

Arts Libraries Society/Australia and New Zealand (Arlis/ANZ)

Report to the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) 2008

ACTIVITIES

In 2007-08, the two most significant activities undertaken by Arlis/ANZ have been the implementation of the new website, and the ongoing planning for the 2008 conference, to be held in Brisbane, Queensland.

The website redevelopment project embraced web 2.0 principles and has delivered a new online identity for Arlis/ANZ which is dynamic, interactive and flexible. Members are able to co-create content; maintain their profiles; communicate via email, blogs and discussion fora; and pay membership dues and book conference attendance. Arlis/ANZ has entered a new era in its online presence.

The 2008 biennial conference will be held in the stunning facilities of the newly redeveloped State Library of Queensland. Delegates will also be able to visit the award-winning Gallery of Modern Art, part of the Queensland Art Gallery.

Arlis/ANZ members have also been active in other fora, with several members accepted to present at the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) conference in late 2008.

The Society continues to support its members, through awards and grants schemes. The Society offers a Travel and Research Grant Award, which enables members to access funding to undertake professional development or research activities, including attendance at conferences or job exchanges and visits. No awards were made in 2007, but applications have been received for 2008.

The Society launched a new award scheme in 2005 – the Online Grant – which offers members a source of independent funding for digitisation projects or similar activities, in order to make arts-related research materials and special collections publicly accessible in an electronic format. The scheme was endorsed as a biennial award by the 2007 Executive, but no applications were called for in 2007. It is planned that applications will be called for in 2009, and that the biennial schedule of the award will be reinstated.

CHAPTERS

The Larger Chapters are active professionally and socially. These are: New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Queensland and the north island of New Zealand. The Queensland Chapter is the host of the 2008 conference, and planning activities dominate its calendar. The other larger Chapters schedule regular meetings and events, including their obligation of an Annual General Meeting. Intra-Chapter knowledge sharing and sense of Community is strong within these larger Chapters, but inter-Chapter interaction occurs mainly via the Arlis/ANZ e-list.

The smaller Chapters often comprise only a few people, and are also usually geographically isolated. For instance, Northern Territory, Western Australia, Tasmania and South Australia have only one or two members each. The smaller Chapters are particularly aware of their need to maintain networks with other colleagues and groups in the library and information management sector. They would therefore benefit greatly from an active national Arlis/ANZ Community, but they are also the most likely to direct their energy into other relationships

and support networks outside Arlis/ANZ - particularly those with larger memberships - if Arlis/ANZ does not meet their needs.

THE CHALLENGES

The current challenges for Arlis/ANZ for 2008-2009 are:

1. To recruit, engage and retain members, and facilitate interaction.
2. To make available Society funds to benefit members.
3. To effectively document and manage corporate knowledge.

Arlis/ANZ is in competition for the time, attention, engagement and participation of its members. Arlis/ANZ's greatest assets are the relationships, networks, communication and knowledge sharing between its members. Facilitating these relationships is its best 'service' to its members. It is important that the Society put energy into those activities which enable members to effectively connect with each other.

The Society's awards and grants schemes are an important source of alternative funding for members, independent of their employing institution. It remains a challenge for the Society to effectively promote its funding schemes, and to administer them efficiently, consistently and transparently

The Society is administered by volunteers with varying levels of experience and personal engagement. Ensuring the authority, integrity and continuity of business processes and corporate knowledge is an ongoing challenge, exacerbated when position holders change every few years.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

1. The redevelopment of the website is an example of how the Society is working to provide better services to its members, to engage them and facilitate interaction. The website is dynamic and user-centred, allowing members to contribute content and maintain their own profiles.

The biennial conference remains the premier networking activity of the Society, and is also important to its business functions, in that the Annual General Meetings takes place as part of the programme. Arlis/ANZ exists for the most part as a 'virtual' Society, and the conference is one of the rare times when the Society as a physical entity (ie – a gathering of its members) exists.

Through the website and the conference, Arlis/ANZ is making available quality opportunities for its members to meet, interact and network.

2. The current Travel and Research Grants process and the planned Online Grants process for 2009 will enable to Society to continue to make available funds for the benefit of its members.

3. The new website supports collaborative content creation, which will enable more effective documentation and management of corporate knowledge. Experienced members and past position holders will be able to co-author documents online, such as policies, procedures and position guidelines. The website will be the medium through which the Society can reach consensus on its business processes, and standardise the various local systems used by individual position holders from each successive Executive.