

Your voice

Winning library

Further to the article 'Youthful creations: designs for all ages' in *inCite*, March 1998 (p9), the Council has been awarded the following architectural award: *For the Brisbane City Council Library Services Strategic Direction — Reorganisation and Refurbishment Programme; by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects Queensland Chapter; to the Brisbane City Council, Architectural Design Group.*

This major architectural restructuring has consequently been short-listed for the RAlA Queensland State Awards in May 1998 as a *Commendable work of architecture in the region of Brisbane*, and if successful enters the national final in October.

This is high recognition for the work done in partnership by the Council's architect in charge, Peter Roy, the manager, community information and libraries, and their colleagues.

Ruth Cameron, Brisbane

A question of image

I am writing to express my complete dismay at the current ALIA Library Week poster entitled 'The incredible library'.

For me this image epitomizes the depth of our fear that society cannot accept us, or allow us to be ourselves within our profession.

1. The ad itself, and particularly the depicted figure: This figure is androgynous. It is the idealized form of what males want from females in our society today. It has large boobs and an unrealistically small waist. It has an asexual face with no humanity/personality whatsoever, and strong male characteristics in its shoulders, arms, and large hands. Such a figure personifies the male perception of a female as a thing to be screwed (solely a sexual object), that will not challenge him personally in any way or form.

This figure has nothing whatsoever to do with women who serve others with their knowledge, experience and skills, and bring their own personalities into the services that they pro-

vide (whatever profession we may work in).

2. The issues: Librarianship is a largely female profession, and many of us are mature women. If we do not dare to be who we are, what are we? If society does not care for our service, our skills and abilities, experience and wisdom, what is society? What are we doing with a 'professional' body to represent us, that does not dare to represent us as we are?

For me this poster is an apology for my existence, my experience, my skills, and my gump-tion. Librarianship may be 'dying', in the way that so many of the service professions (dominated by women) are being devalued, but this is society's problem, not ours. We cannot go on negating ourselves because our services and abilities do not appear in the accountant's 'bottom line'. It is the accounting that loses touch with humanity, not us.

This figure is inhuman — what are we?

Cathryn Speck, Prahran

Larger-than-life librarian

We've known for a long time that you have to be superhuman to be a librarian these days. So, what fun to discover 'The incredible library' as a special edition poster for Australian Library Week!

I thought the larger-than-life sister of Arnie Schwarzenegger was a snappy and clever way to promote that things are changing down at the local library.

ALW is all about marketing, and this poster is sure to make people think twice about libraries and librarians. As well, it will undoubtedly polarise opinion between those who love it and those who loathe it. That too, is healthy.

I'm a sci-fi, *Terminator* fan and as soon as I saw the poster, the words 'I'll be back!' came to mind. Librarians never fade away!

I am sure you will receive letters of outrage concerning this poster. I thought it was fun. I

congratulate ALIA for taking the risk to run with it, and for challenging the complacency and caution that so often smothers adventure in our profession!

Jan Gaebler, Adelaide

Today's librarian

Not surprisingly, I have heard some disparaging remarks about all three of the posters our Association has decided to use for this year's Australian Library Week: the 'moonscape' one is inaccurate, the people one is boring, 'The incredible library' does not depict our true profession.

The 'Incredible Library' happens to be my favourite of the three posters. I notice it is also the favourite of Senator Alston. The poster is today, it is colourful, lively, eye-catching, trendy, and attractive. And I do not use these words lightly. I have the three posters hanging from the doors of the corridor to my office and there is no doubt that all who pass just love 'The incredible library' — for all of these reasons.

Dare I tell you that when ALIA General Council and the Board of Education along with each of the Branch Presidents, met in March, all but two of those present selected 'The incredible library' as their preferred poster?

There will be members of our profession who will find it offensive. But there are also many of us who realise a need for the attention it draws to our profession and its place in today's society.

Our membership is many and varied, which is why we do not agree on everything. Many of us are mature-aged and female. But I would suggest that ours is a profession which needs to draw from society's youth. What better way to do this than with the 'incredible librarian'?

Kerry Smith, Perth

Megawoman unchained

'The incredible library' image has attracted some criticism as being not the type of image that we wish to project of the profession. I think that is a matter of

personal opinion and I do not agree.

I would like to point out that, regarded objectively as a piece of graphic design, the poster is highly effective. Good graphic design grabs the attention, provokes strong feelings and stays in the memory long after the original image has gone.

It is obvious from the amount of comment that the poster has generated that it's achieving one aim — it is provoking strong feelings all over the place. Unfortunately, when strong feelings are evoked, it is normally only the negative ones that are expressed. I would like to try and redress that balance a little.

The images in this poster appeal directly to the young and avoid the stereotypical middle-class, middle-aged concepts of the second poster in the series 'Libraries: Pathways to Knowledge' which I (again speaking personally) find much more indigestible.

If I were 16, I would not be drawn into my public or school library by a picture of an obviously well heeled middle class group, who can afford the money to buy laptops and the time to sit together in familial cosiness improving their minds — but 'The incredible library' might just drag me in.

I am not 16 (alas) but I think we need to realise we must appeal to those who don't use our services far more than those who do — even if, in doing so, we don't take ourselves quite as seriously as some would like. Isn't that what Australian Library Week is all about?

Vicki Wilson, Perth

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.