

Taking up the challenge

Coreen Lo adds the Specials' viewpoint in the run-up to Australian Library Week

'Can you give me a list of pet cemeteries in Sydney... I need it for a story that is going on air tonight on ABC and I need it in half an hour; give me a list of the top 50 companies in Australia and their turnover; what is the agency that produced the 'I like Aeroplane Jelly' advertisement; can you locate this book — I think the title is something like this but I forget the author, anyway it's a red book, hardcover and I saw it in the bookshop when I was on a course in Hawaii...'

These are real questions asked of Special Librarians and not made up for the purpose of this article. Honest!

The theme of Australian Library Week 1994, *Destination Information*, is particularly appropriate for Special Libraries, as we constantly face the challenges of making our workplaces the main destination for the information needs of our parent organisations. It's not easy — but it's not impossible.

To ensure an organisation is efficient and effective and to maintain a competitive edge in a business environment, the operations and productivity of organisations are under constant review and evaluation.

Special Libraries, no matter how efficient or productive, cannot afford to be complacent. Often, when cost-cutting measures are necessary, the library is one of the first to get the axe.

So Special Libraries need to be economically viable to reflect the goals, functions and the mission of the parent organisation and to

provide services that support these goals and functions and that meet the needs of the staff and their clients. Special Libraries can have budgets ranging from hundreds of thousands to less than \$10 000, with staff of 10 or more — or just one.

Regardless of staffing or budget, the Special Librarian needs to be proactive, service-oriented and able to market, sell, advertise, prioritise, conduct research and collect statistics (only the useful kind), lobby management... the list goes on.

The library needs to be an attractive resource centre, providing an inviting and friendly, yet professional, environment within the organisation. Libraries (and librarians) can be quite intimidating to some people, especially those executives who made it through the education system with minimum exposure to libraries (yes, they do

exist!). Special Librarians need to overcome the initial bias, prejudice and just plain ignorance that may come their way.

Management will judge by how a product looks and how it is presented. Making the library the best-looking destination is a vital part of the Special Librarian's job.

Australian Library Week 1994 gives Special Librarians a special opportunity to raise the profile of their library as an important resource within their organisation and to make the library the first — not one of the last — destinations for staff in search of information.

This article adds the voice of the Specials to the thoughts of other sectors about *Australian Library Week 1994* expressed in the broadsheet inserted in issue 8 of *inCite*. Use this article and the broadsheet as your inspiration to make *Australian Library Week 1994* extra special. ■

Politicians get the message

State, Territory and Federal Members of Parliament have responded positively to copies of an Australian Library Week postcard sent to each one of them by ALIA National Office, urging support for libraries.

We have received many requests from politicians' offices for extra information about issues of concern to our members in response to our mail-out and look forward to the further development of this interest as our electoral action strategies are implemented.

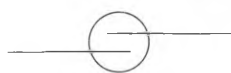
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