LIW Forum — outcomes

In last month's Directline, Jennefer Nicholson announced that ALIA would host the Library and Information Week Forum — *Down and loaded: the right information at the right time*. The forum aimed to develop a collaborative framework to advance electronic networking initiatives and ideas for sharing resources, improving efficiencies, increasing access to public information and enhancing services provided by the sector.

In planning the Forum the Associations Board of Directors considered that the Senate Inquiry into Libraries in the Online Environment report submissions and evidence provided a valuable resource of data on the composition, achievements, activities and challenges for the library and information sector. The Forum drew in particular on recommendation 7 of the report that:

(a) the Australian government negotiate with telecommunications carriers to establish an e-rate or discount rate for broadband access to public libraries and that, if negotiations are not successful, consider imposing a requirement on carriers under the Universal Service Obligation arrangement; and

(b) further funds be allocated under an expanded National Broadband Strategy for expanding broadband access in libraries.

The Federal Minister for the Arts Senator Rod Kemp provided a welcome and LIW message to open the Forum [http://alia.org.au/advocacy/alw/2004/].

The program included presentations on models, programs, and initiatives by VICNET, Telstra, the Centre for Community Networking Research (CCNR), the Federal Department of Communications, IT and the Arts (Broadband and Access programs), and the Australian Local Government Association; and discussion of and agreement on initiatives to make more information available more easily and efficiently to more Australians.

The forum participants agreed to take up DCITA's offer to make a presentation to the state and federal governments National Broadband Strategy Implementation Group later this year. Currently there is an emphasis in the strategy on the education and health sectors. This presentation will recommend that the strategy be pushed out beyond the education and health sectors to sectors such as library and information services have infrastructure in place, and have an equally-valid role in services delivery.

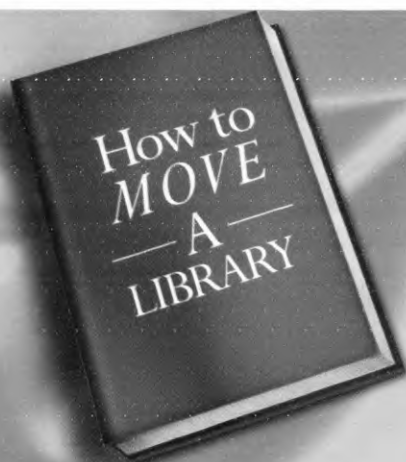The presentation (framework) is to be developed by ALIA, VICNET, and CCNR, framing the concepts encapsulated in the issues outlined by the Forum; illustrating them with examples of models and initiatives that the sector is currently employing; outlining potential initiatives for the sector and how and when these could be achieved working with broadband strategies. It is proposed that it be presented for discussion by the sector at a session or workshop at the ALIA 2004 Biennial Conference in September this year.

The presentation would also form the basis of the sectors submission to the DCITA Strategic Framework for the Information Economy. A further opportunity for the presentation is to submit the document to the Online Ministers Council, and in particular the Officials Group and its Integrated Transaction Reference Group (to be renamed National Services Framework Group).

ALIA is to prepare the project plan. The Framework to be developed is linked to the following initiatives:

- Peering arrangements;
- Broadband demand register and libraries;
- Mapping broadband availability for libraries;
- Maximising linkages between state government programs and federal programs.

The report of the Forum and key dates for initiatives will be available on the ALIA website when it has been approved by participants. ∎