

FRONT LINE



Lynn Allen, President, ALIA

I am conscious as I sit down to write this Front line that three quarters of my year as President has almost gone. After a year as Vice-President, waiting in the wings, I am barely 3 months away from being *passé*. Time is so short to achieve anything in a year. Yet the demands upon and expectations of members and staff in relation to the President are so great, one could hardly take on a longer period.

Within Executive of General Council and in General Council itself, we have been exploring the role of the Executive Director, trying to define what

support (financial and secretarial) a President without institutional support would need and attempting to minimise paperwork and bureaucracy while improving focus and planning. All of these matters together with my current project of penning my Presidential address, have placed the need to define the role of the President at the forefront of my mind.

I have always read *inCite* with great interest but I have read it extremely carefully in 1989/90. I am always struck by the diversity of activities going on, by the diligence and enthusiasm of what are, after all, voluntary efforts. I have also been struck by the sometimes very quick and scathing criticism that a few members feel is their right to make of people who are giving up phenomenal proportions of their own time to our very fine Association. I could not agree more with Kay Poustie, the WA Branch President's sentiments in her Frontline on our attitudes to each other.

The role of the National President is not defined and even if one observes a President in action, nothing would prepare one for the experience. With dozens of Sections, Special Interest Groups, Regional Groups and Branches — all of whom communicate little with each other — the expectation that both elected and paid officers of the Association can respond to every request in a manner and time frame to suit the convenience of

that Group is very high. The load that General Councillors and Branch officers carry is a load that I think is too great. And, we all know, it's always the same group of people that do the work. I don't know how we continue to find such devoted people. I have been — frankly — appalled at the work that has been expected of me.

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I get up to 20 phone calls a week, anything up to 60/70 pages of correspondence/faxes a week as well as spending 6/8 hours every weekend on ALIA business. This is despite saying no to at least 50 per cent of the requests, cutting down the use of fax and insisting

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NOW A LIFETIME OF RESEARCH ONLY NEEDS A MINUTE. NOT A MONK.

Business Periodicals Ondisc (BPO) contains scanned images of the full text of more than 350 leading business, management, economics and financial journals throughout the world, including Australia, from 1987 onwards. It quite simply allows you to identify, select, view and print out articles on the particular subjects you require at the touch of a button.

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All told, it's researching power you wouldn't find even in a monk of Sundays.

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on weekly packages. So much of what I am persuaded I should do strikes me as being an Executive Director's role — but our Executive Director and her staff are already working inordinate hours.

As an example, this week, I have received: request for tender for computer, notes to organise AGM, Strategic issues papers, request to review agenda for General Council, discussion paper on role of Executive Director, monthly report from Executive Director, contract for lease of building, notes on planning for ILL meeting, information on award restructuring, draft budget, reworked claim form and 20 other sheets of paper I won't list. In addition to this I need to organise the AGM, our suggestions for the ALIA/ACLIS executive meeting agenda, Presidential address, Frontline, Presidential reception, press releases, give interviews and notes for chairing several sessions at the conference and opening and closing ceremony as well as two Ministerial speeches (because I'm State Librarian and Ministers refer these to me).

Now I don't have any great problems with this. I have devoted significant proportions of my time to ALIA since 1974 and I am a speed reader who writes easily. But — and this is the reason for me telling you all this — is this what the

members want a President to do? If so, then it's time we realised that we may need a full time President who is paid — or at the least, an organisation is reimbursed for the effort. I have a computer at home and can write this straight to disc — but what if someone doesn't have these resources? Do we want to bar such people from being President? I would like to put this issue into the public arena.

This a long Frontline, but it will be published in *inCite* to coincide with the conference. I would really appreciate previous Presidents, General Councilors and Branch Presidents who attend the conference having a chat with me on the role we might define for future Presidents. Or, anyone, drop me a note.

Of course, the benefits of being President are immeasurable, intangible and contribute to personal growth. Meeting people from all sectors of librarianship has confirmed in me the understanding of how important the common things are rather than the differences.

But, why does one nominate for such a position? To give, to contribute, to make a difference. One does not wish to alter the essence of the Association but I think any President would want to look back on the year and see policy development, planning and reviewing of activities, satisfied clients and a sense of

things having been somehow improved as a result of these efforts. Keeping things 'ticking along' is not the role of a President.

To expect someone to visit every capital city, attend meetings of Boards, read all paperwork, go to every conference and so on — is to demand a full time commitment.

What kind of President do you want? A full time paid officer — or a senior member of the profession in a powerful position to make a difference, a leader in his/her own right who brings that empowerment to the role of President? I think the latter, but then the expectations of time and effort must change.

Let's discuss this so we know what we want and nominees can prepare — but, let me assure everyone — I wouldn't have missed this year for the world! I don't know whether I will feel I have made a difference or a real contribution when December comes — but, I tell you, it's not for the want of having a damned good try! And let me assure those who are nominating as Vice President for 1991 all these issues can be discussed and such things as support resolved by collective decision making. They are on the agenda — let's resolve them.

Let me hear from you.

With best wishes,

Lynn Allen



Apologies to the NT Branch

In my report of the General Council meeting in issue 12 of *inCite*, I neglected to mention that the Northern Territory Branch, in addition to the Board of Education, was writing a discussion paper on the identified Association strategic issue of continuing education and professional development. My apologies to the Northern Territory Branch for this omission.

The Northern Territory Branch has been extremely active in the area of training for library and information science in the Territory, as was reported in issue 13 of *inCite* by the Northern Territory President, David Hugo. General Council is to consider all of the strategic issues discussion papers at its 29 September meeting. Copies of all papers will be available at the ALIA stand in the Trade Exhibition at the 1990 Conference, and members are encouraged to provide comments on these papers.

ALIA strategic issues

The following strategic issues have been identified for the Association. Discussion papers have been written for each issue,

and are available from the National Office or from the ALIA stand in the Trade Exhibition at the 1990 Conference. As these issues will form the basis of the Association's action plan for 1991, all members are encouraged to provide input into the discussions. Your comments can be given directly to either your State General Councillor or to the National Office staff.

Strategic issues discussion papers:

- Continuing education and professional development.
- Award restructuring and industrial priorities.
- Membership.
- Association financial budgeting and ILL vouchers.
- 'I' in ALIA.
- Capitalising on the move to Canberra.
- Promotion and lobbying.
- Administrative effectiveness of the National Office.
- Cooperative activities with other organisations.
- Accountability measures.
- Define the role of library and information services industry to members.

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AUSTRALIAN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION ASSOCIATION



Know someone who's worthy of a Letter of Recognition?

The General Council may on the recommendation of the Honorary Awards Committee present a letter of recognition to a person or an institution or organisation who/which has rendered a significant, specific service to a library or libraries, to ALIA or to the promotion or development of libraries or library science or who has over a period demonstrated significant services well over the call of duty in these fields.

Nominations for Letter of Recognition may be made at any time, and will be considered at the first available meeting of the Honorary Awards Committee.

For further information and/or nomination forms contact: the Membership Services Manager, Australian Library and Information Association, PO Box E441, Queen Victoria Terrace, ACT 2600, telephone (06) 285 1877, (008) 02 0071 (toll free).