



ALIA TAFE LIBRARY SURVEY 2016

About TAFE libraries

There are 246 TAFE libraries in Australia, supporting VET students in every State and Territory.

Background

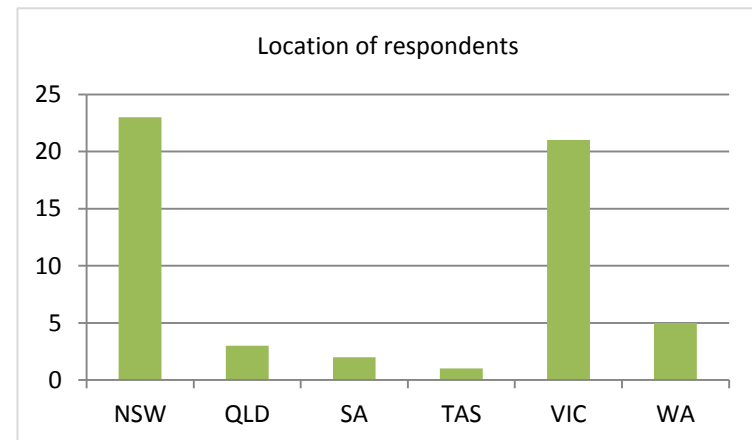
At the beginning of 2016, ALIA's Vocational Education and Training Libraries Advisory Committee (VLAC) sought feedback about how changes in structure and funding have affected TAFE libraries and the library and information professionals who run them.

Methodology

TAFE libraries were asked to complete an online questionnaire with 32 questions relating to changes in collection format, staffing, funding, space and the size of population served. The survey ran from 1 to 25 February 2016.

Respondents

There were 55 responses from six states (the ACT and Northern Territory did not participate in the survey). This gave us a statistically significant participation rate.



SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

The last three years have been a period of significant change for TAFE libraries, with 31% of respondents saying they had experienced a major organisational restructure; 24% the integration of the library with other TAFE services and 18% the closure of a library.

1. Size of population served

25% of respondents had seen a decrease in students and 11% an increase.

2. Annual expenditure

31% of respondents noted a decrease in annual expenditure and 14% had either matched CPI or seen an increase. Looking ahead, 10% of respondents anticipated further decreases in funding.

3. Collection

The range of items to borrow had decreased according to 24% of respondents. While the range and number of loans of print books and journals had mostly decreased, the range and number of electronic resources had mostly increased.

4. Visitor numbers

Libraries saw more online engagement and fewer physical visits, although 16% of respondents noted an

increase in physical visits, alongside 38% for online visits. 13% of respondents said that opening hours had decreased.

5. Library staff

No respondent reported an increase in qualified library staff but 31% reported a decrease. Levels of non-LIS qualified staff were more stable, with 9% reporting a decrease. For the next 12 months, 6% anticipated a further decrease in staffing levels.

6. Spaces

For 31% of respondents, the floor space had stayed the same or decreased (11%). This was also the case for individual and group study areas. It was anticipated that this would be the case in 2016-2017.

7. Service levels

While few respondents noted an increase in services such as document delivery, information and digital literacy training, research and literature reviews, there were comparatively few who noted a decrease in these services. For most respondents, service levels in these areas had remained the same.

COMMENTS ON FINDINGS

TAFE libraries have not escaped the dramatic changes taking place in vocational education and training, often as a result of cost-cutting.

Annual expenditure fell for most libraries and the impact of this could be seen in the staffing levels.

The reduction in library staff appeared to exceed the fall in student numbers and yet most libraries were maintaining access to library staff expertise and one-on-one support, and service levels in other areas such as information and digital literacy training. This suggests fewer staff working harder to maintain services.

The loss of qualified library and information professionals is a serious concern.

The move to digital has become well-established, in terms of the collection (books, journals, eresources) but it is not clear if this has resulted in budget savings or if electronic resources cost as much as or more than print.

The decrease in opening hours would have been a factor affecting the decrease in physical library visits, so we cannot assume from the survey results that online engagement with the library is the preferred method for students.

QUOTES FROM RESPONDENTS

“Staffing expenditure is keeping pace with CPI; materials and resource expenditure is decreasing. While all library staff currently hold professional qualifications, organisational management has started looking at non-qualified library staff as an option.”

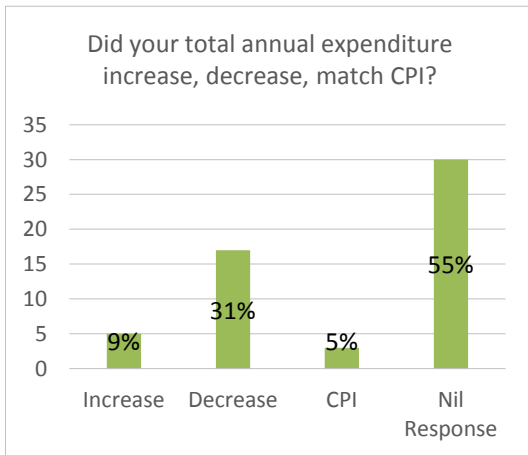
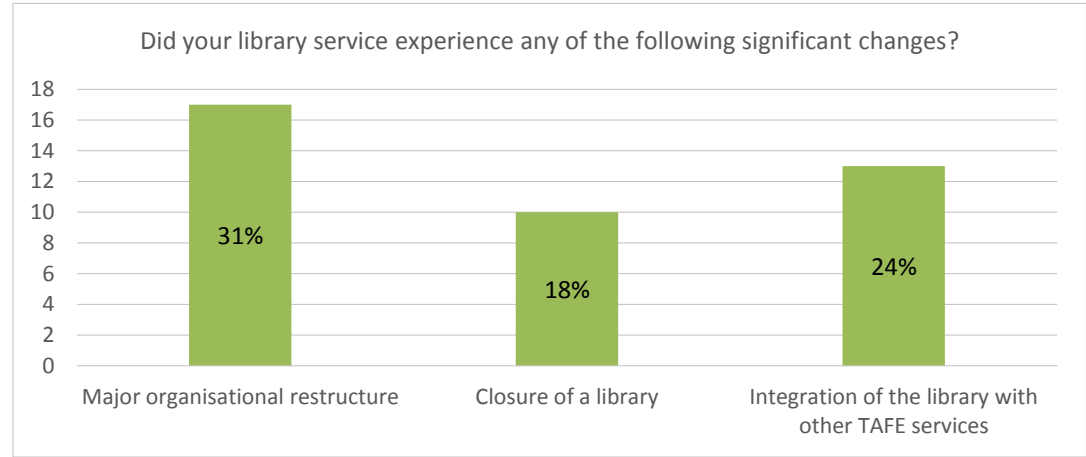
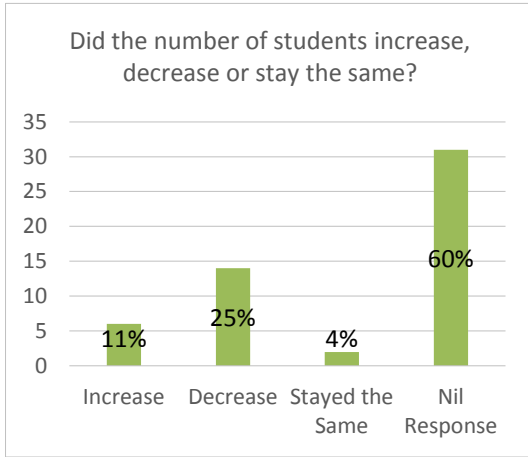
“With fewer staff and a smaller budget, staff are being asked to deliver more with less.”

“I am aware of quite a lot of copyright breaches. Orientation sessions and information literacy does not occur as students do not physically visit the campus.”

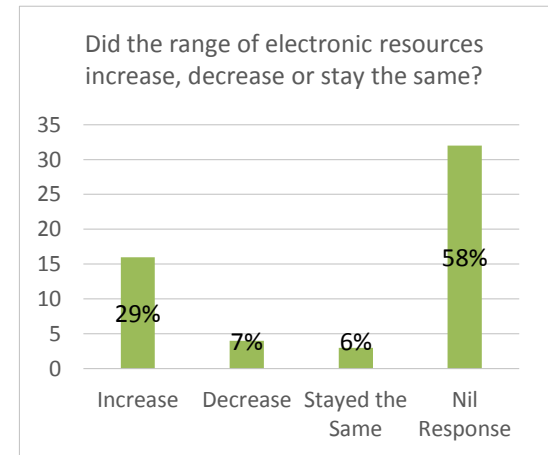
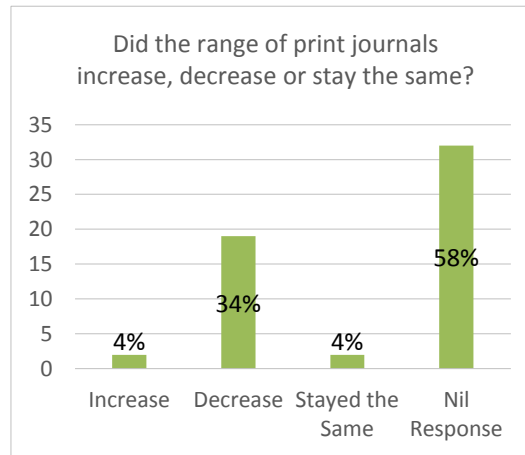
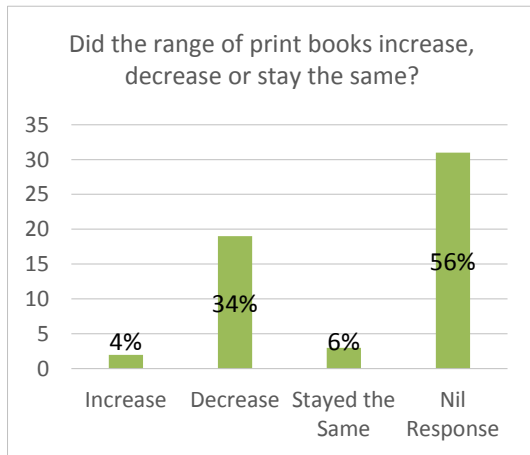
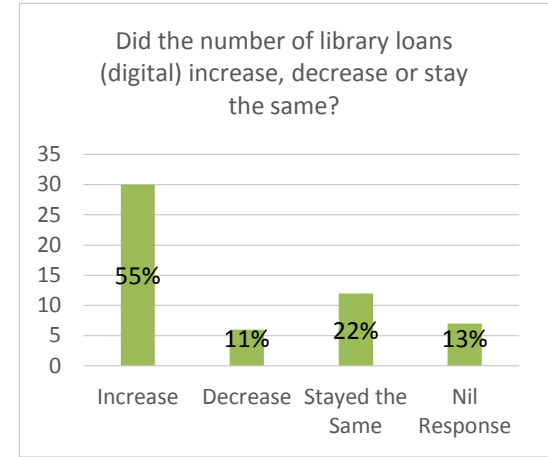
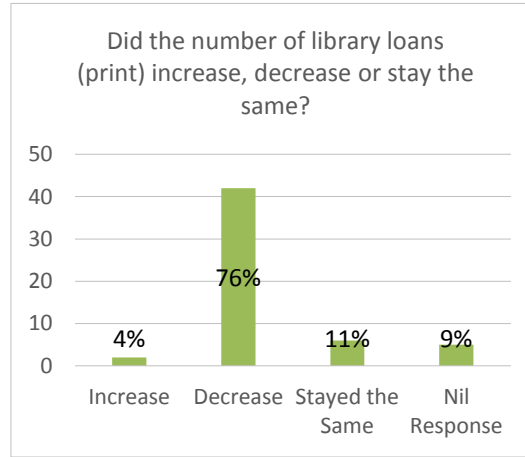
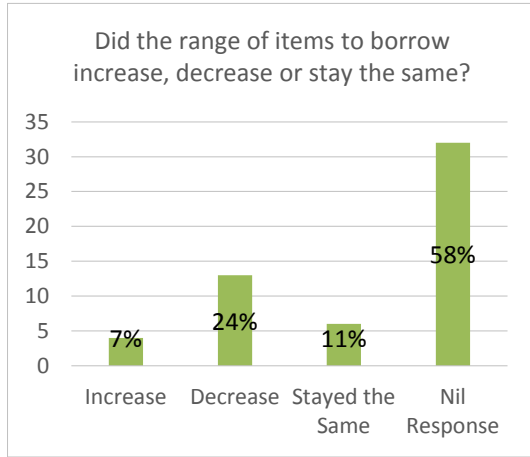
“Instability in the training sector and the ongoing devaluing of information professionals’ skills in the digital and information literacy area mean that the library is being seen more as a student meeting area rather than one of academic and training pursuits.”

“Our library service is undergoing significant reform and the proposed staffing levels will mean a reduction of professional librarians by 53%.”

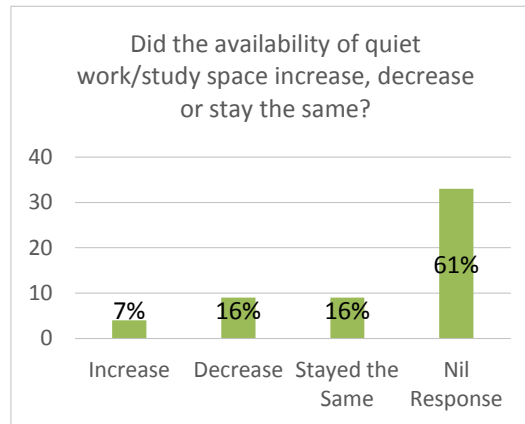
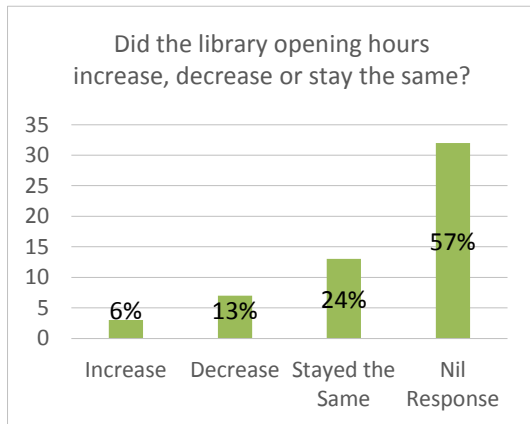
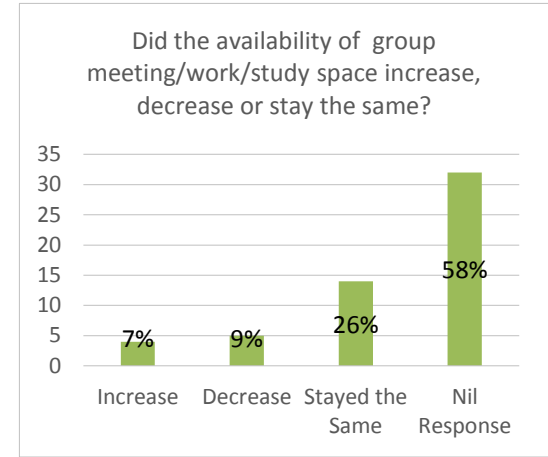
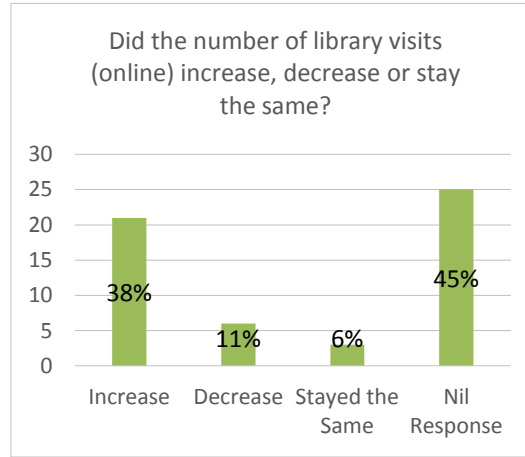
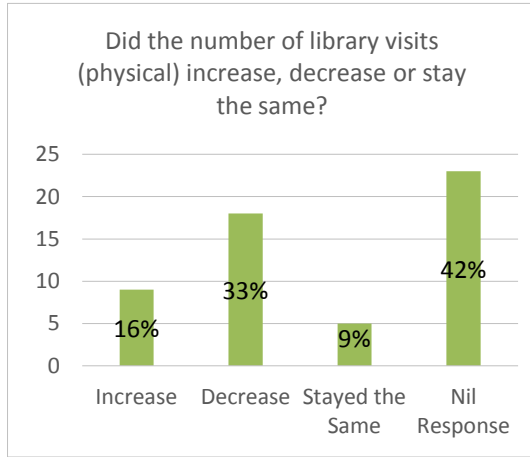
Size of population served, expenditure and major changes over the three years 2013 to 2015



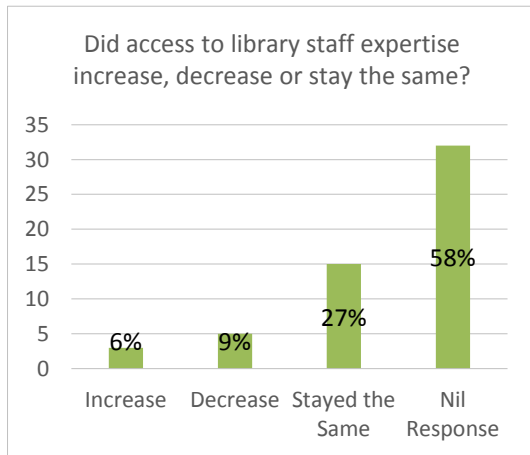
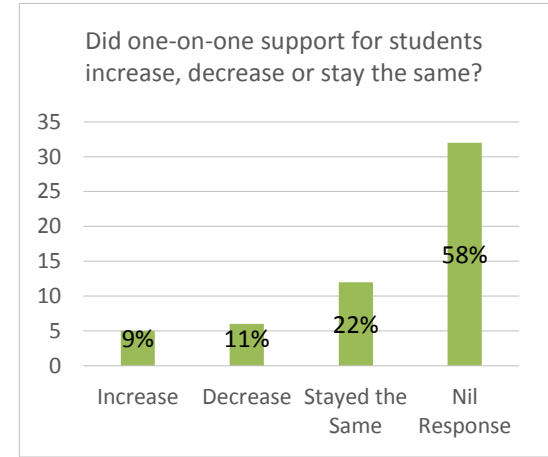
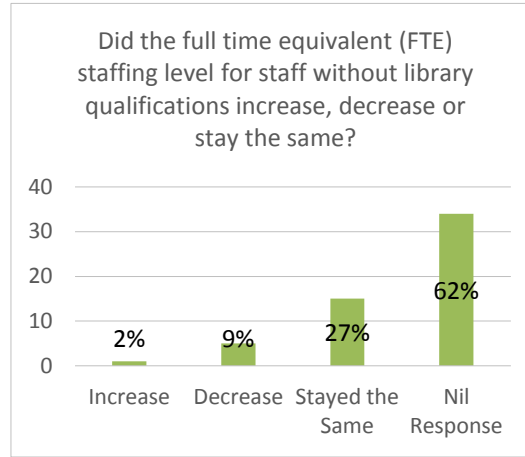
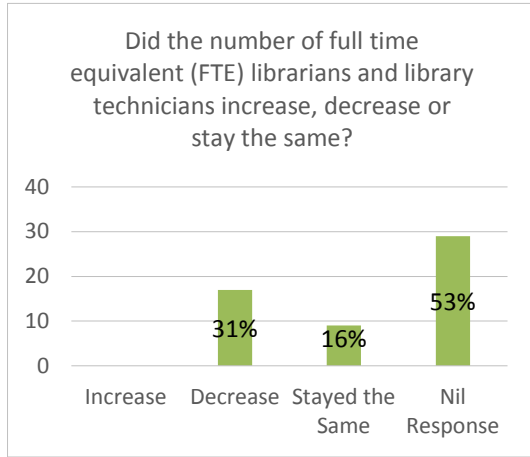
Collection format – changes over the three years 2013 to 2015



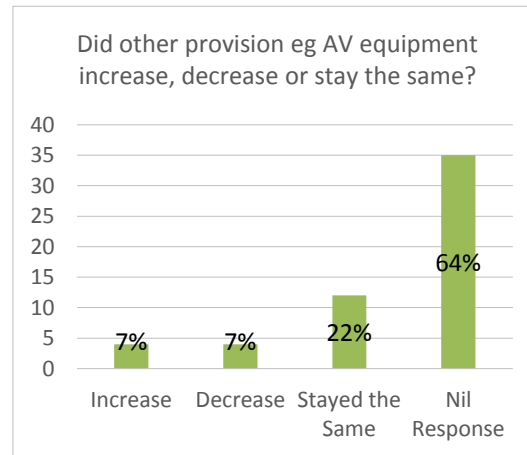
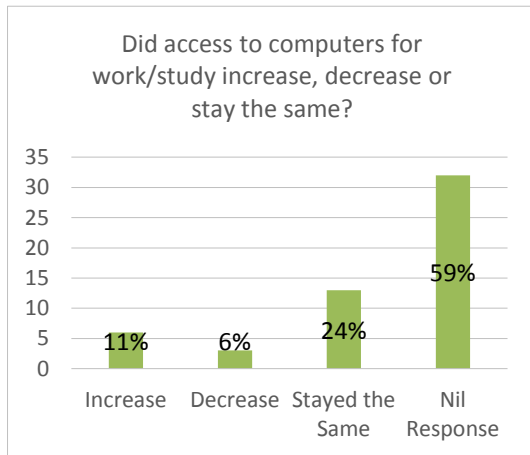
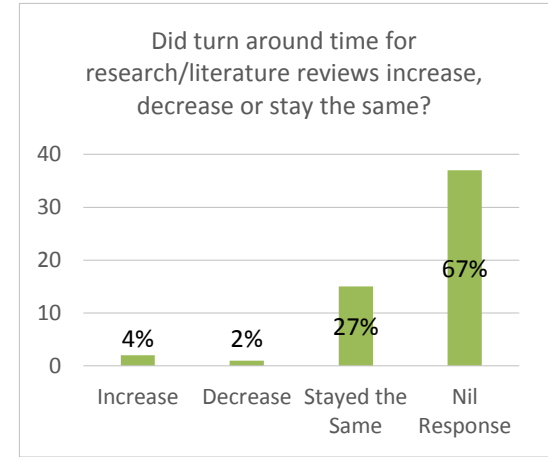
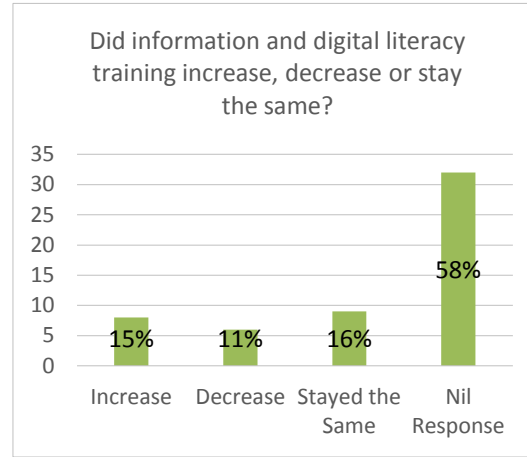
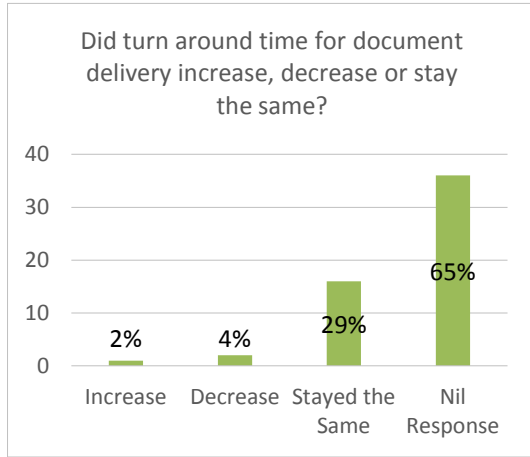
Library spaces, physical and online visits – changes over the three years 2013 to 2015



Staffing levels – changes over the three years 2013 to 2015



Information services and technology – changes over the three years 2013 to 2015



Future – changes anticipated in 2016-2017

