

The value of belonging

Maureen Nimon, national president of the School Libraries Section

As I am currently the national president of the School Libraries Section of ALIA, you will expect me to urge you to renew your subscriptions to ALIA and to recruit other teacher-librarians as members. That is part of the brief that goes with the job.

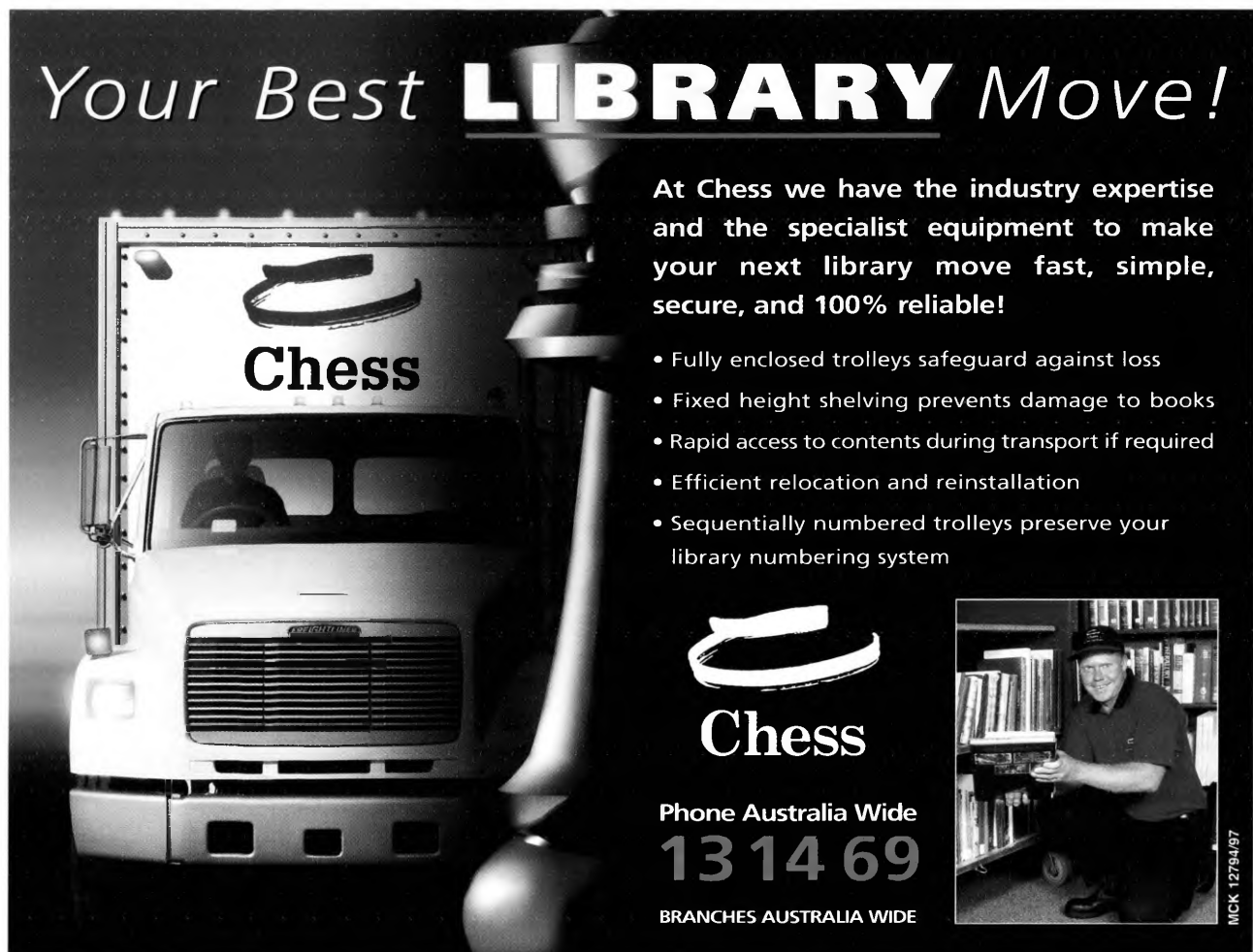
Some people, however, may feel hesitant in considering future membership because they are aware that ALIA is engaged in a process of re-examining its function and form. Why join an organisation whose future shape is uncertain, which is metamorphosing in front of our eyes?

The reasons for doing so remain constant. While teacher-librarians are primarily teachers in their professional concerns and in their employment conditions, their specialisation — integrating the appropriate use of information into the learning experi-

ence of students — depends for its effectiveness on a lively, effective, vital information profession. The core values of our teaching role, empowering students to become information literate and life-long learners, depends on access to learning and information resources as unfettered as possible by economic, political and social restrictions. To fight the pressures which threaten or actively reduce such access, we need to be part of an organisation with the scope and power of ALIA. Moreover, ALIA's role in the accreditation of professional information workers of many kinds and its influence on the pre-service education of teacher-librarians are means of influence not available to us elsewhere. We must acknowledge the value of the role of ASLA and its associated state organisations in providing teacher-librarians with continuing professional development, but per-

haps in the future there may be ways to provide for joint membership of ALIA and ASLA. Certainly closer cooperation between the two is desirable.

Finally, it is the very way that ALIA is adapting itself to present and future needs that should give us the greatest confidence in the organisation. As someone who attended the National Policy Conference, I know that the brief given to the Board of Directors by the Congress gave the Board the opportunity to develop a truly new organisation. I was impressed by the way the Congress tackled its brief and with no regard for nostalgia or regret, set itself to make the most of the future. We can have great confidence in a body composed of such impressive professionals, with the School Libraries Section firmly placed within such a body. ■



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