

Solo Librarians

Sue Lacey Bryant in her book '*Personal Professional Development and the Solo Librarian*' defines solo librarians as:

"all those librarians, information scientists, and information workers who manage information units on their own, or who work as the solo professional, providing a library and information service with the minimum of support"

It is extremely difficult to estimate the numbers of solo librarians with any accuracy although *The Library and Information Statistics Tables* (L.I.S.T.) published by the **Library and Information Statistics Unit, Loughborough** suggests that many of the 7264 'special' librarians manage information services on their own.

The recent **Women in Senior Management** research and requests from individual LA members suggest that solo librarians have particular career disadvantages such as professional isolation and difficulties in pursuing their own continuing professional development.

Although **The Library Association** already provides a considerable number of services from which solo professionals benefit, they are not 'labelled' as being of particular interest to solo workers. These services include

- the Library Association Record;
- a geographic membership network in the form of the LA Branch structure;
- sector or specialist networks in the form of special interest Groups ;
- advice and information on career development and learning opportunities, professional issues and employment problems.

The LA is looking at ways it can more visibly support its solo members. The **Special Libraries Professional Adviser** has established networks for voluntary sector library and information staff and for consultants and independents to help overcome isolation in those sectors. We know that many school libraries staff also operate as solo professionals and rely on the LA for information and support.

What would help you feel more a part of the LA ?

With email contact round the world - is the answer really a network open to everyone working on their own? Does the Group Committee discuss how it meets the needs of solo professional and paraprofessional staff? Could you ask your specialist Group to set up a network ? Is a Branch contacts list more helpful? Would you volunteer to co-ordinate this ? Would a CPD course for solo staff have sufficient common useful content for you to book a place ?

What additional services would members like to see provided by the LA for solo members ?

We may not be able to change the world for special librarians overnight but we'd like to hear from you on this. LA Professional Advisers would like to hear from special librarians on this topic.

Please contact Lyndsay Rees-Jones for further information.