

Is it free library service to all?...

The recent changes to the *ALIA statement on free library service to all* has prompted me to do something for the first time — go into print to criticise an Association of which I am very proud to have been a National President.

The Executive at the Library and Information Service of Western Australia (LISWA) cannot allow the changes to the statement to go without expressing our disappointment and dismay at the usage of the language.

The main argument for retention of the previous version was that a professional association defines the principles and ideals by which a profession guides its moral and ethical directions.

To change the statement to suit the vagaries of organisational pressures or to use the Association to justify institutional interests is not only sad but fraught with difficulty — will we change it the next time there is a dominant ideology in a handful of powerful quarters? It is even more distressing since these changes have been initiated within the profession as a response to external pressures.

The main problem in the new statement is the use of the word 'core'. Since this word is not defined in the statement it can be defined as it suits any institution. Thus, what is core to one institution is non-core to another.

The Statement is now meaningless and I am disappointed. What pleases me is that many people in Western Australia will continue to subscribe to the previous version and the new one will have trouble crossing the Nullarbor, at least in those 'services established to serve the general public'.

Lynn Allen
member of Executive of LISWA

It's hard to know what to make of the General Councillors who voted for lobbying libraries with the concept of 'core' services, let alone their noisy little cheer squad (see *inCite 9*).

That master of the oxymoron, Ross Gibbs, insists that charging for non-core services does not endanger free library services. Trevor Wakely tells us that we now have a 'statement that can be used and applied without hypocrisy' (that's right, those who object are a bunch of hypocrites) and that the vote 'reflects the reality of the situation'.

Perhaps Wakely and myself have a

different sense of reality or perhaps we live in parallel universes? In my universe the reality is that any library which wants, or needs, to charge for certain services or programs will do so. Many also need, for practical reasons, to limit access to their collections and services to certain users.

Nevertheless, despite the reality, it is important and useful to retain the *principle* that libraries should be free and that no one should be prevented by financial reasons from using their full range of services. I cannot see any justification for institutionalising the concept of 'core' services, as six members of the General Council have done.

In practical terms, I suspect that public libraries will be hardest hit by their decision. Local councils and other funding bodies will now require a list of 'core' services as a basis from which to charge for 'non-core' services — which might have been free up until then.

What do Wakely and Co mean by 'core' services? Book loans? Children's holiday programs? Access to the Internet?

If these are the sort of policies which ALIA is going to be advocating then I wonder if it's able, or even willing, to defend and improve the status of libraries. As a representative, professional organisation it may be heading towards total irrelevancy. After all, how many professions positively beg the government to cut their funding?

Can anyone give me a good reason for renewing my membership?

Alan Samagalski, SA

I write on behalf of Public Libraries Section (Victorian Group) to congratulate the General Council on its recent decision regarding the Association's *Statement on free library service*. Whilst I can appreciate the emotional commitment many of ALIA's members and their representatives on General Council have to the 'principles' of free library services the statement, as it originally appeared, did nothing at all to support the practice of 'free library services'. In practice many public libraries all over Australia already charge for a range of services and do so without jeopardising any of the free access issues important to us all.

In fact the income raised by the current range of charges offers more protection to core services than the old statement was ever capable of doing. Every example of a library service

charging for such non-core services as photocopying, overdue items, reservations and use of meeting rooms is clear demonstration of the failure of the original statement to express our profession's commitment to the principles of access to resources. As a practitioner frequently involved in lobbying various levels of Government for more library support the statement required constant qualification to explain these apparent discrepancies. It has often been safer to ignore it altogether or use the ACLIS position statement in these situations.

I take great satisfaction from the changes the General Council has endorsed and I thank you for your resolve.

Rod Blacker, President, Public Libraries Section, Vic

Quality meat (II)

I refer to Moosh Dua's letter entitled 'Quality meat' in *inCite 8*. Your correspondent is under the impression that *inCite* is not indexed for any of the databases but this is not so.

inCite is one of many journals indexed by the Australian Clearing House for Library and Information Studies (ACHLIS) for Australian Library and Information Science Abstracts, which has been published in hard copy since 1982 and is available in AUSTROM as a separate database. ACHLIS is based in the University of South Australia Library.

Neville Aylmore, SA

Completed any research lately?

...or have you started any research projects? If you can answer yes to one of these questions, the Australian Clearing House for Library and Information Science (ACHLIS) would like to hear from you. ACHLIS has been publishing *Australian library and information research (ALIR)* since December 1992, with the agreement of the National Library. Continuation of ALIR depends on sufficient contributions from anyone involved in library and information science.

Don't hide your light under a bushel: please support ALIR and ask for a data report form from Neville Aylmore, Editor, *Australian library and information research*, c/o ACHLIS, University of South Australia Library, 15 Lorne Avenue, Magill 5072, phone (08) 302 4439, fax (08) 302 4695. The deadline for the next issue of ALIR is 30 November 1994.

Neville Aylmore, SA ■