



Derek Whitehead

ALIA President

## Feedback to your Board of Directors

Board members welcome your comments and feedback. Please feel free to contact a Board member at any time.

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Is there a conventional way of kicking off the first of eleven Frontlines? I don't know, but I make lists. To quote actor Michael Caine, another list maker, "Not many people know that."

Here are two lists – five things to focus on over the next 12 months, and five reasons for being a member of ALIA; number five being about change, as all you numerologists out there would know.

The two lists are closely related and we will do the first things best if you take careful note of the second.

What are the critical issues for ALIA?

1. The outcomes of the Education and Workforce Summit. Clearly the future of the Australian library workforce is one of the most important issues for us.
2. Professional development (PD). The future workforce – looking, to 2020 – is largely the current workforce in new shoes. To have an outstanding workforce in 2020, we may each have to have a makeover some time along the way, and that is where PD plays a part. PD will be a focus of this year's National Advisory Congress (NAC).
3. We are embarking upon a membership survey before the end of 2008. This is extremely important in providing an understanding of member needs and wishes which in turn must be an extremely powerful driver for action planning and budget processes. Our survey will be the dominant element in the way we take the Association forward in the next few years. Make sure you participate.
4. A public library forum or summit will be held in 2009, and that is important to us. Public libraries are the sector which provides the majority of Australians with their library experience.
5. Finally, image. How other people see us links to all of the other things, and is a preoccupation for us all, an obsession for some. I will come back to it.

I have also been thinking about the issue of ALIA membership, because ALIA has an ongoing issue with maintaining and expanding its current membership base. Why is that?

Our relatively aged workforce generates quite a few retirees – retirement plans are one thing librarians are quite outstanding at doing, and I am amazed at how many things our wonderfully creative colleagues have in mind to do when they leave. So much so that retirement beckons for many as an appealing alternative to working.

A second reason is that there is a leakage of library workers into other occupations. Again, librarians often have flexible and

portable skills. There are ex-librarians all over the place, adding to good will but not membership.

A third reason is that people are not joining. Why? It is a real puzzle.

The cost of becoming a member of ALIA is only \$267 (08/09) for a full fee employed member (there are concessions and variants). This can be paid monthly. It is almost always tax deductible, so in practice people on the most common marginal rate (30%) end up paying only \$187 or around \$15 per month after tax.

So why not become a member? Check out <http://www.alia.org.au/membership/benefits/> for starters.

Here are five more reasons.

- You get a magazine every month, which reads well, is professionally produced and is informative. Just the cost of the magazine is good value. Buying *Delicious* every month will cost you nearly \$80 (alright, it has lots more recipes).
- Membership is a lot about upskilling by volunteering and participating, and many people learn about how to do things – like organise a seminar – by taking part. More experienced professionals receive as much benefit from helping.
- Thinking of leaving Australia for a while to do new things somewhere else? All you need is a passport and an ALIA card. It is widely recognised, and provides recognition of your skills and qualifications overseas.
- Many people feel that they can get most of what they need from ALIA without paying. You can get a lot without paying – many of the discussion lists don't require membership, much of the website is accessible to everyone. The real answer is that you freeloaders should be ashamed of yourselves! Join, pay your way.
- ALIA is developing as a social software site (alliteration unintended – well, maybe intended a bit).

There are lots more reasons too – I haven't mentioned lobbying and advocacy yet. We have to stick together. The more members we have, the cheaper it will be for each of us, and the more effective we will be as an Association.

As you can see, you got three lists for the price of two. Watch for future Frontlines, but also keep an eye on the ALIA directors' blog at <http://www.alia.org.au/blog> and for the real enthusiasts, <http://www.dereksaliablog.blogspot.com>