

Your voice

On free trade

I have just read the article titled 'US-Australia trade deal threatens Australian culture, creativity and research' in the December 2003 issue of *inCite*.

I found the article to be very well written, and very informative.

Thank you for putting forward some facts so that our industry can be aware of what might happen if our government goes ahead with this agreement with the United States.

This is an area where I feel quite strongly about and feel we will all gain from having more information!

Thank you again for publishing such an informative and 'awakening' article. I hope to see more articles of the same nature appear in future editions of *inCite*!

Sharon Uthmann, Goodna Qld

I'm as mad as hell...

Thank you for 'saying out loud' Ivan what my murky subconscious has been mulling

over for some time. Your words have freed me! I say, let's stick our heads out the window and yell, 'I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to die by bullet points anymore!'

Geraldine Barkworth

Death by bullet-points: shortchanging the audience and dumbing-down the conference

I read Ivan Trundle's 'Death by bullet points' [*inCite* December 2003 p24] and it struck a chord: for some time now I have been walking out of conference and other presentations which turn out to be offered in the PowerPoint format. As Ivan says, the presentation becomes the focus: not the speaker, much less her ideas, rhetoric and content. My objection goes a little further: it is, quite simply, impossible to reduce complex ideas and arguments to the format, vocabulary and layout of a child's picture-book. And ideas which are not complex have no place in any professional sharing of

information. Going beyond my position as a conference attendee — and I have been known to stand up and shout to the hapless presenter whose technology just won't work 'well, you could just try talking to us' — I am more concerned about the intellectual content of ALIA conferences and related activities: we should make it clear to speakers, particularly those whom we invite from overseas, often incurring substantial outlays in the process, that the gross reductionism of PowerPoint simply is not acceptable at the professional level. It is fine for sales pitches to a captive audience focussed on the free drinks and food which invariably follow the presentation, but not for any forum which is intended for the exchange of new knowledge and the assessment of often complex phenomena. From time to time, the *Australian Library Journal* (ALJ) will publish significant papers which have been given to

professional conferences: occasionally one [or more] PowerPoint presentations will have constituted part of the proceedings. But however exalted the reputation of the presenter, and however smoothly orchestrated the presentation — bells, whistles and Wurlitzer, *there is simply not enough content to make the presentation publishable in ALJ*. It should be mandatory for any speaker who insists on using PowerPoint to also supply a *publishable* paper based on the material from which the PowerPoint presentation is derived.

John Levett, editor, the Australian Library Journal

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 6335, Kingston 2604. Please include your name and postal address with your letter or e-mail.

Letters will be accepted for publication until the 18th of the month.

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