

Feedback

RAILS SA Group

The first RAILS SA meeting was held on 28 May and was an outstanding success with 98 people attending. The attraction was a debate on the topic 'Para-professionals — do they have a place on the reference desk?'

While not a true debate, two groups of three presented arguments for and against. One group argued that para-professionals (library technicians) had a justifiable place on a library's reference desk, the other argued that *only* professionals should staff the reference desk.

A time limit of 20 minutes per side with a 3 minute rebuttal, proved to be a winning structure. General discussion followed for another 20 minutes as the audience probed the validity of some points.

No vote was taken, nor was there an adjudication by the Chair of the meeting, as the side presenting the case for professionals only, conceded that there was a *place* for library technicians on the reference desk. Both sides agreed that there were limitations on what a library technician could do; there were numerous quotes of surveys from the literature.

The debate was followed by a social drink or two, which was very successful.

It is important to note that the speakers were chosen for their ability to prepare and present arguments for or against the issue and not because they necessarily hold that view.

Chair: Anne Hazell, Chair of the Board of Education.

Team for para-professionals: Robyn Mathews, Peter Murdock, and Philippa Middleton.

Team for professionals: Tony Foskett, Ray Choate, and Michael Talbot.

Patrick Condon
President

Library Technicians awards: Sydney Technical College

Joy O'Brien topped the school at the Sydney Technical College graduation ceremony for the Associate Diploma of Library Practice, winning the S & M Supply Company prize for the Dux of the course.

Second prize winners for the best of final year subjects were Rosanna Rapaport (Library Technicians at Work), Carol Cantrell (Publicity and Display), Shirley Bush (Subject Cataloguing), Carol Cantrell and Sylvia Monsted (Information Services), all sharing cash prizes donated by S & M Supply Company. □

Library Focus Victoria launch

The last issue of *inCite* mentioned the formation of Library Focus Victoria, the collective name for library cooperative activities being established at 123 Dover Street by Technilib, CAVAL and the Victorian Branch of the Australian Library and Information Association.

Library Focus Victoria was formally launched on Tuesday evening, 21 May 1991, by the Honourable Jim Kennan, Deputy Premier of Victoria and Minister for the Arts. The Minister spoke to a gathering of about 150 people present for the launch, making it one of the largest cross-sectoral library gatherings seen in Melbourne for some time.

In his speech, the Minister spoke warmly of the value of inter-library

cooperation and the initiative taken by the three founding institutions. He commented 'The establishment of Library Focus shows that the library community is committed to inter-library cooperation. No other State has a centre like this, provided by libraries for libraries.'

Other speakers were Cr Elizabeth Maffei, Mildura Regional Library Service and President of Technilib; Margaret Smith, President of the Victorian Branch of ALIA; and Professor Margaret Cameron, a senior member of the CAVAL Board. The launch augurs well for the future development of Library Focus Victoria as a strong participant in the effective development of the State's library services. □



Left to right: Douglas Savage (Executive Director, Technilib), Margaret Smith (Manager, Library Services, City of Keilor and President, Victorian Branch, ALIA), and the Honourable Jim Kennan (Deputy Premier of Victoria and Minister for the Arts).

Queensland report on award restructuring

The main issue for Queensland library technicians in 1991 is award restructuring. It is vital that technicians be involved in this process or we will be overlooked.

To keep technicians involved and informed on what is happening the Queensland Library Technician Section has held two seminars on award restructuring.

The first seminar was an evening seminar held on 22 March. The speaker was Katie Steenstrup, from the Queensland Trades and Labour Council who gave us a brief overview of award restructuring and stressed the need to be involved, be informed and take part in working parties and workplace reorganisation.

On 3 June we held a 1/2-day seminar on job redesign and skills analysis. The speaker was Reg Bond from the Queensland Workplace Resource Centre.

Reg advised library technicians to take a new look at what we do and how we do it. His advice is 'don't mistake the edge of the rut for the horizon'. The purpose of job redesign is to improve the quality of work life and to improve organisational efficiency. The challenge for library technicians is to make our jobs more satisfying, varied, using a wider range of skills and to have an improved career path.

Queensland library technicians have already received one bonus from award restructuring. For the first time technicians employed by the State Government will have access to the higher wages enjoyed by other similarly qualified technicians and have the opportunity in the future for the creation of senior library technician positions.

Jilleen Chambers
President

Queensland Library Technicians Section □