

ALIANet: a web of information

Successful launch of new web pages in May

Thanks to the increased interest in and awareness of Australian Library Week 1997 (ALW97), the previous month was an extremely busy time for promotional activities and for communication amongst members and the wider community. The online community was particularly busy, and the Association's online presence, ALIANet, was a hive of activity and industry. The theme for ALW97, 'Libraries, a web of information', offered many opportunities for libraries and library workers to demonstrate that, as an institution, the library is a collective resource of both online and offline (viz. more traditional) information.

ALW97 was the perfect vehicle for the launch of two significant additions to ALIANet, that of the New South Wales Branch and the Victorian Public Libraries Section's web pages. Both groups had successful live launches in their respective State Libraries of their web pages, a testament to the hard work and preparation by those individuals involved, particularly Helen Mandl of the New South Wales Branch and Ken Young of the Victorian Public Libraries Section.

In the lead-up to ALW97, ALIANet was an integral part of communication between members of the ALW97 consultative committee. Designs for promotional material were posted onto ALIANet for perusal and comment by the committee, followed by the development of a faxback form to allow for a no-fuss method of ordering material. The consultative committee also provided up-to-date information on ALW97 events and activities in the process of being organised by the branches. Also included were the numerous press releases, statements from all State Libraries, an interesting section on quotable facts and figures about libraries, and a letter from the Minister for Communications and the Arts, Senator Richard Alston.

Those branches and sections with an existing Internet presence continued to build on and improve their pages during May. The Reference and Information Services section revamped their pages and upgraded the content to include contact details. The TAFE section began to build their pages, with Donna Shields doing some great work shaping the *Partnerships in learning* — the creative strategy TAFE national conference pages. Lee FitzGerald helped to put the School Libraries Section (NSW) on the web, with contact and committee listing, the newsletter *aliaS*, and details of professional development activities.

Electronic mailing lists

The automatic distribution of e-mail to groups of people who are registered as subscribers to electronic mailing lists (erroneously referred to as 'listservs', a proprietary trade name) is proving to be a real attraction for the online community. ALIANet offers a number of these lists, all of which rate a mention on the ALIANet electronic mail lists page.

Most people have little difficulty in the use and operation of these lists, however there are consistent errors made by 'newbies' to electronic lists. At ALIANet, we are doing all we can to make the process of joining a list as simple and as easily understood as possible. Apart from the aforementioned 'list of lists', we have posted information on how to subscribe to a list, how to send messages to a list, and, for the brave-hearted, information on how to go about creating a list specifically for your division or interests. And in the age of cost-recovery and rising charges for the setup and operation of these services, we also offer information on the migration of a library-specific list

to ALIANet. A collection of other library-specific lists useful to the sector is also included for convenience. These pages will be continually updated and added to, and in particular we intend to provide a great deal more information on the 'netiquette' of list communications.

A quick tip for lists

Ever wondered why your initial message to a list processor was rejected? Has anyone ever mentioned the term 'signature files' and then left you baffled? Read on...

To join any list, a very precise message needs to be sent to the host computer that manages the list in question. The list managing software (usually Listproc or Listserv) on the host computer then translates the message, which is where most people discover the frustration of dealing with an automated, rule-based machine. In general, if the list serving software cannot decipher your message it rejects the message entirely, usually by returning a message to the sender and to the list software manager (a person, not a machine!).

A 'reject' message is often due to nothing more than a mis-typed name of the list, for example. If you are unsure, and if the list is an ALIA list, refer to ALIANet's list page for more information. Many errors are caused by having a 'signature' appended to the bottom of a message. Most e-mail users are accustomed to seeing 'signatures' at the foot of each message they receive, some more elaborate than others. List processor software usually trips up on these signatures, or 'sigs' as they are known as in the computer industry. The simple and elegant solution to this problem is to either remove your signature, or signature file attachment, or, if you are looking for a more elegant solution, just precede your signature with a line with two dashes (two minus signs, together and followed by a return). Like this:

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And don't forget: when you finally manage to join that list, read carefully and keep the instructions provided!

How to get there

All of the additions made last month (or in any month) on ALIANet can be found with links from our *What's New* page, at <http://www.alia.org.au/whats.new.html>, and ALIANet's electronic list information can be found at <http://www.alia.org.au/alinet/listservs/index.html>

Ivan Trundle, Manager, systems and publishing



**STATE LIBRARY OF
NEW SOUTH WALES**

**NEW TELEPHONE AND
FACSIMILE NUMBERS**

AS FROM 1 JULY
our numbers will be:

GENERAL REFERENCE LIBRARY
Telephone: (02) 9273 1599
Facsimile: (02) 9273 1253

DOCUMENT DELIVERY SERVICE
Telephone: (02) 9273 1551
Facsimile: (02) 9273 1254

ADMINISTRATION
Telephone: (02) 9273 1414
Facsimile: (02) 9273 1255