

Specials Union Registered

On 29 November 1983, the Library and Information Staff Union was registered under the NSW Trade Union Act. This concluded more than 12 months' effort by the Union's Committee of Management.

The Library and Information Staff Union covers people employed in the private sector in NSW in the following occupations:

- librarians
- information scientists
- library assistants
- library officers
- Community information librarians
- indexers
- archivists
- research assistants/officers
- records management officers/librarians

and similar positions. Exceptions to this

membership rule were made for people eligible to belong to a number of unions which already cover library staff. Most of these were in the public sector.

The objects of the Union are:

- To uphold the right of combination of labour and to improve, protect and foster the best interests of its members.
- to watch over and protect the industrial interests of its members and to consider and deal with all matters affecting them in their industrial relations.
- To obtain and secure for its members the best possible conditions and proper and sufficient remuneration, and to guard them against any hardship, oppression or injustice in connection with their employment.
- To ensure that its members enjoy the same civil rights as are enjoyed by other citizens.
- To secure participation in the adminis-

tration and development of institutions in which members are employed.

- To speak authoritatively for members whenever the necessity arises.
- To affiliate with, co-operate with or render financial assistance to any organisation whatsoever having any objects similar to any of the objects of the Association.

The Union was formed on 4 August 1982 at a meeting attended by more than 100 library staff. This was in organised response to requests by LAA members in the private sector throughout the preceding eighteen months. During this time, too, a number of individual librarians had complained to the LAA Industrial Officer about their lack of proper industrial cover. A survey conducted at the 1981 Specials Conference indicated an overwhelming wish for a trade union.

After the formation of the Union came the

continued on page 10

MORRIS WEST: LETTER TO THE AUSTRALIAN BOOK TRADE

Dear Colleagues:

On the day I accepted the office of President of the National Book Council, I made myself the servant of you all.

You are the makers of books. You finance them, you write them, you print them, bind them, pack them, sell them, distribute them through bookstores and libraries, advertise them by critical discussion. You are artists, craftsmen, merchants, boilers down of wood-pulp, makers of inks and dye-stuffs; but the handiwork of each of you is visible in every single volume.

So, whatever your rivalries, whatever your disputes, you are a family - a family of book-folk. As a steward in your household, I beg you, with great respect, to recognise your dependence upon each other, printer on publisher, publisher upon author, small, stumbling child upon those who lead it on the rite of passage into the magical world of books.

I beg you to join together in the National Book Council, to plead your common causes with Government, to promote your common interests in the marketplace, to make known the riches you bring and the traditions you preserve through the printed page.

If you have no care for your own professional dignities, who else will assert them for you? If you disprize your craft so much that you will not pay the price of a good dinner to its common fund, how can you make others value it? If you cannot find a united voice to urge your joint concerns, then where is your authority in the speaking-place?

I am back in Australia after nearly two decades in foreign parts. I know nothing and care less about old quarrels and shortcomings in the organisation. I am concerned only with the future. I am prepared to work for it with you.

So please, makers and readers both, will you join us? Will you put some modest dollars into the National Book Council fund and begin to work together for that strange, magical object which enriches so many lives, upon which so many of our liberties have been founded - the Book!

I wish you all a Happy, Prosperous and Co-operative New Year.



Morris West is seen here in earnest conversation with the Prime Minister, Mr Bob Hawke on the occasion of the establishing of the Morris West Trust at the National Library of Australia. Mr West presented a cheque for \$50,000 and has undertaken to make a personal donation of \$5000 annually throughout his life. The funds are to be used by the Library specifically for the publication of historic, literary, artistic or other items the Library holds in its collections.

Staff exchanges — practical hints

The growing interest in staff exchanges between librarians (*InCite* 19.11.82, 11.2.83, 25.2.83, 29.4.83, 25.11.83) prompts me to offer an account of my experience of an exchange in 1982/83.

The exchange was initiated in early 1981, by Ellen Howard, a reference librarian at the Health Sciences Library, University of Washington, Seattle, USA. Her first letter was publicised to Australian health sciences librarians through *Australian Medliner*. Prior to making official negotiations, we compared details of qualifications, experience, duties and library environments. We also explored the possibility of exchanging houses and cars. When all these factors were found to be compatible, the real work of arranging the exchange began.

The first step was to obtain the approval of our immediate supervisors, and of the respective university librarians. Approval was readily obtained, on condition that:

- i. no expenses would be incurred by the universities (ie. we would pay our own fares and removal expenses);
- ii. each university would continue to pay the salary of its own employee. (As a corollary of this, we would retain continuity of service and accommodation of leave credits and other benefits.)

Official negotiations were then undertaken by staff administration officers. Each university had to provide a sponsorship form to accompany visa applications. The US Consulate required a Form IAP-66, in order to issue an Exchange Visitor J-1 visa.

The Australian Consulate required a Form M.55(1-80)15, which is a sponsorship for a Temporary Residence visa. Issue of this visa also depends on satisfactory results of a medical examination of the applicant and any accompanying family members. My US visa was issued immediately on applica-

tion, but the Howard family were advised to allow three months for processing of their Australian visa applications.

These official negotiations took a long time to complete. They were complex and frustrating, so we found it a considerable advantage to be able to rely on the expertise of university staff officers with previous experience in arranging academic staff exchanges.

While the official negotiations were taking place, we considered the personal aspects of the exchange in more detail. At this point, we had to carefully consider whether our life styles were really compatible, as we realized we were going to have to place considerable trust in our exchange partner regarding personal property. While the exchange of houses and cars solved certain problems, it meant that we had to reach agreements with regard to payment of on-going domestic expenses. We decided that each would continue to pay her own mortgage, taxes, rates, insurance and repairs due to normal wear and tear. We would 'exchange' payment of utilities, car running costs, including routine maintenance, and payment for any repairs due to breakage or other inflicted damage. Our insurance companies had to be notified of the exchange, but raised no objections.

Other arrangements included assigning a Power of Attorney, packing and storing valuables and personal items, and finding volunteers among family and friends to provide orientation, support and information about local services to the incoming exchange partner. We were both able to meet some of our future colleagues socially before starting work, and this made the first days in the work environment much easier.

Although our work was similar, there were many local details to be learned, and

adjustments to be made. This included different policies, administrative styles, location of materials in complicated layouts, and new data bases. The change of status required some adaptation. For librarians with considerable experience, the sudden lack of responsibility, though understandable, was at times difficult to accept. In addition, we had to cope with cultural and language differences, and disruptions caused by the change of seasons. Ellen, with two small children to accommodate in pre-school, found the latter problem particularly difficult.

Staff at each host library must be prepared for some upheaval. They are taking on a 'new' member of staff without the usual formalities of application, interview and selection. They need to spend time in orientation and training of the exchange person, and they must be prepared to listen to the inevitable comparisons and criticisms. Some tasks may have to be reassigned for the whole year, or until the new person's skills are known. Staff goodwill is an essential component in the success of an exchange.

The preparations for a one-year exchange may seem long and tedious, but the rewards make the effort worthwhile. It was possible to use data bases and online systems which are so far unavailable or rarely used in Australia. There were opportunities to attend conferences, seminars and workshops on many professional topics. Visits to other libraries permitted observation of a variety of applications of new technology. No less important were the opportunities to meet colleagues, exchange ideas, and look at a variety of management styles and organizational practices. As a result, some plans for extending information services in my own library are already being implemented.

Although not all ideas and practices observed during the exchange are applicable or desirable here, the year spent in a different environment provided an opportunity to take a detached, objective view of the local situation, and to return to it with a refreshed outlook.

Sandra Russell

(In consultation with Ellen Howard)
Deputy Biomedical Librarian
Monash University

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

MARIA GEMENIS AWARD

for outstanding contribution to special librarianship

Nominations are called for the Maria Gemenis Award.

The award criteria are as follows:

The award will be made to a person who has made a significant contribution in the following areas —

- Willingness to share professional expertise.
- Breaking down the barriers of librarians in isolation.
- Successful promotion of the library/information service, achieving outstanding recognition from their parent organisation.

Rules of nomination:

1. Only members of the Library Association of Australia, NSW Special Libraries Sectional Group may be nominated.
2. No current member of the NSW Special Libraries Sectional Group Committee may be nominated.
3. Each nominee must have a proposer and a seconder, with the consent of the nominee.
4. The proposer and the seconder must submit a brief resume, in writing, about the nominee and send it to the Maria Gemenis Award at the address which has been nominated in the Call for Nominations.
5. The decision of the Committee will be final and no correspondence will be entered into.
6. The presentation of the award will be reported in the September issue of *Australian Special Libraries News* (or nearest date after presentation) and will include a photograph and the resume of the recipient.
7. Nominations should be reported in *InCite* and June *Australian Special Libraries News*.

Nominations will be received up to 30 April 1984.

Nomination forms are available from: **The Secretary, Special Libraries Section NSW Group, Library Association of Australia, 376 Jones Street, Ultimo NSW 2007.**

SPECIALS UNION

continued from page 1

time-consuming process of seeking registration under the Trade Union Act. Some objections to the registration of the new Union were made by existing trade unions. This complicated the process and eventually resulted in hearings before the Deputy Industrial Registrar, after which registration was granted.

Although seeking registration was time and energy consuming for the officers of the Union, other industrial work was being carried out at the same time. Two sub-committees drew up detailed 'logs of claims' for conditions and salaries awards. One more hurdle has to be overcome before these applications can be lodged — registration of the Trade Union under the Industrial Arbitration Act. Application for this has already been made.

Any enquiries concerning the Union should be addressed to Cheryl Grant, General Secretary/Treasurer, Library and Information Staff Union, 7 Forsyth Street, West Ryde NSW 2114. Tel 807 4191 (home), 666 9841 (bus).

Judith Hill