

## OPINION

Each month, OPINION features contributions from invited guest writers. The opinions expressed in this column do not necessarily reflect those of the Australian Library and Information Association.

# LIBRARIES NEED TO TAKE ACTION NOW TO LEAD THE COMMUNITY IN CYBERSAFETY

Librarians and library staff are the stewards of cybersafety in the library community. As such, they have an extraordinary opportunity to lead the community in the safe and responsible use of technology by setting the standard for best practice behaviour online.

Libraries are uniquely positioned to provide opportunities for the community to access information and undertake important tasks online. Libraries and library users are increasingly able to use the internet and online applications to help with homework, special interests, and everyday requirements. However cyberspace also brings with it risks to privacy, security, and personal wellbeing, and therefore needs to be managed appropriately by libraries providing online access. While libraries are well aware of this important challenge, they acknowledge how difficult it is to deal with the broad and ever-changing issues the online world brings.

There are a multitude of daily risks and obstacles any individual must navigate online. It is difficult for individual citizens to be aware of all risks and how to effectively deal with them. Many Australians are aware of the widely publicised 'macro' cyber threats that exist in the online environment, including major computer virus alerts, privacy concerns, the proliferation of child pornography, and extreme cases of cyberbullying.

However, it is often the regular and insidious threats that provide concerns for the Australian public, and such threats are constant and ever-changing. Some of these threats include virus-laden data downloads, ring tone scams, lottery and prize scams, spyware and other malware, geo-tagging vulnerabilities, and personalised scams. While protection against many threats can be relatively easily accomplished, the problem can seem overwhelming and it's easy to see how citizens may think only experts and well-resourced institutions are equipped to tackle them.

The Telstra Foundation and The Alannah and Madeline Foundation came together last year and, working closely with Australia's public libraries, developed eSmart Libraries – one of

the most significant cybersafety initiatives ever undertaken. The partnership gives all of Australia's 1500 libraries the opportunity to adopt the system over the next five years.

eSmart Libraries is a behaviour change system for libraries to improve cybersafety and deal with cyberbullying and bullying. The eSmart Libraries framework has an online system that provides a road map for library staff to put in place everything they need to equip the library community with the skills and knowledge they need for the smart, safe, and responsible use of technology. eSmart Libraries is an extension of eSmart Schools, which has been adopted by more than 1400 schools across Australia since its launch in 2011. Our Foundation's goal is to support the library community to manage cyber-based issues and continue to embrace the positive benefits of online activity. By implementing or using the eSmart framework, library staff and users can be a part of an important educational and behaviour-change initiative for cybersafety and wellbeing.

So do you and your library community know how to guard against security and privacy risks, download content legally, and manage reputation and relationship-based issues associated with being in cyberspace? eSmart will help you deal with these issues and position your library as the community leader in the smart, safe, and responsible use of technologies.

The Telstra Foundation and The Alannah and Madeline Foundation recognise that libraries play an increasingly important role in bridging the digital divide by improving opportunities for all Australians to access the benefits of technology irrespective of income, ability, or disadvantage. eSmart Libraries

## eSmart Libraries could be beneficial to your library if you:

- are aware of cybersafety but unsure if it is really integrated into the knowledge, skills, and approaches of your library
- agree that the digital world changes at a rapid pace and having all the best resources and tools in one place would be very beneficial
- don't have the time to think about what needs to be done – tapping into a comprehensive (and free-to-use) solution would really help.

has consulted widely within the library sector to develop the initiative. The Alannah and Madeline Foundation and Telstra Foundation are piloting eSmart Libraries in 20 clusters of libraries across Australia in 2013, and the system will be offered to all of Australia's 1500 public libraries over the next six years. If you think your library could benefit from cybersafety support or you are interested in having your library join the eSmart Libraries initiative, let us know by visiting our webpage at [www.amf.org.au/eSmartlibraries/](http://www.amf.org.au/eSmartlibraries/) or calling our team on 03 9697 0666.

*Judith Slocombe is CEO of The Alannah and Madeline Foundation, a national charity protecting children from violence and bullying and its devastating effects. The Telstra Foundation has partnered with The Alannah and Madeline Foundation, investing \$8 million over six years to develop and implement eSmart Libraries – one of the most significant community cybersafety initiatives ever undertaken in Australia.*