

You can REAP the rewards...

Announcing the Research Exchange and Partnership (REAP)

The ALIA Research Exchange and Partnership (REAP) program encourages and supports research and innovation in library and information services.

REAP is a network of peers working together to exchange ideas and information, based on the findings of *Promoting research and information sharing: report of the ALIA research initiative project* — a report commissioned by the ALIA Board of Directors in 2002.

The partnership aims to bring library and information services practitioners and researchers together, both face-to-face and online, to share ideas, information and experiences about doing research and using the results of research.

REAP operates through an electronic discussion list (aliaREAP) and face-to-face meetings. REAP web pages on ALIANet give access to research-related resources and links and to ALIA e-prints, an electronic archive to load and provide free access to research output relating to LIS.

Practising professionals, researchers in university and TAFE LIS departments and research centres, independent researchers and practitioners and researchers from related fields such as information systems, cultural industries, knowledge management, archives and museums are encouraged to participate in the partnership.

ALIA e-prints

[<http://alia.org.au/research/e-prints/>]

The ALIA e-prints repository is an integral part of ALIA's Research and Exchange Program. This electronic archive aims to increase the visibility and accessibility of research output relating to library and information services.

The ALIA e-prints repository is a freely accessible electronic archive of library and information sector [LIS] research. It is intended to complement traditional publication routes.

Registering with the e-prints archive is straightforward — and free. Registration allows authors to submit work for publication, and review their own published works at any time. By publishing in ALIA e-prints, researchers can increase the exposure to their work, and contribute to a valuable open database of research material.

Research Initiative Project

REAP has developed from the Research Initiative Project initiated by the ALIA Board of Directors in 2002 and conducted by Varavena Pty Ltd.

Consultants Professor Mairéad

Browne, a former ALIA president, and Kate Vale interviewed more than eighty LIS practitioners and academics from around the country. The focus was on practical aspects of research, the development of mechanisms to encourage and promote research initiatives for the sector, and to establish a system for disseminating information about such activities. Discussion also included the role which ALIA might play in fostering research.

The project extended work previously undertaken by ALIA, including the forum *Survival, improvement, innovation: how research makes good practice, how practice makes good research* in October 2000.

Seven main themes emerged from the Research Initiative Project:

1. *Definition and scope of research:* An umbrella phrase such as 'research for innovative practice' is necessary to encapsulate the breadth of activities and the underlying rationale for research-related activities in the field.
2. *Level of research activity:* A large number of research-related activities were taking place in the workplace. However, LIS educators were finding that pressures of increased workloads and funding constraints were impacting on their capacity to undertake research. Also there was little evidence of collaborative research taking place between LIS academics and the workplace.
3. *Research priorities:* There was little interest in the concept of a research agenda; that is, of priority topics for the sector as a whole.
4. *Patterns of communication:* There is a need for practitioners to share findings of their research and to communicate their experiences more widely.
5. *Building research capacity:* A need to prepare more expert researchers who can operate with confidence and standing in both the academic and practice environment was identified.
6. *ALIA's role in research:* ALIA has an important role in fostering research and should take a leadership role:

- to ensure optimum exploitation of Australia's limited resources and expertise in the field



- to build on the existing culture of sharing ideas and collaborative action
- to bring practitioners and academics and their parent institutions together to enhance the practice of LIS.

7. *Potential partners for ALIA:* Few potential partners for ALIA in research-related initiatives were identified, however there are some active and effective bodies which may collaborate on projects of mutual interest.

It is from these findings that the REAP concept was developed. The REAP strategy relies for success on the recognised willingness by people in the field to share information and experiences. REAP provides the forum and mechanisms for practitioners and researchers to discuss the conduct of research and ways to apply outcomes for innovation and improvement to LIS practice and to share information across the academy and workplace.

Research committee

ALIA's Research Committee has been established to promote research, to provide advice on the development of REAP and ALIA's role in research in general, to have oversight of the Research Fund and to recommend recipients of research awards and research activities to be supported by the Research Fund.

To find out more and to participate in REAP, visit <http://alia.org.au/research/>.

If you are actively involved in library information sector research or practice and want to communicate your ideas and findings to the community at large, this partnership is aimed at you. Browse through the material, and if you would like more information contact Marie Murphy, REAP co-ordinator, phone 02 6215 8218, fx 02 6282 2249, or e-mail marie.murphy@alia.org.au.

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