

Highs and lows: the year that was



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Feedback to your Board of Directors

Do you have an idea, compliment or concern about your Association? Contact any director and ideas will be reviewed at each Board meeting.

E-mail to feedback@alia.org.au will be automatically forwarded to all Board members.

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The New Year is the time when we look forward to the coming year with a sense of anticipation, but can also reflect on the year that was. As always there is a mix of highs and lows. Below is my list of library issues and events that shaped the year 2004.

The highs were many:

Reading is alive and well with programs including Books Alive, an Australian Government initiative; National Simultaneous Storytime, co-ordinated by ALIA as part of National Literacy and Numeracy Week featuring *Muddled-up farm*, by Mike Dumbleton in 2004; the national summer reading program Reading Rulz!; and the 21st year celebration of *Possum Magic* to name a few.

The extremely successful 2004 ALIA Biennial Conference on the Gold Coast, and the New Librarians' Symposium in Adelaide represented the ALIA conference program in 2004. Other library conferences included the International Conference on Archiving Web Resources arranged by the National Library of Australia, and the IFLA Council and General Conference held in Buenos Aires.

ALIA awards for the year included the Library Technician of the Year, awarded jointly to Beth Clary and Lothar Retzlaff. A Fellow of the Australian Library and Information Association (FALIA) was awarded to Janine Schmidt for her outstanding contribution to the profession, and to Marianne Broadbent in recognition of her distinguished contribution to the theory and practice of library and information science. The YBP/Lindsay & Howes Research Award went to Kerrie Hunter. The Redmond Barry Award honouring outstanding achievement within the library and information sector by an individual not eligible to be an associate member was awarded to John Dwight from DA Information Services.

The ALIA online shop was successfully launched during the National Policy Congress in November. The online shop facilitates new membership applications and renewals, provides group member lists and enables merchandise such as posters and bookmarks, journals and other publications to be purchased.

The New Graduates Group is going from strength to strength with the New Librarians' Symposiums, the new generations column in *inCite*, and the New Generation Policy Advisory Group.

The opportunity to pay tribute to our past leaders — Margaret Trask, Ena Noël, Jean Whyte, Warren Horton, Alan Horton and Ali Sharr — at the ALIA 2004 Biennial Conference, was a highlight of the year.

A visit to Australia by the IFLA president, Kay Raseroka to attend the ALIA 2004 Biennial Conference gave the ALIA Board of Directors an opportunity to meet with her and to discuss IFLA and its role in working collaboratively with member associations such as ALIA.

There were some low points too:

The expected adverse effects of the Free Trade Agreement on library provision of information is of serious concern to the sector.

The increasing number of members reporting cases where police have contacted libraries seeking access to user records is disturbing. In response ALIA has prepared guidelines to assist library staff respond appropriately to such requests.

The trend by conference keynote speakers not to provide a conference paper, but to rely instead on the PowerPoint presentation, continues to be a disappointment for many delegates. While it is recognised that keynote speakers are often very busy and may wish to protect their intellectual property, PowerPoint is no substitute for a conference paper.

The failure of the ALIA REAP eprint repository to inspire numbers of researchers to publish their research findings in the repository has been disappointing as research informs practice in the library and information sector.

The excessive use of acronyms by librarians continues to bamboozle, confuse, and obfuscate our endeavours within the sector and in the wider community.

The negative portrayal of libraries and librarians in the media — the latest one I noticed was in the movie *I Robot* where the libraries have been closed — taken over by the internet. There are enough bean counters out there already who think this is the answer!

The findings of the Review of the Gender Pay Gap in Western Australia confirmed that women are on average paid 22.6 per cent less than men in Western Australia and less than women elsewhere in Australia where the gender wage gap is 15.2 per cent. Neither figure is good news for women who are strongly represented in the library and information services sector.

There is however much to look forward to in 2005, commencing with the ALIA *Information Online 2005 12th Exhibition & Conference* and later in the year *neXt 2005*, the National Library and Information Technicians Conference, plus more awards and more positive programs promoting reading and library services. ■