

# A Decade of SALIN

In 2010 SALIN, the South Australian Library and Information Network, celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> year of existence. What began as five friends, all library graduates, meeting regularly for lunch has lasted a decade and grown in size and strength. In April 2003, the founders of SALIN published an article outlining the formation of the group. In 2010, we look back at how far SALIN has come since then and where it might be heading in the future.

## How SALIN began

SALIN began as a networking group for new generation library and information professionals. A group of friends, frustrated at the lack of job opportunities for new graduates and the inability to make connections with librarians for mentoring purposes, decided to take matters into their own hands. Their solution was simple, form their own networking group, one that provided the very opportunities and skills they were seeking - networking and social interaction with other library professionals in a similar position to them.

In 2001 SALIN was formally initiated and an executive committee was formed. This committee organised events which library workers could attend to meet up with their peers. From seminars and forums to more social 'drink nights', these events formed the grounding of the first years of SALIN's existence.

## Has SALIN changed?

Today SALIN remains truthful to its beginnings but has matured and adapted to the needs of the group's membership. In preparation for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the current executive committee revisited the group's statement of values, clarifying and confirming the focus of SALIN:

*SALIN is grounded in three main elements - informal, informational and interactive. SALIN's focus is on professional networking and socialising with peers through regular social events, seminars and forums.*

As the founders intended, SALIN continues to be, at its core, a networking group for library and information professionals whether librarians, library technicians, library assistants, archivists, students or others in information-related fields. The group continues to be free and open to all who wish to join whether they are 'new generation' or a more 'experienced' professional. SALIN continues to have members from all library and information sectors. The only real change has been that the membership has significantly grown since the original article was written in 2003. At that time, it was reported that the e-list had 170 members. In 2010 the list now has over 750 subscribed members.

SALIN has also matured into more than just a networking group, conducting a number of events that lend itself more to professional development, not only for new graduates, but for established professionals also. While forums and seminars are still held, a number of workshops have been run in recent years to educate members on various subjects from selling yourself when applying for jobs to dealing with aggressive people in the workplace.

The e-list continues to be the group's main avenue for communication. The list is used for posting job vacancies, industry events including ALIA events, upcoming training as well discussions on topics of interest. The e-list continues to be the committee's main tool for advertising upcoming SALIN events.

One of the main developments of the last decade has been the expansion of SALIN's presence on the Internet. The SALIN website ([www.salin.org.au](http://www.salin.org.au)) also promotes upcoming events, as well as details what SALIN is, how to join the e-list, and provides an archive of

write-ups of past events. Having a website has been a major achievement in branding SALIN and increasing the profile of the group.

### Has SALIN continued to offer benefits?

The SALIN founders started the group because they wanted to create opportunities for themselves and others in a similar predicament. But did they succeed?

Past and present committee members would overwhelmingly answer yes. Reasons for joining the committee are varied but all boil down to two key themes - networking and professional development. While participating in SALIN events is often a great way to network with other library professionals, that experience is heightened when you become part of the executive committee. Organising events including coordinating presenters and welcoming attendees magnifies one's exposure to library professionals and enhances the chance of making contacts. If you are new to the profession and looking for a job, what better way to make some industry contacts than through being part of the executive committee of SALIN?

But being part of the committee is more than just networking. The opportunity for professional development is immense. Committee members can gain a variety of skills and improve on personal and professional qualities in a safe and supportive environment. Development areas include:

- Meeting chairing
- Meeting minuting
- Marketing
- Event organising
- Public Speaking
- Liaison skills
- Budgeting
- Website maintenance
- e-list maintenance
- Sponsorship negotiation
- Teamwork

For new graduates, especially those who have yet to gain employment, membership on the committee can be a useful addition to a job application and resume.

The make-up of the committee has changed throughout the years. Committee members have moved on to bigger things, others have joined to pick up where they left off. Those leaving often do so because they have achieved their personal goals for joining the group and thus move onto other activities. Many have moved onto other Library groups, such as ALIA committees ARCOM, New Graduates, and Specials SA. The current committee has members from different areas of the library sector - academic, public, specials, and government. Members vary from recent graduates to those who have been working in the industry for over 10 years; from contract staff to permanent employees; from part-time workers to full-time workers. A good balance is essential to ensure all potential viewpoints and circumstances are catered for.

The benefits to members may be a little harder to quantify. However the fact that the group still exists, membership to the e-list has grown, and people still attend the organised events is a sign that there are definite benefits to being involved with the activities of SALIN.

## Highlights of the last 10 years

There have been a number of achievements of the past decade that are worth noting. Most importantly has been the SALIN website and logo. The website was created in 2005 and now in 2010, the committee have decided it is time for a new look. A new website has been commissioned and will hopefully be launched in time for the 10 year anniversary in October. Early in 2010 a new logo was also designed and will accompany the website launch. The previous logo was a useful branding tool and accompanied official documentation including minutes, emails, and e-list postings.



The new logo continues the purple scheme and is based on the themes of networking and community. It also emphasises the South Australian aspect of the group.



More recently SALIN has also created its own Facebook page, reaching out to an even greater range of potential members via this social networking application. While still in its infancy, the Facebook page is used to promote events and generate interest for SALIN for those who are avid Facebook users. Other highlights of the progress of SALIN include success at securing sponsorship for an event, which required complex negotiations, and being approached by organisations to host events on their behalf. These activities show, not only the depth of SALIN's skill improvement, but the group's standing within the community.

In terms of events SALIN have held, there have been a number of highlights. There have been regular workshops - both the *Ready to Apply* and the *Day in the Life of* series have been well received for their interactive and instructional nature. Other seminars have covered topics such as stress management, networking, and library-related controversies. Library tours occur every year and are always well attended. A recent highlight was the tour of the Women's Prison Libraries which are staffed by volunteers. It took much time and effort to arrange access to such a restricted area, but it was worthwhile to see the current set-up within the Women's prison. The tour resulted in the establishment of a collaborative arrangement between a local public library service and the correctional services to provide a regular exchange of recent material.

A major highlight for SALIN occurred in 2008. SALIN hosted two screenings of the Library-related documentary *Hollywood Librarian*. Organising the premiere screening of the film in Adelaide was a major undertaking for the committee. Not only did it involve liaising with the director who was in the United States but the logistics of holding the screening was larger than anything the group had ever undertaken before. Challenges faced included securing a venue, finding a sponsor, developing appropriate promotion, working out a plan for the day, handling large sums of money, obtaining insurance, and dealing with a certain element of risk - that one of the biggest events SALIN had attempted would

all go to plan. The event was a huge success with the first screening booking out within days, and a decision made to organise a second screening. In all, SALIN's foray into the world of film premieres had been a gamble that paid big dividends.

### Challenges Ahead

While SALIN enjoys success as an informal networking group, challenges do exist for the future. The committee, it should be remembered, while dedicated is still a volunteer group. Therefore giving up time and effort and balancing work and life with SALIN commitments can often be difficult especially when other areas of life become more demanding for periods of time. It can also be challenging to maintain enthusiasm for SALIN at times when other aspects of life become overwhelming.

Another challenge lies with the activities of the group itself. How does SALIN continue to offer events that appeal to the membership? It is important to stay relevant to the very people the group is here to support, so providing events and workshops that attract members is vital. Ensuring consistent attendance or a healthy turnout to events on a regular basis will be a continuing challenge for SALIN. Committee members are already trying to tackle this issue via another means by promoting events beyond the e-list, for example via the Facebook page, into University and TAFE courses and on other library e-lists. So far, keeping a fresh outlook on the committee through regular turnover of members has been one way of maintaining new event ideas for SALIN members.

The biggest challenge for SALIN is constantly thinking - Where to now?

### Conclusion

Looking back over the past decade, why has SALIN survived and even thrived in that time? Why has it been successful? Firstly, it began because of a true need. Networking is important in the library field, especially for new graduates hoping to get noticed in a small city that has an even smaller library industry. Secondly, the committee continues to be staffed by enthusiastic and passionate people who care about creating a warm, inviting and educational environment for other library workers. Thirdly, the events provided remain relevant and interesting with enough variety to appeal to a wide range of the e-list members.

SALIN is not the only Library and Information Network in existence, but it is definitely a unique one. And in these times of clones and copycats, that is something to treasure. Happy 10<sup>th</sup> Birthday SALIN.