Information Literacy workshop

On Wednesday 13 November, representatives of some dozen organisations with vested interests in information literacy and lifelong learning met at ALIA House to workshop the formation of an interim coalition for information literacy advocacy. The meeting had been called in response to recommendations arising from a Feasibility Study for the Development of a National Coalition for Information Literacy Advocacy conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) on behalf of ALIA, the National Library of Australia (NLA) and the National Office for the Information Economy (NOIE).

Following a Round Table conducted by the Information Literacy Special Interest Group (later the ALIA Information Literacy Forum) in February 2001, ALIA, NLA and NOIE had agreed to jointly fund a research project which would focus on developing a business case and strategic framework for a broad-based national coalition and advocacy strategy to promote and advance the integration of inf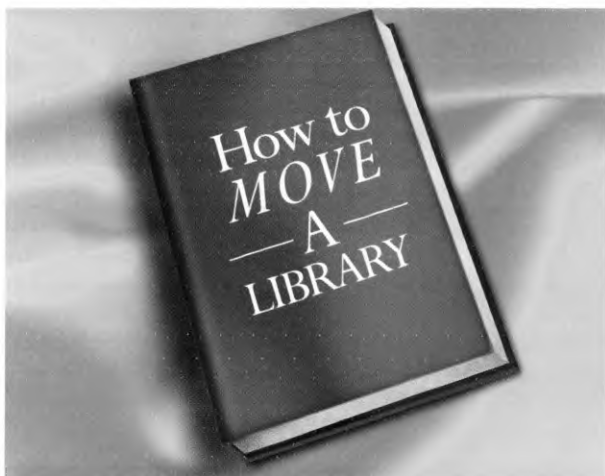ormation literacy into community, business, public library, school and tertiary education programs and ensure an awareness of information literacy for lifelong learning. A Steering Group chaired by Prue Mercer, ALIA, and including members from NLA and NOIE was established to oversee the project and, following a tender process, commissioned ACER to undertake the study.

As part of its study, ACER surveyed a broad range of organisations representing business, community, education, government, library and media interests as well as professional organisations and unions to gauge interest in the formation of a coalition. A total of nineteen key stakeholders identified from the first round of consultations as interested in the proposed coalition were followed up to determine a level of commitment.

The final report recommended the establishment of a national coalition to be developed in stages through formation of a small interim body drawn from key stakeholders which would, over a two year period, develop a framework and long-term strategy for an ongoing coalition.

The November workshop brought members of the Project Steering Group together with representatives of Adult Learning Australia, Australian Association for the Teaching of English, Australian Computer Society, Australian Literacy Educators' Association, ASLA, CAUL, Department of Education, Science and Technology, Global Learning Services, National Centre for Vocational Educational Research, National Working Group on TAFE Library Services and Public Libraries Australia. Important outcomes from the day were a working definition of information literacy with which the broad group could work and the establishment of a core body, consisting of ALIA, ASLA and Adult Learning Australia, to drive further development of the interim coalition. This core group, with secretariat support from ALIA National Office, will oversee development of terms of reference and the agenda for the interim body. Members of the broader group agreed to act as a consultative body to the core group. Progress of the interim coalition will be reviewed in mid-2003. ∎