

Front Line



Kay Poustie

President
WA Branch

During my term as President of the Western Australian Branch, I have been fortunate in being able to visit the Regional Groups in Geraldton and Port Hedland, and to participate in the teleconference with all Australian Regional Groups convened by the Training and Development Committee of the Board of Education. For those of us operating in capital cities there are a wide variety of activities offered to enable us to network and develop our professional skills. For members living in isolated towns such as Port Hedland, which is 1800 kilometres north of Perth and 230 kilometres from its nearest neighbouring town, isolation is a fact of life and members find ways of combating the distance and networking in whatever way they possibly can, video and teleconferencing being

opportunities that modern technology has now made available.

So what options do isolated members have to grow professionally? One, is to make contact with other professional workers in the area who are not library or information based; people such as social workers, engineers, accountants, government department officers and teachers, for example, who are also isolated. General training in strategic management, interviewing skills, marketing, etc, can be valuable and, by organising general training of interest to all, you may be able to pool resources and bring a specialist trainer to your town.

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Secondly, look within your community for people who have the skills and knowledge base who may be willing to share their expertise. In return, you may be able to share your expertise in organising and retrieving information. Continuing education does not need to be limited to library and information-based topics as we can all benefit from

additional skills to assist us in operating more effective services.

The Western Australian Branch has specifically set out to try to assist our isolated members this year and recently trialed videoing a Training and Development session run for our capital city members. The session addressed 'Professional Ethics' and was conducted by Professor Bob Ewin of the Philosophy Department of the University of Western Australia. Active audience participation by members after the session was also taped. This video will be supplied free of charge to our Regional Groups and is also available for other Divisions and Branches for hire at a minimal charge to assist us in covering production costs.

1990 Conference

The Conference Committee of the First Biennial Conference and the Western Australian Branch were delighted to note that the financial outcome of the 1990 Conference was a profit of \$121 576.71 for the Association. This profit represents the Conference Committee's compliance with the *Guidelines for Biennial Conferences* which stated that:

'Biennial Conferences should endeavour to return a profit of a minimum of 20 per cent of the gross income of the conference.'

In consideration of the extensive debate that was published in *inCite* at the time the

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conference registration fee was set (which has been re-opened with the letter by Neil Radford in the latest issue [14]), the Conference Committee prepared a paper for the June General Council Meeting and also requested that it be published in *inCite* in order to re-open the dialogue on Biennial Conferences and their funding. No response was forthcoming from General Council and the paper was never published in *inCite*. All Branches have, however, been asked to comment on several papers prepared by the new Conference Organiser. We will await the outcome of those comments with interest.

The Western Australian Branch believes that \$30 000 remains of the conference profit which is not required for general operating expenditure. We believe that this money should be put aside for a specific project and has recommended at General Council and Board of Education that this money be channelled into Training and Development, with isolated members being the specific target group for projects.

Sectional Groups

There has been much discussion in the Western Australian Branch regarding the funding of Sectional and Regional Groups in this past year. The majority of Association activities are held at Sectional and Regional level and most members have stated and shown their strong preference for activities run

by the Sections and Regions (of course, isolated members have no choice). We have found that the small monetary allocation to Sectional and Regional Groups is making them rely even more heavily on employer support by way of photocopying, mail-outs and telephone calls and are concerned that this is not the way a professional association should be run.

*...the time has
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Sections.*

This concern has led us to question the role of National Sections, which do not provide primary contact for members, but rather organise conferences and publications and coordinate responses to subjects of national concern. We wonder if, in fact, the time has come to consider the role of National Sections in the structure of the Association and to debate whether they warrant the funding they currently attract, or whether they should be abolished and the additional funding placed with the State Sections who provide the members with tangible services and professional contact.

Feedback

I am hoping that the issues raised in this Front Line may stir some spirited debate — which we probably all need to take our minds off increased usage and budget cutbacks. If some of the issues I have raised are contentious, or if anyone has some ideas to share about training and development for isolated members, I am sure that others would be pleased to tap into your suggestions.

I leave the challenge with you. □

Note from the Editor

Kay's comments on the 1990 Conference call for a couple of remarks. At the time Kay prepared her paper, inCite was asked not to pre-empt the General Council discussion in June, which gave rise to the following Council minute:

Review of biennial conferences

The Western Australian General Councillor, on behalf of the 1990 Biennial Conference Committee requested re-consideration of the concept of biennial conferences, given that overall Association membership attendance was low and the nature of papers presented at the conference were very general and of little relevance to specific areas of library practice. However, the conference did generate substantial funds for the Association.

Councillors concluded that this issue would benefit discussion from the wider membership, and it was agreed that the Western Australian General Councillor would be invited to submit a paper to inCite on this matter.

Council did not accept the proposal to put money from the conference aside for a specific training project. inCite will be happy to publish the WA Councillor's paper as soon as it is ready.

There will be library skills educational tours also on offer:

1. A walk round the reference library and local collection;
2. How to use OPAC.

June van Rooy □

(Editor's note: these are the only responses to a letter from the ALIA Division Support Officer, sent on 12 August to all the principal Divisions of ALIA asking for details of their ALW activities. If inCite's 'special ALW issue' seems a bit thin, don't shoot the messenger.)

Feedback continued next page...

Feedback

Australian Library Week

Children's & Youth Services Section

Start Australian Library Week with a celebration of literature for children and young people. The Victorian Group of ALIA's Children's and Youth Services Section will be holding a Literature Weekend, 18-20 October 1991, with the theme *Teenagers — what are they?* Guest speakers will include Agnes Nieuwenhuizen, Victoria's Youth Literature Field Officer, and two writers for young people, Jenny Pausacker and David Metzenthen.

The weekend will be held at Rutherford

Park, Blampied, between Daylesford and Ballarat. It promises to be lively and thought provoking, and is an excellent chance for members of both CYSS and School Libraries Section to get together. Day rates are available.

Contact Trevor Trotter, Williamstown Library (03) 393 9311 or Jane Walker, St Kilda Public Library (03) 536 1333. □

Bird-persons and other adventurous souls

Townsville City Library in Flinders Mall, plans to have an Open Day on Sunday, 20 October.

A banner announcing the week and the theme will be hung across the front of the building. As an 'eye-catcher' they are arranging for a rap-jumper or abseiler to make a descent from the flat roof of their three-storeyed building into the mall below where the weekly Cotters Market will be in full swing.

Inside the library, they will feature a hang glider with a display of books and videos about adventurous leisure pursuits, both 'how-to-do-it' and tales of individual adventurers. Clubs and businesses have been approached for brochures, etc. about the sports and they are hoping that a couple of talks from practitioners can be arranged.

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