

The ALA conference: call for papers

The forty-third ALA conference is titled COMMUNITIES OF LEARNING: COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE. It will be held at the University of Technology Sydney from 27 to 30 November 2003. Sydney ALA members are already hard at work on conference organisation.

The conference will have three strands: Learning at Work; Learning in Communities; and Learning in the Family. The cross-cutting issues at the conference will include: Indigenous learning and the needs of the older learner.

A call for papers was issued late last year, with a deadline of 31 March 2003, by when people are asked to submit a one-page outline of a proposed paper which explains how the paper would fit into the overall theme of the conference.

The concurrent sessions at the conference will encompass a full range of activities including: workshops; research reports; formal papers; round table discussions; and poster sessions. Submissions to run such a session are also invited. Proposals should reach the National Office by 30 April.

If your proposal is accepted you will receive full details as to how to prepare and present your paper or plan your workshop. It is intended to publish a set of refereed proceedings of the conference and there will be a prize for the best research paper presented by a student.

Submissions can be emailed to info@ala.asn.au or sent to: ALA National Conference, PO Box 308, Jamison Centre ACT 2614. For regular conference updates see www.ala.asn.au/conf/

ANTA consultations on the national VET strategy 2004-2010

Thank you to those who sent comments about the national strategy. In addition to the minutes of the special ALA-ANTA consultation held in February, we combined these comments and submitted them to the national strategy team (available at www.ala.asn.au/members). The deadline for comments on the strategy has been extended to 14 March, so if you would still like to submit your views go to www.anta.gov.au/dapStrategy.asp

Social and economic impacts of ACE

A long-awaited report on the social and economic impacts of adult and community education is just published. See www.ncver.edu.au/research/proj/nr0A03.pdf. The report concludes that 'the adult and community education sector improves the social capital of regions and communities, promotes lifelong learning, and raised the life skills and work skills of individuals. A broad defining feature of the sector is its primary focus on learners and their needs'. This is certainly welcome endorsement for the hard work we know is taking place in adult learning. Unfortunately, however, the report does not capture all that work and when it comes to numbers remains vague. Nevertheless, it calculates that the economic benefit of ACE to

the community is “most likely” over \$3 billion—not an insignificant figure! It also quotes a pessimistic figure of \$2 billion and an optimistic one of \$6 billion!

John Cross, ALA’s Research Manager has offered some preliminary comments on the report (available at www.ala.asn.au/docs/ncver_ace.pdf). We would also welcome your views on the report.

Flexible Learning Advisory Group (FLAG)

Rita Bennink, ALA’s Vice President, is the ACE representative on the Flexible Learning Advisory Group which oversees the planning and implementation of the Australian Flexible Learning Framework for the National Vocational Education and Training System 2000 – 2004. FLAG’s role is to advise ANTA CEO’s, the ANTA board, DEST, the education.au board and AITEC (Australian Information and Communication Technologies in Education Committee) on national issues related to the directions and priorities for flexible learning in VET, with particular reference to elearning. See flexiblelearning.net.au/aboutus/index.htm.

Rita’s role is to participate as the ACE representative; to advocate for the ACE sector within the decision making and planning processes of FLAG; to advise State and Senior Managers on flexible learning and Framework Outcomes; to consult with ACE stakeholders; to provide advice on ACE needs to FLAG; and to advocate for flexible learning and to encourage the uptake of AFLF products within the ACE sector. Rita is developing a consultation strategy and will be contacting many ALA members during the year. If you wish to contact her, her email is ritabenn@tafe.sa.edu.au.

Learning communities

ALA is the lead agency in an effort to create a Learning Communities Catalyst on-line. We are working with the Australian Learning Communities Network, EdNA and the Australian Local Government Association to gather resources which will be useful both for existing learning communities and ones thinking about forming a learning community. We hope the website will also prove to be an effective advocacy tool and a source of information about learning communities for policy makers. If you have resources you would like to contribute to the website, please contact Mary Hannan at m.hannan@ala.asn.au.

Things are moving on the ACT learning community front. Last year members of the ACT Branch of ALA together with other interested individuals formed a Learning Territory Working Group. The group made representations to the new ACT Minister for Education, Katy Gallagher, who has given official support for ACT as a Learning Community. The working group will now formalise links with the ACT Advisory Council on Adult and Community Education. This will include ensuring that Learning Territory plans are recognised in the Advisory Council’s Strategic Plan. The next major step is to engage key health, environmental, business, technology, cultural and educational organisations in discussing a learning community.

Website of the month

LILI - the LEARN information literacy initiative (www.tafe.sa.edu.au/lili) was created by the LEARN Network of South Australian TAFE Libraries, to provide online information literacy training for TAFE students. However LILI can be used freely by anyone. The seven interactive modules have no

specific study sequence and may be completed at the learner's own pace. Instructions and technical requirements are explained clearly, and a useful glossary is provided.

The skills developed in the modules, while targeting typical tasks for students—for example, analysing assignment topics, citing sources, searching library catalogues and the web—can be applied in a more general context for all learners wanting to effectively understand, locate and evaluate information in their employment and personal lives.

Secretary of Department of Education, Science and Training

The new secretary is Dr Jeffrey Harmer, former managing director of the Health Insurance Commission, who fills the vacancy left by Dr Shergold, now the head of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. See www.pm.gov.au/news/media_releases/2003/medi_a_release2160.htm

Communications Manager

And we are delighted to announce that the National Office will be welcoming a new member of staff next Monday. Jane Speechley joins us as Communications Manager. She will be overseeing the promotional aspects of Adult Learners' Week as well as seeking to increase ALA's profile in the media. Jane comes to us from the Department of Defence. She is also undertaking a Bachelor of Communications Degree (Media Communications) with Open Learning Australia via distance education from Griffith and Monash Universities.

Francesca Beddie
Executive Director, Adult Learning Australia