

Thriving in tough times?

A new year and new Governments here, and in the offing—perhaps a new perception of librarianship is needed as well?

As a profession why do we persist with this defeatist accepting attitude of blaming the recession for our libraries' problems? It's just not true!

There are *never* good times or there are *always* good times for libraries. It is an attitude of mind. What we need is a pride, a passion and the skills to create the environment where libraries and librarianship can flourish forever, no matter what barriers are placed in our way.

There are many librarians out there who are not just surviving but thriving in these tough times.

Here are just five examples.

- Our Businesswoman of the Year speaks for herself. Alison Crook has not only gained resources through commercial activities, she has increased Government and Foundation support. Where Alison hasn't had the skills and contacts herself, she has used others to influence to create a chain reaction. She never gives up. Even though old Wal Murray, the Deputy Premier, has been inveigled into the library after years of cajoling and by all accounts has become a born-again library user and supporter!
- For a University model Meg Cameron stands out. As the first female university librarian she pestered and influenced her university so much that she not only got the resources but became Pro Vice-Chancellor as well. Here is a committed passionate librarian who will not take no for an answer. She has become so persuasive at Deakin that other Deans and professors have given up the challenge and accept that the university library must thrive if the university is to survive.
- In the public library sector Janice Nitschke of Millicent public library shines. In a community of only 8000 people she has just opened one of the most modern and innovative public libraries in Australia. Roman columns and art works abound as this building towers symbolically over the Council Chambers and administration building left languishing in a converted house. In a community suffering from a struggling economy and a cautious Council, exists an irrepressible librarian who is a true community leader.
- In library education Mary Ronnie, formerly of Monash, provides a dynamic example. As Acting Professor faced

with the closure of her library school and only lukewarm support within her university, she stormed off to Canberra. In three days she not only saved the school, but got an extra \$250 000 and new courses in archives and records management to boot.

- Special librarianship offers us Jan Gaebler. Jan, the librarian at the ill-fated State Bank of South Australia has not only maintained the library as all about her got cut and retrenched, she has developed a desktop access network to make the library the focus of the 'new Bank'. Jan has gained a whole new layer of support and strength from the new management which has been converted to the library cause.

Lets use these people and others to help all Chief Librarians develop their skills of communication and persuasion so they too can achieve greatness.

Lets make 1993 a year of power and influence for libraries. The chance is there—lets grab it.

*Euan M Miller
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Something to celebrate?

On April 24, 1896 the Library Association of Australasia was formed in Melbourne as a major outcome of the first Australasian Library Conference. This first 'LAA' was significant and effective and I refer readers to a brief history of the Association by Dr M Talbot in Volume 2 of ALIAS.

Fortunately, in an historical sense, ALIA has already decided to hold its 1996 conference in Melbourne. The conference will focus our attention on libraries and library services in the next century and one would hope that the conference will be as effective as its century-old predecessor in shaping the ideas of those younger members of the profession who will later become its leaders, in bringing influential people from outside the profession into close and fruitful collaboration with librarians and in stimulating some chief librarians to take new directions and to look to broader horizons for their libraries.

Somewhere in the conference program I suggest that we celebrate the centenary of Australasian library associations and use the history of our endeavours to spur us toward the achievement of the hopes and aspirations enshrined in successive Constitutions, Objects and Royal Charters. Do others agree?

John Brudenall ■



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