

FUTURE OF THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE PROFESSION: PUBLIC LIBRARIES

BACKGROUND

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. The findings from the project have been produced as seven reports, available as pdf downloads from the ALIA website www.alia.org.au. This is a taster for public libraries.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

There were 12 themes that emerged, specific to our 1,500 public libraries.

1. **50:50 by 2020**
Ebooks will be important, and so will print — we're not writing off the physical book.
2. **Reading — a national pastime**
People read, borrow and buy books; demand will increase rather than decrease.
3. **New media**
Transmedia opportunities will see highly interactive ebooks, book apps, and other exciting developments.
4. **Support for the creative economy**
Even greater support from libraries for Australian authors, illustrators and publishers.
5. **Community created content**
Libraries will enable people to create and share new works.
6. **It's not all about the book**
Libraries will continue to connect people with information and ideas — and much, much more.
7. **Maker spaces**
We will provide places for exploration and discovery through the use of shared resources.
8. **Enterprise hubs**
Expanded services will be designed for job seekers, entrepreneurs, freelance and other home workers.
9. **Online learning**
Public libraries will partner with tertiary education providers to support students.
10. **Everyone a member**
Our vision is of the gift of a library membership card for every child at birth.
11. **Local services through a national network**
Territory and state and locally funded libraries will build on the strength of collaboration to deliver national projects.
12. **The meaning of free**
Core services will remain free to library users, but there will be pressure to charge for add-on services.

GENERIC THEMES

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.

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS

A further ten themes looked at the professionals who work in library and information services.

- 1. Balancing the workforce**
New recruits will help increase age diversity.
- 2. Higher paid jobs**
Salaries will better reflect the importance of our role.
- 3. Aiming for the top**
We will need to sharpen our business skills, demonstrate flexibility and help lead change.
- 4. What we call ourselves**
Librarians and information professionals will co-exist.
- 5. Guardians of privacy**
We see an expanded role as guardians of our users' personal privacy.
- 6. Technology for all**
Every LIS professional will need to be proficient in IT.
- 7. Beyond the library**
We will find new employment opportunities outside traditional library settings.
- 8. Ongoing learning**
Professional development will be a necessity for anyone on a career trajectory.
- 9. Future leaders**
Succession planning and support for emerging leaders will be essential.
- 10. Visibility**
Remaining visible in an increasingly digital environment will be one of the challenges.