

Generational change is a topic receiving more and more attention as demographic change occurs in the Australian population. It presents a number of challenges in the workplace: how to continue attracting people with ideas and approaches to workplaces that are themselves adapting to their changing age profiles, how to ensure that the strengths of each workplace are maintained while at the same time people adapt to new directions necessitated by change in the broader environment, how to identify and nurture leaders of the workplace in the future. ALIA must consider the impact of generational change in order to renew and sustain itself in the interests of its members and the broad library and information profession that it represents. In Frontline in the last issue I commented on the inspiring energy of the new librarians I met at the New Librarians Symposium last December. Generational change in ALIA is tangible and I would like to introduce you to one of the newest ALIA Groups through its leader Natalie Blanchard. I am confident you will share my conviction that your Association has a bright future. Joyce Kirk

A passion for...

Natalie Blanchard

Chair, New Generation Policy and Advisory Group

Some people are passionate about freeing Tibet, others are passionate about preserving the environment or saving endangered species — I would like to introduce a new group that is saving a new endangered species. The endangered species is the librarian and the group is called the New Generation Policy and Advisory Group!

The New Generation Policy and Advisory Group, or NGPAG (pronounced 'en-gee-pagg) for short, has been in existence for approximately seven months. It comprises nine enthusiastic, passionate and determined library professionals with a median age of 27. Introductions to the nine members will come later in this article, but first I would like to explain why the librarian is an endangered species.

According to a report commissioned by the Australian Library and Information Association in 1998, more than seventy per cent of the Association's member base had an age profile of over 40 years. A number of recommendations were made to address this issue. The final recommendation stated that while the ageing issue was not a major problem at the time, the Association needed to continue to be active in recruiting and encouraging new members to maintain the viability of the Association.

It is widely recognised that the situation of the Australian library industry is replicated in many other countries in the world.

To address this issue, ALIA is engaging in a number of key initiatives — one being to develop and market new services for new student/professional members. The purpose of NGPAG is to advise and work with the ALIA Board of Directors to develop services and activities to encourage new and recently graduated library workers to stay in the industry and to encourage people to join the profession and the Association.

To find out more about NGPAG, please visit <http://www.alia.org.au/governance/committees/new-generation/>.

In December 2002, NGPAG presented a paper to the Board of Directors with a number of suggestions for services and activities that will assist in the process of maintaining the profession and industry to address Key Initiative 1.

In March 2003, NGPAG will present another paper, reporting on the progress and development of the actions they proposed in the original paper to the Board of Directors.

During the New Librarians Symposium, NGPAG circulated a survey to the delegates to discover

what new library professionals wanted to assist them in developing their careers. The response was overwhelming and there was a resounding consensus that new library professionals wanted a New Graduates Group, professional development assistance and mentoring.

The response to this survey will be the basis for the paper to be delivered to the Board of Directors in March. NGPAG hopes to have these and other services approved by the Board and start to work towards putting the services in place for the new library professionals of Australia.

In the coming months, there will be more information on the ALIA website and in discussion lists about the progress of NGPAG and Key Initiative 1. It is important to the members of NGPAG not to reinvent the wheel, but to look at what has already been done, what is currently being achieved and draw on that knowledge and experience to allow new graduates and library students to feel part of the industry and association.

What we keep in the front of our minds is that without fostering participation and involvement with both new and experienced librarians, there is a risk of losing new library workers to other industries that do embrace new blood. Through retirements in the next decade, there is also a risk of losing the abundance of experience and knowledge we already have in the industry.

We are in the business of preserving and providing information. We need to start preserving our knowledge, our skills and ourselves for the future of information profession. To ensure the longevity of the library and information industry we need to embrace the future, so that the future embraces us.

Members of the New Generation Policy Advisory Group are: Mylee Joseph, manager of outreach services at Willoughby City Library and convenor of the ALIA CYS (NSW) group; Alison O'Connor, library manager at Blake Dawson and Waldron and past committee member of the LISEKA group; Kate Watson, school librarian at Somerville House in Queensland; Kate Sinclair, law reference librarian at Flinders University; Tony Wauchope, librarian at the Sunnybank Hill Library; Jenelle Cleary, librarian at the Victorian Parliamentary Library; Samantha Hughes, librarian at the Success Public Library; Sue Hutley, recently appointed library manager of the Ipswich Campus of the University of Queensland (congratulations Sue!); Natalie Blanchard, sales manager at Swets Blackwell; and Yvette Turner, membership services at ALIA National Office.

Natalie Blanchard, NGPAG chair

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