

Library Locums' survey, 1992-93

Marion Nicolson believes that the survey is a good gauge of the economic situation and encourages a little optimism

What do employment statistics mean for the information profession? Where are the job opportunities, which skills are in demand, what trends are shaping our future direction?

These are vital questions to both job seekers and employers.

The 5th annual Library Locums employment survey, for 1992-1993, strongly suggests that unemployment has peaked. The last six months have been the busiest in Library Locums' history. Good news for Australia at last?

More jobs

Library Locums now handle as many jobs as they were before the recession. Employment in the Information sector is showing signs of recovery. Libraries which have been reducing staff over the last couple of years are now supplementing their core staff with temps to meet demand for their services, or to handle special projects.

Demand for temporary staff has gone up by 60% since the beginning of 1993. Library managers find that increasing the provision for temporary staff in their budgets gives them the flexibility to employ staff only when they need them.

Working through a firm such as Library Locums makes it very easy to do this, because the firm takes care of all the hidden on-costs such as payroll tax, superannuation, levies, insurance etc which are incurred when you employ someone. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, these on-costs add an average of 34% to the hourly rate of pay—even higher in the public sector—and in-house administration costs may add a further 20%.

Temp jobs

Temps were once considered only for emergency, semi-skilled work but this situation has changed dramatically. Library Locums' survey shows that in 1992-93 almost 20% of placements

were at a senior librarian level; 45% required professional qualifications and 20% required Library Technician qualifications. Skills in greatest demand are Cataloguing, Technical

In the survey Library Locums have defined 'part-time' as working less than 35 hours per week. Just over a third of all positions they handled in 1992-93 were part-time, slightly lower than the

40% of the previous year, so that the number of full-time positions placed in 1992-93 may have actually increased.

Salaries

Library Locums' system of recording job placements enables them to track salary trends in the private sector. The following

table is derived from actual salaries offered and accepted on starting a job but does not include salary 'packages'. Part-time salaries have been extrapolated into full-time figures.

The salary range for experienced Librarians seems to have significantly broadened—the proportion of Librarians earning above \$41 000 has doubled. This suggests that in the private sector there is greater variation in the market place for skilled library staff. New graduates are entering jobs with salaries in the \$32 000-\$34 999 band. An important factor that influences what they are paid is where they are placed in the management structure within an organisation.

Conclusions

The Library Locums' survey provides a useful early indicator of changes in the labour market. Being at the leading edge of employment it is closely in touch with the needs of employers as well as those of people looking for work. It appears that for Library Managers the most important issue is achieving peak performance from their staff. An effective way for them to achieve this result is to use temps to fill in the gaps caused by staff reductions. This means that job-seekers can benefit from temp work, and Library Locums find that they constantly need more people to satisfy demand for their service. The nature of work in Australia is changing and so too is employment in libraries. ■

Starting Salaries 1992-1993 1991-1992 1990-1991

\$25 000 - \$27 999	17%	16%	22%
\$28 000 - \$31 999	11%	42%	28%
\$32 000 - \$34 999	39%	16%	14%
\$35 000 - \$40 999	11%	16%	22%
\$41 000 and higher	22%	11%	14%

Services, Online searching and automated systems experience.

There are many reasons why people like temporary work. They enjoy the flexibility to work when and where they like. This is important for people with families. Others don't want to be tied to one job or they want to be free to do other things such as travel.

Permanent jobs

A growing number of people are using temp work as a way of proving what they can do, in order to get a permanent job. By temping, you can build up a successful track record, demonstrate your versatility and also obtain references about your work performance which are valuable to potential employers.

Employers sometimes take on a locum while they are deciding about a permanent position. In this way, the locum has an opportunity to try out the job and the employer can see if they are the right person at no risk. It appears to be a successful strategy, because the survey records the number of permanent positions they filled in 1992-93 rose by 69%.

Full-time or part-time

National employment statistics show that more part-time positions are being created. Some analysts believe that part-timers will make up the workforce of the future, particularly when the definition of 'part-time' includes casuals, contracting and out-sourcing.