

## In each other's shoes: a library job exchange

*Barbara Frame & Jill Britton*

*[Barbara is the Librarian of the Hewitson Library, Knox College, Dunedin. Jill is the Deputy Librarian of New College, University of Southampton.]*

### *Barbara writes:*

A few years ago I met a theology lecturer from the UK who spent a couple of years in Dunedin, and after he moved to Southampton we stayed in touch. He knew that I was interested in working overseas for a time, and one day suggested that I contact Jill, who does a broadly similar job here, about the possibility of an exchange.

So I emailed Jill, virtually out of the blue, and she gamely responded and we corresponded for several months, discussing the nature of our jobs and practical matters that would have to be sorted out if the exchange came about. We exchanged CVs, and collection policy and other documents. Gradually our ifs, turned into whens, and by December 1996 I was in a position to approach the Library Committee of the Hewitson Library at Knox College with a detailed proposal, to which they agreed.

### *Jill writes:*

Barbara and I first made contact more than a year before the start of the exchange, and although this may seem a long period I think it was helpful to have enough time for detailed planning and preparation (and also to save some money!). Being able to communicate by e-mail made the initial process very easy as problems and questions could be dealt with instantly, and it was easier to get to know one another in that more 'conversational' mode.

The exchange itself was effected relatively smoothly. We agreed to keep our own salaries which must have helped getting employer agreement; and we were also able to exchange houses, and would have done the same with cars if I had had one. We finally agreed on the period June to December which gave us both a good spread of the seasons. This means that I shall experience two winters in six months (!), but in fact it would have been quite difficult for Barbara to have started at New College at any other time than the summer when there was sufficient calm in the academic year to give her time to get to know the systems before the students arrived back. We also arranged dates so that we overlapped in Dunedin for a week. Barbara was able to show me procedures at Knox, and it was good actually to meet one another.

### *Barbara writes:*

From my point of view, it has worked beautifully. The New College Library isn't much bigger than the Hewitson Library, but it's busier and has more staff. As subject librarian for Theology, English, Art (in all of which I can claim some knowledge or expertise) and (completely new to me) sport, I've been able to broaden my experience; I've gained practice with Dewey and familiarity with TinLib, the library system used here.

Evenings and weekends leave me free to see as much of England as possible, and indulge my passion for theatre. And during the several weeks between leaving Dunedin and arriving here, I was able to see quite a lot of Europe.

I know that when the time comes I'll be glad to return home, but at present I'm happy to absorb as much as I can. I'd certainly recommend the job-exchange experience to anyone who's considering it.

*Jill writes:*

I have enjoyed my time in New Zealand enormously and will be very sad to say goodbye to friends and colleagues I have met here. Work has been interesting, and I have made good contacts with fellow professionals in Dunedin. There is a much more integrated approach to librarianship in New Zealand; people move easily between academic, public and special library positions than they might in the UK, and they also cooperate more closely. I have been involved with a grant application during my time here which has involved Knox College, the University of Otago and Dunedin Public Library which has been a useful experience in all sorts of ways. I have also been impressed by the extent to which e-mail and the Internet are used by professionals. I hadn't used Dynix (or a solely Unix-based system) before, and I have grappled with the complexities of NZBN!

One of the great attractions of doing a job exchange is of course the chance to see another part of the world and I have been making the most of my time here by getting away every other weekend when possible. New Zealand is certainly a very beautiful country with spectacular scenery. I shall go back with many memories of new experiences: watching yellow-eyed penguins in Sandfly Bay, sandflies! a helicopter flight over Milford Sound and landing on a glacier, the sight of six albatrosses flying over Taieroa Head, sitting next to the pilot in a tiny 10 seater plane on the way to Stewart Island. I am also looking forward to my Summer/Christmas holiday when I shall see something of the North Island and Australia.

I too can thoroughly recommend doing a job-exchange, and am grateful to Barbara for helping it to happen so effortlessly.

*Although we didn't know it there is an organisation which helps effect exchanges between librarians. Known as Libex it is the Bureau for International Library Staff Exchange which acts as a clearing house for library and information staff interested in arranging job exchanges with LIS professionals in other countries. It is based at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, Thyomas Parry Library. (Aberystwyth is one of the major library schools in the UK.) The Internet address is: <http://www.aber.ac.uk/~tph/www/libex.html>*

## News

Perhaps you may not have heard yet that ....

The new **Head Librarian of Lohe Memorial Library**, Luther Seminary, North Adelaide is to be **Mark Sutherland**, presently the Deputy Director of the University of South Africa Library in Pretoria. Mark will take up his new position early in 1998 when he and his family migrate to Adelaide. We warmly welcome him into the Association and look forward to getting acquainted at conferences, as well as working with him professionally.