
The President's Page

In presenting this, the report to the 17th Annual General Meeting, it was timely as we move to a new management structure for ANZTLA, to read in the ATLA Newsletter, Sharon Taylor (President) reflecting on the duties and legal and moral responsibilities of the ATLA Board. In part this message was influenced by the recent Enron debacle. In particular, she noted that a Board had a responsibility to, in her words "to sit up and pay attention, ask questions, and if you don't understand the answers, to ask again." That is what the Executive has been doing in the period since the last Annual General Meeting.

The previous Annual General Meeting, charged the Executive with proceeding to incorporate the Association as a company limited by guarantee under Australian Commonwealth Corporations Law. This has necessitated a careful reworking of our constitution to take into account the legal requirements of incorporation. And in doing that, many questions have had to be asked, to enable us to understand just what it is that we are working towards. This has been the major work of the Executive this year.

Since the beginning of ANZTLA, we have operated on what might be called a mutual self-help level, with the major direction being one of enhancing the professionalism of theological libraries and librarians. In agreeing to pursue the direction of incorporation last year, we in effect move now to a different level of operation, where much more will be required of us. It is important that in doing so, we do not lose sight of the real reason for our existence and the groundwork that was so carefully laid by far-sighted earlier members.

The other significant on-going project has been the future of the **Australasian Religion Index**. You will be aware that the agreement with the Centre for Information Studies has been discontinued and that a Review Committee has been working to find a way forward for the

future. We have had no printed index since 2000, and it is vital that we move forward with this project. In the meantime the indexers have continued with the indexing work, and we are grateful to the interim editorial team of Philip Harvey, Ruth Millard and Lawrence McIntosh for the work they are doing to ensure that the data will be ready for future input.

The Executive has made much use of email to enable it to function efficiently across the water. Without such electronic facilities, it would have been very difficult to achieve the same level of information sharing and amending. The internet has also made it relatively simple to look at the charters and codes of practice of other similar organizations. Our own ANZTLA Forum and web site have enabled distribution to members of draft documents for consideration before this AGM, although it is acknowledged that not all of our members yet have access to this means of communication.

Last year's very successful conference held in Auckland, was the first time that ANZTLA has worked closely with the SPATS librarians, although we have had some individuals attend in the past. I have heard recently that SPATS has an interest in ensuring that a group of librarians from their Association attend the 2003 conference. We were made more aware of the close on-going relationships we have with the Pacific, our responsibilities to that part of the world, and their special needs and reliance on ANZTLA libraries. A library consultation for this same group was held at St John's College for the two days following the Conference, through which we hope that the groundwork of a network amongst themselves was laid, and some further library skills were gained.

Lynn Pryor has notified her intention to step down as editor of the Newsletter. Lynn, we owe you a huge thank you for the many years given to this work.

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The creation of a web searchable catalogue involved the conversion of data from a previous database into Microsoft Access format. With ASP programming there is author, title, subject and keyword searching.

Costs associated with this project were kept to a minimum, with the Sisters paying less than \$1000. This has been a very successful venture and the CathLINK Team would be happy to speak to anyone who would like to attempt something similar.

Australian Catholic Church History Project

At this point in time many institutions are taking increasing advantage of digital technology to preserve and facilitate better access to rare and important resources. The Catholic Church in Australia is yet to take real advantage of this technology to help tell its own story. The inclusion of a collection of digitised Australian Catholic Church resources therefore represents a logical and very timely

extension to the range of services offered by CathLINK.

This project is being developed in partnership with the Veech Library at the Catholic Institute of Sydney. It is envisaged that this will be a self-contained resource, which will include a short history of the Catholic Church in Australia, from which there will be links to relevant digitised documents and photographs. These will initially be drawn from the collection held at the Catholic Institute. The participation of other Catholic agencies from around Australia will also be sought.

Building on the idea, CathLINK has grown and is developing beyond its original start. Stephen Oakshott and the Team look forward to further practical engagement with all of the information agencies involved. An important next step is the formation of a user group to facilitate greater levels of co-operation. If you have any ideas or suggestions Stephen would be happy to discuss these with you.

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Lynn was first appointed as editor in 1987 until 1993, and then again from 1996 until this year. We have a nomination for editor from the South Australian chapter.

Thanks are also due to Tony McCumstie for on-going work in producing a new edition of **AULOTS**. I understand that it is well on the way and scheduled for production this year.

Philip Harvey has once again run a very successful Pettee Users group workshop and a cataloguing workshop prior to the Conference proper. Philip, we are grateful for your skills in this area, and your willingness to share your expertise.

Following an inward-looking year as we

have worked to sort out a new management structure for the Association, I believe that it is time to start looking outwards, and to improve on our 'marketing' the benefits of membership to others.

This may be a task that is better achieved by local chapters – what about the many church and theology libraries that have little or no connection with the Association, and also the College and university libraries which have theology departments. Chapters – this is your challenge for the coming year.

Finally, I would like to thank the membership for their support during the year.

Judith Bright
President

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