

# FEED BACK

## Library Technicians Section

### National Group

On 21 June the members of the National Executive, Jeff in the NT, Vicki and Ellen in SA, and Jean in NSW, waited anxiously while the Telecom operator linked them together for the first meeting of 1990. After a somewhat hesitant start, the Executive spent a very productive 2 1/3 hours addressing a very full agenda.

Teleconferencing has supplied library technicians with a medium for extensive — that is, national — representation on the National Executive. It can be recommended to all National Sections of ALIA as a cost-effective approach to communication.



### SA Group

Library technicians in South Australia are active both as individuals and as a group. Within the Section, our program this year is revolving around a series of library tours. This format has been used successfully in recent years by several Sections in South Australia. Our focus has been on the wide range of positions and career options available to library technicians. It also gives graduate library technicians the opportunity to see other library technicians in the workplace. This benefits people both in small and larger libraries who may be isolated or only view the range of positions available in their institution.

Library technicians were well represented at an award restructuring seminar held by the South Australian Branch Council earlier this year. Several library technicians are involved in the award restructuring processes and keep us informed of progress in this area.

An informal dinner was held in July for a group of external study students, which provided useful feedback, support and contacts.

Our ongoing aim is to have greater library technician participation within the Association. To this end we are encouraging technicians to join and participate with other Sections. As part of our regular committee meetings, we have informal reports from other Sections. There are several technicians actively involved in this way and we hope this small group will increase.

### NSW Group

The Group has been mainly concentrating its efforts on the organisation of the 6th National Conference, but other things have been achieved as well:

- Three issues of *LibTec* have been published this year.
- An information pack for promotion of ALIA and the Library Technicians Section, directed at students of the Associate Diploma of Library Practice in NSW TAFE Colleges, is well under way. A folder is being provided by Co-op Subscriptions whose contribution is greatly appreciated. The Group is producing a special brochure, for inclusion in the pack, which will address the advantages of joining ALIA and the Library Technicians Section. The pack will also contain other ALIA pamphlets which have particular relevance for students undertaking the 'Library Technician at Work' strand of the course.
- The Cumberland College of Health Sciences has run a 1-day seminar entitled Interviewing Skills — from Application to Interview. Attendance at the seminar was encouraging.
- The Group was represented at the Graduation Ceremonies for 1989 students at Sydney and Mount Druitt Technical Colleges.
- The organisation of the AGM is underway. Scheduled for 23 October, the theme of the meeting is 'Award Restructuring' which will be addressed by Anne Doherty, SLT, State Library of NSW, and Tom McKeon, Industrial Information Officer, ALIA. Elections for the 1991 Executive will also be held at the AGM.

The Group met Teresa Fanning who is on an exchange between the libraries of the University of NSW and the University College of Dublin. Theresa told us of the employment situation in Ireland, and the differences in the structure and roles of staff in the University College Library.

The Group is concerned that so few NSW members who are actually involved with their Group. There are only seven working for the benefit of all library technicians, including the organisation of the conference. This is a great deal of extra work for people who are already very busy, and more help is urgently needed. Why not come along? Meetings are never boring!



### Qld Group

Queensland library technicians are spreading far and wide and are being employed in many different enterprises. One of the most unusual appointments has been that of Annette (Nan) Gallagher to the library of the Australian Stockmans Hall of Fame and Outback Heritage Centre in Longreach.

Other library technicians are well represented in the State Public Service. TAFE has always been a major employer of both qualified library technicians and students. Some graduates are in the law library while others — the lucky few — are represented in private Secondary School College Resource Centres. The City Councils, Brisbane, Logan and Redland City Libraries all employ library technicians. One well-regarded library technician is at present 'in charge' at the Police Academy at Oxley pending the appointment of a permanent librarian.

We recently held our mid-year function at which Jenny Hale from the Australian Stockmans Hall of Fame gave a talk with slides. Profits from this dinner, which totalled \$200 have been donated to ALIA Flood Fund Appeal for use in replacing book stocks and equipment in Outback Queensland devastated by the recent floods.



### Victorian Group

The three TAFE library schools in Melbourne report a buoyant job market for their technicians-in-training. Although the demand is somewhat down on last year, enquiries from employers are still being received at a steady rate. In the light of funding cuts to government, educational and corporate sectors there is a changing emphasis on technician employment and the demand is for technicians-in-training who are often employed as library assistants. There is, of course, no guarantee that their employment will continue at the completion of their course. However, media advertisements for qualified library technicians are often not responded to by the quantity or quality required, even though there are cases of qualified technicians still unemployed.

The challenge this year is in the courses being offered to technicians presently holding a Certificate of Applied Social Science (Library Technician) to convert to the new Associate Diploma. A large number of technicians who qualified prior to 1989 are undertaking the necessary extra units which will entitle them to this Associate Diploma. These conversion courses are heavily computer-oriented and in the automated library environment of today this is a logical and wise path to follow.

The Victorian Library Technicians Section of ALIA is inactive at present. Technicians can be involved in very many issues, not necessarily industrial, which are invaluable in increasing their knowledge and awareness of library related issues. With so much talk of award restructuring, technicians need to be au fait with the current climate. Support and enthusiasm is urgently needed if the Victorian Section is to be reformed.

Discussions are planned between technician members of ALIA and those members of ALTA (Australian Library Technicians' Association), an alternative

Victorian body representing library technicians, so that we can cooperate on common issues and problems. We shall be aiming to achieve this in the coming months.

Victorian technicians wishing to register their interest in the section should leave their name and telephone number with Micheline on 427 0071 at the ALIA Victoria Branch Office between 10 am and 3 pm each day or leave a message on the recording machine.



## WA Group

Having devoted most of our time and efforts over the past few years in successfully pushing for a library technician classification in the Western Australian Public Service, the Section has been able to have a more social calendar this year, combining some enjoyable meetings with guest speakers and demonstrations.

In April we had a workshop on 'Applying for Jobs' (to be repeated in November); another on 'Procedure Manuals' will be staged in August.

In May the Section catered for a student luncheon at WCAE in conjunction with an address to technician students by Lynn Allen, the National President, Kay Poustie, the Branch President and myself. I felt this function really stimulated interest in ALIA and later in the year we're hoping to do the same for our other group of technician students at TAFE.

The next big event we're looking forward to is the 1st Biennial ALIA Conference in October, where we hope to exchange ideas on ways to encourage new members to join and to get involved in Sectional activities.

Cheers for now and hope we see you in Perth in October.



## School Libraries Section

### National Group

The National Committee of the School Libraries Section is working on a discussion paper on *Continuing Professional Education for People Outside the Metropolitan Areas*. This discussion paper will be tabled at the Section AGM in Perth in October, and circulated for comment, before being published. The aims of the document are:

- to raise awareness among our membership of the continuing professional education needs of members outside the larger cities;
- to look at some of the issues and problems involved in meeting these needs;
- to provide examples of how these needs have been met in the past;
- to encourage organisers of continuing professional education activities to look at ways of bringing continuing professional education activities to their more remote colleagues;
- to indicate some developments which might be considered for the future in providing continuing professional education opportunities.

Developments which have influenced the preparation of the discussion paper include the 1989 report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, *An Apple for the Teacher? Choice and Technology in Learning*; the 1989 document *A Fair Go, The Federal Government's Strategy for Rural Education and Training*; and the Federal Government's 1990 Training Guarantee Bill. The National Committee of the School Libraries Section made a brief submission to the Working Party on Rural Education and Training (set up by the National Board of Employment, Education, and Training), in June this year.



## ACT Institute of TAFE

### Department of Information Studies

A number of developments over the last 2 years have influenced the current position of library technicians in the ACT.

1. The absorption of the Library Officer category in the Australian Public Service (our major employer) into the general clerical (ASO) structure has resulted in uncertainty about the value of the library technician qualification. Untrained personnel are taking the library positions that were previously the domain of the library officer. The change is too recent to assess the full implications of this on the para-professional scene. However there are indicators that suggest that the change will have a negative affect on incentives for technician training.
2. Against this, however, the imposition of the Government Training tax has resulted in some Government Departments sponsoring technician level study for their employees.
3. There has been a slow decline in numbers enrolled in the Associate Diploma at the ACT institute of TAFE, but no decline in the number of graduates. This suggests a better level of student with greater determination to complete the course.
4. The strong demand for staff at the paraprofessional level, that has been experienced in the ACT for many years now, is continuing and ACT graduates are in high demand.
5. There is a noticeable increase in the demand for:
  - short term specific skills courses for staff in the ASO structure;
  - higher level library skills e.g. online searching, ABN use, and subject indexing.
6. It has been made easier to progress from the Associate Diploma of Arts in Library Studies at TAFE to the undergraduate program at the University of Canberra. This is proving attractive for a small proportion of professionally oriented students.

TAFE Progression Program students can complete the BA course in 2 years full-time or equivalent part-time study. They may undertake any of the specialisations within the undergraduate courses (library systems and services, information retrieval, research and archival resources, services to young people, and records management).

Additional information about status given for previous study and the course requirements is available from Dr. Nancy Lane at the above address, or telephone (06) 252 2647 or 252 2312.

Donna Reid

ACT Institute of TAFE

## NSW TAFE library courses update

The Division of Library Practice is currently operating three courses:

### Library Practice Associate Diploma

This course provides for the training of library technicians in NSW. The re-accreditation of the course is currently underway — a revised course will commence in 1992. The revision process will involve all sections of the industry. The Library Technician Section (NSW Group) will be represented on the Industry Working Group.

### Library Technician Assistance Certificate

This course is designed primarily as an Australian Government Traineeship for

local government libraries. It can also be used as a lower level entry course, completion of which allows entry into the Library Associate Diploma.

### 'Get Skilled' for Library Clerical Assistants Course

This is a short (12 weeks) Labour Market Program course.

The Division currently operates at Sydney, Mt. Druitt, Newcastle, Wollongong and Lismore. A block release mode is proposed for the associate diploma at Lismore in 1991. Albury may also be starting in 1991.

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