

COUNTING DOWN TO ALIA NATIONAL 2014

The ALIA House team is in countdown mode in the last couple of weeks leading up to the ALIA National Conference in Melbourne from 15 to 19 September. The Conference Committee has created a terrific line up of speakers including keynotes Susan Benton, Dr Marianne Broadbent and Roly Keating, and more than 600 delegates, exhibitors, sponsors and guests will be making their way to the Pullman, Albert Park, to participate in this highlight of the library and information calendar.

The conference will be a great opportunity to showcase some of the excellent work carried out by ALIA Members in recent times through the different streams, including students and new graduates, research, copyright, school, academic, health, TAFE, public, national and state libraries.

Our Education, Skills and Employability Summit on the Thursday of the conference will include the launch of the *ALIA Education, Skills and Employability Trend Report 2014*.

This report provides a valuable overview of what has been happening in LIS education and the job market over the last five years and will contribute to our understanding of how best to direct the Association's efforts in future. There are currently 26 universities, TAFEs and colleges delivering ALIA accredited courses around Australia to approximately 2,800 students.

One of the themes emerging from the report is how small we are as a sector – around 0.2% of the Australian workforce – and yet how great our reach and profile is through our library and information service users – close to half the population. The business performance of library and information vendors, documented in the report, clearly demonstrates the difficult times the sector has faced over the last five years, but there are signs of recovery. And while there is some despondency about job prospects in the sector, the figures from government and other sources suggest this lack of confidence may be over-played.

The statistics in this report indicate that the library and information sector remains an attractive proposition for qualified professionals looking for relatively well paid positions and regular hours, although there is increased competition for jobs. Baby boomer retirees have not yet created sufficient new openings in existing positions and we have yet to see the 3.6% increase in jobs predicted for 2018 by the Department of Employment.

The essential role of education underpinning participation in the sector remains strong, with 69% of workers having librarian or technician qualifications. In fact, educational attainment in the sector is far higher than that for all occupations. For example, some 60% of librarians have a post graduate qualification, compared with 9% for all occupations.

The full *ALIA Education, Skills and Employability Trend Report 2014* will be launched by our President at the ALIA National Conference. If you aren't able to be there in person to hear the results, it will be available on the ALIA website from 22 September.

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