

# ALIA moves on purchasing agreements

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In order to get more for their budget dollar, libraries are increasingly co-operating to negotiate agreements for purchasing goods, collection items and online services.

To assist ALIA institutional members in this process, ALIA held a cross-sectoral forum on 14 October to discuss the critical issues relating to licences and consortia.

Following a report on the forum, the Board of Directors agreed at its November meeting to support the development of a program for achieving favourable purchasing agreements for online resources for institutional members and to establish an advisory group to assist in the development and implementation of the program.

Macquarie University deputy university librarian Maxine Brodie chaired the forum which was attended by representatives from the National Library, CASL, CAVAL, CAUL, CSIRO, ALIA acquisitions group, ALIA information specialists group, ALIA TAFE national group, ALIA copyright and IP advisory group, Australian Law Librarians Group, Health Libraries Australia, Australasian Parliamentary Librarians Association, Arts Libraries Society of Australia and New Zealand, Federal Libraries Information Network, Australian School Libraries Association and Viclink/Gulliver. Moyra McAllister represented the ALIA board of directors.

The forum looked at present arrangements, important issues, responsibilities and desirable outcomes.

## Models

Three contrasting consortia models were outlined and discussed. Cheryl Brickhell presented the CASL model, Diane Costello outlined the CAUL consortium arrangements and Julie Rae demonstrated another contrast in the Viclink Gulliver agreements. Even the choice or desirability of core services differed in each model.

These presentations indicated that consortia depended for their success on addressing the needs of the individual members, that they must be simple and flexible, with good, continuous, administrative support and re-evaluation and that, therefore, no single model could be recommended.

## Broader environment

Roxanne Missingham (National Library of Australia) discussed the opportunities available to Australian libraries in the current climate. Steve O'Connor (CAVAL) looked to the future for the publishing industry and user needs and demands and how these may affect the acquisition of resources by libraries.

## Issues

These included:

- Libraries and suppliers may have a poor understanding of each other's business, so that both parties must build knowledge and trust.
- Some suppliers are initially concerned that consortia are anti-competitive.
- Some special libraries find difficulties in establishing common ground to form consortia where user information needs differ.
- Government purchasing rules may inhibit government library consortia.
- Small budgets of most art libraries place standard information tools out of reach.
- Small libraries need help in negotiating with suppliers.
- A standard Australia-wide approach is needed for school libraries, based on equity of access.
- Australia is a very small market for online resources and models developed in larger markets, such as United States and Canada, may not be feasible here.

## Benefits

Successful consortia identified benefits for both parties.

Benefits to libraries were increased access to information, universal access to a set of titles, time saving in negotiating and managing licences, information sharing and more efficient use of budgets.

Benefits to suppliers included new customers, more use of their products, reduced costs in acquiring and keeping customers, distribution of information, knowledge of the library market and feedback from customers, cost savings in administration and invoicing and increased bottom line.

## ALIA outcomes

The proposed group to advise on ALIA's purchasing agreements program will have cross-sectoral representation. The ALIA Acquisitions Group suggested that training in the management of consortia be a CPD activity. Other suggestions included links to information and experts, discussion with other stakeholders, advocacy and lobbying to support equity of access and a possible symposium in 2003 involving both suppliers and libraries.

A full report on the forum can be found at <http://www.alia.org.au/governance/forum/>. ■

## In the next issue...

Don't miss the next issue of *inCite* which will include our ever-popular 'Who, what, where' directory of the library and information sector. The issue will also include our bonus pull-out calendar with all those important dates included.

## Mark your diary

If you want to include a letter to the editor, an event, insert, or appointment in the January/February issue you will need to have the copy to us by Monday 13 January.

## And thank you...

The *inCite* staff would like to extend our thanks to all those who contributed to the success of *inCite* in 2002 — contributors, advertisers, printers, and of course, the readers! We look forward to working with you all again in 2003.