



Australian
Library and
Information
Association

ALIA and Australian libraries

Fact sheet

Australian Library and Information Association

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is the professional organisation for the Australian library and information services sector. It seeks to empower the profession in the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services to the nation, through leadership, advocacy and mutual support.

ALIA represents the interests of its 6,000 members, the profession, and Australia's 12 million library users.

The Association has an active responsibility to protect the free flow of information and ideas in the interests of all Australians and a thriving culture, economy and democracy.

Contact details

Website: <http://www.alia.org.au>

Ph: 02 6215 8222

Email: enquiry@alia.org.au

Australian libraries

Libraries connect people to ideas. It's a vital part of our commitment to promoting the free flow of information and facilitating all Australians' access to recorded knowledge, information, and creative works.

Australians are supported in literacy and reading, education, business, health, community and digital access through a network of approximately 1,600 national, state and public library service points. In addition, Australians benefit from services provided by approximately 9,000 school libraries, 42 university libraries, 387 TAFE campus libraries, and thousands of health libraries, law libraries and other special libraries.

Library statistics

- There are approximately 12 million registered users of libraries in Australia – almost half of Australia's total population
- There are over 1,500 public libraries in Australia with over 9 million visits each month giving a total of almost 110 million visits each year
- Each year Australia's public libraries lend over 177 million items and answer nearly 7 million enquiries
- There are over 9,400 computers in public libraries in Australia of which almost 8,000 have internet access
- There are approximately 450 health/medical libraries. Health librarians are responsible for knowledge support to clinicians, managers, educators, researchers and some directly serve patients or health consumers
- There are over 400 corporate/business libraries in Australia and they play a key role in ensuring that business strategy and decision-making is supported by accurate, current, relevant information sources
- There are over 400,000 fulltime-equivalent TAFE students in Australia and they are supported by 387 campus libraries. TAFE libraries had 14 million visits in 2006
- There are over 23 million loans every year in Australian university libraries
- In 2007-08, 7.7 million people visited Australian and New Zealand national and state libraries and 132 million pages were viewed on their websites

Quotable quotes

A thriving national and global culture, economy and democracy will best be advanced by people able to recognise their need for information, and identify, locate, access, evaluate and apply the needed information.

ALIA Statement on Information Literacy for all Australians
<http://www.alia.org.au/policies/information.literacy.html>

Economic benefit, that is the financial amount saved relative to the cost of purchasing materials, was found to average \$325 per annum among surveyed library users. This aligned closely with a more structured estimate of a statewide benefit of \$1.216 billion, which equates to a benefit-cost ratio of 4.24 against the 2004-2005 investment of \$287 million. Thus for each dollar expended on public libraries, \$4.24 of economic benefit is generated.

Economic activity measures the contribution of public libraries to the economy in real terms and was estimated at \$810.2 million. Thus for each dollar expended on public libraries, \$2.82 of real economic activity is generated.

Enriching communities: the value of public libraries in New South Wales, Library Council of New South Wales, March 2008. p i.
http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/services/public_libraries/publications/docs/enriching_communities.pdf

Unlike some of the other cultural institutions, public libraries regularly attract frequent repeat visitors. Almost three quarters (71%) who had visited libraries in the past 12 months had gone more than 5 times. This can be compared to museum attendance where 11% had been to visited more than 5 times, and art galleries where 17% had visited more than 5 times.

...it was mainly the characteristics of less advantaged people that were related to more frequent attendance - unemployed people and those not in the labour force, people without access to a computer, people living in the most disadvantaged areas according to SEIFA, and those who could not raise or didn't know if they could raise \$2000 within a week were more likely to visit frequently.

ABS 4172.0 - *Arts and Culture in Australia: A Statistical Overview, 2008 (First Edition)* Australian Bureau of Statistics <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4172.0>

With an attendance rate of 34% of people aged 15 years and over (5,454,500 people), national, state and local libraries were the third most attended cultural venue or event in 2005-06 (after cinemas and zoos/aquariums)

ABS 4114.0 - *Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues and Events, Australia, 2005-06* Australian Bureau of Statistics <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4114.0>

'...there are more public library outlets than there are McDonalds'.
Parliament of Australia: Senate Committee 2003, *Libraries in the online environment*
http://www.aph.gov.au/senate_communications/completed_inquiries/2002-04/online_libraries/report/c01.pdf

'Existing research shows that school libraries can have a positive impact, whether measured in terms of reading scores, literacy or learning more generally, on student achievement. There is evidence to show that a strong library program that is adequately staff, resourced and funded can lead to higher student achievement regardless of the socioeconomic or educational levels of the adults in the community..'

Lonsdale, M 2003, *Impact of school libraries on student achievement: a review of the research, report for the Australian School Library Association*, ACER, Camberwell, Vic., p. 27.
<http://www.asla.org.au/research/>

My guess is [it will be] about 300 years until computers are as good as, say, your local reference library in doing search.

Craig Silverstein, Director of Technology, Google.com
<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/03/25/sunday/main608672.shtml>