



Australian
Library and
Information
Association

ALIA NAC, Sydney Report 2007

1. Attendance:

Nine members were in attendance, together with ALIA Director Damian Lodge and Local Liaison Officer for NSW Niki Kallenberger. See attached list.

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

Name: Alyson Dalby

ALIA membership no.

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

General issues raised:

It was noted that workforce planning is not something generally associated with ALIA. It was viewed as appropriate, however, and a general discussion of the various dimensions of workforce planning ensued. It was suggested that ALIA should look beyond the library and information sector to see how workforce planning is tackled in other industries. It was also suggested there has been some very useful research done in Canada on workforce planning for the LIS sector.

What can we do to ensure that we have a future workforce?

- Moving the base qualifications to a master's degree will put people off
- How many technicians upgrade to a degree? It's a long slog!
- Coming to LIS as a second career has many benefits for both the individual and the industry
- Our image is improving! "The power of information" is cool!
- We need to be clear that there **is** work, and there **is** worth, before we promote our profession.
- Important connections between LIS work and the IT industry – do we make the most of this?
- We need more dialogue between educators and employers (the only we talk to educators is when they are seeking work placements for their students!)
- NLS2006 survey revealed the biggest challenge for new grads is getting a professional, full-time job. Conversely, employers say they can't find people – so why this mismatch?
- Some concerns that the new gradings that emerged from the NSW pay equity case may be disadvantaging new grads, but no hard evidence here.
- There seems to be little interchangeability across the sector – ie, children's librarians don't easily move into other areas, even within the public library sector. Are we becoming too specialised? It's hard to transfer even when skill sets are similar.

What is the role of employers?

- How does ALIA reach all those employers who employ only 1 or 2 librarians? How do we hear their concerns? Good structures are in place for larger employers via CAUL, NASLA, etc., but what about these small employers?
- In those organisations employing only a few librarians, it really depends on who the manager is, their particular approach, concerns, etc
- These small employers need to be part of the proposed Educational Summit.
- The private sector may be more interested in skill sets, not qualifications
- Many employers highly value the Association's advice in identifying appropriate qualifications for their employees

What is the role of educational institutions?

- Fiona discussed short courses and the need to have some middle ground between a one day CAVAL type course and that of a Degree. Librarians want to learn about issues such as digital libraries or the management of libraries in more detail than just a one day training program.
- Information literacy standards still seen by some as highly useful
- Many present had completed PLCMC's "23 things", but others didn't even know what it was

What skill set will be required for the future?

We need people who are

- flexible
- have generic skills
- adaptable
- good communicators
- quick learners and seek learning opportunities
- effective advocates
- skilled at building business cases
- understand the role of research in advocacy and business cases
- good at marketing (market yourself, market your product/service)

How to promote the profession?

- It's very hard to promote the profession, given the diversity of it. Need to establish a broad understanding of it. There's a whole spectrum of work we do – it's not just books! (But books can be part of it).
- Harness those who are engaged and enthused by it; profile them
- People don't know the breadth and depth of the work we do – it will astonish them!
- Positive interactions with LIS workers encourage people such as nurses and teachers to enter the industry as 2nd or 3rd career
- Are we too self-effacing? Is this the result of being a service industry?
- We do need to balance promoting the profession with ensuring that there are jobs
- Contracting school careers advisers could help raise awareness
- How do people make career choices? Do we know what the research says?
- We need an ad campaign (like the ones for accountants) that establish a big picture of the work we do (and yes this will be expensive)
- Are we using You Tube to promote our profession?
- We should encourage program and ad makers to use libraries free of charge to film ads, host interviews, etc – let them see what librarians do and it might improve people's understanding of our work

How to retain best people?

- They need to see opportunities and diversities, but also want to be well paid and have opportunities to study
- We need to work with other associations, such as Information Architecture, Records Management, etc and look for commonalities
- Alyson Dalby shared some of the issues NGPAG is currently working on, including how new grads can be encouraged to move onto working on other ALIA committees. One idea is to get committee members to talk about being on a committee – what's involved, what the benefits are. A blog may be the way to do this. A key idea is that wanting to contribute is enough, you don't need specific skills or experience. Another is that the skills you gain through committee involvement do transfer to the workplace.
- Do employers encourage professional development? Not always, and this is something ALIA can and should follow up.

Education Summit 2008

This was not specifically discussed.

4. ALIA Initiatives for 2008

- Boardroom Bound
- Review of advisory committees and representatives
- Technology: what members want from ALIA

These initiatives were well received, and there was particular interest in Boardroom Bound.

In terms of technology, the following points were raised:

- Given the constant turnover of ALIA IT staff, the question of whether or not they need to be located in Canberra was asked.
- The ALIA e-prints repository is down. This isn't good! Such services need to be robust and constantly available.
- ALIA does not offer its groups much flexibility in using technology – it would be better for ALIA to advise groups on good tools (such as Google docs, Blogspot) they can use, rather than developing (and then having to support) its own.
- The e-lists are great. Easy to use, effective. Love them!
- Perhaps things like the NAC should be run online in future. The NZ police are using wikis to foster community involvement – this might be a good model to investigate.

5. Celebrating Success – ALIA stories of Achievement

- NLS2006 was "glorious"!!! Very positive feedback, and a profit was made. Three members of the organising committee have had a paper accepted for the ALA 2008 conference.
- Jennifer Deyer from NSW has been named Library Technician of the Year – congratulations to her!

6. Local issues

We need New Grads activities in NSW!!

ALIA Sydney needs people willing to serve on its committee.

7. Evaluation

Six evaluation forms were returned, and show that the meeting was very well-received. Several noted that it was disappointing there were not more people in attendance, despite widespread promotion. One noted the value of "meeting a Board member and hearing what is on the agenda", a sentiment shared by

others. Running the NAC online was suggested as a way to improve the meeting in the future.

A number of specific questions arose which neither Damian nor I could answer. We have undertaken to find the answers and get back to the people who asked.

8. Any other comments from the meeting?

A big thank you to UTS Library for the use of their seminar room for our meeting.

Niki Kallenberger
4 October 2007