

Letters

Inserts are out

Dear Editor,

It is with concern that I note the continuing practice of ALIA Publications to include certain flyers in the pages of *inCite*. The one in particular that I am concerned with is that of the Community Aid Abroad organisation. I would be very interested to know the policy for inclusion of flyers, both paid or otherwise, that allows such organisations to continue their money-making drives.

I am by no means anti-charity, far from it. I am happy to make regular contributions to my preferred charities, and do so at my leisure. However I do not agree with certain types of promotion for these associations. The practice of phoning up for donations at dinner-time, and people sticking a tin under your nose just as you are about to cross a busy intersection are just two examples. The insertion of the CAA brochure in *inCite* is another.

The ALIA magazine should be used for purposes of alerting the profession to current and important events. We as members should not be subjected, to what amounts to junk mail, in a publication which we read in order to keep ourselves professionally aware. Such an invasion of our privacy occurs in professional publications, because the offending charities expect more donations to come from the affluent that are supposed to comprise a professional group. You would not see the CAA insert in a copy of *Popular Mechanics* or other like journals.

I think we should seriously consider the policies which allow this type of advertising to occur. I for one do not wish to be confronted by such blatant charities. I give donations to those places which I believe in, not those that can publish glossy brochures and distribute them in expensive magazines.

Travis Lawton
City Librarian, Kalgoorlie-Boulder

(We try to ensure that *inCite* accepts only advertisements and inserts that will interest most of our readers, and we believe that generally we succeed. CAA paid the normal commercial rate for their insert. If you disagree with their cause, consider this payment as part of the revenue that General Council requires us to earn, that helps keep down the cost of *inCite* and so benefits us all. Ed.)

The para/ professional nexus

Dear Editor,

President John Levett's 'Front Line' comments in the 9 September issue of *inCite* are as timely as previous statements. The librarian/library technician interface (stand-off? confrontation? impasse?) is sensitive indeed. Particularly relevant to the pessimistic perceived threat of library technicians to professional appointments is the demarcation issue or the dreaded 'overlap'. Jean Bailey's excellent paper at the 1990 ALIA Biennial Conference, on education and training of library technicians, notes that 'the profession as a whole has never fully debated and resolved the professional/paraprofessional nexus.'

This seems to me to be the crux of the matter, yet it has a familiar ring. Is it just another variation on that hoary saga of the professional belonging of the librarian? The nagging sore point of many library technicians-in-training, as far as I can judge from Wollongong TAFE experiences in teaching, is the attitude of librarians to library technicians in the workplace. It seems to be one of resentment, or fear, or jealousy, strong terms no doubt but too often expressed to be ignored. It is clear, too, that this is not one-sided; library technicians are not lily-white in their attitudes to librarians.

The nexus of co-existence requires a navel contemplation and extensive reappraisal of the division of labour but the overlap cannot be removed, only refined. I have yet to see how librarians

can oversight any library operation without first having mastered it. A greater degree of respect for each other needs to be generated in the skills audits and restructurings now in progress.

Publicly witnessed tasks, such as reference work, require very careful examination. Although the public-at-large is uninformed on details of duties performed it is very judgemental (as we are in the bank and other service operations). Today's library managers must make certain that library activities under immediate and constant public scrutiny are performed by top operators (skilled, motivated and personable). In-service training has to be first-class and more time spent on role identification. Both the librarian and the library technician should be professional in their operation, in their outlook and in their appearance. The last thing we want is an un-civil war, with the public waiting in 'the wings' for service.

Jeff Hazell

Vale Cliff Burmester

Dear Editor,

I very much appreciated the excellent obituary of Cliff Burmester in *inCite*, 23 September. Thank you for getting it right for one of our very finest, which I sometimes think we can count on the fingers of one hand. The Guide to the collections has been on and off one of my favourite books of bedtime reading and it did not have an easy passage, paradoxical as that might seem.

John Thompson was a very good person to write it. I appreciate it.

Denis Richardson



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