

Library stereotypes I

Your issue of 14 December contained an article 'A catalogue is a reader service' about a lecture given to cataloguers in NSW. Going by the report, it seems that the stereotype of the cataloguer as being obsessed with detail is alive and well (unlike that of the spinster with the spectacles and the bun, stamping books).

In my 12 years as a cataloguer, naturally I developed *habits* of 'correctness, consistency, completeness', but my *mind* was always on access—helping people to find things. This involves thinking, which takes time, and authority control, which costs.

The real balance to be struck is between 'currency' and 'findability' and it can be wasteful to cut corners if this results in inferior access. Sadly there is no real basis on which to work this balance out scientifically, so the matter will never be properly resolved!

Ivar Dorum

Deakin University Library



Library stereotypes II

How many readers received a copy of the MCB Publications Limited Library Link calendar for 1993? The calendar featured sketches from *Jane's Adventures in Libraryland* by Ian Parratt.

The caricatures were offensive and derogatory to the profession and only served to reinforce the negative stereotype image of librarians.

I was shocked and offended that a supposedly library-friendly organisation such as MCB Publications Limited would be silly enough to produce such a defamatory calendar. The copy I received was destroyed plus a curt protest letter sent to MCB. I hope that others who received the calendar did likewise.

The profession should not have to put up with this type of rubbish

Trevor Wakely

Past President ALIA Vic Branch

We need a larger General Council

In recent years the General Council has comprised one representative from each State and Territory branch plus the presidential trium-

virate and the Board of Education chair. The Council used to be larger with a representative from each National Section attending.

The trimmed down Council has been an organisational experiment which has not worked. In theory, the Branch Councillor is able to represent the views of all members including the special views and interests of those in sectional divisions and special interest groups. This is a daunting task and its failure is reflected in the paucity of timely policy formulation achieved by the General Council in recent years. Branch Councillors appear to be more at home with managerial and administrative tasks and business of this nature has dominated Council agendas recently. No longer does the Council enjoy the energy and commitment of National Section Councillors with clear policy positions who come to Council meetings well prepared for debate and decision making.

At the same time the Sections and Special Interest Groups within the Association appear to be alive and well. The conferences, professional development activities, meetings etc. organised by the sections and special interest groups are better attended and more rewarding for many members than Branch or General Council activities. The opportunity to bring members with broadly similar professional interests together within its National Sections is one of the strengths of ALIA and yet it is not adequately reflected in the General Council process.

I urge the incoming President to take action to reinvigorate the General Council by taking whatever action is necessary to once again have National Sections represented at Council meetings. To illustrate the point I am sure that if the Literacy Section had been on General Council last year we would not enter the 'Year of Indigenous Peoples' without a policy or plan of action. The cost of an expanded Council is slight compared with the benefits to the Association as a whole. The development of policy and the input to debate will be worth the cost but, more significantly, the Council will be able to draw upon a much broader range of talents and interests for its committees, task groups, etc. This in turn will enable the Council and ALIA to improve both the quality and timeliness of its actions and to apply one of its strengths to its longer term strategic advantage.

In order to avoid a proliferation of National Sections it may be prudent to review the rules and to make it necessary for sections to have a significant minimum membership and a division in at least four States or Terri-

ories. Otherwise the group would have the status of a special interest group.

The Association, in its national activities, requires a new burst of energy. The inclusion of National Sections onto the General Council is one method, other members will have further ideas.

John Brudenell

Curbing ALIA expenses

The present parlous financial state of ALIA gives rise to a reconsideration of the means by which the various national committees find it necessary to meet. In the past we have not questioned the need to fly members in from various cities to a central meeting point, to accommodate them, and to provide them with a modicum of expenses while engaged on ALIA business. When funds were much more freely available than they are at present, the advantages of face-to-face meetings could be accepted as necessary, but now that ALIA is deeply in debt it is time there was a rethinking of whether this is still needed. Many businesses and other organisations find video and teleconferencing viable alternatives to face-to-face meetings. Particularly where there are only three or four on a committee (such as the publishing committee) then teleconferencing can be quite as effective and certainly much cheaper than flying the several members to the one city. Where committee numbers are larger, then the advantages of video conferencing can be adopted. The technology certainly exists, and has existed and been used for many years.

Is ALIA investigating the possibility of alternative means of meeting, at least of one meeting per year in the first instance?

J D Jensen

Jennifer Nicholson, Membership Services Manager, replies: 'Thank you for your concern and suggestions for the Association's financial operations. The Association's financial affairs are, in fact, in a very sound state. The year end for 1992 was reached with a balanced budget and a sound asset base. The possible deficit budget had been forecast primarily due to a retrospective taxation bill, and air conditioning rectification work for ALIA House. The tax situation was resolved in our favour and through careful financial management a balanced budget was achieved.'

The Association has now implemented program budgeting, which will assist General Council further in its continuing commitment to responsible financial management of the Association.

The Association regularly explores cheaper methods of communication, and teleconferenc-

ing is a method employed by committees of the Board of Education in particular. Video conferencing is currently too expensive for our requirements. It has been determined that for committees such as the General Council and the Board of Education the most effective way to process their business is through meeting as they currently do. However, Council has resolved that it will limit its number of meetings to three in 1993, and Canberra has been costed out as the cheapest venue.

Please be assured that the Association is constantly aware of the need to consider the most cost effective methods of operation, including methods of communication of its committees, so that the Association's work can be carried forward efficiently and effectively.

Many thanks for your concern in this area. Your interest in and suggestions for the affairs of the Association are most appreciated.

Library jobs and salaries

I welcome Kelly Callaghan's comments about the Library Locums' annual Placement Survey in *Incite* issue 11, 16 November 1992. She has drawn some valid conclusions from the survey data about the market worth of our profession which deserve wider discussion. However, I do not agree with her conclusions about the opportunities for new graduates.

The Library Locums' placement and salary survey is about trends. As it has been conducted over 4 years, genuine trends are becoming evident. The important point about 'the steady decline in the numbers of Librarians receiving the lowest salary range' is that 4 years ago 56% of Librarians were paid between \$25 000 to \$27 999 per annum, compared to 16% in 1991-92.

This means that the bulk of the Librarians in our survey has moved into a new salary band above \$28 000 per annum. There are new graduates starting at this higher level. They are not all confined to the lowest salary range. Not all new graduates lack library experience and some have very marketable skills. As Kelly Callaghan correctly states 'they are generally highly motivated and keen to work hard and gain experience'. Employers regard such qualities highly.

I acknowledge that it is difficult to get that first job break particularly in a tight job market. At Library Locums we do our best to highlight the strengths of new graduates to employers whenever we can and we have given many new graduates their start to successful library careers. If you are in Sydney, Brisbane or Canberra, why not register with Library Locums as part of your job hunting strategy?

Marion Nicolson

Manger, Library Locums P/L. ■

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