

Your voice

Libraries: building an equitable information society

As the caption to this article points out [May issue, p20], the research report deserves highlighting for this very reason — public libraries' provision of free access to the internet is crucial to building a more equitable society.

One of the most outstanding statistics reported was that for almost sixty per cent of respondents, the public library was their only source of access to the internet.

Public libraries themselves need information on internet use to bolster local government support of these services; and we can use this type of hard data to provide

evidence that public libraries are a means of developing an informed public which is necessary for the functioning of a democratic society.

In addition to this, research-based evidence is needed to support the case that public libraries help to foster a more equitable society.

It is not only the provision of free access to web-based information which is important — increasingly, access to government services and the ability to carry out transactions are being offered via the web, and to deny this to those who don't have the technology is to reinforce the digital divide.

So thanks and well done to Graeme Johanson and

Gary Hardy, and the Centre for Community Networking Research — it is a valuable piece of research.

Ann Ritchie,
member, ALIA Board of Directors

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

All letters should be addressed to the inCite editor and may be e-mailed to incite@alia.org.au, or faxed to 02 6282 2249, or posted to: Your voice, ALIA, PO Box E441, Kingston 2604. Please include your name and postal address with your letter or e-mail.

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