



## WALT Conference Grant Recipient

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### **Mason Clarke Winning Essay 2003 – 1<sup>st</sup> year student – Edith Cowen University (Library Technology)**

WALT's award: 'What do you consider to be the benefits of ALIA membership for library technicians?'

The information revolution has well and truly arrived, in the midst of this revolution certain professions have developed to help bring some sort of order and control to this new age.

The development of these new professions has meant that new skills need to be developed, new roles identified and new organisations set up to help support and offer advice to these pioneering professionals. The Library Technician is one such profession that requires this support and ALIA is the organisation which provides it.

Today's technician is an integral part of many information agencies working in many varied environments. Professional recognition and acceptance helps give a positive self-image to the technician and a similar image to the public. ALIA is broad enough to represent many information personnel and has specifically designed a library technician's section resulting in many benefits for them. Membership of ALIA cements a feeling of belonging and a knowing that you are not operating alone; that you are part of a large organisation that can help service your needs.

There are a number of areas in which ALIA membership specifically benefits library technicians.

#### **Professional development:**

Changes in technology and changes in the information industry occur very rapidly therefore, any support to managing, leading and creating change is beneficial. Skills constantly need to be updated and new methods learned to help manage the growth and be an effective player in the industry. Membership to ALIA allows technicians to be aware of particular courses and further studies which may add value to professional development. Further study is essential so as to be at the cutting edge of a dynamic industry.

Specific conferences, such as the one being held in Tasmania in 2001, are another way in which ALIA aids in developing the technician. These conferences have the potential to be stimulating and informative to the technician looking to grow and improve.

Mentoring is another beneficial role of ALIA that aids in professional development. Access to experience and to specific support and advice when required is a major benefit. To be only an e-mail away from having your questions answered can be a comforting thought.



### **Career development/opportunities:**

ALIA, being the peak professional body in the industry of library and information, is highly regarded in terms of professional support and career development. Therefore, membership of ALIA allows library technicians to:

Understand the structure of the industry and therefore identify career opportunities relevant to the technician's personal needs.

Provide for connections and networks with employer groups.

Gain access to advice in career development activities.

These factors increase the library technicians opportunities for employment and ensures new developments are brought to the attention of its members.

ALIA also provides for the recognition of its membership which also enhances career prospects. ALIA has approved the addition of letters of affiliation (ALIATec) as part of a person's qualifications. This acts as a status symbol and gives recognition to those members who may be applicants for particular jobs.

### **Networking:**

In today's interconnected society there is a need for all employees to be aware of and develop networks. A network of personal contacts of experienced people established in the industry and people of similar interests provides for a formal and informal way of receiving advice, giving advice, gaining understanding and keeping up to date. ALIA has institutionalised these networks allowing for members to communicate easily.

### **Social activities:**

Social events provide opportunities to meet informally but talk with a common interest. As is evident from the number of conferences and gatherings, social support appears to be an explicit aim of ALIA and the benefits which stem from this are personal contacts, support systems and enjoyable company.

### **Feeling of belonging:**

Library technicians (LT's) are unique. ALIA has recognised this fact by dedicating specific sites and sections to LT's. Each state has their own groups and these are linked together through ALIA to provide a sense of national identity. One of people's basic needs is a sense of belonging. To be a member of ALIA helps to fulfil this need.

The many arms of ALIA provides many benefits to its members as outlined above. These arms wrap around its members to create a sense of belonging within a group of people with similar interests and needs. To be a member of ALIA is to be connected and linked to supportive people willing to offer advice, share knowledge and grow together.

There are many advantages in being a member and there are many disadvantages in not being a member.



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