

The Current Status of Teaching and Fostering Information Literacy in TAFE

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ABSTRACT: This paper presents the findings of a research project about Australian TAFE librarians' information literacy practices. The project addressed two research questions: What are the practices that TAFE librarians use to teach and foster information literacy? What changes have occurred since the last TAFE information literacy survey in 2001? During 2005, 154 librarians completed a web-based survey. The results provide a status of current practice and identify key areas that TAFE librarians can focus on to improve professional practice.

A key concern of librarians employed in the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sector in Australia is to help students improve their ability to find and use information. Information literacy programs are provided by most TAFE libraries for this purpose. While there are examples of individual TAFE information literacy programs and initiatives in the literature,¹ there is little empirical research about TAFE librarians' information literacy practices as a whole. This research aims to fill this gap by identifying current practice. Two research questions were posed: What are the practices that TAFE librarians use to teach and foster information literacy? What changes have occurred since the last TAFE information literacy survey in 2001? The information literacy practices examined include the definition of information literacy used as a framework for training programs, librarians' understanding of information literacy, the range of training programs provided (for example introductory information skills, research level skills, computer skills training), methods of delivery and assessment, the level of collaboration with teaching staff, the level of integration in the curriculum, and methods of promoting information literacy. Associated issues explored included the training needs of librarians, the barriers experienced by librarians when advocating or providing information literacy programs, and librarians' perceptions of whether their institutions value information literacy.

The research was concerned with librarians employed by TAFE providers within the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector. The small number of participants from some states and territories and from dual sector institutes (universities which incorporate both the higher education and VET sectors within one institution) other than in Victoria was a limitation of the study. This precluded satisfactorily addressing whether there were any differences in practice between single and dual sector institutes, and between states and territories. However, despite these limitations, the research provided a valuable

picture of the state of information literacy practices in the TAFE sector in 2005.

Definitional Issues

The information literacy literature is characterised by a superabundance of definitions indicating a range of understandings. A comprehensive review of information literacy definitions and their meaning is beyond the scope of this review; however, interested readers may wish to consult Lupton,² Bawden,³ Behrens⁴ and Webber and Johnston.⁵

One of the definitional issues pertinent to TAFE practice is the difference between library skills programs, bibliographic instruction and information literacy. The synonymous use of these terms by theoreticians and practitioners alike results in confusion.⁶ Another feature of the information literacy discourse is the dissent among librarians and educators about terminology, particularly the ‘literacy’ aspect of the term. Langford⁷ points out that researchers have described the term as ‘fuzzy’ and that teachers are not clear about the term or its implications for classroom practice. Clarification of the definition is required to ensure that all stakeholders understand and embrace the concept.⁸

A characteristic of many definitions is a description of a set of skills or attributes that an information-literate person should exhibit. This type of definition is common within current educational practice which requires the demonstration and assessment of learning outcomes. For example, the *Australian and New Zealand Information Literacy (ANZIIL) Framework*⁹ describes the information-literate person as one who:

- recognises the need for information and determines the nature and extent of the information needed
- finds needed information effectively and efficiently;
- critically evaluates information and the information seeking process
- manages information collected or generated
- applies prior and new information to construct new concepts or create new understandings, and
- uses information with understanding and acknowledges cultural, ethical, economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information.

The Australian Library and Information Association’s policy statements about information literacy,¹⁰ clearly of relevance to TAFE practice, firmly positions information literacy as a prerequisite for personal and vocational empowerment and lifelong learning, noting that information literacy can contribute to participative citizenship, social inclusion, acquisition of skills, innovation and enterprise, the creation of new knowledge, personal, vocational, corporate and organisational empowerment, and learning for life.

In the early 1990s significant changes were occurring in TAFE with the introduction of the competency-based training curriculum. The Finn Report¹¹

identified six areas of competence that young people need in preparation for work and recommended the development of employment related key competencies. The Mayer Committee developed the following seven key competencies in 1992:

- 1 collecting, analysing and organising information
- 2 communicating ideas and information
- 3 planning and organising activities
- 4 working with others and in teams
- 5 using mathematical ideas and techniques
- 6 solving problems, and
- 7 using technology.¹²

The competency ‘collecting, analysing and organizing information’ is fundamental to most TAFE information literacy programs.

The first TAFE librarian to establish the connection between the key competencies and information literacy was Robert Burnheim. He recognised that collecting, analysing and organising ideas and information was a component of the broader concept of information literacy, and recommended that the Mayer Committee develop an information skills curriculum to support the development of information literacy across all educational sectors.¹³ Floyd and Burnheim¹⁴ conducted a Queensland-wide study on the delivery of competency-based training curricula. Important findings included the wide range of understandings of the term ‘competency-based training’ and that teachers wanted the library to provide training in the development of information literacy skills for themselves and students in support of the new curriculum. TAFE librarians clearly had an educational role and by 1995 information literacy programs were described as a core service that TAFE libraries should offer in support of independent learning.¹⁵

The link between library literacy and the key competency ‘collecting, analysing and organising information’ was explored in Zobec’s master’s thesis,¹⁶ which was the first formally documented study of library literacy levels in a TAFE environment. Zobec attempted to measure the library literacy levels of flexible learners at Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) in the 1995 academic year and found that CIT courses did not meet one component of the key competency ‘collecting, analysing and organising information’, the ability to locate or collect information.¹⁷ Zobec also found that measuring library literacy levels was difficult in the absence of a standard measuring instrument.¹⁸

Another practitioner who investigated issues related to professional practice was Harrison.¹⁹ Harrison’s unpublished survey research investigated librarians’ consistency of understanding about information literacy, the information literacy training provided by TAFE libraries, the barriers librarians experience when advocating information literacy to their institutions, whether information literacy is valued by their institutions, and the inclusion of

information literacy in the curriculum. Forty-one responses were received from librarians in all states and territories other than Tasmania. An important finding was that librarians did not share a uniform definition of information literacy, prompting Harrison to recommend that a definition be developed. Another recommendation was that TAFE libraries should adapt and implement the CAUL information literacy standards.²⁰ The limitations of the study include the small number of participants and the use of convenience sampling; however the research is of value in that it provides a snapshot of TAFE information literacy practice in 2001.

Methodology

A questionnaire was developed to ascertain the current status of TAFE librarians' information literacy practices and was administered using a web-based survey tool, SurveyMonkey.com (www.surveymonkey.com). Harrison's research²¹ was used as the basis for several questions; however, some guesswork was involved, as her survey was unpublished and the questions asked were not explicit in the proceedings of the conference where it was reported. The project was conducted in three stages: pilot testing, a Victorian survey, and a national survey.

The questionnaire was piloted in early 2005 by ten librarians from colleges or institutes in Victoria known to be involved in information literacy. The results were discussed with the Victorian Association of TAFE Libraries (VATL) Executive and modifications were made to the questionnaire. Questions about computer skills training and the training needs of librarians were added. Pilot testers provided additional feedback about the modifications.

The questionnaire was distributed to Victorian TAFE librarians during March 2005. The Victorian TAFE Reference Interest Group (TRIG) email list and the VATL listserv were used to distribute the email link to the survey and to send out reminders. Data collection was completed by mid April 2005. Results from the Victorian survey indicated that minor alterations to the questionnaire were required. For example, one of the findings indicated that librarians are providing programs that focus on the training of information skills relating to the use of libraries, the Internet and databases, a narrow conceptualisation of information literacy.²²

The national survey (provided as the appendix) was distributed to librarians from other states and territories during October 2005. ALIA e-lists, TAFE listservs, an EdNA Focus on Flexible Learning discussion list, library email addresses sourced from a library directory²³ and an email contact list of staff from TAFE Tasmania were used to send out the email link to the survey and reminders. Data collection was completed by the end of October. The Victorian data was merged with the data from other states and territories. The survey software was used to aggregate the data for the multiple-choice questions and filter responses to selected questions. Responses to open-ended

questions were analysed by grouping into common themes. The use of convenience sampling for this research limits the findings to the participants of the study.

Approximately 330 full-time equivalent librarians were employed in TAFE libraries throughout Australia in 2003;²⁴ 154 librarians from all states and territories participated in the survey (see Table 1).

Table 1
Respondents by State and Territory

State / Territory	Respondents (% of Total)
Australian Capital Territory	2 (1%)
New South Wales	33 (22%)
Northern Territory	2 (1%)
Queensland	25 (16%)
South Australia	20 (13%)
Tasmania	5 (3%)
Victoria	60 (39%)
Western Australia	7 (5%)
Total	154 (100%)

Results

The results of the survey are presented under ten headings.

Librarians' Understanding of Information Literacy

Question 8, added following the Victorian survey, asked respondents to describe their understanding of information literacy. Eighty-nine respondents replied to this question. Six librarians directly referred to the CAUL definition, or pasted the definition into the survey software. Other responses were found to contain common elements, such as 'finding', 'locating' or 'using' information. A basic count of these elements was performed to ascertain how often they occurred. These are shown in Table 2 with the number of responses for each element.

Table 2 shows that the information skills 'finding, using and evaluating information' were mentioned most frequently, although not all definitions included these elements. Ten respondents described as information literacy a simple process concerned with finding and/or accessing information. The majority of respondents conveyed the idea that information literacy also includes evaluating and using the information found, such as the following definition:

The ability to understand what one's need is for information, where to find it, how to access it effectively, how to evaluate its usefulness, how to work with it to fulfil the original information need.

Table 2
Common Elements of Information Literacy Definitions

	Number of Respondents
Recognise / identify information need	22
Find / search / locate information	47
Access information	17
Use / apply information	42
Evaluate information found / search process	39
Organise / manage information / referencing	13
Includes analysis	8
Includes synthesis	2
Includes knowledge of resources / search tools	4
Research skills	6
Related to learning / life long learning	19
Includes creating new information	1

A few definitions were more complex and theory-based, including the understanding that information literacy includes analysis and synthesis, such as the following:

To assist with retrieval and organising information obtained through the research processes
To evaluate and critically analyse information
To encourage using such information immediately or in the future as part of the process of lifelong learning
To facilitate learning through the teaching of info lit that will contribute to the foundation of self-empowerment through knowledge for each individual.

It is clear that librarians exhibit a range of understandings about information literacy, the majority of respondents perceiving it to be a skills-based process focusing on accessing, evaluating and using information, mainly within the context of a formal education environment and strongly associated with library skills and text-based information resources. This range of understandings about the concept of information literacy is unsurprising given the number of definitions and ambiguity of meaning in the library literature.

Definition of Information Literacy Used as a Framework for Programs

Question 9 attempted to determine whether TAFE information literacy programs were based on a recognised definition or teaching framework of information literacy.

Although the CAUL standards were designed for higher education, they are used by many librarians in the TAFE sector. Seventeen respondents indicated that their programs are based on both the ALIA statement on information literacy²⁵ and the CAUL/ANZIIL Framework.²⁶ Other definitions

cited by respondents include the Prague Declaration, the SA TAFE information literacy policy and the graduate attributes of specific institutes. Responses to

Table 3
Definition of Information Literacy Used

Definition	Response Total	Response %
CAUL/ANZIIL Framework	76	49
American Library Association	1	1
Researchers (eg. Doyle, Breivik)	0	0
ALIA statement on information literacy	30	20
No	55	36

the ‘other’ option of this question also support the use of a combination of definitions, for example:

Blend them all – not fussed about exact definition. More important to understand that information is both highly contextual to the objectives and particular discipline and that meaning is socially constructed.

A noteworthy change since Harrison’s 2001 survey is a decrease from 44% to 36% in the percentage of respondents not having a definition of information literacy. TAFE librarians in 2005 used a narrower range of definitions, with a clear preference for statements from education and library-based organizations such as CAUL and ALIA. Unlike the previous survey, no respondents indicated that they had created a generic definition, and there was no reference to the Mayer competencies. Furthermore, 66 (47%) respondents indicated willingness to participate in a project to adapt the CAUL standards to the TAFE environment (Question 18).

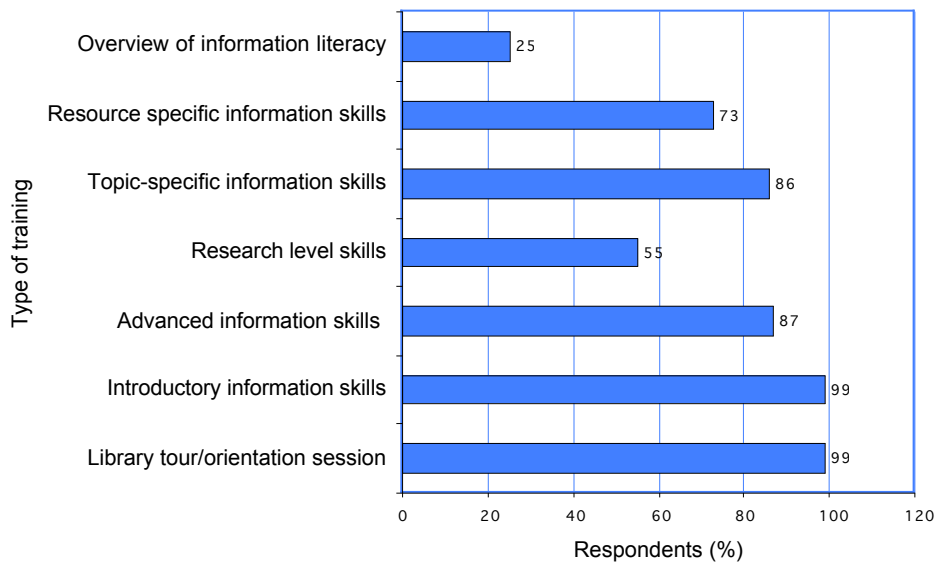
Information Literacy Training Provided at TAFE

Respondents were asked to indicate the information literacy training provided at their TAFEs (Question 4). There were 154 responses to the question (100%). The option ‘overview of information literacy’ was added to the question following the Victorian phase of the study, so percentages for this option are calculated out of 102 respondents.

Figure 1 indicates that respondents are providing a wide range of training, ranging from introductory to advanced level programs. Significantly fewer respondents are providing training in research level skills compared to the other types of training provided. One possible reason is that some TAFE courses do not have a requirement for research skills. Respondents may have also had a problem with interpreting what ‘research skills’ means, as this was not defined. The finding that only 25% of respondents include an overview of information literacy in their programs is further support for Fafeita’s²⁷ previous contention that TAFE information literacy programs focus on a skills-based

conceptualisation of information literacy relating to the use of libraries, databases and the Internet.

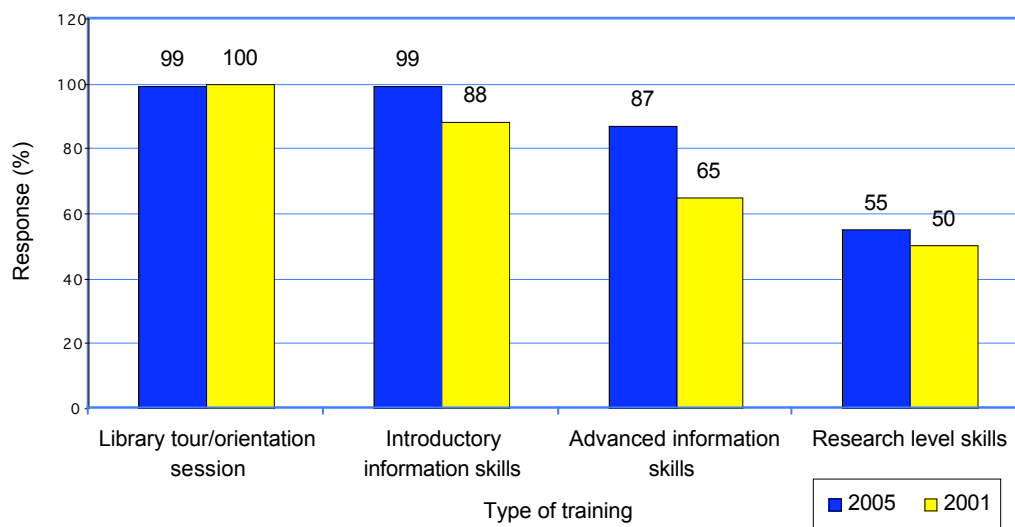
Figure 1
Information Literacy Training Provided at TAFE



Thirty respondents provided further comments in the ‘other’ option; these were basically lists of various types of training provided by their colleges or institutes. Comments included instruction in Internet searching, referencing and research skills and online information literacy tutorials. Respondents also listed other types of training they provide such as instruction in the use of email, software packages and equipment. Four respondents indicated that training is provided on request, one in particular indicating a degree of flexibility in whatever training was on offer, commenting that ‘while there are standard tour/orientation etc sessions, everything else is pretty much open to negotiation and all the above (and more, e.g. I recently did a session of free email accounts) are possible’.

The findings for this question were compared with Harrison’s 2001 survey. Figure 2 shows that there were increases in response percentages for all of the information skills programs, particularly advanced information skills such as database training. Further research is required to determine the reasons for this increase. Possible reasons may include the increasing number and complexity of resources in the information environment, as well as librarians’ efforts in advocating training in information literacy skills to students and TAFE teachers.

Figure 2
Changes since the Previous Survey



Computer Skills Training Provided by Library Staff

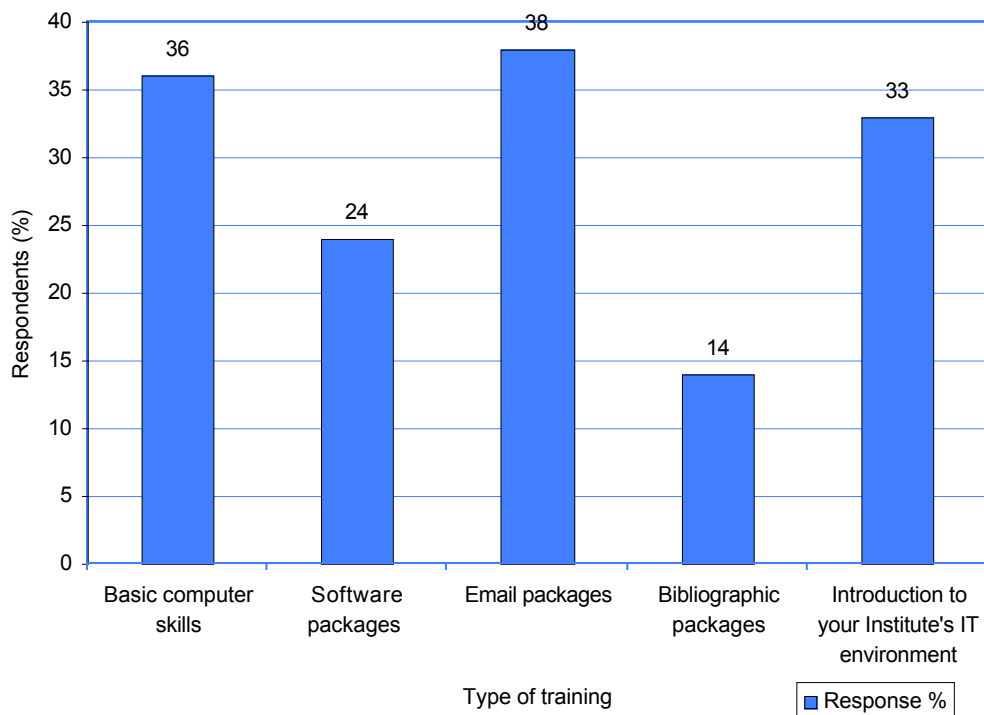
The survey also questioned respondents about the computer skills training provided by library staff at their TAFE (Question 5). Students need basic computer skills to successfully engage in information skills training; however, library staff are often required to assist students with file management, emailing and the use of software loaded on library computers. Figure 3 illustrates the responses to this question.

It is evident that respondents play an important role in providing computer skills training, including training in software packages and email. According to ‘other’ comments supplied, respondents are also training users in digital scanning, burning CDs, using digital cameras and printers and applications such as course management software. Training is also provided on an informal on-demand basis. This training makes a difference to TAFE students, as indicated by the following success story (Question 19):

We have a large number of mature age students doing Health and Community services certificates. Many of these students have little or no computer skills – they feel embarrassed by this, but after they have participated in some of our introductory sessions their confidence levels just sky-rocket and now they are our most frequent users.

The survey did not examine what percentage of training is provided on a formal basis; it is assumed that training by librarians is mainly provided in support of the curriculum, as indicated by the comment ‘Computer skills training is generally carried out by teaching staff, with backup from library staff’.

Figure 3
Computer Skills Training provided by TAFE Library Staff



Training Delivery Methods

Question 6 asked respondents to indicate training delivery methods and locations used by library staff.

Table 4
Methods and Locations of Training Delivery

Method	Response Total	Response %
Face-to-face in library training room	134	87
Face-to-face in venue external to library	95	62
Online	47	31
Mixture of face-to-face and online	58	38

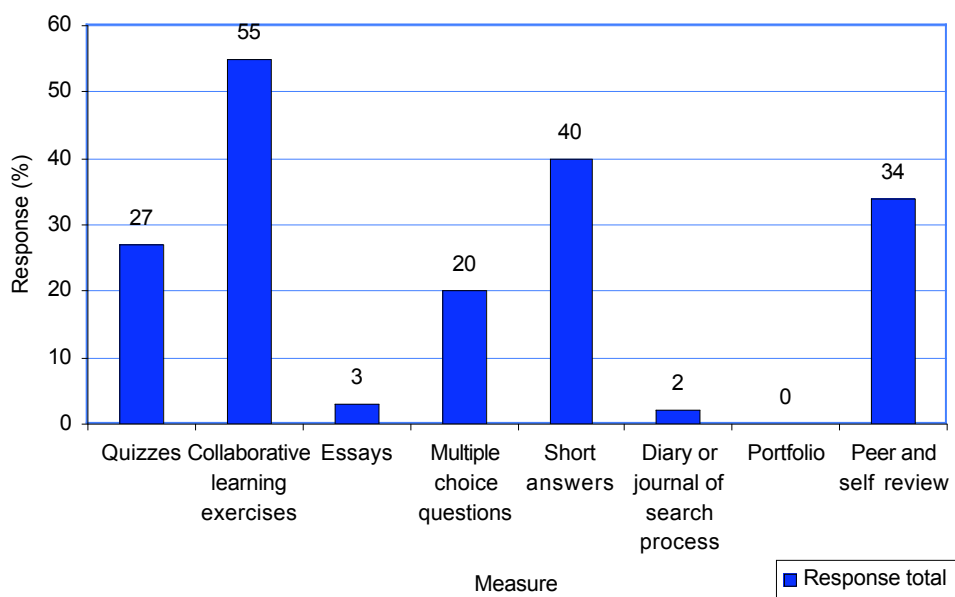
Delivery is predominantly by face-to-face methods in the library training room and venues external to the library; however, ‘other’ comments indicate that training is also provided within the library proper. There was a 16% increase in online delivery compared with the 2001 survey. Examples of online delivery methods cited in answer to Question 19 include Chisholm Institute’s COIL tutorial and Southbank Institute’s SAIL online course. Other delivery methods used by respondents include teleconferencing, videoconferencing,

telephone and facsimile. Training is delivered in groups and on a one-to-one basis.

Assessment Used to Evaluate Student Outcomes

Question 10 asked respondents to indicate assessment measures used to evaluate student outcomes of information literacy programs. All respondents answered the question, with six (4%) respondents indicating that teachers assessed student outcomes, and 14 (9%) respondents noting that no formal assessment was performed. As shown in Figure 4, several types of assessment strategies are used. Collaborative learning exercises are used by more than half of all respondents, and additional measures used according to the ‘other’ comments include observation, verbal feedback and a research task. The more complex qualitative evaluation strategies such as the essay, diary and portfolio are infrequently or not used.

**Figure 4
Assessment Used**



Involving Teaching Staff when Developing Information Literacy Programs

Respondents were asked to provide an indication of the level of teacher involvement in the development of information literacy programs.

**Table 5
Involvement of Teachers in Program Development**

Level of Involvement	Response Total	Response (%)
Programs developed in partnership with teachers	35	25
Programs developed in consultation with teachers	92	65
Programs developed without input from teachers	40	28

Respondents' comments indicate that teacher involvement varies according to the subject or program being taught: 'Some programs are developed with teachers, some without', wrote one respondent. Positively, 25% of respondents indicated that their programs were developed in partnership with teachers, but it is clear that the majority of information literacy programs are developed with little or no involvement from them.

Teachers' level of interest in information literacy is a factor in their level of involvement in program development, according to several respondents. One wrote: 'There would be a few that are developed in consultation with teachers, but the majority of teachers don't seem to have time to do this or don't see the importance.' It is clear from Table 5 that librarians predominantly consult with teachers when developing information literacy programs. Respondents describe the consultation in various ways, some describing a very low level: for example, 'Teachers leave the content of the program up to library staff but will offer information on what sort of focus is required when invited.' Other comments indicate that more direction is provided: as one respondent wrote, 'Usually get an outline of topics/skills to be covered and then the class plan is prepared by library staff, this varies in the amount of consultation depending on the teaching staff.' It is clear that librarians need to work on developing educational partnerships to ensure that information literacy is taught incrementally in TAFE curricula.

Integration of Information Literacy in the TAFE Curriculum

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent that information literacy is integrated into the curriculum.

Table 6
Level of Integration in the Curriculum

Level of Integration	Response Total	Response (%)
Integrated well into curriculum (IL skills are developed incrementally in the curriculum)	10	7
Integrated into some subject units (IL is embedded in subject assignments)	88	62
Not integrated at all	39	28

It is clear that the majority of respondents consider information literacy to be integrated into some subject units, but this finding is questionable given the Low level of teacher involvement in the development of information literacy programs. One possible explanation is that information literacy may be taught at some TAFEs as training package support materials (formerly unendorsed components of training packages). This correlates with respondents' comments such as 'Lecturers request information literacy sessions for students at particular times e.g. to assist in researching a topic' and 'It is not formally integrated, although some teachers informally integrate our sessions into their curriculums.' Respondents were also positive about the plans or progress they were making in relation to getting information literacy integrated in the curriculum in the future, one respondent in particular indicating involvement in a project to get information literacy embedded into the national training packages.

Methods Used to Promote Information Literacy

Question 16 asked librarians to indicate the methods used to promote information literacy at their colleges/institutes. The 131 responses were grouped into two main themes: methods used, and staff involved in promoting information literacy. Most promotional activities are directed at students and teachers.

Traditional library and institute publicity methods are commonly used to promote information literacy at colleges and institutes. These methods include printed and electronic handouts, guides, booklets, newsletters, flyers, posters, sandwich boards and displays. Online methods such as email, library and/or Institute websites, intranet and the student computer network are also used. Personal contact with teachers features the most prominently, as illustrated by this comment:

Promotions are carried out through: flyers, newsletters, emails, senior staff meetings, general college staff meetings, by walking around campus dropping into teachers offices, dropping off flyers, posters in their workspaces, ie tea-rooms, bulletin boards, college intranet... and any time a teacher comes to the loans desk we have flyers ready there to hand out to staff.

Orientation sessions for new students and staff are another opportunity seized by library staff to promote information literacy. Information literacy is also offered as a staff professional development activity at many colleges/institutes.

The staff involved in promoting information literacy are primarily library staff; however, several respondents acknowledged the efforts of others such as teachers and departments that manage institute promotional activities. Subject liaison librarians have the primary responsibility for promoting information literacy at many colleges and institutes, a few libraries have positions dedicated to information literacy and there were also comments describing the involvement or leadership of library management.

It is clear that library staff are putting considerable and sustained effort into promote information literacy at their colleges and institutes. This requires a great deal of persistence but eventually pays off, as illustrated by the following information literacy success story (Question 19):

When I first started at a regional college in WA, they had never heard of information literacy and many of the teaching staff treated me as if I was some sort of pleasant, but intellectually disadvantaged pain in the neck who was constantly reminding them of the services I could provide. When I left two years later, I felt I had made significant headway into their information literacy development :-) From little things, big things grow.

Librarians' Perceptions of Whether Information Literacy is Valued

Question 15 asked respondents to indicate their perception of whether their major stakeholders (students, teachers and institute management) value information literacy. One hundred and forty-one respondents answered the question. As indicated by Figure 5, respondents perceive that teachers value information literacy the most, followed by students and then institute management. This finding is to be expected since teachers and students are the primary recipients of librarians' promotional and teaching endeavours. The finding that 32% and 35% of institute management respectively value or value information literacy a little is very positive, as it may indicate that the message about information literacy is getting through to appropriate levels.

Information literacy success stories provided by respondents (Question 19) provide examples of TAFE teachers and students who value information literacy. Teachers recognize that their students need information literacy education and that it contributes to improving assessment outcomes, as this comment illustrates:

I have run a specific course designed to address persistent needs of one of our diploma courses. Teacher support was commendable and I spent three hours teaching hands on skills like use of online legislation, web page evaluation and advanced internet searching. Feedback has been extremely positive and a much closer rapport with students was created. Teachers have now included the session as part of their courses to equip the students with research skills pertinent to their future profession.

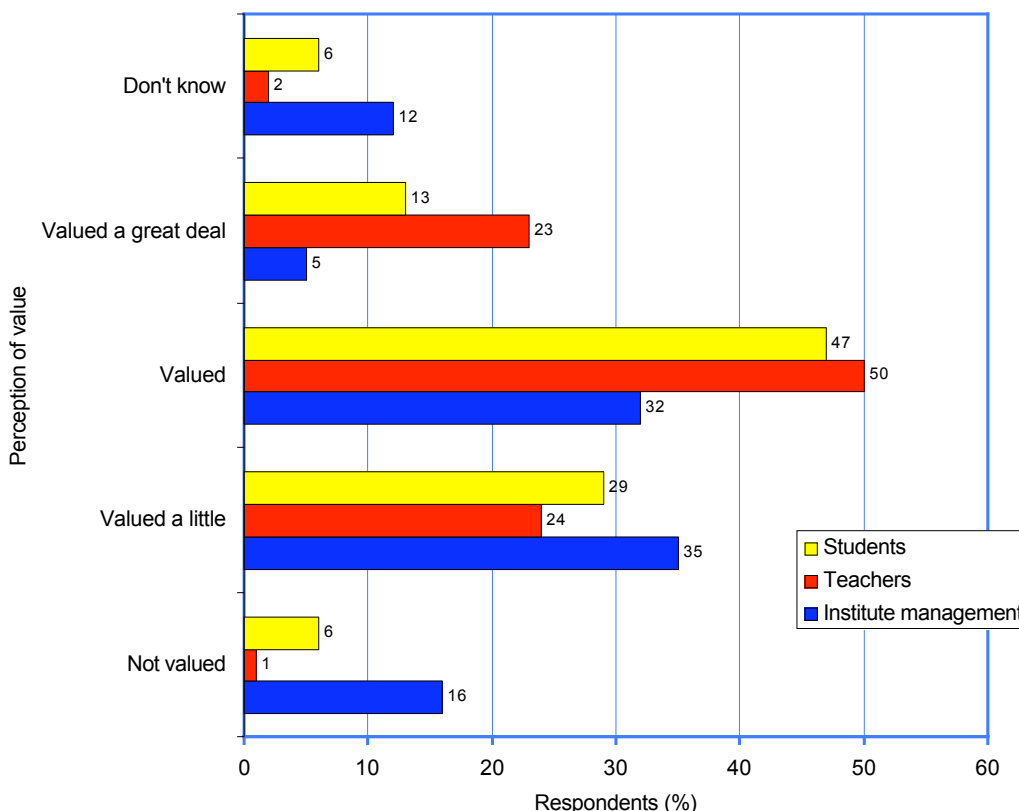
Students can also see the practical value of information literacy training:

We have received some great feedback from students who have used our SAIL online course both via email and in person. When I hear their comments of how it has helped them overcome hurdles with their first assignment it makes me feel proud that I was a part of the development team for SAIL, and that it is helping and guiding students just like we planned it to.

Although this question deals with perceptions, it seems reasonable to suggest that librarians still have much work to do in advocating and providing information literacy programs to their stakeholders. This is easier said than done, however, as librarians encounter barriers that impede their efforts to

advocate and provide information literacy instruction at their colleges and institutes.

Figure 5
Librarians' Perceptions of Whether Stakeholders Value Information Literacy



Barriers Faced

Librarians were asked to provide comments about the barriers they face when advocating or providing information literacy programs at their TAFEs (Question 17). The most frequently mentioned barriers in Harrison's 2001 survey were a lack of time and lack of understanding about information literacy. One hundred and thirty-one respondents provided comments to the 2005 survey and these were grouped into five common themes: insufficient resources, TAFE management, teachers, time constraints and students. Limited resources (facilities and equipment, staffing, time) and faculty and student attitudes were also identified by surveys of academic libraries in Canada and New Zealand as common barriers to user education and information literacy programs.²⁸

Limited resources to support the provision of information literacy programs were perceived to be a barrier by many respondents. Extra funds

were seen as needed to provide support for staff involved in developing and delivering training:

the usual problem ie: money, with it we can get more staff in, therefore we librarians can develop more skilled literacy classes we can do things like deliver classes off campus or go to classes. Due to a lack of staff numbers we make do with the limited resources and time that we have.

Access to training rooms with suitable computer facilities was another common barrier. 'Not enough equipment to run large sessions' wrote one respondent, 'no specific training room at any campus, have to use open access computer[s] in [the] middle of the LRC.' IT problems were also described as a barrier. In general, respondents expressed a need for more reliable technology and backup support when needed. 'Constant battles to keep the IT going – poor IT support,' wrote one respondent. 'Computers never work at the right time', wrote another.

Several comments revealed that TAFE management was perceived to be a barrier when advocating or providing information literacy. The attitude of management towards libraries and information literacy is one of the issues, as noted by the following respondents:

Lack of 'real' support from top management. They are too 'business model' oriented and you really have to promote aggressively before the worth of libraries and information literacy is acknowledged.

Senior TAFE management who can't see the need for libraries because it is all on the Net.

Another issue raised by respondents was the shortcomings of the competency-based training system. As the following respondent explains, this is at odds with lifelong learning and information literacy:

The major barrier is the current obsession with competency-based education. This divides learning into disconnected discrete units. These are presented and assessed in very short periods of time allowing no real study... Students are now leaving TAFE with no overall understanding of their area. They have no theory to link all the little competencies they have achieved and, for the most part, forgotten. They have not been taught how to study. Libraries are promoting life long learning. Our management is promoting serial learning... They are definitely not encouraged to learn by themselves. Until there is a recognition of the shortcomings of the current training paradigm information literacy training in TAFE is going to be hard to sell.

TAFE teachers were frequently mentioned by librarians as a barrier. One recurring theme was that teachers lacked an understanding of what information literacy is and how it could benefit their students, a point clearly made by the following respondent:

Some TAFE teachers are not aware of the resources and services the Library provides and therefore do not know enough to know that their students, and they, would benefit from information literacy session.

Getting the message through to teachers can be challenging for librarians:

The majority of teachers have NO idea about what information literacy is and the biggest barrier: 'you can always tell a teacher, but you can't tell them much' – teachers typically are awful students!

The terminology associated with information literacy is seen by librarians as a factor impacting on the lack of understanding and/or acceptance of the concept within TAFE. It is 'confused by some facilitators/teachers with adult learning competencies and literacy/numeracy' wrote one librarian. 'We need to drop the libraryishness of this term and make it understandable to everyone' wrote another. Some TAFEs use alternative terms such as research skills or information skills, and others have sought terms more acceptable to teachers, as the following comment indicates:

Many teachers balk at the use of the literacy term. Coaching seems to be the buzz word of the moment and information coaching sits more comfortably with most teachers. Same program, new name, greater understanding and acceptance.

Several respondents made the point that some teachers took the view that their students didn't need information literacy training. 'Teachers do not feel any time spent on information literacy is necessary,' wrote one respondent. 'Lack of awareness of students' need for information literacy training,' was another comment, 'too many teachers presume students know how to research, reference etc.' Echoing a teacher's remarks, another librarian wrote 'My students don't need to know that. My students already know about information.'

The difficulty of contacting and liaising with sessional (contract, casual, not permanent) teachers was frequently noted. Management issues within some teaching areas was also cited as a problem, affecting the provision of training to students: 'lack of coordination between teachers within departments – some students get the sessions and some don't, some get the session in third year and the penny drops'.

Respondents' comments also reported that teachers in trades areas did not see information literacy training as useful or relevant for their students. As one librarian indicated, 'some trade teachers don't think it's worthwhile, and I think, for the majority of their students, they're probably right.' Another noted that the 'lack of research on information seeking behaviours by different industry groupings' was a barrier to advocating and providing information literacy, adding 'we ourselves lack the groundwork to justify our case.' TAFE librarians need to understand the information needs and practices of industry groups that they serve to develop information literacy programs that are relevant for their students.²⁹ The research by Smith and Martina³⁰ into the information needs of bakers is an excellent example of how TAFE practitioners can provide a research base for their information literacy programs for the vocational trades.

Time constraints were described as a barrier by the majority of respondents. Information literacy is difficult to slot into existing timetables, as

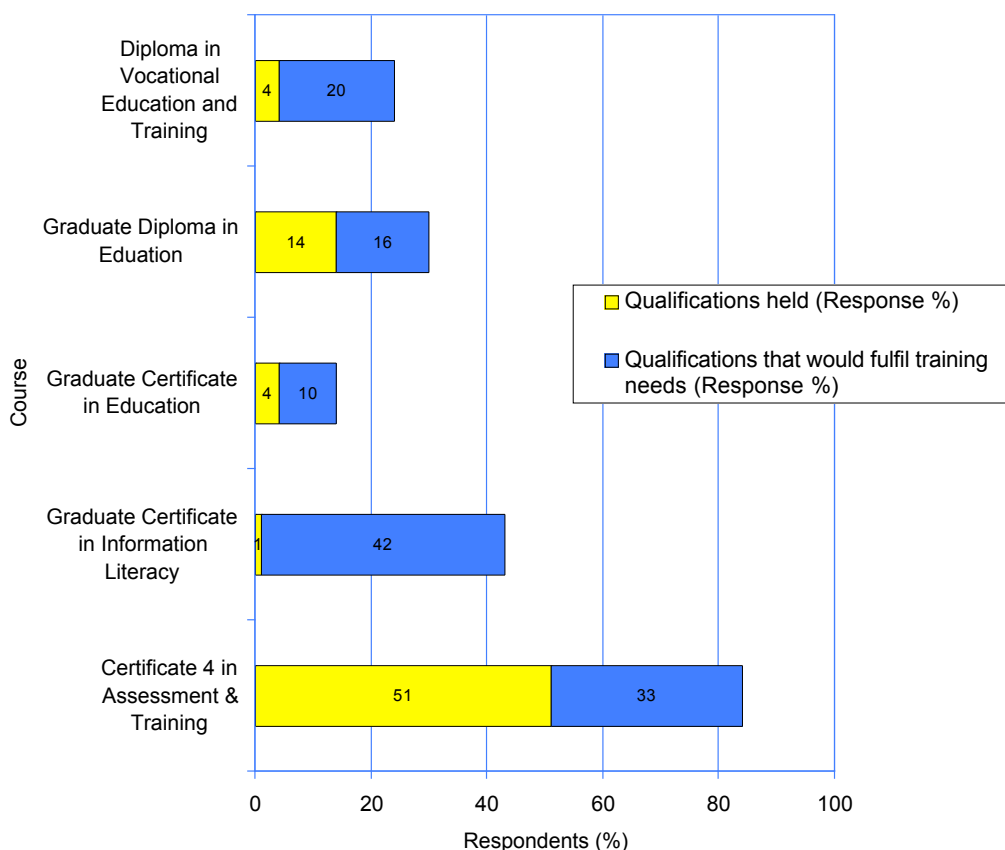
many TAFE curricula are overcrowded. As one respondent wrote, ‘Not enough time for the students to attend more than just orientation tours.’

Students also presented barriers to providing information literacy programs. There were some that were simply not interested or had negative attitudes towards libraries, seeing them as irrelevant. Many students have a clear preference for Internet resources, as noted by the following comment: ‘Gen X student confident with Google and web – and see no need to look beyond that.’ Respondents perceived that students did not value information literacy classes when they were not an assessable part of the curriculum.

Educational Needs of Librarians

Librarians require teaching expertise to cultivate information literacy in students and pedagogical knowledge to work with teachers to integrate information literacy in the curriculum.³¹ Formal coursework is one way of developing these skills and knowledge. Question 13 asked respondents to indicate the education-related qualifications that they currently have, and Question 14 asked respondents to indicate if any of the courses listed would fulfil their training needs in relation to their role in information literacy at their TAFE. There were 142 respondents for both questions.

Figure 6
Educational Needs of Librarians



The lighter bars in Figure 6 indicate that respondents hold a range of teaching qualifications, predominantly the Certificate 4 in Assessment and Training. Other education-related qualifications held by respondents, in addition to those listed in the question, include bachelor, masters and other certificate-level qualifications. The darker bars illustrate courses perceived by librarians to fulfil training needs and it is clear that the majority of respondents consider that the Graduate Certificate in Information Literacy would be useful to their job role. The Certificate 4 in Assessment and Training (33%) and the Diploma in VET (20%) were also perceived to fulfil training needs. Notable also were the 22 respondents in the ‘other’ option of the question who do not wish to undertake any further coursework or were unsure whether the listed courses would fulfil their training needs.

Although Questions 13 and 14 focus on education-related training needs, comments from respondents for Questions 17 and 19 indicate that IT skills are another area of training need:

I think our world is changing so fast. I have undertaken a number of IT courses (Web design, Multimedia, etc) and am very aware in IL sessions, the students are often more aware of technology capabilities than the library staff. I really think the

currency of our skill is outdated but the TAFE management seem unwilling to invest in their staff. I attend classes in my own time and at my own expense.

It is clear that TAFE librarians recognise the need for further education in the areas of information literacy, educational methods and IT skills. Teaching skills (design, delivery and evaluation) and professional competency (content knowledge, technological competence and professionalism) are described by Peacock³² as another skill set required by reference librarians to enable the ‘librarian-teacher metamorphosis’. Given the wide range of understandings about information literacy in this research, TAFE staff would be well served by professional development activities that not only address teaching skills but also clarify and expand their understanding of information literacy.

Sharing Information Literacy Programs and Instruction Materials

Question 7 polled librarians about their willingness to share their information literacy programs and instruction materials with other TAFE libraries. The sharing of this type of information with colleagues may reduce duplication of effort, save time and assist smaller TAFE libraries. Sustained collaboration on a project such as this also has the potential for developing a community of practice among TAFE librarians.

Table 7
Willingness to Share Materials with other TAFE Libraries

Program / Instruction Material	Response Total	Response %
Lesson plans	62	40
Training activities	87	57
Assessment activities	31	20
Online programs (generic or subject specific)	40	26
No	10	7

As Table 7 indicates, many librarians are willing in principle to share their information literacy materials with other colleagues. ‘Other’ comments indicate that librarians are already sharing with colleagues in the same region or state.

Conclusion

This research has described the status in 2005 of TAFE librarians’ information literacy practices. TAFE librarians were found to exhibit a range of understandings about information literacy. The most common understanding is that information literacy is a skills-based process focusing on accessing, evaluating and using information, mainly within the context of a formal education environment. Librarians strongly associate information literacy with

library skills and text-based information resources. Clarification of understanding is required so that librarians can advocate and teach information literacy to key stakeholders and differentiate it from various library user education programs.

Nearly half of all information literacy programs provided by TAFE librarians are based on the well-recognized CAUL/ANZIIL definition of information literacy, sometimes combined with other definitions. Compared with 2001, fewer respondents lacked a definition of information literacy for their programs and the range of definitions had narrowed. Notwithstanding this, 47% of respondents indicated their willingness to participate in a potential project that had the stated aim of adapting the CAUL standards to the TAFE environment. Discourse that explores the meaning of information literacy in a TAFE context is recommended.

The information literacy programs provided generally resemble library skills or information skills programs. Compared to 2001 there are increased response percentages for introductory (11%), advanced (22%) and research skills (5%) programs. Training is predominantly delivered by face-to-face methods in library training rooms. There is a 16% increase in respondents using online delivery methods since 2001. A range of assessment methods to evaluate student outcomes of information literacy programs are used by librarians, most commonly collaborative learning exercises, short answers and peer and self review. Nine percent of respondents indicated that no formal assessment was performed.

TAFE teaching staff were found to have a fairly superficial level of involvement with the development of information literacy programs. Lack of interest and lack of time on the part of teachers were seen as factors affecting their involvement. Developing educational partnerships is recommended as a key area of focus in the future. TAFE librarians can learn from examples in the higher education sector, particularly strategic partnerships between librarians and lecturers, curriculum developers and senior management.

The finding that 62% of respondents consider information literacy to be integrated in some subject units must be questioned given the low level of involvement of teaching staff. One possible explanation for this finding is that information literacy may be taught at some TAFEs as training package support materials. Only 7% of respondents thought that information literacy is developed incrementally in the curriculum.

Librarians were found to put considerable and sustained effort into promoting information literacy, using both traditional publicity methods and online methods. Personal contact with teachers was the predominant method used. Teachers and students were perceived to value information literacy more than TAFE management, probably because they are the main recipients of librarians' teaching and promotional efforts.

The barriers that librarians face when advocating or providing information literacy were found to include insufficient resources, TAFE management, teachers, time constraints and students. Key barriers to delivery include the lack of resources in terms of providing support for staff involved in developing and delivering training, and training spaces with adequate computer facilities. Another area that needs to be addressed is teachers' lack of understanding about information literacy. Trades teachers in particular were perceived as not interested or saw information literacy as irrelevant for their students. This is clearly an area requiring further investigation, as information literacy is a life skill that is needed by all students. The terminology surrounding the concept was seen by librarians to compound misunderstandings. Clearly, any definition and teaching framework developed for TAFE should use terminology that is understandable and acceptable to all stakeholders.

Finally, many librarians were found to hold a variety of teaching qualifications, particularly the Certificate 4 in Assessment and Training. Many were interested in obtaining further qualifications to assist them in their job roles. Given the wide range of understandings about information literacy in this research, TAFE staff would be well served by professional development activities that clarify and expand their understanding of this complex phenomenon.

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Notes

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Appendix: Questionnaire used in the National Survey

1. Please identify your institution
 - Standalone TAFE
 - Combined TAFE/Higher Education Institution
2. Please identify the name of your institute and campus (where appropriate)
3. Please indicate your state or territory
4. Please indicate the information literacy training that is provided at your TAFE (tick all that apply)
 - Library tour/orientation session
 - Introductory information skills (including library catalogue instruction, introduction to library website)
 - Advanced information skills (e.g. database training)
 - Research level skills
 - Topic-specific information skills
 - Resource-specific information skills
 - An overview of what information literacy is
 - Other (please specify)
5. Indicate the computer skills training provided by library staff at your TAFE (tick all that apply)
 - Basic computer skills (working in windows environment, file management etc.)
 - Software packages (e.g. Powerpoint, Word, Excel etc)
 - Email packages
 - Bibliographic packages (e.g. EndNote, Procite)
 - Introduction to your institute's IT environment
 - Other (please specify)
6. Please indicate the methods of delivery used by library staff at your TAFE (tick all that apply)
 - Face-to-face in library training room
 - Face-to-face in venue external to the library e.g. lecture theatre, classroom
 - Online, e.g. web based
 - Mixture of face-to-face and online

- Other (please specify)
7. Are you willing to share your information literacy programs / instruction materials with other TAFE libraries? If yes, please indicate
 - Lesson plans
 - Training activities
 - Assessment activities
 - Online programs (generic or subject specific)
 - Other (please specify)
 8. Describe your understanding of information literacy (in less than 100 words)
 9. Do you have a definition of information literacy that is used as a framework for your training programs?
 - Yes, based on CAUL/Aust. and N.Z. Information Literacy Framework
 - Yes, based on American Library Association definition
 - Yes, based on researchers e.g. Doyle, Breivik etc.
 - Yes, based on ALIA statement of information literacy
 - No
 - Other (please specify)
 10. Please indicate assessment measures used to evaluate student outcomes of your information literacy programs (tick all that apply)
 - Quizzes
 - Collaborative learning exercises in class
 - Essays
 - Multiple choice questions
 - Short answers
 - Diary or journal of search process
 - Portfolio
 - Peer and self-review
 - Other (please specify)
 11. Is information literacy integrated into the curriculum offered at your TAFE?
 - Integrated well into curriculum (IL skills are developed incrementally in the curriculum)
 - Integrated into some subject units (IL is embedded in subject assignments)
 - Not integrated at all
 - Other (please specify)
 12. Are teaching staff involved with the development of information literacy programs? (tick all that apply)
 - Programs are developed in partnership with teachers
 - Programs are developed in consultation with teachers
 - Programs are developed without input of teachers
 - Other (please specify)

13. Please indicate whether you have any of the following education-related qualifications (tick all that apply)
- Certificate 4 in Assessment and Training
 - Graduate Certificate in IL
 - Graduate Certificate in Education
 - Graduate Diploma in Education
 - Diploma in Vocational Education and Training
 - Other (please specify)
14. Would any of the following courses fulfil your training needs in relation to your role in information literacy at your TAFE?
- Certificate 4 in Assessment and Training
 - Graduate Certificate in IL
 - Graduate Certificate in Education
 - Graduate Diploma in Education
 - Diploma in Vocational Education and Training
 - Other (please specify)
15. Please indicate your perception of whether your students, teachers and institute management value information literacy
- Students
- Not valued
 - Valued a little
 - Valued
 - Valued a great deal
 - Don't know
- Teachers
- Not valued
 - Valued a little
 - Valued
 - Valued a great deal
 - Don't know
- Institute management
- Not valued
 - Valued a little
 - Valued
 - Valued a great deal
 - Don't know
16. Please indicate how information literacy is promoted at your institution
17. What barriers do you encounter when advocating or providing information literacy training at your institution?
18. Please indicate whether you would be willing to participate in a project that will adapt the CAUL information literacy standards to the TAFE environment.

- Yes
- No

19. Do you have any information literacy success stories that you would like to share with other TAFE staff?