

Volunteering in Retirement

Many retired librarians are finding it rewarding to be a volunteer. In many cases, they are volunteering in a capacity where they use their skills as library and information science skill, thus taking part in something beneficial to them and libraries. For example, Neil Radford tells us he volunteers at his local public library indexing a 19th-century local newspaper on microfilm. He has also organised an oral history project. At the same library, a retired librarian volunteers by cataloguing or indexing old photographs for the local studies section. Of course, these are merely a few examples out of the myriad things retired library and information professionals are doing. Pat Gallaher tells us on page 29 about her experience of volunteering as a board member, and while she is not a retiree, Karyn Siegmann tells us on page 33 about her experience volunteering in a PNG library through Australian Business Volunteers.

In Tasmania, a volunteer courier system for home clients provides people with disabilities access to library services.

Larger Australian libraries have considerable volunteering programs. These are mutually beneficial and can see the completion of special projects that would otherwise not have had the resources with which to be undertaken. Just a few examples from the many library volunteer programs are given below.

Many of the services delivered by the **State Library of New South Wales** (SLNSW) are assisted by around 160 skilled and enthusiastic volunteers. They range in age from their early twenties to over 90 years. Activities that volunteers assist with range from giving tours, multicultural services, quality control checking of digitised heritage items such as Sir Joseph Banks' papers, to helping with mailouts. In 2005–2006, volunteers committed 10,986 hours to the SLNSW. Volunteers also participate in the Speakers' Program. In 2005–2006, 23 volunteers visited 47 community groups and clubs. As a result, 2816 members of the community were introduced to the history, collections and services of their state library.

In 2005–06 in the **State Library of Western Australia**, over 50 volunteers (most of them seniors) provided nearly 5000 hours to assist the State Library in a number of areas. The J S Batty Library of West Australian History volunteers contributed 3882 hours. They worked on indexing projects, in the oral history collection writing synopses and tables of contents, as well as organising unprocessed collections and donations of interviews. In Preservation Services a volunteer has prepared descriptions of images from the negative collections to assist the Historical Records Rescue Consortium project. Others have assisted in the film archives helping to organise films for assessment. Volunteers also protect collections by re-housing fragile documents in order to preserve them.

In the **State Library of Queensland**, 97 volunteers in 2005–06 provided support in many areas including Family History, Heritage Collections and the Australian Library of Art. In 2006 a recruitment drive for volunteer exhibition guides resulted in over 220 expressions of interest for 45 positions. Training was given to enable volunteer guides to conduct tours of the *National Treasures from Australia's Great Libraries* exhibition and an unusual project saw two dedicated volunteers who are themselves car enthusiasts, index car workshop manuals for an online resource of the John Oxley Library of motoring.

In 2005–06, 126 volunteers committed over 12,550 hours in front-of-house customer services as well as behind-the-scenes project areas in the **State Library of South Australia**. This was a 37% increase in the program from the previous year and there is nearly one volunteer for each of the 137 full-time equivalent staff. The entrance to the Institute Building and the Bradman Exhibition is supported by volunteers with a particular interest in cricket and Sir Donald as well as being able to provide information about library services and events along the cultural precinct. Volunteers assisted with the interpretation of the Australian War Memorial's major travelling exhibition *Captured in colour*. Many comments in the visitors' book acknowledged the warm and welcoming manner of the volunteers and the way in which the information and

stories they shared helped to enrich their experience of the exhibition.

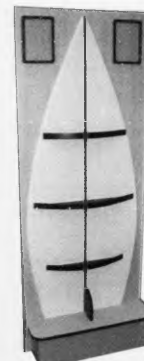
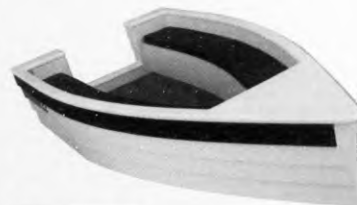
If you are considering volunteering in the LIS sector, familiarise yourself with **ALIA's statement on voluntary work** on page 25. That page also has information about the **aliaVOLS e-list**. The e-list promotes opportunities to volunteer in Australian libraries and information collections.

National Volunteer Week 2008 will be held from 12–18 May 2008

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