Frontline

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ALIA into the 21st Century

ALIA has successfully operated as a professional association for over 60 years, but in an era where the information environment is subject to an unprecedented level of change it is essential that the Association addresses the issue of its future and how it might respond to the rapid changes occurring. To do this, the Association needs to ask some fundamental questions and, in the words of the former ACLIS/ALIA Queensland State Council in its response to the draft *Charter of Renewal* 14/9/98 'challenge … assumptions of the status quo in the process'.

General Council's vision is of an Association which recognises the realities of the new information environment and provides a focus for the currently fragmented groups of information workers and agencies. The Council seeks to form an Association which will give effective representation to our collective interests and the interests of our users.

In November 1998 General Council adopted the resolutions passed at the Association's October Extraordinary General Meeting held to endorse the *Charter of Renewal* [http://www.alia.org.au/review/charter.html] and to move towards incorporation under *Corporations Law*. A Renewal Working Group was established to provide advice on a plan of action. Members of the Group are Craig Anderson, Mairéad Browne, Helen Mandl, Robyn Collins and Jennefer Nicholson.

General Council has directed the Group to focus on incorporation of the new organisation by January 2000, and has agreed that a broad three-year plan providing for restructure, consolidation and review be followed.

As a first step to establishing the new Association, members were asked to vote on whether they wanted a new name for the Association. A plebiscite was held in April 1999 and members voted to retain the name.

The Renewal Working Group has identified three further key elements as fundamental to shaping the new Association: the Objects, governance, and the role of institutional members. The options preferred by Council are presented in this issue of *inCite* for your consideration.

Potential models for the new organisation
On the recommendation of the Group, General Council has established a sub-committee to examine ALIA's divisional structure. Helen Mandl (convenor) and Christine Mackenzie (Queensland Branch president) will co-opt a number of other members to assist in this examination. The sub-committee will table a discussion paper at the June executive meeting.

Advice has been sought from the Association's auditors on possible financial models and a discussion paper will be considered by the Executive in June. Both of these papers will be offered for wider consultation at a later date.

General Council has considered a set of options for the broad goals of the Association in the future. Three possible models were discussed:

- a 'business-as-usual' model in which ALIA would continue on the same lines as at present, dominated by the interests of libraries and library workers.

- an 'add-on' model where ALIA would in addition to being a 'library association' also take a leadership role with other established associations of information workers — records managers, computer professionals, and so on.

- an 'information profession and services' model, that is an industry-based association built on a membership of individuals based in the information services industry generally and working as record managers, internet workers, librarians and library technicians, market researchers, computing personnel, and so on. This kind of association would also represent the interests of information agencies such as government information services, multi-media production houses, libraries, and commercial information services. The key distinguishing feature would be that these agencies, like the information workers, would be involved in information provision.

General Council discussed the advantages and disadvantages of each potential model in the context of an information services industry where libraries and librarians no longer have a monopoly on information supply, and where people in positions defined as 'librarian' or 'library technician' are becoming a smaller proportion of information workers generally.

General Council agreed unanimously that ALIA's future lies in redrawing its boundaries so that it can become the key organisation incorporating both the interests of individual information workers and the information services industry. Council agreed that ALIA should look to becoming an Association for the information profession and the information services industry in general.

The General Council encourages members to comment on the options outlined, and particularly on the following:

- the scope and direction of the new Association;

- the proposed draft Objects;

- the role and composition of the board of directors;

- the role and composition of the national advisory council; and

- the new view of institutional membership.

Responses may be forwarded by fax or mail to ALIA National Office, or through the response form on ALIAnet [http://www.alia.org.au/review/renewal/option.response.html]. Questions can be directed to the Group at rwg@alia.org.au. Your responses are requested by 31 July 1999. ∎