

## Survey of library technicians in academic libraries

Late in 1989 a survey of library paraprofessional workers in Australia was conducted, to determine the factors that affect their job satisfaction and their continuing education needs.

Questionnaires were sent to all Australian academic libraries so that responses from a random sample of one quarter of the total population of paraprofessionals in these libraries could be analysed. At the same time, all institutions offering pre-service education for library technicians were asked to provide information about their courses.

While the survey analysis is not yet completed, some interesting trends seem to be emerging. Some of the New South Wales results were reported in *LibTec 6*, 2 July 1990 and at least some of the national data echoes the findings for that state.

At this middle level in academic libraries, the female/male ratio is about 6 to 1, so our profession is certainly female 'dominated' at the operational level. Ninety four per cent of respondents said that computers were used in their sections, but the percentage of male/females doing at least some clerical work was about the same. Forty per cent of respondents worked in libraries large enough to have more than 20 professional librarian positions.

The answers to questions about skills and training were particularly interesting. About 75 per cent had basic typing skills but only 9 per cent felt they did *not* need extra skills in basic word processing. Nearly half the sample wanted to have training in using micro computers for graphics, spreadsheet work or desktop publishing. To deal with new technology, library paraprofessionals said they needed personal computer skills (using PCs, programming and basic word processing), online skills (using CD-ROM, cataloguing, ABN usage, online literature searching, interactive videodisc) and, to a lesser degree, audiovisual equipment and methods of training. This list has enormous implications for job design in academic libraries and for professional/paraprofessional education courses in library and information science.

Library technicians, with a recognised qualification as such, comprised 62 per cent of this sample. Yet only half of the respondents felt that librarians looked on them as 'team members' at work. Just as many felt that librarians saw them as a threat to their own positions, even though only a fairly small proportion of library technicians felt that their current jobs required special skills. Very few library technicians reported getting any evaluation of their work or regular feedback on their performance of duties.

There is some evidence to suggest that the job satisfaction of library technicians would be increased if organisational restructuring occurred in academic libraries. Improved communication would make for a better working environment and most respondents agreed that personal development courses for all library staff together would do much to improve attitudes towards library technicians in our academic libraries. It seems that there is a need to consider these points in both professional and paraprofessional pre-service education, as well as at in-service training courses for both groups.

Pam Pitkeathly



## Teaching Bibliofile in Indonesia

Imagine, if you will, teaching basic keyboard skills, basic cataloguing, MARC tags AND the Bibliofile software package to 20 Indonesian library staff, of varying levels of expertise, and who speak minimal English — and all in 3 weeks! That was the challenge I faced when I undertook an IDP (International Development Program of Australian Universities and Colleges) visiting assignment to the Universitas Sebelas Maret Library in Solo, Central Java in May/June this year.

The participants in this course were naturally apprehensive when faced with the new concept of computerisation AND a non-Indonesian speaking library technician/instructor. At first, most were diffident about admitting that they spoke or understood English but as they gained more confidence many of them admitted that they could follow my instructions in English. Fortunately I had the services on many occasions of an excellent

interpreter, who, despite lack of library training, quickly picked up the concept of Bibliofile and mastered the commands and performance which was a great help to me and the participants.

The course commenced with teaching, in English, the names of each component of the system, both hardware and software, and demonstrating searching the Bibliofile database and printing card sets. When each person had mastered the fundamentals of such operations as starting the system up and closing it down and of searching Bibliofile for both Indonesian and English authors and titles, we progressed to MARC tags and worksheets. The latter two exercises were not a raging success at first but time and patience were eventually rewarded.

Each of the 8 faculty libraries and the Central Library were assigned a separate floppy disc on which to record their library's holdings. By the end of the third week each library had entries onto floppy disc and had printed card sets. At last I was able to quote Professor Higgins 'By George, I think they've got it!'

On my last day an impressive farewell ceremony was held at which each of my 'students' received a certificate stating that they had completed the 3 week computer course and I was presented with a plaque and gifts. My students then demonstrated Bibliofile to the Rector and Vice Rector who were most interested and enthusiastic.

My time with these lovely people at UNS was a most rewarding experience. The satisfaction of having introduced the library towards automation was stimulating. Solo was a pleasant country town (population 3 million!) with very friendly people. I was indeed fortunate to have the opportunity of being part of their lives for those short 3 weeks.

Faye Pattinson



*Demonstrating Bibliofile to the Rector and Vice Rector at UNS*