

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2037

This year, ALIA celebrates 80 years strong. This is a significant milestone. While as a professional association we have much to be proud of, there is still more for our Association (and profession) to contribute.


In June 2017, I had the privilege to attend New Librarians' Symposium 8 (NLS8) – a conference specifically targeting our new professionals. Upon arrival, I was immediately aware of the immense enthusiasm and energy of delegates. The conference program explored digital skills, advocacy, transformational change, and more. Analysis of ALIA membership indicates that approximately one third of our members have been part of the Association for more than 20 years. So it's very likely that many of the NLS8 delegates will celebrate the ALIA centenary in 2037. The theme of NLS8 was DIY Library Career, and the most memorable quote I heard was from keynote speaker Mylee Joseph – 'You are the CEO of your own career!' This proclamation and my observations reflect the commitment and vitality that was evident at NLS8: these are professionals who are prepared to take responsibility for their own career but who also focus on the needs of their stakeholders and clients. If this is the group that will represent our profession in our centenary year, then we are in good hands. But, perhaps, do we all need to take charge?

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Looking forward to 2037, I see many opportunities for our profession to demonstrate its relevance to society. Now more than ever in my career, I believe that access to information and the principles of freedom of information and expression are more relevant than ever. I find myself regularly citing these values in conversations with colleagues, stakeholders and even friends!

Digital inclusion is one of the greatest social justice challenges facing modern society, and reports such as the Australian Digital Inclusion Index highlight the divide that exists in Australia. Across our communities we have gaps in the three factors of digital inclusion: ability, affordability and access. The impact is both social and economic disadvantage. Irrespective of which sector we work in, as a profession we need to advocate for every citizen to have equal opportunity.

For centuries, our profession has led initiatives to collect, share and make accessible information and knowledge for the common good of citizens. It is important that we continue to provide leadership – but more importantly we need to be bold. As an institution, the library is trusted, and as a profession we are respected. As we celebrate our longevity, let us also make a commitment to be bold for our community and leverage the trust we enjoy. Let us all make a commitment to continue to strive for a society that values information and also values equal access to that information. 

VICKI MCDONALD, AALIA
ALIA President
Vicki.McDonald@slq.qld.gov.au



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