



Annual General Meeting

The Association held its annual general meeting on 1 November. Ned Dennis retired as President after two years of very active involvement—which will continue in his capacity as immediate past president on the executive. The new President is Garry Traynor, a committed member of ALA for many years who served two terms as the Association's treasurer. Ellyn Martin has retired from the executive, having completed a two-year term in which she made a valuable contribution both through her work on the GST and as the Association's representative on AQFAB's RPL project (see below). Vaughan Croucher fills the vacancy on the executive.

Here are short biographical sketches of Garry and Vaughan:

Garry Traynor is the principal of Sydney Community College. He has been involved in community education for the past 20 years. He has a Masters in Adult Education from the University of Technology in Sydney. Garry is deputy president of the Sydney Institute TAFE Advisory Board and a member of the NSW TAFE accreditation council.

Vaughan Croucher is the Dean of Learning Services at the Canberra Institute of Technology. He has a strong commitment to lifelong learning. He has been a member of ALA ACT since 1991 and was an inaugural member and later Executive Officers of the ACT ACE advisory council. He has served on the MCEETYA ACE Taskforce and the ALW National Steering Committee as well as on

the national executive of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy.

At the subsequent meeting of the executive, the following positions were filled:

Vice President: Rita Bennink

Treasurer: Jan Dunsby

Secretary: Roger Morris.

Members also attended a workshop conducted by EdNA Online at which the possibilities for collaboration were discussed. There appear to be some exciting prospects for working together on building a learning communities website.

Recognition of Prior Learning

The Australian Qualifications Advisory Board has commissioned a project to:

- research existing policies and practices relating to Recognition of Prior Learning in the senior secondary school, adult and community education, vocational education and training, and higher education sectors; and,
- develop cross-sectoral, national RPL principles and operational guidelines

The consultants on the project are a team at the Southern Cross University. ALA made some initial comments on their report (take a look in the members' section on the website) but are still interested in hearing from the field. If you would like to read the paper go to the Southern Cross website: www.scu.edu.au/research/rpl/index.html. ALA will be putting together further comments to

be submitted at the end of the month. Please send your views to f.beddie@ala.asn.au.

Learning Communities

Another important conference on learning communities was held in October. It was jointly hosted by the OECD and the state of Victoria, and placed greater emphasis on policy issues than had the practitioner-focussed conference in Ballarat. That said there was considerable overlap in the discussions at both conferences, confirming that the momentum for learning communities is building. (Go to websites.net.au/oecd/papers.htm to view the papers from the conference.)

Much still needs to be done to explore the concept of a learning community both with policy makers and potential communities. ALA is planning to facilitate greater information sharing by establishing a learning communities website and by forging partnerships with other interested organisations, such as the Australian Local Government Association.

State Library of Victoria

Libraries have an important role to play in building a learning society so we are delighted to be building a relationship with the State Library of Victoria. The Library hosted a seminar for its staff on 30 October at which Professor Chris Duke, Francesca Beddie and Shanti Wong from Smart Geelong spoke on aspects of lifelong learning. Chris's and Francesca's papers are at www.ala.asn.au/docs/duke_paper.pdf and www.ala.asn.au/docs/SLV_address.pdf. This initiative will be followed up by a series of learning circles among Library staff.

Website of the Month

'infed.org, the home of informal education' (www.infed.org) is an information-rich resource providing introductory guides, definitions, essays and annotated bibliographies exploring the key concepts, thinkers, theory and practice of lifelong learning, adult education and many other aspects of informal education. Other features include an archive of full-text articles, a comprehensive encyclopedia, discussion forums and links.

The website is designed to deliver its information clearly and efficiently to the user. Pages are text-based and fast-loading, and the vast volume of content is searchable, categorised and cross-referenced throughout.

infed.org will be useful both as an overview of informal education for anyone who may be interested, and as a reference tool for students, academics and professionals in the field.

Francesca Beddie
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