

Valuing change



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This month's issue of *inCite* looks to the future. You will find a number of articles that consider different dimensions of libraries and information services designed to cater for future user needs.

In my current professional reading, common themes emerge: 'the ever-changing arenas of library services', 'new online services', 'new worlds of information work', 'library services are evolving', 'a new integrated service will transform the way society and future generations view the library'...

From a personal perspective, I find that one specific aspect of LIS education that challenges many academics is in fact how to structure learning so that it helps students develop the skills and knowledge they will need as future library and information professionals when the future itself is still being defined. The ongoing economic, social and technological changes will continue to impact on our sector, causing us to constantly monitor and evaluate current practices and to strive to develop innovative services that will inspire all our stakeholders.

The feature articles this month look at the future of libraries from a number of different angles. Join us as we visit the new Playford Library in South Australia, short-listed for the 2005 Australian Interior Design Awards, and as we listen to the ideas presented by Lynne Brindley, CEO of the British Library, when she spoke recently at the State Library of New South Wales about the modernisation strategy she has implemented at the British Library. Fiona Emberton, of John Stanley Associates, introduces us to a range of innovative services developed within the public library sector. Read about cutting-edge technology to improve security and efficiency at a new library in Victoria.

I believe the future is really exciting for library and information professionals — we have great opportunities to be creative and innovative in a dynamic information world. At the same time, however, if we are truly to make a difference, I feel we need to also pause to reflect on the core values that we all share as information professionals.

A comment from one of my students recently in the learning portfolio she submitted at the conclusion of her studies highlighted the fundamental importance of our professional values. This student indicated she had gained deep insights into the LIS profession through the ALIA statement on core values and that she needed to be vigilant to ensure she could make the distinction between her personal and her professional values. While they did not necessarily need to be fully congruent, in her professional life, these professional

values must be clearly articulated. The ALIA statement on core values was placed prominently next to her computer so she could easily refer to it in her daily work.

This caused me to stop to consider how many library and information professionals might readily think about their professional values during their own daily work. Are these core values deeply instilled in us all, or in our organisations, so that they do direct our professional activities? Is it possible that the social and technological changes around us may force us to question our professional views?

A reminder, then, about our values: Australian library and information services are fundamental to the free flow of information and ideas that support and encourage a thriving culture, economy and democracy. It is critical that library and information professionals commit to the core values of their profession:

- promotion of the free flow of information and ideas through open access to recorded knowledge, information and creative works
- connection of people to ideas
- commitment to literacy, information literacy and learning
- respect for the diversity and individuality of all people
- preservation of the human record
- excellence in professional service to our communities
- partnerships to advance these values.

I realise that many other professions have values that overlap with some of ALIA's core values: teachers would certainly share the commitment to literacy and learning and respect for diversity, artists would share the desire to connect people with ideas, while excellence in professional service must be a common attribute to all professionals. These values form the context for the kernel of our professional values — the free flow of information and ideas and the need to preserve the human record. In the face of inevitable future social and technological change, I do not doubt that these central issues may be increasingly threatened and it should be our professional goal to stand up against the challenges that are presented to us.

This issue of *inCite* celebrates innovative ideas that underscore the dynamic nature of libraries, library services and librarians in the environment of change that we all operate in. The core values of the profession should, however, remain constant and relevant to help us to deal with the uncertainty of future events in the library world. ■

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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