

## Your voice

### Raising our profile

The Federal Government's recent *Innovation statement* will provide public libraries with the capability to deliver on-line information to all Australians. This is a truly innovative program in that it is acknowledged by the government of the importance of the public library network for the dissemination of information across the nation.

However it must be recognised that such largesse does not fall from the sky. Over the past two years the Association, through its members and its national office staff in Canberra, has been working diligently by use of direct lobbying, submissions to government enquiries, attendance at seminars and conferences across a field of related areas to achieve the profile required to effect such changes.

The Public Libraries Section in

Victoria would particularly like to commend the Association's executive director, Virginia Walsh, for the crucial role she played on behalf of all Australian public libraries.

Stage one is now complete — lets hope that the concerted effort will be continued. It is up to us to ensure that the project is successfully implemented.

**Rod Blacker, Public Libraries Section (Vic) president**

### Hallucinogenic collections

In a recent issue of *The Guardian* I came across an article by Chris Mihill with the eye-catching heading *A trip to the library can be the high point of your day*. This was not an article extolling the cultural virtues of your local library, but rather an

in-depth look at one of our libraries least well-known inhabitants — fungus. As a concerned parent I wish to highlight the dangers of libraries.

I quote Mr Roger Hay, a dermatologist at Guy's Hospital in London, 'To the gourmet fungus, as to the bibliophile, a well-stocked library is a feast of incomparable variety and flavour.' However, and particularly for those who are forced to spend long periods in libraries, he warns: 'Some fungi produce mycotoxins, which can severely damage the brain, bone marrow, liver and kidneys.'

'The risk that mycotoxins might cause permanent mental impairment among scholars and literati is balanced by a more fanciful possibility. Other classes of fungal metabolites have different pharmacological properties, including the ability,

in some cases, to cause hallucinations.

'It is not inconceivable that intoxication might follow inhalation of spores from mould fungi in libraries. The source of inspiration for many great literary figures may have been nothing more than a quick sniff of mouldy books.'

Librarians be warned!

**Patricia Lee, Canberra**

### Your voice

**Your letters on any issue of relevance to the library and information sector are welcomed.**

All letters should be addressed to the *inCite* editor and may be e-mailed to [incite@alia.org.au](mailto:incite@alia.org.au), faxed to 06 282 2249, or posted to: *Your voice*, ALIA, PO Box E441, Queen Victoria Terrace, ACT 2600. Please include your name and postal address with your letter or e-mail.

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