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ALIA President

Feedback to *your* Board of Directors

Board members welcome your comments and feedback. Please feel free to contact a Board member at any time.

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Frontline

All about image?

One of the issues which frequently preoccupies librarians is our image – how do others see us? This is no mere vanity (or masochism). How people see us is closely connected with the key issues which concern us now. These are:

- the importance of recruiting capable new people to the library and information industry;
- how to create good pathways through post secondary education and, subsequently, professional development, which will lead to a skilled profession;
- maintaining a strong professional organisation with steady growth in membership and support; and
- lobbying and advocacy which succeeds in attracting support for both libraries and library values from government, industry, and Australians more widely.

In promoting careers in libraries we are helped by the fact that everyone loves libraries – we have a high level of affection and approval, even among those who don't use libraries. Unfortunately, many people have an image of what we do as unexciting process work, archetypically stamping books or putting them back on the shelves in Dewey order. This makes it more of a challenge to attract people.

So we need a message which says something like "You THINK you know what happens in a library. Well, here are some things that really happen. This is what working in a library is like."

There is a group getting this message out. It has been particularly interesting to take part in several meetings of the Careers Working Party. The group works in Victoria to recruit people to librarianship. It is chaired by Chris Kelly, a public librarian and manager of Brimbank Library and Information Service. Other members represent ALIA, the State Library, schools, academic libraries, training authorities, and universities and TAFEs.

The main thing the group has done is establish a wiki, Destination Library, to provide information from the library and information industry to people considering a library career. It is at **http://destinationlibrary.pbwiki.com**. Have a look.

To counteract those misapprehensions about libraries the group has collected 26 case studies from around Australia – short accounts by real librarians of what they do, to contradict the impression that dull process work dominates our lives. It doesn't, and we know that. Another section of the wiki gives profiles of particular library and information careers that are possible within libraries, or outside them.

The group has also organised a stand-alone library presence for the first time at The Age VCE and Careers Expo. This will be held April 24–26 at the Caulfield Racecourse. The group is also organising its second Library Careers Night at Experimendia @ the State Library of Victoria, coming up on 26 May. The last one attracted about 120 people. The group is seeking support from educational institutions for the two events as a combination.

Lots of other things could be done, too. For example, we might explore opportunities to see inside libraries a bit more closely. This includes work experience for school students and placements for library and information studies students, right up to full-scale cadetships. Several Victorian university libraries are introducing cadetships for new graduates, who work in different areas of the library, and study a postgraduate library qualification as they do.

By the time you read this, it will be too late to win a Nintendo Wii for designing a post card promoting careers in libraries. The Careers Working Party has produced one of these cards, and is now seeking designs for a second. The cards will be distributed to various sites as publicity for the events, for the wiki itself, and, of course, for becoming a librarian.

Finally, the Careers Working Party has developed this graphic. For those who like a wacky style, it fits. A little book-heavy, but you can't put a computer into everything.

ALIA has a lot of resources for people thinking of taking up a career in libraries, located at **http://www.alia.org.au/education/qualifications/careers/** and elsewhere on the ALIA site. ALIA also provides support to the Careers Working Party.

The challenge for ALIA is to transfer the lessons the group has learned, and the approaches it has taken, to the other states. Who's willing to offer to help? You will have great mentors.

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