

And now for a word from our sponsors...



Craig Anderson

ALIA president
craig.anderson@alia.org.au

The industry side of our profession includes many organisations, and individuals who are very unlike libraries, yet have a very real interest in our industry. These organisations include suppliers of books, library equipment, stationery and computer systems as well as recruitment agencies and suppliers of services such as cataloguing and library consultancy.

On the surface, our mutual interest seems apparent — they depend on us to remain in business, we depend on them to supply us with the goods and services we need to run our organisations, and achieve our objectives. Our interest in a financially healthy sector is also mutual. Without well-funded library services, our vendors have a diminished market place which they work within. Generally speaking, a fair percentage of library funding ends up with vendors of library goods and services.

A more obvious example of our mutual financial interest is right in front of you. This year, vendors contributions to *inCite* advertising, equating to a subsidy, on average, of about \$30 per year, per member. As well as their contribution to *inCite*, trade exhibitors also contribute to conferences. An average conference includes a default 'subsidy' of about \$100 per delegate. This contribution is made through the exhibitors' payment for space in the trade exhibition, and helps to defray the overall cost of the conference.

As well as *inCite* advertising, and conferences, the vendor community also sponsor awards, including the Library Manager, and Library Technician of the Year Awards (sponsored by Co-op Bookshop) and the Innovations Awards (sponsored by One Umbrella). These awards promote good practice, and provide our members with a focus on high standards.

Deeper than these simple examples driven by financial transactions, we also have a symbiotic relationship. Many vendor employees are actually librarians and conversely, many fine librarians have come out of the industry. Working in a commercial enterprise provides librarians with a valuable opportunity to view the commercial world from another perspective — a perspective which can give them more credibility with non-library groups, as well as with library clientele who are outside the public sector.

Working closely with vendors means that products are created which are appropriate to library needs. This applies especially to electronic databases, computer systems, and equipment. This influence is apparent when you consider several of the US-based electronic databases which have been made available over the last several years. Australia creates something like one to three per cent of the world's knowledge, yet some of these databases have as much as ten per cent Australian content (on the basis of journal titles). A sort of reverse cultural imperialism! This has been achieved (presumably) through persistent lobbying by Australian agents, and employees, for greater Australian content.

The recent rise in use of recruitment agencies has also provided many librarians with a variety of work experiences, and entry into library — or 'near library' — environments which they might not have otherwise worked in, or been aware of. These experiences strengthen the breadth and depth of our collective experience, and give all of us more employment opportunities.

Increasingly, we live in an environment which is measured by commercial considerations. Many of our library services are being encouraged, or forced, to take on a commercial demeanor. Whether it is right or wrong, we are often measured by our attention to the 'bottom line', and our awareness of commercial concepts. A vigorous, healthy relationship between the vendor community and the library community will foster and encourage libraries to adopt, and adapt these concepts. At the same time, vendors learn about libraries through working closely with librarians, and provide us with the products which we want and need.

Please let vendors know that we appreciate their support, and that it is valued. The vendor community needs our support — and we need theirs. ■

It's official...

It gives me great pleasure to announce the appointment of Jennefer Nicholson as executive director of ALIA. As many of you would know, Jennefer has held the position of acting executive director for the past nine months. Jennefer has a unique combination of experience in managing a professional association, and knowledge of the library and information services industry.

Jennefer has spent most of her working life in the information sector — in advertising, information brokerage, and the library sector. During her time at ALIA, Jennefer has had a particular responsibility for education and training, policy development, and initiating funded projects and research.

She has enhanced the Association's participation and standing within the education, training and information technology sectors. Jennefer secured government funding for the Association under the Online Public Access Initiative, for research on Recognition of Prior Learning and for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy managed by the Association on behalf of the federal government. She was largely responsible for a refocussing of education and training policy and standards for the sector, and the development of a continuing professional development accreditation program for members, to be implemented in 2000.

She is a director of the national Culture Research and Industry Training Advisory Body, a member of several committees of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, and has been a member of a number of IT industry advisory committees.