

A worthy bunch...

ALIA NSW Branch Merit Award winners

More than sixty people gathered on 30 November in the beautiful Jubilee Room at Parliament House (NSW) to celebrate the presentation of ALIA Merit Awards to Di Simpson, Judy Ryan, Kay Vincent, Beth McLaren and Julie Young. We were welcomed to Parliament House by our host (and parliamentary librarian) Rob Brian.

All recipients spoke eloquently of the honour they felt at being recognised by their peers. There was mention of fraud (an award for having fun?), of rich friendships and fat address books grown out of shared experiences, of challenges faced and won on the strength of information shared between colleagues. Each person described ALIA as an indispensable tool in their career development. The Association was referred to as a springboard, a sounding board and a great forum for discussion of issues from across the profession.

Branch president Jillian Beswick took the opportunity to thank current members of the executive committee — Sue Grimes, Regina Chan and Margaret Daly — who have agreed to an extension of their terms of office to 30 June as part of



ALIA NSW Branch award recipients were (l-r) Beth McLaren, Judy Ryan, Julie Young, Kay Vincent, and Di Simpson

the swap-over to operating on a financial, rather than calendar, year. She also thanked retiring Arts Training NSW library industry representative, John Batholomaeus, and the local presence co-ordinator, Jo-anne Fuller. John served the ATN Board for three years and was chairperson for the last two.

Final thanks were extended to Rob Brian for making such a great venue available and to Jillian herself, who regularly makes the trip down the F3 from Lake Macquarie to lead and inspire us. Congratulations to all recipients — a worthy bunch indeed! ■

To be or not to be...

ALIA NSW Branch considers its future

NSW Branch Council hosted a special meeting on 4 November to determine if a division such as itself should exist in the new ALIA structure. This could have been an opportunity to 'dump the bundle and run' — a sometimes tantalising fantasy when committee responsibilities seem onerous and never-ending as the year draws to a close. Instead, it was a morning of great spirit and optimism for the future of the Association. Participants representing twelve divisions unanimously supported the existence of a NSW Branch of ALIA.

The morning focussed on a series of key questions — should branch exist? If it exists, what should it do? And what structure should it have? We tried not to be diverted by questions of logistics.

Reasons put forward for why a branch was needed were many and varied, but a number of solid themes quickly evolved and in large part mirrored those raised at other branch-sponsored meetings about the future shape of the Association over the last four years.

At the end of the session, it was

agreed that a branch should exist because it provided the best medium for bringing people together to recognise and promote cross-sectoral interests, to create forums and opportunities for debate; to co-ordinate celebrations, including awards nominations and presentations, and cross-sectoral activities like Australian Library Week. Branches are, it was argued, a key contact point for members and non-members as the structure of our Association and our governance ensures that we look locally, then nationally. Having a spokesperson at branch or state level was seen as an important lobbying tool. A branch was seen as a key contact point between the membership and the Board of Directors, a forum for raising issues of concern for one group and mustering support from others. The co-ordinating/advisory role of branch was seen as crucial to the future development of the Association and its culture.

The meeting agreed that the 'branch of the future' should comprise a convener, secretary and treasurer (as set out in the draft guidelines for formation of

divisions in the new Association), plus the convener/president (or their nominee) from each group extant in NSW. This automatic membership guarantees the cross-sectoral representation identified as important in our discussions. While the group will be NSW-based it will be open to any interested member. It was suggested that the group elect its convener, secretary and treasurer from within, although some participants expressed concern about overloading committee members, as multiple-division responsibilities could act as a disincentive for people to nominate as convener/president of other groups.

The current branch president, Jillian Beswick, agreed to draft a statement of purpose and goals for a branch group based on these discussions. This will be published in the first issue of *Trunkline* for 2001, which will be distributed as an insert in the March issue of *inCite*.

The full summary of discussions at this meeting is available on the ALIA NSW web site (<http://www.alia.org.au/branches/nsw/>). ■