Your voice

Xboxes in libraries

What a disappointment it was to read about the introduction of Xboxes into the Barossa Council Public Library (*inCite* Vol 27, March 2006). In a time of ever-reducing literacy amongst young children and where children are subject to an almost continual assault of images both on and off screen, to decide to introduce the Xbox is a foolish and ultimately self-defeating way of getting kids to read. It's not just about getting the numbers through the library door; the point is that we want to encourage reading (yes, books!) amongst children to hopefully foster a life-long love of reading and learning. We all know that the nurturing of book-love must initially be developed at home and at school. It is no help at all if libraries submit to the commercial culture of Xboxes and undo all the good work being done by parents and teachers.

An Xbox console in a library will not make a child discover books and reading; quite the opposite.

John Williams, Victorian College of the Arts Library

Developing librarians

In relation to the recent correspondence about the need for strategies to nurture, support and develop new graduates and younger people into the profession of librarianship, I thought readers might be interested in a program the University of Wollongong Library (UWL) have introduced. We have for a number of years felt the need to address this issue at both a local level and also to support the ongoing development and sustainability of the profession.

In 2005, UWL introduced a Library Professional Cadetship Program. The program was a result of UWL finding it increasingly difficult to attract professional librarians with the relevant skills, knowledge and attributes to fill vacant positions. Articles in the literature and various discussions have recognised the pressing need to nurture and encourage young people to enter the profession. An additional element in UWL's thinking was the perceived lack of librarians who were willing and able to assume leadership positions, thus adding to the challenges associated with succession planning.

The initiators of the program, associate librarian Lyn Wright and administration co-ordinator Jo-anne Lombardi, will present a paper on the program at the Asia-Pacific Conference on Library and Information Education and Practice (A-LIEP) conference in Singapore in April. The paper outlines the process of developing a model, briefly describes the recruitment process and offers some preliminary evaluation. While traineeships and cadetships are not new, UWL's model has some potentially unique elements such as the availability of funding to support study, the concept of broad-based work experience and a process of planned and recorded evaluation and co-ordination.

In brief, the program is designed to attract graduates of any discipline who are committed to embarking on their post-graduate qualifications in librarianship. With a three-year employment contract, professional cadets are paid at library technician level and are provided study leave, an annual fee and textbook allowance and professional mentoring. Over the three-year period they rotate to every team in the library with the final six months offering the opportunity to choose an area of specialisation. Although no guarantee of continuing employment at UWL can be offered, cadets will clearly be very competitive employment prospects, possessing not only post-graduate qualifications but also a sound foundation of experience in all aspects of professional practice.

Currently UWL has employed two professional cadets and will be evaluating their progress and the Library's capacity to employ additional cadets.

Felicity McGregor, University of Wollongong Library

Still searching

I have had the November issue on my desk for months, intrigued by your reference to Bulwer-Lytton's building of roads in Australia. I do not know the answer, but will definitely keep looking. (He was my grandfather's father, so I have a personal interest.) If you – in the meantime – do find out, I would love to know. The thrill of the chase...

Pamela Lloyd, John A Farquharson Library, Melbourne Theosophical Society