



Health library study indicates \$9 return for every \$1 invested

Monday 4 November 2013: A study released today suggests that hospitals, government departments, associations and other organisations involved in healthcare gain a \$9 return for every dollar they invest in health libraries.

Health Libraries Inc (HLInc) and Health Libraries Australia (ALIA HLA, a national group of the Australian Library and Information Association) commissioned award-winning firm SGS Economics and Planning to survey health libraries across the nation and from this to assess the return on the annual investment in these services to their organisations.

The results provide a snapshot of the continued outstanding value of health libraries against a backdrop of significantly greater usage but declining investment. Patient and medical staff numbers and hospital expenditure are increasing, while health library budgets, space and staffing levels are decreasing.

HLInc chair Jane Edwards and ALIA HLA convener Ann Ritchie said, 'The investment in library and information services is small in the scheme of things – just 0.1% of recurrent expenditure in Australian hospitals. The report suggests that a modest increase in spending would allow for significant incremental benefits.'

The indicative finding of \$9 for every \$1 invested is likely to be even higher. SGS assessed the benefits provided directly to health library users, including time saved and value of 'out-of-pocket' expenses such as journal subscriptions. However, the user focus of the study omitted the return on investment in terms of patient care, and SGS said 'it is highly likely that the benefits of industry libraries outweigh their costs considerably'.

This economic value assessment supports the findings of the ALIA/HLInc *Questions of Life and Death, an investigation into the value of health library and information services* report, published last year. Library and information service users were asked how they believed their use of the service over the last year had helped them – 83% said it had helped them improve health outcomes for their patients and 76% said it had changed their thinking and improved their diagnosis or treatment plan.

The full report *Worth every cent and more: an independent assessment of the return on investment of health libraries in Australia* can be downloaded from the ALIA (<http://www.alia.org.au>) and Health Libraries Inc (<http://www.hlinc.org.au>) websites.

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Health Libraries Inc is a dynamic group of information professionals committed to health information provision, resource sharing, professional development, consortia implementation and relevance to the community that we serve. Based in Victoria, Health Libraries Inc promotes excellence in health libraries across Australia.

<http://www.hlinc.org.au>

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is the national association for library and information professionals. Our 5,500 members include libraries and individuals with library and information science qualifications. We also welcome people from other disciplines who work in the library and information sector.

<http://www.alia.org.au>

ALIA Health Libraries Australia is ALIA's national group for members working in the health sector. It promotes, informs, unites, influences and innovates libraries and information professionals in the health and biomedical sector through professional development, research, networking and collaboration, advocacy and promotion.

<http://www.alia.org.au/groups/HLA>

SGS Economics exists to shape policy and investment decisions to achieve sustainable places and economies. Its vision is to be a college of professionals providing Australia's best independent policy advice.

<http://www.sgsep.com.au>