

### ALIA conferences

During my recent attendance at the *Library Management '94: into the 21st Century Conference* in Sydney, I took the opportunity to ponder conferences for the profession and ALIA's role therein.

Our membership is well aware of the many conferences which appear on our professional calendar during each year, and they generally support each of these ALIA initiatives. Conferences continue to abound: the last set of General Council papers announced the Cataloguers, Public Libraries, On Line On Disc, Library Technicians, and the Asia Pacific, Health and Law Librarians conferences for 1995, as well as our next Biennial conference in Melbourne in 1996. Not to mention the joint NZLIA/ALIA Joint Conference in Wellington New Zealand this September, and a proposed Australian Library Fair to be held in conjunction with the ABPA Book Fair at Darling Harbour in June this year.

And some 300 (I was told, and so it seemed) members of our profession attended the Library Management conference in Sydney. This conference was not organised by ALIA, though ALIA members gave papers and were delegates to it. Its theme was popular, though in the final analysis it was questionable whether we were led into library management for the 21st century; we rather dwell on case studies of today. Nevertheless, the theme attracted library and information professionals from across all disciplines and interest groups and it was a rewarding experience to be present at such a gathering. The conference also allowed each of us to attend every paper and not be faced with the difficult choices necessary in streamed conferences.

In the list of ALIA supported conferences we have in 1995, how many similar opportunities will there be for all of our membership to share their thoughts and methodologies in the many challenges which face the profession today? Will we perpetuate a sectional approach to our experiences, often on the misunderstanding that only 'our' section is faced with certain issues which we perceive as unique, reasoning that handling these issues is also unique to 'our' section?

Conference organisers might argue that each conference will have a theme, and that anyone is able to

submit a paper around this theme. My experience at many of our conferences is that we usually share our thoughts on our sectional interests, but rarely share them across the board. Will a recent initiative by public librarians to hold their own conference take away those public library papers I enjoyed at our Biennial conferences and leave only the academic library sector and occasional 'others' to ponder our future at this venue?

I pose these questions for the profession to consider.

I also ask, how much did the profession benefit financially from the Sydney Library Management conference? A number of professionals gave (freely?) their time in the preparation and presentation of papers. If there were profits, were they fed back into the profession as is the case with ALIA?

At its March 1994 meeting, your General Council deliberated on a new set of Conference Guidelines to assist in the mechanics of conference organisation and these should be available shortly. General Council did not prescribe the types of conferences you should run. What do you think?

*Kerry Smith*

*ALIA member; Lecturer, School of Information & Library Studies, Curtin University of Technology; WA General Councillor*

### Non-librarians in office

I can't agree with Gail Robertson's stance, in her well-intentioned letter (29 April), that the appointment of a non-librarian as Executive Director signifies disregard for professional qualifications.

I think we must veer away from xenophobic attitudes that profess one must 'be' a librarian to be able to understand librarians or library issues.

And ALIA, after all, is plentiful in professional librarians. They make up 100% of its Executive, they dominate its membership, and they are included in its paid staff.

What ALIA needed was someone with leadership and business management capabilities who could assume responsibility for a range of demanding tasks that included business planning, facilities management, company secretary skills and public relations. The selection committee was obviously after the best candidate; that it opted for a non-librarian is perhaps a message for librarians

schools and professional development opportunities offered by employers.

In the meantime, don't shoot the messenger, who happens to be doing a mighty fine job!

*Jan Gaebler*  
*ALIA Vice-President*

### Professional qualifications

It is very odd indeed to find in the same issue of *inCite* (no. 4) an assessment of John Metcalfe's contribution to professionalism in Australian librarianship and a report on ALIA Council's shameful decision (in the *Trunkline* insert) to downgrade professionalism in Australian librarianship. If persons without a professional background may now become Fellows of the Association, who can have the slightest respect for librarianship in this country?

It is a disgrace which the Association will not live down for decades and which will detrimentally affect all arguments for better deals for libraries and librarians. I can't imagine that John Metcalfe would have let it happen.

*D H Borchardt*

### French books and Paris flats

Jean-Paul Delamotte, the Head of the *Association Culturelle Franco-Australienne* (ACFA) in Paris dropped by to see me the other day and asked if I could assist in publicising the books that the ACFA Press (*La Petite Maison*) puts out. The books are either translations into French of Australian writers, e.g. Frank Moorhouse, Katherine Prichard etc., or books by and about Paul Wenz, the French writer who lived and worked in Nanima, NSW from 1892 until his death in 1939. The receipts from sales go to support ACFA activities, which include providing low cost accommodation to members of the Australian cultural community visiting Paris.

*I should be happy to give details of available titles and the contact address and fax number of ACFA to any interested inCite readers.*

*Lynn Hard*  
*Librarian, ADFA*

### Jobs for librarians?

It is rather disappointing that Phil Teece (*inCite* 1 April 1994 p.16) chooses to ignore the experiences of a range of people in the library profession by giving further publicity to the ABS forecast that opportunities

for librarians will grow by 84% over the next 7 years.

Where is the evidence that there is a 12% annual growth in jobs for librarians?

There is much evidence that employment opportunities for librarians are contracting rather than expanding, with special libraries particularly badly hit. With amalgamations in the university sector and pending council amalgamations in Victoria (with possible implications for the public library sector) there is little evidence that either of these sectors will provide increased opportunities.

There seems to be considerable evidence that new graduates are experiencing difficulties securing employment (and this situation has been lamented for some years now!) but such optimistic predictions will encourage more students to choose librarianship as a career only to be disappointed or frustrated at the end of their courses. Can you blame them?

Surely the role of a professional association is to sound a note of caution (or provide further enlightenment!) rather than to simply endorse

predictions which appear to have no link with reality.

*Dennis Warren*

### Have you done any research lately...?

...or have you started any research projects? If you can answer yes to one of these questions, the Australian Clearing House for Library and Information Science (ACHLIS) would like to hear from you. ACHLIS has been publishing *Australian Library and Information Research (ALIR)* since December 1992, with the agreement of the National Library. Continuation of *ALIR* depends on sufficient contributions from anyone involved in library and information science in libraries, information services or in library schools.

*Don't hide your light under a bushel: please support ALIR and ask for me to send you a data report form from Neville Aylmore, Editor Australian Library and Information Research, C/- ACHLIS, University of South Australia Library, 15 Lorne Avenue, Magill 5072. Tel: (08) 302 4439; fax: (08) 302 4695.*

## LIBTEC is operational

*Jean Bailey announces a new electronic mailing list for library technicians*

LIBTEC has been established as an electronic mailing list to facilitate exchange and discussion matters relating to library technicians in Australia. LIBTEC will provide a forum for consultation, discussion, questions, news, and announcements about events and is available to practitioners, employers, educators, and anyone interested in library technician affairs.

Matters of primary interest will include education, training and development, competencies, workforce issues, representation, influence, standards, and any other matters which may be of interest or relevance to library technicians.

The list owner is Jean Bailey who is supported by the University of Sydney Information Service which maintains LIBTEC via a listserv facility. To subscribe to LIBTEC mail to [listserv@is.su.edu.au](mailto:listserv@is.su.edu.au) with message 'subscribe LIBTEC your name'.

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## A MALGAMATIONS & THE CENTRALISATION OF TECHNICAL SERVICES: PROFIT OR LOSS?

*Edited by  
John Thawley and Philip G Kent*

Melbourne ; ALIA University, College and Research Libraries Section, Victorian Group, Cataloguing Section, Victorian Group and Acquisitions Section, 1993

ISBN 0 86804 494 6

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