# Managing Volunteers

## ALIA Statement on Voluntary Work in Library and Information Services

ALIA has a statement on voluntary work in library and information services, which can be found in full at <**http://www.alia.org.au/policies/volunteer.workers.html**>.

### Principle

ALIA emphasises that the efficient collection, organisation and dissemination of information requires a highly-trained, paid library and information services workforce with increasingly sophisticated skills.

### Statement

Use of volunteers in library and information services for specific short-term purposes is acceptable but must never compromise the quality of service provision, nor undermine paid employment in any way.

1. ALIA affirms that volunteer workers must not replace appropriately trained and paid staff:

    a. to compensate for the reduction, or withdrawal of services caused by inadequate staffing establishments, failure to fill vacant posts, or cutbacks in overall library and information services funding; or

    b. to establish and maintain library services or outreach programs which would normally be established and maintained by paid library staff.

2. The replacement of trained, paid library staff by volunteers can only lead to a deterioration in the standard and the effectiveness of services, be wasteful of resources and be detrimental to the interests of library users.

3. Groups of persons such as Library Committees, Friends of the Library, Friends of the Faculty are of value to libraries and the functions of such groups should be defined by the librarian; their role should be separate from the day-to-day operation of the library service.

## The basics of working with volunteers

The Friends of Libraries USA and Minnesota Association of Library Friends have the following six basics of working with volunteers:

### 1. Planning

Define your project clearly, and always seek the approval of your librarian. Divide your event into chunks to make planning less formidable, who will do what: what committees are needed; you've got to ask for participation and know what you're going to do.

### 2. Recruiting

Don't recruit volunteers until you know what you need! Identify specific tasks and skills, and put your needs on paper. Advertise in a variety of ways. Some libraries have a volunteer interest form.

### 3. Orientation and Training

Remember the basics: contact people in advance and follow up with reminders; make the event fun and welcoming for your volunteers; assign greeters, have a sign-in sheet, and provide a place for volunteers to put their coats and bags.

### 4. Supervision

In things such handling money. For example, two Friends members might be in charge of money at an event and then one Friend and one library staff member might go to the bank to deposit it. Supervisors should serve as a support system.

### 5. Recognition

Say thank you in person and in writing. Inform all of your volunteers of the results of your project. Consider providing treats or pizza during a long day or offering benefits to volunteers who come in regularly. Do give thought to what sources of funding for recognition are appropriate and ethical for Friends.

### 6. Evaluation

What went well? What didn't? Consider these and correct them for the next event.

*Reproduced from the Minnesota Association of Library Friends <http://www.malf.info/>*

## ALIA Volunteers' Online e-list

The aliaVOLS e-list promotes opportunities to volunteer in Australian libraries and information collections by qualified professional and student members of ALIA and promotes the discussion of volunteering and the utilisation of volunteers. Such positions enable ALIA members to use and develop skills whilst providing a valuable contribution to the organisations involved.

The voluntary positions and projects are ones that would not be possible without volunteers — such as projects by non-commercial organisations, or the high resource needs of a non-commercial project. The group does not seek to replace employment opportunities for paid professionals or any duties for which personnel are employed, but acknowledges the significant contribution volunteers make in libraries and promotes and supports the role of volunteers in enhancing the availability of information and knowledge provided by Australian libraries and information collections.

For more information and how to subscribe, see <**http://lists.alia.org.au/mailman/listinfo/aliaVOLS/**>.

## Philanthropic Organisations

ALIA's website at <**http://www.alia.org.au/policies/developing.countries.html**> lists the resources available for international grants and awards which cover library and information personnel and libraries generally.