

Helping new graduates

Bill Cations, University Librarian, talks about an initiative by the Flinders University

In recent years when interviewing applicants for entry level librarian positions, I have been very concerned about two trends. Firstly, the number of applicants who respond seems to be growing at an alarming rate. I always regret not being able to make more than one appointment when there are clearly so many able and willing candidates. The second cause for concern is that a large number of applicants are inevitably very recent graduates with little or no experience of working in libraries. These applicants cannot compete with the many who have had the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities by working in a library environment. This is especially the case if the selection criteria for the advertised position include a statement such as 'relevant experience essential/desirable'. Many inexperienced graduates do not even make the shortlist for interview. Continuation of this trend is not a desirable outcome for the library profession or for libraries. However, something can be done about it.

At Flinders University we have decided to set aside a number of positions as 'trainee librarian positions' and to actively seek to appoint recent graduates. Each person appointed is expected to work in various sections of the library over a three year period to broaden their experience. They are paid at the trainee rate, which although less than we would pay an experienced librarian, is still a very reasonable \$29 800 per annum. We do not target young graduates only. The emphasis is on recent graduates without experience but with potential. A new entrant to the profession who happens to be of mature age would be as eligible to apply for these positions as a young new graduate.

What is to be gained from this approach? From the management point of view most new graduates are enthusiastic, receptive to new ideas and willing. All they lack is opportunity and experience. It also costs slightly less to employ trainees although there is a greater training load to be taken on as a consequence. From the perspective

of the new graduate the trainee approach greatly increases their chances of actually getting a job. As one candidate put it to me '...this is the first time that my lack of experience has been seen as an asset'.

We recently appointed our first trainee librarians, Elizabeth Walkley (see page 9) and Amanda Nixon. Elizabeth's first assignment is to work in the monograph cataloguing section. Amanda's initial appointment is as assistant to the University Librarian.

Setting aside trainee positions is not, of course, a new idea. The National Library among others was an early proponent of this approach, and the Victorian Parliamentary Library has established the position of 'Library cadet'. This is a time, with so many unemployed and with limited opportunities for employment, for more employers to find ways of providing opportunities for the bright new graduates streaming out of library schools. The fact is we need each other: the libraries need new graduates, the graduates need a chance! ■



INDUSTRY COMMISSION

Melbourne

SYSTEMS LIBRARIAN/CATALOGUER

Professional Officer Class 2

\$37188-41560. Position No 547 (Re-advertised)

The Industry Commission is the Commonwealth Government's major review and public inquiry body on industry matters. It is an independent statutory authority whose aim is to inform the community & government on ways to improve economic performance.

The Industry Commission is seeking an experienced Systems Librarian/Cataloguer to manage the Technical Services function of the library, to provide timely and effective access to library materials. The position requires considerable experience with 'hands-on' cataloguing, with ABN, and maintenance of automated systems in a Special Library. Under guidance, assist with the review, evaluation and assessment of commercially available integrated library software. The successful applicant will have a commitment to providing a client focused technical service & the ability to interact with & supervise staff.

Contact Officer for inquiries & selection documentation: Ms Gerry Mackenzie Ph: (03) 653 2274; Fax: (03)-653 2323.

Note: Previous applicants will be considered and need not re-apply.

Normal Commonwealth Public Service conditions apply. To be eligible for appointment, applicants must hold Australian citizenship or have permanent residence status pending citizenship. Applications addressing the selection criteria are invited by 23 June 1995 to: The Library Manager, Industry Commission, Locked Bag 2, Collins Street East P.O., MELBOURNE 8003