

# Workwatch

## University library professionals

This month's *inCite* focuses on university libraries. The range of services provided by library professionals in universities to students, teachers, and researchers is covered in detail elsewhere in these pages. The extent to which universities and the wider community depend on these services is the underlying reason why library workers in higher education institutions have needed to be vigilant in recent times about professional recognition. From an industrial perspective, this focus touches on some of the issues of professional standing covered in earlier 'Workwatch' articles.

The standing of university library professionals and any threats to their recognition is similar to the experience of health librarians, in three ways. Firstly, both groups are specialised, particularly with regard to reference skills and the need to maintain knowledge of relevant research publications across disciplines, often at a highly technical level. (The level of specialisation among health librarians and their university and research counterparts is the basis for library professionals in both sectors having their own groups within the ALIA network.) Secondly, university and health libraries are often the first areas to face cutbacks in times of austerity – as though libraries are almost an 'optional extra' and not part of the critical mass of an institution. Thirdly, there has been a tendency within the higher education, health, and public sectors generally to reduce or eliminate designated professional positions from employment classifications.

This last development has meant that many library posts have been advertised as general administrative positions, even if reference is made to library qualifications within a job description or advertisement. Where a position is not specifically designated as being that of librarian or library technician, the implication arises that the professional training required for admission as a library professional is not being recognised or deemed essential for completion of at least some of the work performed in libraries.

These are the kinds of issues about which ALIA needs to be informed so as to make appropriate representations to organisations where recognition of library professionals is inadequate. ALIA has made firm representations concerning hospital libraries, Health Department libraries in two States, to Local Government Associations concerning employment of library staff, to universities and to law libraries where the more general term of 'library officer' has been used and relevant qualifications deemed only 'desirable'. Members of the library and information workforce with concerns of this kind are encouraged to approach ALIA for advice and, where possible, for ALIA to take remedial action.

## Fair Work regime

Details of the *Fair Work Act* are at <http://www.fairwork.gov.au>, with special links to information for employees, employers, and contractors. These links include information as to sections of the workforce covered by Fair Work provisions and those which remain covered by State laws. The number of workplaces which are covered by Federal provisions is likely to increase within the coming year, as the South Australian and Tasmanian Governments have indicated that they will refer industrial relations powers to the Commonwealth, as provided for by section 51(xxxvii) of the Constitution. The Queensland Government has indicated in-principle agreement with this approach, which was taken by Victoria in 1996. The effect of these proposed measures will be that most private sector workplaces in these States will be covered by Federal employment laws.

## Teacher librarians: continuing industrial campaigns

The Australian Capital Territory branch of the Australian Education Union has endorsed in principle the outcome of negotiations with the ACT Department of Education and Training. Negotiations are now occurring to incorporate agreed outcomes in a new Enterprise Agreement. These outcomes include a 6% salary increase based

on 4 x 1.5% installments to be paid on 1 July 2009, 1 January and 1 July 2010, and 1 January 2011. While this level of increase falls short of what was sought by the AEU, acceptance of the outcome is described by the Union as "a significant contribution by ACT public education teachers to wage restraint in the current global economic climate". Further details of the formal negotiations are at <http://www.aeuact.asn.au>



Heather Nash  
Industrial Relations  
Advisor

In Queensland and South Australia, teachers are continuing their respective industrial campaigns following expiry of collective agreements. Updates on matters affecting teacher librarians in these states are at <http://www.qtu.asn.au> and [www.aeusa.asn.au](http://www.aeusa.asn.au).

Heather Nash  
Advisor, Industrial Relations & Human Resources  
[heather.nash@alia.org.au](mailto:heather.nash@alia.org.au)

## LOOKING FOR A GOOD HOME

As part of a periodicals rationalisation process the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia wishes to dispose of about 400 periodical titles. Many titles are from the late 1800s and early 1900s – about 33% of the titles are Australian, about 66% overseas titles. Many are foreign language titles; many are bound into annual volumes. Contact Library Manager for a list: [kevin.griffin@bigpond.com](mailto:kevin.griffin@bigpond.com)

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