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With this edition of *inCite* we find ourselves at the end of another year. Christmas and the New Year are almost upon us. We must brace ourselves for a succession of festive events—and later formulate resolutions that will hopefully go some way towards repairing the damage of over-indulgence!

This time of the year provides an opportunity for reflecting on the progress we have made in the last twelve months and for contemplating the twelve that lie ahead. For ALIA, 31 December represents not only the end of the calendar year but also concludes the fiscal year. It is the time when we analyse our performance against budget and evaluate one of the most critical performance indicators—the extent to which we have met our financial targets.

I am reminded of the story of the Irish Company Director who said to his shareholders at their annual general meeting: 'Last year when I stood here I said we were on the edge of a precipice. Well I am pleased to report that we have taken a great leap forward'.

Times are tough. We must manage our finances in a responsible, well-informed and creative manner. We must continually evaluate our investments and ensure that we extract the maximum return to best support our activities.

Happily, there are some positive signs suggesting a general economic upturn and good omens for the library and information profession. The growth in job vacancies and size of the labour force suggest a rise in employer confidence. Recent tax cuts are expected to result in improved consumer confidence (and bumper Christmas trading) and the outlook for inflation is low. Unemployment remains high in spite of the growth in the labour market

and expert commentators suggest that this painful position may persist for some time.

From one commentator prepared to venture a view on the long term economic outlook, there is some good news. Harry S Dent, billed as a 'Harvard economist' in one of those promotional pamphlets that seem to land incessantly on my desk, 'predicts an unprecedented economic boom from 1994 and extending well into the next century!' Dent's 'startling predictions' are based on an analysis of the 'fundamental economic cycles already set in train by the baby boom'. While Dent expounds on the theories underlying his predictions, it was the role he predicted for information technologies in the boom time that caught my eye. Information technology, in the hands of the 'innovators' will be the key to success. The bad news is that Dent predicts 'a drastic collapse and depression' from 2010 to 2025 in the USA 'though with Australia far less affected'.

While we are entitled to be a bit cynical about the mixed messages we receive from politicians and economic commentators about our economic future, we should be confident about the future role of the library and information sector.

In spite of the tough times, ALIA is not on the edge of a precipice. Membership has grown by 5% during 1993. ALIA House—the home of the National Office—provides a sound financial footing for the Association. In 1994 we predict that this investment will provide us with a healthy operational surplus.

As the year concludes, General Council and the Board of Education have been busy formulating, in consultation with ALIA Divisions, priorities for 1994 and preparing

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next year's budget. Workforce, education and training issues will continue to be the focus of much of the Association's activity. The resources of the National Office will be directed to ensuring that the professional interests of members are met by responding to particular matters of concern to individuals in the workplace. Effort will continue to be directed to ensuring that reforms in areas such as vocational education, the development of competencies and wholesale changes in the workplace are made with input from our Association.

There are a multitude of good reasons for belonging to a professional association such as ALIA. One of the most important reasons for supporting ALIA's activities is because we can collectively achieve a great deal more for the profession than is possible individually. In periods such as this, where reforms in education and the workplace are dramatic, the active support and participation of the profession in the programs of the Association is critical. Therefore your views on issues are encouraged and will be welcomed by the National Office.

1994 is the year of our biennial conference. Planning is already well advanced for this event which will be held in Wellington, New Zealand, jointly with the New Zealand Library and Information Association. Members of both Associations will benefit from the professional and cultural exchange that this forum will facilitate. While I have already met many Association Members in my travels around Australia, I am looking forward to meeting many more at the conference in Wellington.

On behalf of all the staff in the National Office I wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas and a successful 1994. ■