

FUTURE PREDICTIONS FOR THE AUSTRALIAN LIS SECTOR

This month ALIA President PATRICIA GENAT notes how things that seem unimpressive on the outside can often appear much more substantial if you look more closely.

This issue of *INCITE* is about the future of our sector, so first, a confession – I'm a *Doctor Who* fan. (Although I am still to be convinced that Peter Capaldi was the right choice for the current Doctor!)

Every fan of *Doctor Who* is familiar with the TARDIS, the time machine that looks like a 1960s UK police box but which is much bigger on the inside than it appears to be on the outside. I love the idea of something that's bigger on the inside, and I react most strongly to storylines in which people make flawed choices and then make powerful responses to fix things – usually by means for forging stronger relationships.

But reality kicks in, and even though I do have the sonic screwdriver app on my phone – the sonic screwdriver is a multifunctional tool that the Doctor uses – it's never managed to produce anything more than a nice sound – and no aliens have been scanned or discovered.

But the issues that define the important discussions of our industry at the moment are definitely bigger on the inside – Big Data, Linked Data, the transformation of publishing and introduction of digital formats, funding, copyright, streaming content, accreditation and training, global shifts in power and our local delivery of services that maintains strong, vibrant thinking communities.

We can get very involved in the digital argument for new and emerging technologies, and they certainly should have a space in community and academic libraries where safe exploration is open access. But just like the storylines, it's our human response and connection that always makes the difference between success and failure for any project, technology or idea.

The challenge for the future of our sector is not about the technology, the data, the format of the content or the increasing pressure on costs and service delivery. It is only – and always – about the people. In Australia, we

have fared better than our UK and US colleagues in terms of the strength of well-funded and community-supported library services across all sectors. Maybe it's because we are relatively isolated, or because we have better-educated library managers, or because we have a strong and politically active library association. Or it could be because we are generally very well connected and travelled, and we saw that we needed to seize the initiative and protect a valuable part of our cultural and community strength.

Whatever the reasons, the evidence is clear: Australia leads in many aspects of the library world. We win praise for our well-planned and executed Professional Development Scheme, we are continuing to open rather than close new public libraries and we offer many of our best library managers the opportunity to volunteer at an international level. And governments of all levels want to work with us. We also have strong competition for Board positions across all sectors, and we have above-average attendances at conferences and training events.

That's a lot more powerful than a sonic screwdriver (sorry, Doctor).

I'm so proud that we engage, create and lead in everything that we do for ALIA and our libraries and the people who work in them. I hope you feel that way too. ✨



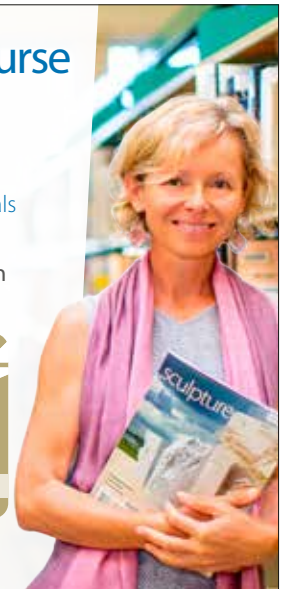
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