

ALIANet turns 10

There is a rumour going around that I was one of the first remote (that is, outside the ACT — only a Canberra could consider that as a definition of remote!) users to sign up to ALIANet. I was itching to become involved. Living in Western Australia can be isolating, and keeping in touch with colleagues within and outside Australia is a major activity of mine.

My general councillor's report to WA Branch November 1994 included: 'The ACT Branch has just endorsed an initiative to undertake the provision of internet access to their membership... GC is aware that this will be a pilot project to assess the feasibility of providing internet access to the whole of the membership and is mindful of the technological and other challenges involved'. The 1995 ALIA annual report has a photo of the then Governor General The Honourable Bill Hayden at the ALIANet launch, which I, and many others, attended. Such exciting times!


How we have moved forward since 1995. I always knew we would make it. At the July 1997 meeting of General Council I proposed that we initiate 'electronic broadcasts' as a recruitment and retention initiative, an 'electronic alerting service' as I called it; a service whereby we kept members informed. By then I was hooked on such devices and could not wait for ALIA to get underway. I have not kept subsequent deliberations on this matter, but if my memory serves me correctly, this was a bold move indeed and the Association did not take it up straight away. However, we now have aliaNEWS (first distributed in November 1998), and aliaPUBNEWS to name two such alerting services and many of the groups have their own e-mail lists. I belong to quite a few of these, too.

I am not a total ALIANet freak. In my Frontline column in the September 1997 issue of *inCite* I mention that General Council was online with many of the council papers now available from the ALIA home page. This was good up to a point but it meant that we, the 'client', had to print out the documentation if we needed it. Today, such is life, but I recall then that I was not very happy with this approach, though I did not admit this in the Frontline!

Are we now too carried away with the electronic messaging, alerting and documentation game? I have previously mourned the loss of the ALIA *Handbook* as a record of the Association at given moments in time. We are an Association to be reckoned with and documenting our history is an important part of our existence. I have often given up wading through the many pages on the ALIA website searching for that elusive piece of information. The search engine does not always find it. I also believe that the Association could improve its printed publication offerings and feel that our fascination with the web and its facility have diverted us from these matters for too long.

Nevertheless, ALIANet is a very important component of the Association's business and may it continue to improve and serve us well.

Kerry Smith, FALIA



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