ALIES

AUSTRALASIAN LIBRARIES IN THE EMERGENCY SECTOR

ALIES is a cooperative information network that aims to serve the common interests of emergency management agencies.

ALIES supports the information requirements of the emergency sector by sharing knowledge and resources within Australia and New Zealand.

Ask your librarian how ALIES is improving the information capacity of your organisation!

information catalysts

www.ema.gov.au/alies

REPORTS

Australasian libraries in the emergency sector – information catalysts

by Troy Watson, Library Manager, Emergency Management Australia.

Australasian Libraries in the Emergency Sector (ALIES) is a cooperative information network that aims to serve the common interests of emergency management agencies.

ALIES supports the information requirements of the emergency sector by sharing knowledge and resources within Australia and New Zealand, to increase the information capacity of emergency management agencies. The network collaborates to exchange and share knowledge, skills and resources, to maintain a distributed Australasian emergency management collection, and to provide an expert information service to the emergency sector.

The ALIES network was formed in 1991 and included a handful of emergency service libraries. By 2003 ALIES had 26 member libraries, and in 2008 has grown to include 40 member organisations from Australia and New Zealand. Membership of ALIES has grown particularly quickly in the last few years as we realise that more libraries (and their parent organisations) have a role to play in a whole-of-government approach to emergency management. In particular, this has seen the network move from a strictly 'emergency service' base, to a broader membership base that covers the full spectrum of emergency management. This has led to an increase in members from the recovery, science and environment areas.

Membership of ALIES is based on the involvement of a library's parent organisation in at least one of the four stages of emergency management – Prevention/ Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery. Member libraries range from Police, Fire & Ambulance services, through to State and Federal Government departments including Geoscience Australia and the Bureau of Meteorology, and non-government organisations such as Australian Red Cross. New members that have joined ALIES in the last twelve months include: Department of Human Services (Victoria), Department of Sustainability and Environment (Victoria), Department of Justice and Community Safety (Australian Capital Territory), GNS Science (New Zealand - Geological and Nuclear Sciences), Department of Internal Affairs (New Zealand) and Department of Families and Communities (South Australia).

ALIES library professionals may be known as librarians, knowledge managers, or information specialists, but our common goal is to promote the professional status of emergency management agency libraries and information services. ALIES works as a community of practice, providing an opportunity to exchange ideas, knowledge, experience, skills and resources, as well as a mechanism for contributing to wider policy issues affecting emergency management practices. The ALIES charter provides a formal framework for future direction of the network, and an Executive Committee of elected members is responsible for managing the affairs of the network.

ALIES library collections contain Australasian and international resources in subject areas across the emergency management sector including:

• Policing, criminology, security, intelligence and law

• Science and environment

• Hazards, disasters and epidemics

• Fire, ambulance and emergency services

Over recent years, ALIES has developed a number of tools to facilitate the sharing of resources across the network, and affordable access to electronic resources. These include: ALIESnet, a gratis Document Delivery network which includes the journal holdings of ALIES members; the ALIES e-list to communicate with members; an online secure 'Quickplace' for sharing information and managing knowledge; and consortia arrangements for a range of online databases. ALIES has

been an important contributor to the development of the AusDIN portal, particularly in relation to taxonomy development and adding content.

ALIES libraries vary from multi-branch government library services to small one person libraries. There are a number of 'big issues' that these libraries face and these are relevant across the special library sector, such as: downsizing; organisational restructure; changes in management; and budget cuts. In addition, marketing of the library within our organisations and externally is important, as well as changing services to meet the demands of users. In relation to delivery of library services ALIES libraries are particularly focused on targeted information services, online delivery of services, and delivery of services over distance, training and e-learning.

The ALIES conference/workshops, held annually since 2002, have become a regular and highly valued experience for ALIES librarians. Each conference has provided a forum for library professionals to engage with their colleagues and discuss ideas that ultimately benefit the emergency management sector. Hosted and funded by Emergency Management Australia at the Institute in Mount Macedon, Victoria, the annual conference is a valuable investment in the development of networks, knowledge transfer and professional practice.
The development and maintenance of relationships within the network is as important to the individual members as it is to the network and its continuity.

The ALIES 2008 Conference will be held from Sunday 16th to Thursday 20th March 2008 at Emergency Management Australia, Mt Macedon Victoria.
The theme of the conference is 'ALIES 3.0: information catalysts' and reflects the impact of Web 2.0 technology on libraries and how ALIES is evolving in a changing information environment. The focus of ALIES 3.0 is to go further than Web/Library 2.0 technologies and plan for the next 'version' of ALIES in order to move forward in the emergency sector information environment.
The conference is designed with four streams:

- Trends in emergency management – the current and future issues

- Pushing forward – the professional skills required to move ALIES libraries forward

- ALIES 3.0 – implementing Web 2.0 technologies to benefit member organisations

- ALIES in the 21st Century– strategic planning for the future of ALIES

The conference features keynote speakers from emergency management, knowledge management and libraries, including: Tony Pearce (Emergency Management Australia), Andrew Coghlan (Australian Red Cross), Bruce Budge (Queensland Fire and Rescue Service), Liz Curach (University Librarian, University

of Western Sydney), Christine Mackenzie (CEO, Yarra Plenty Regional Library), and Anne-Marie Schwirtlich (CEO & State Librarian, State Library of Victoria).

The objectives of the ALIES Conference are:

- To assist member libraries to broaden their focus by incorporating current knowledge and information management principles and practices into core business

- To conduct the ALIES Annual General Meeting (AGM)

- To exchange information on current information management trends which will encourage innovative practices within and between emergency sector libraries

- To discuss and plan marketing strategies for ALIES and individual members

- To contribute to a better understanding of resources of other emergency Sector libraries by creating improved access to information and people

- To develop strategies for future co-operation between member libraries, parent organisations and government bodies involved with emergency management

The 2007 conference featured 40 representatives from 30 ALIES libraries and was a fantastic opportunity for idea sharing, networking, and professional development. Similarly, the 2008 conference will prove to be an important event for emergency sector librarians, to assess the current and future role of ALIES and to identify key issues and projects for the next twelve months.

The Executive Committee is always keen to identify potential ALIES members. If you think your library may be eligible, please visit the ALIES website for more information or contact your nearest member library. A directory of member libraries is available on the ALIES website: www.ema.gov.au/alies.

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Attorney-General's Department
(Australian Government)

Australian Customs Service

Australian Federal Police

Australian Institute of Criminology

Australian Institute of Police Management

Australian Red Cross

Bureau of Meteorology

Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial
Research Organisation -
CMIT - Information Services Group

Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial
Research Organisation - Livestock Industries
Australian Animal Health Laboratory

Country Fire Authority (Victoria)

Department for Families and Communities
(South Australia)

Department of Emergency Services
(Queensland)

Department of Environment and
Conservation (Western Australia)

Department of Human Services (Victoria)

Department of Internal Affairs (New
Zealand)

Department of Justice (Victoria)

Department of Justice and Community
Safety (Australian Capital Territory)

Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries
(Queensland)

Department of Primary Industries and
Water (Tasmania)

Department of Sustainability and
Environment (Victoria)

Emergency Management Australia

Environmental Science & Research
(New Zealand)

Fire and Emergency Services Authority
of Western Australia

Geoscience Australia

GNS Science (New Zealand)

Metropolitan Fire Brigade (Victoria)

New South Wales Fire Brigades

New South Wales Police Service

New South Wales Rural Fire Service

New Zealand Fire Service

New Zealand Police

Northern Territory Police,
Fire & Emergency Services

Queensland Police Service

South Australia Police

South Australian Fire and Emergency
Services Commission

St John Ambulance (Western Australia)

Tasmania Fire Service

Tasmania Police

Tasmanian Ambulance Service

Victoria Police

Victoria Police Forensic Services

Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine

Western Australia Police