



Being on the Board, I get broader industry insight by hearing from other leaders around the country

ON BOARD WITH ALIA

With nominations currently open for the ALIA Board Elections, INCITE had a chat with current Director, Kim Sherwin, about her experiences of being on the ALIA Board.

Originally from the United Kingdom, Kim Sherwin moved to Australia in 2007 and eventually became involved with ALIA. 'I was a member of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) in the UK, and I wanted to contribute to the profession in Australia. Involvement in the peak body that represents my industry is important to me.' After her work on Arup's *Future Libraries* research reports in 2015, her involvement in ALIA grew, with a focus on promoting the work that special libraries do.

She decided to run for the Board in 2019, several years after first considering it. 'I overthought it the first time and talked myself out of it.'

This time, she saw it as a time-bound commitment that would give back to the profession. 'I wasn't keen about going through the election process. Fortunately for me, a candidate withdrew, and I was selected.'

Kim has found numerous benefits to being on the Board. Director obligations count towards her ongoing professional development. It has been a chance to learn about other sectors. 'As the Board representative for health libraries, I've become more familiar with the issues in that specific library sector.' It has also been a way to connect to colleagues across the country. 'I now work in public libraries, and the work is often very state/territory based. Being on the Board, I get broader industry insight by hearing from other leaders around the country.' Finally, there is the experience itself of being on a Board of Directors. 'We are ultimately responsible for the organisation, which shouldn't be taken lightly.'

One thing that surprised Kim most as a Director was the volume of work that is undertaken by ALIA, and the scale of its portfolio, where the average library worker might only see ALIA's work in relation to their sector. 'I came to realise the breadth of ALIA's capability and impact'.

She was also surprised by some of the decisions that the Board needed to make, but proud of the confidence with which they take decisive, evidence based and informed action. Such was the case, in the timeliness of cancelling the ALIA National Conference earlier this year. 'We were ahead of the curve.'

There are still challenges, with those who don't understand what the role of a Board does and ALIA is no exception. 'People think that we need to solve every single issue faced by libraries. The reality is that we're here for our Members and to support the long-term financial sustainability of the association.'

Kim has a few words of advice to anybody considering nominating for the Board: 'Talk to a previous Board member to get an understanding of what it's really like, and then just do it. There's always a bit of imposter syndrome with these things, but I'm proud that I've been able to make an active contribution. Don't doubt yourself, back yourself.' 🌟

Board nominations are open until 29 January 2021. See the ALIA website for more details.

alia.org.au/elections