



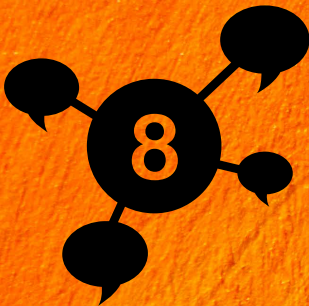
Australian Library and
Information Association



TRUTH INTEGRITY
KNOWLEDGE

INDIGENOUS MATTERS

A report on the ALIA Leadership & Innovation
Forums 2018–2019



**Leadership &
Innovation Forums**



**organisations
involved**



**participants in
the discussion**

In 2018, the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) organised seven Leadership & Innovation Forums across Australia. These forums are a biennial event.

The theme in 2018 was 'Meaningful and respectful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, culture and heritage – what more do we need to do?' This aligned with the Presidential theme of Indigenous matters and complemented ALIA's 2019 Truth, Integrity, Knowledge campaign.

These forums took place in New South Wales, the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia. In May 2019, to coincide with ALIA's Annual General Meeting, a similar forum was held at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) in Canberra.

Introduction

Across the eight forums, conversations shared common threads, prompted and supported by questions directed towards the expert panellists. These panellists included representatives from AIATSIS, the Jumbunna Institute of Indigenous Research and Education, Noongar Boodjar Language Centre, and the Indigenous Literacy Foundation.

The panellists were asked variations on the following questions:

- How can libraries develop and improve our programs and services to better meet the needs of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities?
- In what ways can libraries attract more people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds to work in our sector?
- What are some of the personal experiences – or compelling arguments – that have influenced your thinking and have motivated you to be an advocate for change?
- What more can we do?



Services for Indigenous people

- Collaboration and open communication are critical. They are the difference between delivering services to, and working with and for a community. For example, the development of a welcoming and open space can be achieved by respectfully integrating Indigenous languages and attributed artwork. However, this should only take place after engaging with relevant Indigenous authorities and gaining approval.
- Libraries are seen as Western structures. We need to create and promote cultural safety in libraries, fostering an environment that is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe.
- Rather than simply adapting existing programs, more relevant programs can be developed with the active participation of the community. We should be looking at transformation rather than accommodating.
- The lack of diversity in the library workforce is a known issue which needs to be addressed.
- Everything takes time – the change process needs to happen in a genuine and authentic way.

Working in libraries

- Our aim should be to recruit more people from an Indigenous background into the library workforce. This can be in a range of roles as library workplaces evolve, for example, community engagement, IT or media.
- Recruiting more than one Indigenous employee provides a greater chance of retention.
- We should not expect an Indigenous team member to be the one and only source of Indigenous knowledge in our organisations. It is unfair to designate one person as a representative for an entire culture.
- Established management hierarchies may not sit well with Indigenous staff. We need to embrace a more open form of engagement.
- Organisations will benefit from an internal and external mentorship culture.

- We need to appreciate that there are different ways of learning and communicating knowledge: documentary heritage and the oral tradition.
- Consider the educational courses that Indigenous people undertake prior to the hiring stage and how to tailor these courses to be more engaging and relevant. One option is providing the option for increased specialisation.
- Take a broad approach to skills. One person may not meet all your criteria on day one.

Collections of First Nations' materials

- Indigenous culture is living and relevant to this day. Resources at your organisation should reflect this so that users can engage with their past and create for their future.
- When collecting and collating materials and resources it is important to engage with the local Indigenous community. Having community involved in decisions about library collections is the only way to ensure that these collections are truly representing and meeting the needs of diverse First Nations communities.
- Respect and acknowledge that negative circumstances may have occurred in procuring past and present collections and resources.
- There are often unique considerations that need to be made when dealing with Indigenous materials, especially around appropriate access, permissions and copyright.
- Traditional cataloguing systems are not applicable to First Nations' materials and we need to develop new forms of resource description to provide a valid and respectful framework.
- There will be mentions of Indigenous peoples in the overall library collection. Library staff need to be aware of the sensitivities and there should be guidelines for those involved in selection and collection management.
- We should acknowledge that collection materials are the physical manifestation of thousands of years' worth of knowledge.

Australian Capital Territory panel

Host: Lyndall Ley, ALIA President, Executive Director, Return of Cultural Heritage Project, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

Rebecca Bateman, Indigenous Curator, National Library of Australia

Samantha Faulkner, author, Chair, Us Mob Writing Group

Craig Ritchie, CEO, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

New South Wales panel

Host: Robert Knight, ALIA Vice-President, Executive Director, Riverina Regional Library.

Shannon Foster, PhD student, Centre for the Advancement of Indigenous Knowledges, University of Technology Sydney

Michael Gonzalez, University Librarian, University of Technology Sydney

Kirsten Thorpe, Cultural and Critical Archivist, Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research

Northern Territory panel

Host: Monika Szunejko, ALIA Board Director, Director, Resources and Technology Services, Monash University Library

Marcus Schutenko, Director, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory

Nadine Lee, Northern Territory Regional Arts Fund Manager, Darwin Community Arts

Anja Tait, Assistant Director Libraries and Learning, Northern Territory Library

Kim Robertson, Senior Analyst, Indigenous Policies and Programs, Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Leadership, Charles Darwin University

Queensland panel

Host: Anne Reddacliff, ALIA Board Director, Librarian, Visitor & Information Services, State Library of Queensland

Anita Heiss, Advocate for the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence, Ambassador of Worowa Aboriginal College, Manager, Epic Good Foundation, Board Member, State Library of Queensland

Douglas Watkin, Founder, Double Wire Productions

Debra Cooper, Library Programming Coordinator for nine libraries in the City of Logan, Chair, Nyeumba-Meta Advisory Group

South Australia panel

Presenter: Jonathon Guppy, ALIA Board Director, Senior Librarian, Collection Services, University of New South Wales Canberra, Academy Library

Jenina Haines, PhD student, University of South Australia

Geoff Stempel, Acting Director, State Library of South Australia

Tasmania panel

Host: Helen Ebsworth, ALIA Board Director, Director, Library Network, Libraries Tasmania.

Mary Blake, Teacher Librarian, Aboriginal Education Library, Tasmania.

Ross Latham, Director, Collections and State Archivist, Libraries Tasmania.

Andrew Parsons, Library Coordinator, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery (QVMAG). Member of the Plomley Foundation, Manager, QVMAG Library Collections.

Clair Anderson, Associate Professor and Aboriginal Higher Education Advisor, Tasmanian Institute of Learning and Teaching (TILT), Division of Students and Education, University of Tasmania.

Victoria panel

Host: Paula Kelly Paull, ALIA Board Director, Manager, Learning Communities, Hobsons Bay City Council

Special Guest Speaker: Patricia Genat, President, Indigenous Literacy Foundation

Nick Thieberger, Associate Professor of Linguistics, University of Melbourne

Western Australia panel

Host: Monika Szunejko, ALIA Board Director, Director, Resources and Technology Services, Monash University Library

Deanne Fitzgerald, Yamatji/Nyoongar woman, Senior Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisor at the Western Australian Museum

Elizabeth Spencer, Director, Library Services, State Library of Western Australia

Denise Smith-Ali, Noongar woman from the South-west of Western Australia, Linguist for the Noongar Boodjar Language Centre

Thank you to everyone who participated in and supported the ALIA Leadership & Innovation Forums in 2018. ALIA will be continuing the conversation in 2019 through the Presidential theme of Indigenous matters; the Truth Integrity Knowledge campaign; and by promoting the Year of Indigenous Languages.