

There is a better way...

Ivan Trundle, manager publishing and communications

The long and pregnant pause was telling. We were sitting in a Canberra coffee shop, and I had just outlined our proposal to upgrade the Association's internet services, otherwise known as ALIANet. The silence was broken with a short reply of 'You must be mad! There is a better way.'

This outburst followed protracted and rather lugubrious negotiations with a large relatively monopolistic supplier of internet connectivity. I had stumbled across a rare event: sitting across the table was someone with a broad understanding of the various internet-connectivity options available to the consumer, and indeed someone who not only knew the implications of tariffs and pricing, but could wax lyrical about performance issues as well. The coffeshop meeting was opportune, to say the least.

The dilemma faced by ALIA highlights the difficulties faced by all consumers of internet services at all levels. ALIA members have been clamouring for better bandwidth, but only at a price that the Association can afford. Whilst most large corporations and educational institutions accept that the price of copious (some

might say 'adequate') amounts of connectivity comes with a hefty price tag, for most small to medium enterprises, the cost is out of all proportion with the benefit afforded by such luxury.

However, against all odds, we appear to have found a solution to the Association's bandwidth problems that will not break the bank (so long as we do not use the full bandwidth that will come on-stream by the end of the year).

Our original strategy prior to the coffeshop meeting was to upgrade our present single 64K ISDN link (by doubling or quadrupling the capacity), at a price that would effectively double our yearly expenditure on internet connectivity. This would be stage one in the move to broadband connectivity, which is considered not yet mature enough for us to jump onto the broadband bandwagon. Indeed, there are still a number of technical issues that require exploration and resolution before we could be confident that broadband options would suit the Association's needs (or anyone else's, for that matter).

The 'better way' that the Association has now embarked upon is a quantum

leap that leapfrogs the broadband option altogether, and propels us into the 'big league'. Not only do we get a much-improved bandwidth, but we get it at a better price, as well. Interestingly, the afore-mentioned major supplier of connectivity was unable to discover and outline the best option available to us, and was rather more keen to sell us an upgrade to our existing services that would, paradoxically, cost more than the option that we have finally chosen. The coffeshop meeting led us to a better way indeed, by allowing the Association to move directly to fibre-optic cabling and a rather grandiose (and more than adequate) 2MB/s link.

What this means to members of the Association is very clear: not only will we have bandwidth parity with large corporations and institutions, but we will free the bottleneck that has up until now throttled back the functionality of the ALIANet website. By the end of the year, when the cabling is complete and the new server is in place, members will see big improvements in the delivery of ALIANet services. I look forward to it, immensely. ■



STATE LIBRARY OF
NEW SOUTH WALES

ILANET

Whatever you're looking for today

- single login to a range of commercial databases
- affordable casual access to Informat Online, Proquest, Kinetica, Dialog and Datastar
- document delivery services, including OCLC FirstSearch, Infotrieve and CISTI
- InterLibrary Loans management package: online management of requests using simple web forms
- one itemised bill in Australian dollars for all services

and tomorrow

- access to even more services
- tailored services for specialised markets
- Z39.50 interface to the LIDDAS Document Delivery System

With the help you need

- comprehensive support delivered by dedicated fellow professionals
- online access to your account information
- updates on the information environment via elogon

You'll find it at **ilanetweb**

Visit our site, send us email or call toll free

website: www.ilanet.net.au email: ilanet@ilanet.net.au
toll free: 1800 801 659 Sydney: (02) 9273 1424

ALIA 2001 TAFE Libraries Conference, Sheraton Hotel, Brisbane, Qld 21-23 October 2001



passion power people

TAFE Libraries Leading the Way

Invited Keynote Speakers include Dr David Warner, Eltham College and Rachel Hunter, Office of the Public Service Merit and Equity. The program will also include plenary and concurrent sessions as well as a trade exhibition highlighting the latest products from leading organisations.

If you would like to receive a Sponsorship Prospectus or Registration Brochure please contact the conference secretariat:

Organisers Australia,
PO Box 1237, Milton, Qld 4064
Ph. 07 3369 7866
Fax. 07 3367 1471
Email. vanessa@orgaus.com.au



ALIA
Australian
Library and
Information
Association