

Directline

Underpromise and overdeliver

We all have our own personal 'Customer Service' motto and in the context of a professional services organisation, this is one I have sometimes used with my colleagues. Sometimes it is far better not to promise great things but instead promise what you know you will achieve or do, and then surprise your customers or colleagues by overdelivering on your promises.

We should all value the customer service that we receive whether it is internal, external, or retail customer experiences. But what is customer service? Or maybe I should ask, what is customer service to you? It is different for everyone and in each situation. As ALIA is a membership based organisation, our members are our customers – but they are also the creators of our customer service experiences. We are all part of the 'service' of our Association. Our Board, Standing Committees, Advisory Committees, Group office bearers, conference committees, and other volunteer groups give internal customer service to create the 'ALIA experience'. When you see the ALIA logo, you should expect a positive and professional experience and quality products and services.

In this context I also encourage and advise our ALIA volunteers to underpromise and overdeliver with their time and energies. If now is not the right time for you personally or professionally to be part of a committee or an activity – that's OK. Better that you identify time constraints or contribution skills that you may not have right now and save them for overdelivering them later on when the time is right.

The Board gives customer service to members through their leadership, decision making, and correspondence with members – and driving the organisation's strategic direction. In our revised organisational chart for the National Office, we recognise them as delivering better outcomes to our internal staff, that is an appropriate level of staffing to meet the services we deliver to our external clients.

Our National Office staff have been revisiting our values these past few months, and have also identified quality of products and services as one of our core office values. ALIA National Office has a small team of staff in Canberra. Last year all ALIA staff had their customer service skills refreshed with a two-day training course. But National Office is not the only point of customer service for members. As a member, you can also receive local customer service from the Local Liaison Officers in your state (listed to the right), and other services delivered by project offices and contractors such as our editors. To consolidate this team of ALIA customer service operators, we brought the team of LLOs to Canberra for a training day in late March this year. I know that all of my staff put in extra efforts for our members. If you do have any feedback to the ALIA staff, you can email it to enquiry@alia.org.au or call the members line on 1800 020071.

How do you, as a manager, recognise good customer service by your staff? How do you as library staff recognise each other's customer service excellence? How do you react to receiving bad customer service and how do you reward good customer service – both internally and externally? The theme of customer service will continue in Board Blog posts during April, so continue the conversation at <http://www.alia.org.au/blog>. You might also like to comment with some of your own ideas there. Our thanks to all the contributors to this edition of inCite for the great range of good ideas from all sectors – read on.

So to finish – if you haven't 'underpromised and overdelivered' lately, I hope you keep it in mind next time you aim for quality customer service.

Safer Internet Group update

The Safer Internet Group now includes the Australian Library and Information Association, the Inspire foundation, Google, Yahoo!, the Internet Industry Association, the Systems Administrators Guild of Australia, and the Internet Society. All partner organisations have agreed with the Core Principles – released on 15th February 2010 at <http://www.alia.org.au/internetfiltering> and are working together to further the debate against mandatory internet filtering. The draft legislation is yet to be tabled. Further meetings of the group continue during April as well as talks with ministers, advisors, and other key stakeholders.

The 'new' PLAC

The membership of the Public Libraries Advisory Committee was approved for change in 2009 and the new members were officially appointed in March. We welcome representatives from all of the State Public Library Associations and Public Libraries Australia who join with current ALIA members to work on this committee. The main focus continues to be outcomes from the 2009 Public Libraries Summit, including the National Vision and Framework for Public Libraries and the National Standards for Public Libraries. Other projects for this committee during the year include the Public Libraries stream for ALIA Access and the next Survey of Internet Use in Australian Public Libraries. The next face-to-face meeting of the committee will be in Auburn in July on the day before the Public Libraries NSW Country conference.

Sue Hutley
ALIA Executive Director
sue.hutley@alia.org.au



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Your local ALIA contact

LLOs are ALIA representatives in each state/territory. Their duties include being a point of contact for members and non-members.

ACT: Robyn Ellard
02 6215 8250
robyn.ellard@alia.org.au

NSW: Alyson Dalby
0404 655 319
alyson.dalby@alia.org.au

NT: Jayshree Mamtora
0416 366 634
jayshree.mamtora@alia.org.au

QLD: Claudia Davies
0407 964 967
claudia.davies@alia.org.au

SA: Jeannine Hooper
0437 167 050
jeannine.hooper@alia.org.au

TAS: Sally Murdoch
03 6228 7904
sally.murdoch@alia.org.au

VIC: Margie Anderson
03 9315 1090
margie.anderson@alia.org.au

WA: Carol Newton-Smith
08 9381 5674
carol.newton-smith@alia.org.au