

Your voice

Marketing the image: the image for the market

I am writing in response to the above article which appeared in the October issue of *inCite*. The article gave a somewhat misleading picture of the study scene in Tasmania.

As co-ordinator of Library and Information Studies, part of the Information Technology Section of the Institute of Business, TAFE Tasmania, South, I was present at the careers expo held in Hobart recently and was gratified to answer quite a few inquiries from potential students.

The courses that are offered in Tasmania are at the library technician level and are extremely popular. In fact, we have a very strict selection process and for 1999 it looks like only a third of potential students will be able to commence the course.

Admittedly, the article discusses the image of librarians and careers at the degree level, but Tasmania does not offer any degree courses in librarianship.

Leonie Atkins, Hobart Tas

More on the image

Thank you for your report on the perceptions of libraries and library professionals in the October issue. It was welcoming to hear that the general public see libraries as important cultural institutions that deserve support. The image of library professionals, however, leaves us a daunting task of reinventing ourselves.

I am a librarian in my early

twenties and people are surprised when I proudly declare that I am a librarian. I am young, don't wear glasses, don't usually wear my hair tied back, I smile a lot and, horror of horrors, I actually have a sense of humour!

Like members of our profession, library patrons cannot be stereotyped. On the one hand, some show great appreciation for tasks I just consider part of my job. I have received flowers, chocolates, food and declarations that I deserve a medal and that I am a fountain of knowledge. On the other hand, I cannot tell you the amount of times I have been frustrated to hear:

'Oh, you're a librarian, that's not hard — you must shelve books all day'

'Wow, you must get a lot of reading done'

'You need to go to uni to be a librarian? I thought you were straight from school!'

I am sure that many library professionals experience this, and I am equally sure that they, like myself, have a sense of humour which carries them through it.

Undoubtedly something needs to be done to change the image of the librarian. The best place to do this is through school education programs. Perhaps the twenty-first century will create a new and original image of the stereotypical librarian!

Kirsty Rickett, Australian College of Natural Medicine

Excite not excited, about librarians

I recently found this message on the Excite search engine help page:

'Excite Search is a revolutionary approach to search that gives you the results you expect, the way you expect them. Using some other search engines to search the Web is like asking a librarian for information on a topic and being given a million "card catalog" cards to sift through on your own.

'Excite Search, by comparison, is like having your own personal research assistant deliver targeted information and services designed to provide you with exactly what you need, whether it's items like a company stock quote, the latest score for your favorite team or tickets to that special concert.' [<http://www.excite.com/Info/searching.html?a-tip-t>]

We have still got a way to go in promoting ourselves as information specialists when you get messages like this on one of the most popular search engines. Personally I think providing internet training with a strong emphasis on information finding is an excellent way to make people realise what skills we have.

Sue Scott, Bronte NSW

Language of inclusion, part 2

I would like to express my strong support for the comments made by Lainey Furness (October, p5). It is evident that the librarian is the focus amongst library professionals, and that the library technician is not considered for the skills and knowledge they have to offer. It is quite easy to mention both

librarian and library technician as library professionals in the title of a conference or seminar — for example *Specials, Health and Law Library Professionals Conference*.

Library technicians are a group who need to be considered highly and have knowledge and skills to offer to the profession. Technicians represent a large proportion of library professionals in the field. They go through an excellent form of education: the Diploma of Library and Information Studies, and gain extensive experience in their working career and perform in other career oriented activities.

Give technicians a chance and let them show all what they have to offer.

Katherine Raper, President, NSW Library Technicians Section [ALIA]

Your voice

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

All letters should be addressed to the *inCite* editor and may be e-mailed to incite@alia.org.au, or faxed to 02 6282 2249, or posted to: Your voice, ALIA, PO Box E441, Kingston ACT 2604. Please include your name and postal address with your letter or e-mail.

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