

# WANT TO MAKE YOUR MARK? NOMINATE FOR THE ALIA BOARD

**A**LIA is a not-for-profit organisation that relies on a small team of paid staff and thousands of volunteers. Seven of those volunteers work at the strategic level, listening to all our members and shaping the direction and priorities that underpin our continued sustainability and success as the peak professional association for our sector. These are our ALIA Board members, voted in by other members, every year.

As our 2013 financial year comes to a close, I would like to thank my fellow Board members for their contributions to date and look forward to working with them over the next five months until our new Board members are elected in May 2014.

**AS A BOARD MEMBER, YOU NEED TO THINK AND ACT AT A STRATEGIC LEVEL. YOUR INPUT TO THE DIRECTION OF THE ORGANISATION WILL HELP SHAPE THE ALIA OF THE FUTURE.**

At our previous board meeting in October this year, the Board regretfully accepted the resignation of Susan Coker who was elected as president-elect in May this year. Susan has resigned due to health reasons and we wish her well in her recovery.

In line with our Constitution and By-laws, the Board agreed to temporarily fill the position of Vice President from within the Board and then fill the ensuing vacancy. All of this means that in the elections are held early next year we will all be voting for a president and a president-elect as well as three Board members.

From my experience, the benefits of serving on the Board of ALIA have included:

- understanding the operations of professional organisations at a higher level
- further developing professional networks

- the development of skills that may be different from current employment experiences
- the opportunity to consider issues that may not be part of everyday employment and in sectors other than one's own
- building one's own, and the organisation's, reputation

Our Board members take the lead on developing the Association's direction on high level strategic projects such as the future of the profession, course accreditation models, ebooks and elearning, open access, copyright, data and text mining/linking, and a whole raft of other topics.

As a Board member you need to think and act at a strategic level. Your input to the direction of the organisation will help shape the ALIA of the future. You will learn skills that will assist you in your career development, especially around governance and risk management, financial, ethical, and legal issues.

The details for nomination for the Board are on page 2 of this issue of INCITE and I urge you to consider nominating. It's a precious opportunity and a unique experience.

Seasons greetings to all and let's be ready for an exciting new year.



JULIE RAE  
ALIA President

# CONTRADICTIONS ABOUND

**O**ur Future of the Profession consultation is almost complete. Imagine a whiteboard the size of a football oval, covered in thought bubbles, and you will have some concept of the task ahead. All we have to do now is collate the information and ideas into a comprehensive yet short report, that is indicative without being prescriptive, based on the balance of probabilities while remaining flexible enough to accommodate the realities of disruptive change. What we have discovered is that the Future of the Profession is not about either/or, it involves a mass of contradictions that cannot easily be resolved.

## MAKING LIFE EASIER AND MAINTAINING BARRIERS

In our everyday lives, businesses are working harder than ever to make our buying experiences seamless. They want us to dive online and, in a few clicks, order the item we need for next day delivery. The quicker and easier they make it for us to shop, the more likely we are to return to their site and the less likely we are to defect to a competitor. For libraries, though, we limit physical book borrowing by putting up arbitrary barriers – the length of time for the loan, becoming a member, how many items you can borrow at one time. We maintain artificial ways of limiting supply, when the world around us is trying to remove them.

For older people, these library ways are familiar, safe territory. Younger generations, though, expect to have access to anything they need. For example, while older people may still be surprised, delighted and grateful to find the information they need free of charge on the internet, it's a basic requirement for younger ones, who are, by contrast, frustrated and annoyed when they hit a paywall. People today want what they want, when they want it. That means libraries providing the precise information users need at exactly the right moment, free of charge at the point of use.

## PRECISE DELIVERY AND RANDOM DISCOVERY

The other side of the coin from needing precise information, right there and then, is that people like to browse at their leisure. They like to discover that special something that will set them apart in their research or studies, or that inspires them and takes them to new places they would never have thought of on their own. A lawyer friend was horrified when I told her physical collections in libraries were shrinking. Her opinion was that "what undergraduates find on the shelves means the difference between an average degree and an outstanding degree".

## NOISY AND QUIET

And then there's that question of noise levels. Being free to talk in libraries has loosened up the atmosphere, making places more relaxed and welcoming. But now it's the users who are saying they want quiet spaces – places that are free from distraction, aid concentration, and provide an environment for serious study. People are saying that libraries are one of the few places where it is legitimate to disconnect yourself from the smartphone, tablet, and face-to-face hubbub. When we're looking at library brand values for the future, 'browse' and 'quiet' are factors we need to consider – not exclusively, but as an important option.

## WITHIN THESE WALLS AND OUTSIDE

While libraries provide the physical spaces people need and crave, there has also been a strong theme around taking the library and information service to where the users are, rather than expecting them to come to us – whether it's in the real or virtual world. The October issue of INCITE had a number of features about library and information professionals working outside the classic library environment, and there is a growing belief among leaders in the sector that many students graduating from their course in the coming years will find jobs in other industries, where their information sourcing, management and dissemination skills will be highly valued.

Other contradictions include library and information professionals' belief that content creators should be appropriately rewarded for their work, while opposing overly restrictive copyright regulations, and the desire to provide access to information tailored to the needs of individuals, while defending people's right to personal privacy.

This has all made for a fascinating consultation period and it has reminded me of one of my favourite lines in job advertising – "must be able to cope with a high degree of ambiguity". This should probably be included in all the ads we post for library and information professionals from here on in.

Please stay tuned in for the outcomes of the Future of the Profession project early in 2014. One thing we know for certain is that this will be a major staging post in the project delivery, but not the end of the journey.



**SUE MCKERRACHER**  
ALIA Executive Director