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## Feedback to your Board of Directors

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

Email: [feedback@alia.org.au](mailto:feedback@alia.org.au) with your comments.

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One of the things I love about *Public Libraries*, the journal of the US Public Libraries Association, is the way in which the obligatory photograph and short biography of contributors is complemented by details of what they're reading. Similarly I've taken to including my current reads in my email signature line as a way of subtly highlighting the importance of reading. I've been quietly surprised by the number of people who've commented positively on this. It does of course raise a few 'housekeeping' issues:

- Is it over the top to include more than one title? I find it reassuring to note that most contributors to *Public Libraries* list at least two titles in their 'on the go' pile, so I'm assuming that it's OK.
- Will I be judged by what I'm reading? As LIS professionals we stress the line 'it doesn't matter what you read so long as you're reading' but do we practice what we preach? The audio books I've been listening to in the car on my frequent trips to Canberra during my term on the ALIA Board frankly border on trashy (know, judgement value!), but it keeps me alert and amused; enough so that I've been known to sit in the car for until the end of the chapter when I reach home
- What if you forget to change your signature line? Will regular correspondents think 'she's been a long time reading that'?

In the spirit of sharing this *Frontline* is dedicated to what I'm currently reading.

- Doesn't every library/librarian have a book group in their lives? Pageturners is one of my library's book groups and is open to everyone. We started it several years ago to counter the difficulties new residents faced when trying to break into the 'closed shop' of many of the established groups. Subsequently we have an ever changing audience which makes for a stimulating time. The wine and cheese helps too! For next month we're to read anything by Alexander McCall Smith which takes me outside of my preferred zone – but isn't that what book groups are all about? I've chosen to read *Corduroy Mansions* (2009), a novel set around a crumbling mansion block in London's Pimlico. Interestingly *Corduroy Mansions* was first released as a serial novel in the UK's *Daily Telegraph* (shades of Charles Dickens) and available on line to listen to or download, a nice juxtaposition of the traditional and emerging technologies. And yes *Corduroy Mansions* does have a Facebook page.
- *American Patchwork and Quilting et al.* OK, I admit it, I'm a quilting junkie and a total sucker for any glossy magazine on the topic which appears on the news stand. Unfortunately as library budgets constrict there's a real danger that we'll cut our periodicals vote, especially when so many titles are available on line. In doing so are we disadvantaging our readers? With their easy format and enticing covers, magazines are the perfect entrée for some hard to reach client groups including young readers and new arrivals. They add to the 'living room' environment and the human feel of our spaces.

- The book I'm reading for me is Barbara Kingsolver's *The Lacuna* (2009), an epic novel of a man caught between two nations, the Mexico City of artists Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, and pre- and post-war United States. It was my companion on a return flight from Orange to Melbourne a few days ago and I can only concur with a critic in *The Independent* (UK) who wrote this "is the first book in a long time that made me swap my bike for public transport, just so I could keep reading." *The Lacuna* is a springboard book; already I have a pile of related reading including a biography of Leon Trotsky and an expose of McCarthyism set aside to explore. I wonder how well we signpost such pathways when working with readers?
- Where would our reading piles be without the work inclusions? You know, the articles, journals, and books that often do the commute with you becoming more and more dog eared as they make the journey between home and work without once being opened.

My current travelling companions are actually on active service and bear the post-it notes to prove it. *The Bookends Scenarios; alternative futures for the Public Library Network in NSW in 2030* (2009) has been developed by the Library Council of New South Wales in association with the Neville Freeman Agency. As its title suggests it discusses how the future of NSW public libraries might unfold over the next twenty years through scenarios which enable consideration of the types of roles, products, and services that will be offered. I was a participant in several of the workshops that were part of this project and it's fascinating to see the results of our varied deliberations brought together and gives a considered direction for the future. Similarly Michael Dewe's *Renewing our libraries; case studies in replanning and refurbishment* (2009) is giving me a framework as I work through the issues around what I want from refurbished spaces in several of my branch libraries.

Finding time for professional reading is a constant dilemma and I'm sure I'm not alone in saying that, more than anything, the piles of unread material have the ability to bring on a case of guilty conscience. 'I must be a very bad librarian!' A speaker at the Australian School Library Association conference in Perth last September talked about book groups within the workplace where colleagues shared their professional reading experiences, addressing the issues of isolation and death by information.

The quotes about reading are numerous and most strike a chord. My current favourites are 'We read to know we are not alone' (C S Lewis) and 'Reading is a ladder out of poverty' (British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown). As LIS professionals we recognise the primacy of reading, it's core to our profession and the services we deliver. One of the priorities recognised at the ALIA Public Libraries Summit last year was for a National Year of Reading and already discussions have begun with partners to progress for 2012. We're really excited about this initiative and will be sharing details with you over the next few months.

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