



## LIS future employment prospects are positive New ALIA report on LIS education, skills and employment

**18 September 2014 Melbourne:** The Australia Library and Information Association (ALIA) said there is a positive outlook on employment prospects for library and information professionals over the next five years, but the job market will remain tight.

This is one of the conclusions in a new report [ALIA LIS Education and Employment Trend Report 2014](#) today launched in Melbourne by ALIA President Damian Lodge at the Association's National Conference.

'This report provides a valuable overview of what has been happening in LIS education over the last five years and will contribute to our understanding of how best to direct our efforts,' Mr Lodge said.

'Students can use this report to inform their decisions about the level of study they wish to pursue. Employers will find it useful in identifying the available pool of library and information professionals, and, as the Association, we will use the key findings to support our approach to professional education and qualifications.'

'Our analysis of the data indicates that the job market will remain tight over the next five years but there will be openings as baby boomer workers retire and these existing positions are filled.'

'As the majority of library and information services are local, state, territory or federal government funded, they will be subject to the effects of government budget cuts.'

'As a result, there's some despondency in our sector about job prospects in the sector. However, the figures from government and other sources suggest that this pessimism may be misplaced and the reality may be better than anticipated.'

'On the education front, LIS courses have been particularly vulnerable to changes in the TAFE system at a state and territory level, which have seen pressure on individual courses and substantial increases in student fees.'

'In 2014, the report finds 26 institutions delivering 39 ALIA accredited courses around Australia. In addition, there are VET (Vocational Education and Training) providers offering Certificates II, III and IV in library and information studies. This is a decline since 2012, when there were 29 institutions and 49 courses.'

ALIA analysis of the report data concluded:

- Library and information science is an occupation with a relatively small, highly qualified workforce. Fewer than 30,000 out of 11.5 million, or 0.2% of the Australian labour force. This is reflected in its equally small education footprint (0.2% of VET students and 0.1% of higher education students).
- Although the LIS workforce is small, the sector has significant reach and profile because millions of Australians use library services. More than 10 million Australians are registered public library users<sup>1</sup> and still more use university, VET, special and school libraries, although there will be some duplication.
- The library and information sector remains an attractive proposition for qualified professionals

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<sup>1</sup> Source: *National and State Libraries Australasia*

looking for relatively well paid positions and regular hours, but there is undoubtedly competition for jobs.

- There will be a modest increase in the number of positions available over the next five years because retirements will create new openings in existing positions.
- The job market will remain tight, with as many as 1800 professionals graduating each year and seeking employment. While many of these graduates will already be employed in the sector, others will be new entrants.
- LIS courses have been particularly vulnerable to changes in the TAFE system at a state and territory level, which have seen pressure on individual courses and substantial increases in student fees.
- Vendors in the library and information sector saw their income effectively halved between 2009 and 2011 and this had a significant impact on jobs. There were a number of factors affecting their business performance, including the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis and the strength of the Australian dollar, which made imports a more affordable option, negatively impacting their sales performance.

Mr Lodge concluded: 'The core skills, knowledge and attributes required by library and information professionals are evolving and it is important that educators, employers, students, professionals and ALIA work together to ensure people working in the sector are equipped to deliver quality services.'

This is the first edition of the report and it's intended that this becomes a regular reporting feature.

#### **About the Australian Library and Information Association**

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is the professional organisation for the Australian library and information services sector. With 5,000 members across Australia, we provide the national voice of the profession in the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services, through leadership, advocacy and mutual support. [www.alia.org.au](http://www.alia.org.au)

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