

Outstanding graduate rewarded

In May the Faculty of Business at the Northern Territory University awarded Liisa Webster the prize for 'Most Outstanding Graduate in the Diploma of Library and Information Studies' (DPLIS). The prize is sponsored by the ALIA Northern Territory Branch.

Born in Finland, Liisa migrated to Australia with her parents in 1958 and settled in Canberra. After matriculating she ventured off to New Zealand where she married and had two children. Returning to Canberra four years later, Liisa commenced studies in a Bachelor of Social Sciences at the Canberra College of Advanced Education but due to family commitments and financial difficulties withdrew after completing one semester. Seeking employment, Liisa moved to Darwin where she commenced work with the Department of Employment Education and Youth Affairs and worked with this department (under its various name changes) for seventeen years, taking voluntary redundancy in August 1996.

Deciding not to rush into a new career, Liisa thought very hard about the career path she wanted to take. Although Liisa knew the skills that she had gained in her former employment would be invaluable in any industry or occupation, she was aware that future employers may find them too industry-specific. Wanting to take full advantage of this opportunity to change careers Liisa decided to return to study.

Liisa's daughter Leigh had been studying the Associate Diploma in Li-

brary Studies and Liisa found she was interested in the assignments and homework her daughter was undertaking. She discussed the course with Leigh and mentioned her interest. Leigh was most supportive and urged her mother to contact the course co-ordinator. Before Liisa knew it she was enrolled.

Studying full-time, Liisa enjoyed the course, learned a lot and made new friends. The diploma was hard work but Liisa always found it interesting and the two years passed by all too quickly. She found that the lecturers were always encouraging and helpful and that they would advise the class of current employment opportunities in the industry. Acting on this information, Liisa gained casual employment at the Northern Territory University Library loans desk and also loose-leaf filing — which led to temporary work in the serials section. She was delighted when she was appointed to the permanent position of serials assistant.

Completing the diploma gave Liisa



Liisa Webster at her graduation

the incentive to continue to learn new things and to undertake further study. She is currently enrolled in the Certificate III of Information Studies to expand her knowledge in this area, especially since computers are such vital tools in the information industry. ■

Library technicians in degrees of change

Lothar Retzlaff, Western Australian library technician

As our profession evolves, we — willingly or unwillingly — are evolving with it. As when we were library media technicians, and before this when we were library assistants, our skills continue to evolve to deal with the requirements placed on us.

Library technicians continue to act as intermediaries in the traditional sense, helping to find information in the unstructured chaotic environment of the internet. However, now we spend an increasing amount of time with users in response to the demands of problem-based learning demands. There is also the growing realisation of the need for evidence-based practice and the opportunities it offers for the library profession to supply needs. There is certainly enough growth in demand for knowledge and information to support an ongoing role for both librarians and library technicians.

In the mid-1980s, job descriptions for library technicians did not include the requirement for skills in the use

of the internet. The idea of 'access to organised knowledge' has taken on an entirely new meaning in today's society, as easily accessible information technology redefines how users perceive information access and use. Converting information into knowledge will be a huge part of any future service the library provides in the ever-changing market place for library services. Our expertise in understanding market forces must expand to accommodate the way we handle this knowledge and how we present it as librarians or library technicians.

We must learn and adapt library skills and invest in people talents, competencies and information systems across the worldwide network of libraries. Enhancing the provision of knowledge offers opportunities in other developing areas, not specifically for library technicians but for anyone with skills in knowledge management, and the effective marketing of information. Perhaps we should not be threatened by change but instead be motivated to move on toward these new opportunities. ■