

# The future of librarians

## A talk to the NSW New Graduates

New South Wales new graduates recently had the chance to hear two high-flyers of the library profession give their views on the future of our world.

Dagmar Schmidmaier, NSW state librarian, and Jennefer Nicholson, ALIA's executive director, spoke to new (and some not-so-new!) graduates in the gorgeous Jean Garling Room in the Mitchell Library on the evening of Tuesday 27 July. Organised by Alyson Dalby and Adrienne Harris from the NSW New Graduates Group, the audience were predominantly new professionals working in special libraries, but also those working in the public and academic sectors, recruitment agencies, and teaching staff.

The evening began with a bit of self-promotion — Alyson outlined the role and function of the New Graduates Group, as well as talking about the upcoming New Librarians Symposium in December. Dagmar addressed the audience and encouraged new professionals to get involved, to respond to calls for volunteers, and most importantly to cre-

ate our own stories and our own images.

Both speakers touched on 'the L word' — what do we call ourselves? This was particularly timely, as the issue has been discussed recently on the new grads e-list [aliaNEWGRAD <http://alia.org.au/aliantet/e-lists/>]. It seems that debates over naming are not new — Dagmar and Jennefer both felt that it was an issue that has always been and will always be, and both made the point that, as a 'librarian', the world has an idea of what you do — and that how you see yourself has more relevance to what you call yourself than what your job title is. Jennefer, for example, has the job title 'executive director', but at heart, she is a librarian. Dagmar commented that when she is dealing with the 'big wigs' in town, sometimes they relate to the term 'chief executive' better than they would to 'state librarian'. The key is to be flexible, and to understand what your audience is more comfortable with.

In a question and answer session facilitated by Adrienne, the speakers addressed the issue of lifelong learning. Dagmar pointed out that a basic accounting course would be of huge benefit to potential library managers — 'you need to know how to read a financial statement!' Jennefer suggested that business training is invaluable, telling us that 'ALIA is a company and we need to run it like a company' — an increasingly popular view of libraries in general.

The current Free Trade Agreement was discussed by both speakers, and not without some frustration! The audience was told that, dry as the agreement may seem, if we are on the reference desk and we cannot access the information



Dagmar Schmidmaier, NSW state librarian

that we — or our clients — need, due to the changes in the copyright law that the FTA entails, then it will start to matter to us. If we get involved at an earlier stage, we may have a chance to make a difference. Jennefer outlined the work that ALIA has been doing in relation to the Agreement.

With the formal part of the evening over, guests networked and enjoyed the refreshments generously supplied by the State Library of NSW. It was a fantastic opportunity to meet many of the other new professionals, and to speak to lecturers about how the changes to the sector are being addressed in library and information education. The wide range of interests and passions among the group was encouraging and inspiring.

I would like to extend a personal thank-you to both Dagmar Schmidmaier and Jennefer Nicholson for taking the time to get involved with the New Graduates Group.

Alyson Dalby, NSW co-ordinator, New Graduates Group



Vicki Bourbous and Fiona Bradley

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