BACKGROUND

In 2013, we set out to investigate the big questions about our future.

- How will libraries remain relevant for users?
- What changes will institutions and individuals in the sector experience?
- Will ‘library and information professional’ continue to be a necessary and desirable occupation?

We received challenging, insightful, inspiring responses to our request for feedback at events held all around Australia. As a result, we have been able to identify themes and develop actions that will support positive outcomes. The findings from the project have been produced as seven reports, available as pdf downloads from the ALIA website www.alia.org.au. This is a taster for VET libraries.

VET LIBRARIES

There were five themes that emerged, specific to TAFE and RTO (registered training organisation) libraries.

1. Disruption
   There will be systemwide uncertainty in the VET sector in the short to medium term.

2. A VET future
   We see a strong future for VET in the long term, and institutions will gain competitive advantage from offering an enhanced library experience for online students.

3. Level playing field
   We will be advocating for library standards to be built into the government VET accreditation process.

4. Professional support
   VET students will continue to need a high proportion of qualified staff to support their learning needs.

5. Our vision
   The future will see consistent, well-resourced, appropriately staffed VET libraries helping students achieve the best outcomes.
GENERIC THEMES
Ten themes covered all library and information services, including school, public, university, TAFE and special libraries, and collecting institutions.

1. Libraries and information management
   The same skills, differently interpreted.

2. Fair
   People's love of libraries is underpinned by our contribution to a fair and just society.

3. Equality of opportunity
   We help to overcome the gap between advantage and disadvantage.

4. Funding
   Library users and funders have a different perception of the value of our services.

5. The library experience
   Others provide information, but no one else provides the library experience.

6. Analogue and digital
   We will need to look good and work well both online and in real life.

7. More space not less
   More space for people, less space for books in our future libraries.

8. Stretching collection budgets
   More content, in multiple formats — we will need to be smart with our money.

9. Community created content
   Libraries will help connect readers with all kinds of new content from surprising creators.

10. Unimaginable technologies
    Technology will continue to have a massive impact on how we work and the services we deliver.

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS
A further ten themes looked at the professionals who work in library and information services.

1. Balancing the workforce
   New recruits will help increase age diversity.

2. Higher paid jobs
   Salaries will better reflect the importance of our role.

3. Aiming for the top
   We will need to sharpen our business skills, demonstrate flexibility and help lead change.

4. What we call ourselves
   Librarians and information professionals will co-exist.

5. Guardians of privacy
   We see an expanded role as guardians of our users’ personal privacy.

6. Technology for all
   Every LIS professional will need to be proficient in IT.

7. Beyond the library
   We will find new employment opportunities outside traditional library settings.

8. Ongoing learning
   Professional development will be a necessity for anyone on a career trajectory.

9. Future leaders
   Succession planning and support for emerging leaders will be essential.

10. Visibility
    Remaining visible in an increasingly digital environment will be one of the challenges.