



Jan Gaebler
ALIA president

This month we will be launching a valuable document that strikes at the heart of why ALIA exists in the first place; namely your library career.

The *Framework for continuing professional development* builds on the work of the British Library Association and, with their permission, has been adapted by ALIA to suit our Australian workplace. The Board of Education identified the potential of the work of our British colleagues and suggested that ALIA negotiate to use their existing document, with alterations. The Board was subsequently given carriage of the adaptations necessary to ensure our publication complied with ALIA policies and with our Australian conditions. Their draft document was endorsed by the General Council in March.

Specific details of the *Framework* are located elsewhere in this issue, but I commend this important new member service to you. I trust you will find it the helpful device it promises to be in terms of offering a positive approach to structuring performance plans and identifying opportunities for your future in librarianship.

An integral feature of professional development is taking part in professional activities and, by coincidence, this issue of *inCite* marks the half-way point of my term as your President. I've had to start taking vitamins, but the rewards have been far beyond my anticipation!

In March I visited NSW and was able to speak with a number of groups in Sydney and Newcastle. Similar trips are planned for Victoria and Queensland in the near future. I have had papers accepted for the forthcoming Specials and Cataloguers conferences and am honoured to have been invited to open the TAFE conference in September.

This communication and feedback with the membership is vital to ensuring that ALIA is meeting your

needs and addressing your concerns. I returned home from my NSW visit with some issues that can be referred to General Council, some ideas for future projects, and a reaffirmation of my own belief of what a vibrant 'switched on' group of people we librarians are!

Over and above any benefit to the Association itself from this activity, the experience is personally providing me with unequalled professional development in my work as a practicing corporate librarian.

The infrastructure of our Association is such that we can all play a part in professional activities, either in a big or a small way — but always in a meaningful way. Don't sell yourself short... elbow in and share your ideas for creating quality library careers of tomorrow.

I can heartily recommend the role of President as all inspiring. (Nominations for President-elect will be called for soon, start picturing yourself at the helm or convincing your most admired librarian that they should run for office!)

It will be over by the time you read this, but I hope the ACLIS Interlending Summit scheduled for mid-May resulted in a positive outcome for the principles of cooperation, economies of scale, and service which keep our profession united.

We are a service industry.

Yet the tremendously successful inter-library loan market, of more than one million items per year travelling through our Australian library network, is about the only example I can think of for widespread strategic alliances between us built on library service.

The increasing trend for generating higher percentages of self-funding has the potential to undermine that service ethic of cooperation between our libraries, if we do not fiercely protect the principles upon which it is based.

Let's take the real example of a

The infrastructure of our Association is such that we can all play a part in professional activities, either in a big or a small way — but always in a meaningful way... elbow in and share your ideas for creating quality library careers of tomorrow.

large library which says it can supply a photocopy the next day if the library colleague is prepared to pay the fast-track fee. If the library is prepared to pay only the standard fee, the lender does not guarantee delivery within four weeks. For paying half the fee, the client is having to wait 26 days or longer for the same service!

There is certainly an argument here that the lending library has a core clientele to serve first. However, the fact that they are happy to provide 24-hour fast-track service tempers that argument a bit.

As champions of information access, we are letting our principles be eroded if we do not establish cooperative service standards and then ensure they are maintained.

I agree that we cannot take an ostrich in the sand approach to the very real funding and staffing issues affecting many of our libraries today; but we must also ensure that their short-term solutions do not destroy the foundations of the valuable service industry which librarians make possible.

The inter-library loan market is one that consists of the haves subsidising the have-nots to provide needed information. It is founded on the premise that we are all colleagues and that we all have a common goal of providing a service, namely access to information.

If we devolve into a competitive network of information rich libraries and information poor libraries ourselves, we will be hard-pressed to justify our claims that the wider community is entitled to subsidised information access.

As a profession, we need to be coming up with funding solutions that solve funding problems; not undermine existing services and ethics of our profession. Our strength comes with our professional unity; and with cooperation and coordination between our diverse institutions as mutual colleagues, not competitors. ■