

MORE LETTERS

Business as usual

The Management and Staff of James Bennett would like to pass on their thanks to our many clients in libraries for their expressions of goodwill following the recent fire on our premises at Collaroy.

Whilst we have suffered a certain amount of structural damage, and substantial damage to internal fittings and offices, we have been able to continue the business with a minimum of disruption, and we are now fully engaged in our usual activities.

Unfortunately the entire first floor is virtually unusable due principally to smoke damage. We are extremely grateful to fire brigades who acted very promptly and effectively to the extent that damage to stock and to orders in progress was almost negligible. We feel that there should be no noticeable disruption to services.

W.J. Kelly
General Manager
The James Bennett Group

Book reviews on-line?

Since the State Library of South Australia was forced to discontinue the publication of the Australian Book Review Index, the WAIT Library has been investigating possible alternative methods of capturing information on reviews of Australian books. A pilot project has been conducted into the feasibility and costs of adding index entries for reviews from the journals formerly covered by Australian Book Review Index, to the Ausinet database WEST, which already includes reviews published in the National Times. The procedures for maintaining WEST have also been modified to permit the periodic output of a cumulated microfiche of the book review entries.

Whether or not we can contemplate re-establishing the Australian Book Review Index in this new format, ie on an on-line data base with or without a microfiche cumulative edition, will now depend on the level of interest among libraries. A first estimate of the cost of the operation indicates that it will be of the order of \$14,000 pa. Some revenue may be expected from use of the data base, but on present experience this is going to be relatively small. Therefore, the project must depend on the sale of the microfiche version. It would assist our thinking on this

project if interested librarians likely to purchase the service would write to me indicating the limits of their interest. Thus, I need to know how many copies of the microfiche might be purchased and at what price. Obviously the larger the number of sales the lower the price, and we might start thinking that the project is viable if 50 libraries were willing to pay \$250 pa. If this figure is too high for many libraries, I would welcome a nominated figure of the upper limit on the price, recognising that it would take 250 libraries to produce the necessary support at \$50 a time.

G.G. Allen
Principal Librarian
Western Australian Institute of Technology
Kent Street, Bentley, WA 6102

More on Manpower

Methinks he doth protest too much! Neil Radford's admonishment of library schools who have failed to reduce their intake in line with reductions in job opportunities reduces a complex situation to a simplistic one. If library schools adjusted their intakes to every fluctuation of the labour market, the staffing formula would result in the numbers of academic staff (and, as a result, standards) going up and down like a fiddler's elbow.

Do you see airlines changing aircraft with varying passenger loads? On my next trip east, will a possible near-empty aircraft result in the re-introduction of the Tiger Moth? No, because it is more efficient and safer to use an aircraft under-utilised, but well-serviced and reliable. Hiccups in supply and demand should not produce knee-jerk reactions in either airlines or professional associations.

But let me quote the Tertiary Education Commission from their Report for the 1982-84 Triennium:

... The Commission aims to preserve the ability of the tertiary education system to adjust to emerging social and economic trends. Given the impossibility of achieving a precise balance between supply and demand on a continuing basis, it is preferable to accept some imbalance in the short term rather than to impart instability to the intakes to tertiary courses: a current over-supply, or the probability of some future over-supply, is to be preferred to the risk of shortages of trained manpower (Summary of recommendations on guidelines, p.266).

The LAA is, of course, now involving itself in the supply and demand scenario and

the work of the Library Workforce Standing Committee will contribute to the profession's knowledge base. The terms of reference of this Committee were published in *InCite* (13 May 1983, p.7), and it will be seeking the co-operation of employers and educators of librarians in its endeavours.

Roy Stall
Member, Library Workforce
Standing Committee



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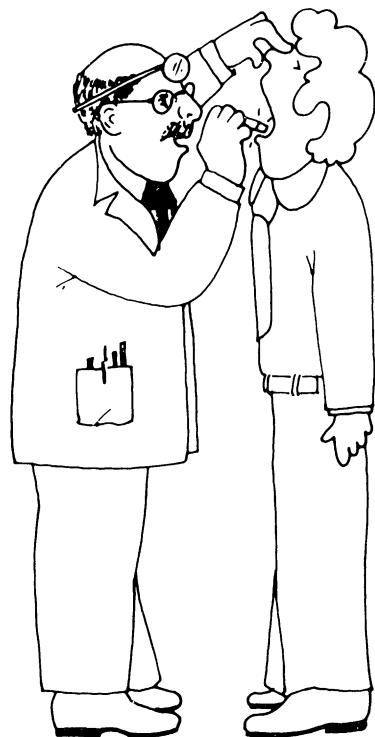


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