

# the last word

## HOW WILL WE EVER KEEP UP?

We work in a changing environment. Everything you've read in this issue reinforces the feeling we all have that our workplaces – and practices – are evolving in ways unimaginable when I joined the profession thirty years ago. Who knows what it will be like in 30 years time?

So how do we keep up with all this? Essentially by ongoing learning – formal courses, professional reading, conference attendance or through the workplace. Such ongoing learning is a vital component for you as an individual and also, for an association such as ALIA, in order to remain relevant to its members and an effective lobby group for our interests.

But how do we inform this learning; where does the information come from? This is where research comes in. Now don't stop here thinking this has no relevance to you. It does!

**Research underpins everything we do. We need to know what works, what doesn't. Is one approach cost-effective, another not worth the effort? Are our users appreciative of our services, or do we need to do something different, better, to meet their changing needs?**

In order to answer such questions we need to do some research. This may be as simple as talking to our clients to find out anecdotally if we are meeting their needs. Or it may be that we use statistics to evaluate a service or the collection. Quite simple approaches – which most of us do as part of our day-to-day lives, often without calling it 'research'. But this is research, and its outcomes will help shape our own workplace.

And what about thinking a bit bigger? Is this research we are doing applicable to the wider profession? With a bit more effort could we actually make a difference? Can we feed into the professional literature or present our findings at a conference so that others may read or hear and learn from them?

The importance of research cannot be exaggerated. It is essential – and it is not just the role of the academic. For those working in our profession – at the coal face – finding time to undertake more formal research will be a challenge. I would suggest it is a matter of prioritizing – while time may be fixed, it's what we do with it that has some flexibility. And it may well be that your workplace will understand the benefit of your proposal and actually provide support to give you the time to do it. Or perhaps you can get together with a colleague and share the load.

Start by reading a few easy articles on undertaking research – it isn't so hard – and get some ideas together. Look at what has been published – this is where ALJ or AARL particularly are useful and provide examples of how to do it. You can also contact the editors for further advice. They are always happy to help.

So, take a moment to think about your interests and how research can tie in with them, and how it can help you with your career. It can be fun – as well as challenging – and can help not only you and your workplace but also others and the profession more broadly. We want ALIA to represent a dynamic, enquiring profession and it is our research that will ensure this.

Don't be afraid, get involved!

**Bob Pymm**

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**National  
Year of  
Reading  
2012**

**"IF YOU CANNOT  
READ AND WRITE  
THEN YOU ARE  
ALWAYS AFRAID."**

So wrote Australian indigenous author Tara June Winch, later quoted by her friend and Mamamia ([www.mamamia.com.au](http://www.mamamia.com.au)) columnist Bec Sparrow in a piece on the work of the Indigenous Literacy Project, one of the partners in the National Year of Reading.

**And there's a lot we, as a profession, can do about it.**

The National Year of Reading 2012 is but six months away. Now is the time to get planning to ensure your events are included in the official program to be published in September.

- Find out more about the National Year of Reading and the exciting opportunities it offers for all kinds of communities – schools, book groups, workmates. There's information on the website and our wiki.
- Get together with friends and colleagues to talk about your own special initiative for 2012. You might even decide to form a local steering group. See the wiki for more information.
- Put your name forward as a volunteer. More information is available on the wiki.
- Put a line under your email signature saying "I'm supporting the National Year of Reading 2012 – [www.love2read.org.au](http://www.love2read.org.au)."
- If you have your own website, set up a link by downloading the button and code from our website.

Send us details of any events you are planning for the National Year of Reading, so we can add them to the calendar. We'll be going public with the schedule of events for 2012 in September, so make sure you let us know before then – email [donna@thelibraryagency.org.au](mailto:donna@thelibraryagency.org.au).