

## **Australian Law Librarians' Association Ltd.**

### **Presidents Report**

The last year has been a busy and productive period for the Australian Law Librarians' Association Ltd. At 18 months of age, ALLA is transitioning to a national body combining more than forty years of history and over 550 legal information. This report gives a brief overview of how the Association's structure has developed, before looking at the achievements and events of the last year, finishing with a look at the future plans and possibilities.

First, however, a thank you to all of the dedicated members who have made the last twelve months of ALLA possible. These include the six divisional committees, The Board of Directors, the national sub-committees' members (CPD, Web Communications and Vendor Relations), the Conference Planning Committee, the journal editor, business manager and editorial team, the QUT course mentors, the events and conference speakers, the award winners, scholarship recipients and the ALLA ambassadors at international events. Everyone who has contributed to an event, project or initiative at a local or national level – to all of you – thank you.

ALLA is more than excellent professional development and social events, hard working committees and successful projects. ALLA is a community of like-minded professionals. Therefore, to every member who has replied to a question on the list, supplied an inter-library loan, helped someone with unfamiliar areas of research, shared solutions and experiences, to all those who picked up the phone, sent or replied to an email, tweeted, added, liked and shared – to each and every one of the members – thank you for supporting and being a part of the ALLA community over the last 12 months.

### **ALLA Ltd – A Structural Overview**

ALLA Ltd. is a company formed from six divisional groups: New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. While Queensland and Tasmania have opted not to have a local division sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ALLA Ltd, we have nearly 100 members in these states giving ALLA a truly national presence.

Members who reside in a state without a local division have become members of one of the six divisional groups. For each renewing and new membership, a local division receives a per member disbursement amount – for a full year, ordinary member the amount is \$45 (see s 5.2 of the MOU for full membership fees and disbursement information). Members and committees will need to think differently about the delivery of local services and member benefits to those divisions which include interstate members, but the additional funds, discussion at monthly divisional presidents' meetings and support from the Board will facilitate the development of initiatives that will benefit everyone. Each of the divisions has the means for recording local CPD sessions, and the divisional presidents are looking at recording and sharing events via the ALLA website. Each month, the divisional presidents and national president meet by teleconference to share local news, collaborate on projects, provide ideas and feedback to the Board and find solutions to local and national issues.

Each of the six divisions is chaired by a committee, and these committees are supported at a national level by the ALLA Board of Directors. The Board is made up of eight directors, including a President, Vice President, Past President, Treasurer, Secretary and three general directors, each of whom chair one of the national sub-committees. Each of these sub-

committees include members who have volunteered and who work with the directors to facilitate national programs and collaboration with the states.

The development of ALLA Ltd has been intense and the directors have been working hard to establish a framework, develop policies and procedures, a strategic plan and a budget, as well as developing systems to manage the administrative and legal requirements for ALLA Ltd. Over the next year members will see more communications from the Board, with more information and more opportunities for members to engage and participate in projects, initiatives and professional development activities, as the focus shifts from establishing a company to developing a strong, national industry body for legal information professionals. Other working groups and committees, such as the Conference Review Working Group, will be established in consultation with the members over time as a need or project is identified.

In addition to the committees and working groups, ALLA is developing special interest groups for our members using LinkedIn. The first two groups have been launched – ALLA eLearning and Training and ALLA Products and Vendors. Members can choose to participate in discussions, share updates, point to resources and information of interest and network with other professionals. For those not on LinkedIn, setting up a profile is free and easy, and you can choose to as much or as little information as you wish to your profile. LinkedIn has been identified as the most appropriate forum as it is free, secure and the administrative workload required to establish and maintain the groups is minimal. Members can easily join or leave groups as necessary. These member-driven groups will become a valuable knowledge sharing and professional development tool for members.

## **A Look at the Last Year**

### **Corporate structure and sub-committees**

In December 2013, the board implemented a Corporate Structure and Governance Plan. This was shared with members, along with a call for members to join the new sub-committees – Vendor Relations, CPD, Scholarships and Web Communications. Thanks to a positive response the sub-committees have been formed. The 2014/2015 sub-committees chairs are: CPD – Phil Mullen, Vendor Relations – Lianne Forster Knight and Web Communications Committee – Kirsty Wilson.

### **Divisional Presidents' Meetings**

In November 2013, the first ALLA Divisional Presidents' meeting was held by teleconference. It was agreed that the meetings will occur monthly, to facilitate communications between the Board and the divisions as well as between the divisions. It is also an opportunity for the Board to update the divisions on its activities and initiatives, as improving communications is a key Board objective.

### **The big 5-OH-OH**

Each month we see new members from a variety of fields of legal information join the ALLA members' network. This year, our membership reached a milestone of 500 members. This marks an organisation of a significant number of professionals coming together to support, develop and grow the industry. We now have over 550 members, including three international members. The grace period for renewing memberships expires at the end of September, meaning firm numbers will be provided in October.

### **New ALLA Website**

The new ALLA website is now live. I would like to thank David Furler, an ALLA Director and Chair of Web Communications Committee, who created this website in his own time when the former secretariat failed to deliver on it as promised. I encourage you to take a look – it is easier to use and looks fresh and modern. The website is, and always will be, a work in progress. Kirsty Wilson will take over from David Furler on the new Board and she is working with the web committee and divisional presidents to look at the strategic direction and content of the site. If you see changes or improvements that would be of benefit, send them through to your divisional president or [admin@alla.asn.au](mailto:admin@alla.asn.au). If you want to re-write or create content, or if you have the proof-reading, technical or marketing skills {remove - **to help someone else who does**}, the web team would like to hear from you at the same email address.

### **C.A.S.E. [2014] ALLA 5000**

The 2014 Conference was held in Adelaide, with the theme Collaborate – Advocate – Strategise – Educate. The conference brought together professionals for thought provoking discussions on the four key foundation principles for legal libraries. It focussed on how law librarians can collaborate in a dynamic and responsive way to the expectations and needs of our industry and its clients. Through rigorous formulation and implementation of strategy, by advocating its talent and value to its stakeholders, by delivering timely and relevant education to its members, we use these principles to Make the CASE for law librarianship. The conference was a great success, with stimulating presentations, very good trade exhibitions and many networking opportunities.

### **ALLA Conference – Annual to Biennial**

The Board and general membership have reviewed the future of the Australian Law Librarians' conference. Of the 229 responses (almost half of our membership) the results were: 71% of respondees were in favour of the conference becoming biennial, with 14% neutral and 15% preferring an annual event. In light of this, the ALLA conference will occur biennially in future, the next one to be held in 2016 in Melbourne. A committee has been formed to make recommendations for a format for future events. The paper will look at evaluating what our members need and how the conference (and smaller events in the off year) can meet members' needs. The committee will be looking at opportunities to support and encourage original research by members, mentoring members in writing and presenting papers and working with the state groups to overcome the challenges of running a conference.

### **QUT Law Librarianship Course**

QUT ran its law librarianship course again this year, providing it online, in order to offer it nationally. Dr Gillian Hallam and her team at QUT worked with ALLA CPD director Kim Kelly, Past President Lisa Sylvester and me to develop and promote this course. This post-graduate unit was available for course credit (with assignments) or as a professional development opportunity (without assignments). The course was completed by 33 members in Australia and the Pacific Islands. QUT offered ALLA a gratis position in the course in recognition of our contribution to it. The position was offered as a scholarship to our members and Jacinta Jamieson of Minter Ellison in Brisbane was our successful applicant.

### **2014 ALLA Fellowship**

Joelie Cook of Fisher Jefferies Gadens in Adelaide was the recipient of the 2014 ALLA Fellowship. The fellowship awards \$3000 towards the costs of attending an international

conference. Joeline attended the 2014 American Association of Law Librarians' conference in San Antonio, Texas, in July. AALL's Beyond Boundaries 2014 offered an exciting and challenging program which explored the value, scope and dynamism of our roles as legal information professionals. Joeline will write up her experience for the Australian Law Librarian.

### **2014 Lynn Pollack Memorial Scholarship**

The 2014 Lynn Pollack Memorial Scholarship recipient was Trung Quach of the University of Melbourne. The Scholarship offers financial support for a new law librarian to attend our conference. The award gives law library professionals in their first five years an opportunity to attend our conference. I was the first recipient of this award in 2007. With only seven months professional experience at the time, taking up the award offered me an incredibly valuable experience. I would not have taken on the position of national president six years later if it weren't for the experience I gained and networks I began to build during and since that time. I would ask all members to encourage their colleagues who are new to the profession not only to join ALLA but to apply for this scholarship.

### **New Awards and Scholarships**

In the last year, the board has introduced a number of new awards that recognise the achievements of our members. These are:

- Life Membership of ALLA Ltd;
- Gem of the Year – an award recognising a commercial representative that has gone above and beyond for ALLA members;
- Legal Information Centre of the Year;
- Law Librarian of the Year – recognising an outstanding librarian or library technician nominated by peers.

### **International Networking Opportunities**

In June, Vice President Karen Rowe-Nurse went to Harrogate to represent ALLA at the 2014 British and Irish Association of Law Librarians' Conference. I represented ALLA at the American Association of Law Libraries conference in Texas. This is an important opportunity to learn from our colleagues and Karen and I will share these learnings with members via the journal and email communications.

### **Future Possibilities**

The legal industry offers unique challenges to its information professionals in our courts, tribunals, universities, firms and special law libraries, as well as many other areas. Our members know the bleak prediction for our future could not be further from the truth – information management in the twenty first century is not just evolving, it is growing and expanding at an exponential rate.

Legal information professionals in Australia still catalogue, shelve books, update loose-leaf services, provide reference and research services and practice collection development. They also create and manage web content and intranets, train students and practitioners, implement technological changes across their organisations, manage social media, write and edit for legal publishers, negotiate complex contracts, manage legal CPD programs, run marketing and business development programs, liaise with clients, teach and develop academic programs, develop products, manage precedents, prepare tenders, apply for grants and funding, run community events and programs, sit on boards and committees across the legal

industry, mentor new professionals and much more. Increasingly we are called on not only to provide access to information and resources, but to be the creators of content for our users. The globalisation of the legal industry requires us to develop in-depth knowledge of other jurisdictions and skills to source cases, legislation and commentary from jurisdictions all over the world. In fact, the twenty-first century legal information professional is also seen by users as a magician. Taking these skills into consideration, it must be acknowledged that the most valuable resource available to ALLA is its members. ALLA has come a long way in the last twelve months, but there is still much to do and many improvements to be made. The Board is working with the divisions and the committees already in place, but in order to offer members and the legal community more we will need the help of our members.

### **A few issues the Board will consider over the next twelve months are:**

#### **Communications**

The ALLA Inc. Board is in the process of developing a formal communications policy that will engage with members via the website, email, LinkedIn and Twitter. The dissemination of information from the Board is only part of the plan. The policy will look to engage all members and create conversations that flow among members, across divisions and nationally.

#### **Partnerships and Funding**

The Board is exploring new ways to raise funds and partner with industry to bring more benefits for ALLA's members. This year we are pleased to be working with Prenax to offer the Law Librarian of the Year Award. Prenax previously sponsored this award for many years, but when nominations for the award were not received it was put on hold for a few years. We will announce new opportunities as they are confirmed, and would call on any members who may have suggestions or contacts who could help. We are not only seeking financial support, but the offer of resources or services that may be used by the Association or passed on directly to members.

#### **Finances**

As of 1 July 2014, the Board has introduced a budget and financial plan for ALLA Ltd. We have identified that annual funds are extremely limited and are looking ways to can cut expenditure on administration and governance to use funds for member services and benefits.

#### **Review of the Legal Structure**

The current national structure was designed over many years and with much consideration and hard work. After 18 months, both members and the Board have identified that a national industry body is essential. However, the current legal structure will need to be reviewed. As a company limited by guarantee, reporting and governance requirements are significantly more complicated than the rules governing Associations. Over the next year, the Board will use its experience to look at changes and possible alternatives that will further the national body we all need and want in a structure that reduces the administrative burden and costs. We will seek ideas from members, divisional presidents and our committees.

#### **Final Farewell**

On a personal note, I would like to say thank you to all of the directors, divisional presidents, committee members and all ALLA members with whom I have worked during my time as Vice President and President. Not only have I met many wonderful people, I have learned a great deal and have been exposed to opportunities and experiences that would not have

existed without ALLA. I wish Karen, the Board and the membership all the best for the next twelve months and beyond.