

Directline

Treasures coming out of the back rooms

Over the past few years the rare treasures of Australian libraries have been put on display. Many Australians are probably unaware of the valuable, culturally significant and wonderful collections tucked away in so many of our libraries. Library staff are continuing to keep preserving unique pieces of our Australian and indigenous heritage, as well as those from other countries. This issue of *inCite*, with the theme of Rare and Antiquarian, is timely with the return of the playbill to the National Library of Australia, the conclusion of the successful "National Treasures" roadshow and the State Library of Victoria Mediaeval Manuscripts exhibition. This month we focus on our greater history of the primary purpose of libraries – which is collecting and storing our information and heritage. For the impatient google searcher, they really are missing out on viewing library treasures in person.

Blue Shield Australia (BSA)

Part of the preservation of our collections is disaster planning, especially for natural disasters. BSA is a part of the International Committee of the Blue Shield. The Blue Shield is the cultural equivalent of the Red Cross. It is the symbol specified in the 1954 Hague Convention for marking cultural sites to give them protection from attack in the event of armed conflict. It is also the name of an international committee set up in 1996 to work to protect the world's cultural heritage threatened by wars and natural disasters.

Blue Shield Australia was formed in late 2005. Presently four pillar bodies are involved in the Australian committee of the Blue Shield:

IFLA - The Executive Director of the ALIA which represents the International Federation of Library Associations in Australia

ICA - A representative (by a decision of the Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities) of the Australian members of the International Council on Archives

ICOMOS - A representative of Australia ICOMOS which is the national committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites

ICOM - A representative of ICOM Australia, the national committee of the International Council of Museums.

At the first face-to-face meeting held in Melbourne in June 2008, it was decided to rotate the Chair of BSA amongst the pillar bodies, with IFLA (ALIA) being chair for 2008-9. I am pleased to be able to Chair this committee for a year. More information <http://www.collectionscouncil.com.au/blue+shield+australia.aspx>

BSA is one of the many partnerships and representation that ALIA is involved with.

Eyes, ears and brains – intelligence from the library community

ALIA National Office is a small team, with only a few staff directly involved with library advocacy at a high level. This means that we cannot be aware of everything that is going on in all the library sectors, the many levels of government, all the departments, committees, organisations etc. That's where you come in as an ALIA member. We need you as the eyes and ears of the Association. You are all advocates for our profession. Identifying key media releases and newspaper items at a local level that may be relevant to the work of ALIA or identifying submissions that ALIA should contribute to and notifying National Office staff, can enable us to prioritise and assist with our advocacy work. What can you do to help? We need your expertise – your brain power – your knowledge.

ALIA is as good as members make it, and we need the assistance and expertise of our members to complete submissions, applications for funding, writing letters, be on committees, attend meetings – the list of things to do goes on.

Recent examples of ALIA members contributing to submissions include:

- Health Libraries Australia (HLA) group developed a submission on the potential to improve knowledge support to Australia's health systems as an integral part of the development of a national e-health strategy
- ALIA Research Committee has provided feedback to ARC on research issues raised in the ERA Consultation Paper
- ACT group, aliaACTIVE, contributed a submission to the Gershon Review.

For ALIA submissions, go to <http://www.alia.org.au/advocacy/submissions/>

Contact National Office at advocacy@alia.org.au if you identify an inquiry or issue.



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