

# The neXus census: an update on the current research into workforce planning issues

The neXus census was launched at ALIA's biennial Click06 conference in Perth in September 2006. The neXus research project, supported by ALIA, Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and CAVAL Collaborative Solutions, seeks to capture demographic, educational and employment data about LIS professionals at the individual level (Stage One), as well as employment policies and practices at the institutional level (Stage Two) to help achieve a comprehensive overview of LIS professional resource issues, challenges and opportunities.

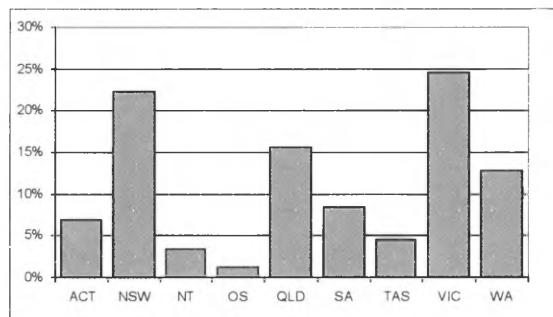
Stage One of the project, the neXus census, was a self-administered questionnaire for individuals accessible online for one month. It was promoted widely via ALIA, LIS special interest groups and organisational e-lists. The survey attracted 2346 valid online responses and eight paper-based responses.

The neXus census has delivered an immense amount of valuable quantitative and qualitative data: a series of reports are currently being prepared to present the detailed findings. Presentations have been given or are forthcoming to provide insights into specific angles of the data: for example, public libraries, the TAFE library sector, reference and information services staff, technical services staff and library technicians.

## Who, where and when?

Respondents came from across Australia (Figure 1) and represented the different sectors of the profession (Figure 2). Fifty per cent of respondents were 46 years and over, a favourable contrast with the figures published by Australian Job Search (<http://jobsearch.gov.au/careersearch.aspx>), where it was reported that 65 per cent of librarians were 45 years and over.

Figure 1: Geographical distribution



The Australian LIS profession attracts a significant number of career change workers; that is, graduates of LIS courses may be entering a second or third career. LIS workforce planning, therefore, must distinguish between chronological age and career age. For example, 40 per cent of 'new graduates' (five years or less in the sector) indicated that they had changed careers, meaning that 44 per cent of 'new graduates' were over 40 years old. New entrants to the profession may wish to gain a variety of experience and diverse employment opportunities early in their careers, which can result in more frequent hiring and induction processes for employers.

## Heading for retirement

Table 1 shows the length of time respondents anticipated remaining in the workforce. On these figures, almost one-third (32%) of the current workforce will have retired by 2015.

Significantly, this is almost double the number who actually fall into the chronological age group of 56 years and older, meaning there is a strong trend for people to retire early.

Figure 2: Sector representation

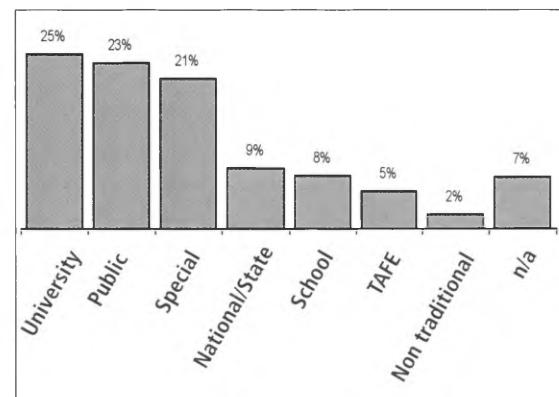


Table 1: Anticipated time until retirement

Years until anticipated retirement	%
1–3 years	7%
3–5 years	9%
6–10 years	16%
Total 2006–2015	32%

Now that we have the data, the challenge for the sector is how best to use it for initiatives and projects that will add to the sustainability and future development of our profession. The Collection Council of Australia's Conservation Survey 2006 (see the article in the May 2007 issue of *inCite*) also seeks professional engagement to ensure a sound and viable future. People are at the heart of our profession: there needs to be an ongoing focus on people entering and leaving the profession, along with the skills they bring with them, skills they need to develop as their career grows and matures, and the skills that will need replenishing as they retire. It is all about the nexus between education, curriculum, recruitment, retention, training and development.

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## 979-prefixed ISBNs to appear early in 2008

The International ISBN Agency has announced that ISBNs with a prefix of 979 are likely to start being assigned in the second quarter of 2008.

Up till now, 13-digit ISBNs have all carried the 978 prefix, allowing systems to carry both 10 and 13-digit ISBNs. Once the 979 prefix is introduced there can be no 10-digit equivalent as this could lead to duplication of numbers. It is therefore essential that book trade and library systems are prepared to process the full 13-digit number.

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