

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

Libraries — centres for learning

In the course of developing guidelines and policy for South Australian TAFE College Learning Resource Centres attention is being paid to the issues of support, service and provision of learning resources to open learners. Nationally, TAFE agencies are working on guidelines which ultimately will come together as national guidelines for TAFE Libraries/Learning Resource Centres. Agencies in the United Kingdom have already prepared some of the ground work — the LA's policy statement on open learning, and the National Council for Educational Technology statement on *The Role of the Librarian in Supported Self-Study*, both published in 1990.

John Cowan has suggested that the three key issues to learner-centred learning are:

1. How can we cater properly for the individuality of learners?
2. How can we obtain or provide adequate

and appropriate resources to sustain learner-centred learning?

3. How can we help learners to develop their ability to use knowledge, and not merely to acquire it?

Librarians have the basic personal, knowledge and experience strengths. Libraries offer the potential for the effective management of learning resources and as venues and facilitators of learning.

It is expedient that the library and information profession openly tackle issues of provision of appropriate and flexible support to open learners. What better time to tackle these issues than our first conference, quickly followed by Australian Library Week with its theme of 'Libraries for Life'?

At ALIA 1 on Monday October 1 an afternoon session will be run which will touch on some of these issues of open learning and also the role of libraries as facilitator of lifelong learning skills. The papers will conclude with a discussion and action planning session which I hope will move in the direction of the development of policy and operation guidelines for open learning and libraries, across all sectors. The National TAFE Section is offering to coordinate these initial stages, but it is imperative that all sections are involved as lifelong learners will impact on all!

Chris Harrison
National President
TAFE Section

Dear Editor,

In February this year, I arrived in Sydney to complete a 1 year's exchange between the Main Library, University College Dublin and University of New South Wales, Kensington.

The exchange idea is not a new one but in each case there are different people and places to consider when going about it. I am the third exchange person from University College Dublin to come to Australian libraries in recent years.

The first went to Sydney, the other to Adelaide. A colleague of mine advertised in *inCite* for a possible exchange. This had been set up but she had to cancel because of other commitments. I stepped in to take her place and everything was organised within 6 months.

I have reached the half-way point in my visit already and I can honestly say so far that it has been a great success for me. There have been many benefits: the travel experience, the working experience in a new organisation, the living experience in such a cosmopolitan city — these will be with me for the rest of my days. Any employer back home will gain the benefits of my new expertise and the many insights into how they go about things Down-under!!

Teresa C Fanning

The Australian Council of Archives and the Australian Society of Archivists Inc. presents

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10 – 12 OCTOBER 1990

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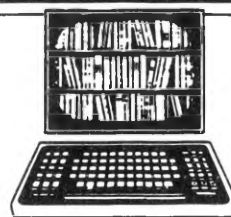
This workshop will provide sound practical advice, by presenting the collective experience of Australia's foremost practitioners in the field. Presenters include computer systems specialists, consultants and teachers in the information management field, and staff of major archival institutions.

The cost for the three days of \$300 includes lunch and refreshments.

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LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICE

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Dear Editor,

Library technicians and ALIA

As a library technician since 1981, and now with a BA in Library and Information Science, I have been President, for 2 years, of ALIA's Tasmanian Branch, Northern Areas Regional Group.

I am currently teaching two classes in the Associate Diploma Library Technician Course, at Launceston TAFE, so I maintain close contact with current students and graduates. I find so many of them with negative feelings toward ALIA and their own situation as well. Graduates from the course, both current and those of many years standing, are also expressing doubt in ALIA's ability to listen to library technician concerns and problems.

This situation has been developing over many years. In 1983-84, what was then LAA strongly argued that technicians in the State would never be recognised by the major employers, such as the Education Department and the Government if they did not come under the umbrella of a national body such as the Library Association. This was put to the vote and library technicians chose to work in and with the Library Association.

In truth, however, LAA/ALIA has not been able to advance the technician's plight to any great extent at all. For all

intents and purposes technicians are still not recognised in this state, and LAA promises now may seem very hollow and ineffectual to those technicians persuaded to join the association 5-6 years ago.

I am sure that the Association, operating in this case from the position of strength, could breach this negativity by displaying a more active concern toward the situation by restructuring meetings and establishing contact with library technicians both in their years of training and after graduation.

My prime concern is that it requires more than one or one dozen committed people to overcome the crisis that all library technicians groups appear to be confronted with at the moment. It is also time for ALIA to offer substantial support to technicians who are still awaiting recognition, after many years on the sidelines, for the few crumbs that may be cast their way. Polarisation within ALIA will not solve our problems and all of us who work in libraries need to support one another in our endeavours to maintain what is an industry set up to serve the public.

In the meantime, I can only hope my letter can be seen as both a measure of support and a sounding-board to get technicians talking and working toward their common aims, and what I hope will be a sustained and viable future.

Robyn McKenzie

Once a library technician - always a library technician?

Not at all! Your skills *can* be used in other fields — let me share my experience.

After working happily for some years as a clerical assistant in school libraries, I enrolled in the Library Technician Certificate Course, to broaden my possibilities. When I completed my course I joined the NSW Parliamentary Library, as an Assistant Library Technician (ALT) in the Reference and Information Section, using traditional material and in-house files. Later, I became an LT and acquired additional responsibilities, including preparing verbal and written answers to reference enquiries using traditional and on-line sources, and indexing Hansard.

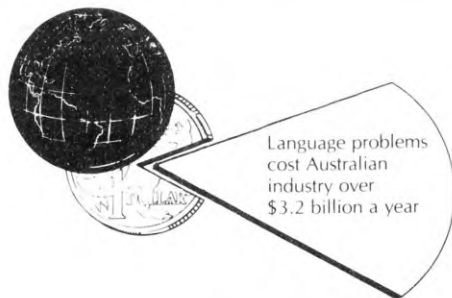
Later, as a Senior LT, I supervised para-professional and clerical staff, updating reference files and preparing bibliographies. I thanked our college training — those hours of exercises in Reader Services! — and my supervisor, who encouraged me to develop my skills.

By 1988 I realised that lack of qualifications blocked further promotion within the library, so I began looking for jobs outside which suited my skills. I saw an advertisement in the Public Service notices for a Parliamentary Liaison Officer, and felt that with a little more experience I could do it. I did not apply, but it made me aware of another possible opening for me.

The change of State Government in 1988 brought the chance to become Parliamentary Liaison Officer to the Minister of Education. There was a lot to learn, but my information skills served me well, and I already knew many of the MPs and the parliamentary procedures.

So — if you don't think that there is a very bright future for you, do as I did. Look around, read advertisements, seek out a position that looks interesting, and transfer your skills to another area. I only hope that it works as well for you as it did for me.

Marlene Knowles.



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How to get your letter published!

- Keep it under 250 words.
- Make it legible. If handwritten, make it double spaced.
- Give a contact address and telephone number.
- Send it to: The Editor, *inCite*, Australian Library and Information Association, PO Box E441, Queen Victoria Terrace, ACT 2600.

Letters may be edited for space unless marked for publication in full or not at all.