

## Your voice

### Farewell to professional librarians?

I am very concerned about the trend at the Australian National University (ANU) Library in which professional library jobs being re-classified as 'administrative officer' positions. I have raised the issue with ANU library (including the university librarian), my colleagues, and the Union over the past two years but to no avail. Apparently mine is a voice in the wilderness and even ALIA is not interested unless they hear the same complaint from many more of its members. The NTEU is very busy with other issues, but is concerned and might look into it in the future.

To my knowledge, there is no other university in Australia carrying out this change of classification for librarians. I think that there is a total of around 163 ANU library staff and out of those, less than 30 positions are now left in the library stream. This has been a gradual process which

started a couple of years ago, whereby any positions vacated were reclassified (and frequently downgraded) as administrative officer positions before being advertised and filled. Library stream 5/6's become administration stream 5's, library stream 7's become administration stream 6/7's, library stream 10's become administration stream 9/10's. The library stream still exists as a legitimate stream in the current *Enterprise Bargaining Agreement and Salary Schedule 2003-2006* but the ANU library chooses to ignore this classification for its staff. This, of course, represents a huge saving in the cost of salaries and applicants need not have a professional qualification.

**Linda Lee Elford**

### Generational differences?

*Frontline* (August 2004) mentions 'numerous articles' informing us that newer generations bring very different values to the work-place and that such values do not include

automatic allegiance to a professional organisation.

However, the assertion that generations X and Y lack organisational loyalty must be challenged. For example, a recent study titled 'Leadership, climate, work attitudes and commitment: is generation X really that different?' reveals no significant differences between the views of generation xers and baby-boomers with regard to leadership and organisational commitment. Similarly, the *Australian July-Sept 2004 Hudson Report* shows negligible differences between the workplace motivators for generations X, Y and the boomers.

Values of 'diversity' and 'disloyalty' attributed to younger generations are especially problematic if considered in the context of fashionable rhetoric about the 'choice' and 'flexibility' offered by casual and short-term contract work. The former justifies the latter? It is certainly difficult to reconcile these notions with the frustrations of many under-employed

graduates as witnessed, for example, on the ALIA NewGrads e-list.

Casual work is a manager's convenience and job-seeker's reality. It is unrealistic to expect ALIA to influence the size or quality of the employment market, except through its continued advocacy on behalf of all types of libraries. Simplistically, the more that our sector is valued by decision-makers, the more funds and jobs will follow. Perhaps this connection needs clearer articulation in the recruitment drive for graduates of all generations whose primary value, I suspect, is rewarding professional employment. Where there are jobs, there will be loyalty.

**Benjamin Wheal, Adelaide**

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

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