

YOUR VOICE

Dear Editor,

I think that Michaela Owen rather over-eggs her glorification of today's library in her Last Word in the March 2015 issue of *INCITE*. But she does us a service in drawing to our attention to the reported comments of prominent literary people with regard to libraries, and in particular the value of their memories of libraries, as we seek continually to situate libraries and librarians at the cultural centre.

I recall a letter by Alexander McCall Smith, in the *Guardian* newspaper. It was a letter of love and an acknowledgment of things greater and more meaningful than anything the ephemerality of a consumerist zeitgeist could dish up. My attention was taken by his stating that he rarely visits this library anymore.

I got to wondering how frequently – if at all – the prominent writers, who speak so eloquently of the value of libraries, currently visit and borrow from their local public library. This seems to me an area that would be ripe for exploring.

If the only link writers have with libraries is with the library of the past then there is a bit of a problem.

Having said that, it doesn't do to underestimate the power of memory as a force for social and political change – or as a source of enrichment, inspiration and consolation.

Montaigne and Proust obviously come to mind as two writers whose memories served them well (or not) but any number of other writers could be counted in their number.

We should be making more use of our prominent literary (and other) supporters. They do get media attention and they can be persons of some influence, not just amongst their readers but also politically.

Just as some, such as McCall Smith count themselves as friends of a library, we as a profession should be befriending them and getting their support – not just in a general 'I love libraries' way but around specific projects, both at a local and at a national level.

How about regularly inviting local or visiting writers and artists to the local library? Not only to see what wonders are there but to also meet with the people, without whom the library would not be a library, and the librarians – before they become completely endangered.

To end, for those for whom the image of the librarian is a necessary cultural marker I refer you to Sean O'Brien's evocation in *Beautiful Librarians* – a link to which can be found in the ALIA Weekly of 18 March 2015 (and elsewhere) whilst I crank up the record player for some good old Blossom Dearie - 'I'm hip, I'm no square...'

Mary Cain
mary.cain@lawsociety.org.nz



INCITE
AUGUST 2015
BRIGHT IDEAS

In August, INCITE looks at LIS education. We're inviting educators to tell us about emerging themes and essential skills, and we're asking you how you keep learning after you've left the classroom, and how you help your community to update and upskill.

The deadline for submissions is 23 June 2015. Check the guidelines for writers on the ALIA website and email your stories and images to incite@alia.org.au. Please note, all images must be high resolution (at least 300DPI) and sent separately as .jpg files. Images may be reproduced in print and online.