

Your voice

Working for our future

I refer to Dennis Warren's comment published in the January 1997 edition of *inCite*. Like Dennis, I too am worried. So worried that, a year ago now, and as a member of the Special Libraries Committee for South Australia, I organised a seminar with key independent speakers to talk to Special librarians in South Australia about taking charge of our future. The response, however, was apathetic.

We stand at the brink of the next century. We live in an increasingly high-tech information age with an expanding global marketplace and knowledge-based economy. Information is now considered a strategic resource for business success. Where does our industry stand in relation to this new world? To my view we are still too strongly conservative, trapped into preserving traditions. Why is it that there is good attendance at 'survival' workshops, but apathy for new directions?

Evidence of this profession's unique skills in navigating, managing, organising and brokering information abounds in our trade journals. But why do we go no further than espouse our talents — and to none other than ourselves?

Is it not time for a paradigm shift? Instead of focusing on survival strategies,

consider a dynamic, business-like approach. Instead of being buffeted by the winds of change, this industry could proactively reshape itself to meet the needs and wants of New-Age consumers. We could be at the leading edge in knowledge-based services. But, should we continue in apathy, our profession may be made redundant.

If this profession is to enjoy a 'rosy future', I strongly consider that future strategic direction and leadership of the library industry needs to be on the agendas of bodies with 'clout', especially ALIA and ACLIS. Independent professional advice and quality research would be of great benefit at this time. Perhaps the ABS should be commissioned to conduct a survey that would yield data on strategic issues vital to the future direction and prosperity of the library profession? A change of name for the profession itself may also be appropriate for a new direction.

Lesley King, South Australia

Planning underway

Graeme Oke (*inCite* January 1997) may be interested to learn of the plans which the program committee has for the fifth ALIA Biennial Conference to be held in Adelaide in October 1998. Within the general theme, *Pathways to knowledge*, the focus of the program will be on

aspects of client service in all sessions. The structure will be: day one — identifying our clients and their needs; day two — providing and managing resources to meet those needs; and day three — reflective practice, including monitoring and evaluation and staff development. These streams will provide the 'backbone' on which speakers, panellists and presenters can build specific topics of interest to all library and information service providers.

A call for papers will be made in July 1997. We look forward to an avalanche of responses from would-be speakers, panellists and workshop leaders, eager to be seen and heard at the last ALIA Conference of the 20th century.

**Anne Hazell, convener,
Program committee ALIA98**

A matter of record

The interesting presidential snapshots in January's *inCite* identify me as the last president of the LAA and Averil Edwards as the first president of ALIA. Averil was certainly the first full-term president of ALIA, but my recollection is that the long-delayed approval of the amended ALIA Royal Charter by the Governor General occurred at the end of my presidential year.

As a matter of greater historical substance my major contribution to the

Association was to lead a General Council to finally make a decision on the sale of the Sydney office and the construction of ALIA House in Canberra. However the real credit for that — and not mentioned in his presidential snapshot — goes to the 1986 president Ian McCallum. It was Ian who had the strongest vision of what the Association could achieve by its major presence in the national capital. That presence now facilitates the next sensible move in Australian library representation, the establishment of a Canberra-based Federation of Australian Library and Information Services Associations (FALISA) by the year 2000, as proposed in a paper I gave at the ALIA conference in 1988.

**Alan Bundy,
University of South Australia**

Your voice

Your letters on any issue of relevance to the library and information sector are welcomed.

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