

TIME TO DO MORE THAN JUST MANAGE INFORMATION?

For some time now I have heard people say what does the 'I' in ALIA mean? And then, in the next breath, they ask what does ALIA do about the 'I'?

Firstly – in practical terms – that 'I' represents information. To me, therefore, the question becomes one about semantics, and what your definition is of 'information'. Some say records management, some say IT.

Am I missing something? Because I believe that everything we do in libraries is about information, and how we do it is equally important. We, in libraries, are about people having access to ideas and information. We are about assisting them in whatever pursuit they are undertaking, whether it is educating themselves, improving their knowledge, learning a trade, or finding a hobby, we enable people to gain access to ideas, data and information easily.

MAYBE IT IS TIME WE STARTED MINING INFORMATION, ADDING VALUE TO OUR SERVICES BY USING IT IN SOME WAY.

Our information is stored in paper containers (books and journals), in electronic depositories (journals, ebooks) and in the numerous repositories across the globe that are accessed via a multitude of search engines.

So if the 'I' means all of this, then what does the 'L' mean? Some say the 'L' is about books and buildings, therefore the 'I' (information) is what we do and the 'L' (library) is how we do it.

Technology has changed many things in our lives and has provided people with faster, easier access to a wealth of information. We don't own the information; we organise it, we caretake it, and we provide venues for access, whether physical or virtual.

So to me ALIA is all about the 'I' – just look at our website, our discussions, and our conferences and you can see we spend a lot of time talking about the 'I' and, of course, the 'L'. But maybe there is a need for us to do more with information than just manage it. Maybe it is time we started mining it, adding value to our services by using it in some way. Maybe it is time

we started critically evaluating it and using it to join debates, or add value to other products. To promote the nuggets of gold we have through channels such as social media.

By the way, if you also think that 'I' is really more about records management or archives, then you will be pleased to hear ALIA has just signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the two professional bodies representing professionals in these fields, and we are looking together at opportunities for further collaboration. ALIA is indeed all about Libraries and Information. They are the 'what' and 'how' of all we do.

Why do we do it? To ensure that information and ideas can be available to all so they can live their lives to the fullest. It's really that straightforward – at least, that's how I see it.

Those are a couple of my ideas. What ideas do you have? Join the debate on ALIA's LinkedIn group page and let's talk.



JULIE RAE
ALIA President

YOUR ASSOCIATION. YOUR AGM.

The 2014 ALIA Annual General Meeting will take place on Wednesday 21 May 2014. For information regarding rules of meetings, proposal of motions to the meeting and meeting details, visit the website at www.alia.org.au/agm.