

Upon reflection...

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As we deliberate on the year that has almost passed us by, we will each have memories of key events that have made an impact on us and our activities. Following the final General Council meeting of the year, ALIA National Office will convene a planning day in which staff will reflect on 1996 achievements and focus on the anti-

cipated future wants and needs of the diverse membership of ALIA. This process of review will ensure that the ALIA National Office continues to provide a relevant and quality service to all members of the Association, and to enhance the delivery of such services. On the preliminary agenda are a wide-range of issues, from the production of

inCite to the content of membership recruitment brochures, from projects researching workforce issues to looking at ways of improving the turnaround time of membership applications. What follows here are the notable 1996 events and achievements, as seen from an ALIA National Office perspective...

A year of political change

1996 has been a year of considerable political change. Prior to the March election many commentators held that there was little to distinguish the policies of the Labor and Coalition parties with the key exception of Peter Reith's proposed reform of the industrial relations agenda. The emasculation of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the slash and burn approach to ATSIC's operations and, at a smaller scale in dollar terms, a cut of over eighty percent in federal funds identified for our public libraries have demonstrated that we cannot be complacent.

As we entered 1996 we did so in the hope that bipartisan support for issues such as equity of access to online information would generate the promised financial support. Our advocacy efforts and those of many members of the library community have been only partially rewarded. Our submissions addressing regulation of online content, the review of the Copyright Act, the sale of Telstra and the review of the Standard Telephone Service have all presented arguments against the erosion of existing rights of access to information. In short we are fighting hard to stand still while also promoting fundamental shifts in the way information is managed and delivered.

The election of Pauline Hanson to the Federal Parliament and the debate about political correctness has had an impact on the way we perceive ourselves as Australian citizens and the way we are viewed by others — especially in our Asia-Pacific region. The events at Port Arthur in Tasmania have had far-reaching consequences politically and have impacted on the psyche of the nation in myriad ways. It is in this political context that we have had to place the issues of greatest concern to the library community including the holy grail of freedom of information.

ALIA National Office has continued to place emphasis on its advocacy work at the Federal level. Our involvement in advocacy training has continued throughout 1996 with the delivery of *Lobby for Library* seminars in remote centres such as Alice Springs as well as capital cities. Library promotion activities including Australian Library Week and the introduction of the Library Week Oration have given us high profile. Sir Anthony Mason's Oration on 1 May, which largely dealt with copyright concerns in a digital environment, received broad coverage in the media. The presentation of the Redmond Barry Award to Barry Jones acknowledged the outspoken commitment of Mr Jones to Australia's libraries and recognised the importance of the contribution of such public figures to the future of the profession.

General Council, under the leadership of ALIA president Helen Tait, has set the policy direction for the Association and provided support for the staff within ALIA National Office who are responsible for program management. We have enjoyed working with our 1996 General Councillors and, as executive director, I am particularly indebted for their assistance and succour.

Virginia Walsh, Executive director

Reducing industrial isolation

Members have found 1996 a particularly testing year in the workplace. Change programs in libraries have seen restructuring of work practices, contracting out, casualisation of jobs and more individualised approaches to establishment of employment conditions and salaries. Our industrial assistance program has helped hundreds of individual librarians to grapple with this demanding work environment. It would be nice to report that we have been able to prevent all the worst aspects of a changing labour market. But the fact is many librarians have seen their libraries close. Some have lost their jobs, while others have seen security and confidence diminish. But we have had successes in numerous cases.

In some, we have been able to help industrially-isolated librarians, especially in one person libraries, to achieve significant improvements in pay and conditions by direct approaches to their employers. This is a service we hope more of our members will be able to benefit from next year, as the swing to individual contracts gains momentum. Other members have been grateful for ALIA National Office support in developing strategies which have enabled them to resist the worst excesses of what has sometimes been a mania with job-shedding and cost-cutting.

Phil Teece, Manager, industrial services

Education opportunities

This year saw many major projects underway, all leading to greater education and training opportunities. The Recruitment and Career Development Strategy for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders began in New South Wales, Queensland and the Northern Territory. A range of promotional materials was produced including brochures, guidelines, a video *Hey look out*, and a guide for cultural awareness training. A major achievement this year was to gain the Government's agreement that library technician students under the Strategy qualify for a Cadetship.

Edith Cowan University is now delivering specialised ALIA professional development courses in print and via the Internet. Popular courses this year were project management and strategic planning. Three courses are offered for those wanting to brush up on their search strategy skills. Other courses are in the pipeline and our CPD survey has highlighted future cpd needs.

ALIA has been funded by DEETYA to develop an RPL assessment strategy. This fits well with the CREATE (Cultural Industry Training Advisory Body) national RPL assessment project in which we are participating. Both projects will provide a way forward for recognising skills gained in the workplace and not currently formally recognised.

A new employment pathway will be possible through a traineeship being designed for local government libraries. We are working closely with the Local Government Industry Training Company to de-

velop a traineeship which is based on the Library Industry Competency Standards, and meets entry requirements to the Certificate III in library and information studies now being offered as part of the Diploma.

Jennefer Nicholson, Manager, education and training

Raising the profile

In 1996 ALIA member services has concentrated on the preparation and implementation of a new membership database which will assist us in providing better member services. Information provided by the new system will assist in mapping our membership and to identify potential new member services and Association activities.

ALIA member services have represented the Association in a range of activities: including participation in the trade exhibition of the ALIA Biennial conference and, in order to raise our profile, at an increasing number of non-ALIA activities and conferences. Our continuing presence at library and information sector events, including the Australian Book Fair and Edutech 96, enhances our ability to recruit new members, and to have direct communications with existing members, as well as offering the opportunity for us to put names to faces and vice versa!

The Association's various awards are administered by ALIA Member services — in 1996 the following awards were conferred: the Redmond Barry Award to The Hon Barry Jones; fellowships to Angela Bridgland, Andy Exon and Eugenie Greig; ALIA Manager of the Year Award to Clare Body; and the ALIA Study Grant Award to Heather Fisher.

Carolyn Cherrett, Manager, member services

Just a bit pregnant?

Few will have not noticed that *inCite* became a little bit pregnant in 1996. Quality articles and photographs for publication poured in from ALIA members, due in part to our initiative to base each issue on a set theme. Division representatives ensured that members were kept in touch with activities and events organised by our many active groups. Our special issue profiling State libraries mid-year began a continuing rash of colour throughout each subsequent issue of *inCite*, an enhancement welcomed by readers and advertisers alike.

The ALIA publications team produced a number of occasional papers in 1996, including *Compulsory competitive tendering and public libraries* and *Preservation of library materials in south-east Asia: Issues, workshops and institutions*. These were well-received and further occasional papers are planned for 1997. Australian Library Week was a great success, with much of the ALIA-produced promotional material displayed in libraries across the country. Media coverage of the week was outstanding — a reflection of the dedication and enthusiasm of Australian Library Week committee members and helpers from around the country.

A highlight of the year was the publication and subsequent launching of *Developing a profession of librarianship: the travel diaries and other papers of John Wallace Metcalfe*, edited by Professor Boyd Rayward. Among the guests at the launch were many who had known and worked with Metcalfe during his time at the State Library of New South Wales. The publications team also produced a wide range of brochures, leaflets and other material in 1996, including the 1995 *Handbook* and *Annual report*.

Ivan Trundle, Manager, systems and publishing

(A report on electronic publishing activities and ALIANet appears on page 14)



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SETTING UP AN ELECTRONIC JOURNAL

Friday 24 January 1997

**9.00am - 4.30pm, Australian National
Maritime Museum, Darling Harbour**

The ALIA Information Science Section and the CSIRO Division of Information Technology are jointly organising this seminar which will give participants practical information and advice to assist them in setting up an e-journal. Speakers include Dr Bob Jansen (CSIRO), Patrick Wilken (Monash University) and Jan Fullerton (NLA) and the seminar will cover technical requirements, administration and content, archiving and preservation.

**Seminar fee \$120 ALIA and CSIRO
members, \$140 non members.**

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