

# Changes in the pipeline...



**Ivan Trundle**

manager,  
communications  
and publishing  
ivan.trundle@alia.org.au

The culmination of a great deal of behind-the-scenes activity is about to come to fruition this month. To coincide with the Association's Annual General Meeting and the meeting of the Board of Directors in Canberra, a new Association membership database will be launched, in conjunction with a significant upgrade to the ALIA website, and all with new corporate livery.

## New membership services

Over the past year or more, we have been searching for a replacement membership database, and one which was able to be integrated with our website in order to deliver a range of web services. We have found a solution which allows us to offer online membership applications and renewals, online merchandise purchasing, and events and conferences bookings and handling. Apart from being able to handle address changes and the normal types of transactions that members would expect to be able to do via the internet, we intend to implement CPD tracking and other services in the near future. Overall, members will have greater access to what information is stored by the Association, and will have the ability to modify information at will. It promises to be a valuable step for the Association, and one which enables both members and non-members to be better served.

The e-commerce functionality alone will make a great difference to how members interact with ALIA National Office. Merchandise will be made available, events will be able to be booked directly, and members will be able to flag what is coming up in their calendar more easily. All these features are driven by the new database.

## New website

Not only this, but the process of integrating the database with our existing website affords us the opportunity to deliver a range of 'members-only' services, tailored to the needs and demands of individuals. Whilst we have always had members-only sections of the website (areas that required password access), we have been unable to integrate membership details with access rights without recourse to re-inventing the membership database in an online environment. Now that we are migrating to an online database for members, we can readily offer and deliver members-only features, with proper, integrated password access.

The new site is being redesigned to accommodate these new demands, and whilst we are very mindful of the fact that wholesale site redesign is a recipe for disaster, we have tweaked the features that visitors appreciate the most, and will be adding a range of extras over time. The overall site structure is much the same, but a great deal of background engineering has gone into making the site work faster, work harder, and to be less effort to maintain. Much of the new site will be delivered via a content management system, which will gradu-

ally replace much of the static pages across the site. All material that is no longer part of the current Association (such as General Council, Branches, Sections and SIGs material) will be moved to an archive site, whilst all of the Association's present structure will be incorporated in the new site.

There is to be no wholesale changes to URLs — indeed, practically ninety-five per cent of the existing 40 000 pages will remain in the same directory, or in the archive site with an identical URL (for example, <http://www.alia.org.au/branches/> will become <http://archive.alia.org.au/branches/>). Wherever possible, the site structure will mirror what is presently found on ALIANet. Bookmarks might require updating, but only where we have moved material to a more logical location. This will be a rare event, and the site will redirect users automatically if anything has been relocated.

A new and much more feature-rich members-only chat server will be rolled out: one which demands a username and password, but which allows users to create new rooms and to invite individuals into private rooms to chat. This will greatly benefit groups and group committees, who have all asked for a richer experience in a chat environment.

The trial of the members-only web-based e-mail service went very well — to the extent that we will be offering ALIANet e-mail accounts to all ALIA members. This members-only service was well patronised in the trial, and will greatly benefit those members who are looking for an independent web-based mail service.

ALIA conferences will be better served by the new website. Apart from being able to offer greater functionality and tools that can be used to design and support a conference site, a new subdomain will be created to support all conferences: <http://conferences.alia.org.au> — resulting in shorter, easier to remember, and easier to find URLs.

Many of the sections of the website will now be database-driven, which allows us to deliver content across the site in a range of different formats. And a 'breadcrumb trail' will be present on all pages to provide a greater understanding of the site hierarchy and to navigate more intuitively. Even the search engine is to be given a tweak or two to bring it up-to-date.

## New livery

The website will be published in the new corporate livery, which will also be launched at the Annual General Meeting. The revamp of the livery enhances the branding of the Association, and projects a more sophisticated and contemporary image to the wider community. New membership cards, letterhead and a complete range of stationery will be more visible to members over the coming months. All in all, the spate of activity has been frenetic, but the results will be well worth it. ■

*The culmination of a great deal of behind-the-scenes activity is about to come to fruition this month...*