

Little book packs a big punch

Next month sees the publication of the *Little book of public libraries*, a handy, pocket-sized volume that's bright, colourful, and, in just a few pages, explains why public libraries are so important.

The *Little book* is based on a publication produced in the UK a few years ago. ALIA has taken the idea and adapted it for the Australian library world, creating a valuable advocacy tool, which includes the kinds of words and phrases to which politicians can easily relate. ALIA's *Little book* features sections on public libraries' contribution to social inclusion, a vibrant economy, healthy citizens, higher literacy levels, lifelong learning, strong families, and sustainable communities.

It also includes the latest, impressive statistics about library usage.

- There are some **1500** public libraries across Australia and **8200** library staff, who provide expert guidance.
- **9.9 million** people or nearly **50% of the population** are library members, and many more of us use them as study spaces, for online research, and just to browse the collections of books, CDs, DVDs, and magazines, giving a total of **111 million** annual visits.
- We borrow more than **183 million** items a year and make nearly **10 million** enquiries.
- There are **8500** PCs in our libraries, **7000** with internet access.
- All this costs us **\$757 million** – less than **10c** a day each.

Source: *The Australian Public Libraries Statistical Report 2006-2007* (State Library of Queensland, January 2009)

The *Little book* will make its debut at the ALIA Public Libraries Summit on 16 July, where a copy will be given to each attendee. Its primary function is to remind politicians of the valuable contribution made by public libraries, and it is designed to work on a federal, state, and local level. In addition, it can be used with council officers, library users, friends of library groups, library staff, and the media.

ALIA President Jan Richards has been responsible for the publication. She explains: "It's a simple, lively, multi-purpose book. Unlike flimsy leaflets, it's just too attractive and substantial to throw away, so all we need to do is to make sure it gets into the right hands.

"We asked colleagues, through the state Public Library Associations, how many copies they might be interested in ordering, and they responded with quantities which totalled more than 1 2000 copies. This brings the price down to less than \$2 a copy.

"A pdf of the final artwork will be available to view on the ALIA website from 12 June (if not before), and if anyone hasn't already requested copies, but would like to do so, we will be taking orders for the initial print run right up to 19 June."

For more information, or to request copies, contact ALIA Project Officer Sue McKerracher on 0404 456749 or email sue.mckerracher@alia.org.au.

Sue McKerracher
ALIA Project Officer
sue.mckerracher@alia.org.au



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