

# Local Liaison Officers - AL

Local Liaison Officers are the professional outreach managers for ALIA in each state and territory. Our role is primarily about communication – providing a local point of contact for members and non-members; providing feedback from members to the ALIA National Office; and ensuring that ALIA National Office are aware of local issues and requirements. We help individuals, organisations, and groups to get actively engaged with ALIA and to get value from their ALIA membership. We are ALIA advocates – promoting the work of ALIA to our members, future members, and the wider community.

What all the Local Liaison Officers have in common is a passion for the library profession, an enjoyment in working with people, and a flexible attitude to work. We are employed as independent contractors on a part-time basis. While our hours



## Australian Capital Territory Robyn Ellard

Luckily for me Canberra is the smallest location of all the LLO regions and also lucky for ACT library professionals, ALIA's National Office is located here. This means my LLO role is quite different to the other ALIA LLOs, and since I have another full-time ALIA position as Director: Member Services, I'm quite pleased by that. Most of Canberra's library professionals are employed by the federal government. We have two universities, one TAFE (with multiple sites), and one public library service (also with multiple sites). While we don't have our own state library, we do have the wonderful National Library. My LLO role is mostly making sure the local ALIA groups, LIS students, and members are supported by ALIA staff. ALIA volunteers may see any number of ALIA staff at their events, even our Executive Director – Sue Hutley. Judy, our PD and Careers Manager loves visiting library students (I get to see her jump for joy when asked).

As both ACT LLO and Director: Member Services, my role involves advising the ALIA Board on membership strategies as well as promoting the benefits of a peak body to our profession and membership of ALIA. I also get to meet many of our members over the phone, via email, and face-to-face at conferences and I look forward to talking to you next time you have an ALIA question.



## New South Wales Alyson Dalby

Like most states, NSW suffers the tyranny of distance. The professional needs of a special librarian working out of a Sydney CBD high-rise differ from those of a public librarian in a rural area. It is incredibly challenging to support the needs of all members across the state, working out of my little study in Marrickville.

NSW has more ALIA members than any other state, but this doesn't always translate to the most active members. I see my role as trying to take advantage of the amazing resources we have across the state to bring a richer professional experience to members. This means working with volunteers to develop locally-relevant events, helping to promote ALIA-initiated professional development, and targeting the senior managers of large employers to encourage professional engagement in their staff.

I came from a background in special libraries,

and was an active ALIA volunteer for a few years before applying for the LLO job in late 2009. This background means that I appreciate the impact that professional engagement can have on an individual's day-to-day experience. Sitting there alone in my little special library could have been incredibly isolating, but my volunteer work with ALIA gave me endless opportunities for socialising and development.

As state and territory representatives we are given a wide remit to focus on what we feel will be most beneficial for our areas, and who wouldn't love a job that involves visiting as many new libraries as possible? One aspect of my job that was new to me was liaising with library schools across the state; in the last 9 months I've spoken to lecturers and course coordinators, given presentations to students, and attended a number of graduation ceremonies. I think ALIA has a vital role to play in helping graduating students maintain their passion for the industry, highlighting our profession and the great work that we do, to the community at large.



## Queensland Claudia Davies

Queensland is not only vast; our State has the greatest percentage of our population outside of our capital city with so many cities, towns, and dots on the map up and down the coast and across the great inland. Library professionals are required to have a richness, diversity, and roundedness in their experiences and skills to provide an amazing range of information services to the people of Queensland. I'm fascinated by the life experiences of the library students and professionals I have the pleasure to meet each year. Their resourcefulness is humbling – from running a library with an inadequate yet still shrinking budget, to providing reference services to professional clients spread around the globe, to running a disaster response service for a local community devastated by flooding.

While perhaps not fascinating, I've had my own journey to this point: scientist, mature age-student, science librarian, law librarian, ALIA local liaison officer, coffee addict, and closet Hugh Grant and Beatles fan. The things that are most important to me professionally are the standards and the future of the profession. I would love to see all our members embrace the ALIA professional development scheme. Think how individuals and the profession as a whole would be enriched if we all actively planned our

careers and continuing learning as well as we plan for our libraries. As an LLO, the things that are most important to me are ensuring that each member gets what they need from their ALIA membership. Many members don't realise all the resources and benefits to which they have access. It's also important to me that members – and non members – recognise the important contribution ALIA membership makes to the profession as a whole through supporting such things as ALIA's course accreditation program and lobbying work on issues of universal importance such as censorship.

We have some hard working groups in Queensland such as the QPAIs, Library Technicians, New Graduates regional group, Health Libraries Australia regional group, Tropicalia, and Children and Youth Services all providing members with learning and networking opportunities and advocating for the profession in a volunteer capacity. We are in the final stages of getting a new ALIA Queensland group up and running with a focus on professional development. I hope that you will support this dedicated group of volunteers as they create a richer experience for all of us.



## South Australia Jeannine Hooper

The South Australian library community is similar to other states – a diverse group ranging from one person special libraries, a dynamic public/community library network through to university TAFE, and school libraries, each with their own strengths and focus. Supporting the professional needs of members throughout these sectors is a challenge but also provides a wealth of opportunities to promote cross-sectoral activities and associations between them.

I came into this role of LLO with an interest in the TAFE/University sector having worked in those areas for a number of years, but also gained experience outside of mainstream libraries as a software vendor throughout that time. I was active as an ALIA volunteer with a number of South Australian groups that promoted sectoral activities at both state and national level. That commitment has shown me that involvement in our professional association provides a positive influence on an individual's career and that is what I am keen to encourage in others.

As with the other LLOs, my role requires a multi-faceted approach in delivering a valued and professional experience to members. Primarily

# ALIA's managers in the field

only total approximately one day per week, we try to respond to members quickly and make ourselves available as much as possible throughout the week. We all have other jobs so for some of us this means that our ALIA liaison work is done out of office hours – mornings, evenings, and weekends. It is by no means a tidy 'each Monday' proposition. Our other jobs in libraries and library-related industries ensure that we know the issues our members are facing.

We all work individually in our states and territories and also as a team sharing our expertise. We come from a range of different library sectors and we are a range of ages and personalities. How we interpret our ALIA role also depends on the needs of the local ALIA members as well as the culture and geography of the state.

it involves supporting local volunteer groups to develop events and encouraging communication between the groups. I meet with members to help them with career advice and professional development and promote professional development opportunities provided by ALIA. I'll also work with ALIA National Office staff to deliver services to members as well as liaising with other library associations based here in SA.

Additionally, I liaise with the TAFE and university library schools here to promote the benefits of membership and involvement in professional activities to new students. After all they are our future and for our Association to continue to grow and the profession to be valued in the wider Australian community, we need to nurture these individuals through all stages of their career.



## Tasmania Sally Murdoch

My background in libraries is diverse. While I am a teacher-librarian, I have spent more time working in state, academic, and special libraries than in schools. I'm originally from Victoria and moved to Tasmania five years ago, it was then that I started volunteering for ALIA on the ALIA Tasmania committee, just before I got the job as the Tasmanian LLO early in 2008.

Tasmania is one of the smallest states and there are only two major employers – the Community Knowledge Network (formerly the State Library of Tasmania) and the University of Tasmania Library. Government and special libraries, school libraries, and the Tasmanian Polytechnic libraries are all very small and employment opportunities limited.

My main challenge is that the job is the equivalent of one day a week and it can be really difficult to prioritise my time in order to give the best outcome to members, especially when there is so much that I could be doing.

Of all the jobs I've had (and there are a lot!) this one gives me the most job satisfaction for two main reasons. It is a great mix of the practical and strategic. I get to organise things at a grass-roots level that give immediate results, plus I contribute to the strategic direction of the organisation with broader and longer-term outcomes. And of course, being a bit of sticky beak, I get to see inside lots of libraries!



## Western Australia Carol Newton-Smith

Being a Local Liaison Officer is the ideal position for a "cappuccino librarian", I love getting out and about and working with the Western Australian (WA) ALIA Community.

My background is in research and academic libraries with a focus on outreach. I worked for CSIRO in Queensland and Western Australia as a reference librarian and trainer on their suite of databases. This gave me a taste of getting out to the clients and I really enjoyed it. So when I moved to academic libraries, I leapt at the opportunity to be the first Senior Librarian who had an office beyond the library walls. I was sent out to the Division of Humanities with a portable computer and a coffee cup to find myself an office. My last ten years has been as a Manager of the Medical and Dental Library at the University of Western Australia (UWA), managing an off-campus library and a clientele across the state of WA. When I left UWA earlier this year, I was thrilled to take up the position of Local Liaison Officer.

Western Australia is a large state with very active library professionals. I have been getting to know the range of library groups across WA. It is fascinating to develop an understanding of the range of the profession and also to meet the library and information study students and acquaint them with some of the opportunities ahead of them in their careers. Another focus in 2010 has been in assisting the development of two ALIA major events that are in planning in Perth for September 2011: the ALIA National Library Technicians Conference and the ALIA 5th New Librarian Symposium. WA is hosting these two events back to back with a common professional seminar and an exhibition running across both events – a new model for ALIA.



## Victoria Margie Anderson

I am an ALIA junkie. I was a volunteer for ALIA for many years before becoming an LLO. My husband Craig has also been a very active ALIA participant, so we are an ALIA household. We joke our kids could recognise the ALIA logo before they could read their own names. Victoria is fortunately a compact state with a large number of ALIA members. This helps to make us one of the most active areas. We have fantastic long serving volunteers, bringing years of experience to our groups and programs of events. They are

dedicated senior professionals who work hard making sure all members get the most from the association. Alongside them is a terrific band of new graduates, giving us fresh ideas and a new perspective. These are the members who will ensure our success in the future.

I see my role as a conduit, from the members at large and volunteers in our Groups to our Board of Directors and team at National Office. I'm here to inform, guide, encourage, and cajole. This is an industry I am passionate about. I want everyone to be able to make the most of their careers within the library and information arena.



## Northern Territory Jayshree Mamtara

Northern Territory has the fewest number of ALIA members but its small size is made up by the enthusiasm of its members and the number of successful activities that they organise. A large proportion of our members are employed by three institutional members: Northern Territory Library, Darwin City Council Libraries, and Charles Darwin University, but we have also members working in a wide range of special and school libraries throughout the Territory. Members form a close-knit community and as Local Liaison Officer I work very closely with the volunteer groups. My full-time employment at Charles Darwin University means that my ALIA work is done at weekends and evenings – fortunately the workload varies from week to week depending on what's going on at the time.

As far as possible I try and attend all ALIA events organised by the ALIA Top End Group in Darwin where I am based, and be there to help, advise, and support the Group and our members as and when required. I keep in touch with the Red Centre Group committee in Alice Springs as well, and try and get down there when I can. Our recent very successful student event, "Take Off Your Career" held in Darwin was videolinked to Alice Springs to enable their members to participate.

A large part of my job involves promoting ALIA and outlining the benefits of joining a library association to not only students but the wider library community as well. I extend this promotional role to highlighting our profession and the great work that we do, to the community at large.