

MANY FORMS OF ADVOCACY

ALIA's advocacy for libraries takes many forms and is both proactive and reactive. On the proactive front, a major gain in recent months has been our success in positioning libraries as community information hubs for federal government initiatives.

On behalf of public and health libraries, we have negotiated \$1 million in grant funding with the Australian Digital Health Agency to cover a consumer health education program in 2019–2020. The program includes training for library staff, sessions for library users, and resources to help empower people to take greater control over their own health futures. We are also in the process of working with the Australian Bureau of Statistics to co-design an approach for Census 2021, which recognises libraries as places where people come for help completing their form. In both these examples, libraries have been at the frontline when it comes to information provision, but for the first time, this role is being recognised (and resourced) at a national level.

Reactive advocacy is where we hear about libraries under threat of budget cuts, staff reductions and even closure. There are tactics we deploy in these circumstances, but if an organisation is at the point of announcing major change, we are less likely to be successful in averting the crisis.

Special libraries have had a tough time in recent years, and too often, we are on the back foot in terms of advocacy. To counter this, the ALIA Special Libraries Working Group, ALIA Australian Government Library and Information Network (AGLIN), and CSIRO partnered in July to run an advocacy workshop and tour of CSIRO's amazing Black Mountain library and storage facility in Canberra. With more than 40 attendees, the event was over-subscribed and – as you can see from the photos – generated a lively discussion, led by CSIRO Executive Manager Information Services, Cynthia Love.

Topics included libraries closely aligning themselves with the organisation's strategic goals; articulating the value of services; supporting researchers and evidence-based practice; promoting digital access to collections; providing metadata expertise; showcasing new initiatives; adapting their language to be around possibilities, not problems, and to reflect asset management as an adjunct to collection management.

On 19 September, libraries will be high profile partners in the Australian Reading Hour, alongside publishers, booksellers and well-known authors. During October, ALIA will be using International School Library Day as an opportunity to shout about the excellent work of school libraries. Rarely a week goes by without us undertaking some form of advocacy, whether for an individual Member or for the sector as a whole – and, of course, our Canberra location means we are just down the road from Parliament House and federal government offices.

Unfortunately, there is no silver bullet. There is not one campaign, one item of collateral, one piece of evidence, which will unlock funding and resources for libraries. Advocacy is a complex, continuous slog, but the good news is that we are seeing results, as you can see in this issue of *INCITE*. We can say that, thanks to the investment by our Members, ALIA is making a positive difference to the future of libraries. ✨

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