

Your voice

A question of values...

I cannot agree with Graeme Johanson's (August *inCite*) declaration that at the library educators meeting held in Adelaide last December: 'It was considered that commodification of "knowledge products" and services, and mass production of most publications, limited the actual influence of libraries on generic social mores'.

This may indeed be his opinion, but the discussion was more focussed on librarianship as a profession — not libraries as institutions — and whether there was an onus on educators to impress the core value of intellectual freedom on students now coming through the ranks.

As a sessional university lecturer (and experienced journalist and professional librarian) and someone who now works across a wide cross-section of the information industry as a consultant, I find it disappointing that such an integral component of information work in a democratic society is interpreted so dogmatically and literally by library educators.

One of my collection management students recently posed the question about what he should do if he was in charge of a mining company library and wanted to add anti-mining literature to the collection. I suspect my answer differed from the one that Graeme Johanson might have offered to this student.

Years ago, when in charge of a

special library, the company manager requested to have a list of all titles borrowed in a given week and the names of staff who borrowed them. Of course, I refused, saying it was against my professional ethics. That particular manager found it most amusing that librarians even had 'professional ethics'. In any event we achieved a win/win compromise to the stand-off and he went away a little wiser about libraries.

I continually tell my students that they must believe in what they do, and be prepared to make a stand, when required, to uphold that which they believe in. Of course you are not going to always win, but that is no excuse to throw core values off the professional agenda.

As well, I do not agree with Graeme's recollection of student attendance. I do not recall any students being present at the forum; although in retrospect it is a pity they were not. The librarians (as opposed to library educators) who attended were generally those engaged in sectional professional development activity.

Students need exposure to professional debate and discussion. If Alan Bundy succeeds with his campaign to have print versions of the ALIA2000 conference proceedings, I suggest one set be distributed by ALIA, gratis, to all campus libraries of recognised Australian library education courses, as part of the benefits of recognition. Better yet, an electronic database of all library conferences and profes-

sional development proceedings, where students can access this information from one desktop reference point may mean that more people will take the opportunity to explore what is in it — the easier something is to use, the more people will use it!

Jan Gaebler, Lynton SA

Informed discussion needed

I enjoyed Graeme Johanson's compliment 'John Levett is an inveterate stirrer' [*inCite* 21 August 2000] and the rest of his interestingly moderate contribution. Now that he has dealt with me however, could we perhaps hear what he thinks about the issue? Judging by the response to what was a light-hearted reflection on current mores, it could certainly do with some more informed discussion.

John Levett, Middleton Tas

Print versus web...

I envy Alan Bundy the ready access that he has to the proceedings of both the 1900 and 1998 conferences. Most of us though are not in his favourable position. In terms of maximum accessibility — if not preservation — a web publication is so much better than a printed product, and the ALIA2000 conference committee believes that this should be our priority in publishing the proceedings.

The printed proceedings of the 1998 conference sold around 370 copies for a total cost of \$40 000. Receipts were less than half that amount. While

we appreciate Alan's offer to edit the ALIA2000 conference proceedings and will look carefully at the costs involved in a limited print run, we will need to be convinced that it represents value for money.

Kerry Webb, North Lyneham

Striking a chord...

Keep it up Ivan — loved your page on frames [*inCite*, July, p24], which certainly struck a chord with me. I often have to evaluate websites, and am on a working group auspiced by Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission as an outcome of their inquiry into e-commerce accessibility for older people and people with disabilities (reports are on their website at <http://www.hreoc.gov.au>) — and frames are not loved!

The information on digital cameras and photos [*inCite*, August, p8] was also helpful.

The other page of *inCite* I am passionate about is Belinda Weaver's 'Weavers web'.

Helen Scott, Melbourne

Your voice

Your letters on any issue of relevance to the library and information sector are welcomed.

All letters should be addressed to the *inCite* editor and may be e-mailed to incite@alia.org.au, or faxed to 02 6282 2249, or posted to: Your voice, ALIA, PO Box E441, Kingston ACT 2604. Please include your name and postal address with your letter or e-mail.

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