



Australian
Library and
Information
Association

ALIA NAC, Riverina Report 2007

1. Attendance:

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

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

Name: Christopher Griffiths

ALIA membership no.

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

General issues raised:

- Post-graduate or undergraduate courses? Which is better, or is there a place for both?
- The profession has an image problem!
- Are CSU graduates getting jobs? We don't know.
- It's hard to get graduates in country areas (this applies to other sectors, not just LIS)
- Some concerns re the new course accreditation procedures, including the perception that small panels may be biased. Also that course advisory committees are very helpful, but sometimes their advice is at odds with a course accreditation panel.
- There is scope for enhanced cooperation between LIS schools to avoid duplication and acknowledge specialisation (eg, CSU students do records management electives through Curtin University).
- Many academic staff in LIS schools lack appropriate academic or research qualifications. This is a significant problem, especially as academic workloads increase.
- The workforce issues currently impacting on the profession will also impact on LIS schools, especially retirement. (There will be employment for all those graduates!)
- Those approaching retirement are sometimes reluctant to accept managerial responsibilities, preferring a less stressful role at the end of their careers.
- The assumption that everyone wants to be a manager is not necessarily true!
- There is scope for increased and enhanced professional development opportunities across the LIS industry.

What is the role of employers?

- A good employer will support ALIA, and value ALIA-recognised qualifications for its staff.

- However the reality is that if employers don't allocate adequate funding for professional development, the perception will be that they don't value their staff.
- ALIA needs to put more effort into advocacy with employers. Maybe ALIA even needs to become more militant with employers, particularly those who do not require ALIA qualifications (or equivalent).
- Library work is often invisible, and this makes advocacy difficult.

What is the role of educational institutions?

- There is still a place for undergraduate LIS qualifications.
- LIS schools need to prepare their students for learning throughout their careers.
- LIS schools need to work closely with ALIA and employers. It's an important 3-way partnership.
- Some believe whether academics have lost touch with the reality of the LIS workplace.
- Tension between research and popular interests for academics – where do you put your energies and time?

What skill set will be required for the future?

- The pace of change is such that it's hard to know what to teach now so the skills will be right in the future.
- Professional development is the only way practitioners can keep up to date.
- There's a tension between concepts and principles versus skills.
- ALIA's statement on core knowledge, etc (LISKEA) is very useful in informing the future. However, there was concern expressed that the area that combines infrastructure and management is not quite right.

How to promote the profession?

- The profession is a **profession**, and we need to be very clear about this! It's not a soft option.
- Cranky old school librarians have a lot to answer for!
- Still not enough men in the profession.
- Careers expos are a good vehicle for promoting the profession and could be a good partnership between LIS educators and ALIA, but sometimes unis don't support efforts in this way, saying there are already too many students. Universities have limited money for marketing.
- It would be great to have a kit to sell the profession, and which could be used by local volunteers at schools, etc. Maybe it could be a DVD sampler called "Beyond Google".

How to retain best people?

- Not sure retention is an issue. Isn't some turnover a natural process?
- We benefit from people who have worked in other areas (and isn't this another reason why postgraduate LIS courses are important?)
- Maybe a more important question to ask is "How do you identify the best people?"
- We've wasted time in the past differentiating between technicians and graduates (ie, who does what work?) – let's try not to do this in the future.

Education Summit 2008

- This was seen to be an excellent initiative. Some of the "unconference" strategies might be useful. Not sure what the answer is re size: 60

people can hardly represent the whole of a diverse profession, but 60 is already too many for a single conversation.

4. ALIA Initiatives for 2008

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

The members present were pleased with these initiatives. The e-lists were seen to be a particularly valuable use of technology.

Some concerns were expressed about *inCite*, although all agreed it looks much smarter. There was a desire expressed for some meatier articles, and feature articles from weekend newspapers like The Age were seen as appropriate in length and depth.

5. Celebrating Success – ALIA stories of Achievement

There was general acknowledgement that Damian Lodge's election to the Board of Directors was the success story of the year for the Riverina. Members are delighted to have a local, regional representative on the Board.

6. Local issues

Finding new energy for the local group is an ongoing issue.

Speakers are always welcome, and it was suggested that perhaps an interesting speaker could "barnstorm" the east coast, speaking in regional areas of Victoria, NSW, the ACT and Queensland. This is something Local Liaison Officers could collaborate on.

7. Evaluation

Evaluation forms attached. In summary, members in attendance valued the meeting as "an excellent opportunity to discuss a whole range of issues" with a member of the Board and their LLO. All were disappointed the meeting was not better attended. One participant noted the meeting made her feel "as though the Association belongs to me".

8. Any other comments from the meeting?

A big thank you to Culcairn Library and Riverina Regional Library for the use of their space for our meeting.

Niki Kallenberger
13 September 2007