

Wanted: More intelligent Australians!

Having been an international student in Europe for two years undertaking a Masters degree in Digital Library Learning (<http://dill.hio.no/>), one of my most treasured anecdotes involved a non-LIS European student. After having some very interesting conversations about our countries, world affairs and other interesting topics, this person suddenly looked at me with a puzzled look on his face. Before I could ask what it was about, he offered the following little gem: "You're intelligent for an Australian, aren't you?"

I had no idea what to say or how to react. I think I just said something like, "well, I try to be aware of what is happening outside my country" – or something equally as uninspiring!

I do not believe there was any intention to insult me or my country, but unfortunately his prior experience of Australians (he had visited our country) was of people who did not even know what was happening in the next state, let alone what was happening on the other side of the world. Yes, we are geographically isolated, and as much as we would like to turn the globe upside down and convince the rest of the world that they are the ones who are far away from us, I don't think we will succeed. But that isolation should not affect our involvement on the international stage. Admittedly, the distance we must travel to many international events means our costs are often higher than our European and North American colleagues, but the rewards, I believe, are worth it.

Conferences are a wonderful way of not only hearing about LIS projects and developments, but of making new contacts. When the conference is international, the perspective gained can be even wider. My most recent international experience was to attend IFLA in Gothenburg in August. I was fortunate

enough to also attend two pre-conferences: With the Right to Read in Oslo, Norway (<http://www.abm-utvikling.no/bibliotek/ifla-pre-conference-programme.html>) and The Global Librarian (<http://www.ifla.org/en/events/the-global-librarian>) in Borås, Sweden.

The relatively small number of LIS professionals in any country who serve people with print disabilities makes events like With the Right to Read a truly valuable learning and networking experience. It enabled me to hear about incredible initiatives from around the globe which I perhaps would not have heard about otherwise, it allowed me to connect with people who have vast knowledge and experience in this area (always useful to have good contacts), and I have learnt a great deal more about the important work that is being done on a world-wide scale to have information produced in alternative, accessible formats.

Not only is an international conference a rewarding learning experience for us (as isolated Australians) we can make it a learning experience for the rest of the world too. If we were to really put ourselves out there and present papers about the wonderful work taking place Down Under, as ten or so of us did in Sweden this year, we can show the world that there are indeed many intelligent Australians.

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Living Libraries name change

The internationally successful Living Library has changed its name and will now be known as Human Library. The Australian program will now be known as Human Libraries Australia.

The change has come about because of trademark issues in the United States, Canada and Mexico and the international body managing Living Library has agreed to the name change to avoid conflicts with other businesses in those countries. Full details of the announcement are available at <http://humanlibrary.org/major-changes-coming-up-for-2010.html>.

Human Library has asked all participating countries, now numbering over 45, to make the transition to the new name during 2010.

The Australian National Living Library Steering Committee has decided to change to the new name in order to preserve synergy with the international program, which is now seeking to trademark the Human Library name. The website, <http://www.humanlibraries.org.au> is being updated accordingly.

The Steering Committee is now requesting all participating libraries to also make the change and to ensure events are named and promoted using the new name by the end of this year. Existing DVD stocks can continue to be used with the addition of a label announcing the new name. We have also confirmed that we can continue to use the term 'living book'. The Committee understands that some resources, such as roll-up banners, may be more difficult to replace.

A teleconference for Human Library Organisers is planned and further details will be conveyed via the Human Libraries e-list.

Sadly, we must also report that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, who have supported the program for the past three years, have advised that further funding is not available. ALIA and the Steering Committee are seeking new funding and will advise as more information becomes available.

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Office of Australian Information Commissioner launched

The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) was officially launched in November by the Honourable Brendan O'Connor MP, Minister for Privacy and Freedom of Information (FOI).

The new office has been created to bring together three functions:

- Freedom of information functions, in particular the oversight of operation of the Freedom of Information Act 1982 and review of decisions made by agencies and ministers under that Act
- Privacy functions, conferred by the Privacy Act 1988
- Government information policy functions, conferred on the Commissioner under the Australian Information Commissioner Act 2010

The Office's website <http://www.oaic.gov.au> includes information on all of these plus a series of fact sheets. On the day it was launched, the OAIC also released their first issues paper on Australian Government Information Policy and invited written comment on ten draft principles on open public sector information, with a deadline of March 1, 2011. For more information: <http://www.oaic.gov.au/publications/papers.html>

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