

COMLA Jamaican HQ links information professionals

The Commonwealth Library Association (COMLA), founded in 1972, is one of more than 28 Commonwealth Professional Associations sponsored by the Commonwealth Foundation in London. Established in 1966 by the Commonwealth Heads of Government, a primary goal of the Commonwealth Foundation is 'the nurturing of professional activity throughout the Commonwealth'. COMLA's mission is to serve the interests of Library Associations in the Commonwealth by promoting the interests of libraries and librarians as well as facilitating networks for information delivery.

COMLA's membership spans fifty-two countries and is governed by a General Council which meets every four years. The management of COMLA is vested in an executive council which is supported by regional councils. All of COMLA's officers are elected except the executive secretary who is appointed to this position. The COMLA secretariat is located in Jamaica, making it one of the first Commonwealth Professional Associations to have its headquarters outside of the United Kingdom.

COMLA's goals are to:

- support and encourage the development of library associations in the Commonwealth;
- forge, maintain and strengthen professional links between librarians;
- promote the status and education of librarians;
- promote the reciprocal recognition of qualifications in librarianship;

- improve library and information services;
- initiate library and information research projects;
- foster and improve the management of library associations; and
- further the technical development of libraries and information centres.

Rural librarianship, distance librarianship, information literacy and other interests are promoted through a series of regional activities, seminars, workshops, and monographic publications. A special initiative, *Literacy through posters*, published in collaboration with the Dominica (West Indies) National Library Association has been particularly successful. These colourful and attractive posters were designed to encourage reading and the use of libraries.

The development of other regional and special interest groups to which COMLA's members belong provide excellent opportunities for mutually beneficial partnerships. COMLA is associated with ACURIL (Association of Caribbean University, Research and Institution Libraries), SCESCAL (Standing Conference on East, Southern and Central Africa Libraries) CONSAL (The Conference of Southeast Asian Librarians), SCOPAL (The Standing Conference of Pacific Librarians) and PIC (The Pacific Information Centre). Most recently COMLA assisted three persons from member associations of SCESCAL to attend SCESCAL XIII which was held in Nairobi.

COMLA has long been associated with, and is a member of, the IFLA

Roundtable for the Management of Library Associations where it has participated actively in that Association's programs. Currently it is preparing a report for the RTMLA on the findings of a Survey of National Library Associations which had been undertaken to try to establish critical areas of assistance for library associations which appear to be faltering. COMLA sits on the Copyright and Legal Matters committee, and sub-committees of IFLA as well as on the ACURIL Executive.

COMLA/COL partnership

Through an association with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), COMLA has been quite active in the area of distance library services. The 1996 COL publication *Library services of distance learners in the Commonwealth: a reader of twenty-two articles from around the Commonwealth* provides a unique resource on the subject. (Reviews are available on the COL web page). During November 1998, COMLA will be involved in a virtual conference on distance librarianship. Distance library service practitioners and other interested in distance library services and education are invited to join and participate. Details are available at <http://www.col.org>.

COMLA in the South Pacific

Currently there are eight full and thirty affiliate members of COMLA located in the South Pacific. Persons from the South Pacific have served with distinction as presidents and treasurer, and Roy Sanders is the current editor of the *Bulletin*. COMLA has held several successful workshops in the South Pacific which include *Training non-professional library staff* (Fiji, 1979); *Electronic systems for librarians* (Australia, 1984); and *Rural and Community Resource Centres* (Australia, 1988). COMLA looks forward to being able to be involved in other activities in the region and welcomes contact with national, regional, special associations and individuals from the South Pacific.

For more information about COMLA contact the president: Elizabeth F Watson, librarian UWI, Cave Hill, Barbados, West Indies, phone +246 417 4201, fax +246 424 8944, watson@uwichill.edu.bb; or the executive secretary, Norma Amenu-Kpodo, deputy librarian, UWI, Mona, Jamaica, West Indies, phone +876 927 2123, fax +876 927 1926, nkpodo@uwimona.edu.jm ■

Call for nominations for the ALIA NSW LIBRARY TECHNICIANS GROUP

CALLING NOW for nominations for library technicians interested in joining the 1999 committee for the NSW Library Technicians Group.

Nominations should be sent to Katherine Raper at the address below, or submitted at the group's Annual General Meeting on 9 December at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney Library, 4.30 – 6.00 pm.

**Contact: Katherine Raper
ph 02 9514 3688, fx 02 9514 3305, Katherine.Raper@uts.edu.au**