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Executive Director

It was Samuel Langhorne Clemens, better known by his pen name Mark Twain, who wrote in his autobiography 'There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics.' While these words have entered the vernacular, the prudence of the observation that we must exercise caution when interpreting statistics should not be forgotten.

With this caveat established, the release of *Cultural Trends in Australia: a statistical overview* by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) on 30 June provides us with some reassuring information about libraries. A number of different surveys have been drawn together to establish a profile of attendance

at cultural venues, employment in culture and government outlays on culture.

In June 1991 the ABS surveyed attendance at eight selected cultural venues, one of which was 'the library'. The highest participation rates for all venues were recorded for library attendances (36.7%). These participation rates varied according to the age and sex of the participants with the highest participation rate for women occurring in the 35-44 year age group where 53.4% had visited a library at least once in the previous twelve months. The survey also found that, in relation to library attendance:

- High participation rates (over

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85%) occurred in the younger age group (18 to 44 years).

- Frequency of visits tended to increase with age with 48.1% of library users aged 65 and over attending a library more than 15 times over the 12 month survey period.
- Survey participants with a tertiary degree recorded twice the participation rate of those with no qualifications (62.8% and 30.2% respectively).
- Over 43% of unemployed persons and 51.4% of part-time employees used a library during the survey period.
- Of those who did not visit a library, 4.8% cited illness, disability or language problems as a

Persons attending selected cultural venues/activities

Venue/Activity	Number ('000)			Participation rate (%)		
	Capital city	Rest of State	Total	Capital city	Rest of State	Total
Library	2 935.7	1 506.8	4 442.5	37.8	34.7	36.7
Art gallery	1 969.4	917.4	2 886.8	25.4	21.1	23.9
Museum	2 470.0	1 163.0	3 632.9	31.8	26.8	30.0
Popular music concert	2 261.4	1 195.0	3 456.4	29.2	27.5	28.6
Dance performance	947.7	401.7	1 349.4	12.2	9.3	11.2
Musical theatre	1 746.9	680.5	2 427.4	22.5	15.7	20.1
Other theatre performance	1 545.3	606.0	2 151.3	19.9	14.0	17.8
Classical music concert	743.2	242.7	985.9	9.6	5.6	8.2

Source: ABS, *Attendance at selected cultural venues, Australia, June 1991* (4114.0)

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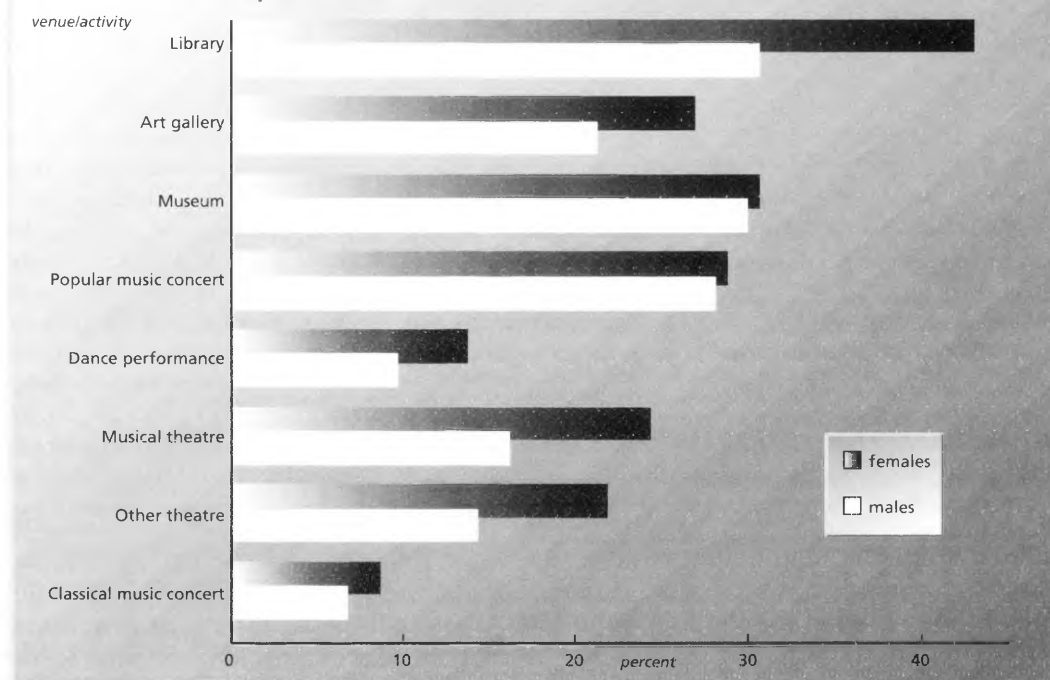
Library attendance by employment status and sex, 1991

Participation rate (per cent)

	Males	Females	Persons
Full-time employed	27.2	41.7	31.7
Part-time employed	45.1	53.1	51.4
Total employed	28.6	46.4	36.0
Unemployed	37.8	53.3	43.8
Not in labour force	33.8	38.2	36.8
Total	30.4	42.9	36.7

Source: ABS, Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues, Australia, June 1991 (4114.0)

Participation rates at venues and activities, Australia 1991



late library statistics is the diversity of the collection agencies. Another is the incomparability of sets of statistics. In spite of the caution we should exercise when dealing with statistics they provide an important basis for establishing the value of libraries. For this reason ALIA has embarked on a statistics collection project which

reason but 91.9% of non-users said no barriers prevented them from visiting a library.

These statistics demonstrate that libraries are a well-used community resource and we should ensure that this fact is well-known to policy-makers and funding bodies in all spheres of government. Because survey participants were

all over 18 years of age the ABS also assumed that responses excluded visits to school and special libraries. While some respondents may have visited university or TAFE libraries, we must assume that these figures principally apply to public libraries.

One of the difficulties we encountered when attempting to col-

will encompass libraries in all sectors. We hope to make a comprehensive report available to members in May 1995—to coincide with Australian Library Week. In the interim, if you want more information about the ABS statistics appearing in this column, you should acquire ABS Catalogue No 4172.0.



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PLACEMENT WANTED...

Stephanie Nakatt, Head Mistress and head of the library of Namatanai High School, PNG, is a member of the School Library Association of PNG who is looking for a placement in a secondary school here for 2-4 months to gain work experience in preparation for her school's enrolling years 11 and 12. Offers directly to Stephanie, please, at Namatanai High School, PO Box 4, Namatanai, New Ireland Province, PNG.