

the last word

ALIA's State and Territory Managers are ALIA's managers in the field. They've been through several name changes – Local Presence and Local Liaison Officers – with accompanying changes to responsibilities and how they do business – but one thing hasn't changed. They've always been committed to connecting personal and institutional members to ALIA services and resources and connecting ALIA Boards and executive to the needs of the members in their area.

State and Territory Managers have an enviable job whereby they meet a wide variety of people in a diverse range of circumstances from glittering functions to disaster-ravaged back rooms. Between them, they've just about seen it all. They've agreed to share some of their most memorable moments with ALIA – at least the ones that they can publish!

Northern Territory – Jayshree Mamtora

Although I joined my first professional association while still a student in the UK, it was not until 1992 when working in Fiji and actively involved in the Fiji Library Association (FLA) that I joined the highly-regarded ALIA. Ten years later, following my move to Australia and the Northern Territory, I was able to become actively involved with ALIA as a member. I spent the first year getting to know the library community and learning how the ALIA Top End Group functioned.

The Group Committee asked for suggestions for professional development activities for local members. While I had been able to get to know the small committed group of members that attended the monthly meetings, the majority of members of the community were nowhere to be seen. So, armed with the experience of having served as President of FLA, and been involved in organising the Fiji Biennial Convention, I suggested a library conference which would serve as a major professional development activity both for members and non-members in the NT, and would bring the whole library community together. Hence the *ALIA Top End Symposium* was born in September 2003 and I was appointed its first convener.

Our small committee of four spent every Saturday afternoon for four months planning the Symposium. We ambitiously called it the first in the hope that there would be many more to come. And so there have been, with the 7th ALIA Top End Symposium held in October 2011. It has indeed become the highlight of the ALIA professional calendar in the Northern Territory and the source of many great memories. It provides opportunities for a range of library staff from throughout the Territory and beyond to come together to hear and share their stories and successes, and to meet and network with colleagues. May it continue to do so for a long time to come.

Queensland – Claudia Davies

My first vivid memory of ALIA was attending a Branch Council meeting as a student and realising how little I knew. It only required a little bit of pluck and

perseverance – and paying some dues – before things got very interesting and rewarding.

January 2011 was a memorable time with ALIA. The Queensland floods were distressing and emotional for everyone involved, but also a unique and remarkable time for the library industry.

Library disaster response plans, including that of my own Brisbane CBD library, were sorely tested. Some libraries pulled off remarkably swift and efficient evacuations, often with the generous help of community members. I was still in my local council library as the water poured in. Some libraries lost every book. Other libraries housed and hosted colleagues or commercial competitors for as long as they needed help. Some even acted as evacuation centres and overnight emergency accommodation. ALIA forged strong links with related industries and associations. Libraries strengthened their relationships with other libraries and with local communities and businesses. Resilience was tested and business and project skills developed in the recovery phase.

Through all this, ALIA concentrated on communication and coordination. I can't describe the dread of trying to phone libraries in devastated regions, or the relief of hearing that staff were safe even if, sadly, their homes were destroyed, or the sinking feeling watching ASLA's growing list of damaged school libraries, or the goodwill shared when library sectors came together in our library disaster recovery forums.

We've learned many valuable lessons about disaster readiness, response, and recovery while hoping we never need to use them.

South Australia – Jeannine Hooper

ALIA membership has supported me through a varied career both in libraries as well as on the 'fringe', working for some years for library vendor SirsiDynix. Throughout that time it has given me a network of friends and colleagues who are priceless for their expertise, knowledge, and unstinting support.

I had always wanted to work in libraries and my studies at the University of South Australia's Magill campus brought me into contact with Joan Brewer, one of the lecturers there who was much admired for her work in the fields of education, women's affairs, and the Library Association at the time – she reaffirmed that I had made the right career choice. Although Joan has been retired for some years, she continues to be involved in ALIA and the School Library Association of SA and promote the value of teacher-librarians in schools.

Looking back on the various committees with which I have been involved has given me an appreciation of all the skills you gain on both a personal and professional level – helping to organise a conference is a brilliant way to learn how to organise, negotiate, manage your time, and not worry (too much) when things do not go quite to plan!

My first conference in 1995 was organised by the Reference and Information Services (SA Section). I have

been involved in several since then, the latest being ALIA Access held in Brisbane in 2010. All in all, lots of work but great fun. Each conference has brought me into contact with amazing people who have been involved in the profession for a number of years as well as those just starting their careers in the library and information sector.

Tasmania – Sally Murdoch

I joined ALIA straight after graduating. For me, it was as simple as feeling that to be a 'proper' professional, I needed to be a member of the professional association. Being a member has given me so many benefits that it would be impossible to list them all in such a short space – it is enough to say that I consider my ALIA membership has given me a much greater return on investment than I could ever have expected.

Although I attended group events and meetings early on in my career, I found it very intimidating as an ignorant new graduate to participate fully and speak up. I tended to lurk on the sidelines, especially when these events were mostly dominated by experienced managers.

When I moved to Tasmania from Victoria several years ago, I wanted to meet people socially, network with members of the profession, and find out about the local job situation. I volunteered for the local Group committee, an experience that I enjoyed immensely, and one that I'm happy to say, met all my hopes.

In Tasmania, ALIA Groups play a vital role. There are fewer professional development opportunities on offer in Tasmania than on the mainland – the cost of bringing speakers and trainers to an island with a small population can be prohibitive. Groups provide a vital role in filling this gap, keeping the profession connected and up-to-date by offering regular, low-cost professional development and networking opportunities to local members. These events only happen through the hard work of voluntary committee members. I never cease to be amazed at the time and energy that busy people are willing to devote to ALIA for the benefit of the profession.

Victoria – Margie Anderson

My personal membership with ALIA spans several decades. I count joining ALIA as one of the best professional moves I've made. My ALIA membership and resulting network have been the clincher in every job I've won. A band of 'secret' mentors – people I met or worked with through ALIA and whose skills and professionalism I've attempted to emulate – has been my best asset. Most probably don't know how much I've relied on their wisdom.

My first contact with ALIA was as a student when a persuasive lecturer insisted I join a group she was initiating to focus the status of women in librarianship. I went to one meeting and was hooked, so I guess I can thank Janette Wright for her guidance. This month Janette takes on the role of CEO and State Librarian at the State Library of Queensland. She and many other women in leadership positions have been fantastic role models.

Working as a volunteer on ALIA committees, I learned everything I could ever want to know about governance

and dynamic leadership from Sue McKnight, who is internationally renowned for her work in education and the LIS field.

Having been part of the conference organising team lead by Gail Schmidt of the State Library of Victoria, I'm now confident I could manage such a complex project, hopefully with Gail's good humour.

Lately I'm watching ALIA New Graduates Group Convenor Melanie Chivers with admiration. Mel is showing me new ways of doing things and reminding me you really can teach an old dog new tricks.

Western Australia – Carol Newton-Smith

Having led a travelling life I have been involved with ALIA in many roles and in many states. I began as a member of ALIA in Northern Territory where I was a library officer; after a break having children in South Africa I rejoined in Victoria as a librarianship student and I have been a member ever since.

My first professional role was in Queensland where I worked both as a reference librarian (remember acoustic couplers and silent 700s?) and then I moved to Western Australia and became an academic outreach librarian – sent out with a portable computer and coffee cup to find an office. After completing my Masters I became a library manager.

Travelling has enabled me to develop networks of ALIA contacts. Seminar and conference participation has been the highlight of my ALIA involvement. In the early days of online access we were passionate about sharing what we learned and doing so in Queensland enabled me to begin developing my presentation skills. I gave my first conference paper at an ALIA conference in Adelaide. The paper was on downloading from Biosis on Dialog, using Blackboard to convert the file and then uploading into Scimate (a personal bibliographic management system). I had wonderful support from the conference organisers and met colleagues who remain an important part of my professional network today. Since then I have given many presentations and I always find that by actively participating I gain far more from the conference to take back to my workplace than I would otherwise. Thank you for your conferences ALIA.

It's evident that the State and Territory Managers are as different as the areas they represent. While we rarely get to meet up personally, we're a close knit bunch and never miss an opportunity to meet up virtually. And we look forward to talking to you about the benefits of joining ALIA, or how you can get more from your membership.

Note: At the time of compilation of this article, the position of State Manager for NSW and ACT were vacant but we are sure Vassiliki and the new ACT State Manager have some wonderful stories of their own to tell as they meet everyone in the coming months.