

Front Line



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THE proposal for a merger of the Australian Library and Information Association and the Australian Council of Libraries and Information Services was considered by the General Council of the Association at its meeting on 17–18 March. Introduction of such a topic into casual conversation is likely to be productive of groans of 'not more restructuring' or crisp comments of 'should have been done years ago'.

In a unanimous vote General Council resolved that this was not the appropriate time to consider such a merger. Both ALIA and ACLIS have, in the last two years, been through more changes than at any other time in their history. Both have a new name, new objectives, a new constitution and a new structure. It does not seem sensible at this juncture to propose further fundamental change.

Both organisations, ALIA in a new format, and ACLIS, not a revamped AACOBS but a new organisation, must have time to consolidate. ALIA has to come to terms with the implications of its new name, its newly defined objectives and a new Royal Charter. ACLIS has to determine its role and to achieve the goals it has set itself. There is always stress in adaptation to change and Council considered that implementation of such a wide reaching proposal would place an intolerable strain on both organizations and their members.

Significantly, General Council did not reject the proposal completely—rather it resolved that in two years time it would be re-examined. There is some virtue in the proposal for a single strong organisation advocating improved library and information services though it is not a new idea for ALIA, being most recently raised by Alan Bundy in a paper to the LAA-IFLA Conference in

August last year. While the issue is complex, it merits discussion. It is important for ALIA to consider what would be in the best interests of its members and whether a merger would be in furtherance of the Association's stated goals. Wide consultation and discussion amongst all members would clearly have to precede any formal discussion at the General Council.

Another important aspect is that ALIA and ACLIS are not the only organizations which represent members of the library sector. For instance, the Australian School Library Association has approximately 2000 school library members and no proposal for merger to make a strong unified body to represent the interests of libraries to governments and the community would be complete without its involvement. The General Council resolution recognized this, stating that re-examination of the mega-merger would be raised with other appropriate organisations.

Related to this issue, was a resolution by the General Council on membership by ALIA of ACLIS. At present, the pattern established with AACOBS has been followed. ALIA is a national member of ACLIS and ALIA Branches and sectional groups may become members of ACLIS State and Territory Committees. With changes in ACLIS structure, in some States and Territories such membership no longer results in representation on the local committee.

While AACOBS was a member of the LAA, ACLIS has not become an institutional member of ALIA. General Council considered that, in the light of the development of the two new organisations, it was not appropriate for one to be a member of the other but rather to explore mechanisms to enable the essential close co-operation between the two organisations to proceed. The two Presidents and Executive Officers are to develop such proposals. A date has been set in May for such a meeting with formal meetings to take place every quarter thereafter.

It is clear that both ALIA and ACLIS have significant issues and concerns which need to be discussed regularly with resultant benefits to both organisations. The establishment of regular, high level and formal consultations between the two organisations will result in much better co-operation and will enable the consideration of a mega-merger to be made on a more informed basis than is possible now. It will, for instance, become clear in the next two years whether there are real differences between the two organisations which would preclude merger or whether it is a matter of formalising a pre-existing situation.

ALIA and ACLIS represent significant sectors of the library and information community: it is only sensible to continue the dialogue between the two organisations.

Australian Library & Information Association

Nominations for Fellowships

The Australian Library & Information Association may confer the distinction of Fellowship of the Association on an Associate (professional) member who has made a distinguished and sustained contribution to the theory and/or practice of librarianship. Nominees normally must have at least eight years' standing as a professional member of the Association.

Nominations for Fellowship may be submitted by professional members or Divisions of the Association. They should be supported by details of the following: nominee's achievements and leadership in librarianship or archives administration; contribution to the objects and work of the ALIA; publications on bibliography, librarianship or archives, and/or conduct of research or development in librarianship or archives. Nomination forms are available from the **Membership and Divisional Services Manager, ALIA Office, 376 Jones Street, Ultimo, NSW 2007.**

Members should note that any recommendations for Fellowships must be made in strict confidence. Failure to comply with this requirement will jeopardise the nomination. Nominations should reach the ALIA office by **1 June 1989.**