



Imogen Garner

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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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ALIA conferences

Conferences, workshops and symposia form an important component of ALIA's professional activities and provide professional development opportunities for members, encourage networking opportunities, strengthen relationships with trade organisations and generate income that can be used to further the Objects of the Association.

The ALIA conference program currently includes the Biennial Conference, the Online Conference, the New Librarian's Symposium and the National Library Technicians Conference. Expressions of interest may be called by the Board of Directors to host these conferences. In addition any ALIA-endorsed Group may propose an event, or even form a group specifically for the purpose of holding an event such as a conference. A Group wanting to host an ALIA conference or symposium can make a submission to the Board. If endorsed by the Board, the Association underwrites the event and provides the necessary seed funding.

The first stage in the process is forming a conference committee to prepare a submission for consideration by the Board. The role of volunteers is the key to the success of ALIA's conference program and cannot be overstated. Without the hard work and dedication of its members working together, these events cannot take place. Committee members may or may not have previous experience in organising a conference and, in the case of the big conferences, a two-year timeframe is required from initial planning to the actual presentation of the conference. Decisions about delegate numbers, venues, dates, conference themes and program, social events, sponsorship all have to be thought through even before a proposal can be considered by the Board. Unlike a work environment where organisational structures support the work of teams, in this situation the teams are self-forming and self-motivated in support of the profession.

This year there are two regular conferences, the 2004 Biennial Conference just held at the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre, and the second New Librarian's Symposium being held in Adelaide at the beginning of December.

In addition to conferences hosted by ALIA, there are other library and information conferences supported by ALIA. One of these is the International Federation of

Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) conference which is held each year. ALIA is a member of IFLA and as such is entitled to vote in Council. It falls to the duties of the ALIA president to carry ALIA's votes to the General Conference and Council. Past-president Christine Mackenzie reported on last year's IFLA conference held in Berlin in *inCite* October 2003 and highlighted concern for the growing gap between the information-rich and information-poor. This year, the 70th IFLA Conference and Council was held in Buenos Aires and was very much concerned with preparations for the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis in 2005. The United Nations decided to hold the WSIS in response to the digital revolution and in recognition of the fact that while the digital revolution has brought many benefits, much of the world has yet to enjoy them, and in fact there is a widening gulf between the information-rich and poor both within and between countries. The issue for discussion is how to bridge the digital divide. IFLA, as an international association representing libraries, has a significant advocacy role in attempting to influence policy on this issue. ALIA belongs to a number of sections within IFLA including the Management of Library Associations. One of the agenda items for this section is the development of a program aimed at Global Library Association Development (GLAD). This program aims to develop library associations on an international basis so that IFLA can truly claim to speak on behalf of library associations around the world. The IFLA president-elect, our own Alex Byrne, highlights this in his presidential theme of partnerships. While we in Australia expect a high level of performance from our Association, many associations cannot even afford the lowest membership fee to join IFLA and are run by volunteers. The GLAD program aims to establish twinning arrangements between established and struggling associations to assist with coverage of fees to enable more associations to join IFLA. This in turn will improve IFLA's effectiveness as a global organisation in forums such as the World Summit.

I was privileged to attend this conference on your behalf and to learn more about the role of library associations in other countries and to extend my understanding of library issues at an international level. ■