



Bill Linklater
ALIA President

This is my first *Front Line* in my term as the 39th President of ALIA, and I am very conscious that this brief message will, to some extent, set the pattern for my activity in 1994.

Over the last few years, Front Lines have been mainly personal messages from the President, and we have been very fortunate in having Presidents who were capable of intelligent and inspired writing on a wide variety of topics.

I intend to break with this tradition and change the pattern (which is not uncommon for me) by actively soliciting Front Lines from various people with expertise in the areas currently determined by ALIA as having priority for our activity.

Many times during 1993, while I was Vice-President, I was asked what are my Presidential themes for 1994. These were not merely polite enquiries, they were based on the assumption that my various interests were to be the major issues for ALIA in 1994.

My answer to these questions was, and still is, that I don't have the right as President to determine ALIA's themes and priorities. It would be an insult to the professionalism of our members for ALIA to take on my vision of the Association as its own.

The recently appointed Vice-Chancellor at the University of Newcastle, Professor Raoul Mortley, put this point very neatly in late 1993 when responding to a question on his vision for the University. His answer was that he had no vision—the vision for the University was to be determined by the university community through the various structures that allow for this and this would then result in a shared common vision.

Similarly, ALIA's goals and objectives, and the immediate themes from these, must be determined by our membership through the various structures that we have devel-

oped (and continually adjust) to provide for this, with ultimate ratification by the General Council.

The various themes for our activities and interest are detailed in the Strategic Plan and significant effort by the membership, the Branches, Sections, Special Interest Groups, Regional bodies and the General Council over the last few years has provided this documentation. The priorities for action from the Strategic Plan are determined each year by an established consultative process with the membership, and currently concentrate on *leadership* in quality library and information services, on *representing the profession* with governments, other organisations and the community, and on providing the organisational framework to foster individual and mutual *professional interests and aspirations*. Specific issues identified by the membership for 1994 are:

- competency standards;
- enterprise bargaining and workplace reform;
- continuing education and certification;
- status of members as individuals and the profession generally;
- education and training reform (including recognition of prior learning);
- recruitment and retention of ALIA membership.

Having said all this, and put the formal situation, I do admit to having some personal themes, which while important to me, may not necessarily rate highly as priorities for the membership as a whole. I now have the opportunity, as President, to promote these interests and attempt to build interest and enthusiasm amongst the members for more formal action and I welcome this opportunity.

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and possibly inappropriate term for what I mean. I am concerned that we currently have inadequate attention and priority to ALIA's relationships with librarians and professional associations internationally, but particularly within our own geographic region, Asia and the Pacific. The intended review by General Council of the Association's International Relations Committee during the first half of 1994 should give us an effective instrument with which we can address this situation.

In this year of the Joint Conference in New Zealand we are naturally all the more conscious of our relations across the Tasman and in the region more broadly. The opportunities for making a strong statement about our commitment in this regard have never been better, and I hope that all members will do their best to contribute to and share in this celebration of our global outreach at the Joint Conference next September.

Democratisation of access to electronic networks, nationally and internationally, is a major issue and one that is currently being promoted by only a small number of senior librarians in the country. This is a situation that has to change.

There is an urgent and pressing need for professional development for those librarians who currently lack both access to the networks, and an awareness of the value of the data on these networks to their professional roles. Those librarians working in public and school libraries are two particularly important groups in this context. The appropriate use of networks and the library's role in using the facilitating use of the networks is probably the best opportunity that we have had in the last ten years to re-assert or re-establish our professional roles in the management of information access.

I will be pursuing the above two themes with a variety of groups throughout 1994, and in future *Front Lines*. ■