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Information futures – service and professional challenges revealed

The final session of the ALIA 2002 conference will be a ripper! The ideas and issues you have heard raised over the previous two-and-a-half days of the conference will be synthesised and placed firmly within the context of the library and information services sector by two elite speakers — Malcolm Gillies and Neil McLean.

In sessions chaired by the conference convener and New South Wales state librarian, Dagmar Schmidmaier, Neil and Malcolm will articulate both the service challenges and the professional challenges that you and your organisation must address in order to prosper in the new knowledge economy. They will be joined by ALIA's incoming president, Joyce Kirk, who will explore options for action in response to these challenges from the Association's perspective.

Professor Malcolm Gillies is deputy vice-chancellor (education) at the Australian National University in Canberra — a post he took up in January this year. Previously, he was executive dean, Faculty of Performing Arts, Law, Architecture, Commerce, Economics; executive dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and pro vice-chancellor (Commercialisation), Adelaide University.



Malcolm is chairman of the Board of Elision Ensemble; president of the Australian Academy of the Humanities; and president of the National Academies Forum. He is a former president of the Pacific Science Congress and the Musicological Society Australia. Professor Gillies is general editor of the Oxford Studies in Music Genesis and Structure and prior to his current appointment was professor of music at the University of Queensland. He was a music critic for *The Australian* for many years and has published a number of books including works on Percy Grainger and Bela Bartok.

Malcolm states that 'supplying future information needs requires a strong sense of priorities between rapidly expanding fields of knowledge, an acute sense of balance between likely client demands, and a faith in technological and financial directions'. In pulling together the threads of the ALIA 2002 conference, Malcolm says he will pay particular attention to the 'role of the librarian/information professional as the link between materials, people, and knowledge opportunities; as the balancing agent between our citizenry's information, knowledge, wisdom and entertainment; and as facilitator of pathways from knowledge aspirations to realities, from lesser to greater cost efficiencies — in short, from dollars to outcomes'.

'The librarian and information service provider is seen,' he says, 'as the key mediator between technology and content, and as navigator upon the treacherous high seas of information'.

Professor Neil McLean is currently pro vice-chancellor, E-Learning and Information Services at Macquarie University and director of IMS Australia. His primary interest is the convergence of information and learning spaces in on-line environments, both in terms of service and technical interoperability.



Neil has published widely in this field and is responsible for a range of research inputs aimed at developing an open systems framework to sustain online information and learning environments.

His professional involvement includes: chair of Standards Australia IT-19 Committee, which covers standards in information and learning exchange; membership of the OCLC Research Advisory Board; membership of the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative (DCMI) Board of Trustees; membership of the DEST Committee for Information Infrastructure in the Australian Higher Education Sector; and membership of the AICTEC Standards Sub-Committee.

Professor Joyce Kirk, dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Professor of Information Studies, University of Technology, Sydney begins her term as ALIA's president after the AGM on Monday 20 May, during the conference. Joyce was previously head, School of Information Studies at the university and has held positions at Kuring-gai and Riverrina CAE's and with Library Services, in the New South Wales Department of Education. She has played a very active



role in ALIA and served on several committees in addition to the ALIA Board. Joyce was a member and deputy chair of the ALIA Board of Education, and she has occupied a number of positions on the state and national School Libraries Section committees. She has been FID chair, Education and Training committee, RMAA branch council and education committee member, and Institute of Information Scientists editorial board member.

But wait, there's more!

Don't forget to check out the conference website at <http://www.alia.org.au/conferences/alia2002/> for details of satellite

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activities such as the Friends of Libraries Conference prior to ALIA 2002; the ALIA Agriculture and Environment Interest Group (Agendis) lunch time meeting on Monday 20 May; the National Library Technicians Day dinner celebration, the Australian Serials Special Interest Group (ASSIG) and Acquisitions (National) dinner and AGM and the OPALs lunch time get together — all on Tuesday 21 May.

ALIA NSW Forum is also investigating hosting a seminar on the implications of the NSW Pay Equity Case — details of this will be posted on the conference website.

And don't forget, even if you are not coming to the conference, you can come to the parties to network with your colleagues. How about the ALIA AGM and awards presentation on Monday afternoon and then the conference dinner on Monday night? Dinner bookings can be made via the website or direct with the conference managers, Tour Hosts, via phone 02 9262 2277 or e-mail alia2002@tourhosts.com.au.

Speaker change – Research and innovation stream

Professor Lawrence Cram will replace Professor Vicki Sara as the third speaker in the Research and Innovation stream on Monday afternoon.



Lawrence Cram was appointed executive director for Physics, Chemistry and Geoscience at the Australian Research Council in February 2001. He previously worked for CSIRO and has been head of the School of Physics, and acting deputy vice-chancellor at the University of Sydney. He was chair of the University's

Academic Board at the time of his appointment to the ARC. Professor Cram's research interests include astronomy, scientific instrumentation, mathematical methods, and applied physics.

Professor Cram is the Australian nominated member of the Anglo-Australian Telescope Board, and was chair of this Board from 1995 to 1997. Professor Cram was also the inaugural chair of the steering committee for the Australia Telescope National Facility. He is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Physics, and of the Royal Astronomical Society, as well as a member of the American Astronomical Society, the International Astronomical Union and the Astronomical Society of Australia.

Lawrence says 'Australia's ability to innovate at the intersection between research and information technology will help shape the economic and social destiny of the nation. Public policy regarding this intersection, the domain of *e-Research*, will influence such critical matters as Australian access to the world's growing stock of knowledge, international recognition and marketing of Australian innovations, and Australia's control over its digital connections with the rest of the world.'

In discussing *eResearch in Australia*, Lawrence will challenge you with his assessment of the contribution of research organisations to Australia's success as a knowledge economy. He will assess the ITC resources that support Australian research, including computers, networks, information resources and skills, highlighting some evident gaps. He will also comment on the value of research information to government and the community at large. ■

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