

# WE'RE ALL ON THE SAME PAGE

In March, we held our second vendor roundtable in Melbourne, with 14 representatives from publishing, technology, equipment, and service companies joining us to talk about how we can work more closely together.

Vendors and practitioners have a common goal, to ensure the long term success and sustainability of the library and information sector. A healthy sector means good business for vendors and good jobs for practitioners, so while we may be on opposite sides of the table for purchasing negotiations, we are working towards the same outcome.

Without vendor sponsorship and exhibition booths, conference attendance would be out of reach for most delegates. Without advertising, we wouldn't be able to publish INCITE. However, an open cheque book is only one part of the value vendors bring to the sector.

Vendors are well placed to enjoy an overview of what is happening across the industry. They can help map different types of library and information services, identify innovation, and promote excellence in Australian LIS to colleagues elsewhere in the world.

Advocacy and lobbying can be

difficult for practitioners employed by government. As private companies, vendors are not restricted in this way, and have the opportunity to be strong advocates for library and information service. Examples include:

- Softlink supporting our 13 Project for school libraries by tailoring its annual school library survey to include questions about cybersafety.
- Scholastic Group helping us promote libraries' role in early reading and literacy by helping us deliver National Simultaneous Storytime.
- Proquest getting behind Library and Information Week, to help us make this landmark event even more relevant to our members in academic libraries.
- The One Umbrella running a free careers workshop at Information Online, in Brisbane, and Zenith Management supporting an event for Queensland Government library and information professionals in danger of losing their jobs.

As commercial enterprises, library vendors are very good at gathering data and intelligence about the sector, and generous about sharing, where it doesn't give away trade secrets.

For the Future of the Profession project we are working with vendors to factor their insight into likely scenarios for the sector heading towards 2025. We will also soon be introducing a new corporate membership category of the Association, recognising the importance of vendors.

Thanks to OCLC for hosting the meeting at its King Street office and to our vendor colleagues for giving up their afternoons to be part of the discussion. Thanks also go to the Australian Library Suppliers' Association in Sydney for participating in, and to Zenith Management for hosting, a similar but smaller session late last year.

We would also like to thank Holley Dumble from Ex Libris for her commitment to providing vendor representation on the ALIA Information Online 2013 Conference Program Committee.

If you would like to participate in our roundtables, please contact sue.mckerracher@alia.org.au.

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