## IDENTIFYING THE ISSUES IS THE EASY BIT

The old adage goes that a week is a long time in politics. If that is the case then a month must seem like an eon this Australian summer. When I wrote the last Frontline column, we'd just witnessed the tragedy of Toowoomba and the Lockyer Valley. Since then we've had fires and flooding in Victoria, bushfires in Western Australia, a heat wave in Sydney, floods in Brisbane and Ipswich, and Cyclone Yasi has devastated parts of North Queensland. Who knows what will happen next. I hope not much.

This issue of *inCite* is all about the 'big issues'. I think it's safe to say that for many libraries and library staff from Cairns to Victoria and beyond, the big issue is all about getting their lives and libraries back in order after Mother Nature has had her way. But as insignificant as it may seem at the moment, there are other big issues that we as a profession and as an association need to come to grips with. The issues I'm going to briefly touch on were highlighted at ALIA Information Online as well as at the annual meeting of my organisation's metropolitan library managers.

My observations over the past 12 months or so lead me to believe that the library sector is static at best, while the information sector is where the potential membership market is growing. So, the question I've been asking myself as well those who have been unfortunate enough to come close to me is, "What are we doing about the "I" in ALIA?" My view is that we need to do more. I'd suggest that at the moment we are really ALiA. We are highly focussed on the library sector(s), and rightly so, but we still have a hazy view of the how the information sector, eg knowledge managers and the like, are accommodated within the organization.

We, as a profession and as an association, need to embrace those people who have a vast array of information skills, and who are linking people with all sorts of information in ways many of us hadn't foreseen when we embarked on our library careers. This, of course, has all sorts of implications for accreditation, membership criteria, and professional development. Nevertheless we need to engage in the conversation and develop a strategy or risk withering on the vine.

I've discussed other big issues in previous editions of Frontline such as moving towards a certified practitioner model and financial sustainability. Finding the right balance and model for the ALIA's governance is another pretty big issue. Is a two year term for directors long enough? Should we have any independent directors sitting on the Board? And, should the past president stay on the board for a period after their presidential term of office?

I could probably reel off a whole heap more big issues. However, identifying the big issues is really the easy bit. The really difficult bits are identifying the implications, developing and executing the strategies, and communicating all this to members. Plus there are only so many big issues the Board and National Office can deal with at any one time, after all some of us have day jobs and we all need our beauty sleep. And of course, not all big issues need or should be addressed by the Board or National Office staff.

Well I'm probably close to the end of my word limit but, before I sign off, I would like to make a quick mention of that other '*Big Issue*', the magazine sold on street city street corners by people getting their lives back together. It costs about $5, it's always an interesting read and you're helping somebody out who most likely has had some very real big personal issues in the past. Buy a copy and tick one big issue off your list.

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# YOUR INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT

### Can you really copyright a database?
In recent news from the world of copyright, it seems Telstra will be seeking special leave to appeal the Federal Court's decision that copyright does not subsist in its White and Yellow Pages phone directories. At stake is the applicability of copyright to databases and watchers will be waiting to see if the High Court upholds the reasoning in previous decisions in the case. Watch this space.

### 90+ submissions for Book Industry Strategy
The Commonwealth Government's Book Industry Strategy Group (BISG) received over 90 submissions to their inquiry into the future of books and the book industry in Australia. BISG will make recommendations for the industry to make the most of new opportunities offered by the global market and technology. Public submissions will be available to view on the BISG website shortly at **www.innovation.gov.au/Industry/BooksandPrinting/ BookIndustryStrategyGroup/Pages/default.aspx**

### 5 Million Manuscripts, Films and Texts for Europeana
Work begins this month to add over five million digital objects, ranging from Spanish civil war photographs and handwritten letters from philosopher Immanuel Kant, to Europeana from 19 of Europe's leading research and university libraries.

The project will put many of these treasures online for the first time. It will also add extensive collections from Google Books, theses, dissertations and open-access journal articles to the 15 million items amassed in Europeana to date. Providers include some of Europe's most prestigious universities and research institutes, including the University of Oxford's Bodleian Library, Trinity College Dublin and Lund University.

Europeana.eu is Europe's digital library, museum and archive. Launched as a prototype in November 2008, it offers access to some 15 million digitised items from Europe's cultural and scientific heritage organisations, including resources from 48 national libraries of Europe.