

Your voice

Cross-fertilisation...

I disagree with much of what John Brudenall said in his letter 'Ten top jobs' in *inCite*, September 1996.

I doubt if anyone would disagree with his view that we should be aiming to produce well-qualified leaders for major professional positions. The ALIA *Statement on senior professional appointments* of 1991 says we recognise that applicants for such positions require demonstrated leadership and managerial skills and experience, appropriate management training and overall career achievement. Noting that these CEO's work in environments where appropriate qualifications and experience would be an advantage, it finishes 'The Association believes that senior members of the profession with such a combination of qualifications, skills and experience are therefore best-fitted to fill senior leadership positions in the nation's library and information services.'

If we cannot produce such people we have no particular claim on these positions. But librarianship is fine professional training for a wide range of other careers, especially in the wider information industry.

Similarly senior professional positions will in future more often be filled by people from other sectors of the cultural and information industry, and this cross-fertilisation could be very healthy. Indeed, it is probable that the majority of John's 'top ten' jobs would be advertised now to encourage such applications.

I also disagree that we should encourage 'all librarians and particularly those under thirty-five to set career goals and to aim for a top job', and with John's statement that 'it is striving for the top that counts.'

I have in a fortunate professional life occupied two of John's 'top ten' jobs. I consider this a great privilege, but am very conscious that the strength of this profes-

sion lies in the shared commitment to service and professional values by most working in it.

I believe the contributions of all are of equal importance to the image we want the Australian people to have of our craft. I recognise also that many will never have the opportunities, even if they wished, to reach the major leadership positions. And I have on occasion applauded colleagues who have put quality of life and family issues ahead of career opportunities.

So if you want a 'top job' in John's terms then by all means aim for it, but understand it is not the only or indeed the major test of your professional contribution and commitment.

I also disagree with John suggesting the position of executive director of ALIA (his number ten top job) requires professional qualifications in librarianship. I must declare an interest here too, having been a member of the selection committee when

the position was last filled. But I believe that this position, as is the case with almost all other leadership positions in the many national professional/industry associations in Canberra, requires a quite distinctive range of leadership, management and advocacy skills. If a librarian has them too, then he or she is advantaged in applying for the position. No librarian won it of course the last time around.

It is interesting in this respect to note the widespread recognition, both in Australia and internationally, that Virginia Walsh has gained in her three years in the job, after coming to us from another professional association and with a varied business and advocacy background.

Warren Horton
Director General
National Library of Australia

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Our conference

I sympathise with those who find the cost of full attendance at the Biennial Conference in Melbourne somewhat high, but I also understand the problems of conference organisers in a large capital city such as Melbourne, endeavouring to find a sufficiently large and convenient centre under one roof in which to house the wide variety of events, exhibitions and sessions which we have come to expect from 'the Biennial'. It is interesting to note that the two voices raised on this topic in the August issue of *inCite* were either resident in Melbourne or not really very far away. Pity the Rural and Isolated Libraries Group members who have to expend a great deal of money to reach the nearest capital city before even contemplating the cost of a flight to Melbourne plus the cost of accommodation plus the cost of registration! If you live in Mt Isa or Humpty Doo you may approach your employers with some diffidence

when requesting something over a thousand dollars to attend such a conference. The outcome needs to be very valuable to justify it.

This is why it is so difficult for those who need conferences most — the library professionals and paraprofessionals who are isolated from colleagues to find the means, as well as the time away from their libraries, to attend major conferences. Even for Forum 96, the rural and isolated librarians' meeting to be held in Ballarat following the biennial conference, we have had to work hard to keep our costs down to allow a registration fee of \$95. Accommodation in Ballarat is much cheaper of course, which more than compensates for the relatively minor costs of travel to Ballarat from Melbourne and we are able to include most meals. However it would be extremely difficult for a large rural centre to find the conference accommodation required for a full biennial conference. The World Congress Centre in Melbourne is the ideal venue and I don't remem-

ber that Albury was altogether as successful at housing its exhibitors or all meetings as Melbourne will be.

Also, thank you Brian Gordon (August *inCite*, p5) for expending a tear or two on the retired librarians of our Association. But before we all get out our hankies, it is as well to note that ALIA *does* have a special annual membership fee for those of us who are retired — a mere \$60. For this you get *inCite* and you may add whatever you wish to join more than one divisional group or subscribe to more than one journal. What is a little disconcerting is that conferences and meetings do not allow a similar special fee for the retired person. Bear in mind that we cannot claim any of this off tax as most library professionals can, since we can hardly claim that these valuable occasions increase our work value to non-existent employers. Still I cannot exist without some involvement in our professional association just because nobody pays me any more. The Association is still as mind-sharpening

and exciting as it was when I joined in 1951 and I don't intend to abandon it yet.

Thelma Runkat, AALIA Ballarat

Duplicate maps

The Library and Information Service of Western Australia has a list of duplicate and discarded maps available for distribution to libraries. The selection is very varied. For a copy of the list contact Sue Ryan, Map Collections, LISWA, Alexander Library Building, Perth Cultural Centre, Perth 6000, ph (09) 427 3201, fax (09) 427 3256.

Sue Ryan, LISWA

Your voice

Your letters on any issue of relevance to the library and information sector are welcomed.

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