

ALIA National Office activities

Strategic planning

Strategic issues have taken highest priority over the past few months. With solid input from many people, the 1997-2001 year strategic plan has been readied for consideration by General Council this month. Simultaneously, we are reviewing our government relations, public relations and marketing efforts, and a consultancy is examining the value of libraries and professional librarians to Australian companies. ALIA, ACLIS and the National Library of Australia have commissioned the review of library co-ordination and representation which is now well underway. Chairing a session at the *Online and on disk* conference in Sydney in January allowed the executive director to discuss many of these issues informally with members and allied professionals.

Other planning activity has included the important ALIA Staff Planning Day late last month. The drive across all our activities is to be more strategically focussed and to embrace improved forward planning to maximise use of the Association's resources in the course of providing responsive services to our members.

Policy developments

Policy issues of relevance to the profession, libraries and users continue to require a response from ALIA. The recent announcement of the prospect of a 'work for the dole' scheme has implications for service sectors such as libraries and we are preparing a position paper on this matter for consideration by General Council. Timed calls for Internet access has again been raised by Telstra and this too has been the subject of action including correspondence with the Minister for Communications and Arts, Senator Alston.

Improving processing and reporting

Major effort the past few months has been getting the new membership database software system up and running. Designed specifically for Associations, the system has nevertheless required customisation to suit ALIA's specific needs. Full implementation was scheduled for end-February, with expected benefits of greater service to members and better information and reporting capabilities. We apologise for the delays in posting renewals and a further delay in processing receipts.

Together with the publications section, the membership section has prepared the catalogue (included in this issue) for Australian Library Week 1997 and updated ALIANet to include Australian Library Week information (<http://www.alia.org.au/alw/>).

Membership has provided assistance to this year's Technicians' conference committee on contracts and other matters. The executive director has had meetings and discussions with the PubRAISS, TAFE, Cataloguers and 1998 Biennial Conference Committees.

Carolyn Cherrett has left ALIA National Office to move back to Sydney and take up a position with EBSCO. We wish Carolyn all the very best in her new position and know that we haven't seen the last of her! Marie Murphy has taken on the position as manager, membership services.

Preparing for audit

Finance section has just come through the toughest part of the year, finalising accounts for 1996 and preparing for an external audit. Over the same period, the Finance team has audited internally 1996 financial returns of the 100+ divisions of ALIA.

Education and training

Preparation for the ALIA Board of Education meeting and an important 'futures forum' initiative has been E&T's major recent activity. The Board, which meets three times a year, assembled in February: outcomes will be reported in future issues. The forum, 'Education for practice', in October will assemble fifty experts from education, training, practice and related areas for a two-day, intensive analysis of library and information issues of the future.

We have been working closely with the Local Government Industry Training Company to develop a Local Government Traineeship for Certificate II in Library and Information Studies (LIS), due to start later in 1997. It will articulate into Certificate III and Diploma-level courses in LIS. In mid-February, we represented ALIA members' interests at the first board meeting of the reformed Cultural Industry Training Advisory Body (CREATE). The meeting comprised a strategic planning day for this Industry Training Advisory Body, which concentrates on cultural industries solely.

Taking ALIA on-line

ALIANet continues to evolve and adapt to changing needs. Most web pages have been updated with new contact information (see also our Vital Link page), and recently we posted an ALIA Awards page, outlining awards conferred by the Association — a printed brochure is also available. All policy statements have also been revised to reflect recent changes. Additionally, browsers of our site can now use an enhanced search engine which offers world-wide e-mail searches. On the listserv front, new listservs (electronic mailing lists) are being created almost weekly for access by members and others. Existing listservs are well-patronised.

Upgrading the ALIA National Office computer network and software to help the introduction of the new membership system has also been a major task but one that, now almost complete, means that all of ALIA's staff are able to provide service to members more quickly and efficiently.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment and career development strategy

The co-ordinator of the Strategy for its first year of operation, Alana Garwood, has returned to her permanent position in the library at IATSIS. Her replacement is Felicia Fletcher who has previously worked in the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs — our partner in the strategy. The strategy continues to be a model program and is successfully meeting its projected goals. ■

ALIA lobbies STS Review Group

The Majority Report of the Standard Telephone Service Review Group has emphasised the important role which public libraries can play in the provision of extended and advanced telecommunications services to communities throughout Australia. The Review Group reported to the Minister for Communications and the Arts, Senator Richard Alston, on the adequacy of the current definition of a 'Standard Telephone Service' in relation to its provision by telecommunications carriers under the Universal Service Obligation. ALIA had made a submission to the Review Group stressing the importance of delivering digital-capable infrastructure to all Australians and the central role which libraries could play in breaking down the barriers which are currently imposed by geographic isolation to quality information sources.

Copies of the report can be obtained from the Department of Communications and the Arts. The ALIA submission to the STS Review can be found at <http://www.alia.org.au/submissions.html>