



Australian  
Library and  
Information  
Association

# ALIA NAC Regional Reports 2007

Canberra, ACT  
Monday, 15 October 2007

- **Attendance:**

Beth Clary, Margaret Drury, Felicity Williams, Jennifer Campbell, Sandra Henderson, Roxanne Missingham, Helena Zobec, Sue Hutley, Karen Puren, Alison Carter, Kathy Stapleton, Kym Holden.

Total: 12

- **Selected representative to attend the national meeting of the NAC (they must be a member)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Helena Zorbec \_\_\_\_\_  
ALIA membership no. \_\_\_\_\_ 025056 (UC Membership No.) \_\_\_\_\_

Alternative representative  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Alison Carter \_\_\_\_\_  
ALIA membership no. \_\_\_\_\_ 056020 \_\_\_\_\_

- **Major Issues – Providing leadership in professional education and workforce planning**

- a. Skills shortages in specialist areas**

- Skills shortages in librarians in specialist areas such as reference and cataloguing.
- The closure of Library and Information Schools in tertiary institutions has led to the decline in producing librarians with specialist skills.
- Younger graduates from library studies don't find job components such as referencing and cataloguing an appealing job and will avoid employment in positions that are in this area. This was questioned in discussions.
- Employers are needing to hire mature age librarians, or retired librarians, in a part-time capacity to fulfil a full time role, because these people have the necessary skills or are willing to learn them.
- LIS schools are no longer teaching the specialist skills, because they are not needed in the majority of today's library and information sector positions. Employers are teaching these skills on the job as necessary.

- b. A changing workforce**

- Some employers may have to employ two part-timers to fulfil one position as the workforce changes.
- There is a need for librarians with "pre-internet" skills. Retirees, or near-retirees, looking for a reduced workload are an excellent group to tap into, with their valuable skills and experience.
- There is concern that employing retirees is a short-term solution and not tackling the overall issues facing the workplace.

- Mentoring programs could be offered to students utilising retirees specialist skills and experience, if students are interested in learning more about these. The ACT mentoring program could also be revived to operate with those in paid employment. Suggested it be raised with the ACTIVE Convenor.
- Offering flexible work arrangements to people that have other priorities in their lives, is a good way to attract employees.
- Studies indicate that the future workforce will see people staying in their positions longer, postponing retirement to a later stage.
- Retirees are more frequently taking up contract or part-time work.
- Generation Y seeks more flexible arrangements to fit in with their lifestyles.
- Adjustments will need to be made by employers to accommodate this changing workforce, rather than expect to be able to choose people who will adapt to them.

**c. Remuneration of graduates and career progression**

- The pay and entry level into a library position compared to other graduate programs, especially in the public service, was asserted by an attendee to be lower in one institution. Need to address this as library graduates can apply their skills to other jobs and earn more working in different fields.
- Librarian employers need to set an example and ensure they are offering a market standard salary package to graduates, to attract library graduates to the industry.
- There are only a finite number of library positions at higher levels, so graduates who start at lower levels will take their skills to other areas, in order to progress their career and acquire more senior positions.
- While this situation is not unique to the library and information sector, it seems more prominent in Canberra as employers are competing against the public sector, and when the skills gained in library studies can be applied to many positions.
- The library and information sector needs to promote itself to students as an attractive industry in ways other than salary, as we can't always compete in pay levels with other graduate programs.

**d. Employers and library qualifications**

- Advertising of library positions with general skills required, not necessarily library qualifications or membership of the professional association, diminishes the need for library qualifications to be sort by people wishing to work in the industry.
- Employers look at their need for corporate knowledge of staff for professional qualifications, which is a challenge for employees with professional qualifications but without local knowledge. Need for employers to encourage current staff to gain the relevant qualifications.
- It is important to make workplaces aware of the need to have professionally qualified staff in LIS positions, and encourage employers to support staff wishing to seek qualifications in this area.

**e. LIS students and study options**

- The time required to complete tertiary studies can be a deterrent to gaining qualifications. There may be a need for short courses (perhaps paid for by employers) or more flexible study options to attract and encourage people to stick with the program.
- Important to be aware that many people enter into LIS studies at a later age, often as a second career choice. ALIA has establishing a Careers Working Party to investigate how more people can be recruited into the LIS sector based on this.

- f. What can ALIA do?**
    - More of the same. Would like to see more situations of getting out and talking to people and promoting ALIA, in an effort to continue to attract and retain people into the industry.
  - g. Other issues**
    - Education Summit recommendations
      - An information literacy component.
    - Pressure for 90 years legislation – already started in US.
- **ALIA Initiatives for 2008**
  - Boardroom Bound
  - Review of advisory committees and representatives
  - Technology: what members want from ALIA
- **Celebrating Success – ALIA stories of Achievement**
  - The 1997 Library Technicians Conference Committee was organised and hosted by the Library Technicians Section (ACT Group), in Canberra. The members of this Committee had recently met for dinner, attending the same venue where the Conference was held in 1997, to mark the anniversary of the Conference. The formulation of the Committee in 1997 established a prosperous friendship between all the Committee members, and they have met twice a year, every year, since that Conference.
  - It was suggested that the LIS at Canberra Institute of Technology should be contacted for any of their success stories.
- **Local issues**
  - a. Training course in specialist skills**
    - There is a high demand for librarians with reference skills in Canberra. A course in reference work could be funded by employers to train their staff.
  - b. LIS school closure**
    - The closure of a local LIS school has promoted discussion on how local tertiary institutions can help facilitate a distance-education course, offering a combination of online and face-to-face teachings. A local mentoring program could offer a source of support to library students studying via distance education.
    - ALIA anticipates to be part of a working party initiated by the University of Canberra to campaign these option and emphasis how valuable these courses and subsequent graduates are.
  - c. Lobbying**
    - Sue Hutley, ALIA Executive Director and Roxanne Missingham, ALIA President have visited many ministers and shadow ministers to discuss their agenda for libraries, and are still seeking meetings with relevant politicians and departments. These individuals have been presented with a deadline to provide to ALIA their agenda for libraries, to be published in inCite.
    - ALIA has also been involved in ongoing discussions with government departments in regards to internet filtering.
    - A summary of the lobbying efforts and activities and their responses on the web would inform members of what ALIA is doing about these issues. Even if responses are not received, or the desired result is not achieve, providing information to members of the actions of ALIA in this area, will show members what ALIA is doing for them.

- ALIA is lobbying based on four agendas discussed at the Peak Bodies forum, involving discussions between ALIA, PLA, NLA, CAUL, TAFE, health, ASLA, law and NSLA. They are:
  - Better funding for Australians access to quality information through public libraries.
  - National digitisation program
  - Protecting Australian families online
  - Copyright issues
- Roxanne agreed to submit a page for the advocacy webpages about ALIA's lobbying efforts.

- **Evaluation**

- Opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, discussions: avg 4.3/5
- Program and content: avg 4.2/5
- Organisational aspects: avg 3.7/5

*What was the most valuable aspect of the regional meeting?*

- Discussion.
- Open discussion.
- Hearing from others.
- The ability to air some of the issues around remuneration and employment.
- Small group where all participants had the opportunity to contribute.

*What could we do to improve the regional meeting?*

- More people involved.
- More people.
- More people. More notice of time.
- Don't know if you contacted CIT schools, but if not, maybe approach them to attend.
- More people willing to speak/have opinions.

*What other comments or suggestions do you have about the ALIA National Advisory Congress?*

- Good format – keep it going.
- Keep it going.
- Was glad to have had the opportunity to attend though would like to have been available to talk to others prior to attending to present their views.
- Need to have more discussion about new grads/employment/pay.
- Brilliant idea. Post working hours is good. Having it not go for too long was good.

- **Any other comments from the meeting?**