

# ALIA's membership indicators



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In 2004 we set ourselves some high membership targets with our member retention rate of 90 per cent and a net growth rate of 3 per cent for the 2004–2005 membership year. Now that the year is completed and renewals for 2005–2006 are well underway, Georgina Dale, manager, member services and groups liaison, has reported some very good results.

Membership retention and growth are important indicators of how an association is performing.

## Retention rate

ALIA's year-end 91.78 per cent membership retention exceeds our 90 per cent target. In association management terms, 87 per cent is considered a good rate, with 83–85 per cent being closer to the average.

Final figures show a good result in all the major membership categories (see table).

A challenge for all professional associations is to attract student members and retain them after graduation. The number of *full-time* student members identified in the three main categories of personal membership remained steady with a slight decrease from 403 in 2003–2004 to 400 in 2004–2005. However, the number retained was much higher this year, with 300 (74.4 per cent), compared to last year's 219 (62.93 per cent). It is harder to identify personal members who are part-time students, but we are investigating ways to do this.

This year we will take a similar approach to continue the success in achieving the high retention rate. Reminder notices will go out soon and later this year those who still haven't renewed in October will be followed up by phone or e-mail by their regional ALIA local liaison officer. We will also be following up with a small sample of members to ask what their reasons are for renewing.

Renewals for the 2005–2006 membership year are progressing well. At the end of June 2005, renewal was at 45 per cent compared with 34 per cent in June 2004.

## Membership growth achieved in 2004–2005

The Association achieved a net membership growth of 1.95 per cent for the 2004–2005 membership year, which is up from the net growth of –1.24 per cent for the 2003–2004 membership year, but short of our net 3 per cent target by 61 new or retained members. The positive growth has nevertheless provided real incentive to reach the target this membership year.

Some other areas we measure also show good results:

- A conversion rate of 64 per cent of prospective members in 2004–2005, up from 35.5 per cent at the end of June 2004. This exceeds the target of 50 per cent of prospects converted to members set in ALIA's 2003–2004 plan.
- A total of 62 per cent of new members joined via the ALIA website during the 2004–2005 membership year. Twenty-seven members joined via the ALIA Shop, which has only been operating since November 2004, representing 4.5 per cent of new members joining this way.
- The number of former members 'readmitting' has increased in each of the past two years.
- There has been a steady growth trend in membership in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania in 2004–2005. The number of members in South Australia and Western Australia has held steady, stopping a backward slide that started in 2002.

## Membership growth planning for 2005–2006

In the upcoming year membership recruitment activities will focus on Institutional, Associate and Library Technician members, and include promoting membership through ALIA Group activities and our local liaison officers. The website membership pages are being redeveloped and will link to the online Shop to make it easier to join straightaway.

More challenging for us now is to widen our vision in terms of the potential numbers of members. In addition to its own course recognition, ALIA also accepts qualifications recognised by allied bodies (eg ACS, ASA) and overseas associations (eg CILIP) as eligible for Associate or Technician membership. There is though much potential within the LIS sector yet to be realised. Figures for 2004 obtained through our annual course return process show 1520 Masters and Graduate Diploma students enrolled, approximately 1100 undergraduate students, and approximately 2250 technician students. Phil Teece, ALIA's industrial and employment advisor, provides recent figures (<http://alia.org.au/employment/labour.market/>) from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Department of Employment which classify more than 27 000 as library workers, of which 10 400 are librarians; 8500 are library assistants; and 4700 work as library technicians. So in the bigger picture ALIA's membership figures are good in terms of association benchmarks, but our potential for growth is exciting. ■

Membership category	2003–2004 (financial at June 04)	2004–2005 (renewed at June 05)	Retention rate as a percentage	2004–2005 members	Growth rate as a percentage
Associate	3746	3478	92.85%	3756	+ 0.27%
Library Technician	443	403	90.97%	456	+ 2.93%
Member	816	678	83.08%	911	+11.64%
Institution	881	843	95.69%	878	– 0.34%
<b>Total membership</b>	<b>5886</b>	<b>5402</b>	<b>91.78%</b>	<b>6001</b>	<b>+1.95%</b>