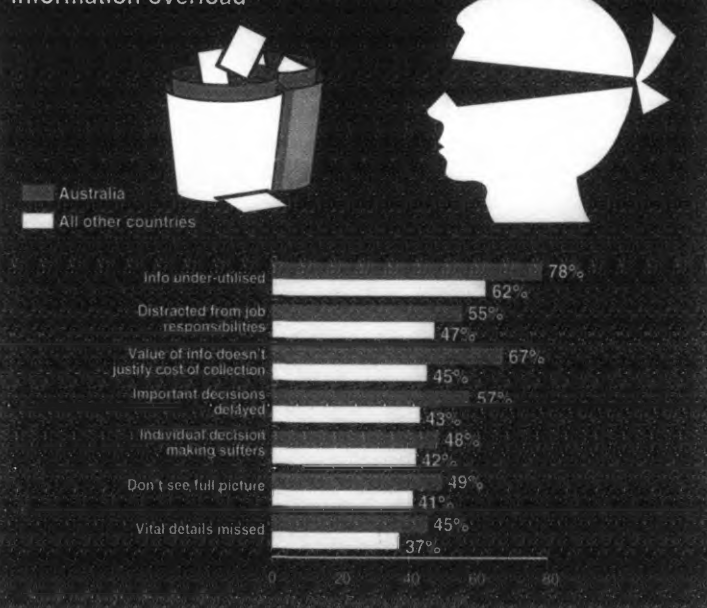


deny the difficult times experienced in the library job market today. We have acknowledged in many articles in recent times the impact of major structural change in the workplace, the impact of new information technologies, the need for continuing professional development and the importance of flexibility. As the article by Ross Bowerman stressed we have to look further than 'L' for librarian. It was this awareness in part that precipitated the addition of the word 'information' to our Association's name in 1988. Stimulated by the response from library practitioners in higher education we will be featuring university libraries in the February 1997 edition of *inCite*. That issue will present portraits of a number of university libraries, an analysis of job opportunities and the emerging industrial landscape and a story about the application of quality standards.

I wish all our readers a happy, peaceful and anxiety-free Christmas!

Problems experienced from information overload



## Quality rewarded

At the annual Australian Quality Awards ceremony held on 12 November, the libraries of the University of Wollongong and the University of Melbourne received Achievement in Business Excellence Awards. The Australian Quality Awards were introduced in 1988 and have contributed significantly to the growing awareness within the community of the importance of quality to Australia's international competitiveness. The Awards provide a framework for defining sustainable organisational excellence.

For the University of Wollongong Library, the presentation culminated a two-year commitment to the quality journey and almost a decade of planned change within the library. The process has transformed the library from a rigidly hierarchical, reactive organisation into one which is flexible, team-based and client-focused.

Participation in the awards program provided the library with a structured means of critical introspection. It reaffirmed the library's goal of creating a culture which values both team and individual achievement. More pragmatically it has prepared the library for meeting the challenges brought about by changes in University funding. Unlike many other sections of the University, the library has a clear mission statement, can identify its core activities and has data regarding its performance and costs.

The library now has a framework around which to continue developing its services in a manner which is strategic and closely aligned with the needs of its clients. This framework will facilitate the library's ability to meet

whatever challenges the future brings.

For the University of Melbourne's library, the award recognises considerable gains in the areas of staff, community relations, planning and products and services, although the library recognises that quality is a journey and they still have some distance to go.

Organisations must lead from the front by effecting their own continuous learning. This requires an approach which encourages audit and review and retains enough flexibility to move resources to new programs and drive change to achieve greater customer satisfaction.

Libraries need a vision which can be owned by the organisation and its customers. The massive increase in information both in print and electronic form requires that libraries change their roles to meet the opportunities and challenges ahead. It is in this context that many libraries have used quality principles as a tool for moving forward.

When the library began its quality journey it was seen by some to be 'lagging behind' — although many of the library's services and its collections were extremely good, the library was criticised for its lack of a service focus. It was clear that substantial quality improvement programs needed to be established as a tool for achieving organisational change and development.

A framework for sustained improvement is in place. Libraries have a future, this future will continue to change rapidly and libraries must be able to embrace the opportunities this future will provide.