

The People's Treasures

A celebration of collectors and collections in the National Library of Australia

The exhibition *The People's Treasures: A Celebration of Collectors and Collections* in the National Library of Australia will be on display in the Library's Exhibition Gallery until 5 September.

Over the years, the Library's holdings have been greatly enriched by benefactors—individuals, such as Sir Rex Nan Kivell, Sir John Ferguson and EA Petherick, who have made their private collections permanently available to the Australian people through the National Library. The more unusual items on view from the originally private collections of these generous collectors range from sixteenth century woodcuts by Albrecht Durer to unique copies of 1950's comics, and from the first books printed in Australia to memorabilia of the Borovansky Ballet.



Marketing the information profession

Ann Irving believes we must begin by marketing ourselves

Dr Irving is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Information and Library Studies at the Loughborough University of Technology. In a recent 'Viewpoint' written for the UK Library Association she asks why it is that library and information professionals are 'apparently invisible' (an intriguing oxymoron) to a wide range of other professionals in government, academia and the community. Or worse. She quotes from a *Sunday Times* careers guide, *Librarianship has a reputation as the last resort of the desperate, a safe retreat for arts graduates who don't want to teach, a career for the frail and introspective. It is still, perhaps, a career for those who have not made it in other areas.* (ST, 4/11/84)

How do we tackle this 'invisibility' and get rid of the shocking old stereotype? Obviously, we need to promote and market ourselves better. Dr Irving thinks we have to start in the schools, so that bright students see librarianship as vital and challenging and are motivated to study for the

profession. To achieve the required breakthrough she proposes three tactics:

- develop a simple statement of what it is we *do*, so that potential clients understand just how much we have to offer (and to do this, *we* have to agree on the statement—at present there are too many different viewpoints within the profession);
- offer to all those clients 'our highest quality of service' through better communication; and
- sharpen our own focus on these objectives by uniting the profession in its approach to its common issues.

In regard to this last point, she underlines the divisions in the profession, giving the example of the LA's 25 000 members supporting 23 special interest groups. *inCite* readers will know that ALIA, with less than 7000 personal members, has 26 sections and SIGs, quite apart from the many autonomous groups that share our field—ALIA is at present networking with the School Librarians, the *two* Archives bodies, the Records Managers and

the Medical Records people. But how do we reach unanimity without stifling constructive differences? Members will always wish to focus on particular aspects of their profession and will want a forum where they can discuss these aspects with like-minded colleagues... Is this really *division*?

Dr Irving suggests that we can improve on what we do for our users (and on our image with them), by giving them better advice on how we can respond to their specific information requirements, rather than just describing our 'services'. In special libraries we might form *partnerships*, or seek other ways of *influencing* people. Above all, we need as a profession to be working towards a wider *information culture*, in which the nature of our contribution will be more easily seen and appreciated.

(Ann Irving, *Marketing the information profession to the information society*, Viewpoints in Library and Information Science 7. London: Library Association Publishing, 1992. ix + 53 pp. ISBN 1 85604 084 4).