

# Melbourne 1996 — be there!



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ALIA president

Enclosed with this issue of *inCite* is the program and registration brochure for the ALIA biennial conference, being held in Melbourne in October. The conference committee is really pleased with the program, and we hope that you will be too.

A wealth of papers was offered, and the committee had difficulty selecting papers and ensuring that topics important to the profession were not overlooked. As one means of ensuring that some of the valuable research work which is currently being undertaken was not missed out, we have included a session of research reports on a range of topics. This will allow for a snapshot of the research and will ensure that it can be included in the conference proceedings.

We have some impressive overseas speakers. Robert Wedgeworth is the current president of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and a former president of the American Library Association. Unfortunately the title of Robert's paper did not reach us in time for inclusion in the printed program. *Courtship, marriage and librarianship*. Sounds intriguing.

Charles Landry, the British founder and director of Comedia, a world recognised cultural planning consultancy, is being brought back by popular request. He is an excellent speaker, with some thought-provoking ideas on the rôle of libraries in cultural change. Eleanor Jo Rodger is the current president of the American Urban Libraries Council and a former executive director of the Public Library Association. She is known for her extensive work on output measures and library planning, and will look at future roles of librarians.

Min-Min Chang is founding director of the library at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and has been a recognised leader in the application of technology in information services in a number of American academic libraries.

The theme *Reading the future* is picked up at the global, society or institutional, and individual level on successive days of the conference. The theme will be introduced in a major plenary session on the first morning, when keynote speakers will present their personal views on particular themes for the future. These themes will follow through other conference sessions.

We have been really pleased with the enthusiasm with which sections and special interest groups have been organising their pre- and post-conference activities. We know that the Christmas break and changes in personnel means that some could not quite get there for the printed

registration brochure, but there is already quite a range to choose from, and more to come.

We guarantee some marvellous Melbourne style for the social events — especially the conference dinner, which will be held in the Great Hall at the National Gallery of Victoria.

The conference committee has been fascinated with the proceedings of the first Australian Library Conference held here in Melbourne in 1896. We will be sharing some of these gems with this year's conference. Topics included library planning, cataloguing, the dewey decimal system, buildings and equipment, and the librarian and *his* work. Yes, the delegates were all men. The only women mentioned are the wives of some of the organising committee, presumably in attendance to make the tea? We promise better balance — but has it gone too far in the other direction? Only the conference dinner dance floor will tell.

Well, that is conference, and now the rest of the world. General Council had its first meeting for 1996 on 14–15 March. We were joined by the Branch Presidents, an idea which was greatly welcomed last year. On the evening preceding the two-day meeting, we gathered at ALIA House for an introductory session and presentations from the ALIA senior staff on the rôle and workings of the National Office. The presentations were comprehensive and most professionally prepared, and the whole evening gave us all a great feeling of pride and confidence in the quality of the conduct of the Association's business — a great backdrop to encourage us to try to keep our General Council focus at the strategic level. We found the opportunity to spend time with the Branch Presidents most beneficial, and they valued spending time sharing ideas with one another, as well as joining in the General Council meeting. A special treat had been arranged for the Thursday night, when we all attended the preview night for the Turner Exhibition as the family of the National Gallery librarian — a wonderful example of library networking, much appreciated by all. An amazing exhibition. Do see it if you can. Council spent some time at the end of the meeting on a general background discussion to provide a framework for a strategic review process which will come back to subsequent Council meetings, but we did not at this stage take up a proposal to join with ACLIS and the National Library in a broad review of future needs of the profession, feeling perhaps that our ideas and needs should be clarified first. Whatever the mechanism, the need to clarify our future directions and requirements will obviously be an important focus of attention for Council and ALIA members at large. ■

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