



Jan Richards

ALIA President

Feedback to your Board of Directors

Board members welcome your comments and feedback. Please feel free to contact a Board member at any time.

Email: feedback@alia.org.au with your comments.

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I can still remember with great clarity the moment in 1995 when I changed my mind about that cardinal rule of 'not eating in the library'. After a morning of performance appraisals with the staff at our Cowra branch, I decided to treat myself to a late lunch before beginning the drive back to Orange. Having given my order I glanced around at the other diners and recognised an elegant older woman who I'd seen in the library earlier. With great deliberation she unpacked her shopping bag and stacked the books she'd borrowed on the table. After carefully inspecting each title she selected one and, taking up her glass of wine, began to read, oblivious to everything and everyone around her. For me that was an 'aha!' moment! My Cowra lady was doing what most of us do with that very portable of pleasures, the book – totally integrating it into her life. Why, I asked myself, were we so precious about people eating in the library when once out of our sight our resources were leading a robust life with no obvious side effects?

If we and our libraries are to remain relevant we need to constantly reassess what we're doing, and not feel compelled to adhere to outdated and irrelevant conventions. The Global Financial Crisis is already forcing many of us to make tough decisions about the resources, services, and programs we offer and, while there will be some casualties, there is also the very real potential for us to reinvent ourselves in a positive way and to position ourselves as integral to our various communities.

During my election campaign last year I rated lobbying and advocacy as my #1 priority – that's why the ALIA Public Libraries Summit is so near to my heart. I'm not alone in my thinking; you too afforded Lobbying and Advocacy the highest importance in the 2008 Member Survey. For that reason we're making it the topic for this year's National Advisory Congress to be held in August/September. If you haven't participated before, I urge you to do so; it's your Association, so let your voice be heard. Isolation isn't an excuse as there's the opportunity to join via teleconference.

In these uncertain economic times, advocacy and lobbying are more important than ever. Libraries don't exist in isolation. Regardless of the sector, libraries are part of their parent body and, as we all know, competition within the organisation for funding can be fierce. It's important to be able to articulate our value to the organisation.

Similarly it's essential for us to be able to demonstrate our personal worth. One way of doing this is through professional development. With your membership renewal you will receive a letter from me outlining ways in which ALIA can help you stay abreast of the latest professional developments. We all know and love *inCite* (you told us that in the 2008 Member Survey) but here are a few new initiatives:

- Access to LIS online full-text journals is an essential part of a library professional's tool kit. You confirmed this in the 2008 survey too. We've been delighted to announce the ProQuest journal package which is available free to all ALIA members to help

ensure library professionals continue to effectively meet the evolving needs of the clients and communities they serve.

- All ALIA's members each month will receive *PD Postings*, a monthly electronic publication sponsored by QUT. It provides you with a monthly selection of professional development opportunities across a wide variety of skills, issues, and subjects of interest to the industry. A read through this always reminds me of how broad the term 'PD' is!
- We also know that managing an information service requires a unique and complex skill set. Managers juggle their core professional duties with added responsibilities for leadership, project management, and human resource development, just to name a few. *LIS Management in Focus* is a new quarterly electronic publication sent directly to ALIA's institutional members. It provides regular updates on management products and services available to assist you, both from ALIA and from the broader industry at large. We're proud to partner with CAVAL on this initiative.

I have just returned from a series of meetings in Sydney where I caught up with many friends and colleagues. Invariably the question was "are you 'it' yet?" followed by "what's the first year been like?" Following on from Derek's musings last month, I can report that it's been a steep though hugely enjoyable learning curve. Thank you to Derek for his inspiration, generosity, and delightful sense of humour. I'd also like to acknowledge the commitment of retiring Board Members, Katy Watson and Damian Lodge, whose incisive questions made me re-think some of my preconceptions (to bring me back to where I started). Oh, and before I am inundated with emails and letters I know there are exceptions to my 'eat and read with gusto' decree!

For updates, keep an eye on the ALIA Board Blog and if you feel like an overdose there's also my own (resuscitated) blog at <http://mentoras.livejournal.com>.

Until next month, keep safe.

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