

What ALIA provides...



Angela Bridgland

ALIA Board of Directors

Of critical importance is the fundamental principle of professional standards and support for our members across a range of education and employment issues...

The New Year is fully upon us and I imagine for you, like me, the pace has reached frightening momentum. The theme of this issue of *inCite* explores and showcases union (and related) information services and I thought it timely to revisit the issue of what services ALIA provides for its members that complement union information services.

After all, incorporation changed the way we *run* our Association, not what it stands for. Our objects are as firm as ever, and, as part of the renewal process, the Board of Directors has been systematically working through the objects to ensure that the strategies designed to deliver the outcomes are vital and fresh. In doing so, it is important to look at each object from a number of perspectives. What does it mean for: an individual member? an institutional member? the profile of the profession?

Let us take, as an example, Object 3: *To ensure the high standard of personnel engaged in information provision and foster their professional interests and aspirations.* As I write, this object is the focus of scrutiny by the directors and the Board of Education. Of critical importance is the fundamental principle of professional standards and support for our members across a range of education and employment issues. The three key planks that underpin ALIA strategies are the well-developed group of employment and industrial information services, a long-established suite of educational services/strategies and a desire to develop a range of strategies/services to support and promote research. How do these three groups meet the needs of members, both personal and institutional, and how do they advance the profile of the profession?

Let us begin with the employment and industrial information services. A wide range of career and employment services are provided by ALIA to both personal and institutional members, from job advertisements to advice on gaining employment, workplace agreements, industrial relations legislation, dealing with problems at work, and the legal rights and responsibilities of redundancy. The industrial services program is available free-of-charge to all members. The Association also represents the library and information profession by lobbying government agencies and negotiating with trade unions and other professional bodies.

Apart from course recognition, which en-

sures that entry-level standards to the profession are maintained, there are also opportunities for members to enhance their professional skills under the umbrella of the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) program. ALIA has been committed to continuous education since 1937 and the CPD program provides a range of development services, such as training programs, seminars and conferences, a mentoring scheme and a wide variety of publications to assist members. One such publication is the *Career development kit*, designed for individuals and employers, which provides a framework for lifelong learning and developing career goals.

Research support is also an essential function of ALIA. At the Board of Education Research Forum, which was run prior to the ALIA conference last year, it was agreed that research be given a more prominent place on ALIA's agenda. Research is important as a way of improving professional practice and boosting the profession's national and international reputation and competitiveness. ALIA will sponsor and seek sponsorship or applied research that is beneficial to furthering its objects and is of value to its members. ALIA also values supplier, industry and government partnerships and thus seeks opportunities to work with appropriate bodies in undertaking applied research and disseminating the outcomes for the improvement of professional practice — this is of benefit to personal and institutional members, as well as to our profile.

Our profile is further enhanced by ALIA gathering and synthesising current information about our industry sector and information workers in Australia — who they are, their work, how much they earn and who employs them. This enables the Association to influence government policy to improve outcomes for its members and to promote the value of library and information personnel to employers and members of the general public. Recent examples include ALIA's submission to the Queensland Pay Equity Inquiry and our recommendation that a formal Code of Conduct be introduced to regulate the New South Wales labour hire industry.

There are always opportunities to improve how ALIA can anticipate and meet the needs of its members, but it is salutary to take stock of the services and benefits that are already there for us. I hope that you agree there's a rich array. (Check our website for full details). ■