



Australian
Library and
Information
Association

ALIA SPECIAL LIBRARIES SURVEY

REPORT
DECEMBER 2010

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2010 the ALIA Special Library Advisory Committee (SLAC) determined to undertake a statistical study of special libraries in Australia.

The purpose of the study was to enable ALIA, special libraries members and employers (management) to gain a better understanding of the current state of specialist information services in Australia.

An online survey was designed, piloted and then distributed by SLAC members to over 1400 library email addresses in November 2010.

Survey Responses

Responses were sought from service managers and individual library staff in Australian special libraries. 73% (266) of the respondents are managers of a special library service. In total 380 responses were received covering all states and territories, 81% (307) of these responses were completed.

Snapshot of Survey Findings

- 74% of responses came from libraries based in capital cities
- 52% of responses came from government based libraries
- The types of libraries covered in the survey are diverse – the largest response rate (28%) was from health/medicine sector
- There is no clear pattern of where libraries are based within their parent organisation or the seniority of the person they report to
- 87% of respondents reported that their library gathered feedback on its service informally at the time of service delivery – this was the most common method of gathering feedback
- 34% of respondents have KPIs for their library service
- 63% of respondents indicated their library service did not cost its services or was able to demonstrate the value of the library to the organisation.
- 15% of respondents regularly benchmark their service against other library services
- 70% of respondents worked in libraries which employ 1-3 staff and only 12 respondents worked in libraries that have more than 10 staff
- 18% of respondents have volunteers working in their library service
- 76% of respondents said their library is a corporate member of ALIA and 71% are members of Libraries Australia
- 80% of respondents said there has been no change in the number of library service points in their organisation over the last 5 years
- Internal users (97%), Other libraries (57%), Researchers (52%) External Organisations (45%) and Students (43%) were the most frequently identified client bases identified by special libraries
- 86% of respondents reported that their library had a budget of < \$1.5 million while 43% reported an annual budget of < 200,000. 10% of respondents did not know what their library's annual budget was
- Collection sizes ranged from less than 5,000 to more than 1 million items
- 140 responding libraries hold collections of specialist material
- 71% of respondents indicated their library service participates in networks or resource sharing
- Cataloguing (91%), document supply (90%), ready reference enquiries (87%), research (86%) current awareness services (84%), and central ordering (84%) were the most frequently identified services provided by special libraries

Profile of Survey Respondents

60% have worked in the special library sector for more than 10 years
46% moved to special libraries from another library sector
73% are managers of the library service
92% have formal library qualifications
52% are personal members of ALIA
88% are female
54% are 50+
64% work fulltime
32% earn \$61-\$80,000
23% earn \$81-\$100,000

Recommendations

- ALIA broadly publicises the results of this 2010 survey of Australian Special Libraries.
- ALIA Special Library Advisory Committee (SLAC) develops a small set of interview/focus group questions to elicit expectations of non-library senior managers of their organisation's library service, especially those who have line responsibility for the library service. The set of questions could then be distributed to Australian special library managers to use in their interaction with the senior managers of their parent organisation.
- Conduct another shorter version of this survey in 3 years time in order to monitor the development of special libraries in Australia

INTRODUCTION

ALIA Special Libraries Advisory Committee is interested in gathering information and data about special libraries from parent organisations, employers (management) and staff of special libraries via a survey. This information will enable ALIA, special libraries members and employers (management) to gain a better understanding of the current state of specialist information services in Australia.

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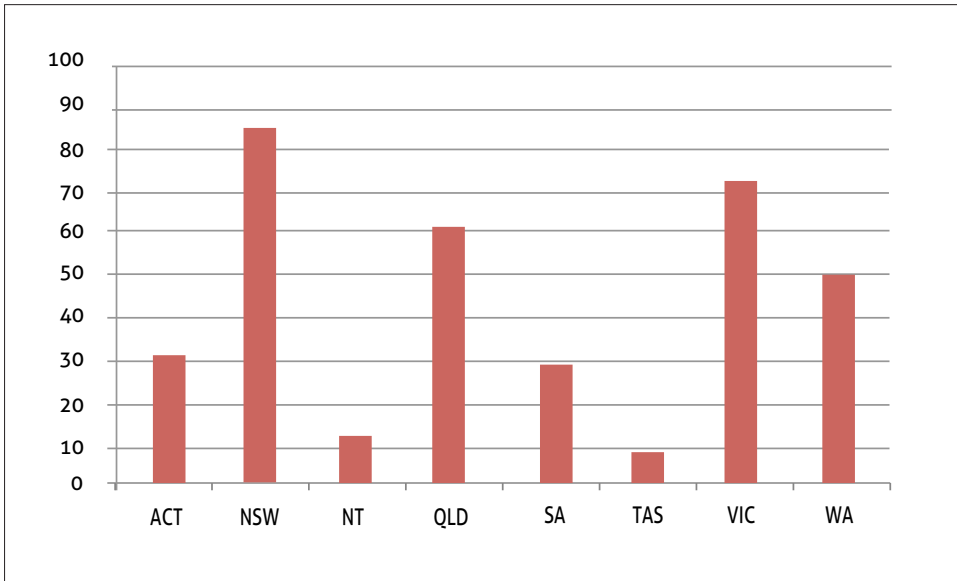
This report summarises the results of the survey and provides recommendations for future research.

The Committee had originally planned to survey non-library senior managers in the parent organization as well as library staff in the same survey but on the advice of the consultant agreed to limit the distribution of the survey to the managers and library staff in Australian special libraries.

The database of library contact emails was developed by committee members bases on their special library networks. Further details about the survey methodology are included in Appendix A.

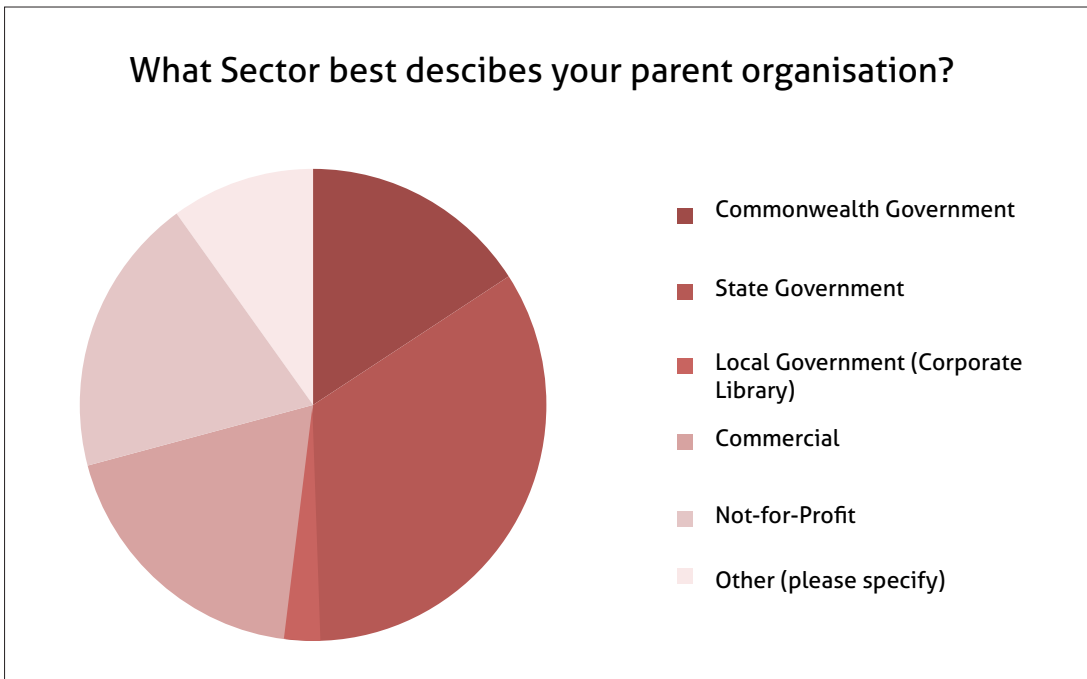
DEMOGRAPHICS

Respondents by State/Territory



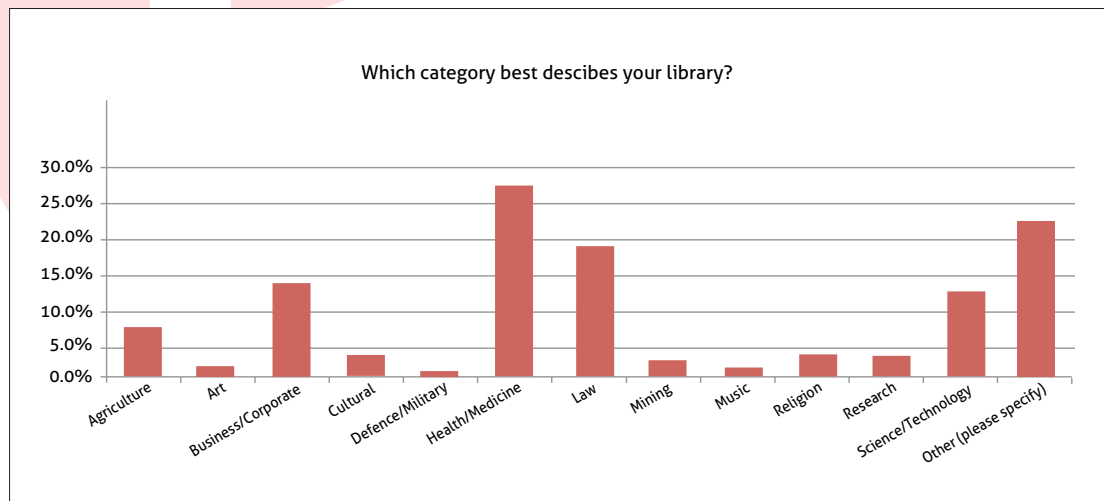
- Special libraries in all states and territories responded to the survey
- 74% (265) responses came from library services located in capital cities
- 13% (46) are based in regional areas & 4% (13) in rural libraries services

Parent Organisations



- Over 50% (187) responses were from government funded special libraries.
- Commercial and Not-for-Profit were equal at 19% of responses
- 'Other' included government entities, peak bodies and education institutions.

Type of Library



answered question 362

- 28% (101) respondents were from health/medicine libraries
- 'Other' types of libraries accounted for 22% (81) of responses and included engineering, education, emergency management, disability, social welfare and trade unions. See Appendix 2 for full list of library type

Corporate Membership of Library Organisations

Australian Library & Information Association	76.3%
AGLIN	20.2%
Australian Law Librarians' Association	20.9%
Health Libraries Inc	11.9%
Australian Geosciences Association	1.6%
Special Libraries Association Austn & NZ Chapter	7.1%
VALA	7.1%
Other (please specify)	23.3%

answered question 253

- 76% of respondents libraries have ALIA Corporate Membership
- 'Other' corporate memberships included: Australasian Libraries in the Emergency Sector (ALIES); Australian Society of Archivists; Australasian Parliamentary Libraries Association; Australia & New Zealand Theological Library Association; and WAGLIN.

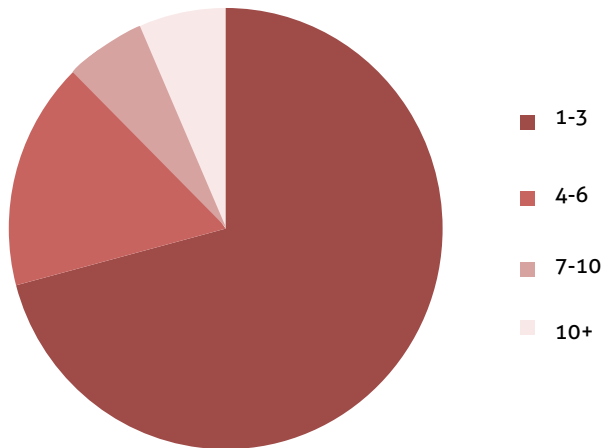
Staffing

Questions were asked about paid staff, qualifications, volunteers and any changes in staffing levels over the last 5 years.

Number of Paid Staff

- 70% of respondents work in libraries with 1-3 paid staff
- Only 12 respondents worked in libraries that had more than 10 staff and their numbers ranged from 16-65 staff.

How many paid staff are currently employed in your library, including part time?



According to survey respondents there has been little change in the number of staff employed in the libraries over the last 5 years.

Effective Fulltime Equivalent (EFT)

EFT range	No. of responses
0 staff	11
< 1	42
1-3	148
4-6	38
7-10	6
10+	14

- 42% have an EFT of 1 or less staff
- The most common EFT of respondent libraries is in the range 1-3 EFT.

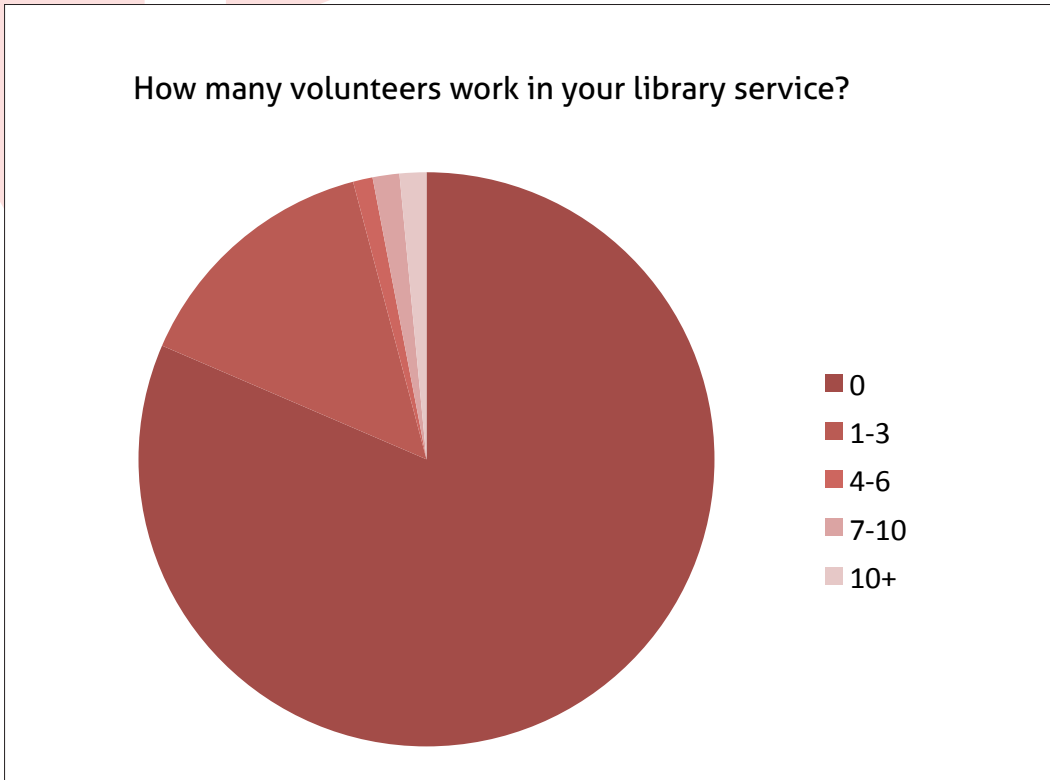
Staff Qualifications

Number of Librarians	95.4%
Number of Library Technicians	56.7%

answered question 263

- 98% (258) respondents had at least 1 staff member with a library qualification
- 39% (102) respondents had 1 qualified librarians and no qualified library technician
- 5 respondents reported that they had no qualified staff in their library service
- 11 respondents had 1 qualified technician and no qualified librarians

Volunteers



answered question 263

- 18 % (49) of respondents have volunteers in their library service
- 5 libraries had volunteers only and no paid staff
- 42% (20) volunteers had library qualifications

How many days per week do volunteers work in your library service? (total days not per volunteer)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1 day	37.5%	18
2 days	16.7%	8
3 days	6.3%	3
4 days	4.2%	2
5 days	6.3%	3
Other (please specify)	29.2%	14

answered question 48

- Some volunteers work on demand when required rather than a set time.

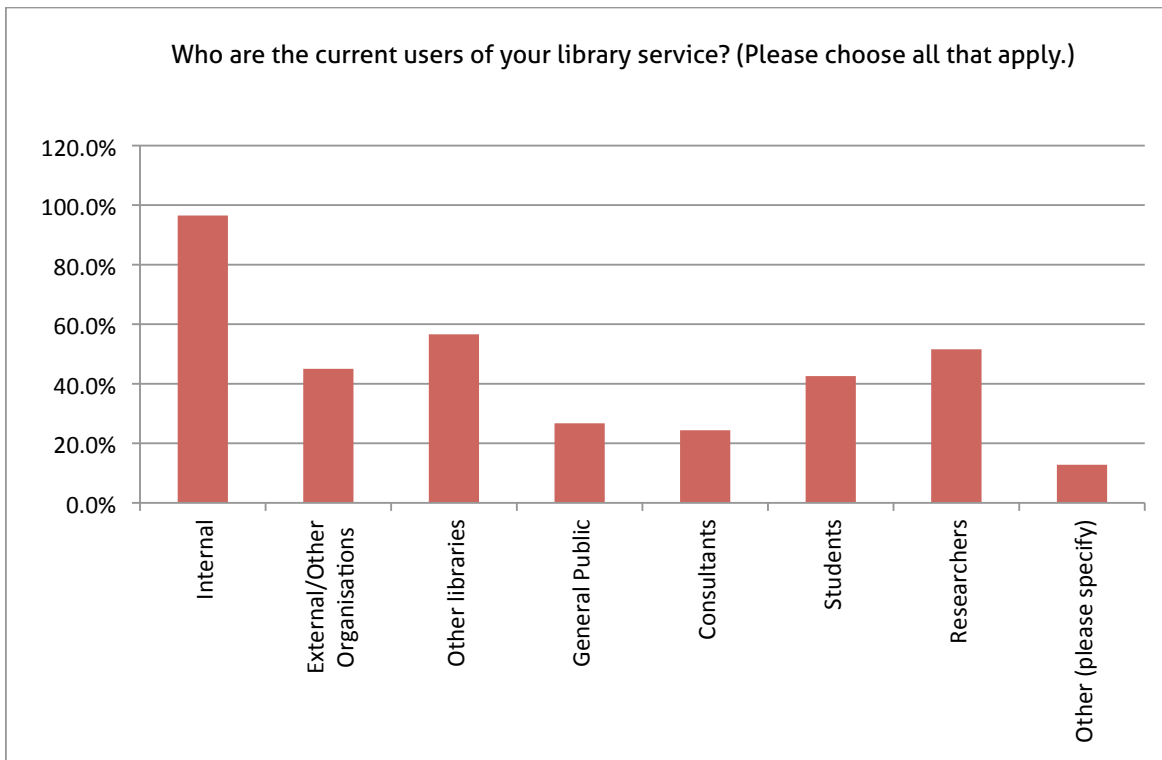
Reasons For Changes in Staffing Levels Over Last 5 Years

Reasons given for reduction in staffing levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • budget cuts • staff not being replaced on retirement • amalgamation of services
Reasons given for increased staffing levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expanded role of the service • additional service point • increased staff in organisation

answered question 31

Clients

Current Users



answered question 258

- Internal users (97%), Other libraries (57%), Researchers (52%) External Organisations (45%) and Students (43%) were the most frequently identified client bases identified by special libraries.

Frequency of Use by Client Groups

Answer Options	Daily	Weekly	A few times a month	Monthly	A few times a year	N/A
Internal	224	18	6	1	1	2
External/Other Organisations	30	46	25	8	27	26
Other Libraries	43	49	35	14	31	16
General Public	15	14	21	7	29	51
Consultants	13	14	18	6	29	41
Students	42	15	24	8	36	35
Researchers	39	19	31	5	52	29
Other (please specify)	12	8	2	2	6	34

answered 258

- Internal users are by far the most frequent users of special libraries

Changes In Client Base

- 60% (154) of respondents did not think their client based had not changed over the last 5 years
- Growth in the number of clients / staff in the parent organisation, machinery of government changes and increase in the number of students are some of the reasons respondents gave for the change in their client base over the last 5 years

SERVICES

Library Services

<i>Current services</i>	<i>Response %</i>
Cataloguing	91.40%
Document supply (including Interlibrary loans)	90.60%
Ready reference enquires	87.10%
Research	85.50%
Central ordering books/aquisitions	84.00%
Current awareness service (e.g. bulletins or alerts)	83.60%
Remote searching of databases/journals	77.00%
Desktop delivery	70.30%
Journal circulation	65.20%
Information literacy	62.50%
Virtual Library (Internet)	46.90%
RSS Feed	17.20%
Other (please specify)	16.40%
Business intelligence analysis	16.40%
Blog	11.30%
Wiki	7.00%

answered 256

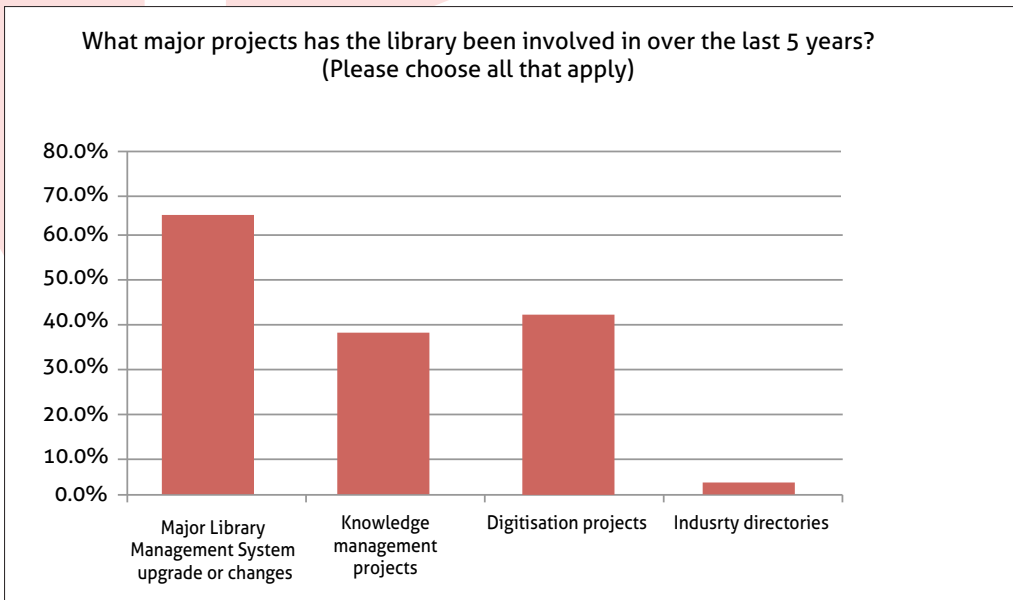
- Cataloguing, Document Supply, Ready Reference, Research, Central Ordering and Current Awareness Services were the most frequently identified library services.
- Library intranets are the most common 'Other' service identified by respondents and a couple mentioned social networking.

Other Business Services Provided By The Library Service

- 25% of respondents said that their library managed no other business services.
- 35% (90) respondents libraries managed their organisation's publications
- 32% (82) managed an Archive
- 23% (58) provided Knowledge Management
- 19% (51) served as the Photographic repository
- The library intranet was a service mentioned by some in the 'Other' category.

Major Projects

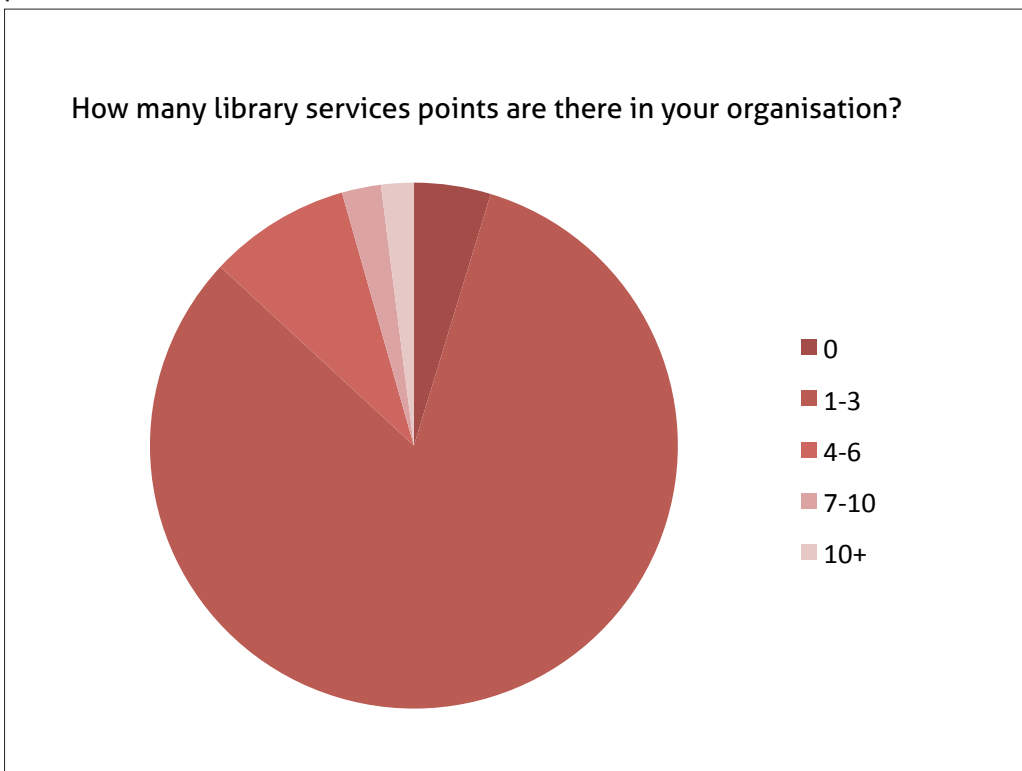
- In addition to system upgrades, digitization and knowledge management projects a number of respondents indicated their service had renovated or relocated.



answered question 187

Number of Library Service Points

To determine whether the increasing availability of electronic delivery of information services had impacted on the delivery of special library services the survey included questions about library service points.



answered question 253

- The 2% (5) respondents that had more than 10 library service points were part of large government or global business networks.
- 80% (204) respondents indicated there has been no change in number of service points in their library service over the last 5 year
- 20 respondents indicated the number of points at their library service had been reduced by one.

BUDGETS

Annual Budget For Library Service

Annual budget including staff costs	Response %	No. of responses
Less than \$50,000	13.6%	34
\$50,000 - \$99,999	15.6%	39
\$100,000 - \$199,999	14.0%	35
\$200,000 - \$299,999	10.4%	26
\$300,000 - \$399,999	8.8%	22
\$400,000 - \$499,999	6.8%	17
\$500,000 - \$599,999	6.0%	15
\$600,000 - \$699,999	2.0%	5
\$700,000 - \$799,999	1.2%	3
\$800,000 - \$899,999	3.2%	8
\$900,000 - \$999,999	0.4%	1
\$1m - \$1.5 m	3.6%	9
\$1.5 m +	4.4%	11
Don't know	10.0%	25
Other (please specify)		10

answered question 250

Library budgets varied significantly

- 53% reported a budget of less than \$300,000 including staff costs
- 13.6% reported a budget of less than \$50,000
- 8% (20) respondents had library budgets of \$1million +
- 10% (25) respondents did not know what the budget was
- 'Other' responses included: confidential, part of larger network so detail unknown
- 30% (76) respondents did not know what the budget was 5 years ago

COLLECTIONS

Current Subscriptions

Subscription	less than 10	10-29	30-49	50-79	80 +	N/A	No. responses
Journals (hard copy)	24	69	42	32	51	6	224
Journals (electronic)	71	55	21	18	39	12	216
Electronic database services (i.e. Proquest)	133	35	5	4	7	21	205
Other	17	5	2	0	5	18	47
(please specify)							41

answered question 233

Collection Size

Respondents were asked to provide a total number for the size of their library service collection.

- 50% of respondents provided an estimate of the size of their library's collection.
- 4 respondents reported the size of the collection was unknown and 187 others skipped this question.

No. of items in collection	No. of responses
< 5000	38
5000-10000	43
10000-20000	42
20000-50000	43
50000-100000	15
100000+	11

answered question 188

Breakdown of Collections by category

Monographs	Journals	Standards	Other
49%	28%	3%	20%

answered question 200

Special Collections

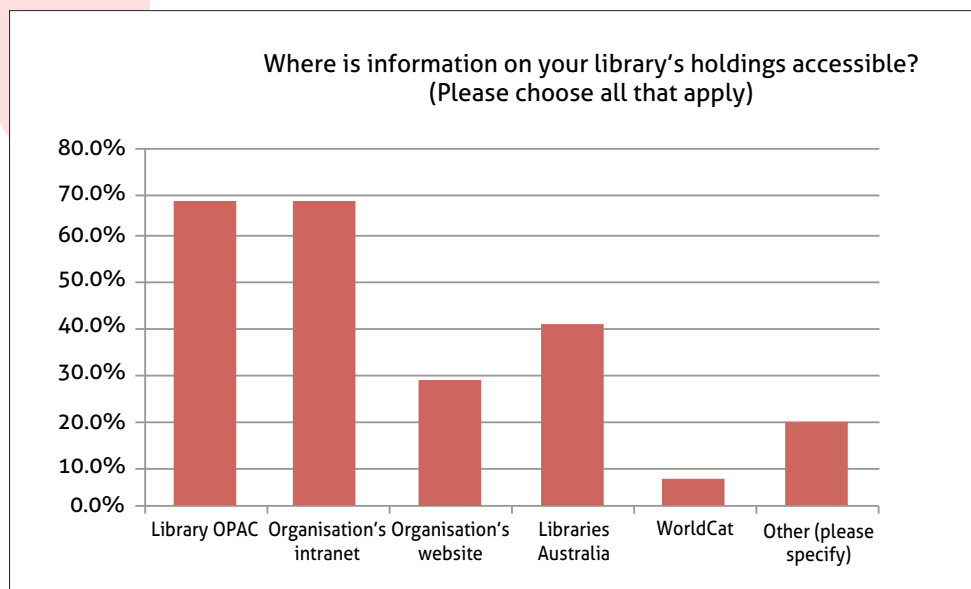
- 140 of 148 respondents indicated their library service held special collections.
- The special collections included unpublished material; rare historical material; photographs and ephemera .

Collection Strengths

The strengths of library collections are as varied as the business of their host organisations.

- 187 responses to the question about collection strengths are so varied there is no clear pattern of collection strengths.

Access to Library Holding Information



answered question 225

- Less than 30% of respondents reported that their library's holdings were accessible via their organisation's website.
- 'Other' responses included the desktops of staff in their organisation.
- A few respondents indicated their journal holdings listed on Gratisnet and some others had plans to make their holdings accessible through their organisations website or Trove.

Collection Management Systems

The most commonly used library systems are listed below

Collection Management System	No. of responses
DBTextworks	78
Softlink Liberty	20
FIRST	15
Horizon 7	15
SirsiDynix	11
Voyager	7
Athena	6
Koha	6
Exlibris	2
In house	4
No system	4
Other	59

answered question 227

- 4 respondents reported using in-house systems and Access databases
- Others indicated their library service had collections too small to warrant having any management system.

Networks and resource sharing consortia

- 71% (160) respondents participated in networks or consortia
- More than 50 respondents indicated their library service participated in Gratisnet.
- Respondents listed over 50 library resource sharing groups – some are subject based.
- Informal resource sharing within sectors was also mentioned by a number of respondents

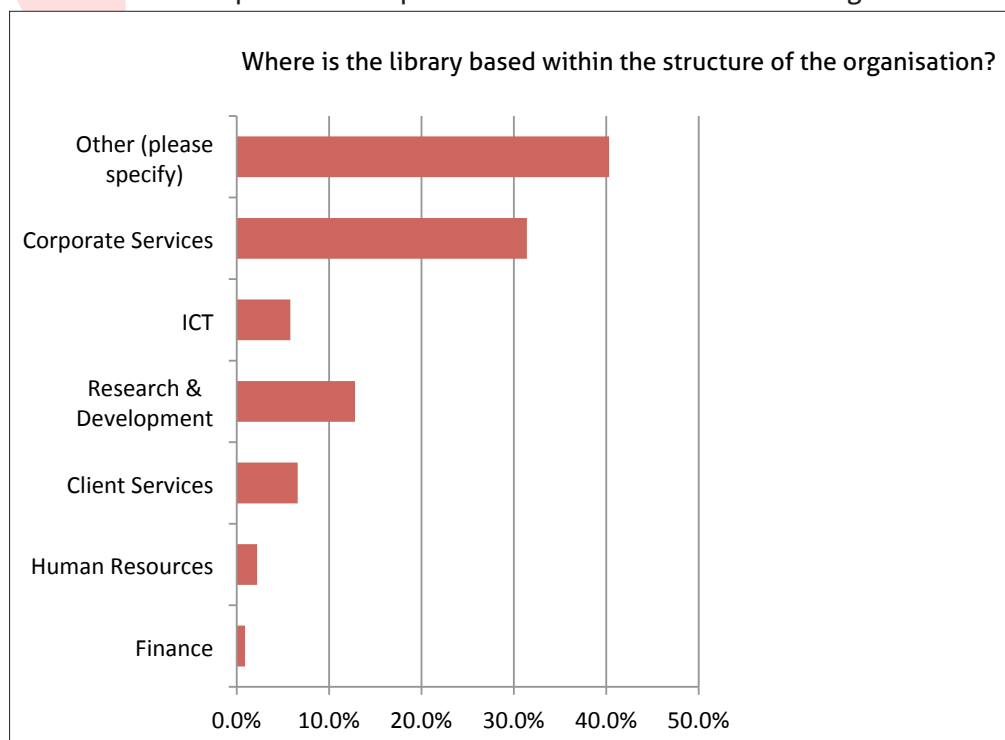
Libraries Australia membership

- 164 (71.3%) respondents' library was a member of Libraries Australia
- 137 provided their library service NUC symbol

GOVERNANCE

Where the library is based within the structure of the organisation

There is no standard place where special libraries fit within their host organisations.



answered question 256

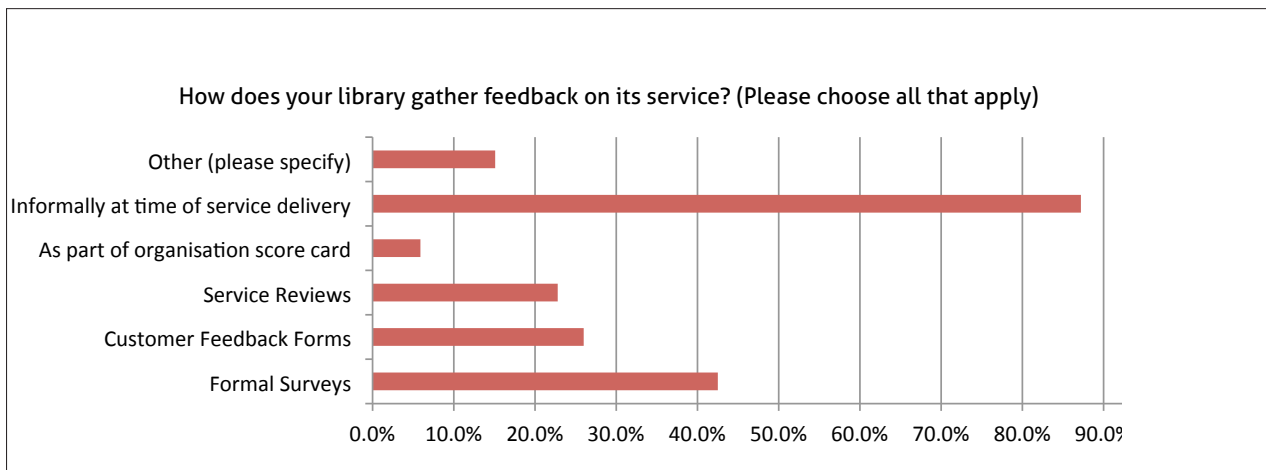
- 31% (71) respondents reported their library service was based within Corporate Services
- 'Other' responses included ICT, Information Services, and Education.
- Who library managers reports to in their organisation is evenly spread between executive, senior management and middle management.
- In smaller organisations library managers are more likely to report directly to someone at the executive level of their organisation.

Library Reference group /committee

- 82% (185) respondents do not have a reference group or committee for their library service
- The most common role of committees/reference groups that do exist is to provide advice to the manager of the library service.

Feedback On Library Service

- The most common method of obtaining feedback on the operation of the library service is informal at time of service delivery 87% (191)



answered question 219

Policies

Documents produced by the library service	Response Percent	Response Count
Strategic Plan	25.8%	58
Business/ Operational Plan	33.8%	76
Marketing Plan	11.1%	25
Collection Development Policy	57.8%	130
Service Level Agreements	18.7%	42
Customer Service Charter	11.6%	26
Risk Management Plan	9.8%	22
OH&S Policy	2.7%	6
Annual Report	22.2%	50
Standard Operating Procedures/Manual	53.8%	121
Other Policies	19.6%	44
Other (please specify)	17.8%	40

answered 225

- Over 50% of respondents reported their library service produces a Collection Development Policy and Standard Operating Procedures/Manual.
- 38% produced a business/operational plan and 22% an annual report.
- 11% of respondents indicated their library has a marketing plan.
- 'Other' documents reported include: monthly statistics, some others reported producing none of these documents.

Development and Planning Activities

- 59% (129) of respondents indicated they participate in organisation planning and development activities.
- Information management, knowledge management and organisational committees are some of the areas where library staff are involved.

Key Performance Indicators (KPI)

- 34% (74) of respondents indicated their library has KPIs.
- Of these the most common KPIs described are statistically based: including data on numbers of loans, searches etc.
- Timeliness of service delivery is another measure cited by some respondents.
- Some others had library KPIs tied to those of their organisation.

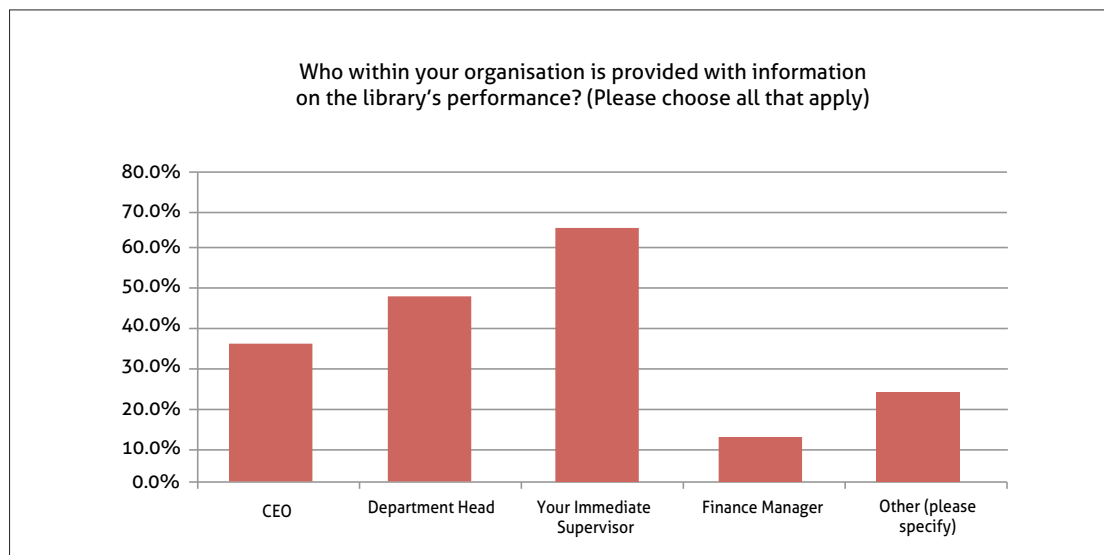
Costing Services & Cost Benefit

- 64% (141) respondents reported that their library service do not cost services
- 66% (141) are unable to demonstrate the value of the library service to the organisation.

Responses which showed the measurement of library service benefit included:

- Comparing the cost of the library performing the research as opposed to the cost of a professional researcher, or even the client themselves, given the efficiency we have in finding and evaluating information sources.
- Keeping statistics on articles obtained via Gratisnet – can calculate cost if had to purchase these online, plus staff time
- Benefit calculator – comparing our services to what staff would pay if they had to go to an external supplier

Reporting on library performance



- 'Other' included providing information on the library's performance to the Chief Operating Officer, the Board, and in some law libraries to the partners.
- A number of respondents do not provide information on the library service to anyone.

Benchmarking Services

- 84.5% (186) responses do not benchmark their service against other libraries or service providers.
- Of the 15% who did benchmark the Australian Health Libraries Benchmarking Group, Parliamentary Libraries and AGLIN were mentioned by a number of respondents.
- A few others indicated they benchmarked on an ad hoc basis if their library service was under review or the department they worked in was being restructured.

GENERAL

Profile of Survey Respondents

- 60% have worked in the special library sector for more than 10 years
- 46% moved to special libraries from another library sector
- 73% are managers of the library service
- 92.3% have formal library qualifications
- 52% are personal members of ALIA
- 88% are female
- 54% are 50+
- 64% work fulltime
- 32% earn \$61-\$80,000
- 23% earn \$81-\$100,000

Views of Survey Respondents

Importance of Skills and Knowledge for Special Librarian

Respondents were asked to rate the important of a list of skills and knowledge for special librarians.

By combining responses of 'extremely important' and 'very important' the table below ranks the most important skills and knowledge for a special librarian.

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>Skill & Knowledge</i>
1	Information & Communication Technology
2	Library qualifications
3	Resource Management
4	Strategic Planning
5	Marketing
6	Subject specialisation

answered question 315

Job Satisfaction and Confidence Levels

By combining responses of 'strongly agree' and 'agree' the percentages below show the satisfaction and confidence levels of respondents.

- 96% of respondents enjoy working in the special library sector
- 85% are satisfied in their current role
- 62% are confident about the future of the special library sector
- 68% are confident about the future of the library they work in now

Future Work Plans

- 65% (204) respondents plan to continue in the same job over the next 3 years
- 12.5 % (39) respondents would like to be working in another special library
- 11.5% (36) respondents plan to retire in the next 3 years
- 10% (32) respondents would like another job in the library they are currently working in.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to enable ALIA, special libraries members and employers (management) to gain a better understanding of the current state of specialist information services in Australia.

The data collected provides an extremely valuable picture of the operation of 300 special libraries in Australia. The survey supports the aim of the ALIA Special Library Advisory Committee (SLAC) to provide a better understanding of the current state of specialist information services in Australia.

The majority of respondents to this survey work in libraries where there is at least one library professional and less than 3 staff. The services they provide are primarily traditional library services.

Most reported little change in the client base or staffing over the last 5 years. Very few used a structured method to monitor the performance of their library service and even fewer were able to measure the cost benefit of their library service to the host organisation.

A summary of the statistical results of the survey are listed below:

- 74% of responses came from libraries based in capital cities
- 52% of responses came from government based libraries
- The types of libraries covered in the survey are diverse – the largest response rate (28%) was from health/medicine sector
- There is no clear pattern of where libraries are based within their parent organisation or the seniority of the person they report to
- 87% of respondents reported that their library gathered feedback on its service informally at the time of service delivery – this was the most common method of gathering feedback
- 34% of respondents have KPIs for their library service
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- 18% of respondents have volunteers working in their library service
- 76% of respondents said their library is a corporate member of ALIA and 71% are members of Libraries Australia
- 80% of respondents said there has been no change in the number of library service points in their organisation over the last 5 years
- Internal users (97%), Other libraries (57%), Researchers (52%) External Organisations (45%) and Students (43%) were the most frequently identified client bases identified by special libraries
- 86% of respondents reported that their library had a budget of < \$1.5 million while 43% reported an annual budget of < 200,000. 10% of respondents did not know what their library's annual budget was
- Collection sizes ranged from less than 5,000 to more than 1 million items
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- Conduct another shorter version of this survey in 3 years time in order to monitor the development of special libraries in Australia

APPENDIX 1 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The survey was designed by SLAC in September – October 2010 with the support of an external consultant. ALIA provided access to its corporate Surveymonkey account.

Topics covered by the survey included: demographics; services; budgets; collections; governance and general information on library staff.

A pilot survey was tested by members of SLAC in late September.

The survey was designed to enable respondents who are not managers of their organisation's library service to skip questions about the operation and management of the library service.

The final survey was emailed by members of the committee (Louise Segafredo and Andrew Meier) to special libraries in Australia on the 5 November 2010.

An email link to the survey was sent to individuals email addresses provided by members of SLAC. A reminder email was sent to individuals email addresses on 11 November. The advertised closing date for the survey was 19 November and the final close off was on 24 November.

APPENDIX 2 TYPE OF LIBRARIES

Accounting	Health/ Medicine
Agriculture/Environment	Higher Education Sciences and Ministries
Anthropology/native title/land rights	Intellectual and developmental disability
Architecture and Town Planning	International development and foreign aid
Archival	Justice
Art	Law
Astronomical	Metaphysical, philosophy, occult, religion, science
Audit/Tax/Accounting	Mining
Australian history	Museum
Botanical	Music
Business	OH&S and Workers Compensation
Communications	Ornithology
Conservation	Philatelic
Consulting Engineers	Planning – urban, regional
Criminology	Policing / Criminology
Culture	Politics and current affairs
Current affairs	Public
Defence/Military	Public housing
Disability	Public Sector/Auditing
Education & Training	Recreational
Education and Religion	Religion
Education	Research
Emergency Management	Science/Technology
Emergency services - training and research	Social policy
Engineering	Social Sciences
Fisheries	Social Welfare
Foreign Language	Socio-legal research
Freemasonry & related areas	Public administration
Gay studies	Speleology
Government	Sport / Research
Government - Statistical Organisation	Trade union
Government, Public sector, Treasury	Transport
	Victimology / Social work
	Welfare and social justice

Disclaimer

The information contained in this report is based on the data provided in the ALIA Special Library Survey November 2010.

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Judy Peppard
Practico Pty Ltd

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