

FRONTLINE – PRESIDENT VANESSA LITTLE



Much has changed, much has been achieved, and there is much left to be done from my year as President of ALIA. Changes have not only been internal to the ALIA organisation, but also within the library and information landscape in Australia.

My term as President has seen the need to galvanise members and to be vociferous in our advocacy across many library sectors. Together, we have had success in Queensland with our Dumb Idea campaign about State Government libraries and I thank the many members who contributed effort to that campaign.

We have continued to work with our school library members and colleagues to press the Commonwealth and State Governments to adopt the recommendations of the school libraries review. So far we have not reached our desired outcomes, but the dialogue is still open and the collaboration between associations continues to strengthen through our joint efforts.

Our advocacy for TAFE libraries has yet to have an outcome, but again the partnership between the Board, members, and the ALIA staff has shown how quickly we can mobilise, and clearly articulate our position with key decision makers.

This year has seen the commencement of a review of copyright legislation in Australia. Well overdue, this review opens up the dialogue between libraries and copyright holders regarding rights in the digital world. Access to information in every format is essential to our future and both ALIA and our colleagues in the

Australian Library Copyright Committee have been active in presenting the library position into this review.

Our 2012–13 Board has been committed to addressing the very key issues facing us and our future as a profession. My special thanks to Vice President Julie Rae in her passionate leadership of the ebook agenda and the Future of the Profession research. I also thank Joseph Cullen and Kathryn Cass, our outgoing Board members, for their dedication and work.

A role such as that of President usually comes with some difficult and sometimes controversial decision making. The decision by the Board this year to outsource the Association's academic journals has been the source of some debate in the profession, but I am confident that it is the right move for this time and that members will see improvements in accessibility and the reach of our journals and our authors.

I hope that you are all happy with the new format INCITE and the ALIA Weekly email newsletter. I believe both of these improvements have brought a freshness and a renewed sense of connection to members of ALIA.

I am proud of the commitment and sound management of the Association by our 2012–13 Board. Mindful of the need to be fiscally responsible, but in a time of transition and change for the Association, the Board, with support from ALIA staff, has put the Association into a surplus position again this year. My Board colleagues have been wise and wonderful counsellors, contributors, and leaders for the Association and I thank them most sincerely for their contribution during my presidential year.

Becoming a member of the ALIA Board is just one way in which volunteering supports the Association. I have been increasingly aware, throughout my term as a director, of the many and varied ways in which members demonstrate their commitment. Editorial boards, Advisory Committees, and ALIA Groups involve more than 200 volunteers at a senior level. Then there are the conference convenors and their helpers, reference group members, panellists, and representatives on external committees. It is impossible to thank everyone individually, but please be assured that your contribution has been recognised and valued.

The ALIA staff are the 'glue' that holds our Association together. I would like to acknowledge the staff as they worked through a year of transition from one leadership team to another and for their dedication to the welfare and benefit of ALIA members. Following Sue Hutley's departure from ALIA, Rob Miller took on the role of Acting Executive Director while recruitment to the position was conducted. On behalf of all of the ALIA family, I thank Rob for leading the team most effectively throughout this time. I also would like to acknowledge Janetta Mascilongo who left the position of Director: Professional Services during the year. Janetta has been an enthusiastic supporter of ALIA's training activities and of the course accreditation program. She left big shoes for Janice Taylor to fill when Janice commenced in the role.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of my year as President has been the National Year of Reading 2012. With over 4000 activities across the country and many, many partners, supporters, and ambassadors, this initiative has far exceeded the expectations of the 15 founding partners who established the concept. ALIA has been not only a founder partner of the National Year of Reading, but also the auspicing body for grants from the Commonwealth Government, business, and philanthropic organisations. We delivered a highly successful year and established ourselves as a trusted, reliable partner for government and others.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the vital role that our new Executive Director, Sue McKerracher, has played in consolidating and reshaping ALIA as we take on the many important issues in our near future. Sue has been inspirational to staff, the Board, and members in her ability to develop partnerships, and advocate and strategise for libraries and librarians, and, on your behalf, I thank her for her substantial contribution this year. I would also like to acknowledge her family who do without her for a number of days every week, while she undertakes her role with ALIA.

I now hand over the presidential baton to Julie Rae for 2013–14. Julie, I wish you well for your year as President and hope that you find the year as energising and exciting as I have.