

Letters

Jobs for professional librarians

Dear Editor,

John Levett (Front Line 14) is obviously not attempting to maintain two children away from home at university with minimal Government assistance. If he were, he would know that an unemployed librarian applies for *any* job (including scallop splitting) which would help ease the financial situation.

Despite John's condemnation of the practice, a librarian with 12 years experience as a technician prior to a librarianship qualification finds that it does nothing for the ego when a coveted library assistant job is awarded to a check-out chick from the local supermarket who has literally no library experience.

Until there are sufficient professional positions available to employ most of each year's graduates, John, can we try less pontificating on 'Fine Distinctions' and more practical ideas for simple survival?

Helen M Dunford

Jobs — open up the closed shops!

Dear Editor,

There have been several letters referring to the difficulties encountered by new entrants to the profession in recent issues of *inCite*. Louise Lewiss (inCite 12) drew attention to the closed advertising practice of the Australian Public Service. The Australian Public Service is not alone in this as all States have similar procedures. However even when open advertising takes place, at least two other subtle methods are used to favour selected applicant groups.

One method is to require prior knowledge of the Department's activities. Anybody not already employed by that Department is immediately eliminated, regardless of their other attributes.

The second and more widely used method for keeping a closed shop in the profession, is to require 'library experience' even for base grade positions. With this restriction, the profession effectively prevents a free interplay of ideas across disciplines.

Librarianship and information management are not only found in libraries. Many other professions require the skills of searching, collating, and

presenting information, and many of them utilise highly specialised and/or sophisticated techniques requiring far more training and experience. Cataloguing, for example, is only classifying in accordance to a set of rules, a fundamental of science since at least the 17th century.

The distinctive feature of librarianship is the broad spread of knowledge handled. To fortify this attribute the profession needs to widen its employment base, not restrict it.

Experience should not be confused with exposure to routine procedures that can be readily learnt on the job or in a college. Experience comes from handling the extra-ordinary situation and takes a long time to gain. To advertise for a minimum of 1 or 2 years experience is nonsense: at least 4 or 5 years in one situation is required.

The modern practice of changing jobs every 1 or 2 years 'to gain experience' is counter-productive. Employees who leave after such a short time miss the long term effects of their actions — the real guidelines of success or failure. By selecting these 'energetic, highly motivated individuals' as the advertising agencies like to call them, employers lock themselves into an expensive cycle of replacement and settling in of short term employees with no real benefit to their knowledge base.

Unless the profession wants to keep the book hoarder image, managers must reject closed shop activities.

Eric Whiting

ALIA 1992 conference fees

Dear Editor,

In response to Neil Radford's letter on the cost of ALIA conferences (*inCite* Vol. 12, No. 14, 9 September 1991), I offer the following comments on the approximate registration fee (\$420) for ALIA 1992 in Albury-Wodonga.

1. At \$84 a day per delegate, a charge which includes a copy of the Proceedings, the registration fee for ALIA 1992 compares favourably with the following:

LAA	1988	Sydney	\$83
		(Proceedings were extra)	
ALIA	1990	Perth	\$90
		(including Proceedings)	
ELISS	1991	Melbourne	\$98
Specials	1991	Canberra	\$112

2. The approximate fee of \$420 for ALIA 92 could be reduced by about \$20 a head if the conference was not required, by resolution of General Council, to produce and supply a copy of the Proceedings to every Institutional member of ALIA.

3. The approximate cost of \$420 is the maximum expected, and may be reduced once the final budget is prepared later this

year before the registration form is printed.

4. Participation by younger members of the profession, and by students, is expected to be higher than usual at Albury-Wodonga for a number of reasons, including the lower than usual registration fee (and the student rate will be at a similar level to Perth). The availability of cheap accommodation and meals, the provision of a free local bus shuttle service, the comparatively low cost of travel to Albury-Wodonga, and a full, attractive and relevant program will be factors as well.

In the Call for Papers we have indicated that we welcome positive input to our planning for ALIA 1992, and responses are already being received from younger members who presumably will be willing to attend because the conference represents excellent value for a very worthwhile professional development experience. Dr Radford's own positive input will be welcomed also.

Roy F Sanders

Chairman, Conference Committee
ALIA Biennial Conference, Albury-
Wodonga 1992

Why don't we take more part?

Dear Editor,

It was my pleasure to attend UCRLS Excellence in libraries an inspirational evening to hear our State Librarian, Alison Crook, give us some inspiration.

I am not a member of this Section, but was made welcome and also awarded a bottle of wine for the winning essay, on what excellence means to me.

I find it hard to understand why the evening wasn't better attended. We cannot be too busy to further our professional contacts and must be prepared to do this in our own time.

In this period of recession, where library funding and moreover staff funding is cut or completely severed we need each other to reinforce our goals, objectives and to keep our morale up there i.e. be inspired to continue, even under difficult conditions. I guess if you work in a large library environment you may feel suitably supported.

In my one-person library environments I enjoy the contact with different Sections and like to take advantage of every opportunity to learn from colleagues. I never depart empty-handed.

I hope I may have inspired others to come along to meetings away from Specials or Online Sections. To gain a competitive edge one must keep informed. Not everyone can attend 4-day conferences (or afford them). Equally informed and

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