

and the ability to apply these to a new job, they seemed to want to find someone with experience in doing exactly the same as the advertised job.

I was fortunate, after looking for some months, to be offered the position of librarian at Blacktown Hospital. Here I found that experience from other jobs and interests was important, including the ability to communicate with people at all levels of library expertise, and a basic knowledge of computer hardware and software.

As well as running the library alone, I introduced various services such as Medline and ABN to the library. I discovered that few librarians, even those with many years experience, knew, for example, how to set up an AUSTPAC connection, or even knew what it was. I learnt how to find out about things at the source (e.g. find out about AUSTPAC from Telecom) and, most importantly, I learnt a lot from other people.

The librarian at Mt Druitt Hospital had previously been the librarian at Blacktown Hospital, and was able to fill me in on details of specific policies and procedures, both of the library and of the institution. The staff at Westmead Hospital library took me in for a week at the beginning to give me a grounding in health science librarianship, and provided continual guidance from then on. In addition I found great community spirit among librarians in the Health Libraries Section of ALIA and the GRATIS interlibrary loan network.

Because I was helped so much as a new librarian by other people, I was particularly interested in John Levert's article on mentoring. I felt an initial spark of hope that with a mentoring system people might be more willing to employ inexperienced staff, in the knowledge that there was someone there to guide them. I ended up discouraged, though, because in my experience library employers want experienced staff even if they will be working in a hierarchy with many other librarians who would be able to give them guidance and assistance. With such caution, I don't see how the promise of a mentor outside the workplace would make much difference.

My other reason for feeling less optimistic is, as Christine Jones and Tom McKeon (*inCite* Vol 12, No. 1) have both mentioned, employment prospects for librarians (both inexperienced and experienced) depend on the availability of jobs. When there are few jobs, an experienced librarian who is otherwise equal to an inexperienced librarian will get the job.

One response from some staff at the University of NSW to the oversupply of library staff is to encourage students to consider non-traditional library jobs (such as indexing, or work with online databases). If this is likely to be a long-term problem, then limiting the number of students who are admitted to library courses may be necessary to decrease the oversupply and increase the quality of library graduates.

Glenda Browne

Disaster for *inCite* 5

Carbonised in postal crash

Almost 3500 copies of *inCite* were destroyed when an Australia Post semi-trailer overturned and burst into flames near Albury on 15 April. Among the 40 000 items on the truck were all the *inCites* for Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Their loss was confirmed to the *inCite* staff on 18 April, and after an anguished flurry of activity the copies (and their inserts, cover sheets and mailing labels) were reprinted and on their way again within 7 days.



Photo: The Border Mail

Writer, Reader, Critic by Dorothy Green

Primavera Press 1991. 190 pp. Paperback \$14.95.
Limited cloth edition \$48.

This inspiring book was published just before the death of the author, after a long illness, in February this year. Dorothy Auchterlonie Green was equally a scholar, critic, poet, journalist and teacher. She was at all times committed to justice and her writing is fearlessly critical, incisive and powerful.

Here we have a collection of reprinted essays concerning the place of literature in society and of writers as social critics, the dependence of writers on good readers and the responsibilities of writers, readers, and critics.

Of writers: they can make beneficial contributions to the quality of our lives. There is a distressing overproduction of books due to self-indulgence by writers who seek to be published, to earn a living; we need only the writers who feel a deep compulsion to write but 'it does not follow automatically that every piece of writing should be published'.

Of readers: 'the first object of reading is pleasure', the second is to evaluate: the reader

must read and understand the words on the page and he must interpret them for himself.

Of critics: There is some history of methods of critical review and a discussion of the necessity for retaining critics.

Dorothy Green's writing is engaging not only for its clarity but also for its wit: '...clear the ground of all but the most dedicated and necessary authors' to 'allow trees to breathe more freely and diminish the carbon imbalance'.

For tertiary literature students this book should be essential reading; for the serious and independent reader it is absorbing and stimulating.

The format of the book is unusual, the pages being almost 2 cm longer than standard. The margins are wide and the print large (10 1/2 point), promoting easy reading. The publishers take great pride that the book is printed on permanent paper — it is probably the first Australian book to state that the permanence of the paper conforms with the USA standard.

Anne Cortis