

## How we got here... the history of the new graduate movement in Australia

As current chair of the ALIA New Generation Advisory Committee, I often get asked (and have wondered myself) how Australia managed to get such a strong new graduate movement in the library and information studies profession. As I entered the profession when the groundwork had well and truly been laid, I have gone back to some of the early initiators of the new grads movement and asked them for their perspectives. Some quite high-profile names occur in this list: showing us that not only can new graduates enact change at the beginning of their careers, they can go on to become influential once they no longer carry the tag 'new grad'.

In the beginning, there was the New Librarians Symposium. 2002 seems to be the year it all began to get serious, with the formation of the ALIA New Generation Policy and Advisory Group, known as NGPAG (now the New Generation Advisory Committee or NGAC) and just one week later, in December 2002 in Brisbane, the first NLS. A conference that we all take for granted now as a biennial opportunity for new graduates from all over Australia to get together and share experiences, give their first paper in a safe environment, and network, network, network! was the brain-child of none other than ALIA's current Executive Director, Sue Hutley.

In the first couple of years of NGPAG's existence, they worked from the results from a survey they ran at NLS1. This primarily involved the formation of the National New Graduates Group and New Grads e-list, two ALIA initiatives we take for granted these days. There was also a lot of work done on the NGG website – a major project in the early days, making it more than a usual group website but a 'one stop shop' for new grad members with tips, hints, photos, career info, and more.

For each NLS, NGPAG/NGAC have been instrumental in building the relationships and connections to make sure that, when the call goes out for the next NLS, someone feels ready to put up their hand to host the event. NLS2 (2004) was held in Adelaide, convened by NGPAG member and South Australian Library and Information Network (SALIN) co-founder and current ALIA Board member Kate Sinclair. Robyn Ellard, SALIN co-founder and current ALIA Director: Member Services, was Programme Convenor. Conference resume reviews were trialed at this conference, and came out of discussions and survey responses at NGPAG.

NLS3 (2006) in Sydney, was co-convened by Alyson Dalby, ALIA NSW LLO, and Adrienne Harris. Also on the committee was Fiona Bradley, an NGPAG member who helped to create new graduate links with the ALIA Research Committee.

NLS4 was in Melbourne, convened by Tania Barry, a former member of NGAC. Committee member Trevor McKay had been the National NGG Convenor, a role currently held by another member of the NLS4 committee, Andrew Finegan. National NGG Convenors traditionally hold a role as a conduit between the National New Graduates Groups and NGAC, however Andrew has taken this role a step further and has worked closely with both committees to ensure a stronger National New Graduates Group through the introduction of a group of coordinators in each region, a social networking presence on Facebook, and a blog.

In 2010, NGAC was involved in reviewing NLS in 2008-09. The review examined whether NLS was a sustainable model of conference that delegates wanted to continue, and was partly based on the survey held at NLS4 by NGAC. The ALIA Board approved NGAC's submission that NLS continue as a

stand-alone conference, and in 2011 there will be an NLS5 in Perth.

NGAC members played an important role in planning what the ALIA Access conference would look like. Former QLD NGG Regional Coordinator Rachel Wray and current NGAC Chair Naomi Doessel co-convened the new graduates stream What Next! Practical Information to Enhance the Career of New Graduates, with assistance from NGAC member Jo Beazley, current QLD NGG Regional Coordinator Bonnie Dixon, and NLS5 committee member Kate Freedman.

Energise > Enthuse > Inspire came out of NGPAG as a way to encourage new graduates to have a voice in *inCite*. It was initially co-ordinated by Katy Watson, NGPAG Chair and later ALIA Board member, and was then co-coordinated for a time by Kate Davis and Naomi Doessel, who both later became members and then Chairs of NGAC. In this month's *inCite* you can find a call for a new coordinator of this valuable new graduate resource.

As well as conferences, NGAC has been very involved in lobbying within ALIA on policy issues: primarily ensuring

that new graduates have opportunities within the profession. The Aurora Scholarship is an annual grant enabling a new graduate ALIA member whose workplace cannot financially support them to attend the Aurora Leadership Institute, and was an NGPAG initiative. In 2009, NGAC lobbied the ALIA Board to provide support to a new graduate to attend the conference, which was successful. Other NGAC reviews and initiatives have and may continue to include reviewing NLS surveys, providing recommendations to the ALIA Board regarding new generation involvement in the association, and providing submissions to the National Advisory Congress.

After ALIA Access the current NGAC team had the opportunity to meet in the flesh and discuss upcoming projects for the next few years. They will include continuing to support NLS and the NGG; work on documenting the processes and ensuring succession planning with NGAC; evaluate

the Conference Mentoring Pilot, which will take place at Information Online 2011; survey new graduates at NLS5; and continue to lobby for sponsorship of new graduates to major ALIA conferences.

Fiona Bradley states, "Looking back, we did have an impact in a number of areas, and other associations are only now beginning to create these kinds of initiatives. ALIA was way ahead!"

Kate Sinclair writes "Speaking as a current ALIA Board member, I found NGPAG an excellent introduction to working nationally, to working to an agenda, to working strategically within a bigger picture. Looking back now, it's amazing how far ahead ALIA was in terms of engagement with new grad initiatives. We should be really proud."

The new graduate movement in Australia is built upon a strong foundation, but it needs new blood continually to keep energising and reinvigorating it. Hopefully this article has given you an idea of just how much new graduates have achieved in Australia in less than a decade, and how much impact we can have if we're involved and enthusiastic. So I encourage you to volunteer today!

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