

Towards 2000 for South Australian technicians

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The 10th National Library Technicians Conference in September provided the perfect forum for the state sections to highlight, consolidate and work towards a national unified approach on issues which are of concern to all technicians.

Two main issues which technicians in South Australia have been addressing for a number of years, and discussed during the conference are outlined below.

The review of Minimum Essential Educational Qualifications statement

Since 1995, the section has corresponded on a regular basis with the Office for the Commissioner for Public Employment (OCPE) on the review of the Minimum Essential Educational Qualifications statement for positions with library technician classifications within the public sector workforce in South Australia. We have requested repeatedly that the educational statement 'Library Technician Certificate or equivalent' be reviewed to mirror the statement on positions for librarians.

For the past nine years the statement on classified librarian positions has read: 'Eligible for professional membership of ALIA'. The section believes it would be equitable for the statement on library technician positions to read: 'Eligible for Library Technician membership of ALIA.'

Negotiations with the Commissioner's Office on this issue have not been successful to date for a number of reasons. We have underlined the confusion amongst employers between Certificate levels II, III, Library Technician Certificate, Associate Diploma and now the Diploma in Library and Information, and accreditation by ALIA. During the period of negotiation, Commissioner's Determination N° 27 was replaced by the *PSM Act (Public Sector Management Act) Direction N° 5*, date of operation 1 January 1997.

As a result of this our educational statement now reads: 'A Library Technician's Certificate, or an Associate Diploma in Library Studies or equivalent'. Updated as far as 1997, but already almost two years out of date with the introduction of the Diploma of Library and Information Studies in 1998. Even more confusing for employers?

Despite ongoing negotiations and wider consultation over the past two

years, the Commissioner for Public Employment has responded negatively to our proposal, with an invitation to address any further issues with them.

The section will now request support from ALIA South Australian Branch regarding this matter, via the newly formed education committee.

The Diploma in Library and Information Studies is now a national course — is it time for a national unified approach to this on-going problem? Have technicians in other states also been grappling with this issue? Were you successful? What strategies did you use, and may we share the information? Should this be an issue for all ALIAtecs? if so, how do we want to deal with it?

Continuing professional development for library technicians

Continuing professional development (CPD) is an issue that was highlighted repeatedly throughout the 8th National Library Technicians Conference in Darwin in 1995. A suggestion of running weekend workshops was embraced by the committee who took up the challenge with enthusiasm.

A subcommittee was formed to coordinate and plan the first workshop, with the objectives to provide a friendly and welcoming atmosphere, and a forum where library technicians, technicians-in-training and library assistants could meet and get to know one another. It would have a dual purpose as a professional development activity and a forum in which to encourage delegates to present papers and share experiences in an environment in which they felt comfortable.

Twenty-seven delegates attended the first SALT workshop, *Marketing for change* held at Mannum in June 1996. The workshop ran all day Friday and Saturday morning. This, we hoped, would encourage delegates to stay overnight and participate in the whole workshop, rather than register for day sessions. Costs were kept to a minimum to encourage part-time workers and students to attend.

Since then, SALT has run the following workshops: *In the know: the role; the changing environment; the profession*, 1997; *Tools of the trade*, Lyndoch, 1998; *Towards new horizons*, 1999.

Committee members have all been involved in the planning, organisation,

and facilitation of these four workshops, and have given generously of their time and commitment to ensure their viability.

The workshops have enabled our delegates to network, discuss problems and find solutions. They have provided a friendly, comfortable environment to put first-time presenters at ease. They have also given us the opportunity to form new friendships, and strengthen professional links, especially with our delegates from Victoria.

With the income raised from the workshops we funded two registrations (one full and one student) to *ALIA 98: Pathways to Knowledge*, allowing seven delegates to attend sessions throughout the conference. We also ran internet training sessions, and funded a registration to the South Australian Branch conference in Clare.

Forums such as these also allow us to raise the profile of ALIA and the Library Technician Section, and encourage colleagues and students to become members. The South Australian Library Technician Section has embraced wholeheartedly the concept of continuing professional development for technicians, provided by technicians. Our plans towards 2000 will be to continue to provide quality activities at a reasonable cost, to enable access to all library workers and students in our state.

We have a basic set of guidelines collated and added to from our experiences. We are more than happy to share this information with other states, should you wish to use them or adapt them to suit your own requirements.

The Library Studies Unit, Adelaide Institute of TAFE — an update

The section has been delighted to receive a letter from the director of the Adelaide Institute of TAFE, reassuring us that the teaching unit is not under threat, and that 'the current changes within the unit have been designed to ensure the long-term viability of the library studies program, and to improve access for all students.'

The Unit has also initiated an On-line Hub for students. The hub offers up-to-date access to staff and courses, and career-related information. It accommodates the provision of on-line delivery of a range of course modules, and further development of others. ■