



LIBRARY TECHNICIAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

**Nominations are now being
called for the 1998 award**

This award promotes the role of library technicians in library and information science, and the role and image of the library technician.

Nominees must be a personal member of the Library Technician Section and hold a library technician qualification recognised by ALIA. Members should note that any nomination for the award must be made in strict confidence.

Nomination forms are available from ALIA National Office, PO Box E441, Kingston 2604 phone 02 6285 1877, fax 02 6282 2249 e-mail awards@alia.org.au

URL <http://www.alia.org.au/awards.html>

Nominations close 1 June 1998



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ALIA MANAGER OF THE YEAR AWARD

**Nominations are now being
called for the 1998 award**

The ALIA Manager of the Year award recognises and encourages exceptional management practices within the library and information sector. Nominees may be a personal member responsible for managing a library service or individual library, or responsible for a significant service or project within a larger organisational unit.

Nomination forms are available from ALIA National Office, PO Box E441, Kingston 2600 phone 02 6285 1877, fax 02 6282 2249 e-mail awards@alia.org.au URL <http://www.alia.org.au/awards.html>

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Libraries are open for business

Alan Samagalski, Bizline librarian, State Library of South Australia

Over the past ten years, from Melbourne to Paris and from New York to Singapore, there has been a wave of library expansion and rebuilding. Singapore is currently putting \$50 million into the redevelopment of its national library. Several years ago the New York Public Library System — which runs on an annual budget of US\$200 million — opened a science, industry and business library, which receives more than 750 000 visits per year.

In Victoria, the Kennett government is spending \$160 million on the redevelopment of the State Library of Victoria which will transform it into one of the world's great libraries.

However, one factor which is increasingly common to almost all libraries, whether they are located in Australia or overseas, is that they must justify their existence. Relevancy is high on the agenda and there is pressure to see some sort of economic return for all the investment. Libraries must provide services which enhance the economic well-being of the state.

One such service is Bizline, the business information service of the State Library of South Australia, which aims to provide direct, practical information to business.

Bizline does not act as a business consultant. We do not advise people about the best shares to buy or the best investments, but rather, we provide the information people need to make those sort of decisions for themselves.

Most of the information Bizline provides comes from commercial online databases (such as MEDLINE), compiled, maintained and updated by private companies, universities or libraries. Using these databases, Bizline has supplied thousands of clients with information on every conceivable business topic.

Perhaps the best way to explain what Bizline does is by example. For instance, we were asked what is the state of the telecommunications system in Vietnam. To find out we accessed a number of online databases containing the full-text of business reports on the international telecommunications industry.

From them we were able to provide an overview of government regulations and policy concerning Vietnam's bur-

geoning telecommunications industry, joint ventures with foreign firms and the military's use of the telecommunications network for commercial purposes.

In a wider context, Bizline's job is to navigate a path through the ocean of information which often seems endless, chaotic and even bewildering. In this so-called 'Information age' we are deluged with facts, figures, sounds and images.

Libraries are the first port of call in this process because whether the information comes to us in printed or electronic form, we have to have some way of controlling it, filtering out the rubbish, and storing the useful information for current and future reference.

With the advent of the Internet and access to huge quantities of electronic information, the natural question is: do we need libraries?

First, we will always need librarians because we will always need someone to gather, store and organise information in such a way that it can be retrieved on demand. And secondly, we will continue to need libraries in the traditional sense — that is, a building — because books and other printed resources are not going to disappear.

Libraries will also continue to be important cultural centres that have an impact on a city or country's broad economic perspective.

It is a fact that the most successful cities, the most vibrant economies, the most dynamic cultures, have well-funded public institutions such as universities, museums, art galleries, sports facilities and libraries. Such cities are open to ideas from the outside world. They are places where people from all over the world gather.

Libraries, and library services such as Bizline, allow us to make effective use of the sort of information resources available to us worldwide. No city which hopes to be part of a global economy can afford to impede the free-flow of information on which highly-developed economies now rely, whether that information comes in print or electronic form. Nor can we afford to neglect the library system which brings order to the chaotic ocean of information which surrounds us and allows relevant information to be located on demand. ■