

## Your voice

### The rise of the 'chief knowledge officer'...

In recent editions of both *Business Review Weekly* (24 November) and the *Australian Financial Review* (22 December), one of the jobs considered to be emerging at the present time is that of chief knowledge officer.

Ian McBride, chief knowledge officer for KPMG, is presented by BRW as an example. His job is described as 'collecting, collating and categorising all the processes and knowledge of KPMG in Australia and New Zealand.' Sound familiar?

People holding such positions are described in the *Australian Financial Review* as being 40+ with a previous job in human relations, IT training or corporate education. Education qualifications include tertiary qualifications in business (preferably an MBA) or IT. A typical salary is \$160 000 to \$200 000.

This is ridiculous. This is a job that should be done by a librarian. We are specifically trained in information management. A major part of our role is to facilitate communica-

tion throughout an organisation. Many of us are already managing intranets. We have developed skills dealing with people, not just hunks of technology. And we get paid nowhere near \$200 000!

This is simply a case of other professions barging in to stake a claim in our territory. Are we going to sit still and do nothing as we did when computer technicians started calling themselves 'information managers'? Is ALIA going to take some action? I wait with baited breath.

#### Maelor Himbury, Niddrie Vic

*The rise of 'new information work' is an inexorable fact of life. But its complexities are not well captured by newspaper articles featuring starring roles for people earning salaries of \$200 000 a year. The fact is that less than one per cent of all employees across all Australian occupations reach salaries of even half that amount. Clearly, this is side-show territory. Change of the magnitude now being spawned by the so-called information revolution is always challenging and can often be threatening. ALIA has been addressing these issues for some time, as exemplified by the recent ALIA 2000 conference. A glance at inCite's December 'Work watch' column gives some indication of the complex inter-relationship of traditional librarian positions and these rapidly-growing new information jobs. Many librarians are dealing with*

*the challenge by applying for and getting these new jobs. More will need to do so in the future. November's inCite focussed on some of the major issues involved in doing so.*

Editor

### Customer service in librarianship? Does it exist?

A recent visit to my local public library showed me that library staff still haven't got it when it comes to customer service.

I had been using a magazine from a file kept behind the reference desk. When I was returning the file, I asked whether it was okay to leave a magazine on top of the file it came with. The reference librarian snarled and told me to 'file it in the folder'.

Library customers should not have to file any item. This is the role of the library staff. It is one of the main customer benefits for most library clients to be able to find an item easily because it has been correctly filed by library staff.

The self-service aspect of libraries today — be they business, academic, special or public — is to facilitate easier access to resources, and not to punish clients for using these resources by expecting them to re-file the items used. This leads to mis-

placed items, which means that resources can't be easily accessed, and results in an increase in workload for a library's staff who have to hunt down the mis-filed items.

Being snarled at means that I am less likely to support my local library service — no-one returns to a shop where they have been treated rudely. I will now visit another branch instead!

Libraries will close if people do not use them. So to all of those people who work in the 'frontline' of library and information services, please do not snarl, no matter how bad your day may be! Remember that the 'customer is king', for without them you have no job!

Cindy Tschernitz, Williamstown Vic

### 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](mailto: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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