

ALIA advocacy @ your service



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The morning ritual begins by reading through the e-mails that lob into my inbox overnight and sifting through the junk mail, deleting messages on topics such as Viagra, and hangover pills. With all the screening devices that modern technology can muster at least half a dozen get through each day. So it is with great pleasure that along with this dross I am now receiving occasional e-mails about ALIA business — a much more interesting topic.

Advocacy is an important service that ALIA provides to its members, and I would like to share with you some of the issues that have been raised in these e-mails.

In fact not all requests for support come from ALIA members. One e-mail was from a small publisher seeking a letter of support from ALIA to accompany a submission for a funding grant so that they could continue to publish educational books. ALIA National Office staff investigated the request and established that the contribution made by the publisher to the local community was significant, with publications well used through the local public library and within the community. On this basis the matter was referred to the Board of Directors and a letter of support provided.

Another e-mail was from the Reading Rulz! steering committee seeking endorsement and support from ALIA for the public libraries national summer reading program. The program promotes activities that support and encourage reading. The committee was seeking ALIA as a partner and supporting organisation for sponsorship. They also wanted permission to use the ALIA logo on publicity material and ALIA support for the program on the ALIA website. The proposal was forwarded to relevant ALIA groups covering public libraries, children's and youth services and the Information Literacy Forum. On receiving a positive response from members, the request was then referred to the Board of Directors, which agreed to support the program as requested. I think that this is a good illustration of how ALIA National Office, ALIA Groups and the Board of Directors work together to carry out the business of the Association.

The encouragement of reading is closely aligned with libraries, and ALIA has also supported National Simultaneous Storytime (NSS) since 2001. The aim of NSS is to promote reading and literacy and to promote the value of books. This year, NSS will be held during Literacy and Numeracy Week (30 August – 5 September 2004), and ALIA

encourages public libraries, school libraries and early-childhood centres to participate. See page 8 of this issue for details.

Providing support for programs run by others in the information industry is part of ALIA's advocacy service. ALIA is also approached to provide representation or guidance directly to members.

The July issue of *inCite* carried an article by ALIA's copyright advisor Colette Ormonde titled 'When the police visit your library'. This article was a direct result of members contacting ALIA seeking guidance on what to do when police enter the library seeking information on library users. Colette's response made reference to the requirement that libraries obey privacy laws which restrict the uses of information about library users. She also stated that library staff should not surrender information without a court order or a warrant. As a result of an e-mail referred to me giving a further example of police seeking private information on a library user, it became apparent that the article did not go far enough in providing guidance to libraries, in particular small libraries in country areas or libraries that may not have professional staff. The staff at ALIA National Office are now preparing guidelines to assist members. These guidelines will be on the agenda for consideration by the Board of Directors at the next meeting in September.

Another e-mail concerned negotiations and arrangements between digital content provider Factiva and Fairfax. ALIA members were concerned about how this development was going to affect their libraries and perceived that this arrangement would reduce competition among providers. This issue was addressed in the August issue of *inCite*.

I hope that these examples give an interesting illustration of the broad range of issues being dealt with through the Association's advocacy role. It is gratifying that ALIA is approached to lend its name and support to allied activities and, more importantly, that it has the expertise to provide guidance and support for members on a range of complex topics that arise from time-to-time.

On the *Frontline* page you have the names and contact details for your Board of Directors. I encourage you to make contact with any of us if you have an issue that you feel should be considered at a Board meeting or drawn to the attention of the wider membership through *inCite*. I look forward to receiving further interesting e-mails in the future. ■

Feedback to your Board of Directors

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

E-mail to feedback@alia.org.au will be automatically forwarded to all Board members.

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