



Jenny Cram
ALIA President

The decision of General Council to extend eligibility for the distinction of Fellow to Library Technician members is a turning point for the Association. This will be the first time that paraprofessionals have been recognised as real partners of the library professionals. The Board of Education has been instructed to advise General Council, by its last meeting for 1993, on the criteria and procedure required and thus 1994 may see the first award to a Library Technician.

"The myth of the hero," wrote Carl Jung, "is the most common of all. We find it in the classical mythology of Greece and Rome, in the Middle Ages, in the Far East and among contemporary primitive tribes. It also appears in our dreams. It has obvious dramatic appeal, and a less obvious, but nonetheless profound, psychological importance."

We have traditionally recognised the Librarian heroes in our ranks, and it is right that we should also recognise the heroes amongst the ranks of our Technician members, but we must not forget that it is the rank and file of library workers that is the face the profession presents to library users.

Bary Oakley pointed out in his column in the Australian Magazine of 24-25 April 1993 that what is different, and very Australian, about the Anzac myth is that no-one is singled out—the common soldier is the hero. The Anzac myth is one of the few national myths Australia has. It is part of our collective consciousness.

It is the pre-eminence of the ordinary person in that collective consciousness that is now proving to be important for the success of Australian businesses and libraries. Application of Structural Efficiency Principles in the workplace, creation of self-managed work teams, and the increasing need for all employees to take responsibility for the quality of services, requires that all staff are aware of both their value and their potential.

Someone once defined fame as that which results from being whole-heartedly

devoted to some cause or pursuit. When your focus is merely achieving recognition of yourself, the best you can hope for is a rather impermanent celebrity status.

The Distinction of Fellow may be seen as a worthy recognition of whole-hearted dedication to the cause of libraries and the pursuit of librarianship.

Ron Tacchi, a specialist in corporate incentive plans and training plans for staff, suggests that there are five basic psychological needs in motivating people—feedback for their efforts; seeing where they fit into the overall picture; knowing that others will take a personal interest in them; the knowledge that the company is going to stay in business; and rewards such as wages.

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An important aspect of motivation is achievement needs, which is essentially learned behaviour. When the Association recounts its reasons for conferring individual awards, it provides stories of achievement which establish a norm of what the profession sees as important, and this shows up in the behaviour of library workers.

The motivational needs that members of the profession display can be driven as much by the way the Association conducts its business as by childhood and other experiences, so it is important that members of the Association regularly and openly express their opinion of the Association's programs and services.

Self-motivation is the only sustainable form of motivation. We should be helping our colleagues to internalise their own motivations, to set themselves challenging goals. We should be setting ourselves the collective goal that no single library worker will depend on another to set his or her goals or to provide motivation.

What may appear to be a lack of motivation is really a fear of failure. Within Australian society people are fed mixed

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messages about success and failure. As a nation we are very phlegmatic about successful people. We are more likely to look for ways to cut them down to size than to adulate them. The myth of the ordinary, and nameless, collective heroes is very strong.

So we tend not to celebrate. Often we neither name nor claim our achievements, nor do we reward ourselves. Instead we hope that someone else, the organisation, profession, or Association will provide that reward.

Yet we also live in a social and organisational climate where we have not been allowed to fail. Mistakes in school tests are made public to the whole class. Results of important examinations are published in the newspapers. At school and work our weaknesses are brought to our attention and we are encouraged to address them rather than build on our strengths.

The importance of the awarding of the Distinction of Fellow is that it is a recognition of sustained and on-going dedication and achievement, but it is not, and should never be seen to be, evidence of achieving a mythical perfect score. ■

The President and the Executive Director are developing performance measures to ensure that the association keeps on track. To assist them, you are invited to write to the President and tell her why you, or your institution, choose to belong to the Association and which services you use and value.

Send your letters to:

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