

ALIA and international aid efforts



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2005 brings us a new two year plan endorsed by the Board following consultations throughout 2004 and the November National Policy Congress. The printed plan will be distributed in the March issue of *inCite*.

Strengthening our role in regional and international activities was a late entry into a priority initiative 'Lobby and advocate to ensure equitable access to information' (initiative 1). Through a combination of coincidence, planning and the tsunami tragedy, two of the actions — 'work with and participate in international and regional library associations' (1.4) and 'work with strategic partners within and beyond the sector' (1.2) are early starters.

IFLA in Canberra

From 3 to 5 February the IFLA Management of Library Associations Section (MLAS) committee will meet at ALIA House in Canberra. I am delighted to be hosting my committee colleagues from library associations around the world. ALIA is taking this opportunity to involve some Australian IFLA representatives in the agenda discussions and to showcase our profession.

IFLA statements and guidelines are very useful to associations in advocacy. However these are often presented to association members at the end of the process for promotion or adoption. MLAS is keen to find ways that associations can have more input during the development stages. One initiative supported by GB is that the chair of the MLAS committee is invited to attend GB meetings. MLAS is investigating how it can work more closely with two of IFLA's core committees — Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE), and Copyright and other Legal Matters (CLM). Joyce Kirk (FAIFE) and Eve Woodberry (CLM) will be able to join us in Canberra for these discussions.

MLAS hosts the evolving IFLA New Librarians Discussion Group. ALIA will take this opportunity to showcase the success of our New Generation Policy and Advisory Group (NGPAG), and two of its initiatives — the New Graduates Group and New Librarians' Symposia. Our NGPAG and NGG/NLS are leading the world in this area. A unique quality that contributes to their success — another is the calibre of our new gens and graduates — is that ALIA provides space and support for them to create and act on their ideas. Most associations have taken the different approach of customising existing services and benefits for new gens and new graduates.

Alex Byrne, IFLA president elect will join us for discussions on two new initiatives: IFLA's Three Pillars document for strengthening advocacy capabilities within IFLA; and the Global Library Association Development (GLAD) program which aims to broaden opportunities for library associations to participate in IFLA and provide leadership development. There will also

be a status report on the World Summit for the Information Society.

The tsunami tragedy

In December last year ALIA's International Relations Committee began considering running an ALIA-hosted forum in mid-year for library associations in the Asia-Pacific region. With this year commencing UNESCO's decade of sustainability, it was suggested the forum could focus on the roles associations can play in improving sustainability within their country and region. With the Indian Ocean tsunami tragedy of 26 December the proposed forum would now look to focussing on identifying assistance needs within these areas, how these can be best met, and developing disaster preparation and recovery workshops. We will be seeking the support of the Australian government in this, and funding, though funding is always difficult to secure. Understandably the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade advises that at the moment the emphasis is on humanitarian aid.

The Sri Lankan library community has quickly established the Sri Lanka Disaster Management Committee for Libraries, Information Services and Archives and is working with UNESCO and IFLA [<http://www.ifla.org/announce.htm>] The list of requirements and priorities is being worked on. An important outcome is that 'A decision was taken in principle to use the opportunities represented by this tragedy to not only rehabilitate but also to develop libraries and information services so that they could play major and positive roles in achieving the Government's aims of an e-Lanka and to try to accord with the time scales made clear in the Action Plans emerging from the Geneva World Summit on the Information Society.' [<http://www.ifla.org/V/press/tsunami-SriLanka-report2.htm>]

ALIA is in a 'coalition' of other Australian cultural and heritage associations to push for a co-ordinated and integrated approach to relief efforts by government and NGOs, and between our associations. Our 'coalition' will propose to the government that this group become a Reference Group for providing advice on cultural and heritage assistance matters. The 'coalition' has agreed to the principles that Australian relief should take its lead from information provided and requirements identified by the local communities affected; reconstruction should reflect the culture, traditional building and craft practices and environmental realities of the affected regions; and that cultural relief and reconstruction is integral to the humanitarian relief effort now underway.

Alex Byrne is a member of our International Relations committee and so provides an invaluable link between IFLA's activities and ALIA's. I have no doubts that the Australian library and information sector will respond with great generosity when called upon. ■