

A model for the future

This month we continue our series of information pieces about our changing organisation. The following draft outline which has developed from the work of the Leadership Committee is being circulated to all ALIA and ACLIS members as a basis for consultation and discussion.

The Leadership Committee has been charged with the creation of a new library organisation for Australia which offers something new for all its members. To do this the Leadership Committee is drawing on the many successes of both ALIA and ACLIS and is also considering the best practice of library and other organisations around the world.

The Leadership Committee has now met on several occasions. Discussion, as you will understand, has ranged over the many issues which confront ALIA and ACLIS as they move towards a new organisation. Perhaps the most important issue discussed to date is how the new organisation can best be shaped to represent its members and meet their needs as effectively as possible.

Much of the material in this document consists of an organisational model which has been developed from the Committee's discussions. The model is offered as an option and as a starting point for discussion by members of both ALIA and ACLIS. The Leadership Committee envisages that the structure of the new organisation, when it is ultimately formulated, will deliver the kind of changes you the members want and which you recognise as necessary to ensure a vibrant, pro-active organisation.

This paper is presented so that you, as an ALIA member or an ACLIS member, can have your say. We, the members of the Leadership Committee, look forward to hearing your views.

History

In response to an increasing wish of the memberships of ALIA and ACLIS, as well as a need for these organisations to better address representation at political levels, both organisations jointly commissioned Robert Gardini and Associates, under the guidance of a Steering Committee, to undertake a strategic review of library co-ordination and representation in Australia.

A joint meeting of the ALIA General Council and the ACLIS National Council, held in Adelaide on 12 June 1997 considered the recommendations of the Gardini report.

The major points agreed at this meeting have been incorporated in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), and this was signed

by the presidents of both organisations on 25 September 1997. At this time the Steering Committee was replaced by a Leadership Committee, charged with the responsibility of planning and overseeing the establishment of a new peak cross-sectoral organisation.

Vision and objectives

At an early stage the Leadership Committee believed that development of a vision and statement of objectives would provide a necessary focal point so that it could undertake the tasks devolved upon it. The following vision and statement of objectives underlies much of the Leadership Committee's work to date:

Vision

In leading the Australian library and information community, the new organisation will represent and advance the interests of that community in all spheres of Australian life.

Objectives

The new organisation will need to focus on providing effective leadership, setting out a clear purpose and values and creating an appropriate structure. It will be:

- for its members — responsive to their needs and accountable to them, affordable and open in its processes;
- in its vision and values — focussed on key issues, oriented to the future, professional, visionary and supportive of the values which maintain a democratic society;
- as an organisation — flexible, responsive and relevant; and
- outwardly-focussed and a significant influence in Australian politics and life.

The new organisation: a preliminary model

The Leadership Committee has examined a number of models for associations and has considered the existing models of ALIA and ACLIS. Our comments included with each component will help you understand the rationale behind our proposal. So that you can have your say about how the new organisation might best be structured, come along to the meeting organised by your Branch.

National entity

The new association aims to be nationally-based; that is, you as a member would join ►

The new organisation will need to focus on providing effective leadership, setting out a clear purpose and values and creating an appropriate structure

a national organisation rather than a state-based or constituent organisation.

Leadership Committee: We believe this is the most efficient way to organise an Australia-wide association and to plan, organise and provide a wide range of services.

Governance

The proposed governance model is to have a large and representative governing body (national council) together with a smaller executive body (executive board) which is focussed on the ability to act quickly and operate effectively. In addition, an annual or biennial conference or meeting of members with a substantial professional and policy focus is envisaged.

Leadership Committee: This form of governance is aligned with the key characteristics we see in a national organisation — able to act quickly, representative and responsive to members, democratic, focussed.

National council

Three elements are suggested: one representative of each state and territory branch; one or more representatives of each division, depending on its size; and the elected officers of the organisation (a president and a vice-president are suggested as the officers of the organisation).

Executive board

This will consist of the president and vice-president, each elected annually, with the possibility of election of the president for a maximum of three consecutive terms; and four members elected by the national council from its members, each for a two-year term, which would be staggered.

Conference

A biennial or annual conference, or annual meeting of members is being considered.

Leadership Committee: We will examine the current conference model to see whether an annual model, with a greater professional and policy focus, would be more appropriate, both in relation to governance and to discussion of issues.

State branches

The Leadership Committee envisages that these will operate according to guidelines set out in the constitution of the association.

Leadership Committee: Development of a vision for state branches is also the work of the states themselves, and this is well under way. One approach might be to apply principles such as: (a) limiting state branches only where the limitation has demonstrated benefits; and (b) providing that a state branch

may do those things not forbidden or clearly at odds with the national constitution.

Divisions

The composition of divisions can be considered in various ways. Divisions could be based on library sectors (for example academic, public, special); or skills and specialisations (for example cataloguers, reference) or special interests (for example new technology). The Leadership Committee envisages divisions that are national in scope and which are made up of a number of sections. Possible divisions include: further and higher education, school libraries, public libraries, special libraries, library services, new technologies.

Members of the new association would join sections. Divisions would each be made up (in most cases) of a number of different sections. In most cases the divisions would function as organisational devices to facilitate representation and co-ordination of the many sections, rather than be entities in themselves. In general, the division to which a section would belong would be clear.

Sections

The structure of sections will need to be considered further. The sections might correspond with the current state-based sectional groups in ALIA, or the state-based subcommittees in ACLIS. Once this is done, a section could then be included in a division with which it was related.

Membership

Two types of membership are proposed: individuals (natural persons) and institutions or organisations. There will be no limitation on who may belong. The Leadership Committee will also need to further consider and discuss with your input issues relating to accreditation and professional membership.

Services

Listing of current and potential services to be provided by the new organisation is being undertaken. Members and potential members will then be consulted to ascertain the relative importance of the possible range of services.

Fees

A new fee structure deriving from the services provided and the categories of membership is being considered. The objectives of the fee structure will include maximising cost-benefit to members, maximising total membership from amongst those eligible, and relating cost of membership to the range of services actually received by the member. The Leadership Committee will seek advice on the most appropriate fee structure. ►

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► Accreditation

The issue of accreditation of qualifications and membership status represents a major area which the Leadership Committee will be addressing in the coming months.

Communication

The Leadership Committee wishes to develop opportunities to improve means of communication as a high priority. The formation of a new association can be seen as providing the opportunity to consider new ways of consulting and informing the membership, and of interaction between members.

Administration

The Leadership Committee will consider administrative arrangements for the new organisation in relation to the current administration of ALIA and ACLIS.

Have your say

You now have the opportunity to comment on the model for the new organisation as outlined or on other aspects in relation to the creation of the new organisation. You can do this in a number of ways:

- Attend your state forum in February.
- Consult the ALIA website for information <http://www.alia.org.au>

- Contact the Leadership Committee secretary, Marie Murphy at ALIA National Office, PO Box E441, Kingston ACT 2604; e-mail marie.murphy@alia.org.au; or telephone 02 6285 1877.

- Hold a special meeting of your section, group, division or subcommittee; if possible, a member of the Leadership Committee will attend.

- E-mail members of the Leadership Committee, who are listed below.

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Next month in *inCite*: ACLIS president, Derek Whitehead with his views on the future of the new organisation. ■

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State/territory committee guidelines for 1998

Pending the establishment of the new organisation the Leadership Committee has developed the following guidelines to assist ALIA and ACLIS state and territory committees

As a general principle both councils encourage the highest level of co-operation between ALIA and ACLIS committees at the local level. The councils recognise that different local factors may require different solutions and these guidelines are designed to provide a framework within which the best local solution may be determined.

Operations of state/territory committees

It is anticipated that committees are likely to want to combine their efforts, which may be reflected in arrangements such as:

- Combined meetings of the ALIA and ACLIS executive or management committees.

- Combined meetings of ALIA and ACLIS members.
- Jointly organised functions, open to all ALIA and ACLIS members at the same rate.
- A combined newsletter sent to all ALIA and ACLIS members.
- It is suggested that each state/territory committee make its own decisions about how subcommittees should operate.
- Support and arrange co-operative activities.
- Representation on external committees and issuing of statements.

Financial arrangements

It is important, however, that a number of formalities continue to be observed

during this interim period. The most important of these relate to financial management. The following arrangements are proposed for use by the committees:

- The bank accounts for ALIA and ACLIS committees must remain separate during the interim period. This is to ensure proper auditing.
- Jointly-funded activities are encouraged and it is expected funds could be made available from each organisation to mount activities. A budget should be prepared for all major activities and an agreed financial statement drawn up at their conclusion.
- Queries about the overall or financial management of committees should be directed to the ALIA executive director or ACLIS executive officer. ■