

1998 Annual Membership Meeting - Summary of Activities

Linden Fairbairn, Librarian for Economics at Fisher Library, the main library of the University of Sydney, talked about academic librarianship in Australia at the October 6 InULA fall membership meeting held in the Women's Faculty Club of the IU Memorial Union. Serving a student body similar in size to that of IUB, the University of Sydney Library employs a total staff of 280, eighty-six of whom are librarians. Very few student workers are used, mostly just for reshelving tasks. Because many university libraries are facing decreases in funding, and are restructuring, as well, the job situation for academic librarians is tight at the moment, and contract positions (e.g., ranging from a few months to five years) are becoming more common, at the expense of permanent positions. Very few academic librarians in Australia have faculty status, and hence are not eligible for sabbatical leaves, but after ten years of continued employment at an institution, each staff member receives three months of paid leave. Most librarians belong to unions, which negotiates the terms of employment for their members.

Fisher Library has both undergraduate and research collections, which share a common reference desk. It is staffed by a team of librarians, including subject liaisons, the rare books librarian, instruction and information services librarians, lending services librarians, and catalogers. Each receives twenty-eight hours of training before serving at the desk, where they field 300-450 queries a day. Subject liaison librarians are responsible for the acquisition mainly of reference materials and electronic resources. Teaching faculty members select print materials for the collections. Linden vividly brought out the similarities and differences in the Sydney and Bloomington situations. She is representing Mary Strow in UGLS on a six-month exchange -- stop by there and become acquainted!

InULA President Larry Griffin recognized long-term members Nancy Cridland and Gloria Westfall, and announced this year's committee chairs. He addressed the next 25 years of InULA, speculating whether it might be a "mission impossible." Asking what members wanted InULA's priorities to be in the coming year, he noted they probably included keeping the organization solvent and alive for collaborative efforts; funding research and professional activities; and providing a forum for discussion of professional issues. He requested all present to write their top priority on pieces of paper to be collected and compiled by the Board for future action. He also noted that without member support, most priorities may remain unaccomplished. In that vein, he called for those who could help sort books in preparation for the spring book sale to give their names to Gary Charbonneau or Roger Beckman. He also announced a lunch in November or December centered on a topic of interest to members, and asked for input on what issues members would like to discuss.

Submitted by Nancy Boerner
Vice-President/President Elect