

Letters

Thank you, librarians!

Library Schools are very dependent on the goodwill of you practitioners. We ask you to supervise our students on practicums, welcome students into your organisations to write reports and take time out of a busy life to answer endless questions and produce printed information.

Last year the Curtin School of Information and Library Studies had more external students from outside Western Australia than ever before. The staff of the School would therefore like send our grateful thanks to all the librarians round Australia who helped our students during 1991.

Maggie Exon
Acting Head

'A book without an index...'

What an alarming quotation (*inCite 19*) to have to take seriously. Do you think Maxine Wilshaw has heard of Shakespeare or David Malouf or T S Eliot? I am terrified that librarians will forget that there are books which are meant to be read as nice literary wholes.

Professor Mary A Ronnie
Head, Graduate Department of
Librarianship,
Monash University

(But another response has just come in! Tricia Larner, of UCQ Library, says: 'A book without an index is like... an ashtray on a motorbike—USELESS!')

Competency standards

In response to John Levett's Front Line on Professional Development and Competency Standards (*inCite 20*) I whole-heartedly applaud the suggestion that there is a need for personal/individual competency standards and for ongoing professional development. The present practice of accrediting courses safeguards the content and conduct of professional courses and presumably guarantees a supply of well-prepared 'competent' graduates for the Library and Information profession. Ten years down the track (where I am now) there is certainly a need for continuous self-education and professional development to ensure

that those competencies aren't lost and that the demands of the profession for new competencies are met.

I also support the idea of the 'client-centred practice' and the 'client-practitioner nexus' (also the use of the term client). For too long the delivery of service to 'the client' has been dictated by institutionalised red tape and the necessity of maintaining procedures which suit the institution rather than the needs/demands of the client.

This shift would certainly require a different definition of competency but one which would be well worth achieving in the interests of our clients and our own professionalism.

Clare Wilde
Macquarie University

CAA and the Flying Doctors

I read most of *inCite's* news and letters—one of the latter (*inCite 17, p. 12*) could have 'gone missing', and not taken up valuable space. It was an objection to the 'Community Aid Abroad' brochure, inserted with an earlier sending.

For those of us no longer as mobile as formerly, that booklet was so interesting that I ordered therefrom. The items arrived promptly, well-packed.

Another membership publication in Victoria, RACV's *Royalauto*, is heavily subsidised by advertisers promoting their wares for sale, on glossy, colourful pages.

The Editorial reply was constrained; hopefully understood by the City Librarian at the isolated mining location of Kalgoorlie. I have been to that city more than once, so I am aware of its problems.

I should like to see the Royal Flying Doctor Service appeal for funds to update and keep their planes in the air, given some publicity in a future pack of *inCite*—if possible for 'free.' The service covers all Australians, including library folk.

The RFDS is on my donations list, having known their work since it began, many decades ago. Over to the Editor of *inCite*.

Miss Lorna E Cuzens
Retired Special (Company) Librarian
St Kilda

Those much-loved Family Historians (again)!

We read with interest the letter 'Librarians hate family historians' by A Family Historian (*inCite 18*). As librarians involved in services to family historians in the State Library of South Australia we would like to outline the many positive steps taken by this institution to develop a quality genealogy service and most importantly to educate both staff and family historians in the resources available.

To assist those undertaking family history research, self service genealogical collections containing useful items such as copies of shipping lists, almanacs and directories etc., have been established. Many 'how to' publications of interest to family historians of all levels have been included. In 1989, the Mortlock Library of South Australiana published *Kith and Kin: sources for family history* (Adelaide: Libraries Board of South Australia, 1989) which is a guide to the most popular family history sources available in the Library. It also includes a brief guide to various other South Australian government and non-government organisations holding other valuable records for family research in South Australia.

A number of family history source sheets and research guides have been produced to explain specialist areas of the collection. A family history package is included on the Mortlock Library's automated Touchscreen Information Service. This allows clients to work at their own pace through important topics, such as shipping and births, deaths and marriages.

While 'there is no teacher, professor or previous training in academic occupations to help family historians through the maze...' the State Library of South Australia has conducted over the past few years a series of seminars on both general and specific topics of interest to family historians which have been extremely well-attended. Many introductory sessions have also been held for a range of special interest groups. The State Library intends to continue these.

► The statement, 'Many librarians have little knowledge of the family history source material held by the library they work in' does not apply to us. We conduct regular staff training sessions on all aspects of the collection. We are also available for specialist consultations with the public if staff feel unfamiliar with a particular inquiry. In an effort to keep up to date with new developments in family history, the State Library of South Australia has sent representatives to the last three national family history congresses.

While we appreciate A Family Historian's comments, we believe that 'Family historians are giving librarians the willies' is an attitude which no longer exists, at least in the State Library of South Australia.

Anne Burrows
Susan Mildred

Those much-loved Family Historians again (2)

The Family Historians at Liverpool have become staunch allies of Liverpool City Library over the last few years. Back in 1987 with the Bicentennial looming panic-stricken librarians cast around for a way to tame the menace of genealogical fervour.

Staff had recognised the need of these people to communicate with their own kind and so a public meeting of interested family historians was called to see if there was enough interest in forming a local Family History Society. The meeting was very successful and culminated in the formation of the Liverpool and District Family History Society.

This group has given immense help to the library by running genealogy workshops on Saturdays and having a volunteer in the library every Monday morning. The library has assisted them by purchasing resources and by converting a former study room into the family history room where ancestors can be discussed without disturbing other library patrons.

The Society is now a well-established part of the library's support in the community and members have lobbied Council for improvement to library facilities.

At the recent Conference of NSW Family History Societies the Liverpool Group bid successfully to host the 1993 conference in Liverpool. This not only brings prestige to the society and to the library but also brings business to Liverpool.

The Society operates within the library holding meetings in the meeting room and family history room. However they are very self-sufficient and the relationship between them and the library is very cordial and cooperative. Because Liverpool was founded in 1810 by Governor Macquarie it has a long history and many ancestors. Library staff are truly grateful to the Society members who have researched many records on behalf of distant descendants and compiled indexes to local cemetery and asylum records.

Staff are relieved of the burden of providing instruction on how to use very complex genealogical resources. The Local Studies Librarian Christine Raszewski works closely with the Society and is happy to provide further information on (02) 8219432.

Helen Ristuccia
Manager,

Library and Museum Services,
Liverpool City Council

(It seems that Family Historians have never had it so good! This has been a most constructive exchange of correspondence, but it is now closed. Ed.)

Get in there and fight!

What has happened to the public librarians in New South Wales?

A recent circular (no date) to members, from the president of the NSW Group of the Public Libraries Section, makes an appeal for people to offer themselves as president, secretary, branch councillor and committee members.

Public libraries in Australia, and particularly in NSW, have never been in such an appalling state as they now are. Funding continues to decline significantly as costs increase.

Don't the public librarians want to get in there to fight the battles? Do they expect someone else to fight for them, or are they just resigned to the demise of public libraries?

Laurie Brown

Writing for publication

I whole-heartedly endorse the value of Academic Publishing Forums as described by Alan Bundy [*inCite* 9 December 1991]. The results of a two-day Writers' Workshop conducted by the School of Nursing at Curtin University in July 1987 attest to the value of such exercises. Since this workshop several of the participants have had articles accepted by both national and international publishers of nursing and allied health journals. Notwithstanding these successes, a textbook spawned at the workshop is now in its second edition and two more monographs are currently in production.

Writing for publication can be relatively easy if the rules which facilitate the process are followed. I would urge librarians to participate in publishing workshops when the opportunity arises and discover just how simple it can be to see one's name in print!

Jeanette Robertson

The Joy of being an editor

Getting out this publication is no picnic.

If we print jokes, people say we are silly. If we don't, they say we are too serious.

If we clip things from other sources, we are too lazy to write them ourselves. If we don't, we are too fond of our own stuff.

If we don't print contributions, we are also too fond of our own stuff. If we do print them, the paper is full of junk.

If we make a change in the other person's writing, we are too critical. If we don't, we are asleep.

Now, likely as not, someone will say we swiped this from some other publication. We did!

[Acknowledgement: *inCite* swiped it from *The Cape Librarian* 35, 7 Aug '91, who swiped it from *US Public Relations Quarterly*, who swiped...]