



2013 ALIA National Advisory Congress

Melbourne, 8 August 2013

Attendance

Chair: Julie Rae
Minute Taker: Margie Anderson
Attendance: 40

Welcome

Julie Rae welcomed members to the meeting and took the opportunity to explain the 'Year of renewal' project for ALIA and the background to the 'Future of the profession' project.

The Future of the Profession project

The following questions were posed:

- What is the future of our profession when we have so many digital information services – social media – ebooks – open access – do we need buildings?
- Is there any point in libraries holding ebooks and digital items when our access to them is so limited? Should we just leave provision of digital material up to the commercial providers?
- Where does big data sit with our future?
- Do we need librarians? Do we need LIS courses?
- Do we need the association if there are no LIS professionals?
- What role can we play in shaping the future to ensure LIS Professionals do have a future?
- How much time do we have left to save ourselves from extinction?

Trends and issues

The first part of the workshop involved identifying the most important trends and issues facing participants, their organisations and the sector over the next

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three years, and working through what this would mean in terms of challenges and opportunities.

	Challenges	Opportunities
Political	<p>Complexities of copyright and digital right management make it difficult for us to provide service.</p> <p>Political parties are warring over the NBN. This reduces the positive impact of the NBN and thwarts how we can use the NBN to provide better services to our users.</p> <p>Do people really value our service? How can we prove this?</p> <p>We are not good at providing evidence of our impact.</p> <p>If we are having to justify our existence to our funding bodies and supporters to prove our worth then it is too late for us, especially in the special library sector. We need to be pro-active not re-active.</p>	<p>We can become the experts in the area – valued for our knowledge.</p> <p>When in place the NBN will give more choices for services and enable more users to connect with us.</p>
Economic	<p>We do not deal with enough digital material. We are focusing only on ebooks</p>	<p>There are other avenues we could follow to utilise our existing skills and create</p>

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but should be looking wider at other material such as digital repositories.

other areas of expertise for ourselves.

Outsourcing of tasks traditionally undertaken in-house is increasing. In some special libraries this included the whole information management department. This reduces our value and lessens our expertise.

The work still need to be done so is there greater opportunity for LIS professionals to work and manage the team who are providing outsources services? This could be an opportunity to promote ourselves as pure information geniuses.

One of our failings in the past has been that we have not collected or utilised the information about what kind of information people are using or seeking. Can we use this to target people – to personalise their services – to market to people and become much more personal.

Social

There is a lack of understanding and recognition for what we do and the skills required to undertake our professional tasks. People use our services but don't know who provides them or how we do it. This means that we are not sufficiently valued.

We need to find other ways to deliver non-digital material to people's workplaces or homes.

In public libraries there are

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movements around the world to provide alternatives to libraries. Free libraries – little libraries.

The development of a celebrity culture and a superficial way of looking at things does not sit well with our services which are about quality of information and preservation.

Technological

A 'do it yourself' culture has developed as people feel they can find their own information.

The easy of finding large amounts of information makes people believe it is all of high quality and don't value the work undertaken by LIS professionals.

The lack of standardisation of digital formats for ebooks makes it difficult for libraries to provide a comprehensive service.

We should incorporate information literacy into the electronic resources more. We could build our position as experts in this area.

Focus on the client groups using an informationist model or the embedded model. We can still have assistants to be reactive to questions on the spot but blend this with online help and help embedded in electronic products.

We need to develop better ways to provide alert services and collaborate electronically. We can be the enabler for interaction and sharing of knowledge.

Academic libraries are also responsible for all the data, repository and all the massive amounts of research data including all

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**Workforce and
skills**

Without a degree or higher LIS qualification there will be no jobs available within the academic sector.

the raw data. Big data and Research data management. This is an area we can build in other sectors too.

Staff will need to gain qualifications and therefore be viewed as more valuable and have greater long term employability.

With mechanisation of some tasks such as self-checking there are no employment opportunities for unqualified staff.

Staff are freed to undertake more interesting work and to assist library users on a more detailed level.

Age diversity in our workforce means that we have difference skills sets and differing expectations.

We can team up differing demographics in the workplace to use those with digital skills to assist existing staff to adapt and be more nimble with picking up new technologies.

The salaries are not high enough to attract and keep good people. Workplace classifications don't always recognise our qualifications.

We need to have better workplace mentoring so that we can cut down on the need to insist that new entrants into the profession have a set amount of experience years. We should be exploiting the other skills applicants bring to the workplace from previous study or employment.





Julie Rae posed the questions:

What would happen if there were no libraries?

Comments:

In academic libraries the students would have no-one to guide them to high quality information sources.

It would be more expensive to try to provide the required information within the academic environment because loss of libraries would mean more duplication of resources elsewhere and greater inefficiencies.

Digital and cultural divide would increase without public libraries. Communities will lose an important space and cultural asset.

Without public libraries there would be a negative impact on literacy rates.

Google doesn't have to be the only answer if there are no libraries. Can we create an alternative that isn't just based on Google?

How should we respond?

Comments:

Should libraries be working with Google to catalogue the internet – with Wikipedia as a platform for our products?

We should be collaborating with other members of the allied professions and joining forces to create a new environment? If we become bigger we would be stronger. If the industry has 27,500 members why do we only have 5,500 members of ALIA?

We need to look beyond our own profession and have these discussions with other allied professions with a view to developing partnerships.

Extend the existing advocacy program with more targeted campaigns like those run recently in response to specific issues.





More discussion about big issues such as the future of the profession. These should include members and those decision makers outside our profession.

We should encourage convergence with others in our industry. We want people to join ALIA as well as other professional assocs.

Extend the PD scheme.

Ensure that ALIA activities are rolled out to all states.

We need to be the authors of our own stories and ensure that the media and commentators get their information about libraries from us.

We need to be able to articulate all the positive about our services.

Other business

Should ALIA implement a compulsory PD scheme?

Comments:

Do we want to put our energy in compulsory PD or is there a higher priority for our efforts?

What about course accreditation? If we stop this will the profession dissolve?

We are not actually a register profession! We are not a legislated profession. We need to be recognised as a "Self-regulated profession".

General comments:

Do we have an inflated sense of self-worth?

We need to stop asking ourselves questions about our demise and start asking others about how they perceive our value.

We should be asking "what business are we in?" Libraries are just the way we do things. In the health sector libraries are the evidence base of the industry and at the moment we provide this service via a library model.

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We should be creating information not just finding it. Should we be mashing more?

Do we want to be special because of what we have or what we do? If we really want people to use the stuff we have then we have to start using standards that are not just unique to libraries.

We need other people to promote us – more ambassadors – young people – sports people.

A core purpose must be to help our communities gain the best, most effective most cost effective access to the information they want

Will we become the place that can provide access to information without people having to give away all their private data? Will people want to deal with us rather than Google because we don't collect and use all the user data.

