

How can we best support each other?

'What can the Association do for me?' Unlike John Shipp (Frontline, *inCite* January 1998) I accept this is a fair question. As a more modern president of America than JFK said recently, 'You, the American people, have a right to ask ... and to get answers'. (Bill Clinton, *CBS News*, 23 January 1998).

In this age of increased accountability for corporations and their officers, it is to be expected that stakeholders will continually [sic] question the direction and services of organisations such as ALIA. High unemployment and reduced career opportunities will mean that much consideration must be given by library professionals to the usefulness of joining and continuing to support our Association.

Each member of the library profession has the right to ask ... and to get answers.

Of the answers John Shipp provided, perhaps the best was not in Frontline, but instead in 'Towards a new association: a vision for the future'. Here he stated that the new organisation will have a role in 'promoting libraries and information services in the wider Australian community. We need to project an image which portrays libraries and librarians as dynamic, educationally and economically relevant and indispensable to Australian life'. In today's complex workplace, where recognition of the work of all levels of library professionals is threatened by economic rationalism, it seems to me that such a role is not union based, but is uniquely a role for our professional Association.

However, instead of looking to elected or salaried members of the Association, with the great diversity of membership as our strength, surely we members should be asking each other, 'How can we best support each other?' and 'What is the best way to promote our work?' After all, just as countries get the government they deserve, so do members get the Association they deserve. In the final count not just the questions but the answers must come from members, because we are the Association.

Vivienne Sigley, Lismore

Times changing for youth services

I would like to reply to Mandy Cheetham of Greenwood who pointed out the lack of support and direction from ALIA on library services to children and young adults (*Your voice, inCite*, January 1998). There is an amorphous body of very professional librarians scattered all over Australia who spend every day applying their management and organisational skills and technical operations, their knowledge of child development and literacy, their reference experience and their expertise in library promotion and programming to young people, who would agree with everything that Mandy said.

Almost every aspect and issue of public library service will have elements which will require inputs from the youth sector professionals ranging over the same aspects and issues that concern managers, reference librarians, technical services librarians and all the others — such issues as technology, architecture, sponsorship, privacy, strategic planning, information literacy, reference services, collection development, and management decisions. Children's and young adult librarians are an integral part of the team in a public library service and their importance is in the same measure as the other parts of the team.

Given that, it is disappointing that children's and young adult issues aren't ranked alongside other issues at conferences where professionals meet to benefit from collective wisdom. It seems that children's and young adult services are stuck between the Children's Book Council conferences (issues of literature, authorship and publishing for children and teens) and ALIA (the applied science of librarianship). Both contribute an enormous quality to our professional development but neither offer the practising children's/young adult librarian any specific stimulation through papers, workshops or presentations.

Meanwhile, the small professional groups such as ALIA sections at state level, young adult network groups, CBC sub-branches, the teacher-librarian associations and the like provide interaction be-

tween librarians on a smaller scale and the treat of some special guest speakers.

However I must add a defence of ALIA. I have been assured that the next Biennial Conference of ALIA in Adelaide will have some sessions relating to children's and/or young adult librarianship, so we will look forward to that. Secondly, I would like to point out that I was the very fortunate recipient of the 1996 ALIA Travel Grant. I suspect these grants are not often awarded to children's and young adult professionals but the 1996 one was! My project involved visiting thirty-two public libraries in USA and Canada on a data-gathering mission: a wonderful personal and professional experience.

The tangible outcome is that a manual of ideas relating to programming for children and young adults in libraries is being prepared as a result of this research and it is hoped to have this finished and ready for sale at a cost-recovery price, by the middle of the year. It will be called *I can do that!* and hopefully you will be able to read news of this in a future *inCite*.

So maybe '... the times they are a-changing'?

Heather Fisher, Gosford

ALIA supports child and youth services

Wearing two hats (as a TAFE librarian and 1998 biennial conference convener), I would like to comment on the issues raised by Mandy Cheetham's letter (*Your voice, inCite*, January 1998).

Mandy questions the 'lack of support and direction from ALIA on library services to children and young people'. Children's and young people's services are generally part of public library services (but are also the sole component of school library services) and I would find it very hard to argue that ALIA does not provide support for public library services. The major component of ALIA's lobbying activities is directed to additional benefits for public libraries which by implication includes children's and young people's services.

Perhaps there has been a dearth of articles in *inCite* but Mandy, why

not write one (or two) and encourage your colleagues to submit articles, photographs, news items? This is not a plug from the editors of *inCite* but, as a TAFE librarian, and a member of one of the 'smaller' library sectors, I'm well aware that each of us has to promote ourselves within the wider professional body.

Was it just coincidence that Mandy's letter followed John Shipp's stirring first Frontline? Mandy, what you and your children's and young people's colleagues can do for your Association is to keep us informed of what is happening in your field, what are the issues you face and make us aware of your professional practice — so that we in turn can lobby on your behalf and provide you with the support you require.

Conference programs are similar to articles in *inCite* and while every effort can be made to make sure there are sessions for everyone, unless proposals are forthcoming from individual members, some sectors of the profession can appear to be overlooked.

However, as 1998 biennial conference convener, I can assure Mandy that there are several excellent proposals from children's and young people's librarians for papers to be presented at the conference in October. Anne Hazell as program convener has been proactive in encouraging all sections of ALIA to submit proposals — you will be able to find something for your specific needs as well as for your general professional development.

Join us in October, Mandy, and contribute to discussions and debate about issues that concern you, not just as a children's and young people's librarian but as a professional member of your Association.

Di Booker, Adelaide

Your voice

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, or faxed to 02 6282 2249, or posted to: *Your voice*, ALIA, PO Box E441, Kingston ACT 2604. Please include your name and postal address with your letter or e-mail.