



the front line

Information For The Nation

Advocacy. In my last column I suggested that the best service the Association can now render to members is a systematic and sustained national campaign of library advocacy. 'Active espousal' is how the Macquarie Dictionary defines the term, but it is not in general use in the current literature of Australian librarianship (although it is used in the draft interim constitution of CALAIS — the proposed Council of Australian Libraries and Information Services). Yet, as Anne Hazell the President of the SA Branch of the LAA has written 'advocacy represents a concept which is of vital concern to us all! It is the best description of what we must be about, comprehending many of the activities which we include under the broad banner of lobbying, marketing, promotion, and display. However, advocacy is much stronger than any of those, and includes such actions as interpreting the role of the library to its community, participating actively in institutional programs and taking a leadership role outside the library as well as within.

There can be no argument that to date much of our more assertive action in support of libraries has been reactive rather than proactive. As Bob Sharman stated in Canberra last year 'We as a profession, are reactive rather than proactive' and the

Association will need to continue reacting as strongly as we can to any decisions which impact on library services and the integrity of the national library network.

It is time, though, to be positive and to be seen to be positive. It is time to make the best capital of our significant assets. The difficulty the library community has always had in this country is in resolving just which organisation has the primary responsibility for library advocacy. There have been, and are, a number of major players including AACOBs, ALIC, NLA, ASLA and the ALPC. The reality is that none of these organisations has had the resources and infrastructure to provide the leadership for a sustained national campaign of total library advocacy.

Your Association has the infrastructure, but certainly does not have the full resources for such a campaign. So what's to be done? We have engaged an agency with a proven track record to seek significant corporate funds to run a campaign. The agency is optimistic about doing so. It is enthusiastic about the concept. The concept is 'Information for the Nation'. It will commence as 'Celebration of a Nation' winds down. It will run for three years. Its primary overt agenda will be to put libraries at the top of the list when people need and seek information. Its covert agenda will be to raise a consciousness among the plethora of agencies funding our libraries that no library now stands alone, that all libraries are now part of a national information network, and must be supported as such.

The 'Information for the Nation' campaign will require participation at all levels of the Association, help from our collegial associations, and will be greatly assisted by the focus provided by the Australian Libraries Summit in October. As a hint of things to come this

issue of *InCite* includes a bumper sticker originating from an idea by Alex Byrene, a member of our National Information Policy Working Party. It's a fun thing. Use it. Perhaps soon we will have the seven million or so Australians who use public libraries adorning their cars or whatever with 'Information for the Nation, Libraries'. In my next column I will be suggesting another more substantial way in which our users can be good library advocates.

But of advocacy for Australian libraries and librarianship — as was recognised in the Australia Day honours — no one stands in higher regard than the Foundation Professor of Librarianship at Monash University. Jean Whyte AM, your profession congratulates you.

Alan Bundy
President

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