

Distance education for library technician students in NSW

The issue of education for library technicians in non-metropolitan areas of NSW has for some time been of concern to the Library Technicians Section (NSW Group). A survey was conducted in late 1989 to assess the perceived need for an external Library Technician Course based in NSW. The survey was funded by ALIA Branch Council, and a full report, together with recommendations, is now being prepared. This report will be presented to Branch Council, and with the approval of the Executive of Branch Council, will be forwarded to the NSW Director of TAFE.

The survey targeted two groups: non-professional library staff, and librarians. Two questionnaires were compiled, and were distributed to 394 libraries in non-metropolitan areas of NSW. The survey covered 162 high school libraries, 166 public libraries, 60 TAFE libraries and six university and college libraries.

The results of the survey have indicated strong support in country areas for the introduction of an external course. Responses from both groups have demonstrated great need for some form of paraprofessional education for library staff outside the major metropolitan areas of NSW, i.e. Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. Non-professional library staff find that moving from job to job is difficult without formal qualifications, and that some form of training would assist them greatly in their ability to perform on the job. Librarians cite the difficulty of attracting suitably qualified paraprofessional staff to libraries in country areas as a major concern.

It is worth noting that in the most recent issue of *LibTec* (Vol. 6 No. 2), the newsletter of the Library Technicians Section (NSW Group), Dr. L Anne Clyde from the Western Australian College of Advanced Education points out that 56

students currently enrolled in their externally offered course for library technicians are from NSW. It is of great concern that so many library staff from NSW are compelled to study from a Western Australian institution. The Library Technicians Section (NSW Group) is hopeful that survey results, when presented to the NSW Director of TAFE, will add weight to the argument for a State-based course, and will finally see the introduction of an external course in NSW.

To those of you who completed the questionnaire, thank you for your responses. Copies of the report can be obtained from Janelle Thoms, Secretary, Library Technicians Section (NSW Group), c/- State Library of NSW, Macquarie Street, Sydney, NSW 2000, telephone (02) 230 1472.



Reference and Information Services Librarians Section

Membership

RAILS has nearly 200 members registered for the Section as of the end of July. Any ALIA member interested in joining the Section is invited to contact the Membership Section at the National Office (telephone: toll free [008] 02 0071) and ask for RAILS to be added to your membership record. Membership of RAILS in 1990 is free.

State activities

Several states have already organised common interest meetings and at least one state (Northern Territory) is making an application to form a state group of RAILS. Interested persons should contact their state coordinators (listed below) regarding local activities.

Newsletter

The first issue of the Section's newsletter *References* was published in May and was mailed to all who attended the Third National Reference Librarians Conference. The next edition of the newsletter is due at the beginning of September and will be sent to all registered members of RAILS as well as the Third Conference delegates.

General meeting

The Section's first general meeting will be held during the 1990 ALIA Conference on Wednesday, 3 October at the Perth International Hotel. A continental breakfast (\$9.50) will be served from 7 am and the meeting will commence at 7.30 am. As well as reporting on activities to date, the meeting will provide a forum for reference and information services librarians to propose projects to be undertaken by the

Section, and to suggest themes for the 4th National Reference Librarians Conference to be held in 1991.

State coordinators

ACT Bette Dracoulis, ABS Central Library. Ph: (06) 252 6603

NSW Craig Grimison, University of Wollongong. Ph: (042) 27 0550

Clare Wilde, Macquarie University. Ph: (02) 887 4752

NT Alex Byrne, Northern Territory University. Ph: (089) 46 6192

QLD Denise Dryburgh, University of Queensland. Ph: (07) 377 3249

VIC Erica Maxwell, Sunshine Melton Regional Library Service. Ph: (03) 311 0712

SA Patrick Condon, University of Adelaide. Ph: (08) 228 5370

TAS Twila Herr, University of Tasmania. Ph: (002) 20 2784

Cathy Doe, State Library of Tasmania. Ph: (002) 30 7460

WA Malcolm Traill, Curtin University of Technology. Ph: (09) 351 7256

RAILS First General Meeting

Please send your name and address with a cheque (made payable to ALIA RAILS) for \$9.50 for the breakfast, by 21 September, to: Susan Bray, Treasurer, ALIA RAILS, c/- Institute of Education Library, University of Melbourne, PARKVILLE VIC 3052.

Job exchanges and library technicians

So you think you're 'just' a technician and that no-one would want to exchange jobs with you?

Wrong. Job exchanges are what you make them and it's pretty rare to exchange with a person who's at exactly the same classification and level as yourself. The library workforce encompasses all areas of industry and the public sector. You don't have to get a new job to get a change of scenery and a new challenge — just an exchange.

If the person is not a library technician it's important to make sure their job is of an appropriate level and that they're comfortable with the thought of doing your job. But first things first ...

To begin, make sure the place you are currently working in allows exchanges. Some people are lucky enough to work in institutions that actively encourage exchanges and have the knowledge and bureaucratic processes in place to manage the exchange. If no such infrastructure exists — maybe you can invent one! ALIA also has access to information on exchanges and often advertises them on behalf of individuals or overseas agencies. Don't sell yourself short — but don't exaggerate either. If you can't do all the duties of a prospective exchangee be honest about it, everyone involved will appreciate it and it often makes an exchange more interesting. Exchanges usually don't fall through because the people involved don't exactly mesh in their respective sets of duties. If you're willing to learn and it's all right by the employer, then the sky is the limit (figuratively speaking).

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