



## Students and industrial issues

In his column in the 13 May issue of *InCite*, Alan Bundy sought information from 'library schools' on the inclusion of industrial issues in courses.

As an educator who next week appears before the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission in Melbourne in support of a claim by medical librarians, I would hope that all recent graduates had at least a basic understanding of 'industrial issues' for both personal and professional reasons.



## THE METCALFE MEDALLION

JOHN METCALFE was responsible for establishing the basis of the profession of librarianship in Australia and was the dominating influence in the profession in this country until his retirement in the 1960s. John Metcalfe and his contribution to librarianship and library education are commemorated by the Library Association of Australia through the Metcalfe Medallion.

The award is for the most outstanding essay or other piece of work on any topic in the areas of librarianship, information science or archives administration, submitted by a student undertaking a first award course in librarianship or archives administration.

Students are invited to submit entries for the 1989 award. There is no specified form or style of entry — essays, AV or other items may be submitted. They should be pieces of work of publishable or reproducible standard.

A panel of several distinguished members of the profession will select the winning entry, which it is anticipated will be published in the *Australian Library Journal* or another suitable publication, or reproduced by the Association. The Association reserves the right not to make an award in any year.

Entries should be placed in a sealed envelope, marked only with the title of the work. This envelope, together with a covering letter indicating the title and the identity of the writer, should be sent to the LAA office. The outer envelope should be marked 'Metcalfe Medallion'.

There must be no identification on the entries themselves, and only one may be submitted by each entrant.

Send entries to Assistant Executive Director, Library Association of Australia, 376 Jones Street, Ultimo 2007. Entries close 1 December 1988. For further information contact the LAA Head Office (02) 692 9233 or toll free (008) 22 1481; Fax (02) 692 0689.

At RMIT, as I suspect in many other Australian information and library studies schools, consideration of 'industrial issues' appears in at least two areas: in the study of the management of information services and in 'professional studies' or 'professional orientation' subjects. While on fieldwork placement or in part-time or full-time employment, students can also experience 'industrial issues'. Industrial action in recent times by groups such as Victorian public libraries has highlighted student awareness of the role and importance of unions in the workplace and to the profession, as well as many other aspects of workplace conditions and standards!

However, I do not see it as the role of schools to keep records of all the various unions pertinent to particular employment areas. That is why we have an Association industrial service to which we refer inquiries!

I am pleased to see that the President has a keen interest in a number of curriculum areas. I have invited him to spend some time at RMIT's Department of Information Services on his next visit to Melbourne.

*Marianne Broadbent*

Head, Department of Information Services  
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology

## Bland approval

I was most disappointed to read that the General Council of the LAA welcomes the Government's action in the area of higher education, as set out in the Green Paper, and is willing 'to participate' — presumably in implementing the proposed changes.

I would be very surprised if this view is held by a majority of those members of the LAA who work in the libraries of our universities and colleges.

It is almost certain that these proposed changes will have serious and unpleasant consequences for academic libraries, regardless of one's opinion of the likely effects on universities and colleges as a whole.

In institutions which are funded by contracts, preoccupied with efficiency and performance measures, and directed towards the production of qualified manpower in accordance with national economic priorities, the library will appear (even more than at present) to be an unnecessarily expensive overhead. Cuts in staff numbers and materials' budgets are its likely fate. At the same time, it will be further reduced to the status of one 'academic service' among several, and may face a merger with these other services. There will be growing pressure to transfer control of acquisitions' budgets to faculties or schools, as part of the new 'devolved' and 'streamlined' managerial structures.

None of this is a welcome change, in which librarians should be willing participants. Instead of a bland approval, the LAA's response to the Green Paper should, at the very least, have noted the substantial misgivings which many of its members undoubtedly feel about this, and indeed about the Government's proposals for higher education in general.

*Toby Burrows*

University of Western Australia

## Pack your bags now

I refer to an item in *InCite* (Vol.9 No.6 p.13) under the heading of General Council Report — Biennial Conference Schedule which states 'The venue would allow a cheaper conference after the expensive venues of Sydney and Perth. Sydney may well be expensive but Perth will not.'

As an example, using today's prices for conventions, excellent accommodation is available in Perth from \$22 per night for apartments and some hotels, ranging through various

prices up to \$90 for five-star hotels.

If these prices are added to the seven-night air-fare package from Sydney of \$708 or Apex at \$577, a week in Perth at the conference could be as low as \$731 inclusive of air fare.

When you compare this with a week in Sydney at today's average hotel price of \$100-120 per night, Perth will be a very economic conference indeed.

*D.T. Pearce*

MD, Promaco Conventions

## Worth their weight in . . .

Let me share with you my pleasure at finding the quintessence of information service — twice this year. Neither case is Australian, but modern librarians are the same the world over, and local ones have given me good service too. I wrote to the University of Edinburgh Library, asking several specific questions about a student enrolled in 1798-99. Back came the prompt reply, with answers to all my questions and a marvellous extra mile: 'Another student of that name enrolled in 1816-17 . . . and it might provide a clue to something or other.' That generous piece of unsolicited information was all I needed to fill a gap by showing that my man had returned to medical school for another year after almost 20 years. How easily Mrs Jo Currie could have just not bothered to tell me what she had found out.

The librarian and archivist at the Linnean Society of London also answered some detailed specific questions for me, and then threw in for good measure: 'I am enclosing the only loose letter we have on file which refers to difficulties over paying his subscription in 1835 . . . I hope it is of interest.' Again, the unsolicited letter was of crucial importance. It proved that my man took an impossible job in New South Wales because he was desperately short of money. My research would have ended differently if Ms Gina Douglas had just not bothered to send me that other letter she found on file. It is marvellous for researchers that modern information services have librarians like those: their price is far above rubies.

*Hugh Campbell*

## Premier who?

The LAA is fully aware of the need for good public relations. We need continually to remind politicians and bureaucrats of the vital contribution we are making.

The first-page article on Queensland's new State Library building (*InCite*, 29 April) was well conceived and effective, but marred by consistent misspelling of Premier Ahern's surname.

Misspelling a person's name is an excellent way to alienate him [or her]. Nor does it help in persuading anyone that we are the professionals we claim to be.

*Herbert Compton*

Darwin Institute of Technology Library

## Exchange Position Wanted

Ms Hurd would like to exchange positions with an Australian teacher librarian. Ms Hurd is a teacher librarian at the elementary division of the Kamehameha Schools/Bernice Bishop Estate, which serves 700 children from Kindergarten to Year 6. This school was established in 1887 on the island of Oahu for the purpose of educating children of Hawaiian ancestry.

Anyone who is interested should contact Ms Hurd c/- 255 Hualii Street, #406, Honolulu HI 96813 USA.