

# A LETTER FROM THE UK

**A**s the 2015 ALIA Board settle down to the many tasks at hand, newly elected Vice-President Patricia Genat has been thinking about the year ahead while also in England to attend the London Book Fair.

I'm writing this in a quiet garden in Surrey, England. It seems a bit surreal to be immersing myself in ALIA issues in the weak British sunshine, but this is where my aunt lives and I'm enjoying a few days with her after the flurry of the London Book Fair.

And it was a flurry this year. After two years of listening to the doom and gloom of bookselling and library news, this year seemed upbeat and positive. Good Christmas retail sales had helped, the interim results of the Sieghart Review were quietly optimistic, and publishers and library managers were offering cautious words of hope rather than of antagonism. I attended the BIC Business Seminar and two speakers – Janeane Cox, President of the Society of Chief Librarians, and Emma House, Director of the Publishers Association – spoke openly about the learning and changes that occurred over the two years since the Sieghart Review and during the process of the eLending trial. Smart, sensible leaders of both organisations shared the principles and key research findings. The final results were published in mid-May.

As always, when I'm away from Australia, I have two predominate emotions. One is immense pride in the entrepreneurial ideas and activities and creative output of Australians. The other is frustration that our small population, large size and European history makes life and business expensive, and often curtails, rather than enhances, healthy competition.

One of the reasons I enjoy attending international Book Fairs so much is that I have a wonderful excuse to wear all of my hats. I am a publisher, bookseller, library supplier and now, ALIA Board Member – it's a powerful combination when



Patricia Genat wears many hats on the international circuit, the newest of these being her role as ALIA Vice President.

I speak with British, American and European colleagues from any of those industries. Of course there's the danger that too little knowledge can be dangerous, so I'm always careful to partner with clear experts in any of those areas on panels or discussions, because then our strengths are shared and multiplied.

As a new member of the ALIA Board, I'm sure the same processes will be in play. I look forward to learning a lot and to sharing some. On a personal note, I was excited and nervous as I approached this first of many tasks as ALIA Vice-President. All the usual thoughts fly through my mind – am I suitably qualified or experienced, will I be useful, how many mistakes will I be allowed to make? And then common sense takes over and I begin the task in front of me and all seems well.

I hope to meet as many of you as I can in the year ahead, and to share conversation and make things happen in this new journey together.

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