



Bill Linklater
ALIA President

This is my last *Front Line* as President of the Association and while I am sure that most about-to-retire-Presidents approach the end of their term thinking what a busy, active and productive year it has been, I can confirm that 1994 has certainly been busy, active and productive!

Like a number of previous Presidents I started the year by stating that priorities were set by the membership but that I did have a couple of personal themes that were important to me and that I would push if the occasion arose. By a combination of luck and good management, one of those issues — network access — appears to have risen to the top of the Association's priority list and we have been able to provide significant input in the development of government policy regarding community access to local and international electronic networks.

I would like to take this opportunity to focus on some of what I consider to be the Association's most important achievements throughout the year.

Community access to electronic networking

Virginia Walsh in her November 1994 *inCite* column summarised the various recent initiatives by the ALP and the government in this area that support the role we believe libraries should have in community access to the networks. We must accept, however, that the role that libraries, and public libraries in particular, should have in network access is still essentially vague and much work is needed by the profession to determine appropriate parameters. As I have said in a previous column, the appropriate use of networks and the library's role in facilitating this use 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. The policy re-

garding infrastructure is now established and we should be very proud of our role in developments to date.

General Council restructuring

Two reforms to the operation of General Council were implemented in 1994 that have resulted in greater efficiency and better communication. The first was the reactivation of the Executive Committee which had, for a variety of reasons, failed to meet for some time. It has met regularly throughout 1994 mostly in the afternoon prior to General Council meetings, therefore not involving additional costs. The second change was the introduction of a portfolio system which involves each Councilor accepting responsibility for a specific area of the Association's affairs.

Finances

The Association is currently in a very sound financial position with an excellent auditor's report pointing to sound management of the Association's affairs. This situation is further enhanced by well-developed strategies in the management of space within ALIA House resulting in maximum rental income. The importance of this situation is that we are better able to fund members' needs now than we have for some years.

Lobbying activity

The Association is now, after the traumatic move of the National Office from Sydney only a few short years ago, well-established in Canberra and has a high profile in the Canberra political arena. I have received many comments this year on the success that we have had in establishing a sound lobbying foundation with Federal politicians, government departments, and bodies — a recent letter to me from the Victorian Branch summarises the general flavour of the comments I have received '...not only is the Asso-

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ciation benefiting from the closer relationship with the politicians and bureaucratic decision-makers, but the information which is flowing out to members about these activities is assisting us to promote membership of ALIA and retention of membership to our colleagues. It is felt that we now have more hard facts than ever before to take to members and non-members alike and say *See what the Association is doing for the profession.*

Relationship with ACLIS

There is general consensus that there is considerable overlap between the goals of the two cross-sectoral bodies in librarianship in Australia: ALIA and ACLIS. This overlap can and does lead to an element of competition, significant duplication of infrastructure and activity, and the perception for many is that this duplication is not in the best interests of libraries and those working in them. Following a joint meeting of the Executive Committees of each organisation and consideration of a paper prepared by the two executive officers, General Council decided unanimously to work towards a merger of the two organisations. A Working Party of General Council is currently developing a discussion paper on this issue for our next meeting and ACLIS is similarly-engaged in reviewing its possible future.

There have been many other issues throughout the year that have excited (and annoyed) the membership, and I have chosen only to mention a subjective few — if I have not taken up your favourite issue, I apologise.

I would like to thank those various library 'experts' who contributed specialist *Front Lines* for me throughout the year. I would also like to thank you, the members, for giving me the opportunity to be President and for the considerable support you have given me throughout the year. ■