

Group in the spotlight

Academic and Research Librarians, WA

Tell us a bit about your group.

We meet in various academic and research libraries (e.g. Edith Cowan University, Murdoch University, Notre Dame University, Curtin University, TAFE, and the State Library of WA). We meet five times a year, and each meeting has two to four speakers. The meetings are based on topical current research library themes and last around 2 hours. Each event is preceded, and sometimes followed by, drinks and nibbles allowing for professional or social networking with colleagues across the sector.

Why is the ARL group in WA so fantastic?

I personally enjoy the opportunities for networking, and the discussion of topics relevant to my daily work. We are also an enthusiastic group, and have a varied group of attendees at each meeting (i.e. not the same people at every meeting).

What is the biggest challenge you see facing Academic and Research Librarians today?

I believe it is provision of services to remote students, although this may be influenced by my role (Systems Librarian)! Provision can be by development of online study tools (e.g. e-journals, ebooks, online lecture notes, and use of web technology).

What are three things you would like us to know about your group?

We always welcome new attendees (I believe that we are very friendly and informal).

We have a great range of topics at our meetings, and we are always keen to hear of subjects which people would like included.

Lastly, I believe that we have a diverse range of speakers, from students to postgraduate researchers to University Librarians, and from all areas of academic and research libraries.

How can other people become involved in your group?

Just come along to our meetings. We offer free attendance for library students, and a discount for ALIA members. We also welcome library staff from outside of the academic and research sector.

Tell us about some of your upcoming activities?

Suggested program of events for 2009:

- March: ARL (WA) and DA Services/Blackwells Student prize presentations
- May: report on research being done by local library researchers
- July: experiences with ebooks
- October: learning spaces
- December: Christmas get together

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ALIA Public Library Ambassador program

One of the key initiatives in this year's Public Library Summit, to be held at the National Library of Australia in Canberra March 26th, is the Public Library Ambassador project.

What is a Public Library Ambassador?

ALIA Public Library Ambassadors can be grass-root members of the community or celebrity advocates who will use their talent or fame to promote the value of public libraries in their lives, especially attracting media attention. Similar in concept to UNESCO's Goodwill Ambassadors, an important difference is that ALIA Public Library Ambassadors come from a broad cross-section of the Australian community.

ALIA Public Library Ambassadors will perform a role different from library advocates and supporters such as Friends of Libraries groups which work steadily to promote library services to a wider audience or their peers.

Why do we need Library Ambassadors?

We know Australians love their libraries, but ALIA recognises that we need a more active appreciation of public libraries: a surge in popular appeal to support our position as a vital service. Library Ambassadors will be the public face of their local library, publicise their library, and influence public opinion about libraries. Our goal is to create a Public Library Ambassador program with approximately 100 active

Ambassadors around the country from all walks of life. Every public library in the country will identify library champions in their community and choose one or more local Ambassadors.

Who would make a good ambassador?

Ambassadors need to have standing, if not hero status, in the community. They should have earned their reputation over a period of time. Look for people with strong, positive appeal. You may be fortunate to have a library user whose fame has spread to a wider national, even international, audience.

At the same time, don't ignore the value of less obvious candidates. Sometimes you can find champions in unlikely places, and they may reach out to groups who would be unimpressed by more conventional spokespeople. It's also important to look outside the conventional Western view of fame and celebrity, to potential ambassadors who represent different faiths and cultures.

Participating in the ALIA Public Library Ambassador program

All libraries are welcome to participate in the Public Library Ambassador program, and thoughts and advice about developing a library ambassador program can be found on the website <http://www.alia.org.au/governance/committees/public-libraries/summit09/public.library.ambassadors.html>.