

NOMINATIONS FOR FELLOWSHIPS

Fellowships are awarded to recognise a members distinguished contribution to the theory or practice of library and information science. Nominees must have a minimum of eight years standing as an Associate or Library Technician member, be a minimum of 30 years of age, and a personal member of the Association. Fellowships may be conferred throughout the year. Members should note that any recommendation for Fellowships must be made in strict confidence.

Nomination forms are available from
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STUDY GRANT AWARD 2001

There are funds available to ALIA members wishing to undertake a study project. Study Grants are offered to provide an opportunity for librarians or library technicians to undertake projects that they would otherwise be unable to do because of the time and costs involved. Study Grants are open to practising librarian or library technician members who have been personal members for at least two years and have a minimum of three years experience.

The number of awards in any year will depend upon the funds available and the estimated costs of proposals received.

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Applications close
1 September 2001

ALIA

A new world awaits...

Lynn Allen, departing state librarian and CEO,
Library and Information Service of Western Australia

All good things come to an end, but endings are difficult, no matter what aspect of one's life is drawing to a close. On the other hand, I am excited about my new position and the next phase of my life with all the opportunities that beckon. Hopefully, a brave new world awaits (one that is less gloomy than Aldous Huxley's, of course).

When one leaves a position, there is a natural tendency to focus on achievements, to remember things past. I want to do that here but I want to look at the Library and Information Service of Western Australia (LISWA) through a kaleidoscope of the past, present and future. My stewardship has been but a twelve-year phase in a distinguished organisation's 107 years of life. While much has been completed, many things I leave *in media res*, as might be expected.

In my time at LISWA we have produced three strategic directions documents, of which *Information and beyond* is the most comprehensive and forward-looking. Now with the preparation of a fourth statement to cover 2002–2006, it is a good time for a new CEO to put their stamp on the next five years.

Smart reference

The term 'smart reference' is being used to describe the kind of library services we want to deliver in the future, although we have been on this track of getting smarter and smarter with the way we deliver our information services for some time.

Our website, with its extensive information guides and variety of indexes and catalogues, has won two national awards and is our 'shopfront' on the web. We have also created many new services. These include the various subject libraries, the Genealogy Centre, the Centre for the Book and our revamped music and performing arts service.

Generators, guardians and gatekeepers

This is the framework being used for the future vision of the State Records Office. In many ways, it has been our vision all along. Intergenerational responsibilities challenge day-to-day access. How to be the guardian while keeping an open door for the public is a tension that must be addressed. Unwelcoming gatekeepers would not be acceptable. The new *State Records Act* has been a dream for over ten years. The State Records Office's new home in the Alexander Library Building is

one of my proudest achievements, since it combines better service, better office space and better use of a lovely section of the building.



I would have liked to see more integration/co-operation between archivists and librarians. I tried to achieve this as state librarian as well as national president of the Australian Library and Information Association. There is so much that could be exchanged in history, theory and practice and it is a shame there is still competition between professions that are in the same essential business — helping people find the information sources they need.

Towards 21st century public library services

The future for public libraries everywhere is an important and challenging one. Challenging because of all the alternate sources of information and entertainment. Challenging because the next generation is more and more electronically and information literate. Co-operation from all quarters will be important as the system defines its role in education, life-long learning, community development and social cohesion.

Networking knowledge

For most organisations and individuals, the 1990s were a time of rapid technological change. LISWA has been no different and I am proud of the flexibility we have shown. There are huge challenges ahead to ensure that the people of WA continue to receive equitable electronic access to the kind of information we can deliver.

Project Information Access, Regional Libraries Online, Public Librarians Online, the website, LISWA Online, LisKidz, the CD-ROM catalogue, Federation CD — only some of the projects that have led to our awards for excellence in IT. There are still many more projects to come — a children's interface to the catalogue, more knowledge guides and new information services from the State Records Office.

Innovation and excellence have been our watchword and I am confident that if LISWA is able to retain its talented staff and the Board is able to acquire the necessary funds, there is no

reason for LISWA not to continue its excellent record in electronic service delivery.

Heritage collections

Much work has been done in collection policy work, preservation analysis and activities, as well as exploring the use of technology. Our Western Stories initiative, now the Save Our Century Fund, seeks to identify, collect, organise, preserve and make available the wide range of heritage materials in ways that would benefit today's clients whilst ensuring this was available to future generations.

We have acquired some magnificent collections. Our staff have developed collection and preservation plans so that we know the size of our challenge, and we have put our scarce resources to best use. We have grasped the new technologies to present multimedia and digital experiences based on our heritage collections.

Income generation for survival and growth

LISWA produced a seminal document on this, called Infowest, in which we outlined our philosophy of developing customised services for individuals or organisations that are prepared to pay. We have yet to make any serious inroads, but we have been able to build our income gradually over the years.

Every major library has a publishing arm, shops, training packages and other sources of income. LISWA has or is in the process of developing these and needs greater support from all its stakeholders if it is to succeed here. For the future, this has to happen with greater levels of income.

And what of the book?

One of the most frequent questions I have been asked as state librarian is, do I think that the book is dead, do I agree that all information will be digital? At LISWA we have done a

great job in keeping both the electronic world and the printed world central to our decisions — it has never been a question of either/or.

Whether it is the Western Australian Premier's Book Awards, Children's Book Week, our own publishing program, Adopt-A-Book, book launches and exhibitions, LISWA is a very 'writerly' and literary place — I like to think I have made a significant contribution here and hope it will continue.

Conclusion

For the challenges that lie ahead, just like those that we have faced for twelve years, there is no *deus ex machina*. There are no easy answers and no simple solutions. Dreams are one thing — we have to have them — but bringing them to fruition takes determination, courage and at times a single-minded belief in what one is doing, regardless of the opposition.

In essence, I believe in the citizens' right to access the information they need to live enriched lives with as few barriers as possible. That information may be needed for economic, social or cultural reasons, for education or entertainment. The need is unique to each person and our role has been to satisfy that need as best we can, either directly or through working with partners in service delivery or policy.

In many ways the challenges I found in 1989 still face us all — the blurring of boundaries; the lack of funds; the tensions of the public sector and between jurisdictions of government; the need to re-invent the information professions or become outdated; the fast pace of technological change and the need to keep up; the need to plan and stay flexible. The differences are that each challenge needs a new response to suit the times.

This is an edited extract of 'Lynn's Last Line' published in the LISWA newsletter knowit, no. 252, March–April 2001. ■



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