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## Stats, more stats, and lies

One of the main responsibilities of an association is as a source of information about the constituency it represents. Our Association has a number of parties to which it has such a responsibility: to governments and policy bodies; to members; and to the wider community.

Our current capabilities to provide information on the sector and to develop a national profile of the sector are limited by the available data. To have credibility with our constituencies it is essential that we work from a sound research and data collection base. Building this base is a priority for the Association.

ALIA National Office is developing an ongoing statistical and research information resource or database which will assist the Association in:

- obtaining valid, informative and reliable data;
- monitoring and documenting trends and changes over time;
- being prepared to take up opportunities as they arise;
- informing policies and data developed by and for the sector;
- providing a reference resource to members;
- advocating more effectively on behalf of members and the sector in general; and
- identifying gaps in important information/statistical or research areas.

This is a huge project for a small organisation like ALIA. We are not going to collect everything but we do want and need to know what is where and how it can be accessed.

We are currently working on a scoping paper on statistical sources and content to complement the initial annotated bibliographic work done by us last year on library industry statistics in Australia and selected countries. The paper aims to source qualitative and quantitative information available, for example from statistical data, government

reports, commissioned reports, organisational information, parliamentary inquiries, and industry sector bodies. Further, it will identify information (or lack of) which is important to the sector but not readily available — the schools sector is a good example.

Our interest goes beyond the library and information sector. It is important that we strategically position our sector within the society and community of which we are a part. Social trends and economic indicators are critically important to us as they characterise the environment in which we operate and to which we should relate.

If you know of any good sources please share these with us by contacting Marie Murphy at ALIA National Office or e-mail [marie.murphy@alia.org.au](mailto:marie.murphy@alia.org.au).

We plan to have sector snapshots for promotion during Library and Information Week.

The research forum held during the ALIA 2000 conference significantly advanced the discussion on applied research and ALIA's role. The forum report and recommendations will go to the next Board of Directors meeting. The recommendations have been crafted to encourage the academy and industry to work more closely on creating a research culture and program which informs practice, to establish better dissemination of research activities within and beyond the sector, and to improve co-ordination of research across the sector.

### Going digital

A member's information kit on the *Copyright Amendment (Digital Agenda) Act 2000* will be available in the new year.

### Happy new century

It is hard to believe that it is nearly twelve months since the Christian world was celebrating (prematurely!) the turn of the century. All of us at the ALIA National Office thank you for your contributions to the Association throughout the year and wish you a safe and enjoyable Christmas, New Year and 21<sup>st</sup> century. We look forward to working with you in the next century. ■