

## Your voice

### Snapshots in time?

My participation in the IFLA project 'Political perceptions of the public library' has given me reasons to delve into the history of public libraries in Australia. I have needed to trace the development of some of the Association's policy statements. How do I do this? Well, once upon a time I used to browse the earlier issues of the *ALIA Handbook* where I could see, from year to year, that not only had a policy been amended, but the changes in the words. Now I go on the web. What do I find? If I have the time and patience to scour the many, many web pages, I find statements, but nothing of their journey. For example, I locate: *Free access to information* [replaces *Free library services to all, Freedom to read*. Adopted 2001] but there is no link to the statements the new one has replaced. This could easily be remedied but what about the context? I have located the older versions in

early editions of the *Handbook*; a publication discontinued some time ago.

John Levett's recent editorial in *The Australian Library Journal* begs us to nominate colleagues for Fellowships. Fellows' names are also located on the web, but in what year did they receive their Fellowship? At least the *Handbook* gave us a snapshot in time of these and other developments of the Association.

Another useful booklet I have had recent occasion to use was the ALIA Occasional Paper. The one I was particularly interested in was Jane King's edited version on Compulsory Competitive Tendering. This was a very useful collection of papers on an issue critical to members of the Association at that time (the mid-1990s). What are today's matters of moment which might deserve similar treatment? I can think of four and there are probably many more:

- the role of copyright in the

digital age and the Australian position. Tom Cochrane gave a very useful paper at IFLA Berlin in August tracing some of the developments. Sure, I can find this paper on the web, but what I would like is a small compendium of events and issues so far;

- the transformation of Australian public libraries;
- developments in the Australian approach to scholarly communication; and
- developments in Australia on censorship of the internet.

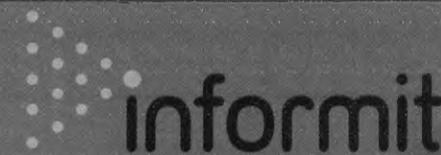
Yes, I know there have been conferences and the papers might/might not be on the web. But what about a snapshot in time? These are matters in which ALIA and its members are involved and it would be useful for ALIA to take an interest in documenting our past before we lose it. I am willing to assist if required.

**Kerry Smith** *FALIA, Curtin University of Technology*

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

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