

of library courses?' The suggestion was that they are working in various information jobs. This is most likely the case if they cannot find library jobs. Of those surveyed who now work in other information sectors, only one has worked in a library since graduation.

It seems the sectors that catch the graduates get to keep them, to the loss of the library profession. The single respondent who is an ALIA member joined after graduation thinking it would help her get a job. This respondent is now working in a non-library information sector — after completing a non-library graduate program. Apart from practical course work she has never worked in a library and is considering switching to the association for her 'new' profession.

In this sense, ALIA's membership statistics could be the warning bells for a more alarming trend. If new graduates are not even entering the profession, who will be qualified to fill the many vacancies expected when ALIA's aging membership retires in ten to fifteen years? (*Quill* July 2000) No pro-active graduate could be expected to work ten to fifteen years as a library assistant, waiting for a vacancy — no matter how committed they are to the profession!

Contrary to Browne's suggestion, those who have managed to secure a professional library position are very dedicated to their vocation, its goals

and ideals. They do not see ALIA membership as a pre-requisite for active professional involvement.

Although they may not have joined, graduates are attending conferences, networking with current members and being as active as they can at a local level and within their own organisation. Some, who can not afford to join just yet, take advantage of their employer's corporate membership in order to participate. These librarians are taking ALIA's issues and objectives back to the workplace and the community. It is possible to advance the cause of librarianship through means other than association membership. Indeed, some non-members are actually more professionally active than are others, who pay their annual fee and give no more thought to the matter. The fact is — ALIA is failing to attract new graduates as members. This is not a reason to question the professional loyalty of new graduates. It should be stimulus for ALIA's continuing development to serve a changing profession.

Recent decades have seen many social changes and various kinds of affirmative action. Consequently, many recent graduates are baby-boomers. From this small preliminary survey, the age of graduates does not appear to have a strong correlation with membership. Drawing a line based on age (baby-boomers vs generation X as Browne suggests) is divisive and poten-

tially insulting. If membership continues to fall, ALIA would do better looking at broader social changes (rather than stereotypes) and adapting its services accordingly.

These results indicate that further research and quick action are required. ALIA must determine which services are important to its changing potential membership. It must then develop and promote these products and services effectively. Examples may include reaching graduates through a special page on the website or a regular segment in *inCite*. Have universities send a complimentary issue containing special promotional material to graduating students at the end of each semester. Pursue services such as mentoring by offering a register or placement scheme. Ask members to write articles for university publications, demonstrating the value of ALIA as a vehicle for networking. Create cheaper categories of membership for students or those not currently working in the profession. Also important is the creation and promotion of graduate programs in both the public and private sectors to keep new professionals in the profession.

The professional association is valuable to all of us, individually and collectively. Like any living thing, it must reassess its environment, adapt and evolve over time. ALIA must take positive action to ensure it endures. ■

Perth Western Suburbs Councils create a single library network

Local governments in the Western suburbs of Perth have co-ordinated information technology efforts to produce a single regional public library network. The five libraries in the western suburbs now provides library patrons with access to a combined database in excess of 150 000 items.

For the first time in Western Australia, enrolling in one library will instantly confer membership across libraries operated by six local governments.

Library patrons will be able to reserve any item in the network, renew their loans and check their own membership details from any library in the network.

The network has been created by a

co-operative initiative of the Town of Claremont, Town of Cottesloe, Town of Mosman Park, City of Nedlands, Shire of Peppermint Grove and the City of Subiaco.

The network is a co-operative arrangement, with administration of the system co-ordinated by a committee of the managing librarians from each Council. The City of Nedlands host and maintain the central servers for the service. Costs are shared on a per library basis.

The Amlib InfoVision software for the library service maximises local control over library operations. This enables each of library to maintain local policies and practices to suit their community needs. At the same time access

to the network maximises the benefit of sharing central resources.

The joint tender process demonstrated that a regional solution would be more cost-effective for each of the Councils than continuing as separate library services.

The network is not the final step in the project. The Councils are now working towards the imminent launch of the regional library network on the internet to provide patrons with on-line catalogue access from the World Wide Web.

Further information about the library network can be obtained by speaking to the managing librarian at any of the Councils in the Perth Western Suburbs. ■