

## Fostering life-long learning: ALIA Schools Group

ALIA Schools Group is a national group that promotes the interests of school libraries and teacher librarians. The goals of ALIA Schools are to:

- encourage collegiality among its members
- promote the interests of school libraries and teacher librarians
- provide opportunities for professional development for personnel in school libraries
- lobby for school libraries with national, state, and local groups
- liaise with other professional groups in the field
- identify and analyse current trends in teacher librarianship
- maintain the profile of teacher librarians within the ALIA structure
- hold regular meetings and to disseminate information in print and electronic format

Since its inception ALIA Schools Group has attracted members from various Australian states and overseas countries. Originally the group was called ALIA Schools Victoria and in recognition of the work that the group undertakes at the national level, a decision was made to delete Victoria from the group's name.

The Committee is based in Victoria and meets eight times a year on a Saturday morning from 9.30am to 11.30am, at Santa Maria College Resource Centre in Northcote. All members are welcomed to attend the meetings. Meeting dates and activities are advertised on the ALIA Schools website.

The members of the ALIA Schools Group Committee are Anne Girolami (convenor), Karen Marston (secretary), Robyn Griffiths (treasurer), Sandra Ryan (PD coordinator), Kris Johnstone (minutes secretary), Susanne Graetsch (website manager), Tilly Stoove (ALIA/ASLA PAG rep, VCTL rep), Anne Girolami (ALIA Schools eList moderator), Barbara Bugg (member).

Each year the Committee plans approximately five professional development activities. Three are half day, face-to-face seminars held at the meeting venue and the other two are online forums. The online forum is an ideal way for our members, based outside of Victoria, to access relevant and apt professional learning activities. All members are welcome to take the advantage of the discounted fee for these activities.

The webpage can be found at [www.alia.org.au/groups/aliaschools/](http://www.alia.org.au/groups/aliaschools/). In addition to the group webpage, ALIA maintains [www.alia.org.au/schoollibraries](http://www.alia.org.au/schoollibraries).

The ALIA Schools eList is also an effective means of communication. Aside from its promotion and advertising of school library issues it is also the platform used for the online forums.

There is a greater need to enable closer ties between the ALIA Schools and ALIA Schools Group members. The Committee, is looking at ways to make more formal and regular contact. Work is currently being undertaken to formalise nationwide consultation.

A feature of the work of ALIA Schools Group has been the way it has actively sought to form partnerships with other professional groups in the field. Currently there are partnerships with the Australian School Library Association (ASLA), the Australian Institute for teachers and School leaders (AITSL), Australian Curriculum Assessment and reporting authority (ACARA), and the Victorian Catholic Teacher Librarians (VCTL).

The collaborative effort with ASLA has seen the development of the ALIA/ASLA Policy Advisory Group (PAG). The PAG is a national committee with equal representation from ALIA and ASLA. It was formed in 2002 to offer advice and develop policy. The PAG works in the areas of:

- submissions to governments and other related bodies on library and information practice matters,
- development of policy statements,
- policy and practice matters of interest and concern,

- representation on appropriate bodies,
- mechanisms for collecting statistical data,
- other matters as determined by ALIA and ASLA.

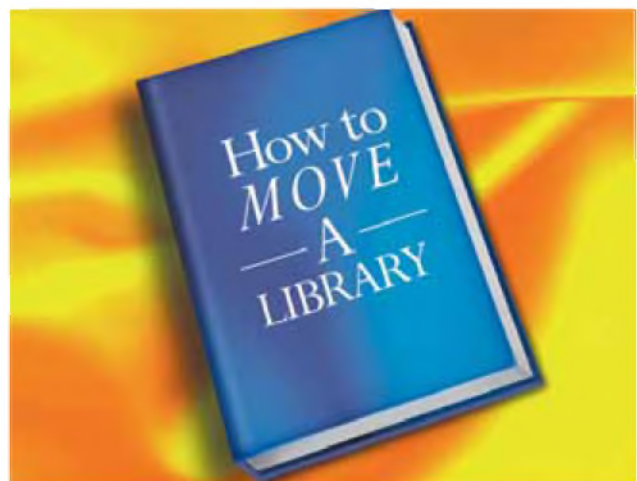
The PAG has been instrumental in establishing a number of documents including *Standards of Professional Excellence for Teacher Librarians*.

The joint venture, with the Victorian Catholic Teacher Librarians, culminated in the production of a document titled *A Manual for developing policies and procedures for Australia school library resource centres*. The success of this initiative has resulted in an upcoming working party to devise documentation to review school libraries in association with the School Improvement Framework.

So the work continues ... because the school library is a valuable asset in the educational field. There is a substantial body of research that shows that the school library has a positive effect on student learning outcomes. In addition a well-managed school library provides the foundation for innovative library programs. These library programs contribute greatly to the wellbeing of students, the fostering of lifelong learning, and the enriching of leisure pursuits like reading. The teacher librarian has an integral role in the school library and within the school community as their unique work is centred on student learning. This role focuses on learning, teaching, resourcing, facilitating access to information, and providing a conducive, educational environment.

### Anne Girolami

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