Notes from the Executive Director

A LIA and the Australian Libraries Summit

It is now almost 1 year since the first Australian Libraries Summit in Canberra. The Summit's mission was to 'determine and reach agreement on the most effective structures and processes for delivering library and information services throughout the nation'.

Since the Summit did not have its own mechanism to follow through with its resolutions, it established an action plan to proceed with the business of achieving its objectives. Appropriate organisations involved with the library and information science industry were nominated to be responsible for pursuing the action plan for some 122 resolutions, either singly or jointly. These organisations included ALIA, ACLIS, the National Library of Australia (NLA) and the Australian School Library Association (ASLA).

ALIA was assigned part or full responsibility for forty of the total resolutions of the Summit.

ALIA strategy

In November 1988, the Association's General Council accepted responsibility for carrying forward the resolutions assigned to ALIA by the Summit, and noted the priority assigned to the resolutions. Despite the fact that this agenda was in addition to priorities already established by the Council for the Association, Council believed that it had a strong obligation to support the Summit and its follow-up processes.

As a consequence, Council endorsed a strategy based on utilising the existing organisational structure of the Association and its democratic processes. That is, Boards, Committees, Branches and other Divisions were asked to be responsible for progressing the appropriate parts of the Summit action plan.

In addition, two joint committees were established — between ALIA and ACLIS, and ALIA and ASLA — to promote cooperative action on joint responsibilities: and a Sub-committee of the General Council was established to reconsider the ALIA Statement on Free Library Service to All.

The Council further established a reporting and monitoring mechanism to ensure that the Association would meet its new-found commitments. Each subsequent meeting of the Council has considered ALIA's progress, and, when necessary, passed resolutions regarding proposals that have been forthcoming.
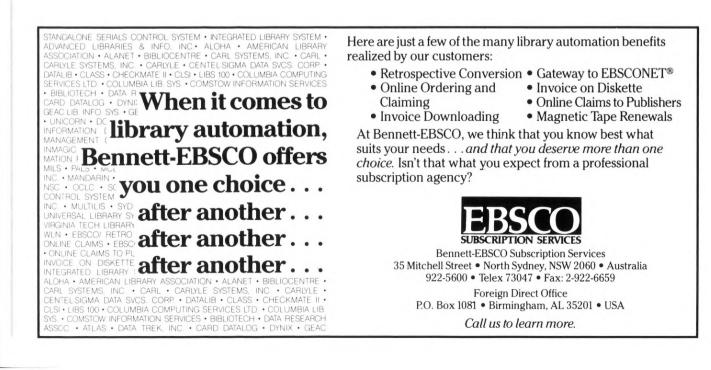
The Board of Education

The Association's Board of Education also gave consideration to the Summit resolutions regarding education for the Australian library and information industry prior to the end of 1988; and established its own action plan to achieve its new agenda in a time frame as near as possible to that suggested by the Summit. The Board delegated — either to its individual members or its sub-committees — responsibility for investigating the implications of, and making recommendations regarding, the resolutions passed by the Summit.

National School Libraries Section/ASLA

Likewise, the National School Libraries Section has been very active in pursuing the Summit resolutions relating to school libraries. The Section has been working with ASLA to achieve a mutually agreed action plan to meet their joint responsibilities.

Similarly, the other Boards, Committees and Divisions have taken a serious approach to the consideration of

A family perspective

On A step-by-step guide to tracing your family history by Marijke Alderson we have what seems — at first glance — to be yet another book from an author jumping on the genealogical bandwagon of the bicentennial boom in family history studies. But, unlike some of the others in this vein, it's a good one.

There are two types of genealogical guides — those that say 'how to' and those saying 'where is the information?' Marijke Alderson is the first professional librarian I know of in Australia to produce a general, Australian 'how to' genealogical guide. And, it seems to me, this is healthy, because she brings a new perspective to the subject.

Most of the twenty or so general (Australia-wide coverage) books of this kind published here over the past 25 years have been written by amateur or professional genealogists (i.e. the users of the records). This book looks at the subject from the other side of the library reference desk.

A step-by-step guide to tracing your family history aims to steer the confused first-time public library user through the beginner stage of Australian family history studies. The book discusses the research process within the Australian record system, and not the records of overseas countries. In particular, it devotes special attention to systematic methods of information gathering and recording during the research process. It also gives extensive coverage to charting formats, record organisation and the publication of research results.

Notwithstanding these good features, the book has a few shortcomings. First, some of the genealogical works cited for reference were out-of-date editions at the time of the book's publication in 1988. For example, under 'Guides to genealogy', attention is drawn to the 16th edition of the very popular guide Compiling your family history, by Nancy Gray (1985). However, two updated editions have been published, in 1986 and 1988. (More than 70 000 copies of this 40-page guide have been printed and it is updated frequently because of the ever-changing addresses of some 130 genealogical societies in Australia. All libraries would do well to place a standing order with the Society of Australian Genealogists to ensure their shelf copy is always up to date.)

Another defect occurs on page 21, where the oak-tree style family tree chart has been designed upside down. Most trees begin at the roots and the new branches and leaves grow upwards and outwards. However, this one does the reverse!

Last, the book has no index. In my view, a basic rule for all researchers of history is 'always start with the index'. You can't do this if there isn't one!

A step-by-step guide to tracing your family history was published in 1988 by Viking O'Neil/Penguin Books Australia Ltd, Ringwood. It has 128 pages. (ISBN 0 670 90112 1)

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the resolutions of the Summit, and have continued to work towards reporting to Council, or making recommendations to Council for further action.

ALIA progress
Because the Association's decision and policy-making processes are based on democracy and consultation, it has not made rapid progress in achieving its Summit responsibilities. However, it has achieved solid and substantial progress in considering the Summit resolutions within a framework appropriate to its already established mission, objectives, action plans and policies. In some instances, minor adjustments to current practice have been necessary as a result; but in others a challenge to a principle has been the outcome of a Summit resolution.

User pays
This is particularly so with the Summit resolutions endorsing free 'basic' library services, and user pays for 'add-on' services. The Sub-committee of the General Council on User Pays had enormous difficulty in reaching any consensus during the consultative process with ALIA members on this issue. However — after 6 months of consultation — it did establish that significant support remained for the basic principle of free library service for all. The General Council was also unanimous in its support of this principle, and for its current Statement on Free Library Service for All.

Other Summit resolutions assigned to the Association for action may be easier or more difficult to consider and either implement, amend or reject. However, the mechanisms for consideration are in place, and the final results will be well considered.

The remaining issues of *InCite* for 1989 will contain ALIA Summit progress reports from the Board of Education and the National School Libraries Section in cooperation with ASLA. If you are interested in the progress on any of the Summit resolutions assigned to the Association, please contact me on (062) 85 1877 or (008) 02 0071.

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