

What is a State Librarian?



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The appointment of non-librarians to senior library positions has a long history in Australia. In 1923 there was animated discussion of the appointment of JDA Collier as the Head of the Public Library in Hobart. Not all such appointments have been totally successful, but very significant contributions to our profession have been made by non-librarian CEOs including HCL Anderson (Principal Librarian, NSW Public Library), Betty Doubleday (CSIRO) and Alan Fleming (National Librarian and Parliamentary Librarian).

At the heart of this debate is a fundamental question of librarianship as a profession. We are a relatively young profession and in the 21st century we find ourselves defending our jurisdiction and, in some cases, our very reason for existence. I hope that this issue will encourage us to look to our key thinkers and writers, nationally and internationally, and to discuss and develop a position from which the profession can move forward.

Fifteen years ago ALIA developed the *Statement on senior library and information services appointments* (adopted 1991, amended in 2002): the Board at its last meeting reviewed this statement and agreed that it was still appropriate and in line with ALIA's objects and values. It is obviously not appropriate for the Board to comment on individual

appointments and it will not do so in this instance.

Much of the discussion of library appointments where professional qualifications are not required could be said to centre on the tension between generalist and technical professional skills and knowledge. In the workplace this manifests itself into a 'confrontation' over jurisdiction, that is a claim for the sole right to undertake certain types of work. Rather than pursue a 'closed shop' approach to the future of our profession we need to work out how we should work with the very wide range of related professions who are working in the information services area and who are also laying claim to the jurisdiction. It is time we came to grips with the 'I' in ALIA, and define what we mean by 'Information' and truly open up our membership to embrace the world we serve.

ALIA is committed to encouraging the development of excellence in our profession. In particular the Board would like to encourage members to undertake research and participate in further education, including at the doctorate level, as this is one of the defining characteristics of a profession. In addition ALIA and Aurora will continue to develop and promote leadership programs for the profession that I hope will generate a resurgence in interest in debating the contribution our profession makes to an informed society.

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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Ready, set, go!

ALIA members and getting ready for Board participation

I am delighted to be able to communicate to ALIA members through *inCite*. Being a Board member is a great privilege, and I am keen to talk to you about both what ALIA can do for you and what you can do for ALIA (to steal a notion from Kennedy).

Participating as an ALIA Board member is a very important role. Our association provides a voice for libraries and those working in libraries on a wide range of issues. It also requires considerable management, as it is a significant organisation in its own right, with staff, assets and a regulatory environment.

You may think it is very early in the ALIA year to talk about getting ready to stand for the Board, with the new members having just taken up their positions in May. From the viewpoint of the Board, however, it's never too early.

One of the challenges for ALIA is to have ready to stand for election a group of members who are well prepared and can confidently fill Board positions if elected. For much for this year the Standing Committee on Governance, which comprises Michelle Brennan, Sue Hutley and me,

has been discussing with the Board how to ensure that there is a group of members who are Board ready. It is a key issue for the Standing Committee and we are developing activities to prepare new Board candidates.

You might ask what it is about being an ALIA Board member that requires different skills than those you use at work and in your ALIA activities. The duties of Directors on the ALIA Board are:

- to act within the powers under Corporations Law and ALIA's constitution, consistently with the purposes for which the powers were conferred;
- to act honestly;
- to provide members with accurate and sufficient information when seeking their support for decisions;
- to give members honest opinion and advice; and



Roxanne Missingham,
ALIA Vice-president

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