

Recognising librarians' mastery of the internet

'Wow! A library — I thought everything was online these days.'

I hear variations on this line quite often. People think that 'library' and 'internet' are antonyms. This is frustrating, as our understanding and mastery of the internet goes hand in hand with our jobs as librarians. But no-one seems to know that few people know how to wrestle with the Net better than a savvy librarian.

How to change this misperception? With apologies to those who foremost identify themselves as information workers, I suggest that an ALIA name change wouldn't hurt. The internet is in the mass media constantly. Who else but a person from the Australian Library and Internet Association would be a good spokesperson for media guidance on content-filters, identity fraud, MySpace, blogs and bandwidth? And suddenly it's out there, a bold corrective statement, and the marriage of libraries and the internet consecrated in every press release.

The AMA gets heard on hospitals, the banks speak out on interest rates, while ISPs, amateur bloggers and various hand-writing reactionaries tend to speak out on the internet. In the public consciousness the internet is more relevant than ever. So let's lay claim to our expertise.

And who wouldn't want to be an ALIA member then?

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Response from Derek Whitehead, ALIA Vice-President

Claiming new territory is never easy, especially if there are inhabitants there already. We claimed the information territory when we put the word 'information' into ALIA in 1989, but haven't made good on the claim yet. The Internet Society and the Internet Industry Association are well established, and there are still lots of players in the information area too. And if the internet is about connectivity, it's the web that's about content: maybe we should be the

Australian Library and Web Association? Perhaps we should just be trying to change what people think when they see 'library'.

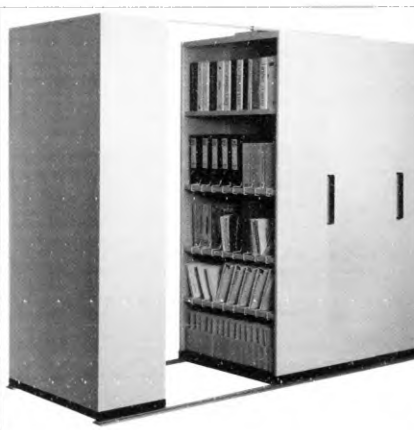
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Your letters on any issue of relevance to the library and information sector are welcomed. Opinions expressed in the magazine are those of the authors and not necessarily the official policy of the Australian Library and Information Association. All letters should be addressed to the *inCite* editor and may be emailed to <incite@alia.org.au>, or faxed to 02 6282 2249, or posted to: *Your voice*, ALIA, PO Box 6335, Kingston 2604. Letters will be accepted for publication until the 10th of the month. Please include your name and postal address.



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