

Pocket Time

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What is the ALIA Industrial Information Service?

I would like to take this opportunity to describe what the ALIA Industrial Information Service offers and to explain how it is not a substitute for membership of a trade union.

Let me start by admitting that the ALIA National Office does not hold detailed information on all industrial awards that cover library staff. I cannot give definitive answers on matters such as study leave and penalty rates because the large number of awards that cover library staff are regularly varied.

ALIA publishes a yearly salary scales booklet. This snapshot approach gives a picture of salaries at a particular time. It may not be possible to indicate specific dates of pay rises as these can occur at any time. This booklet is designed to indicate the relative movement of salaries between different sectors over a yearly period.

Other advice about remuneration will be given. This includes suggestions on pay rates in private enterprise where there are no industrial awards. I can advise on pay rates for casual employees and recommend how people working as consultants may determine their charges.

One of the functions of the service is not to provide all the answers but indicate where to find the answers. This includes advising people on which trade union they may join. Unions keep up-to-date information on pay and conditions. Like ALIA they will provide assistance only to members. I also have telephone numbers for award enquiries sections of the various departments of labour or industrial relations.

Material is also held at the National Office on occupational health and safety issues and workers compensation. Assistance can be provided on grading matters by referral to the ALIA *Work Level Guidelines* for librarians and library technicians.

An often-heard statement is that

'Information is Power'. I would argue from my experiences in the industrial relations field that this is not the case and that by itself information is inert. It is necessary to also possess the means and the legal rights to use that power.

There are very good reasons for library staff to join a union where this is possible. The major function of unions is to obtain improvements in wages and conditions. They maintain accurate information about the implementation of such provisions. In obtaining industrial awards they create certain rights for employees. Employees have relatively few rights under common law.

Telling people about their rights, as I do, is one thing but having them enforced is another. A union has power to appear before industrial tribunals on behalf of its members. This is of particular importance in disputes over such matters as dismissals and redundancies. ALIA does not have the right to perform this function on behalf of its members. Recessions are a good time to be union members as employers may shed labour to reduce costs.

It is worth emphasising that as the law now stands, ALIA cannot become (or form) a union for library staff. Changes to industrial legislation have ensured that no new unions will be formed and existing unions are merging, usually along industry lines. □

Denis Richardson retires A most distinguished career

Denis Richardson, University Librarian of the University of Melbourne retires on 19 April, thus bringing to a conclusion a most distinguished career in librarianship. It was a career that began in Yorkshire, England and that took him to Perth, Western Australia, Hamilton, Victoria, Toowoomba in Queensland, Canberra and finally Melbourne, possibly making him the most widely travelled of senior librarians. The early and middle part of his career was as a public librarian culminating in the job of Canberra Public Librarian from 1963 to 1970 when that organisation was part of the National Library of Australia. Denis had strongly held views on the role of the public library and wherever he worked he made sure that the collection was of the highest standard, whether at the tiny Claremont public library in Perth or the mighty CPLS. No collections of easy reading but challenging collections of high quality books and periodicals carefully designed to meet the aspirations of serious readers.

In 1970 Sir Harold White invited (*commanded* might be a more appropriate word) Denis Richardson to move into the National Library to succeed Cliff



Denis Richardson

Burmester as Deputy National Librarian. It was at the National that his career reached its high water mark, despite later becoming University Librarian at Melbourne. Allan Fleming soon succeeded Sir Harold White as National Librarian, had the title changed to Director-General and for a few short years nothing seemed impossible for a revitalised and energetic National Library. Denis played a significant role in assisting Allan Fleming

to shape a new and strong organisation structure. Together with his colleagues Jean Whyte and Arthur Ellis, he sought to assist Fleming to create a new relationship between the National and other Australian libraries. Also, and no less important, he worked to strengthen the relationships between the national and the important policy departments in Canberra.

The most disappointing moment in Denis Richardson's career came when, after Allan Fleming suddenly retired, the Council selected George Chandler and not Richardson as Director-General. He felt that he was at the peak of his powers and that he could have been a very successful Director-General carrying on the momentum of Fleming's work. It was not to be, and perhaps more than most he was unhappy working under Chandler. This is not the place to dwell on those years. Denis Richardson gave great service to the National Library but perhaps welcomed the chance to succeed Axel Lodewyck at University of Melbourne Librarian. Here his energy was soon revealed, new accommodation was built and a new

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