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I take issue with Jenny Cram's Frontline statement (31 May) that the extension of fellowships to technician members is a turning point for the Association because 'this will be the first time that paraprofessionals have been recognised as real partners of the library professionals'.

If this is the case, perhaps we should all just buy ourselves a copy of Muriel Solomon's *Getting Praised, Raised & Recognised* (Prentice Hall, 1993) for \$22.95 and forget about belonging to ALIA.

I became a librarian because I wanted to be a librarian. I am sure the majority of technicians were equally sure of the career path they were taking.

It now appears that our professional association is unclear about the distinction between the two and is putting them into one category, for the purposes of recognition.

There appears an ongoing and similarly 'unclear' distinction between the roles of ACLIS and ALIA.

Personally, I find it quite sad that ALIA sees its vision as 'to be leading professional association for library and information services in Australia'. The emphasis in this vision statement is 'the association'.

I believe that ALIA should set its sights on touching every practicing librarian and technician with the roles, responsibilities and rewards of their chosen profession. Yet how many 'untouched' librarians and technicians are there who see no need to belong to this professional association. We surely have to ask ourselves if this is the case because the emphasis is always on the housekeeping aspects of 'the association'.

The Association exists to nurture and promote excellence in librarianship. Or am I wrong; does it exist to promote an efficiently run organisation that takes all the square pegs and puts them into one, simply digested, round hole?

There are awesome dilemmas that are facing practicing librarians and technicians in today's climate and dealing with them is not helped by Associations which are 'foggy' when it comes to core purpose.

Jan R Gaebler

Research Librarian, State Bank SA

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I read the Frontline of 31 May with close attention; after careful consideration of the issue, I conclude that if General Council had wished to set back the cause of due recognition of the significant and uniquely valuable contribution made by Library Technicians, it could hardly have chosen a better way of doing so.

Unless General Council is prepared to rewrite the terms and conditions of the Fellowship, thus changing, if not actually debasing the value of existing and future awards, it is difficult to see how technicians will not be placed at a disadvantage in being considered for it, because it is, objectively speaking, beyond their brief to 'make sustained contributions to the theory of librarianship'.

Further, if the argument is of the order that technicians could qualify for consideration for the award of the Fellowship on the ground of a 'distinguished contribution to practice' then the definition of such a contribution will have to be carefully refined if false expectations on the part of technicians are not to be raised. Mere excellence in one's daily work is a necessary, but not a sufficient, criterion, and the Board's occasional rejection of a nomination on this ground reflects this, because to make an award for this kind of excellence would signal to the world that we regard it as *exceptional*, whereas in fact, it ought to be the norm.

To have spoken thus will no doubt lead to accusations of elitism, so let me hasten to acknowledge unashamedly that I *am* an elitist; the whole notion of a professional association rests on elitism, the act of belonging to a 'chosen or select part' of society. I choose to belong to ALIA because I believe that ALIA should stand for excellence; and that in determining (see Regulations B8 and B9) that the basis for the award of the Fellowship should consist of 'a distinguished and sustained contribution to the theory and practice of librarianship', the Association has so far endorsed this view.

It would be a tragedy if, even for the best of reasons (and the ar-

guments for the current proposal are not), it resiled from this position.

John Levett

Monash University

(John had set out a more extensive argument, but for space reasons it has had to be abridged. Ed.)

No professional qualifications needed?

We the undersigned feel that the ALIA should be made aware of a disturbing trend in this large University Library.

Recently a senior position which used to require eligibility for membership of the ALIA was advertised as Manager, Serials Section, with no necessary professional qualifications demanded. The position was given to someone with no professional qualifications.

We are concerned because we see this as a deskilling issue. There is now a total lack of across the board standards for library positions. This senior position demands experience and knowledge at theoretical and practical levels of the latest developments in serials management including cataloguing standards, client services, familiarity with the book trade, acquisition skills and management potential.

It also demands more than an unqualified person could offer in that the position should encompass a theoretical knowledge of the wider field of librarianship and information science and the context of the serials section within the information community.

It is troubling and demoralising for librarians and information professionals to see such a major academic library drop its standards and open the door to an unregulated field with no care about the standards it should uphold. We ask what incentive is there now for staff already in the library to go out and get a degree if experience in one library alone is enough for promotion to senior information management positions?

The new single stream classification structure has opened the floodgates of unregulated professional Practices. It could mark the beginning of an era which could lead to the demise of this profession.

(32 names and University supplied) ■