



THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION AGENDA



Australian Library and Information Association



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5 500 members

of the Australian Library and Information Association

14 400 locations

in metropolitan, outer suburban, regional and remote Australia

27 500 workers

in library and information services

11 million-plus users – 50% of
the population

in communities, schools, universities, TAFEs, government departments, research agencies, hospitals, NGOs, law firms, banks, media channels, technology companies and other knowledge-based enterprises across Australia



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document summarises how people who work in the library and information field want the new Australian Government to engage with library and information services during its term of office. In the run up to the federal election, we will be lobbying for The Library and Information Agenda – four themes and 10 items which we believe are essential for promoting literacy, enabling citizens to be well-informed, supporting socially inclusive communities and contributing to the success of Australia as a knowledge-based economy.

We urge all parties and candidates for the federal election to consider these points and endorse our agenda.

THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION AGENDA

Theme 1

Ensuring equity of access to information and resources

1. To recognise public libraries, which are state/territory and local government funded, as a national network and a national asset that has the capacity to improve engagement with government services and policy, and requires the ongoing support and engagement of the federal government.
2. To support the reform of the Copyright Act, already in train through the Australian Law Reform Commission, with the result being a law that better reflects fair use in the real world and in the digital environment. Protecting fair use provisions is vital to improve the free flow of information for research purposes. To support the amendment of the Copyright Act to extend legal deposit provisions to include published electronic materials, ensuring that the national collection remains a comprehensive source of Australian content.
3. To support the principle of open access, making research funded by government freely available to the taxpayers who paid for it.

Theme 2

Protecting and promoting Australian culture

4. To ensure that, with the global growth of electronic content, access to Australian content for Australian readers is readily available and that our own authors, writers and illustrators continue to thrive.
5. To play an active role in setting the national cultural asset digitisation agenda and to fund the digitisation of Australian content over time, in order to bring Australian history to life online; to make family history and cultural records discoverable; to preserve vital information for future generations as a safeguard against natural and manmade disasters; and to bring Australia in line with (and even ahead of) other first world nations.

Theme 3

Improving education outcomes

6. To recognise the role that teacher librarians play in helping students develop reading, information and digital literacies; in ensuring that students are safe online, and to endorse the goal of a qualified library professional in every school.
7. To introduce a nationwide, federally-funded early literacy initiative through public libraries, extending what currently happens in some states to all states and territories, giving every Australian child a better opportunity to be school-ready.
8. To strengthen the central role libraries play in learning at all levels, preparing Australian students for the workplace and contributing to the nation's successful engagement in the global knowledge economy.

Theme 4

Enabling sound policy and decision-making

9. To call for all federal government departments to have access to library and information services run by qualified library professionals, ensuring that government policy is based on timely, comprehensive and robust evidence, and to call for public sector information to be properly collected, managed, preserved and made accessible by these library and information services.
10. To endorse the important role fulfilled by qualified library and information professionals across all three levels of government and in the private sector, connecting people with information and ideas, and preserving intellectual output for future generations.



QUESTIONS FOR POLITICAL PARTIES

1. Will you pursue the reform of the Copyright Act as a priority for the first term of the new government?
2. Will you consider introducing legislation in favour of open access for government-funded research?
3. Will you include responsibility for managing the Commonwealth Government's relationship with public libraries in a Minister's portfolio?
4. Will you renew government engagement in book industry discussions and, if negotiations with international publishers falter, will you consider government intervention to assist libraries to lend ebooks?
5. Will you develop a national policy for the digitisation of priority Australian content?
6. Will you endorse the aspirational goal of a qualified library professional in every school?
7. Will you introduce a nationwide early literacy initiative?
8. Will your Ministers insist on well-resourced library and information services run by qualified library professionals for their departments?
9. Will you endorse library and information science as a valued profession, akin to accountancy, engineering, health and other professions requiring practitioner registration?



OUR VALUES

Social equity and strong communities

Library and information professionals strive for a society where everyone has the opportunity to participate; where everyone can read, learn and succeed in their chosen endeavour. We respect and celebrate diversity, providing safe, neutral spaces where everyone is equally welcome. We promote freedom of access to information and ideas by connecting people with knowledge, facts and creative works. Libraries help build stronger, more resilient and sustainable economies and communities.

Literacy and lifelong learning

Libraries provide opportunities for informal learning. We support literacy – not only reading and writing, but also information literacy and digital literacy. Libraries operate in

primary, secondary and tertiary education settings; through public libraries, they also enable people to return to study in later life, often providing pathways into formal learning and qualifications.

Academic excellence

In universities, as physical collections are moving out, library spaces are being reinvented as learning commons – places that are designed for students to engage in new ways of learning for the 21st century, through collaborative exploration and discovery. Investment in resources gives students access to the very latest global intelligence.

Quality research driving quality outcomes

All Australian university libraries support digital repositories and are part of the nation's research facility infrastructure.

Library staff are highly valued contributors to university research programs, which in turn support enterprise and innovation.

Preservation of our heritage and promotion of our culture

We collect and curate books, documents, manuscripts, pictures, audio visual and other materials. We make these valuable insights into our culture and history discoverable through libraries' physical and digital collections.

In providing all this, we are naturally collaborative, working with government, communities, private companies and public institutions, including galleries, archives and museums.



SUPPORTING POLITICAL PRIORITIES

More than half of all Australians use libraries, providing a trusted channel for government to engage with citizens.

Social justice

Libraries are synonymous with equity, justice and the support of human rights. We assist with the equitable distribution of resources, contributing to people's quality of life and enabling everyone to participate in decision-making through their online and real world engagement with local, state, territory and federal government. There is inherent fairness in the delivery of collections, services and programs for all Australians. We recognise and celebrate diverse cultures and we support people with print disabilities. We help create stronger, safer, socially inclusive communities.

Vibrant economy

Library and information services are free at the point of use, providing valuable guidance, training and resources for people needing to develop new skills, job-seekers, social enterprises and for small businesses. We provide work and study spaces with free wifi. We offer top-up courses for people who want to re-enter the workforce. We help library users develop their information and digital literacy skills. In a variety of ways, we contribute to a stronger, more productive, prosperous Australia.

Quality education

With 17% of five-year-olds at risk of not developing the reading skills they need to succeed in the workplace¹, early literacy initiatives in local libraries give every family the opportunity to give their child the best start. Quality early childhood education can start with rhyme and storytimes at local public libraries – open to everyone and giving children from homes without books a wide array of children's picture books to spark their interest in reading.

¹ AEDI results – [http://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/aedi/Report_NationalReport_2012_1304\[1\]\(1\).pdf](http://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/aedi/Report_NationalReport_2012_13041.pdf)

Libraries are an essential element of the school, TAFE and university experience. Qualified library and information professionals provide assistance with information and digital literacies, as well as enabling access to books, resources, electronic databases and fast internet connection.

Smarter communities

We support formal learning with informal, free public education and training. This is often a route back into formal education, a way back into the workplace or an opportunity for improved employment opportunities. Fast internet connection, the latest technology and devices in libraries provide a modern infrastructure to help individuals, home-workers and emerging enterprises stay connected.

Independent, secure seniors

All Australian public libraries have large print books in their collections, most run computer training courses specially designed for seniors and offer outreach for people who are home-bound. Many services are designed to support older people, providing choice, helping them maintain their independence and stay connected with the community around them.

Sustainable communities

Libraries contribute to people's sense of wellbeing. Public libraries provide welcoming civic spaces. They are often physical manifestations of a council's commitment to 'reduce, reuse, recycle' policies. In many different ways, libraries help build sustainable communities.



ABOUT US

The Australian Library and Information Association is the peak body in Australia representing individual and institutional members in school, public, TAFE, university, government, law, health, corporate and other special libraries, and collecting institutions. We advocate on behalf of all library and information services. We have strong connections with sector-specific library associations in Australia; with our equivalent association in New Zealand, the New Zealand Library Association (LIANZA), and with colleagues around the world through the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA). Find out more on our website www.alia.org.au.

ABOUT THE SECTOR

School libraries

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' Schools Australia 2012 report stated the number of Australian government schools (6,697), Catholic schools (1,713) and independent schools (1,017), giving a total of 9,427 primary and secondary schools. Almost all schools have a library of some description, but they vary enormously in terms of staffing, facilities and resources. At the lower end, there are schools with a few shelves of books and a member of staff whose responsibility it is to look after them, as part of a much wider teaching or administration role. At the high end, there are flagship library and IT hubs, with more than a dozen members of staff, including qualified teacher librarians. They will have a growing collection of print and ebooks and provide a range of services to students, including safer online experiences, group discovery-based learning and study spaces, and more electronic resources.

Public libraries

National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) produces an annual report on public libraries across Australia². The

² <http://www.nsla.org.au/publication/annual-australian-public-library-statistics>

2010-2011 NSLA report showed that there were 1491 public library service points, 114 million customer visits and 10.2 million registered library members – nearly half the total population of Australia. Public libraries employed 7,500 staff (FTE) and total expenditure on public libraries was \$954 billion or the equivalent of \$42.19 per Australian. Independent studies have shown that for every dollar invested in public libraries, there is a \$2.90 return in terms of community benefits. For example, public libraries contribute to literacy, introducing very young children to books, rhymes and stories through free family sessions. They support Australians from non-English speaking backgrounds, and they are home to local history collections.

University libraries

According to the Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL), in 2011 there were 34 universities in Australia and 199 university libraries. These universities employed approximately 7000 staff in their libraries, including 4000 librarians and 1600 para professionals, providing library and information services to more than 1.2 million students. University library budgets totalled some \$640.5 million and collections included around seven million ebooks and 300,000

serial titles. University libraries support students and play a vital role in research and publishing. You can find detailed information and statistics on the CAUL website. www.caul.edu.au

TAFE libraries

There are 61 institutes of TAFE around Australia. In Victoria, we know that expenditure on TAFE libraries is just \$26 per student, compared with \$460 per university student, and we believe that if figures were available for other states and territories they would reveal a similar picture. Yet TAFE library teams work alongside learning support officers, disability support officers, social workers and counsellors, to give every TAFE student the best chance of success, supporting their training and helping them develop lifelong learning skills.

Special libraries

Special libraries comprise government, NGO, health, law, corporate and other libraries that serve departments, institutions or businesses. Increasingly the word library doesn't appear in the title, instead these are often known as information services or research units, terms which also describe their main purpose and function.



'If you happen to work for an innovative, forward-thinking organization, where the value of information and its importance to success is well understood, consider yourself lucky. You probably have at your disposal a corporate library... Modern corporate libraries are like hive-minds; acquiring, filtering, synthesizing and distributing information where it's needed most, keeping organizations vital and relevant... They find information ranging from refereed literature to codes and standards to patents and market intelligence. ... In an age where separating good information from the irrelevant is increasingly difficult, libraries and librarians are more crucial than ever.' Culhane 2011, from the international journal *Fire Technology*.

Collecting institutions

Many libraries have local history and special collections, but the main collecting institutions are university, national, state and territory libraries. The National Library of Australia, State Libraries of New

South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia, the Northern Territory Library and ACT Heritage Library collect, manage and make accessible the Australian human record, preserving our culture and history for researchers, historians and future generations. Together these libraries have collections valued at more than \$5.2 billion. They welcome some 12 million visitors each year, with 217 million pages viewed on their websites.³

Summary

In total, we estimate there are some 14 400 libraries in Australia.

School libraries	9400
Public libraries	1500
University libraries	200
TAFE libraries	400
Special libraries	2900

³ NSLA Annual Statistical Return <http://www.nsla.org.au/aboutnsla>

ENSURING EQUITY OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

1. To support the reform of the Copyright Act, already in train through the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC), with the result being a law that better reflects fair use in the real world and in the digital environment.

As members of, and active participants in, the Australian Digital Alliance (ADA), the Australian Libraries Copyright Committee (ALCC), and the international Fair Deal Coalition, we endorse the ADA and ALCC's 2012 submission to the ALRC⁴, including its recommendation of: *'The introduction of an open-ended, flexible exception to better keep pace with new technologies and digital services, as well as evolving consumer practices. We support the introduction of an exception modelled on the US fair use provision, or some other analysis of fairness.'* Our goal is copyright law that balances fair use with recognition and reward for creators.

The ALRC is due to report its findings and make recommendations to government in November 2013. Our concern is that two years of work by the ALRC (and the organisations that produced more than 280 submissions to help shape future policy) could be lost in the flurry of activity

⁴ <http://digital.org.au/our-work/submission/alrc-inquiry-copyright-and-digital-economy-issues-paper>

post-election, with vital new copyright legislation pushed onto the backburner.

2. To support the principle of open access, making research funded by government freely available to the taxpayers who paid for it.

As a member of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), we support IFLA's 2011 statement on open access⁵.

IFLA is committed to the principles of freedom of access to information and the belief that universal and equitable access to information is vital for the social, educational, cultural, democratic, and economic well-being of people, communities, and organizations.

Open access is the now known name for a concept, a movement and a business model whose goal is to provide free access and re-use of scientific knowledge in the form of research articles, monographs, data and related materials. Open access does this by shifting today's prevalent business models

⁵ <http://www.ifla.org/files/assets/hq/news/documents/ifla-statement-on-open-access.pdf>

of after-publication payment by subscribers to a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access. Thus, open access is an essential issue within IFLA's information agenda.

The report from the World Summit on the Information Society, held in Geneva, in 2012⁶, stated: *'All stakeholders – government departments and policymakers; academics and researchers; librarians and publishers – have a role to play in promoting and implementing open access policies that can support development. The value of providing free access to taxpayer funded research was clearly identified as a motivating factor for the uptake of open access, along with the importance of encouraging more output from researchers in the developing world to counter a northern bias in scholarly output and publishing.'*

3. To recognise public libraries, which are state/territory and local government funded, as a national network and a national asset that requires the ongoing support and engagement of the federal government.

⁶ <http://www.ifla.org/news/report-from-the-iflaeiflcoarsparc-world-summit-on-the-information-society-wsis-forum-2012-works>



Australia's population is growing, and the demand for public library services increasing, and yet the proportion of state government funding is reducing and local governments have had to pick up the slack. This situation is not sustainable. We seek the intervention of the Australian Government, not as a third level of government funding for public libraries, but as a higher authority setting standards and guidelines for public library provision.

The National Year of Reading in 2012 – a federally funded initiative – showed the potential of public libraries to operate as a highly effective national network, helping to deliver against Australian Government priorities. This national network, working collaborative through the ALIA Public Libraries Advisory Committee, has already created a set of National Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries. These could form the basis of standards and guidelines endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments and the federal government, providing a benchmark to influence investment by state and local governments.

PROTECTING AND PROMOTING AUSTRALIAN CULTURE

4. To ensure that, with the growth of ebooks, there continues to be Australian content for Australian readers and that cheap, ubiquitous global material does not push out our own authors, writers and illustrators.

Publishing (especially epubublishing) is increasingly a global market and it is in our national interest to support Australian publishers, providing access to Australian creators' work. We want to see more Australian creators enjoy a high profile at home and in international markets, to ensure that readers continue to have access to Australian titles in both print and ebook formats.

There are many things we cannot control and may only influence at a global level, but we can push back against ubiquitous, globalised content, by promoting Australian writing at home and abroad. In order to do this, library users must continue to be able to borrow books in the digital environment, however, publishers are struggling to develop a commercial model for elending.

We believe the solution for ebook lending in libraries lies in a whole-of-sector approach. This requires a strong, neutral and effective central forum for discussion and action. ALIA is an active participant in the Commonwealth Government's Book Industry Collaborative Council, which will end on 30 June 2013. We seek a commitment from the political parties that a future Commonwealth Government will remain engaged in the discussion and will be prepared to consider intervention on a legislative front if required.

The US State of Connecticut has tabled '*an Act concerning ebooks and libraries: that the general statutes be amended to require publishers of electronic books to offer such books for sale to public and academic libraries at the same rates as offered to the general public*'.

5. To play an active role in setting the national cultural asset digitisation agenda and to set aside appropriate funding to pay for the digitisation of Australian content over time, in order to bring Australian history to life online; to make family history and cultural records discoverable; to preserve vital information for future generations as a safeguard against natural and manmade disasters; and bring Australia in line with other first world nations.

Australian cultural records and heritage artefacts are national assets. While much has been achieved to date through federal and state government grants, digitisation has been on a piecemeal basis and much of our history, in terms of original documents, images and other physical forms, remains undiscoverable online. Libraries and other cultural institutions have the infrastructure in place to enable mass digitisation to take place, but there is no national cultural asset digitisation agenda established in partnership with the GLAM sector (galleries, libraries, archives, museums), and there is no long term funding arrangement at a federal level to enable the sector to prioritise and plan the process over a number of years.



IMPROVING EDUCATION OUTCOMES

6. To recognise the role that teacher librarians play in helping students develop reading, information and digital literacies in ensuring that students are safe online, and to endorse the aspirational goal of a qualified library professional in every school.

We were pleased to have the opportunity to make our submission and give evidence to the federal government's Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Librarians, which took place in 2010. Our basic principle was that there should be a teacher librarian in every Australian school in order to achieve the best educational and social outcomes for all young Australians, and to ensure their lifelong participation in the Australian economy, culture and society. When it was published, the inquiry report⁷ featured 11 recommendations, seven of which the Australian Government agreed to consider. However, the government's response was published in November 2011⁸ and we have seen little progress in implementing these recommendations, which include:

7 http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=ee/schoollibraries/report.htm

8 <http://foi.deewr.gov.au/documents/school-libraries-and-teacher-librarians-21st-century-australia-report-australian>

Recommendation 3: The Committee recommends that the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority include statistical information about the breakdown of all specialist teachers, including teacher librarians, on the My School website.

Recommendation 5: The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government initiate an Australian-based longitudinal study into the links between library programs, literacy (including digital literacy) and student achievement, including their impact on improving outcomes for socioeconomically disadvantaged students.

Recommendation 8: The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government commission a thorough workforce gap analysis of teacher librarians across Australian schools.

Recommendation 9: The Committee recommends that the Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, through the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development

and Youth Affairs, establish a national dialogue, including with tertiary providers, on the role of teacher librarians today in schools and into the future. The dialogue should include an examination of the adequacy of the pathways into the profession and ongoing training requirements

Recommendation 10: The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government, through the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood and Youth Affairs, discuss ways to enhance partnerships with state and territory and local levels of government to support school libraries and teacher librarians.

We seek assurance that the new Australian Government will revisit and action these recommendations.

In addition, we seek assurance that education reform of the kind outlined in the Gonski report⁹ can be achieved without taking essential funding away from universities and TAFEs to make up any financial shortfall.

9 <http://www.betterschools.gov.au/review>



We note that the Gonski report talks about grants for major works and infrastructure projects. Our experience with the Building the Education Revolution investment was that schools benefited from new libraries but did not have the funding to pay for the qualified teacher librarians to staff them.

7. To consider introducing a nationwide early literacy initiative, extending what currently happens in some states to all states and territories, giving every Australian child a better opportunity to be school-ready.

The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) *Snapshot of Early Childhood Development in Australia* report of March 2010 included results for the language and cognitive skills of nearly 250,000 five-year-olds¹⁰. These figures showed that more than a fifth of Australian five-year-olds (22.9%) were developmentally vulnerable or developmentally at risk of

¹⁰ http://www.rch.org.au/aedi/research.cfm?doc_id=13159

not achieving the necessary language and cognitive skills. Libraries around Australia have introduced or been involved with state and territory-wide, and locally funded early literacy initiatives, often relying on corporate and philanthropic support. There is no national early literacy initiative that guarantees every child a reading start in life.

Successful early literacy initiatives with the capacity to be expanded include Better Beginnings (WA)¹¹; 10 Minutes a Day (NSW)¹²; Paint the Town Read (NSW)¹³; Little Big Book Club (SA)¹⁴; Let's Read (VIC)¹⁵; Dads Read (QLD)¹⁶.

¹¹ <http://www.better-beginnings.com.au/>

¹² <http://www.tenminutesaday.com.au/>

¹³ <http://paintthetownread.info/>

¹⁴ <http://www.thelittlebig-bookclub.com.au/>

¹⁵ <http://www.letsread.com.au/>

¹⁶ <http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/whats-on/programs/dadsread>

ENABLING SOUND POLICY AND DECISION-MAKING

8. To call for all federal government departments to have access to library and information services run by qualified library professionals, ensuring that government policy is based on robust data and that we do not have 'government by Google'.

Government library and information professionals connect politicians and government employees to the essential information they need to make decisions based on facts, not fiction. Government library and information services are critical, if the people who shape our future are to have access to the very latest information, and if government employees are to have access to the knowledge of the past that informs tomorrow's outcomes.

Over the last five years, state and federal government libraries have lost funding, lost staff, lost space, and, in the most extreme cases, closed down altogether. Further public sector cuts can be anticipated, but government libraries have already experienced deep cuts and there is no 'fat' in the system.

At the same time, ALIA has been a strong advocate of freedom of information legislation and welcomed the creation of the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner and strengthening of the legislation in 2010. The commitment to administrative access schemes and oversight by a national agency strengthen the potential for Australians to have both access to documents

that relate to them and to establish transparency for government decision making. Library and information professionals play a vital role in managing these documents and making them discoverable.

For these reasons, incoming Ministers must insist on well-resourced library and information services run by qualified library professionals for their departments.

9. To endorse the important role fulfilled by qualified library and information professionals across all three levels of government and in the private sector, connecting people with information and ideas.

By endorsing our agenda, the new Australian Government would be endorsing the important role of library and information professionals in Australian society. We would welcome opportunities to work with government departments in the new government, particularly in the areas of education, industry, the arts, broadband connectivity, local government and community, culture and heritage, research, print disability and Indigenous affairs.

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