

Your voice

ACLIS/ALIA the debate continues

I disagree with the criticisms expressed by Diane Costello in your lead letter of June 1996 issue. *inCite* has improved immensely — it is easy to read, looks professional, and more importantly the content is improved. It is capturing the diverse and exciting nature of the library and information industry and I look forward to receiving the magazine and keeping in touch with developments at home.

The letter which really captured my attention however was by John Levett who referred to the decision by General Council not to join with ACLIS and the National Library to participate in 'a broad review of the future needs of the profession.' I have some sympathy with the views expressed in the letter that ALIA should 're-engage with ACLIS and the National Library'. This raises a critical issue which I believe is pivotal to the image of

the library profession and therefore its future and these are factors which understandably appear to be occupying the thoughts of the executive director and president.

The ACLIS line has always been that it represents the industry while ALIA represents the profession. This distinction of course treads a very fine line and is bound to run into difficulties. It is fair to say that ACLIS has tried to represent the whole library industry, despite its extremely close relationship with the National Library, with a certain amount of credibility, and it has endeavoured to pursue a wide variety of issues. It is associated however with promoting the National Library's interests and this is no more evident than in its zealous attempts to promote the Distributed National Collection and its associated bedfellow — *Conspetus*. Indeed discussions about these matters occupied much of the attention of the

ACLIS national council meetings which I attended in 1992 and 1993. The National Library's 're-engineering' of its collection, no matter how overdue, explains its desire and the political necessity to push and sell the DNC barrow. ACLIS was and is an important tool.

There are many issues facing the library industry and there are several key dysfunctions. One of the major dysfunctions is the inability of the industry's key players to present a cohesive, united front which captures the attention of key stakeholders and by that I mean governments local, state and federal as well as those private enterprises which still decide to operate libraries. I notice in the May issue of *inCite* that ALIA has established a 'copyright committee'. ACLIS has a copyright 'expert'. Why the duplication? I am sure these and other areas of overlap can be explained away to the satisfaction of many ACLIS and ALIA members but

the fact is that there is a perception of 'unco-ordinated representation'.

These are critical times for the library and information profession and I agree with John Levett that ACLIS and ALIA should participate in a joint review of their activities, interests and future plans. Whether the National Library needs to be directly involved is debatable, but there is no doubt that the profession should become informed and pressure ALIA and ACLIS to get their act together.

John Hawley, Detroit USA

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Your letters on any issue of relevance to the library and information sector are welcomed.

All letters should be addressed to the *inCite* editor and may be e-mailed to incite@alia.org.au, faxed to 06 282 2249, or posted to: *Your voice*, ALIA, PO Box E441, Queen Victoria Terrace, ACT 2600. Please include your name and postal address with your letter or e-mail.



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