

What's the job market like in Britain?

by Alison Jago, Recruitment Consultant

NO DOUBT this question is also in your mind if you are planning a trip overseas in the near future and hoping to find library or information work in Britain. You may wonder whether to stay and work in Britain for a year or two (providing your work permit allows) or to opt for shorter term temporary work between travels to other exotic destinations.

TFPL Recruitment, London, has provided these notes for *inCite*, warning that it is not possible to describe the job market in just a word or two. How quickly you are able to find another job depends on what you are looking for and what you have to offer. You also need a certain amount of luck, with the 'right job' coming along at the 'right time'. The main factors influencing the success of job seekers include relevant experience and/or qualifications, salary requirements, geography and personality, and needless to say, the availability of the kind of job you are seeking.

TFPL Recruitment is often asked by job seekers how much importance employers place on professional information/library qualifications. Employers differ widely: some only consider candidates who are professionally qualified, while others place far more importance on relevant practical experience. The ideal is usually a combination of both. In a specialised subject area such as science or technology some subject knowledge is usually needed.

The salary you are seeking, your own 'personal price tag' also affects your chances of finding another job. In general, the higher your price, the tougher it gets, and like any other profession, in the information/library world there are fewer jobs at the top, and keener competition for the limited number of opportunities at that level. Last year TFPL Recruitment placed information specialists at all levels in a wide range of sectors. 'Quiet but steady' has been an apt description of the job market, but overall the number of job opportunities has been lower than would be expected in a more normal economy. Most of the movement has tended to be in the middle of the range, with first job seekers without previous experience, and those at very senior level finding it more difficult.

One option available to job seekers, and well worth considering, is temporary or contract work. While TFPL would

not recommend that you give up a well paid permanent job to take on a temporary assignment, temporary work can provide an excellent opportunity to 'brush up' skills and gain new ones, and give experience of working in a wider range of organisations. Temporary positions sometimes become permanent too. This is usually a highly successful means of selection, as both employer and employee have the benefit of a 'trial run' before the post becomes permanent.

Fewer opportunities and increased competition have heightened an awareness of personal image amongst information specialists and librarians. These days job seekers need to pay close attention to marketing themselves effectively at every stage of the job hunt process—starting with a well prepared and attractively presented c.v. through to looking good and coming across well at the interview. There is a wide selection of up to date and readable books on every aspect of job hunting, and professional advice is often readily available from other sources—some of it free! TFPL Recruitment runs monthly evening 'Job Hunt' seminars which cover where to look for a job, c.v.'s and application forms, and the art of being interviewed, as well as other useful pointers for anyone looking for a library/information job in Britain.

So how do things look for the future? Despite high demands made on information and library services in most organisations, we know that in 1990 many employers froze vacancies in an effort to keep costs down, and were understandably reluctant to create new posts, even where clearly justified by demand. In 1991, there was evidence to suggest that the 'let's wait and see' mood of the past was on the move, as many employers appeared to be viewing the future with more confidence. A few organisations are still in the 'streamlining' phase, and regrettably some staff still continue to be made redundant, but it would seem that most organisations are now emerging from this, and are entering a new period of cautious optimism and renewal. TFPL are hopeful that this will bring new developments and new opportunities in the library/information field, as part of a gradual upturn in the months to come.

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Call for Nominations

Maria Gemenis Award

for outstanding contribution to special librarianship

Nominations are called for the Maria Gemenis Award.

The award criteria are as follows:

The award will be made to a person who has made a significant contribution in the following areas:

- Willingness to share professional expertise.
- Breaking down the barriers of librarians in isolation.
- Successful promotion of the library/information service, achieving outstanding recognition from their parent organisation.

Rules of nomination:

1. Only members of the ALIA Special Libraries Section, NSW Group may be nominated.
2. No current member of the Special Libraries Section NSW Group Committee may be nominated.
3. Each nomination must have a proposer and a seconder, and the consent of the nominee.
4. The proposer and the seconder must submit a brief resumé, in writing, about the nominee and send it marked 'Maria Gemenis Award' to the address nominated in the Call for Nominations.
5. The decision of the Committee will be final and no correspondence will be entered into.
6. Presentation of the award will be reported in the September issue of *Australian Special Libraries* (or nearest available issue) and will include a photograph and the resumé of the recipient.

**Nominations close
30 June 1992.**

For nomination forms/ further information contact Angela Dunstan, Secretary, ALIA Special Libraries Section, NSW Group, c/- GIO Library, GPO Box 3999, Sydney NSW 2001. Tel: (02) 228 1066; Fax: (02) 235 1347.