

ALIANet update

What's been happening since the launch of ALIANet

The ALIA internet services project has achieved a number of significant milestones in the past few months. In particular, the ALIA World Wide Web site was transferred from the National Library Web site, and is up and running here in ALIA House (at the URL of <http://www.alia.org.au>). Consequently the ALIA web pages on offer have been updated, modified and enlarged regularly. There is still a raft of material that will be added over time: space is still available to post many home pages for special interest groups, branches and divisions. If you have a page that you would like added, or if you have a page or two elsewhere that you would like to see a link to, please contact Ivan ivan.trundle@alia.org.au in the National Office on (06) 285 1877. Our aim is to provide a comprehensive collection of Library-related information for members and non-members alike. We also have plans to provide space for other associations on a fee-for-space provided basis.

A significant number of related web sites (nationally and internationally) that would benefit from having a link to the ALIA web pages have been identified and we have been successful in getting our web site linked through their pages. This process is on-going and we aim to offer many more links out to other organisations and relevant bodies, thus spreading news of ALIA far and wide.

Web access will eventually be provided to ALIA National Office staff, to the extent that most pro-forma documentation and booklets will be represented as web pages. In time this will most likely prove to be the form in which most internal and externally available documents and diaries will be held.

Dial-in access

Following extensive testing to ensure security of the National Office's computer network, the ALIANet dial-in service is now in place and ready to roll. All

that remains to be done is for the appropriate software bundle to be packaged together and offered to ALIANet users. Following an extensive survey of the needs of ACT members, the ACT Branch is about to make available at a reduced price (hopefully) one or perhaps some of the internet book and disk packages on the market today (the disks included will require a minor amount of fine-tuning and localisation prior to use with our network), thus allowing dial-up access. ALIA members wanting advice on modem purchase, suitable hardware requirements, and ALIANet access are invited to contact Ivan Trundle at the National Office.

Many branches and divisions of ALIA have been very interested in the development of ALIANet, and the provision of equitable access. A longer-term strategy is to find economical ways of providing dial-in access to all members of ALIA, from anywhere in Australia, possibly in the form of a locally-accessible telephone number. So far, this appears to be an expensive proposition, given the anticipated number of users. The National Office is currently encouraging branch officers to investigate access to our internet server through commercial and educational access providers.

Newsgroup access/ listservs

These elements of the internet pilot project have not been implemented at the time of writing. Current listservs can be subscribed to already: however the long-term aim is to place on the ALIA server new listservs and to migrate some existing listservs specifically aimed at the library profession. This aspect of the project will be embarked upon following short-term evaluation of core services (e-mail and world-wide web access). Newsgroups will eventually be accessible through the provided Web browser software, limited only by the amount of bandwidth (the size of our internet link) available.

E-mail services

There are two strategies in the provision of e-mail services through this project: one is to provide an e-mail service for any ALIA member who wishes to access the ALIANet server, either by dial-in access or by a telnet session over the internet; the second strategy is to provide internet e-mail functionality for staff working in the ALIA National Office.

The first strategy is fully-implemented. Users requiring e-mail services will be provided with an e-mail address accessible from anywhere on the internet, or by dial-in access. The second part has proved to be more difficult to implement. At the time of writing we are almost there: all staff are able to send e-mail to anywhere, however only one member of staff is able to receive incoming e-mail. Resolution of this minor dilemma is expected Real Soon Now...

Summary

Whilst it might superficially appear that little has been done in the months since the launch, a great deal of activity has indeed taken place. Much of it has been due to the hard work of a number of individuals from within ALIA, from educational institutions, and from commercial organisations, all of whom have provided advice and help throughout the project.

The service is already proving to be a success, in that our Web site is being accessed daily, and a great deal of interest has been shown by people within and from outside ALIA. The pilot project is still very much in its 'evolution' stage, but has proved to be stable and flexible. We are at the brink of experiencing an explosion of interest in ALIANet, and are ready to embark on the next phase — that of adding value to a fledgling but practically boundless membership information service.

*Ivan Trundle,
Systems and Design Manager*

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