

# LETTERS

## Regional groups' dilemma

Dear Editor,

What a contrast! In *InCite* 11 [24 July 1989] our President asks some pertinent questions about regional groups. For those of us who live/have lived in regional centres and isolated areas, the answers are obviously:

- No! Regional groups do not have sufficient funds to undertake their tasks effectively.
- No! They cannot afford to produce a newsletter — not unless they disguise the costs of production and channel it through their employing institution.
- Supplementation of petrol costs? — who are you kidding!
- No! The professional-development needs are not being met. Modes of delivery must be re-examined.
- Scrap the tendering process!
- Those of us who have suggested the reinstatement of a Continuing Education Officer have been politely (but firmly) told that such a move is 'not a priority for the Association'!

In the same issue of *InCite* (p. 21) we are told that potential nominees to the ALIA Board of Education 'are expected to play active roles within their State/Territories ... In particular... should preferably be members of their Branch Councils ...' May I ask what opportunities there are for regional and isolated members to comply?

It is ironic, indeed, that the Board of Education, which has great opportunity to redress the imbalance in the delivery of professional development to regional and isolated members, has to date refused to address the issue in any concerted or concentrated way.

Forgive the cynicism, but many of us, Madam President, have heard it all before. The fact that regional and isolated professionals and para-professionals continue to join the Association is indicative of their desperation for contact and services. The consolidation of the President's travel funds into a seeding grant for the Board of Education to develop programs of professional development for regional and isolated

members is, perhaps, an appropriate step towards redressing the imbalance.

Vicki Williamson  
Past-President, New England  
Regional Group (1988)  
President EDLIBS (WA) (1989)

## Non-librarians preferable?

Dear Editor,

It was interesting to read D.H. Borchardt's deserved praise [*InCite* 10 July] of the initiative by the Council of Cultural Ministers to develop a statistical database on libraries.

In particular, I would like to comment on his remark that 'the fact non-librarians are staffing senior positions in libraries is still with us and presents an anachronism as well as a social and professional embarrassment'.

Some, including myself, have no objections to non-librarians occupying senior library positions, providing they possess the requisite management skills. In larger libraries, in particular, the essential skills required of the library manager are to manage large budgets, direct considerable numbers of staff, establish priorities, compete with other sections of the organisation, market library services internally and externally, and deal on an equal footing with senior management.

Most librarians have not been trained in these areas or do not recognise their critical importance — especially at a time when resources to libraries are being savagely reduced and in some cases totally withdrawn. Hence the natural, and in some sense desirable, trend for non-librarians to be appointed to senior library positions.

The failure of Australian librarians to address effectively the issue of library statistics is one small example among many of dithering and the inability of librarians to address key issues. Statistics are fundamental to the management process — they enable standards to be set, comparisons made, and are pivotal to rational arguments regarding budgets. The fact that Australian librarians have failed to produce/copy or implement a standard for libraries to measure their collections, services and resources, despite the laudable efforts of D.H. Borchardt and others, is a sad reflection on the profession. That something now appears to be happening is welcomed, but is it surprising that the current impetus is from non-librarians?

John Thawley  
CSIRO Information Services Unit

## Approval given for revised course

The University of Melbourne Academic Board has approved a complete revision of the Graduate Diploma in Information Management (Archives/Records), which it inherited from the Melbourne College of Advanced Education.

The course can now be completed comfortably in 2 years on a two-nights-a-week basis instead of the 3 years previously required. Each year comprises two semesters, each involving 13 teaching weeks with classes normally running from 5.30–8 pm. In addition, 2 weeks practical experience is required each year.

Normal entry is for graduates of any discipline. Planning has begun that should enable students who start their courses in 1990 to progress to a linked Master's program. A small number of places are also available for 'special entry'. For this, a minimum of 5 years' experience is required, together with an appropriate TAFE or CAE qualification or at least VCE or equivalent.

Applications for 1990 will close about the end of October. Enquiries should be directed to the Course Coordinator, Gordon Bate, at the University (telephone (03) 344 8620; messages (03) 344 8615) or to Library and Information Studies, Institute of Education, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Vic. 3052.



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