

FRONTLINE

EBOOKS AND THE FUTURE OF OUR PROFESSION

LIS EDUCATION BONUS LIFT OUT

Welcome to the April issue of INCITE. I'm very excited by this issue as it focuses on an area of my portfolio that I support and promote 100% – Education – the starting point of your hopefully long and rewarding career in the world of LIS.

I hope you find the education lift out of enormous value, especially if you're considering new studies and/or continuing professional development. Check out the MyPD tracking tool now open to all ALIA personal members which records your commitment to ongoing learning through reflection.

You'll also notice we have some very young, active-looking people on the front of the lift out. For those of us who won't see 40, or 50, or dare I say even 60 anymore... don't be alarmed! Opportunities for ongoing education and learning are life-long and I believe our three young people pictured represent the enthusiasm and youthfulness that we can all have with regard to our personal growth – no matter what our age or time of life!

I hope you enjoy INCITE this month and, in particular, savour the education lift out to keep as your reference tool for what's on offer for your education and professional development opportunities through your membership with us.

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Over recent weeks ALIA has been conducting workshops with members about ebooks and the thorny issues surrounding this new medium. Workshops have been held in Brisbane, Perth, Sydney, and Melbourne, all very well attended and vibrant in their level of discussion. Thank you to Julie Rae, ALIA Vice President, for her leadership of these sessions.

ALIA is developing a position statement from the information gathered from these workshops. Having a single, position statement for all Australian libraries is critical to the advocacy needed in the coming months and years. Sadly but not surprisingly, none of our colleagues had the 'silver bullet' to solve the ebook problem. All over the world, librarians and publishers are unable to come to an agreement about how to get e-titles into our collections. This is not a library sectoral issue, nor an issue of countries, but we have come to a point in time when the old model publishing of 'books' is being challenged and large publishing houses are faced with the need for radical change.

For some reason, some publishers seem to be using this time to starve libraries of content, which of course is our lifeblood.

Some publishers are refusing to sell ebooks to libraries. Some limit the number of loans before libraries have to repurchase the title, and others dictate how many copies a library must buy, based on the size of the library. In essence, these publishers are taking the collection development role from libraries and managing it with their own commercial interests.

In the public library arena, there is one major aggregator in the marketplace and the publishers dictate these terms to the aggregator, who then passes these on through contracts to libraries.

ALIA is taking a leadership role in advocating for reasonable access to content on reasonable terms for libraries. ALIA's overall goal is to work with members to make ebooks readily available to library users, while ensuring that there is a generally accepted, fair balance between the interests of libraries, creators, publishers and aggregators – we are really all in the book and writing game together.



A very positive sign for libraries is the fact that Australian Government, through the Industry and Innovation portfolio has established a Book Industry Consultative Council to look into the changing world of the Australian book industry. ALIA has a place in this group and we are very well represented by Margaret Allen, CEO and State Librarian, State Library of WA, and immediate Past President of ALIA.

ALIA's leadership in this matter takes a number of forms. Firstly there is an educative activity so that all members understand the complex issues in the ebook debate and are therefore able to advocate locally for our sector. Secondly, ALIA is working with other library groups, to influence the debate and decisions nationally and with IFLA, internationally. Lastly, ALIA is working collaboratively with a range of stakeholders in book world to achieve accessible content, standardised licensing arrangements and compatible formats and platforms.

Members, this is a very serious issue that goes to the heart of the future of our profession. A library starved of content is not a library.

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