

A formative period...



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Feedback to your Board of Directors

Do you have an idea, compliment or concern about your Association? Contact any director below on personal issues and ideas will be reviewed at each meeting of the Board.

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I am writing this column during what promises to be a key formative period for our Association following its governance and structural realignment to the realities of doing business in a changing and often turbulent environment. Heralding this period are several fora that have been planned to inspire and challenge the library and information community. Although not all these events have been sponsored by ALIA they will together enable the Association, that is its members, to articulate its goals and aspirations. Our guiding imperative through this process is ALIA's first object:

To promote the free flow of information and ideas in the interest of all Australians and a thriving culture, economy and democracy.

What are some of these fora?

One was the Peak Bodies Forum hosted and co-ordinated by the National Library of Australia and led by the recently re-appointed director-general, Ms Jan Fullerton. A set of principles underpinning mutual support among libraries of all kinds is one of the first tangible outcomes of the forum and other outcomes will emerge over the coming months. One of the very positive aspects of the Forum was the range of cross sectoral interests that were represented.

Another forum was a Colloquium on Research Libraries hosted by the State Library of New South Wales and the Library Board. The colloquium, or conversation, presented a view of libraries from the outside looking in. The scholars who spoke affirmed the social and cultural value of research libraries, and by implication of all libraries that are involved in collecting and creating access to our documentary heritage in its many forms. It is after all this heritage that underpins our reflections of ourselves. The papers from the colloquium will

be available on the State Library's website and I encourage you to read them, enjoy their eloquence and their honesty and sustain yourself on the insights that they offer on our world of practice.

Yet another forum considered the discussion paper prepared by the LISEKA working group. This paper has the potential to transform library and information science education by bringing a career-long focus to the demands and expectation of increasingly diverse workplaces. The LISEKA working group, led by Mairéad Browne, has yet to present its final report, and the group is very keen to engage in the conversations that are sure to have a long-term impact on education for information practice.

The final forum that I want to highlight here has yet to unfold: the ALIA Biennial Conference, *Powering our future: contribute to the information agenda*. With imagination and daring Dagmar Schmidmaier and her team have designed a program that is sure to inspire and challenge the Association and its members. Along with the Conference's Issues Forum and e-chat sessions, conference participants had opportunities to explore some of the bigger questions around the theme of Australia's information agenda. The ALIA National Policy Congress later this year will be well positioned to carry forward some of the conference outcomes.

During his term as president of your Association, Dr Alan Bundy highlighted the value of social, cultural and economic information literacy to a democratic society. It is likely that the fora that have occurred so far and will continue through the coming year in the form of conferences, seminars, meetings and discussions co-ordinated by ALIA and its groups will further the broad themes pursued by Alan. In the same way that firms and organisations are discovering the place of conversation in sharing and creating knowledge, your Association is in the process of engaging in conversations that will shape not only its own future but also those of the people and groups that we influence.

I acknowledge the key role that Alan took in focusing on information literacy and I look forward to ensuring that the human dimensions of information literacy are central to the information agenda. ■