

Comments for contribution to the ALIA Education Summit, March 2008

National & State Libraries Australasia
Alan Smith, Chairman (Director, State Library of South Australia)
nsla@slv.vic.gov.au
www.nsla.org.au

Since August 2007, NSLA have been engaged in the development of a strategic plan that will leverage the collaborative endeavours of our libraries in the digital environment.

The Re-imagining Library Services (RLS) Strategic Plan is being created with a team from Deloitte and will be released as an exposure draft in April 2008. Comments from across the sector will be welcome.

The RLS Strategic Plan includes a number of major projects that will be led by one of the NSLA libraries on behalf of the group. These collaborations will impact significantly on the core body of work undertaken by each library. They will look at developing a common approach to user created content; at maximizing resources through collaborative collecting and enhanced delivery options; at new metadata and discovery services; and “open borders” so that users can access services across the libraries more easily.

One of the projects will be looking at ways to enhance the capability of the staff in our libraries and to transform the culture to a new mix of roles and responsibilities. The driver for this project is the need to liberate the professional expertise of staff so they can use their skills where they are most needed. The project also aims to create more agile structures and foster innovation throughout the organisations.

An extract from the draft description of the capability project:

The emphasis on easy access for users to digital collections will inevitably drive changes in the roles of librarians and the mix of expertise employed in our libraries. No job will be unchanged. We will do some things differently, and some things we have always done we will no longer do.

As we enable users to create and organise digital content themselves, professional librarian expertise will move towards developing metadata services, enhancing content, participating in community outreach programs and shared services and infrastructures.

Library places are unique – they are free public spaces that are centrally located and belong to the community. The use and appreciation of this public space is growing while information-seeking moves more towards digital services. We will review staffing and role structures to provide for a

National & State Libraries Australasia

welcoming community space with information services available when they are needed.

The project will have two parts:

- a) Developing a framework for organisation design
- b) Building an innovation network

The project is due to get underway in July 2008 and will initially run for 12 months. It will be led by the State Library of South Australia with a project team from all the NSLA Libraries and may include an external consultancy to assist with developing the framework for organisation design.

It is expected that this project will look in detail at librarian roles, as well as the broad range of skills and the mix of roles needed in libraries in the digital age. The examination of librarian roles will include professional training and qualifications; ongoing development of skills; new recruitment practices; the reputation and ability of libraries to draw high achievers to the profession; the transference of expert collection knowledge to younger staff; and transition to retirement programs.

One of the results of this project will be a clarified and more unified approach by the State, Territory and National Libraries to librarian roles, and the skills and expertise required.

The ALIA Education Summit is particularly timely for NSLA, coming in the lead up to the Capability project and bringing together the issues and options being considered across the sector.

March 2008