



## Indigenous knowledge

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges have developed, deepened and been enriched by the more than 65,000 years of sophisticated social and cultural life lived by the people of over 250 Indigenous nations on the land we now know as Australia. These deep knowledges have helped shape and define the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples live on Country and if we take the notice we should, provide the basis for problem-solving and well-being not only for Australia’s First Nations peoples, but for all of us.

Indigenous knowledge is not only valuable in and of itself and for the Indigenous people who own it and live it, but critical, in today’s Australia, for the benefits it can bestow in maintaining a healthy, strong, and sustainable society and environment. In this, the International Year of Indigenous Languages, it is important to think how you might use Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages not only to correctly identify language groups, but also to make your library a more welcoming place.

Reflect on your spaces. How might Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples see themselves reflected in your libraries? Are they an embedded presence, or rather a curiosity, treated as the exotic? Is there an Indigenous voice visible and audible anywhere? Do they see and meet Indigenous staff? The very best way you can value local knowledge and respectfully use it to make both your physical and digital spaces welcoming is to form a relationship with the local traditional owners and take their advice. For more thoughts and links to a range of helpful materials, see my full TIK blog on the ALIA FAIR website ([bit.ly/30CsPat](http://bit.ly/30CsPat)).

It has been my great pleasure to focus on Indigenous matters as the theme for my presidential year and I’ve loved reading the articles and hearing the stories of what people are doing. I look forward to many more – let’s keep the momentum going. 🌱

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## Freedom of expression

I would say that ‘freedom of expression’ is the right to feel like you can be you without fear of persecution for your race, sexuality, gender, mental health status or any other characteristics that might lead you to suffer discrimination, ridicule or harassment.

My most memorable experience of what freedom of expression really means occurred when the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutes (IFLA) announced that the 2018 World Library and Information Congress (WLIC 2018) would be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Now, you need to understand that it is illegal to be LGBTIQ in Malaysia and that I am publicly identifiable as the Convenor of IFLA’s LGBTIQ Users Special Interest Group about to hold a conference there. My freedom to be a gay woman travelling overseas to host a conference session about LGBTIQ issues was not only threatened, in reality I didn’t even have that freedom. It was simply not safe for me to do so. It was not safe for me to be me.

Freedom of expression is important because it can mean that people feel like they can be themselves. Australia is not a perfect country. We certainly don’t have a good track record when it comes to freedom of expression. But I think Australia is a luckier country to have been born in than some. How would I have fared if I was born in Malaysia? To read more about my thoughts on freedom of expression, and my experience with it, see my full blog at ([bit.ly/2JX1mdo](http://bit.ly/2JX1mdo)). 🌱

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