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ALIA Executive Director

This is the last time that I will write the Executive Director's column for *inCite*. I should like look back for a moment, to review the progress of the Association over the last five and a half years.

Without doubt the most important achievement has been the successful repositioning of the Association to become a lobbying force in Canberra for Australian library and information services. One aspect of this has been the Association's move to Canberra and the widening of its financial base through the reinvestment in its National Headquarters building in Canberra, with a capital value of \$4.25 million and an annual income of \$268 410. The other aspect has been the establishment of networks with the Federal government, at senior official and political levels. Increasingly the Association's advice is being sought on government policy issues related to libraries, which is exactly the process through which the Association can expect to achieve its best results.

The second most important achievement of this period has been the completion of the first major constitutional review since the granting of the Royal Charter in 1964. This review culminated in the granting of the Supplemental Royal Charter in 1988, and the approval of the new By-laws in 1992 to implement this Charter. The most important parts of the new constitution relate to the adoption of the Association's new name, changes to the General Council and the Board of Education, legitimising the status of Library Technicians in the Association and a rationalisation between the By-laws and the Regulations. These changes have had and will have widespread implications for the Association.

A third achievement has been the implementation of the recommendations of the Corporate Plan and Review (1986) on the role, functions and structure of the Association, and the subsequent adoption of Strategic Planning (1990) and Program Budgeting (1992) for the Association as a whole. These initiatives have enabled the Association to manage its affairs and resources more effectively. Increasingly, the management of the Association aims to adopt best practices wherever possible.

A part of the move to improve the management of the Association was the review of its National Office publishing operations (1989), leading to the joint agreement with DW Thorpe to publish titles in Australian library and information science. Parallel to this agreement was the agreement with RAECO to publish library promotional materials with Association endorsement.

The most recent step in these management developments has been the General Council's adoption of financial reporting standards for companies. This change reflects the Council's acceptance of both responsibility and liability for the management of the affairs of the Association, and will be seen most easily by members in the new format of the Annual Report for 1992.

Through its Board of Education, the Association has continued to promote standards for the professional and library technician levels, through its course recognition processes and its consultative processes with the Schools of Library and Information Science in the higher education and vocational sectors. Increasingly the Association is seeking to work with external national mechanisms in the Federal Government's Training Reform Agenda to achieve its objectives in

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education. Likewise, the Board has sought to implement its principles of access and equity in training and development programs for the library and information services sector, and to continue its development of the national strategy for training and development.

Strategically, the Association has recognised that it can better achieve its objects if it seeks out strategic alliances according to the issue. These alliances have been with other organisations within the library sector, such as ACLIS, CAUL, CASL, ASLA, TAFE etcetera; with related information professional associations such as those for Archivists and Records Managers, and the wider information industry, such as the Australian Information Technology Council and the Information Industries Roundtable.

Industrially, one of the most important achievements for the Association has been the commencement of a national project to develop competency standards for the library workforce. The outcome of this project will be a strengthening of the basis upon which library personnel are positioned in workplace classification structures and upon which promotion will be based. The project will produce standards which will replace the Association's highly-regarded *Work Level Guidelines*.

Lastly a decision which gained the support of the members was the Association's first biennial conference to be held in a regional centre and not a capital city. This conference achieved the second highest registration numbers of any biennial conference.

Over the next ten year period the Association will face three major issues: management, internationalisation and the development of intellectual capital in the library and information services sector.

With the first of these issues, management, the General Council is well down the track to ensuring that the Association adopts the best management practices available; practices which are efficient, effective and flexible and which enable accountability and responsibility to be demonstrated. The changing economic environment will challenge many of our current assumptions in this area, and with this will come new opportunities.

The second major issue is that of recognising that Australia is intimately linked into the international arena, and decisions in this wider environment will have implications for internal Australia. This recognition has come late in the understanding of how to improve Australia's balance of payments. Within the library sector, the implications are no less. The Association has continued to foster its good working relationship with like associations in New Zealand, North America and the United Kingdom.

Ties have been closest with our colleagues in New Zealand and this has been reflected in the two joint conferences held, and the third planned for 1994, sharing experiences with internal policy developments and with new directions in education and training. The Association reached a position of maturity in 1988 when it hosted the first International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) Conference in Australia. This event projected the profile of Australian librarianship into the international arena in a way never before imagined. Australians have continued to uphold that profile within IFLA with more than 30 Australians attending each annual conference, and through the first Australian, Warren Horton, Director General of the National Library of Australia, elected onto the IFLA Executive Board (1991).

In the last 12 months, the Association has, like the rest of the country, recognised that more specifically our future lies more closely with the Asian and Pacific Region than had previously been acknowledged. Within the Association this has taken the form of a partnership to promote Australian library and information expertise

internationally through the Australian Library and Information International Services, the growth of the Asia and Pacific Special Interest Group and their success with 3 federal government funded training programs in the Region, and through representation at the 1993 CONSAL Congress in Bangkok. The Association's repositioning internationally will continue as Australia continues to adapt to the fact that its future as a nation is inextricably linked to international developments, and particularly to the Asia and Pacific Region.

However, by far the most important issue for the Association in the future of Australian library and information services will be the ensuring development of intellectual capital in the sector. The education and training of the personnel who provide these services will be critical to delivering quality library and information services and to the future of the profession. The Association is already moving to redefine and map its position in the life-long learning chain of the library and information science professional and library technician. The principles to be adopted will focus upon quality, access and equity; while the opportunities for the Association to work within emerging national external priority agendas and mechanisms for education and training through institutions and in the workplace are yet to be identified. This issue is central to the purpose of the Association, and its outcome will be central to the future of our profession and successful library and information services.

In conclusion, the last five and a half years have been a period of great change and challenge for ALIA. The Association has emerged as a renewed organisation seeking out a new future for itself. As Executive Director, I have been closely involved with much of this change and renewal.

However, it is to the many members and staff with whom I have worked through this period that I would like to express my appreciation. For it is their commitment, loyalty and hard work that have enabled the Association to continue evolving to meet the needs of its members in this time of accelerating change.

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