

# Imagine life without OCLC



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It has been a busy and rewarding month. Directors have been meeting with ALIA members through the regional NAC meetings that have been held around the country. I know that we have all met some very enthusiastic and committed members and I am looking forward to the national NAC meeting held in conjunction with the biennial conference in Perth in September. In addition to attending the NAC meetings I have also been taking the opportunity to meet with some of our institutional members to discuss their role and involvement with ALIA. The Board will be considering a discussion paper on issues raised by institutional members towards the end of the year.

I read with sadness of the death of Frederick Kilgour, the founder of the Online Computer Library Centre (OCLC), who died in August at the age of 92. Fred Kilgour founded OCLC, a non-profit co-operative, in 1967 and it is now the largest library co-operative in the world. Its services are so central to the operations of the world's libraries that it is impossible to imagine our environment without the services provided by OCLC, as well as the research contribution made by their team to our profession. The OCLC database comprises the catalogues of over 10 000 of the world's libraries and its new service <http://www.worldcat.org> will make the entire database directly searchable.

In those early exciting times of library automation in the 1970s, a number of Australian librarians involved in ALIA and with the organisation LASIE (Library Automated Systems Information Exchange), developed a close professional relationship with Fred Kilgour. His first visit to Australia was as a keynote speaker at a LASIE conference

in Sydney in 1974. It was as a result of Fred Kilgour's innovative and inspirational work that Dorothy Peake, the chief librarian at UTS, formerly the NSW Institute of Technology, developed and established the CLANN network, now UNISON, based on the OCLC concept. An engaging overview by Carmel Maguire of 32 years of LASIE activity may be found in the final publication of the *LASIE* journal (vol 33 no 1, August 2002).

As a member of the LASIE team I was privileged to remain in contact with Fred Kilgour over the years and spent a couple of weeks at OCLC in the late 1980s while on a Fulbright scholarship. Before joining the Ohio College Association in 1967, Fred Kilgour was the librarian at Yale School of Medicine. He was one of the most inspirational people I have met and he continued to be interested in and engaged with the profession as professor emeritus at the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina until his retirement in 2004. I encourage you to read some of the work of this great leader of our profession.

On the subject of reading and reflection I recently came across an interesting article by Richard Danner, 'Redefining a Profession' <http://www.law.duke.edu/fac/danner/callweb.htm>. In this article he considers 'the work of librarians and information technologists within the context of the literature of the professions... Because the environment in which all professionals work is continually changing as new professional groups emerge, new technologies are invented, and the political environment in the workplace shifts, competition is inherent in professional life.' He poses some challenging questions for us, which I encourage you think about.

## Feedback to your Board of Directors

Do you have an idea, compliment or concern about your Association? Contact any director and ideas will be reviewed at each Board meeting.

E-mail to [feedback@alia.org.au](mailto:feedback@alia.org.au) will be automatically forwarded to all Board members.

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## Digital preservation seminar at the NLA

The School of Information Studies at Charles Sturt University, with the National Library, has organised a one-day seminar to explore digital preservation from a practitioner perspective. What is digital preservation, what does it mean for libraries and how can librarians incorporate it into their practice?

Information in digital format permeates modern life. Organisations and individuals contribute to the creation of a virtual environment of ever-expanding quantities of digital information; websites, documents, blogs, digital photographs. This era of devolved publishing raises serious questions for those institutions involved in the collection and storage of publications, and the preservation of cultural heritage.

The challenge of addressing the issues surrounding digital preservation is a significant one for libraries. It is beyond question that digital content will continue to increase in quantity as hard-copy material is digitised to enhance access, as born-digital resources proliferate, as trends such as blogging and citizen journalism encourage the creation of new forms of content.

The event will be hosted by the National Library of Australia on Tuesday 21 November and is aimed at the practitioner community; front-line library managers and staff who are beginning to think about approaches to digital preservation. Registration for the seminar is free of charge.

The program and registration details are available at <http://www.nla.gov.au/initiatives/meetings/digfreshm.html>.

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