

# Letters

## Seeking an ALIA Executive Director

It is with certain equivocation that I have continued to renew my ALIA membership. Numerous colleagues have long ceased to be ALIA members, many on meagre salaries and often alienated from the 'directors' and 'managers' who tend to monopolise the upper echelons of our Association.

The current advertisements for an Executive Director, with attributes including an 'executive demeanour' (whatever that means) and a 'remuneration package in the range of \$70 000 to \$90 000' might well push me to the limits of what I am prepared to swallow.

Why should the running of the relatively small office of ALIA require a 'remuneration package' possibly in excess of that of a university professor or the heads of some of our largest libraries? Hasn't the ALIA leadership noticed that the 'entrepreneurial' 1980s are now past? And why should ALIA members be expected to support the dubious notion that an exorbitant salary will necessarily attract the best Executive Director?

*Hans Lofgren*

*John Levett, Immediate Past President and Chair of the Search Committee for the Executive Director, comments:*

I am grateful to Mr Lofgren for having raised this issue; his is not the first comment I have received on this topic, and no doubt it will find a sympathetic echo amongst the ALIA membership.

Let me state first that the decision to upgrade the appointment was not taken hastily, and in fact the role and function of the Executive Director is something which has been under continuous discussion in the Association over the last few years.

In relation to the current search, occasioned by the looming expiry of the current contract in November this year, the view was put to General Council (and not disputed) that the job of ALIA's Executive Director was one of the most significant professional appointments in this country—at least as significant (and some, myself included, would say more so) as that of any state or university librarian in its potential to

affect the standing (including the relatively poor salaries of some members remarked upon by Mr Lofgren) of the entire profession in the current national arena. The task, which I had thought was reflected in the advertisement, is not merely to manage the National Office, as Mr Lofgren suggests: it has never been so, and the need for the Association to be effectively represented both within *and outside* the professional context has never been greater than it is now, where the net available resource is diminished and competition for it severe.

That view, which was widely circulated, was accepted by General Council, and the salary package, the advertisement and Position Specification reflect it. The Search Committee, which includes Ms Margaret Trask, Mr Warren Horton, Ms Bev Kirby and myself do not subscribe to the view that mere salary will be sufficient to attract and appoint an appropriate candidate as Mr Lofgren mischievously suggests, but although not a sufficient condition, an adequate remuneration, and above all one which compares favourably with those offered by other similar appointments, is certainly a necessary one in attracting the kind of Executive Director who will take the Association through the next critical five years.

As to Mr Lofgren's tangential comment about the " 'directors' and 'managers' who tend to monopolise the upper echelons of ALIA", it does scant justice to those committed members from all levels of the Association who, whatever their appointment and remuneration, give service to it, and make constructive input to its decision-making processes. One of the glories (some would argue a critical weakness) of ALIA is the extent to which it has democratised itself and devolved its executive and decision-making processes. The office of President is open to all, including, if he wishes to nominate (and I would second him for it), Mr Lofgren.

Similarly, the appointment of Executive Director can be applied for by any members, though few such candidates might choose to suggest in their application that the remuneration was too high, and certainly none who have ever held the

appointment, or watched closely the extraordinary pressures which it exerts on its invariably undervalued incumbents would agree that it was.

## Library Technicians languishing?

I have to admit that it is with a sinking heart that I am watching more and more Library Technicians being left to languish while potential positions that they are qualified to do, are 'upgraded' to Professional Officer status.

This is happening particularly in the Special/government dept library, where Library Technician positions are lumped in with the mainstream ASO becomes more complex, it is upgraded, not to a higher LT/ASO grade, but to a Professional Officer position. Why is this? Is it ignorance? financial? both? All it does for the Library Technician is diminish their chances of staying within their own field and being promoted. Many of us do not wish to return to University and do the degree, and as such are left behind to battle it out within the ASO field and often leave our training behind in search of better pay.

I am not suggesting that Technicians be entitled to join the PO ranks, all I am asking is that Librarians and administrators consider carefully before upgrading/creating lower library positions. There are so many experienced and well qualified technicians out there who would do the job as well as a Librarian, and would then leave these librarians to do the more complex duties that they have been trained to do. Please, give us a go.

*Cathy Jones*

*Library Officer, AIATISIS Library*

*Susan Ainsworth, the ALIA Industrial Officer comments;*

In the broadbanding of classifications which has occurred as part of award restructuring, the challenge for library and information staff has been to get into the appropriate stream, for example, professional and technical. Generally, library technicians have had greater difficulty in achieving recognition of the technical nature of their work and the accompanying need for technical qualifications. The situation Cathy is

▶ describing is one unfortunate consequence of the award restructuring process in the Australian Public Service. Library Technicians fought long and hard to be recognised as technical officers but this was one fight that was lost and they were classified as Administrative Service Officers. As a result there have been recurring difficulties with recruiting and retaining suitably qualified and experienced library technicians. I would certainly support your call for a greater awareness among special librarians and administrators in government departments of the consequences their staffing decisions have for library technicians.

### Sacrificial Lambs?

In *inCite 5* both Bev Kirby and Jan Gaebler make well-intentioned but, alas, platitudinous contributions to the debate about library advocacy. Jan comments that 'advocacy campaigns concerning segments of the whole have had *much* success in this country'. Wishful thinking, Jan. Where's your evidence?

The reality in 1992 is that those who determine the funding of our school, TAFE, University, public and special libraries have, overall, no greater sensitivity to the importance of what libraries provide than they had in 1982, 1972 or 1962.

As the CPAs demonstrated, the solution in our media dominated culture is simple, if distasteful to some. I don't need to spell out what a CPA is—everyone knows because

- they identified what they wanted to sell, and to whom
- they put **MONEY** into selling it.

Meanwhile we—a group of professionals and organisations by no means the country's most impoverished—flutter around the advocacy flame, never quite bold enough to grasp it.

The best exposure libraries now get on prime-time television is as a backdrop to a whispered conversation about mum's lamb roast.

It really is time we stop selling ourselves to ourselves, and gather the funds to tell Australia what libraries and librarians are about—straight.

*Alan Bundy*  
*University of South Australia*

### Is the date stamp obsolete?

In response to the letter, *Date stamp your serials!* in *inCite 5*.

In a damages case in 1988 in Perth I argued that the Inter Library Loan system, even forty years ago, provided access to published items irrespective of their date of receipt in Australia.

The two critical dates are the date of publication and the date that a citation appears in a standard indexing publication.

The date of receipt of a paper copy is becoming even less relevant with the increasing and prompt availability of electronic full text journals from the on-line vendors and in CD-ROM format. If not available electronically, telefacsimile can ensure receipt of a copy within hours of identifying its existence.

Increasing competition amongst producers of contents page services and amongst producers of indexing and abstracting services combined with the capacity for key word searching of the electronic full text services is also reducing the time between publication and the date when the article can be identified in a subject search.

So don't tell the lawyers that we are still using date stamps, tell them how fast we can really get information, if asked.

*Anne Batt*  
*Medical Librarian* ■

# Who's Where

Melanie Lazarow is the new Reader Education Librarian at the University of Melbourne. After extensive experience in the Sydney public library world, she took up a position of tutor and then lecturer at the Kuringai College of Advanced Education (now university of Technology, Sydney). Melanie will coordinate



Melanie Lazarow

Reader Education services so as to make the library's two and a half million item collection as accessible as possible to its users. Prior to this appointment Melanie was a Senior Information Librarian at Melbourne University.

Philip Keane has been appointed to the position of Associate Librarian (Technical Services) at the University of Tasmania. Philip was formerly Manager of the ABN Unit at Adelaide TAFE. He has a science degree, and majored in computing and information systems in his postgraduate librarianship studies. He completed an MBA in 1990, with a thesis on the skills necessary for front line customer service staff. His prior experience in Technical Services began at the Australian National University, in the Acquisitions and Cataloguing sections, and at the Department of Health in Canberra. He then worked on the staff of ABN for three years before moving to the Adelaide TAFE as a central adviser to the TAFE network of libraries which employed more than 100 staff. He has taught library studies at the University of South Australia, and also business studies at Adelaide College. ■

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University of New South Wales

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