

# Connections with the past — directions for the future



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ALIA president

I did ask John Shipp our vice-president and an archivist, if he might also contribute this Frontline as he did last month's, but he was unable to. His story of how he arrived at where he is today (October 1996 *inCite*) makes interesting but not unusual reading: that he was a school teacher, an archivist and now a university librarian. How many others of us are in a similar situation, have bridged what some of us consider an unleapable gap, possibly without even realising it? How many of us are now working in situations where it is important that our knowledge and skills as a librarian are not being used to run libraries in the classical sense, rather to manage data, electronic databases and organisational history?

I was caught in this situation with my first professional position as a librarian. Little did I know when I accepted the job that I, too, would be looking after the company library,

and would also be managing the company minerals and petroleum data, and in a later life of the company, would be asked to put together a collection plan for the company's history and develop a storage and retrieval plan for the administrative records. Now I know that this is not all a records manager or an archivist does, but the connections are there.

So from 1981 when I realised the information world I was entering required knowledge and skills of more than librarianship, of the broad spectrum of information management, I started lobbying the educators. Well, it took a while for the change to come and now that I am the lobbied I realise it also takes a while to enable the changes through complex university systems. But it can be and must be done. We in ALIA must also establish how we assess these educational initiatives in our course recognition processes. Are we too embracing the similarities of interest between what is to a number of us, a continuum of professions?

Our executive director was invited last year to present a lecture at the special joint meeting of delegates from the IFLA conference and the International Council of Archives. In that address, entitled *Two professions one future*, she too drew together the similarities of interest between the professions of archivist and librarian and the partnership in which many of us participate.

Our Association will make a contribution to the Australian Law Reform Commission's review of the *Archives Act 1983*. This review should receive some interesting comment especially if some of the remarks I have seen on the Internet are actually drawn together and submitted formally. As well as the issues of archives and archiving being of interest, so too are privacy, legal obligation and copyright, to name a few.

Our Association has been keen for some time to develop a closer working relationship with related groups. As I've already mentioned, this has been happening over time in the workplace. I have also found that as a minor and, I have to confess, perhaps foolish or brave contributor to electronic discussion lists, the partnerships continue. As an example, how else could I arrange for the current president of the Australian Computer Society to visit Curtin when he was in Perth and address our students? It is all possible, particularly if we seek ways to make it happen.

The image displays three overlapping screenshots of the ALIANet website. The top-left screenshot shows a 'Welcome to ALIA(Q)!' page with a navigation menu and a list of 'ALIA(Q) Branch pages' including Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and Western Australia. The top-right screenshot is titled 'Subscribing to an ALIANet listserv' and provides instructions on how to subscribe, including a list of steps and contact information for the listserv administrator. The bottom-left screenshot shows an 'Update form' for the 'Vital Link' service, with fields for group, area, position, title, first name, family name, postal address, phone, fax, and email.

## Check out some of the exciting developments taking place on our website, ALIANet!

There is plenty to see and loads of activity. Join one of our electronic mail lists (listservs) from the listserv page; update your entry in Vital Link, see what the Queensland, the New South Wales, and South Australian Branches have been up to, discover how many books exist in the State Library of Guadelope, and join others in working out the best layout and the minimum security guards needed for a 20-walled (fictional) library...