

# Learning to learn — a new year's resolution?



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**H**appy New Year, everyone. (Quick double-check — New Year?) It is indeed the New Year for ALIA: the AGM wraps up the old year and brings in the new, farewell the outgoing directors and welcoming the new ones. I would like to extend my gratitude to Imogen Garner, who has brought the breadth of her knowledge, experience and perception to the role of president of ALIA over the past year, and to Kevin Dudeney who has been an active and energetic director over the past four years. I welcome Dagmar Schmidmaier as the new vice-president (president-elect) and Rachael Browning as director, and welcome back Ann Ritchie, who returns to the Board for a second term.

For me, the past year as vice-president has been a steep learning curve — but an immensely rewarding one. The past year has undoubtedly underscored for me the importance of learning — which may perhaps sound strange coming from a person whose core business is in fact 'learning'. But, I think we are all in the business of learning.

Driven by social and technological developments, our areas of practice as library and information professionals are, as we are all too aware, changing rapidly and constantly. This dynamic environment places immense challenges on staff in libraries and information agencies as they perform their duties in the workplace, as well as on managers and employers who need to consider the desirable skill set of their staff. Those who are developing and delivering courses in the LIS field at both the vocational and higher education levels are also challenged by the evolving areas of the discipline, further compounded by structural and economic changes within the education sector itself. Students themselves are facing higher fees for an often-reduced choice within the courses they are enrolled in. ALIA faces its own challenges in the role it plays in the LIS course recognition process to establish and monitor professional standards.

These issues have formed the backdrop to the work currently being undertaken by the ALIA Education Reference Group (ERG). Building on the valuable work of the LISEKA project (Libraries and Information Science Education for the Knowledge Age), the ERG was asked to undertake a consultative review of ALIA's current education statements and to consider their relationship with the LISEKA framework in these changing times. The stakeholders came together to continue the conversation at the Education Forum held in April, which provided valuable feedback on the draft revised education statements and on the roles that the different stakeholders can and should play in the career-long education framework.

That conversation focused on 'developing the dynamic information professional for the

21st century'. Whether a library assistant, library technician or librarian, all LIS workers need to recognise the need to be a lifelong learner; employers need to recognise the role they can play in encouraging and supporting career-long learning to ensure they have a flexible and adaptable workforce; educators and training providers need to develop and deliver courses that help participants with their learning to learn. These formal learning activities can be augmented by mentoring — an important process when a large percentage of LIS professionals are moving towards the end of their own careers.

ALIA has a strong foundation in place to facilitate career-long learning. Its role in the recognition of courses has long underpinned the standards of the LIS profession and the quality of LIS graduates. Beyond this, ALIA has established the professional development scheme to provide members with the tools to strengthen their knowledge, skills and competencies, to remain up to date in their areas of expertise and to demonstrate their commitment to professional development by tracking and recording their learning. Active involvement in this scheme enables you to use the letters 'CP' (Certified Practitioner) after your post-nominals to indicate your commitment to ongoing professional development and contributing to your pathway to becoming an Associate Fellow of ALIA.

In my recent professional reading, I came across international praise for the support ALIA offers its members: 'ALIA deserves a mention... ALIA has introduced validation for its members to raise the profession's profile among employers and to provide evidence that the skills of librarians are current and valid' (Brine, A (2005). *Continuing professional development: a guide for information professionals*. Oxford: Chandos Publishing, p 144). 'Skilling members for the future' is a key aspect of ALIA's vision for 2010 (*ALIA towards 2010: making it happen*). Important strategies articulated in the ALIA 2005–2006 plan include increasing member participation rates both in the professional development scheme and in mentoring programs.

During my year as president of ALIA, I hope to continue the conversation about the roles to be played by the diverse stakeholders in LIS education and career-long learning and how as a professional association we can best manage the many challenges we face. Career development will be an important topic within the ALIA Professional Development program to ensure that the LIS professionals of the 21st century really are dynamic and proactive so that our profession is widely — and obviously — recognised as one of the most valuable professions in the Knowledge Age.

So Happy New Year — and perhaps you have a New Year resolution for your own professional development? ■

## 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](mailto:feedback@alia.org.au) will be automatically forwarded to all Board members.

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