



Jan Richards

ALIA President

Feedback to your Board of Directors

Board members welcome your comments and feedback. Please feel free to contact a Board member at any time.

Email: feedback@alia.org.au with your comments.

Jan Richards
President
02 6393 8126
jan.richards@alia.org.au

Graham Black
Vice-President
07 4930 9435
graham.black@alia.org.au

Michelle Brennan
Director
0429 001 392
rmsubi@bigpond.net.au

Gillian Hallam
Director
0401 678 950
gillian.hallam@alia.org.au

Philip Keane
Director
08 8222 3224
philip.keane@alia.org.au

Helen Partridge
Director
07 3864 9047
helen.partridge@alia.org.au

Kate Sinclair
Director
08 8201 3290
kate.sinclair@alia.org.au

By now most of you will know of the decision by the IFLA Governing Board to change the location of the 2010 Congress from Brisbane to Göteborg in Sweden. This was not the scenario we anticipated when this issue of *inCite* was planned with the theme of "IFLA one year out".

Please let me assure you that this was an extremely difficult decision, and one which was not taken lightly. Many of you have sent messages expressing your frustration at this direction and while we empathise with your response, and share your disappointment, we believe it to be the sensible, financially responsible thing to do. An IFLA Congress is an incredibly complex event — I didn't realise how complex until I joined the National Committee, despite previous experience as a conference convenor and committee member at national, state, and regional level.

There are three major players in an IFLA Congress, each with their own specific role.

- Overall responsibility for the Congress rests with IFLA Headquarters, including planning, budgeting, programming, international promotion, interpreters, and onsite services.
- The National Committee represents the library profession and the national library association in the host country; the Committee for Brisbane comprised key representatives of the Australian library community including ALIA. The National Committee is responsible for government sponsorship, volunteers, library visits, social and cultural events, and local promotions.
- Congrex, IFLA's Professional Conference Organiser, is responsible for financial management, international sponsorship, exhibition sales, venue, promotion, registration, and accommodation.

The world economic crisis was a key contributing factor in the decision to relocate. The National Committee, in agreement with IFLA, determined the downturn could have a significant impact on the Congress. With the greater number of attendees traditionally being drawn from Europe and North America, we needed to recognise that the contraction in the world economy would inevitably mean many of our colleagues would be reassessing plans to move forward in these difficult economic times. Those of us who are dealing with budget shortfalls can identify with this.

The IFLA Governing Board and the National Committee believed that relocating the Congress was necessary to ensuring the long-term business continuity of our international federation and its ability to continue its very important work on behalf of all libraries and library associations around the world. So while fundraising at the local level was progressing well, the projected shortfall was determined to be an unacceptable burden to IFLA.

ALIA believes the long-term continuity of the international association is paramount and therefore supports the IFLA Governing Board's decision.

Once again I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all the hard work undertaken by the National Committee and host city representatives, and the generous support which had been pledged by our colleagues in the sector. This enthusiasm and support made it doubly difficult to have to advise that the Congress was to be relocated. In

particular, the exciting program of satellite events which were in train offered wonderful professional development and networking opportunities.

The power of the social networking media was apparent in informing and discussing the relocation. True to the Australian spirit of 'let's move on' the lists, emails, tweets, and Facebook sites soon moved from 'disappointed' to 'what's next?' Innovative ideas for alternative programming in 2010, including reincarnations of the satellite events gained momentum. As I write this column we have only lived with IFLA's decision for less than a week and still have a great deal to work through.

I would urge you to be patient. The National Committee meets again this week by teleconference to discuss future options and the ALIA Board has earmarked this as a priority item. In the interim, let's stay focused and resist the temptation to organise a plethora of unrelated events. We will also review the broader events program and advise as soon as possible of plans for other events through 2010.

In June 2008 I won a half-day media training session for three people with former ABC news presenter, Richard Morecroft at the Dymocks Literacy Foundation Dinner. Was I excited? — just a little! In June this year after a great deal of 'diarising' Executive Director Sue Hutley, Vice-President Graham Black, and I met with Richard to work through our media skills, nervously aware of the video camera and the 'interview chair' to one side. We needn't have worried. It was a great afternoon during which we learned the importance of preparation and anticipation.

These were skills which came to the forefront last week when, hot on the heels of the IFLA dialogue, came two contentious issues: the outsourcing of selection cataloguing and processing in NSW public libraries, and the perennial issue of internet filtering this time in South East Queensland. Both received considerable media coverage, outsourcing occupying prime space in the Sydney Morning Herald's news and letters pages over three days. Regardless of your stance on either of these topics, such exposure provides us with a unique opportunity to talk to a larger audience about the value of libraries. To add to the mix the "Living Library" at Sydney's Mona Vale library was featured on the Today show. Way to go!

As I write this Frontline, we are only days away from the inaugural ALIA Public Libraries Summit at the National Library of Australia on 16 July. If you haven't yet done so, go to the Summit web page (<http://www.alia.org.au/summit09>) and read through the range of submissions we've received. The topics explored demonstrate the reach of public libraries and give us a starting point for future discussion with the participants. As befits something of this magnitude we have a sense of where we would like this discussion to go but, at the very least, we want everyone to walk out of that room having learned something positive about public libraries, having considered how they might fit with their agenda, and having thought "we can work with these people". If we achieve that, we have been successful in starting up the kind of conversation we need to have with government at all levels — and that's what this Summit is all about.

Jan Richards
ALIA President
jan.richards@alia.org.au