lobby FOR LIBRARIES

About the program...

An outline of what the *Lobby for libraries* initiative is setting out to achieve

ALIA members have long recognised that advocacy campaigns require careful planning and execution. The *Lobby for libraries* program has been developed in response to requests from members to become better library advocates.

This program outlines the skills required to develop an advocacy campaign and the series of seminars based on the kit will give participants a step-by-step guide to identifying issues, identifying influence holders, developing strategies to resolve issues, delivering our message, establishing partnerships and talking to the media.

Many organisations have important messages to convey to politicians and other influence holders but have discovered that this is rarely a simple process. Most have relied on one or two key figures to undertake their lobbying tasks and few have developed a comprehensive a strategy to convey their message. Discussing your problems with a politician at a social function or gathering does not usually produce the results you seek, yet this is often an organisation's only lobbying activity.

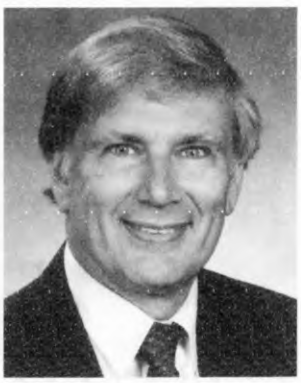
What we are seeking to do with the *Lobby for libraries* program is to ensure that we have many advocates within our Association who are ready, willing and prepared to speak effectively on behalf of the library community.

Seminars are being conducted in major centres throughout the country. We will be continually monitoring the success of the seminars and the content of the kit which will evolve as new information is included and as it is reshaped to reflect your concerns. Your feedback following the seminars is therefore vital.

Most important though is your commitment to the process of advocacy. As President Kennedy might have said if he was running our Association: *ask not what the library community can do for you but what you can do for the library community*. Collectively we can achieve a great deal. Having said this, I hope that you will personally benefit from this program and have a great time in the process!

For more information on the *Lobby for Libraries* seminar series, please contact ALIA National Office, phone (06) 285 1877, fax (06) 282 2249, e-mail enquiry@alia.org.au. ■

*Prior to the Federal Election on 2 March 1996, we asked a number of key people and prominent politicians to comment on our **Lobby for libraries** initiative. On the following pages find their considered response:*



Senator Richard Alston
Shadow minister for communications and the arts

Public access to knowledge was one of the keys to a better life during the transition from agricultural and industrial society. The arrival of the information society will offer similar challenges. Access to books and the written word has been a crucial factor in building an educated society. Now library networks have a wonderful opportunity to play a leading role in the information revolution by facilitating access to on-line information services. It is the responsibility of government to do its best to make sure that this occurs.

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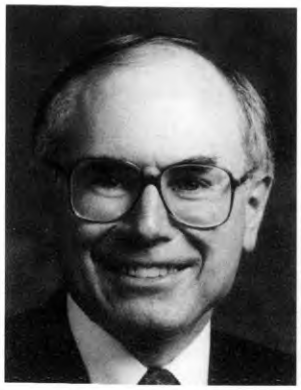


John Howard, *Leader of the Opposition*

The institution of the library has always played an integral role in the lives of Australians of all ages. Libraries continue to be a vital educational tool for students as well as a highly valuable source of information and recreational reading material for the community. Advances in communications technology are providing libraries with the opportunity to offer a wide range of new services. The local library is often the most convenient and appropriate location for providing access to the vast array of public information that is readily available on-line but not always in a paper form. The coalition envisages that libraries will have a central role in enhancing on-line access to cultural and pubic sector information and have indicated that we will facilitate this role when in government.

Simon Crean, *Minister for employment, education and training*

Libraries are a valuable cultural resource and perform a critical role in making information resources accessible to all Australians. As we enter the new age of information technology, libraries will play a key role in making the new information and communication technologies available to all Australians. In the education sector, for example, libraries are at the forefront in exploring the exciting opportunities offered by interactive communication networks to improve the delivery of educational services in Australia. The Commonwealth Government and the States and Territories have agreed on a major initiative, the establishment of a comprehensive education network, Education Network Australia (EdNA), which will deliver educational services and products nationally and aim to contain the costs of accessing interactive information networks. The EdNA initiative forms part of the overall national strategy announced by the Prime Minister on 6 April 1995 to ensure that Australia is well-placed to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the development of the so-called 'information superhighway'. Australia's libraries have a vital part to play in ensuring that this 'superhighway' is open to all Australians.

Cheryl Kernot, *Leader of the Australian Democrats*

'Without citizenship and participation, rights can become a charade ... Without empowerment, rights can seem like decorative fictions.' Benjamin Barber

In the future, even more so than today, access to information will be the key to success — not just for individuals, but for communities and entire societies. To control access to information is to have power. Without each citizen having the power of access there cannot be participation, there cannot be active citizenship, and there cannot be true democracy. As Benjamin Barber put it, rights can become a charade. We must not privatise access to knowledge. The first two staging posts in winning equity of access to information are our public schools and our public libraries. Resourcing them to provide on-line information and services is a vital link to an equitable and successful future for all the citizens of our country. I am only too pleased to ***Lobby for libraries.***

Brian Howe, *Minister for housing and regional development*

Public libraries provide a tremendous resource to local communities, though they are in many respects an unappreciated asset. In addition to the 1400 public libraries throughout communities all over Australia, there are other libraries located in local schools, universities, business and government. One of the great attributes of public libraries is that they are an existing network which is visible and capable of providing local residents with access to information which can enrich their lives. From my experience, libraries are administered by people with a real commitment to serving their communities, and who are often quite innovative in they way they market their libraries products.

The Commonwealth has recognised the strategic importance of local libraries as a viable means of ensuring that local residents have local access points to electronic information, including the Internet. In particular, the 1400 public library service points throughout Australia provide a major opportunity for linking communities to network services. The Commonwealth supports libraries and will continue to examine ways in which they can continue to be used to benefit local communities.

Michael Lee, *Minister for communications and the arts, Minister for tourism*

Libraries have a central role to play in the spread of the communications technologies and in particular in enabling equitable access to them. Australia has a strong tradition of free public library service. The development of a strong public library sector is integral to the democratic belief that all people should have an equal access to knowledge.

The development of new information technology in our libraries is basic to some of the oldest values of a free society. That is, the idea in a democracy that all citizens should have the opportunity of free access to knowledge. This idea has been integral to the development of public education, rights of freedom of expression and all the best features of a meritocracy.

In **Creative nation** *the Commonwealth Government promised to work with the States to form local access points to the information services becoming available. In particular the 1400 public library service points*

throughout Australia were seen as providing a major opportunity for linking communities to network services.

Brian Johns, *Australian Broadcasting Commission managing director*

Books and libraries have played a central role in my life for a very long time, and my experience is probably no different to many other Australians because we are a nation of readers. It is hard to imagine where we would be without libraries and without organised information. Libraries are at the centre of our shared knowledge. Skilled librarians are particularly good at adapting to change. Over a century or more they have been finding new ways to organise information and make it accessible. They were amongst the first to recognise the benefits of information technology and they are now using their skills in the next communications industry — multimedia. Cultural and media organisations like the ABC are developing multimedia services, but we couldn't do it without the skills of librarians.

We have a rich and extensive archive which is of little use without the people to tell us what's in it and how to gain access to it. It is about time that libraries and the skills of librarians were recognised for the important role they play — in business, the public sector and the community. Libraries and the skills of information managers are more important than ever in the new information and media environment.

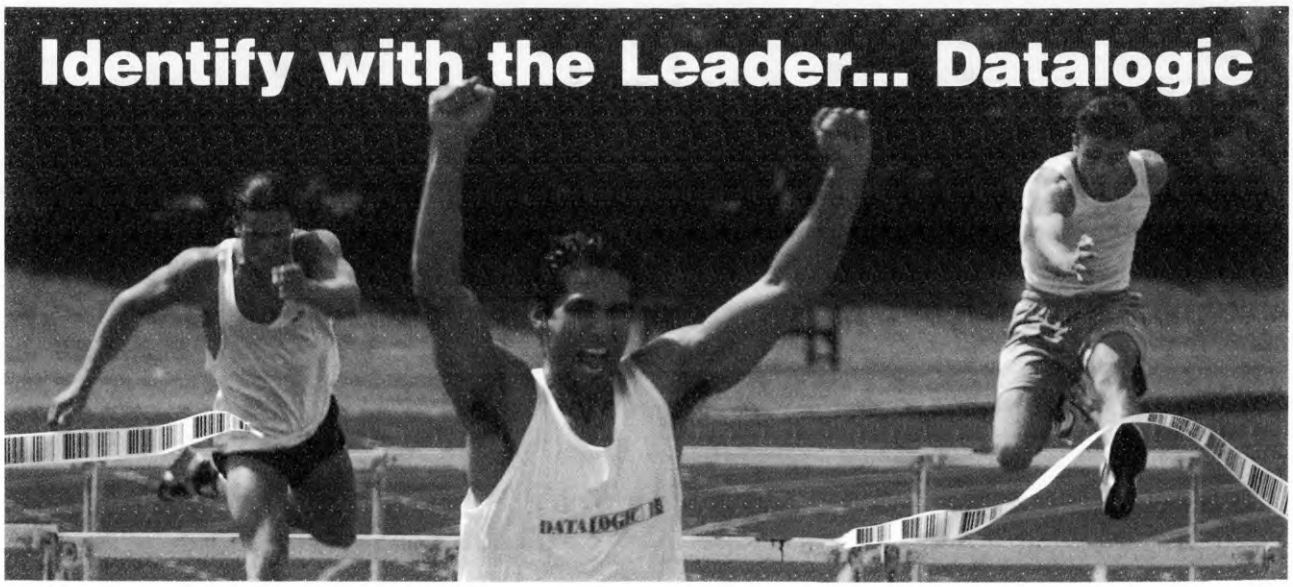
Mark Latham, *Member for Werriwa*

Libraries have always been essential to our success as a civilised society. They foster all the best features of learning, enlightenment and public progress. For many decades in Australia free public libraries have provided an access point for those unable to afford the cost of private libraries. Personal betterment and access to learning should never be a function of one's income and background.

Now, during a period of scarce public resources and rapidly-changing information technology, libraries and librarians face their most important challenge. They will need to alert policy-makers to the prospects and problems of a society divided into the information-rich and the information-poor.

They will need to press the case for libraries as public access points to new forms of electronic information, just as they have always provided access to printed information. In the allocation of public resources, the information superhighway is becoming more important than physical highways. The advocates for libraries know the facts. That, of course, is their work and their passion. In public life, however, facts alone do not always win the debate.

Facts require propagation before they can persuade. This is what makes the ***Lobby for libraries*** *campaign so important. I urge each of the supporters of libraries to always put their case and never hesitate to argue their position.* ■



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