



Response to the review of the Australian Digital Inclusion Index ADII 2.0

13 March 2020

1. About us

ALIA

The Australian Library and Information Association is the professional organisation for the Australian library and information services sector. On behalf of our 5,000 personal and institutional members, we provide the national voice of the profession in the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services to the nation, through leadership, advocacy and mutual support.

Australia's public library network

Australia has more than 1600 central, branch and mobile libraries, with 9.3 million registered members and more than 114 million customer visits each year. Offering books, magazines, newspapers, DVDs, WiFi, PC internet access, learning programs, fun activities and expert staff help, they are a much loved, highly regarded and trusted community resource, with loans of more than 165.3 million items a year.

Other libraries

In addition to our public libraries, there are approximately 9,400 school libraries, 2,000 special libraries (health, law, government, corporate, heritage, arts, media) and 450 university and TAFE libraries. There are nine National, State and Territory Libraries, located in capital cities around Australia. These flagship institutions attract more than 9.5 million physical visitors each year, and hold collections valued at \$4.1 billion.¹

2. Libraries and the ADII

Australian libraries – especially public, State and Territory Libraries – have found the ADII to be an invaluable source of data about the levels of digital inclusion nationally, regionally and locally.

The information gained from the ADII reports has enabled libraries to advocate successfully for investment in technology, programs and services to meet the needs of their communities and users. It has identified specific target groups requiring greater assistance, and it has helped guide program and service development.

¹ <https://www.nsla.org.au/index.php/about>

3. Changes to the ADII

3.1 Consistency

The advantage of the current Index is that it provides comparative data over time. While the current method of populating the index through Roy Morgan Single Source may have its disadvantages, it does provide a level of consistency which is greatly valued.

Libraries have used the ADII as our 'True North'. We have concerns about the results of ADII 2.0 not being 'backwards compatible', and the possibility that the interpretive picture could show a significant shift in an unexpected direction simply as a result of a different survey instrument being used.

3.2 Places of internet access

We ask that 'places of internet access' remain in the survey or that there is another question which will help demonstrate the role of libraries as places for internet connection. We know that people with their own devices use free library WiFi; that people who are mobile-only go to libraries to use PCs, and that people who are not yet online attend library sessions to learn basic digital skills. It is helpful for us to have this acknowledged through the ADII.

3.3 Granularity

Appreciating that with greater detail comes greater cost, we would encourage the ADII partners to make the results of future surveys as geographically-specific as possible. This could be through survey-derived scores or statistical modelling based on ABS Census data.

The release of more detailed datasets would be of interest to libraries. In an ideal world, these would be available at local government authority (LGA) level. A custom digital survey tool would also be of interest to public libraries, as this would assist in comparing smaller local areas, even down to branch level, with LGA, regional and national results.

4. ADII and ADII 2.0

We thank Telstra, the Centre for Social Impact and RMIT University for creating the Australian Digital Inclusion Index. It has proved of great benefit to libraries since the first report was published in 2016. We look forward to hearing more about future plans in the coming months and would welcome the opportunity to be involved in any further consultation or testing prior to the launch of ADII 2.0.

ALIA contact:

Sue McKerracher, CEO, Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)
9-11 Napier Close, Deakin ACT 2600 † 02 6215 8215 m 0404 456 749
w www.alia.org.au e sue.mckerracher@alia.org.au