



Australian
Library and
Information
Association

ALIA NAC Regional Reports 2007

Library Technician's meeting

Monday 8th October

Chair: Damian Lodge

1. **Attendance:**

Damian Lodge – Chair
Margie Anderson – LLO, note taker
Kevin Dudeney
Kim Gosling
Patricia D'arcy
Robyn Lather
Patricia Murray
Bradley O'Brien
Jennifer Dyer
Rebecca Evans
Tania Barry
Gemma Siemensma
John Campbell

2. **Selected representative to attend the national meeting of the NAC (they must be a member)**

Name: Bradley O'Brien _____

ALIA membership no. 048132 _____

3. **Major Issues – Providing leadership in professional education and workforce planning**

- ALIA and the information profession in general need to engage more with secondary students to increase their awareness of the LIS industry as a career option.
- ALIA should work closely with careers teachers and advisors to promote the LIS industry as a career option. (The meeting was pleased to hear about the project currently in place to address this issue)
- Current LIS students do not receive sufficient information about the industry or ALIA whilst they are studying. Faculty members provide few opportunities for information sessions with ALIA staff or members and do not provide background on ALIA and how it can help students. LIS teachers are not seen as supporters of ALIA. Possible solutions could include; ALIA providing information packs or show bags to students at the beginning of their course, wider distribution of information about the ALIA e-lists, more face to face presentations to students during their courses by ALIA staff, mandatory visits to TAFE courses by ALIA staff and BoD members, co-ordinating with learning institutions to provide ALIA kits to students as they graduate.
- ALIA needs to provide more opportunities for students, current members and employers to mix with each other. The Library Technician of the Year Award in QLD was cited as an example of an activity that raised a positive profile of Library Technicians and provided a vehicle for networking and discussion with all parties.

Role of employers

- In a competency based training environment the employers have a large role to play and ALIA needs to highlight how they can contribute to the learning experience and guidelines.
- Employers need to support recognition of Library Technician training by insisting that suitable positions can only be filled by trained staff and aligning job titles and duties to recognise the high level of training Library technicians now receive.
- ALIA needs to encourage employers to advertise for staff "who are eligible for ALIA membership" and to use job titles that reflect the positions eg. Library Technician positions should not be advertised as Library Officer roles.

Skills required for the future

- Cataloguing skills will be even more highly valued in the future as the amount of cataloguing being taught in Librarianship courses is diminishing and thus creating a shortage in the industry of people with good cataloguing skills. Conversely, employers are not recognising the high level of cataloguing skills possessed by Library Technicians. Employers still wish to employ "Cataloguing Librarians" not "Cataloguing Library Technicians" despite the skills held by Library Technicians in this area.
- The ability to be adaptive and responsive to rapid changes in technology will be essential. Library Technicians will need to be able to seamlessly apply a range of complex digital technologies into their everyday work life and to be quick to move from one technology to another.
- Excellent personal communication skills will be essential; both face to face and via a variety of electronic media.
- Library Technicians will have greater exposure to Reference services and this will require more training the area, but also a shift in attitude about the suitability of Library Technicians to provide high quality Reference products.
- There is an increasing blurring of the lines between the duties of Library Technicians and Librarians. The Library Technician's role has been redefined by changing technology and work practices, changes to training such as the continual upgrading of the Library Technician courses and the move of Library Technicians into traditional Librarian roles. In response, the industry needs a redefining of the role of Librarians. ALIA could assist employers by creating a clear picture of the distinctions between Librarians, Library Technician and Library Officer through the production of a relevant and up to date outline of the skills and duties applicable to each level.

Retaining high quality staff

- The LIS industry is undervalued by society and employers because our salaries are too low. As a consequence good staff does not stay in the LIS industry because they can command better levels of remuneration elsewhere.
- ALIA needs to promote the LIS profession to employers and the community in general to highlight the intricacies of the work undertaken and the importance of our services, so that employers and the community begin to place a higher value on the role the industry plays. In particular ALIA, needs to promote the role library staff have played in assisting in the development and learning of all professionals in our community. EG There would be no lawyers if there were no law libraries to help them as they qualified.
- As people work rarely for just the money, ALIA needs to assist employers in providing a work environment that is supportive, utilises a wide range of the employee's skills, encourages learning in the workplace, and enables staff to develop professional networks outside their own organisation.

Working with other professional bodies

- ALIA needs to work more closely with all aligned professional bodies such as ASLA, RMAA, VALA and the Children's Book Council to encourage increased networking, more joint functions and training and a greater exchange of ideas.
- It is often hard to find another ALIA member even within your own workplace. ALIA needs to develop ways for ALIA members to raise their own profile at work and encourage a culture of ALIA membership in all workplaces. This needs to be led by library managers. If managers are seen to value ALIA then this will trickle down to all level of the organisation.

4. ALIA Initiatives for 2008

Boardroom Bound

- This initiative needs to be promoted explicitly to Library Technicians to encourage them to become involved in the Board.

Review of advisory committees and representatives

Not discussed at this meeting

Technology: what members want from ALIA

- Members would like to have the functionality to upload Group documentation such as reports, minutes and agendas etc to the website to create an archive of them.
- The Search feature needs to be refined on the ALIA web site. It is currently totally unsatisfactory and is a waste of the resources that are housed on the website given few can find them.
- Many of the pages on the website are out of date. Content needs to be reviewed and updated more regularly.
- In general the quality of the website does not reflect well on our organisation or profession. It is cluttered and hard to use. Given that the web is the flagship of our organisation improving and maintaining it needs to be one of our highest priorities.
- Personal web spaces need to be returned to ALIANet.

5. Celebrating Success – ALIA stories of Achievement

- The Library Technicians Conference and the high level of work achieved by the organising committee and all concerned should be viewed as one of the achievements.
- The Library technicians of the Year Award
- The Dunn and Wilson Award.
- Techs on Tour in Victoria continues to be a standout success and has been emulated throughout Australia.
- The Hot off the Presses tour in Victoria continues to be successful and may be repeating in other states.
- QLD members reported several excellent sessions including; training on how to work with selection criteria on job applications, and working across a variety of roles and sectors within the industry.

6. Local issues

- Members in isolated and regional areas need help to see the benefits of ALIA membership and to access ALIA services such as training and PD. ALIA needs to develop programs and guidelines with regional and isolated members specifically in mind. In particular we need to look at how we can bring guest speakers to remote area. We need to make a concerted effort to involve all LIS workers in regional area, not just those working in large institutions such as the universities.
- ALIA needs to merge with other professional groups in our industry. It is difficult to stretch resources to cover membership of several organisations.

- Emphasis needs to be placed on involving staff and students from all TAFE's with LIS courses.
- Paperwork for Group Treasurers needs to be made easier to use including the receipt book. An alternative electronic form of receipts needs to be available.
- ALIA needs to help Library Technicians who work in schools to gain recognition of their qualifications. Currently many Library Technicians are employed as school admin officers.

7. Evaluation

Attendees at the meeting were exceptionally pleased with the opportunity the meeting gave them to discuss issues and in particular valued the ability to converse face to face and to have a meeting that focuses specifically on the Library technician experience. Being held in conjunction with the conference, and thus enabling members from other states to attend, was seen as highly desirable. Evaluation forms have been attached.

8. Any other comments from the meeting?

- Members would like an NAC meeting to be a feature of all conferences and major events.
- Rather than having the NAC prior to the conference, members would like it to be held as part of the conference program to enable more people to participate.
- Face to face meetings are seen as extremely important. Members place a high importance on being able to hold face to face NAC's in the future, rather than teleconferences.
- The meeting expressed a great deal of concern over communication problems in dealing with National Office. The high level of staff turnover in the past 2 years has created an environment where lack of knowledge of past events and current procedures has meant that members are faced with staff who are unable to respond to their queries in a timely manner.
- Members are greatly concerned that record keeping policies within the association should be improved to ensure best practise is met and that we do not lose invaluable corporate knowledge.
- Members wish to streamline all procedures for exchange of documents between members and national office and to create a better paper trail so that no document or information is misplaced in the system.
- Open communication between ALIA Staff, Board Members, volunteers and members needs to be given the highest priority and at all points ALIA needs to utilise the expertise and knowledge stored with members.
- Increased consultation with members and volunteers is vital, including co-opting more members to advisory groups and encouraging opportunities at every point for the spread of information about National Office activities.
- It is vital that the Groups and Volunteers have continuity of access to National office and for that reason the Role of Groups Liaison Officer is seen as critical.
- ALIA needs to encourage and facilitate a greater emphasis on creating a research culture within the profession.

Margie Anderson
ALIA Local Liaison Officer - Victoria