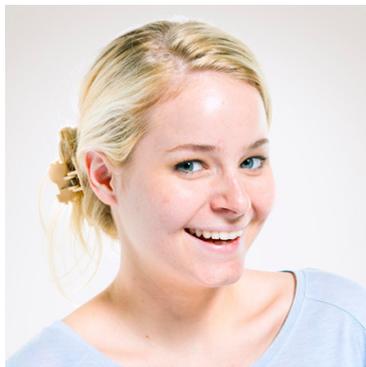Australian **Library** and
**Information** Association

# THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION AGENDA 2016

# THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SECTOR

## 12.9 million users

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

## 13,650 libraries

in metropolitan, regional and remote Australia

## 5,000 members

of the Australian Library and Information Association

## 27,500 workers

in libraries and information services

## $2.8 billion expenditure

estimated size of the library and information market in Australia

# CONTENTS

# KEY AGENDA ITEMS

## POLICY

1. A national framework for digital access to cultural collections

2. Improved access to data and scholarly information through the development and trial of open access models for government-funded research

3. Halt to government library closures and greater recognition of the role of library and information professionals in evidence-based decision-making

4. Greater recognition of the important part libraries can play in literacy and learning

5. Quality library services for tertiary students enrolled in universities, TAFEs and private RTOs

6. Qualified library staff employed in every school library

## LEGISLATION

7. Copyright law reform and the introduction of fair use

## FUNDING

8. Further investment in digitisation and the Trove platform

9. Resourcing for public libraries to assist citizens through government's digital transformation

10. Funding for library buildings as a vital element of Australia's knowledge infrastructure.

# THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION AGENDA

Library and information services enable Australians to be well-informed, literate and ready for future economic and technological challenges.

## KNOWLEDGE INFRASTRUCTURE

Library and information services are essential to Australia's knowledge infrastructure, making a significant contribution to the nation's innovation agenda. Library and information professionals play a key role in data management through government, academic and research libraries. We support connectivity through public libraries, and school libraries have an evolving role in STEM and coding education.

Like energy, telecommunications, road and rail, the various parts of our network are run by different operators, but when viewed as a whole, the strength of our integrated infrastructure nationwide becomes apparent.

Libraries are dynamic workplaces, employing professionals who adapt readily to the rapidly changing information environment and drive the adoption of innovative new content, programs, services and technologies.

Our networks span communities, schools, vocational and higher education, businesses, government, law, media, healthcare and collecting institutions. Public libraries can be found in every electorate – there are more than 1,500 metro, regional and remote locations. There is a library in almost all our 9,000-plus schools. Information services are an important asset for government departments, supporting evidence-based decision making, and for the private sector. Vocational and university libraries not only support students and faculty with access to journals, databases and other electronic resources, but also play an important role in developing, making accessible and promoting world class research.

## GLOBAL HIGH PERFORMER

Australia is seen as a world leader in the context of library and information services and there is much for us to celebrate.

- Trove, the National Library of Australia's portal to more than 485 million books, photographs, newspapers, maps and historic documents, has won many accolades including the Excellence in eGovernment Award 2011 and the ANZIA Innovation Award 2012. It was a world first that has inspired many other countries to create their own portals to cultural collections.

- In 2014 Craigieburn (Vic) was named Public Library of the Year by the Danish Agency for Culture and in 2015 Melbourne's Library at the Dock was shortlisted for the same international award.

- In 2015, more than 200 school libraries were nominated as Australia's Great School Libraries by students, parents, teachers and other staff.

- Our copyright regime is better than many at balancing the rights of the creators with social good and in 2015 Australia ratified the Marrakesh Treaty, giving visually impaired people around the world greater access to books.

However, alongside these achievements, there are weaknesses in the system which must be addressed if Australia's knowledge infrastructure is to remain at its peak.

## HARNESSING THE POWER OF DIGITAL

Digital disruption has had a massive impact on the library and information sector, bringing with it significant opportunities and significant challenges.

- The National Library of Australia went live with Trove in 2010 and now has more than 20 million unique users each year. There is an enormous appetite for cultural content to support education, research, community and the arts. However, the cutting edge technology of six years ago has been superseded and Trove's IT infrastructure is buckling under the weight of 485 million items and the stress of such high user traffic. Trove 7 launched on 25 February 2016 but in order to achieve the full potential of this incredible resource *we need new investment to support the expansion of Trove*[1] *to include digital collections from museums, archives, historical societies and smaller institutions across Australia.*

- Putting our treasures online for everyone to experience is an opportunity for all libraries and also for our peers in museums, archives, and galleries; major national institutions such as the Australian War Memorial, as well as smaller historical societies, RSL and sports clubs, and other groups with special collections. It is an enormous task and by working together we would achieve so much more, through the economies of scale, shared resources and shared expertise. *We need a national framework for digital access to cultural collections, including structured support for smaller institutions and further investment in digitisation.*

- Copyright law aims to balance the rights of creators with social good, enabling the next generation to create new and innovative works inspired by past masters. Australian copyright law has not kept up with technology and is based on a pre-digital world. This means that millions of items are locked away when they could be shared with students, researchers, inventors, historians and others with a special interest. *We seek copyright law reform and the adoption of a 'fair use' regime.*

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1    http://trove.nla.gov.au/

- Library and information professionals advocate for open access, making research funded by government freely available to the taxpayers who paid for it. We would like to see experiments with open access models in Australia to identify ways of sharing important findings with the broader research community. Successful models would provide recompense for the contribution of publishers and aggregators while mitigating the often prohibitive expense of publishing fees, especially for early career researchers. *In building an innovation nation, we urge the next government to improve access to scholarly information through a focus on open access models.*

- Digital transformation is high on the political agenda and library and information professionals have the skills to support the drive to egovernment. However, just as the move to digital gathers pace, we continue to see the breaking up of government department libraries and information services. *We call for a halt to government library closures and a strengthening of the role of library and information professionals in the public service.*

- 2016 is the National Year of Digital Inclusion. As most Australians log in via their PC, tablet or smartphone each day, it is easy to forget that one in five Australians is still not able to access the internet, whether this is an issue of connectivity, affordability, skill or willingness to advance into the digital age. Faced with 'digital by default' government processes, many people head to their local library for help. *Public libraries require information and resources to assist those who need help with egovernment.*

## PROMOTING LITERACY AND LEARNING

- In a digital society, literacy is more important than ever before. In order to participate online, people need to be able to read and write. They also need digital literacy (the ability to use devices and software, and navigate the web), numeracy (as the basis for the STEM agenda), information literacy (being able to source and validate information) and financial literacy. Public libraries are well placed as a key player in early childhood, with storytime and rhymetime helping parents become their child's first teacher; with homework clubs for teens; free and low cost courses to help adults improve their skills and to assist seniors to become tech savvy. These activities often slip under the radar of government departments. At the same time, public and school libraries can contribute to the education and information access targets in the UN Sustainable Development Goals. *Public libraries need to be seen as an important asset for literacy and education, and to be factored into future strategies for children, youth and adult initiatives.*

- In primary and secondary settings, school libraries not only provide essential support for the curriculum and reading, they are also the hub for information literacy, digital literacy, cybersafety and often ICT support. However, the squeeze on education funding has put even greater pressure on library budgets and we have seen staff cuts, reduced expenditure on resources and fewer opening hours in too many schools. *Federal, State and Territory Government endorsement of the important role of school libraries would assist with advocacy to Principals who have the difficult task of balancing their school budget.*

- Education is not only a national priority, it is also a major industry. The role of libraries in supporting schools, TAFEs and universities, and helping to make Australia an attractive proposition for international students must be acknowledged. At a time of increased pressure on government-funded TAFEs and universities, it is important to maintain a level playing field for established institutions and newcomers in the private sector. RTOs must be required to provide the same high quality library resources and employ qualified library and information professionals to deliver the best results for students and researchers. This will ensure good outcomes for individuals and support Australia's reputation as a quality education provider. *A well equipped library staffed by qualified professionals must be reinforced as a requirement of accreditation for further and higher education institutions.*

## HELPING DELIVER BETTER GOVERNMENT

Policy officers are often time -poor when undertaking background research, increasing the risk of flawed policy and exposing the government to litigation, financial loss and reputation damage. However, government information professionals have strong capability in research support.  They are experts at a diverse range of activities, including:

- Selecting relevant information products

- Identifying authoritative information

- Knowledge, thesaurus and metadata management

- Training other staff in the areas of sourcing information, digital skills and emerging technologies.

A more strategic and cohesive investment in management and planning of information services across Government departments and agencies would further increase the contribution library and information professionals can make to evidence-based policymaking.

## STATE AND TERRITORY GOVERNMENTS

While this document has been prepared primarily to inform our advocacy around the 2016 federal government election, there is strong overlap with state and territory governments. This is the case with:

■ Halting the closure of government libraries and strengthening the role of library and information professionals in the public service

■ Leveraging the public library network to assist those who need help with egovernment

■ Factoring community libraries into future strategies for literacy and learning

■ Endorsing the role of qualified teacher librarians and school libraries

■ Supporting the provision of quality libraries for vocational students enrolled in courses delivered by TAFEs and private RTOs.

In addition:

■ In the digital age, it is vitally important that libraries continue to collect creative and scholarly works, and by doing so capture the history of our nation for future generations. Legal deposit legislation has enabled this to happen in the print environment and, from February 2016, this extended to electronic materials deposited at the National Library of Australia. However, elegal deposit is not consistent across every State and Territory. *We need a legislated approach to elegal deposit for every jurisdiction.*

■ While metro and regional areas are well served by public libraries, many remote Indigenous communities do not have library services. As a result, they are denied early years' literacy support, access to free community internet and technology platforms that could help keep local culture and language strong. Some Indigenous programs and internet services for remote communities have received federal government funding in the past and there is a question mark over how they should be funded in future. *There needs to be clarity about funding by federal, state, territory and local government to ensure services for remote communities do not fall through the cracks.*

## FUNDING OUR KNOWLEDGE INFRASTRUCTURE

|  | Direct funding | Indirect funding |
|---|---|---|
| Australian Government | National Library of Australia<br>Parliamentary Library | Department, statutory body and government agency libraries<br>University libraries |
| State and Territory Governments | State and Territory Libraries<br>Public libraries | TAFE libraries<br>Hospital library and information services<br>School libraries |
| Local Government | Public libraries<br>Council corporate libraries |  |

The complex web of responsibility for libraries across all three levels of government means that this essential component of Australia's knowledge infrastructure has no national oversight.

Efficiency dividends and slashed budgets have cut a swathe through federally funded libraries. There have been redundancies and service reductions in TAFE and school libraries. Councils have experienced cost-shifting from federal and state to local government in public library service delivery.

In addition to the points highlighted previously, from the federal government we seek:

■ An investment program for public libraries to help deliver the digital transformation agenda

■ Continued investment in library buildings through regional development funding.

## SUMMARY OF ELECTION COMMITMENTS

| | Federal Government | State/Territory Government | Local Government |
|---|---|---|---|
| Investment in digitisation and further development of Trove | Digital infrastructure project funding | | |
| National framework for digital access | Grant funding plus investment in digitisation | Investment programs for digitisation of collections | |
| National commitment to elegal deposit | | Legislation | |
| Improved access to scholarly information | Develop and trial open access models | | |
| Copyright law reform and fair use regime | Legislation | | |
| Halt to government library closures | Strengthen the role of library and information staff | Strengthen the role of library and information staff | |
| Citizen support for digital transformation | Information and resources for libraries | Information and resources for libraries | |
| Leveraging the role of libraries in literacy and learning | Policy/implementation | Policy/implementation | Policy/implementation |
| Quality library services for tertiary students | Policy/implementation (universities and RTOs) | Policy/implementation (TAFEs and RTOs) | |
| Endorsement of the role of school libraries | Policy/implementation | Policy/implementation | |
| Funding our knowledge infrastructure | Regional development funding for buildings | Increased investment in public libraries | Further upgrades and operational funding |

# QUESTIONS FOR POLITICAL PARTIES

1.  What is your position on Trove and digital access to Australian collections?

2.  What is your commitment to further reform of the Copyright Act, based on the findings of The Productivity Commission Intellectual Property Arrangements Draft Report[2]?

3.  How does open access for government-funded research fit with your policies for research and innovation?

4.  What role do you see for libraries in helping to deliver digital transformation?

5.  How will you ensure that libraries are included in the nation's future literacy and learning strategies?

6.  Will you endorse the aspirational goal of a qualified library professional for every school?

7.  Will your Ministers insist on well-resourced library and information services run by qualified library professionals for their departments?

8.  How will you ensure the next government can leverage libraries as a critical element of the nation's knowledge infrastructure?

We encourage candidates to visit libraries in their electorates and to talk to library users about the importance of freedom of access to information and resources.

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2    Productivity Commission, 2016 http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/intellectual-property/draft

# OUR VALUES

## A DIGITALLY INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Libraries work hard to ensure that Australians of all ages and economic backgrounds have access to the internet and can benefit from the new opportunities arising in the online environment.

## 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 eresources gives students access to the very latest global intelligence.

## QUALITY EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH DRIVING QUALITY EVIDENCE-BASED 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.

## INNOVATION

Library and information professionals ensure Australia's research and business communities have access to the very latest findings from around the world to help drive innovation and ensure Australia remains strong as a knowledge economy. University and research libraries also help manage their institutions' research outputs, while public and school libraries encourage the next generation to be active in the technology space.

## DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

One in five Australians is not online; four in 10 of the lowest income households in Australia are not connected to the internet; of people aged 65 or more, only 46% are internet users and 75% feel confused about using technology[3]. Public libraries provide the technology, assistance and training to support these citizens and in doing so, we help further the government's digital transformation agenda.

## 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. Our nation's government and corporate libraries provide efficient access to decision-ready information for policymakers and businesses. In a variety of ways, we contribute to a stronger, more productive, prosperous Australia.

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3    Telstra, 2015 http://digitalinclusionindex.org.au/about/about-digital-inclusion/

## QUALITY EDUCATION

With nearly one in five Australian five-year-olds at risk of not developing the reading skills they need to succeed in the workplace[4], 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.

In addition to reading and language skills, libraries promote digital literacy, information literacy and cybersafety. Often they have maker spaces to foster the creative arts, music and the use of new technologies. They also run programs, including coding and robotics, that contribute to the STEM agenda.

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. Our aim is for a qualified library and information professional in every school.

## 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.

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4    AEDI, 2012 (now AEDC) https://www.aedc.gov.au/resources/detail/national-report-2012

## 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.
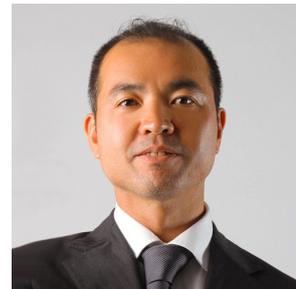
## DEMOCRACY

Libraries are a model of democracy in action. They are an example of social equity at work, and they provide all Australians with the same freedom of access to information and resources. Around the world, libraries are at the frontline of providing services for migrants and refugees. In Australia, public libraries help new citizens develop language and literacy skills, a sense of belonging, and an understanding of what it means to be Australian.

# 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 support research and evidence-based practice. 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 http://www.alia.org.au.

# ABOUT THE SECTOR

## SCHOOL LIBRARIES

In 2014 there were 9,389 schools in Australia.[5] 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, maker spaces and a range of electronic resources.

## PUBLIC LIBRARIES

In 2013–2014 there were 1,530 public library service points, 112 million customer visits and 8.6 million registered library members. Public libraries employed 7,550 staff (FTE) and total expenditure on public libraries was $1.04 billion or the equivalent of $44.66 per Australian.[6] Independent studies have shown that for every dollar invested in public libraries, there is a $2.90 return in terms of community benefits.[7] 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

There are 199 libraries in Australian universities, employing approximately 7,000 staff and providing library and information services to more than one million higher education students.[8] The outstanding service provided by Australia's university libraries supports the government's international education agenda.

## TAFE LIBRARIES

There are 250 libraries in TAFE institutions around Australia. In TAFE libraries, students have help developing their information discovery skills. They have access to electronic resources and to the internet, through library PCs and via wifi. They have quiet space in which to study, which may be lacking at home. 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.

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5    ABS Schools Australia, 2015 http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4221.0Main+Features12014?OpenDocument

6    NSLA, 2013-2014 http://www.nsla.org.au/sites/www.nsla.org.au/files/publications/NSLA.Aust-Pub-Lib-Stats-2013-14_0.pdf

7    ALIA, 2013 https://www.alia.org.au/sites/default/files/Contribution%20of%20Australian%20Public%20Libraries%20Report.pdf

8    Universities Australia, 2015 https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/australias-universities/key-facts-and-data#.VslaivI97IU

## SPECIAL LIBRARIES

It is estimated there are as many as 2,400 special libraries in Australia. 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.

## 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. In 2014–2015, these libraries had collections valued at more than $5 billion. They welcomed some 12.4 million visitors to their buildings and 37.9 milllion visitors to their websites.[9]

It is also important to recognise the role that the National, State and Territory libraries play as part of Australia's research infrastructure. For example Trove is the home of Australian collections on the web – more than 485 million items, including digitised newspapers, pictures, journals, books, maps and other items.

### SUMMARY

In total, we estimate there are some 13,650 libraries and information service points in Australia.

| | |
|---|---|
| School libraries | 9,300 |
| Public libraries | 1,500 |
| University libraries | 200 |
| TAFE libraries | 250 |
| Special libraries | 2,400 |
| Total | 13,650 |

9    NSLA, 2015 http://www.nsla.org.au/sites/www.nsla.org.au/files/publications/NSLA.annual-summary-2015.pdf

# FOR MORE INFORMATION

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