

## ALIA Education and Workforce Summit: progress so far

Since the ALIA Education and Workforce Summit on 30 March, quite a number of things have happened.

The Summit was held because of a perception that we needed to do more on library and information services education and workforce issues. Since the Summit, ALIA and its Education and Professional Development Standing Committee has gone through the issues raised, and started doing some of the things the Summit agreed on.

A great deal of input was provided to the Summit by the National Advisory Congress in 2007, and this summary has been written to provide feedback to the NAC in 2008. Read about the NAC at <http://www.alia.org.au/governance/nac/2008/>

Over the next couple of years, the actions which flow from the summit will be implemented by ALIA – its national office, groups, and members – and also by lots of others. They include library educators (TAFE and higher education), library employers, and many others.

The big topic was **methods of enhancing recruitment to the profession and a program for doing this**. There is a lot going on, and a core outcome must be development of a coherent recruitment strategy by the stakeholder groups. This involves ALIA but also a wider group of players, including groups such as careers teachers in secondary schools and related associations such as the Public Library Association (PLA). There was a clear recognition that the main problem is not a lack of ideas, but the need for more resources, to be more coherent in our approach, and to work together with employers, educators and other players. This is potentially a very resource-intensive area. The recruitment and careers working party in Victoria, chaired by Chris Kelly, is the leader in this area, and the recent report [Workforce sustainability and leadership: survey, analysis and planning for Victorian public libraries](http://www.libraries.vic.gov.au/infonet/), available for download from <http://www.libraries.vic.gov.au/infonet/> is the latest contribution.

Approaches where further work is likely to bring benefits include promotion at careers fairs, appointment of an industry project officer, expansion of work experience opportunities, creation of a good practice manual, and other approaches too.

There was a strong focus at the summit on **the need to define the library and information profession**. Helen Partridge (ALIA Board) is convening a working party with input from Gill Hallan, Kate Sinclair and Sue Henczel.

The Summit agreed that ALIA must establish a **forum of higher education educators** with the goal of acting as a forum for the ten institutions currently delivering courses which led to professional accreditation. Damian Lodge (ALIA Board member) has agreed to convene an initial meeting. The group would be separate to RAILS (which is about research) but might meet initially in conjunction with the Online conference. Another approach of library educators is I-FORUM 3:

New Models of Education Provision and Delivery for the Information Disciplines, to be held on 25 July 2008, and organized by Mari Davis.

Everyone agreed that we needed to look at **professional development** (PD), and in particular the ALIA PD program – see <http://www.alia.org.au/education/pd/> for more information about the ALIA PD program. The NAC this year will have a particular focus on PD – Staying Smart in a Complicated World – and there are several discussion papers available on the NAC website. Come along to the NAC meeting in your state or region to have your say in the PD program, and have input to the review.

Another focus was on the importance of **educators and employers getting together in an Employer & Educator Forum**. Both discussion groups agreed that there was a very strong need for a mechanism for further dialogue between educators and employers – such as an employer-educator consultative body, or state-based groups along the same lines, or other local communication channels around courses (such as course advisory bodies). Neither employers or educators in isolation can deal with fundamental issues like recruitment. The Education and PD Standing Committee will be working to establish this, most likely in January.

The issue of **defining and addressing current and future skill shortages** in the library and information industry was also seen by the Summit as being important. It is likely that the Nexus survey, conducted by Gill Hallam, will throw light on this, and the Forum referred to above will have this as a role, too.

There is a need to build on existing ALIA statements to develop more detail and some priorities in the **core competencies required by employers**. This task will be a priority for the Educator and Employer Forum too.

**The need to develop stronger relationships with other information associations** such as RMAA (Records Management Association of Australasia) and IIM (Institute for Information Management) also came out strongly during the Summit, and this activity is a strong element in existing ALIA strategic directions. There is a need for more effective coordination and leveraging of the variety of representation in the library and information industry. The Peak Bodies Forum on 9 May was a great opportunity to move this forward.

**Enhancing ALIA course recognition processes** was final but particularly important topic of great interest. The Summit agreed that the ALIA role in course recognition is essential if we are to maintain professional status and quality and is a core role for the association. Recognition processes should involve the highest level of practitioner available, and should be more frequent: perhaps every five years. To advance this agenda, the ALIA Executive Director and other staff will consider and propose in detail a review of documentation and processes, develop a strategy to promote the process to employers, investigate approaches taken by other associations, and establish a timeline for the review.

**Derek Whitehead**  
**ALIA President &**  
**Chair, Education and Professional Development Standing Committee**  
1 July, 2008