



WALT Conference Grant Recipient

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Look at ALIA as an organisation and discuss how it can support your career development.

To address this essay topic, I will focus on ALIA's mission statement:

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is the professional organisation for the Australian library and information services sector. It seeks to empower the profession in the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services to the nation, through leadership, advocacy and mutual support.

This statement points out three major goals of the association, which, as an organisation, is how ALIA can support my career development as a library technician in the Australian library and information services sector.

Those three points are:

ALIA is specific to my sector - Australian library and information services.

ALIA seeks to 'empower the profession'.

ALIA seeks to provide 'leadership, advocacy and mutual support', not only to its members but to any person with an interest in the industry.

As an Australian citizen, ALIA ensures that the information and support I receive is relevant and appropriate to my situation. Differing from other nations in culture, climate and language, as well as standards, laws and patrons, Australian's needs are unique, thus the focus on the Australian industry is a key factor in supporting my career development.

There are many unions and organisations within Australia that offer professional and personal development and support to people in any sector or industry. ALIA however, is specific to the library and information services industry, ensuring that all assistance and networking I receive can be directly applied to the library industry. It also means that ALIA can provide technical and practical guidance to library students and workers. It is invaluable to have a network of people who know the practical day-to-day tasks that occur in a library situation and can share experiences and ideas. This is a common theme in the many discussion boards, mailings lists and groups, which are organised through ALIA.

A favourite quote of mine is from a popular action movie called The mummy, spoken by 'Evelyn' the heroine:



'I may not be an explorer, or an adventurer, or a treasure hunter, or a gunfighter...
But I'm proud of what I am... I am... a librarian!'

The second statement I have underlined from the mission statement is that ALIA seeks to empower the industry. This is something that I admire and that will really support my career development as a library technician. There are many myths and stereotypes about libraries and librarians, and an organisation like ALIA can do a lot to dispel those misconceptions and renew the image of the library. There are the typical jokes about whispering in the library, the familiar elderly librarian with glasses resting on the tip of her nose guarding a pile of dusty old books. We in the industry know that this is not the case! Libraries are often busy places with a never ending supply of work to do, and are continually moving into areas of new technology, and there certainly isn't a lot of time for sitting around reading books! ALIA's mission to empower the profession through development and delivery of quality services has opened up the industry, promoting it as multi-faceted and modern, attracting young people like myself to work in libraries and be proud of it.

Thirdly, ALIA provides leadership, advocacy and mutual support, not only to members but to anyone who has an interest in the industry. This is the most practical, and perhaps the most significant way in which ALIA supports my career development. During my TAFE studies, we were introduced to the groups and mailing lists provided by ALIA, which are a mine of knowledge and experiences, where both eager students and senior librarians can seek suggestions or assistance from fellow members.

We also studied the policies and guidelines that address ALIA's core values. These policies, including copyright and freedom of information, provide guidance and professional standards to aspire to.

ALIA organises a number of publications, conferences, and professional development opportunities, such as Library Week and the neXt 2005: ALIA National Library and Information Technicians Conference. They provide the opportunity and the means to network and gain valuable connections with other people in the industry.

In conclusion, ALIA offers many invaluable ways in which they can support and assist in the development of my career in the library profession. Through the mission statement, it can be seen how ALIA strive to develop both the industry and the individual. As an Australian organisation, ALIA has the power to provide the opportunity and practical means for leadership, assistance and development, which is relevant and suitable to my particular needs, and the needs of anyone in the information services industry.