



Nora Stewart
Training and Development Officer

There are 17 schools of library and information science around Australia with a variety of undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

You may be wondering about going back to University, or perhaps trying it for the first time if you haven't done so already. Admissions generally close in October, so now is the time to act.

The role of formal education is becoming increasingly important as a basis for life-long learning. ALIA has long recognised this through its Board of Education and recognition of formal courses at degree and associate diploma levels.

University education is pursued for many reasons. Uppermost in many people's minds is to increase the likelihood of getting a job of their choice, or to get a promotion. People with years of work and life experience look forward to gaining a theoretical framework to make better sense of things.

Meeting people, getting to know different groups and learning from the vast collective range of experience are rewarding aspects of participating in formal courses—a highly commendable avenue of learning.

University may also just be interesting and stimulating—you just never know where it may lead.

Where are the courses available?

There are 17 schools of library and information science around Australia with a variety of undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Many courses offer flexible arrangements for part-time and external studies.

Many first award courses are recognised by ALIA. If you are seeking professional membership of ALIA after graduation, it is wise to check whether your course is an ALIA recognised one. For more information, refer to the ALIA publication *"Courses in Library and Information Science 1993-94"*.

Institutions and faculties will start advertising courses in newspapers late August and September. For general information about the institution and also outlines of specific courses, University Handbooks are a good place to start.

For up-to-date information (handbooks will be nearly a year old then), ring the institutions and talk to administration for general information.

For specifics on courses you are interested in, ask to speak to a course lecturer from the Faculty. And get everything in writing, with the date and the person's name if possible, to save confusion later about what was said and what was meant.

What sort of information do I need?

First, assess your chances of being offered a place. For undergraduate courses, about 95% of course offers are made by the University Admissions Centre (UAC) on the basis of school-leaving results, and the rest by the University. For postgraduate applications, the decision is made by either the University Administration or the Faculty.

Credit is often available for subjects already completed in other awards, at the discretion of the institution involved. Some Universities have standing arrangements with their local TAFE to transfer credit across.

Two important points:

- *get as much information as early as you can about everything you might apply for (you can bet that everyone will be on holiday when your offer comes in December-January) and*
- *write down the names of all the people you speak to.*

What will it cost?

Two costs are involved, the student

services fee and HECS. The Student Services fee, usually paid each semester and required for enrolment, ranging from \$50-\$150 per semester.

The Higher Education Contribution Scheme or HECS is a charge incurred according to the credit point value of the units and the type of course you are doing.

For example, a Graduate Diploma usually has 8 units x 3 credit points, a total of 24 points. HECS contribution would be \$2328 or if paid upfront, \$1746 (a 25% discount for prompt payment!).

If you choose to defer payment, the amount owing will be taken out of your income when it exceeds \$27,000 p.a. and the repayment is a percentage of income tax.

Other costs include books, on-line costs in some cases and of course, income foregone for your time. All expenses except HECS are tax deductible after the first \$250.

Scholarships

Get one! For general information on scholarships there are three useful sources:

- the University Scholarships Officer;
- the *International Guide to Research and Education Funds Awards Almanac*, St James Press 1992; and
- Monash University in Melbourne publish an excellent updated guide every two weeks on internal and external scholarships.

HECS-exemptions scholarships are available, primarily for postgraduate students. Each institution is given a quota by DEET, and the University decides who will get them.

They are usually awarded to doctoral students first and so on down the line (Masters, Honours by research, Graduate Diploma). ■