

Regional perspectives on the LIS profession



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In my April Frontline column, I mentioned that I would be attending the Asia-Pacific Conference on Library and Information Education and Practice (A-LIEP). The conference proved fascinating. Speakers and participants came from many countries in the region, such as China, Taiwan, Japan, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Macau and Singapore, as well as New Zealand and Australia, and a few from further afield: Canada, United States, England and Germany.

It was good to move outside my regular patterns of thought, to learn about the challenges facing the profession outside our borders, particularly in terms of the knowledge and skills required by library and information professionals today. While there is a considerable amount of common ground, of course, it was salutary to encounter the realities of life in other countries where the issues we are familiar with as librarians – the exponential increase in the generation of information, the speed and convergence of ICT developments, the spectrum of user choice and the need to constantly update staff skills – are tempered by economic factors that result in unreliable IT infrastructure, unpredictable power supplies and limited access to current scholarly publications.

One of the key issues discussed was the current lack of recognition or accreditation for LIS courses in the region. Some conference presenters spoke openly of the failure of many educators in their library schools to have either relevant LIS qualifications or employment experience. In Australia, ALIA has managed the accreditation and course recognition that ensures the professional standards of library and information professionals, with further quality assurance initiatives in the higher education sector achieved through the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). On an international level, IFLA has promulgated its *Guidelines for professional library/information programs – 2000*, but there are no requirements for any professional association to promote or for universities to follow these guidelines.

Many countries are currently developing appropriate accreditation models for LIS programs, not only to ensure higher quality in individual courses and increased consistency across different courses, but also to have their LIS qualifications recognised in other countries so that their graduates can work overseas. Reciprocal arrangements have long been in place between professional associations in the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States and Australia, but

LIS graduates from other countries find it far more difficult to become part of the global workforce.

I came away from the A-LIEP conference thinking that, as library and information professionals in Australia, we can indeed be proud of our profession. However, I also believe that too often we only communicate our ideas and achievements within our own closed communities. This issue of *inCite* focuses on the importance of marketing our services and ourselves to the widest possible audience. Michael Newman gives the basics of developing a marketing plan; marketing yourself is equally important, says Dennie Heye, and Daniel Ferguson urges librarians to consider a Friends group – market your library in the community. Make the most of Library and Information Week (LIW), reach out and celebrate the contribution you make to your communities. Take the opportunity to highlight the value you bring to all of your stakeholders, by linking people with ideas @ your library. The new-look LIW pages will be up on the ALIA website by now, at <http://alia.org.au>, and I hope they will offer you ideas, as well as listing events and selling merchandise. (If you put on an event or a display for LIW, take pictures and send reports to *inCite*!) By the time you read this, I will have been to the opening ceremonies of Macau Library Week, which I am certain will have a completely different cultural flavour to our LIW!

In conclusion, this is my final Frontline column as I wrap up my year as president of ALIA. It has been an exceptionally busy year, but one which has been highly rewarding both professionally and personally. Most of all I have enjoyed the opportunity to meet so many members of the association and to discuss issues of concern and interest at a wide range of events. Beyond this, my thanks are extended to my fellow board members for their high levels of interest, commitment and enthusiasm over the past twelve months. A fond farewell to the outgoing directors, Meredith Martinelli and Carol Newton-Smith, with sincere thanks for the valuable contribution they have made to the management of ALIA. Following the recent elections, I congratulate and welcome the new members of the board, Philip Keane, Michelle Brennan and Helen Partridge as directors, and especially Roxanne Missingham as she steps down as director and moves into her new role as vice-president (president elect). It is reassuring to know that the incoming board members represent a wide range of sectoral and geographical perspectives. And Dagmar Schmidmaier AM brings a wealth of experience and wisdom to the position of president for 2006–2007, I am confident that the association will prosper under her leadership. ■

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 will be automatically forwarded to all Board members.

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