



Jan Gaebler
ALIA president

Next month we will be having our first General Council meeting for 1995. This year we are encouraging all Branch presidents to attend this first meeting — a former tradition that fell by the wayside for one reason or another. Some may feel that the attendance of General Councillors is sufficient state and territory representation, and that the attendance of Branch presidents is a duplication of effort and needless expenditure of funds. I hope this is very much the minority view.

Our Association needs to encourage the widest participation and the greatest diversity of thought that it can. A recent report on the library industry from IBIS Business Information quotes 1993 employment numbers in libraries as being 85 800 people in both paid and unpaid labour. The report estimates that there are 13 000 libraries throughout the

country — and I tend to think that is a conservative estimate.

These figures indicate just what a challenge our Association has before it, in striving to represent the composite ambitions, concerns and rewards of a library career in Australia.

But I'm of the school that says we need to 'think big' and firmly believe it is easily within our scope to be a more representative voice for our burgeoning library industry. What we have to do is make it easier for library workers to take an active, if not participative, role in the aspects of ALIA that interest them.

ALIA is much more than the Branch Council meetings and section meetings; and many of us spend so much of our working days tied up in meetings that the last thing we want to do after work is head out to yet another meeting! Yet if people don't turn up at these meetings we have very few mecha-

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nisms for 'finding' them and discovering how they can contribute to the myriad of other activities ALIA can involve them in.

In past years, in the ritual search for office bearers for forthcoming elections, I have often rung people who I consider to be 'bright sparks' and have inevitably heard the response that yes, they would like to become more involved in the Association but they don't really know how, because meeting times are inconvenient and all the other activities seem very much a 'closed shop'.

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Last year I attended my first Board of Education meeting when Bill Linklater asked me to deputise for him. At one stage the conversation round the table was a lament that we do not, as a profession, discuss and debate 'issues' and the comment has been haunting me ever since, because I think it is very true. The closest we have come recently is, I suppose, the 'free libraries' statement and this has been such a polarised debate.

If anyone came up to me and said, where do you stand as a librarian, on issues related to the racial hatred legislation, the 'clipper chip', privacy v technology, the 'library without walls' theory, and suppression orders, I could passionately spring forth with my view on each subject. However, as a profession, we are strangely silent on these and other issues that can have a direct effect on our working life.

I take the view that *we must have a view.*

Knowing the librarians I know, I am sure we *all* have opinions on a multitude of ...contd pg 7

General Council portfolios

Operational

- Strategic planning (including strategic relations)
- Awards*
- Public relations (including Library Week, and image of the profession)
- Membership (including recruitment and retention)
- Conferences*
- ALIA House
- Finance and administration (including archives)
- Constitution (By-Laws and Regulations, and the Annual Report)
- Publications

Professional

- International relations (including Asia-Pacific)
- Copyright
- ATSI*
- Remote Librarians*
- Education and training (course recognition and professional

development)

- Acquisitions and cataloguing
- Information technology
- Preservation*
- Literacy*
- Industrial - workplace*
- Education and training (vocational education and training)
- Reference and information
- Free library service
- Children's and youth services
- Technicians

Sectoral

- School libraries
- State libraries
- Archives
- University and research libraries
- TAFE libraries
- Special libraries (including health and law libraries)
- Public libraries

...contd from pg 4

subjects we *should* be commenting on. We must create a forum in which we can start tapping into the mind-set that is our membership and let our voice be heard on these issues... inside and outside our profession.

The office mail has a daily influx of brochures for forthcoming conferences on such wide-ranging subjects as competitor intelligence, information privacy and specific industry forums but do we ever see a librarian mentioned among the speakers?

The best place to start letting your voice be heard is your General Council. In theory, General Council is the power seat of our Association. It consists of elected representatives of each state or territory; and a president, vice-president, and immediate past president.

General Council holds the power, but you should be driving it. You can make sure that the issues you want addressed are addressed, that your opinions are known and that your voice is heard. Every Branch president and General Councillor receive Council papers about 9 days before each council meeting.

If you want to know about what's coming up, get your copy of *Vital link* and give your Branch president or General Councillor a call — that's part of their job! If you want to make sure an issue is on the next meeting's agenda, get in touch with your Branch Councillor and seek their advice for getting a paper before the meeting. Council papers have a deadline, usually about three weeks before the meeting, so don't leave it till the last minute.

We will be continuing the system of portfolios initiated by Bill Linklater and Virginia Walsh last year, in which members of General Council are assigned areas in which they keep a 'watching brief', and in turn serve as the contact point for members concerning the particular subject area. Since we have three new members of General Council this year there will be

a 'reshuffling' of portfolio holders to take advantage of this new expertise. The current portfolios are listed on page 4, with an asterisk beside those held by General Councillors who have concluded their terms of office.

The March meeting will give us an opportunity to welcome the new members to General Council as well as our new Branch Presidents, and give all of us a firm sense of the role of General Council and the directions we will be taking in 1995.

More importantly, I am hoping we will be sending back to you a charged and enthusiastic team of people who have a firm grasp of what the General Council and National Office are working towards and how they — and you — fit into the overall picture. We have some big challenges ahead of us in our profession. It's important that we face them with a spirit of unity, camaraderie, and a firm commitment to the strategic goals of our Association.

We cover a diverse industry across a vast continent, yet we enjoy a close-knit professional community. It is important that we build upon this. The General Council, as our representative elected body, has an obligation to ensure that it reflects both the ambitions and the concerns of our membership. Your participation, as an ALIA member, will keep the General Council vibrant, progressive, and true to its membership.

Virginia Walsh and her National Office team are busy initiating all sorts of communication channels, hard-copy and electronic, whereby members can keep up-to-date with General Council matters. Please take advantage of them.

The General Council is the decision-making body of the Association, but you are the heart of the Association. So let's not skip a beat. Get on the phone to your General Councillor — or to me — and give us a few tips on how to make a good thing better! ■

Next month: 101 ways to be a librarian...

General Council meeting dates for 1995

Meeting date	agenda determined	deadline for papers
17 & 18 March	15 February	22 February
21 & 22 July	21 June	28 June
17 & 18 November	18 October	25 October

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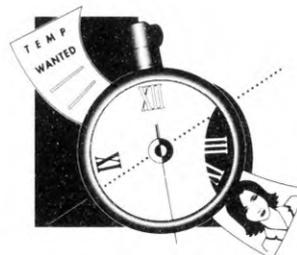
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