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**N**ot long ago, I subscribed to a journal whose focus purported to be career development for librarians. I ended up cancelling the subscription after four issues because the articles seemed to dwell on finding happiness and career success outside of libraries.

I'm happy to acknowledge that our industry affords an ever increasing diversity of 'information-based' occupations running the gamut from researcher, information broker, human resources trainer, to software consultant.

But I think it's equally important that we also emphasise the positives of working in libraries and demonstrate to both ourselves and others the 101 ways we have of making our job the one they'd rather have.

The excitement and 'glamour' attached to the concept of an information highway has a tendency to make the 'shelves on the wall' concept of a library something akin to those abandoned diners on Route 66. However, we're not in an 'either/or' situation — the information highway complements our traditional libraries, it does not replace them. But this is not the message that is universally received in the marketplace.

I was intrigued by a conversation with a management consultant who confidently told me that I had to accept that there would be less demand for libraries and librarians as people gained increasing electronic access to information. I went through my sales-talk routine of just what a librarian delivered through a quality library service and it was interesting to see the change in his expression: metaphorically speaking, the venetian blinds started to slowly open.

On another occasion, I was attending a panel discussion of media people advising librarians on how to promote themselves. At one

stage a prominent broadcaster told us that we didn't have a bad image with the media, but we simply had to accept that the newspaper/radio/TV industry was too 'immediate' for libraries. Journalists didn't have time to go to the library and check out a book — they were working against news deadlines and had to come up with the facts fast, which generally meant dealing directly with the source.

I then pointed out to this newsmen that more often than not there was a library in the journalistic food chain. For example, journalists obtaining information from my institution's economists might be surprised to learn that our economists use our library to formulate and validate the opinions that end up on the newswire.

Again, I could see the haze lifting, and about a year later I was amazed, and proud, to hear this same man give one of the most intelligent and supportive talks I've heard about the value of libraries to business development.

We've got a double-edged problem on our hands in that we have to promote ourselves better — and we also have to ensure that we uniformly deliver what it is we are promoting. It's a tall order and we all have to pitch in to make it a success.

Can we really abide the concept that people can 'schedule' themselves not to require information a certain day of the week? I think a library service is essential, which is why I also think a part-time library doesn't necessarily have to be an absolute outcome of a part-time librarian.

Librarianship is one of the best professions for the concept of 'job sharing'. And in the case of those of our members who need to combine career with family demands it may be their only way of continuing in the library profession. I hope we can foster and encourage job incen-

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tive programs that support this segment of our membership and ensure their experience is not lost.

As well, I hope we can encourage alliances between our part-time library operations and other library services to ensure continuity of information access. The combination of part-time in-house information management and outside research back-up is a good example of what I call 'creative librarianship'.

Thus far, I think we've overlooked the real potential of these sort of alliances. It's an opportunity for academic, state, public and special libraries to join forces to support the catchcry 'decisions are only as good as the information we base them on'. I hope we can begin to investigate opportunities for alliances which are neither competitive nor parasitic, but simply supportive of the concept that library service is essential.

As a profession, I hope that we can be more convincing when demonstrating the advantages and economic benefits of a library and proper information management. No one contests the altruistic benefits, but there's a lot of misconception out there concerning what constitutes 'information' and how often you need it.

Another important strategic alliance in my 'creative librarianship' agenda is that of our 10 000 school libraries. It is time we started acknowledging that our teacher-librarians are the foundation stone for all library user groups. That first introduction to libraries via the primary or secondary school has an irrefutable tendency to imprint lifelong user patterns — those of our future library users.

We must get more vocal about the importance of information literacy to life-long learning, and give our schools colleagues a rearguard back-up as they fight shrinking education budgets and expanding classroom numbers. ■