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Revitalising ALIA NSW

A group is working on a plan to revitalise the professional life of ALIA NSW.

This will emphasise communication with new (and existing) members and the co-ordination through the ALIA website of activities planned by groups.

New activities may involve mixing social and professional development activities, and small-scale local activities will be encouraged. Members will be encouraged to sign up to the ALIA NSW list, which will be used to communicate regularly with members. Regular discussion forums are proposed for the e-list or through online chat. The next meeting of the planning group will be held in late January. For further details, please contact Hilary Yerbury, ALIA NSW Local Liaison Officer: hyerbury@bigpond.com.au.

Social commentator Hugh Mackay was pretty much on the money in his commentary on the federal election outcome. This is understandable given his long career in qualitative research into the views of Australians. In the June 2004 Ipsos-Mackay Report *Mind and mood* Mackay predicted that 'We are unlikely to engage with the Federal election process'. This stemmed from a mood of cynicism. Other features contributing to the *Mind and mood* findings were a sense of being overwhelmed by too much information and choice, a desire for insulation and distraction from the big picture, the 'backyard mentality' as a symbol of security, comfort and control, but which also encourages racism and other prejudices, we are getting used to the idea of 'class' and while many regard the increasing gap between rich and poor is moving away from the Australian egalitarian ideal, they want to be in the top part of the heap, and the gender revolution is far from over. The good news, the report states, is that Australians are really looking for good news, and that there are signs that minds are starting to reflect on the larger questions of values and priorities in life. While primarily written to inform marketing and advertising, the Ipsos-Mackay Reports are a valuable barometer of public opinion and attitudes for any organisation.

The Federal Coalition ran its 2004 election campaign with the theme of trust. With the Coalition receiving forty-seven per cent of first preference votes, and around fifty-three per cent of two party preferred votes, the mood of the Australian electorate could have been to opt for that message of trust, or to not really be engaged enough in federal politics or policy to opt for a change in government.

Whatever the prevailing mind or mood, ALIA continues to engage with the federal government on relevant policies — there were very few new policy commitments during the election campaign. Our local liaison officers will allow us to better keep in touch with policy developments at the state government level and these, and state budgets, will be reported in *inCite* in future.

Our argument for a copyright regime that provides for fair balance between the needs of creators, rights holders and users and enables reasonable access to copyright material through libraries is ongoing. This is made more difficult by the government's commitment to the United States–Australia Free Trade Agreement, with legislation being introduced to extend the term of copyright by twenty years, and a review of whether Australian copyright law should include an exception based on the principles of 'fair use'. When this has been resolved ALIA will provide members with details on the impact on practice.

The government is examining the feasibility of extending the current legal deposit scheme to include audiovisual and electronic material. In writing to Minister Coonan, ALIA acknowledged the complexities of extending legal deposit to digital material and advised her that the relevant deposit agencies hold the expertise and capac-

ity to work collaboratively with government to overcome these complexities. The Association also proposed that there are wider issues of preservation and access yet to be resolved.

Our Online Content and Regulation Advisory Group is keeping a watching brief on any policy developments that may restrict or limit freedom of access to information and expression. At its November meeting the Board is to consider draft guidelines on 'Libraries and privacy'.

NetAlert has received funding through to June 2006 for the National Cybersafe Program, 'a targeted travelling roadshow and education campaign to ensure that more Australians are aware of steps they can take to protect their families from offensive content and other concerns online.' NetAlert was a partner in Library and Information Week 2004 and is now working with ALIA for Library and Information Week 2005.

In March 2005 ALIA will be leading the sector in a meeting with the National Broadband Strategy Implementation Group to present the case for better positioning of the sector within the Strategy. The lead for this came out of the LIW 2004 Forum <http://alia.org.au/advocacy/alw/2004/liw.forum.2004.html>.

The Educational Lending Right received four year forward funding of \$44 million through the 2004–2005 Budget, but, unlike the very successful Public Lending Right on which it is based, is yet to be secured in legislation.

We will be monitoring the improvement of school library resources through the Investing in our Schools additional \$1 billion investment in school infrastructure; and policy changes in higher education and research.

Year's end

It is a good news end to the year. The National Policy Congress in November celebrated successes, reflected on achievements through the 2003–2004 plan, and set the direction for the next two years in our 2005–2006 plan; membership recruitment and retention numbers are well ahead of those for the equivalent period for the last two years; and the New Librarians' Symposium 2 in Adelaide in December has exceeded registration targets. My thanks to you all for your ongoing support for the Association.

If you haven't yet sorted out your holiday break (light) reading I can recommend *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* books by Alexander McCall Smith, set in Botswana. Smith is a good friend of IFLA president and Botswana university librarian, Kay Raseroka who would like him to speak at IFLA 2005 — unfortunately, he tells Kay, the price of fame is that your agent totally controls your diary.

The ALIA National Office will be closed from Monday 27 December so we can recover from our Christmas party of bbq and lawn bowling lessons at the nearby bowls club, and re-opens on Tuesday 4 January 2005. We wish you a restful and 'good news' Christmas break. ■