

LYN STEYN
Head Librarian,
Fish Hoek Library



Crossing to the dark side

There is a Force on the 'other' side of the counter unknown to library workers. We are shielded from its effects by an invisible professional armour that is ruthlessly stripped from us by HR gnomes as they wipe out all trace of you when the hour of departure strikes – no finger prints for the machine, no e-mail or telephone links in Cityweb, no backdoor key or alarm codes. One minute you are responsible for a multimillion rand facility, the minute after midnight no one knows your name anymore.

Veteran retirees all tell me that you have so much to do you cannot believe how you managed a working life before retirement. I have known only a life structured around work. Being inherently lazy, 'bone idle' is my true talent. With such genes, what will induce me to get up in the morning?

The only recourse for a liberated ex-worker is to turn to the dark side of the Force and become a library member, a concerned citizen, or to infiltrate the Friends' association. The dark side is powerful and the attributes with which it endows its adherents can make the new acolyte giddy with delight at the vast array of applications. Temptations abound: join your local library and terrorise its staff with insider knowledge, write letters to your councillor or even directly to the mayor, rant about every conceivable triviality on talk radio. In your fight against fading into obscurity or if you 'do not go gentle into that good night' (Dylan Thomas), you can build a whole new career as a thoroughly annoying old lady . . . Oh wait, that was the old career *in* the library service.

Can I learn to forego the malicious anticipation of reducing my local librarian to tears to lure me out of my house? Jane, the next twenty years are going to be so much fun surviving together. Jane? Come back, Jane.