



Statistically Speaking

Australia's libraries and LIS professionals

There's nothing quite like the start of a brand new year to focus our attention on where we are, and where we want to be. Over recent years, as part of our focus on advocacy, ALIA has been collecting and disseminating evidence-based information about our profession. This has included undertaking major projects such as an environmental scan of the current research agenda, the recent education and employment trend report and the Future of the Profession project. These projects have collated useful data for the many members of the profession

making regular business cases for their libraries and information services to policy makers and financial managers.

As we move into 2015, we've collected some of these findings from across the profession to give members a 'state of the nation snapshot'. It's not exhaustive, but you may find some of these facts and figures surprising. We encourage you to collect your own evidence wherever you can, and to use these figures to support your initiatives.

University Libraries

It is a requirement for all universities in Australia to have a university library service. Many institutions see these collections and services as a symbol of their organisation's investment in 21st century learning. Specialist skills in this field reach from in-depth collection and subject knowledge and original cataloguing and metadata application, to high level research and experience in procurement and contracts to support subscription negotiations. The Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) represents the library leaders in the sector. Their research shows that, between them in 2012, Australia's 39 universities:

- Operated 203 university libraries
- Employed 4,050 people, including 1,589 library professionals and 907 paraprofessionals
- Were used by one million staff and students
- Made over 15 million loans
- Had a total expenditure of \$667m, of which \$331m was allocated to salaries and resources budgets totalled \$218m.

VET Libraries

The other key group in the tertiary sector is the Vocational Education and Training (VET) library sector. Library and information professionals in these libraries also make use of specialist subject knowledge and are dedicated to helping students improve their employability, a task that can also involve significant expertise in delivering programs for information literacy education and learning support.

There are 61 Institutes of TAFE around Australia (ACT 1, NSW 12, NT 1, QLD 13, SA 4, TAS 1, VIC 17, WA 11). Although complete information on this sector is not readily available, an analysis of Victorian TAFE and university libraries in 2012 found:

- The average library budget allowed per TAFE student was \$26.36 while the average for university students was \$459.70
- The staff to student ratio in TAFE was one staff member to 793 students while the ratio for university libraries was one staff member to 352 students.



School Libraries

In Australia's school libraries, teacher librarians are valued members of the teaching community as well as being members of the library team. There are 9,427 primary and secondary schools in Australia. The resourcing of these libraries varies enormously. Some are experimenting with completely electronic collections, while others have developed into flagship library and information technology hubs, providing study spaces and facilities for group learning as well as their collections. The ALIA School Libraries Advisory Committee and ALIA Schools Group (based in Victoria) liaise with the Australian School Library Association and state-based school library associations to deliver a united voice for the sector.

The 2011 report from the Australian Government Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Librarians stated that one of the dominant themes that emerged is a lack of hard data, although:

- A 2010 Australian Council for Education Research survey of staff in Australian schools suggests there are some 5,600 teacher librarians in primary schools and 2,900 in secondary schools, making a total of 8,500
- According to research carried out in 2013 by Queensland University of Technology and the School Library Association of Queensland, 'At schools without a qualified teacher librarian, school NAPLAN scores were consistently below the national mean score for NAPLAN reading and writing, and one principal related declining growth in average NAPLAN reading scores to the lack of a qualified teacher librarian.'

Public Libraries

Local and state or territory funding supports some 1515 public library service points across Australia, including 1,439 fixed point and 76 mobile libraries. Public libraries manage collections across a significant range of formats, provide access to resources such as the internet for their communities and develop and deliver hundreds of different programs and services geared to their communities' specific needs.

Consultants SGS Economics and Planning undertook research into the return on investment of Australia's public libraries for ALIA and the results, published in 2013, revealed our public libraries generate an annual benefit of \$1.97 billion, representing a benefit cost ratio of 2.9. The consultants also found the larger the investment in public libraries, the greater the benefits derived by their communities.

Figures provided in the latest National and State Libraries Association report for the 2012–2013 financial year showed:

- More than seven out of 10 public libraries were open for more than 30 hours each week
- Almost 174 million items were lent to 10 million members of Australia's public libraries and more than 40 million items were made available for the use of the community
- Library customers made more than nine million visits to public libraries per month
- Over \$128 million was spent on ensuring Australia's public library collections were kept up to date and relevant, part of a total expenditure on public libraries of \$1.02 billion (a 18% increase over the previous year)
- On a per capita basis, funding for public libraries increased by 12% in 2012-2013.

Number of higher education students enrolled in Librarianship, Information Management and Curatorial Studies at various levels





Special Libraries

Based on the Australian Libraries Gateway database, there are between 2,200 and 2,400 special libraries in Australia, but an exact figure is hard to pin down because these libraries can be hidden within organisations. It also depends on the definition used, as anything from a volunteer-run historical society collection to a teaching collection may qualify as a special library.

Effective, fast and thorough search skills are critical in this sector and expertise in filtering, evaluating and packaging search results is part and parcel of a special librarian's job. Collections are dynamic and collection development focuses frequently on access to the latest authoritative resources.

- The return on investment of special libraries is estimated to be in the region of \$5.43 for every dollar spent, according to a 2013 study undertaken by ALIA in partnership with the Australian Law Librarians' Association, ALIA Health Libraries Australia and Health Libraries Inc.

Collecting Institutions

There are nine collecting institutions in Australia: The National Library of Australia, the State Libraries of New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia, the ACT Heritage Library and the Northern Territory Library.

The primary role of these libraries is to collect, preserve and provide access to the documentary history of Australia, including books, manuscripts, documents, images, maps and other materials, in print and other formats. Library and information professionals in these institutions manage legal deposit collections and frequently curate collections, providing context for items and formats and ensuring access to materials will always be available.

Our state and territory libraries also provide a leadership role, supporting public libraries within their jurisdiction and working in partnership with archives, museums, galleries, university and special libraries to enhance knowledge and access to unique collections.

National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) represents these institutions. In the 2011–2012 financial year, NSLA reports revealed:

- 12 million people visited these library buildings
- 217 million pages were viewed on websites
- 1,703 terabytes of digital collections were stored
- 1,700 staff, including librarians, library technicians, archivists, curators and professionals from other disciplines were employed
- The asset value of these collections was recorded as \$5.2 billion, while the asset value of the buildings and sites was given as \$1.02 billion.

ALIA Futures

In 2013, we set out to investigate the big questions about our future.

- How will libraries remain relevant for users?
- What changes will institutions and individuals in the sector experience?
- Will 'library and information professional' continue to be a necessary and desirable occupation?

We received challenging, insightful, inspiring responses to our request for feedback at events held all around Australia. As a result, we have been able to identify themes and develop actions that will support positive outcomes.

ALIA Futures - Generic themes for the LIS sector

Ten themes covered all library and information services, including school, public, university, TAFE and special libraries, and collecting institutions.

1. Libraries and information management

The same skills, differently interpreted.

2. Fair

People's love of libraries is underpinned by our contribution to a fair and just society.

3. Equality of opportunity

We help to overcome the gap between advantage and disadvantage.

4. Funding

Library users and funders have a different perception of the value of our services.

5. The library experience

Others provide information, but no one else provides the library experience.

6. Analogue and digital

We will need to look good and work well both online and in real life.

7. More space not less

More space for people, less space for books in our future libraries.

8. Stretching collection budgets

More content, in multiple formats – we will need to be smart with our money.

9. Community created content

Libraries will help connect readers with all kinds of new content from surprising creators.

10. Unimaginable technologies

Technology will continue to have a massive impact on how we work and the services we deliver.

The findings from the ALIA Futures project have been produced as seven reports, available as pdf downloads from the ALIA website www.alia.org.au



The Profession

The body of knowledge required to become a library and information services professional is built around seven core areas of knowledge:

- Knowledge of the broad context of the information environment
- Information seeking
- Information architecture
- Information organisation and access
- Information services, sources and products
- Information management
- Generation of knowledge

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, employment in the library sector has remained fairly static over the last decade. *The ALIA LIS Education, Skills and Employment Trend Report 2014* released late last year (available online at bit.ly/1ricKzc) revealed the library and information services sector may be relatively

small, but it is also a sector with a highly qualified workforce, with both established specialisations such as teacher librarianship, and emerging specialisations such as health librarianship, reflected in ALIA's recognition as Certified Professionals in selected fields.

- Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show there are approximately 25,000 librarians employed in Australia, although these figures do not include library and information professionals working outside libraries, nor do they include professionals from other disciplines (for example finance and human resources) working in Australian libraries.
- The ALIA Trend Report shows that, in comparison with other occupations, librarians and library technicians have attained significantly higher levels of education, and librarians' average weekly earnings are 30% above the national average.

Evidence is essential to making any case for funds or to create effective policies and procedures. ALIA remains committed to supporting ongoing research

to support advocacy across the profession. You can find more resources online at www.alia.org.au.



NLS7 
SYDNEY 2015

ALIA's NLS7 is a low-cost, high-value 3-day event of speaker sessions and workshops geared towards students and new Library and Information Sector professionals but open to everyone.

- Theme:** Trajectories
Dates: 24–26 July 2015
Location: NSW Teachers Federation Conference Centre,
37 Reservoir Street, Surry Hills
Web: <http://nls7.org>
Twitter: #ALIANls7