



Australian
Library and
Information
Association

ALIA NAC Regional Reports 2007

Townsville/Thuringowa
5 September 2007

1. Attendance:

Chris Bendle, Claudia Davies (LLO), Barbara Debono, Margaret Larcombe, Ruth Marsh, Helen Partridge (Director), Bronia Renison, Neil Renison, Ron Store, Jackie Wolstenholme.

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

Name: Ruth Marsh

ALIA membership no: 053560

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

- Professional isolation in regional area:
 - Small libraries mean that solo librarians can't take time off work for training as services suffer.
 - Costs of training prohibitive, especially when factoring in costs of airfares, accommodation and taxis, plus time off work for travel.
- Generational issues:
 - young librarians feel that there is no need to join ALIA because they don't understand the relevance to them – the 'me generation'
 - as a generalisation, the newer generation wants more tangible benefits than just receiving inCite and ALJ.
 - ALIA gives too much away for free – why join when you can use e-lists for free and are welcomed at all the functions.
 - More senior staff should understand the ethos of contribution to the profession and that membership of the profession's association provides strength for the future of the profession. It is managers' responsibility to instil that in their staff and encourage membership and participation.
 - 'ossification' of some groups where new members of the profession feel it is difficult to break into the group
- Changing workforce
 - mobile workforce – move across locations and between careers
 - time pressures are more pronounced than 'the old days' for individuals.
 - Work places are not as generous as they once were with support for professional membership and financial support for professional development.
 - Communication is so much easier these days with email and web technologies. In the old days the only way one found out what was going on was to go to branch council. Now everyone is using email etc to keep in touch.

- With the changing IR landscape the need to join professional associations is changing – depends on union membership, AWAs etc.
- Advocacy:
 - ALIA is competing with many other organisations including APLA, ASLA, CAUL etc for membership. Reduces our ability to provide advocacy at high levels as we don't present one voice.
- Training:
 - Local groups should 'push the boundaries' by organising regional conferences etc
 - Training should not be run for the sake of running it – must fill an identified need.
 - State Library of Queensland offers state wide training – a 'rolling training show'
 - CAVAL offers an alternative model of delivering professional development to regional areas – but should we be in the business of running a training company, especially for profit?
 - Libraries need training on a more diverse range of subjects such as community engagement, program planning and marketing.
 - Partnerships and subcontracting should be used for delivering training.
 - Train the trainer type models could provide the answer to regional training – for example regional professionals could nominate to be trainers in their area, contracting to spend an agreed amount of time being trained, after which they will provide training on an agreed basis.
 - "webinars" were a popular mode of delivering training
 - Online delivery of training should be used where appropriate, but is not a substitute for face-to-face training. Not appropriate for all situations. Online training is better than no training.
 - Papers from conferences should always be put on the web to cater to regional members.
- Pay rates for library workers
 - Poor by comparison to other professions
 - Poor by comparison with mining sector – can get \$1000 pw driving a truck at the mines.
 - Other professions- IT was identified as example – take the best and brightest of our potential recruits
- Education
 - ALIA does not have a high enough profile amongst students
 - Trend to more research grant applications – ALIA has role to play.
- Librarianship as profession
 - In other professions, it would be embarrassing to admit you were not a member of the professional association – peer expectations
 - It was noted that there is a trend against membership of (non compulsory) associations across all professions, so ALIA was congratulated on being as strong as it is.

1. What do we need to do to ensure that we have a future workforce?

Answered above, but professional development the key.

2. What is the role of employers?

- Every graduate from universities is a potential recruit. Library managers should be suggesting the profession to the brightest and the best.

- Employers need to be projecting a positive image of the industry, although it was remarked that the image of librarians has never been better than it is now. We are still a trusted profession.
- Understanding the profession must be translated to joining the profession – though funding and opportunities.
- Provide salaries comparable to other professions.
- Stop the practice of under-employing library staff.
- Provide career progression
- Assist with on-the-job training

3. What is the role of educational institutions?

- Provide a sound, broad education – the world is changing too rapidly to be too specific – and learn how to update your skills
- Adapt to the changing role of librarians e.g. public librarians do a lot of program work now, early childhood education.
- Provide access to various subjects across different universities

4. What skill set will be required in the future?

- Cataloguing (or is this outsourced?), community engagement, planning, program development, working in an organisational context.
- Communication skills, general skills
- Knowledge of publishing industry, IT etc
- There was a strong need for marketing skills
- Don't know yet!

5. How do we promote the library profession as a career and attract the best people into our profession?

Pay equivalent to other professions, level for level

6. How do we retain the best people in our profession?

Career progression, fair pay

7. What do you see is ALIA's role in these areas? How can we engage educators, employers and graduates? And other professional bodies?

- Speak out when library qualifications are not required for library positions.
- Promote to government at all levels.
- Understand the needs of all sectors and speak with one voice with other industry bodies such as APLA, ASLA.
- Promote our advocacy work in the highest levels of government – and local level too.
- "The Smart State" should have "Library" in it!!
- Apply the NSW IRC test case in other jurisdictions

4. ALIA Initiatives for 2008

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

5. Celebrating Success – ALIA stories of Achievement

- Susie Davies from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the 2007 Queensland Library Achiever of the Year – the third year in a row the award has gone to a Townsville based librarian.
- Our hosts, the Australian Technical College NQ Library, for successfully negotiating a budget to open such a wonderful library this year.
- Claudia nominated Neil Renison as a real ALIA success story. Neil is celebrating 45 years of continuous ALIA membership in 2007.

6. Local issues

- Ongoing support at a professional level despite isolation
- Costs involved in attending conferences etc – factoring in airfares, accommodation, taxi fares, extra days leave for travel (often when library must close if solo practitioner absent)
- ALIA Quorum feels like ALIA SEQ to northern practitioners
- Access to professional placements for distance learners.
- Libraries who offer professional placements are limited to how many they can accommodate.
- Mentoring difficulties
- Require seed funding to run events

7. Evaluation

Opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, discussions: avg 4.5/5

Program and content: avg 4.2/5

Organisational aspects: avg 4.2/5

What was the most valuable aspect of the regional meeting?

- Discussion amongst other professionals
- Meeting Helen and Claudia – discussing regional issues
- Being able to hear views from other professionals and to express concerns
- Opportunity to be heard
- Making Claudia and Helen more aware of Townsville issues
- Feeling of belonging and professional kinship

What could we do to improve the regional meeting?

- This type of meeting was good – pity more didn't attend but perhaps that is an indication of some of the issues we were talking about
- More of it
- Let it go until people attending have finished saying what they want to say
- Day long/half day during daylight hours for those who travel from outside of Townsville

What other comments or suggestions do you have about the ALIA National Advisory Congress?

- Well organised meeting

8. Any other comments from the meeting?

ALIA would like to thank Ruth Marsh, the Australian Technical College NQ Library, and TropicALIA for organising the ALIA Townsville/Thuringowa Regional NAC 2007.