Results of the ALIA Member Survey 2017

November 2017

Contents

1. Background

1.1 Introduction

Members are encouraged to provide feedback about ALIA through the ALIA Board, their ALIA State or Territory Manager, or to the team at ALIA House; to attend our AGM and to participate in the various forums held around the country. We want to hear what is working well and what needs improvement. Every couple of years, to give all ALIA Members the opportunity to provide feedback, we carry out a Member survey. In 2017, the survey took place from 31 July to 28 August. It was similar in content to those carried out in 2015 and 2013, to help the ALIA Board assess changes in Member interests and concerns.

1.2 Methodology

Survey Monkey was used as the survey tool, and questions were designed, where possible, to provide a benchmark with the 2015 and 2013 surveys.

1.3 Responses

The survey generated 748 responses, including 15 from non-members. This response rate represented 14% of ALIA membership, which was up from the 12% achieved in 2015 and indicated an increase in participants of over 30% compared to the 570 participants in 2015.

2. Summary of results

2.1 Participation in the survey

- A good representative sample of personal and institutional Members took part in the survey, with proportional participation from every state and territory, metro and regional areas and a broad range of library and information service sectors. Fifteen Members were based overseas and generally engaged with ALIA via online channels.
- 32% of respondents belonged to other associations. This compared with 39% of respondents in the 2015 survey and 65% in the 2013 survey. This continued trend suggested that ALIA was achieving its goal of being the association of choice for the library and information sector.
- 43% of respondents had been ALIA members for more than ten years, while 9% of respondents had joined in 2017.

2.2 Professional Development (PD)

- Over a third of respondents were enrolled in the ALIA PD Scheme (35%) compared with 38% in the 2015 survey (and 33% in the 2013 survey). As 69% of respondents held a membership level that meant they were able to enrol in the PD Scheme, this indicated that 50% of the eligible respondents were a part of the PD Scheme.
- 87% of respondents indicated that they were regularly engaged in PD either self-funded or paid for by their employer, while 6% of respondents indicated that they engaged solely in PD that incurred no cost.
- Cutting edge topics and new developments were again ranked the most important factor when undertaking PD, followed by 'refreshing existing knowledge', with 'low cost' running a close third.

- The most common form of PD undertaken was professional reading, with 74% of respondents undertaking some reading within the last 12 months; 21% of respondents were studying towards formal qualifications.

2.3 Communication and Member engagement

- Amongst the enewsletters, *ALIA Weekly* (92%), *RecruitLIS* (67%) and *PD Postings* (65%) all had particularly strong readership. Other newsletters had lower readerships as they were specific to particular ALIA Groups and professional interests.
- 91% of respondents said that they read *INCITE* magazine at least occasionally and in most cases every issue.
- 85% of those respondents who read *INCITE* did so in print, with 43% also occasionally reading it online. The remaining 15% read the digital edition of *INCITE*.
- A third of respondents regularly read the *Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association* and 26% regularly read back issues of *Australian Library Journal* or *Australian Academic and Research Libraries*. However, 51% of respondents did not read any of the academic journals, with perceived lack of access being the number one reason why.
- 15% of Members visited the ALIA website at least once a week; 92% of respondents stated that they visited the website at least a few times a year, with over half visiting it monthly.
- 91% of respondents felt that the amount of communication from ALIA was 'about right'.
- Over three quarters (78%) of respondents stated that they were 'usually' able to find what they were looking for through the ALIA website and social media platforms.
- 92% of respondents followed ALIA through social media, with Facebook (64%) and Twitter (50%) being the most common platforms used.
- Nearly 25% of respondents were members of an ALIA Group or Committee.

2.4 Customer service

- Almost three quarters (73%) of respondents had some contact with ALIA staff over the past 12 months. This compared to 72% in the 2015 survey and 61% in the 2013 survey.
- ALIA's customer service continued to satisfy, with 95% of respondents who had had contact with ALIA staff either satisfied or very satisfied with the level of service.

2.5 ALIA's performance in various areas of activity

- 92% of respondents felt ALIA's overall performance in commitment to PD was high or very high.
- 87% of respondents felt ALIA's overall performance in communication with members was high or very high.
- 82% of respondents felt that ALIA's overall performance in advocacy and lobbying for the sector was high or very high.
- 73% of respondents felt that ALIA's overall performance in promoting library and information research was high or very high.
- 71% of respondents felt that ALIA's overall performance in employment advice was high or very high.
- 71% of respondents felt that ALIA's overall performance in providing opportunities to participate in local activities was high or very high.
- 91% of respondents felt that ALIA's overall performance in campaigns (i.e. Library and Information Week, Library Lovers' Day) was high or very high.
- 89% of respondents felt that ALIA's work on national conferences was high or very high.
- 89% of respondents felt that ALIA's overall performance in distributing information about the sector was high or very high.

2.6 Reasons for membership

In 2017 the three most important ALIA activities to respondents were:
- advocacy and lobbying for the sector,
- commitment to PD and
- professional recognition of qualifications.

This compares to the 2015 results of:
- professional recognition of qualifications,
- PD opportunities and
- networking opportunities.

And the 2013 results of:
- professional recognition of qualifications,
- PD opportunities and
- advocacy and lobbying.

This showed that ALIA members were consistently more concerned about PD, relevant qualifications, and sector advocacy than any other issue. The least important activity was again fellowships and awards, which was the same result as from the 2015 and 2013 surveys.
- 92% of respondents felt that ALIA Membership sometimes, almost always or always provided value for money, compared with 93.5% in 2015.
- 82% said they would recommend ALIA membership to a colleague (91% in 2015).

2.7 Issues for the sector

When asked what issues they felt were important and/or interesting to the respondent as an individual, LIS professional, and as an organisation the responses highlighted the large number of issues that are of note, with 50% or more respondents stating they had 'great' or 'some' interest in each topic.

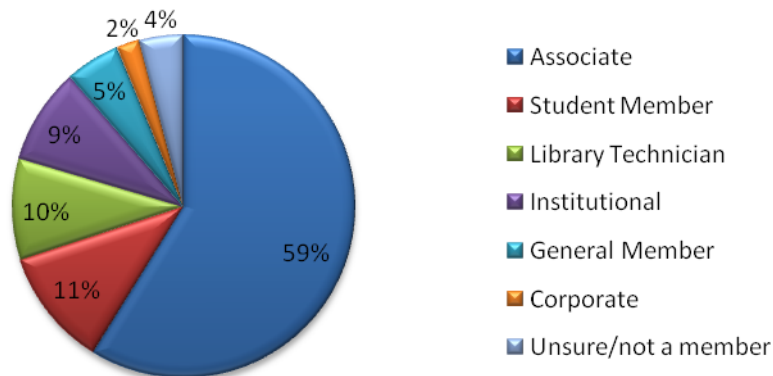## 2.8 Actions arising from the survey results

The ALIA Board will review the results of the ALIA Member survey and the findings will inform the further development of the ALIA strategic plan.

3. Detailed results

3.1 Respondents

Personal memberships accounted for 85% of responses and 9% came from Institutional membership. Of the personal membership, professional members – either Associates or Library Technicians – accounted for 69% of responses, student members (11%), retirees, general, and corporate members making up the balance. Fifteen were not sure of their membership category and 15 non members answered the survey (figure 1).

Figure 1: Which type of ALIA membership do you hold? (Answered: 743 Skipped: 5)

- Associate — 59%
- Student Member — 11%
- Library Technician — 10%
- Institutional — 9%
- General Member — 5%
- Corporate — 2%
- Unsure/not a member — 4%

The first set of questions was designed to ensure that the responses were representative of the broad range of ALIA members. This was found to be the case, with responses from every state and territory and 15 members based overseas (figure 2). Three-quarters of respondents were based in metro areas (figure 3). These rates are representative of ALIA's broader membership.

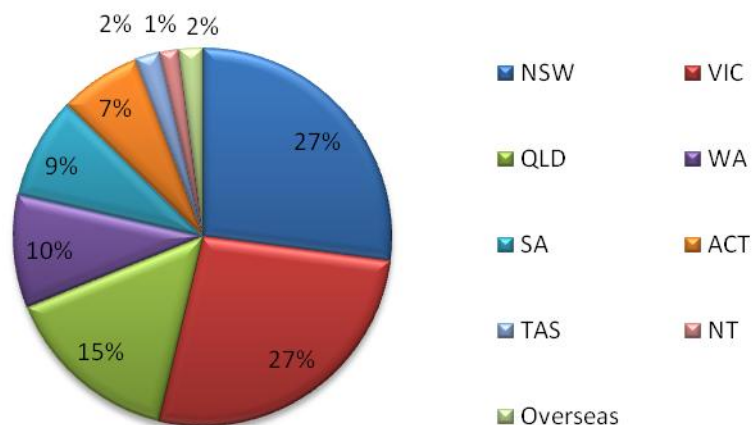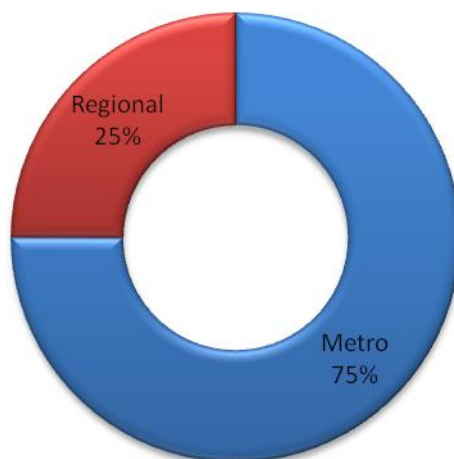## Figure 2: Where are you normally based? (Answered: 746 Skipped: 2)

- NSW — 27%
- VIC — 27%
- QLD — 15%
- WA — 10%
- SA — 9%
- ACT — 7%
- TAS — 2%
- NT — 1%
- Overseas — 2%

Figure 3: Metro or Regional?
(Answered: 738 Skipped: 10)

Regional 25%

Metro 75%

Just under 32% of respondents said they belonged to another association (figure 4). This was a decrease from the 2015 members survey, where 39% of respondents answered that they belonged to another association. 11% of respondents were members of an international organisation.

Figure 4: Do you belong to any professional associations in Australia other than ALIA?
(Answered: 738 Skipped: 10)

Yes 32%

No 68%
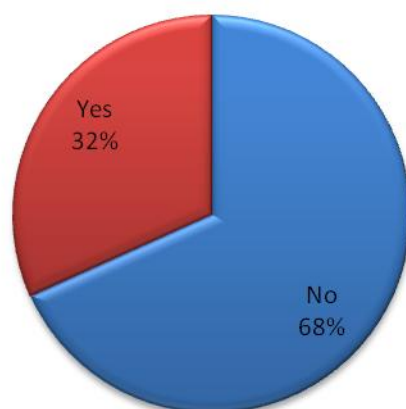
In response to question 7, 'which sector do you currently work in?' (figure 5) out of 743 responses, public libraries (23%) was the largest response followed by higher education libraries (22%), school libraries (12%), government department library/information service (8%) and National, State or Territory libraries (5%). Also notable were the 'other' (8%) and 'not currently working' (8%) responses which included students, retirees, and jobseekers. This followed a similar response trend

to the 2015 survey. Various other options made up the remaining 14% which are broken down below (figure 6).

Figure 5: Which sector do you currently work in? (Answered: 743 Skipped: 5)

- Public libraries
- Higher education libraries (university, college or TAFE)
- School libraries
- Other (please specify)
- Government department library/information service (including law, health)
- I am not working at the moment
- National, State or Territory libraries
- For a breakdown of the remaining responses, see figure 6

Pie chart values: 23%, 22%, 12%, 8%, 8%, 8%, 5%
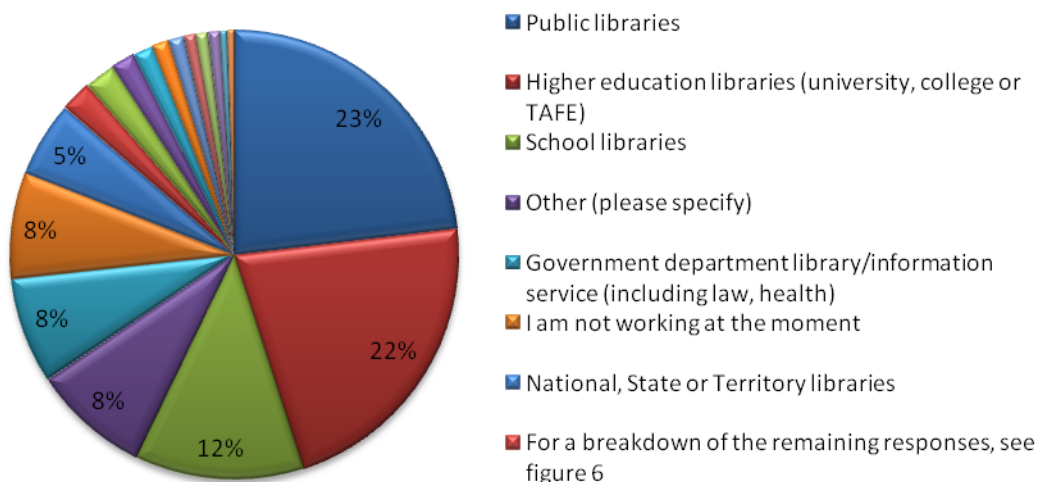
Figure 6: Which sector do you currently work in? Remaining responses expanded. (Answered: 110)

- Corporate/business library/information services
- Library and information science educator
- Non government Health library/information service
- Information/Records management
- Non government law library/information service
- Archives
- Galleries/museums
- Parliamentary libraries
- Self employed Information Professional
- Joint use public or community/school libraries
- Library supplier/industry partner

Pie chart values: 18 (2.4%), 18 (2.4%), 14 (1.9%), 12 (1.6%), 10 (1.3%), 9 (1.2%), 7 (0.9%), 7 (0.9%), 7 (0.9%), 4 (0.5%), 4 (0.5%)

3.2 Professional Development

Over a third of respondents (35%) were enrolled in the ALIA PD Scheme (figure 7), noting that 31% of respondents were not eligble to join. This compared with 38.5% in 2015, 33% in 2013 and 22% in 2008. Those who were not enrolled in the PD Scheme provided a number of reasons (figure 8) along with comments. In comparison to the reasons for not joining from the results of previous surveys, it was pleasing to note the improvement in reputation of the scheme. This was evident from the fact that the answer 'I don't see the benefit' had dropped to 24% in 2017 from 30% in the 2015 survey. Meanwhile, those who were time poor dropped from 50% to 45%, and 17% did not know anything about the scheme, compared to 9% in 2015 and 14% in 2013. Other reasons given for not enrolling included:

- Members had their own workplace PD scheme
- Members were close to retirement or retired
- Currently studying

Figure 7: Are you enrolled in the ALIA PD Scheme? (Answered: 720 Skipped: 28)

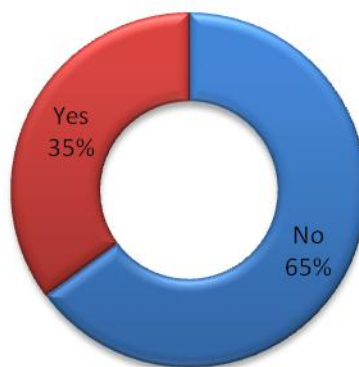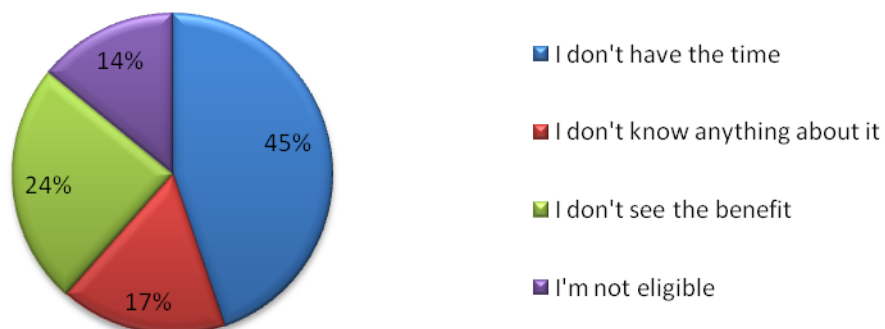Yes 35%

No 65%

Figure 8: If you are not enrolled in the ALIA PD Scheme, could you tell us why? (Answered: 362 Skipped: 386)

14%

45%

24%

17%

- I don't have the time
- I don't know anything about it
- I don't see the benefit
- I'm not eligible

A high proportion of all respondents (94%) undertook some form of PD in the last 12 months (figure 9). Responsibility for payment was fairly evenly split between the costs being self funded (35%), shared by the employer and employee (33%) and the employer paying the costs (26%), while the remaining respondents (6%) only participated in PD that had no associated costs (figure 10).

Figure 9: What forms of PD have you undertaken in the last 12 months? Select all applicable.
(Answered: 704 Skipped: 44)

Form of PD	Percentage
Professional reading	74.3%
Studying towards formal qualifications	21.1%
Informal (eg TED talks, blogs, twitter chats)	55.6%
Conferences/Summits	47.1%
Face to face courses outside my workplace	43.4%
Face to face courses at my workplace	52.8%
Online courses or workshops	50.4%
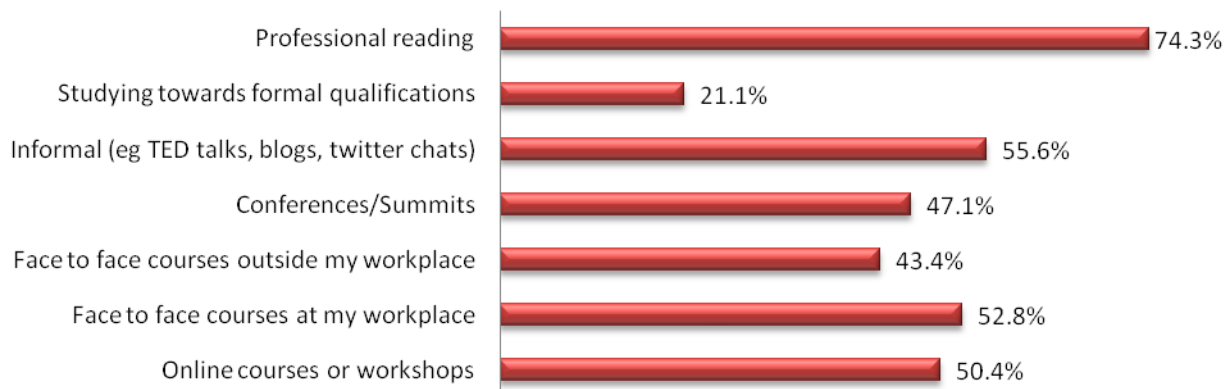
Figure 10: Who generally pays for your PD?
(Answered: 704 Skipped: 44)

- 33% A combination of self-funded and employer-pays
- 35% I pay most of the costs myself
- 26% My employer pays most of the costs
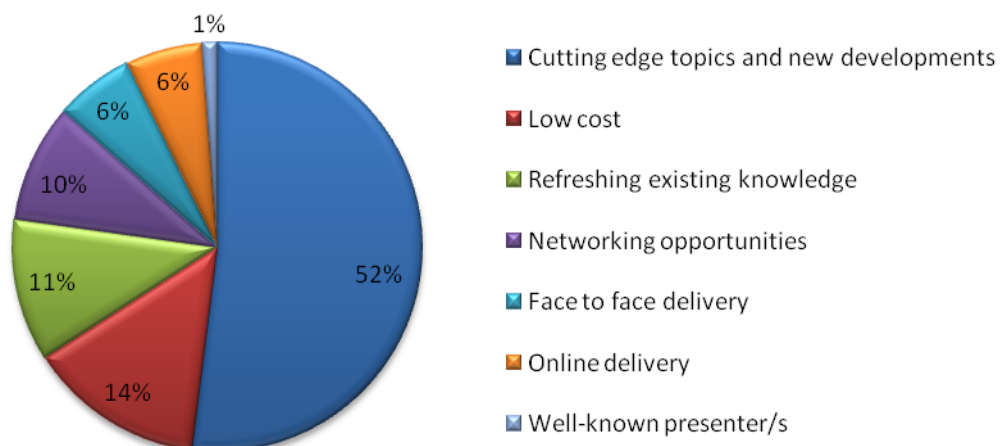- 6% Not applicable – there are no costs incurred
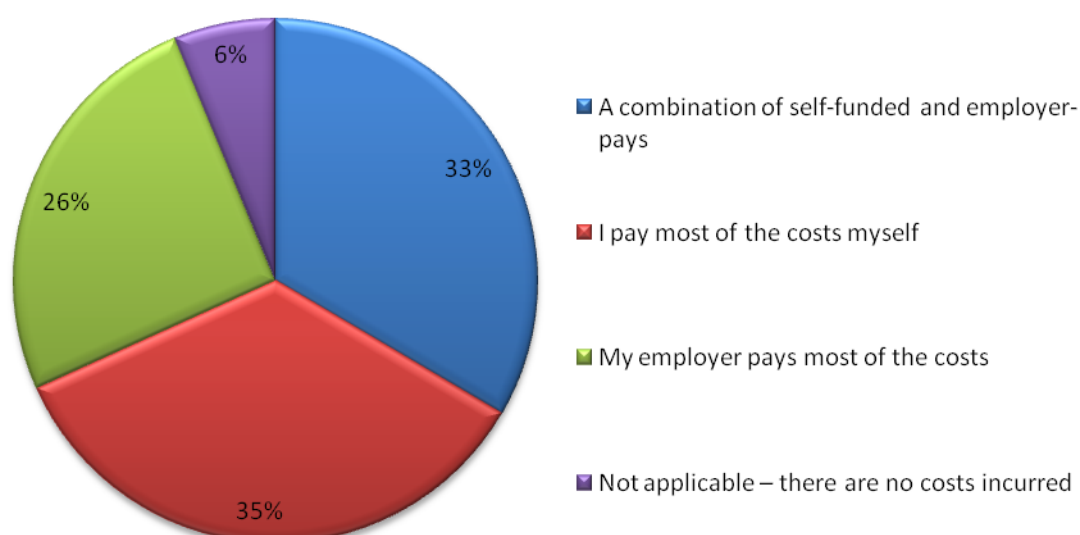
Cutting edge topics, refreshing existing skills and affordability of PD, training and events were recurring themes and made up the top three responses to the question 'Which of the following factors are important to you when undertaking professional development?' (figures 11-12).

Figure 11: Which of the following factors are important to you when undertaking PD? With '1' being the most important. (Answered: 675 Skipped: 73)

Factor	Score
Cutting edge topics and new developments	1.95
Refreshing existing knowledge	3.35
Low cost	3.73
Networking opportunities	3.99
Face to face delivery	4.45
Online delivery	4.67
Well-known presenter/s	5.11
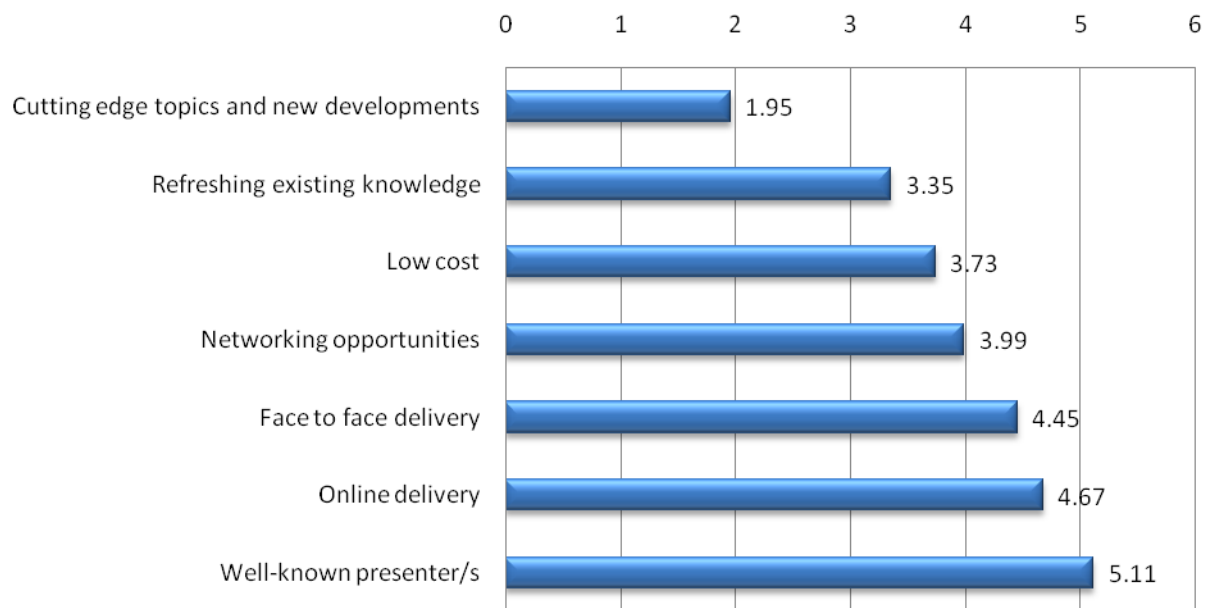
Figure 12: Issues chosen as the most important factor ('1') when undertaking PD. (Answered: 675 Skipped: 73)

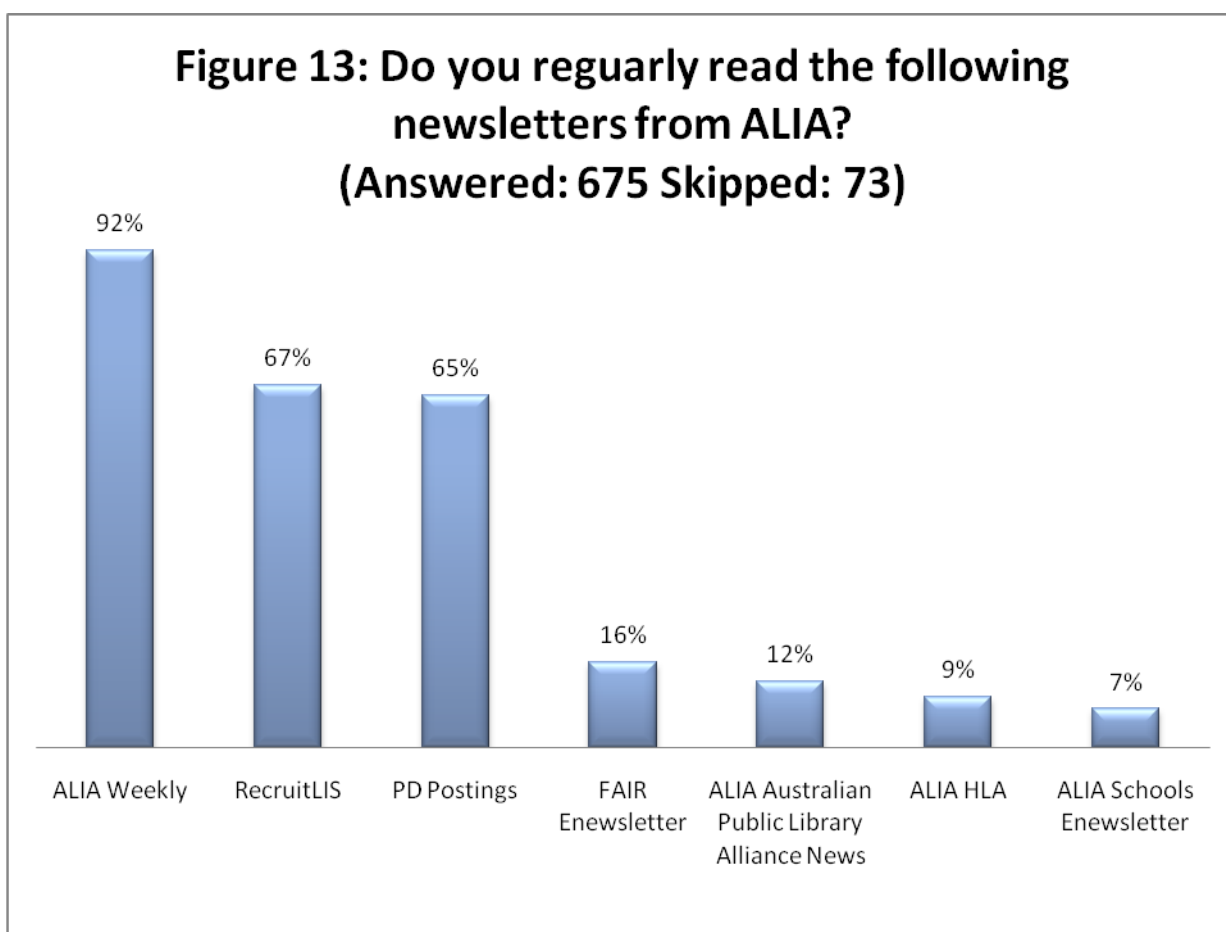| Factor	Percentage
Cutting edge topics and new developments	52%
Low cost	14%
Refreshing existing knowledge	11%
Networking opportunities	10%
Face to face delivery	6%
Online delivery	6%
Well-known presenter/s	1%

There were 305 responses to the open question 'What topics would you like covered in training and professional development opportunities offered by ALIA?' and the range of topics suggested was extensive. A significant proportion of the answers (15%) related to wanting to broaden Members' management and leadership skills, and focused on future careers for librarians; 'how to use your skills as an information professional in other fields; future of information and libraries; roles for librarians and libraries in the digital world' and other management topics such as budgeting, advocacy, impact metrics, and staff and project management. Other popular topics included technical skills such as building and maintaining a digital repository, digital preservation, cataloguing and metadata, data management, publishing, copyright and digital privacy and security. One respondent was happy with the current topics but would like ALIA to include 'webinars or videos that can be watched when I have time.'
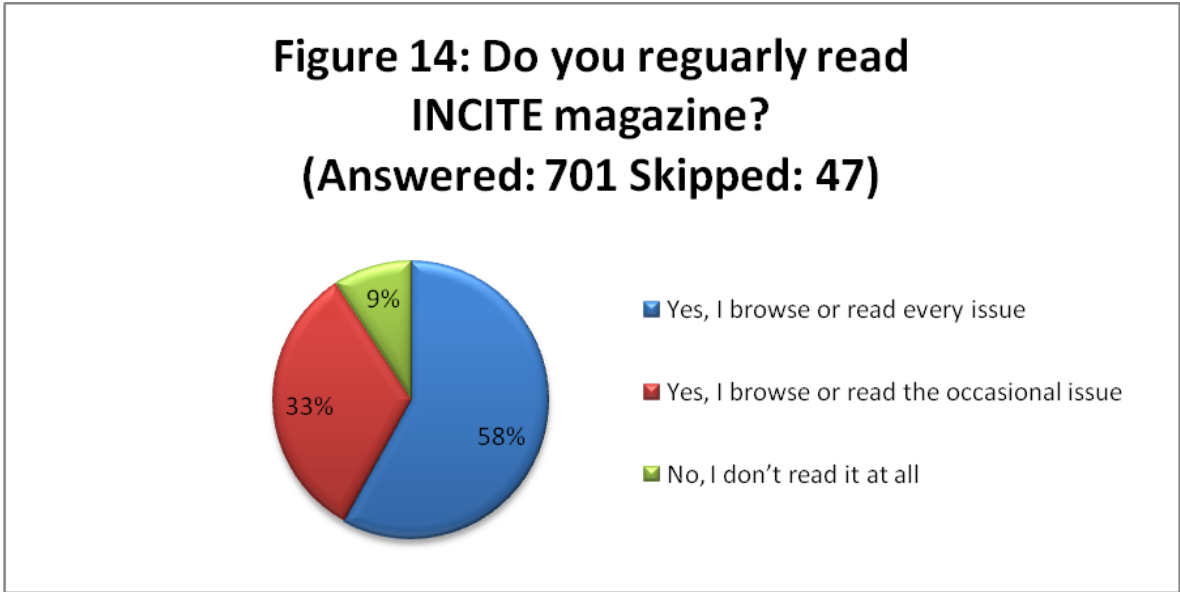
3.3 Communication

In terms of newsletters, *ALIA Weekly* was the most frequently read, with 92.5% of respondents answering that they regularly read *ALIA Weekly* (figure13). This was similar to the 2015 Member survey with 93.5%.

PD Postings was read by 65% — the same as the 2015 survey result.

Approximately 67% of respondents subscribed to the *RecruitLIS* email. This was a slight increase from the 2015 survey, where 65% read RecruitLIS and continued the rise from the 2013 member survey where only 33% stated that they regularly read *RecruitLIS*.

Figure 13: Do you regularly read the following newsletters from ALIA?
(Answered: 675 Skipped: 73)

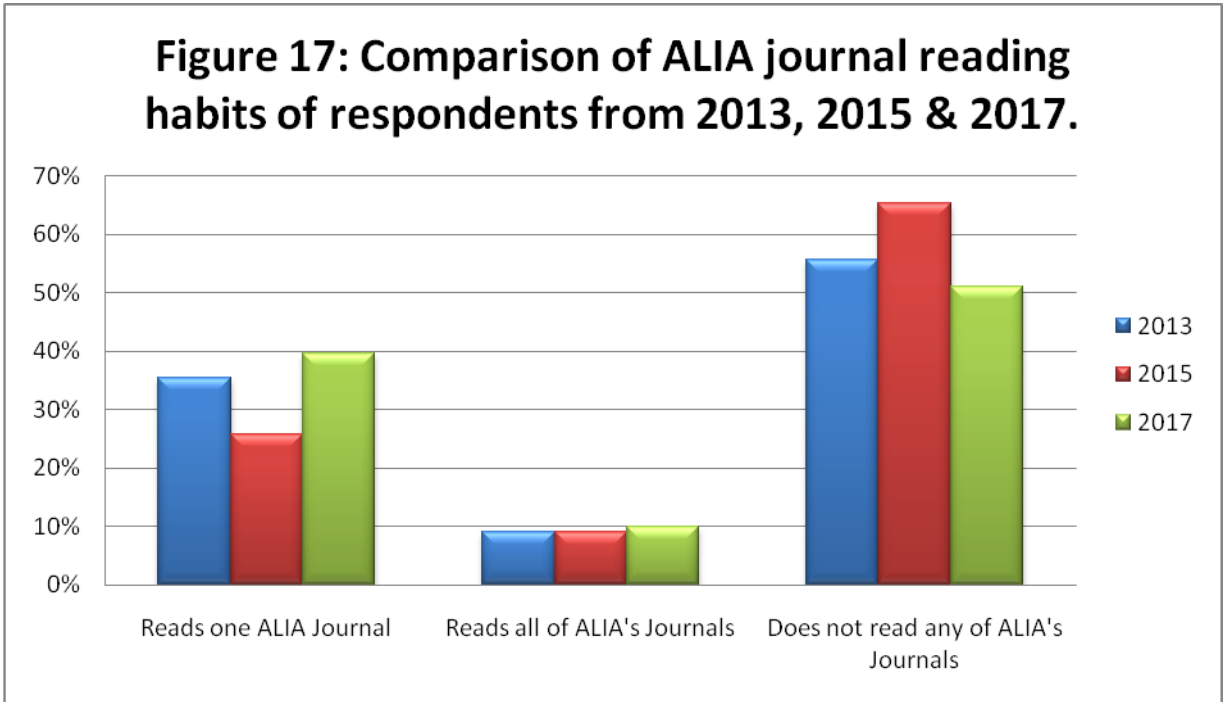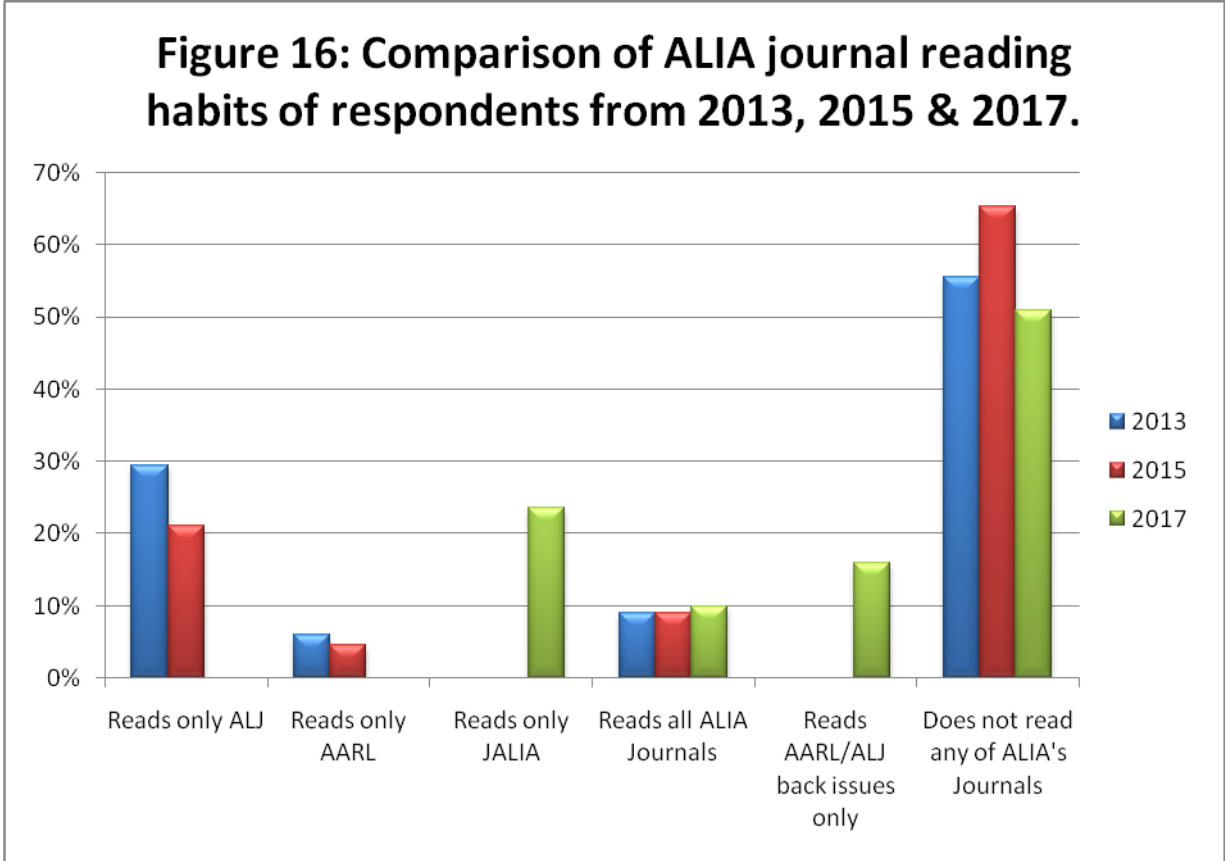| Newsletter	Percentage
ALIA Weekly	92%
RecruitLIS	67%
PD Postings	65%
FAIR Enewsletter	16%
ALIA Australian Public Library Alliance News	12%
ALIA HLA	9%
ALIA Schools Enewsletter	7%

The level of engagement with *INCITE* was high, with 91% of respondents saying they read the magazine at least occasionally and in most cases every issue (figure 14) — this compared with 96% of respondents reading *INCITE* in the 2015 survey.

Figure 14: Do you reguarly read INCITE magazine? (Answered: 701 Skipped: 47)

- Yes, I browse or read every issue — 58%
- Yes, I browse or read the occasional issue — 33%
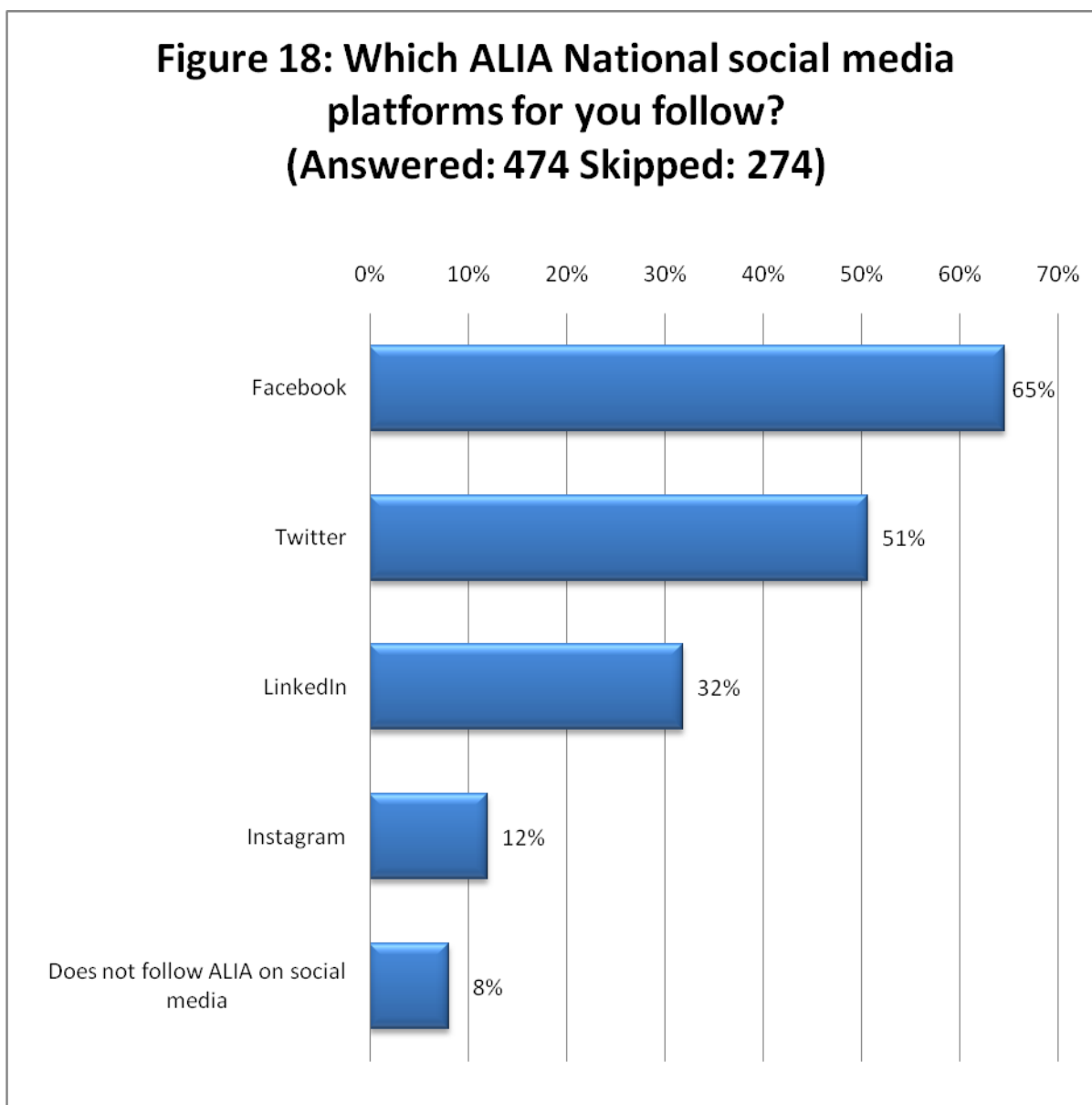- No, I don't read it at all — 9%

Approximately 33% of Members read the *Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association* (JALIA) this compared to the 30% of members who regularly read the *Australian Library Journal* (ALJ) in 2015 and the 14% who read the *Australian Academic and Research Libraries* (AARL). Over a quarter of respondents (26%) read back issues of ALJ and AARL (figure 15). Time, relevance, cost, and limited access were the main reasons why respondents did not read these journals.

Figure 15: Do you reguarly read our scholarly journals? (Answered: 703 Skipped 45)

I read the Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association (JALIA)	33%
I refer to back issues of Australian Academic and Research Libraries and Australian Library Journal	26%
No, I don't read/refer to any ALIA journals	51%
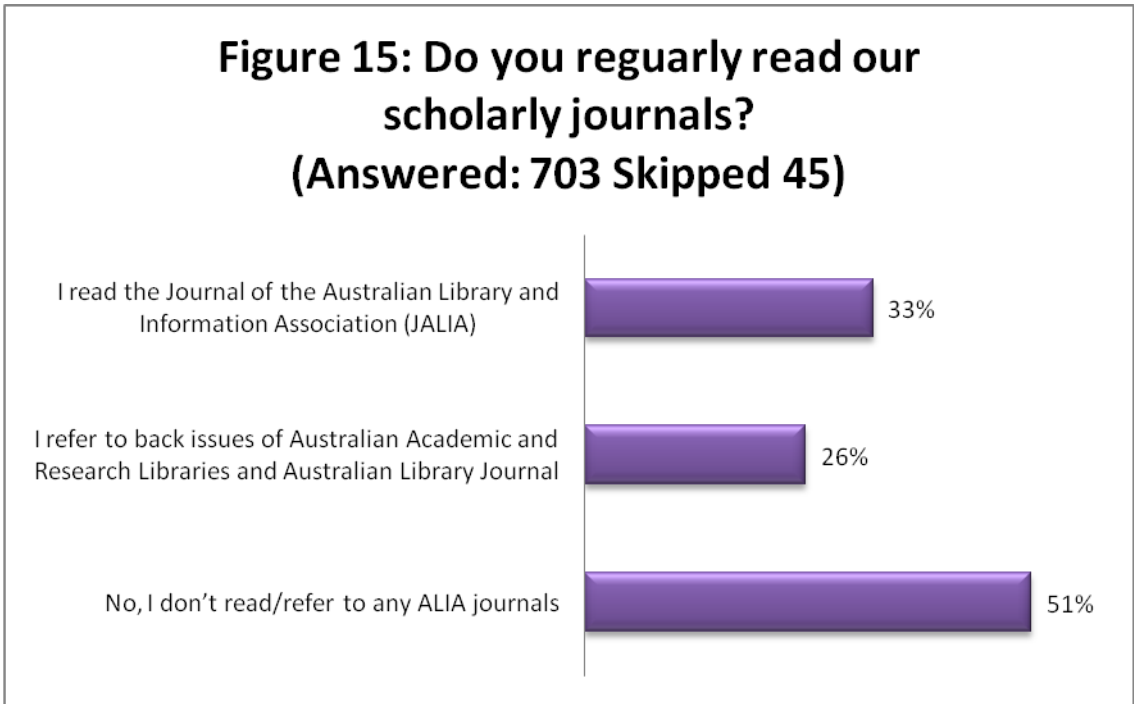
While JALIA readership numbers may seem to have declined in comparison to 2015 (figure 16), overall readership of ALIA's academic journals has actually increased. As can be seen in the comparative graph below (figure 17), 34.7% of respondents in 2015 reguarly read at least one ALIA journal while this figure was 44.4% of respondents in 2013. This compares to the 49% of respondents who had reguarly read either JALIA, or a back issue of AARL/ALJ in 2017.

Figure 16: Comparison of ALIA journal reading habits of respondents from 2013, 2015 & 2017.

Figure 17: Comparison of ALIA journal reading habits of respondents from 2013, 2015 & 2017.

When asked about following ALIA on social media channels, 92% of respondents followed at least one of ALIA National's social media channels, with Facebook (65%) and Twitter (51%) being the most likely used (figure 18). A handful of respondents used a social media platform that ALIA does not currently use, with Pintrest (2%) and Snapchat (1%) being the most common.

Figure 18: Which ALIA National social media platforms for you follow? (Answered: 474 Skipped: 274)

Platform	Percentage
Facebook	65%
Twitter	51%
LinkedIn	32%
Instagram	12%
Does not follow ALIA on social media	8%

We received 123 replies to the question 'What, if anything, would you like ALIA to change about our communication strategy?' and of these, 22 were messages of positive support for ALIA's work in providing a comprehensive communication platform for Members. The remaining responses included a number of people expressing concerns about the functionality of the website and others about the number and length of ALIA emails. Also included were requests that ALIA communicate more about research into the library sector, organise more local meet-ups for Members, and focus more on content about librarians rather than libraries. Of additional note were requests that we communicate better from and about ALIA branded conferences, groups, committees, and events.

3.4 Member engagement

More than nine out of ten respondents (91%) visited the ALIA website during the previous 12 months (figure19). This was a rise from 89% in 2015. Over 78% of visitors were at least 'usually' able to find the information they were looking for on our website or through ALIA's social media channels.

In response to the question 'Do you feel the amount of communication from ALIA to members is...' 91% responded 'about right' (figure 20). Just over 5% of respondents thought communication was too often and 4% thought the amount of communication was not often enough. This was a very similar result to the 2015 responses.

Figure 19: How often do you visit the ALIA website?
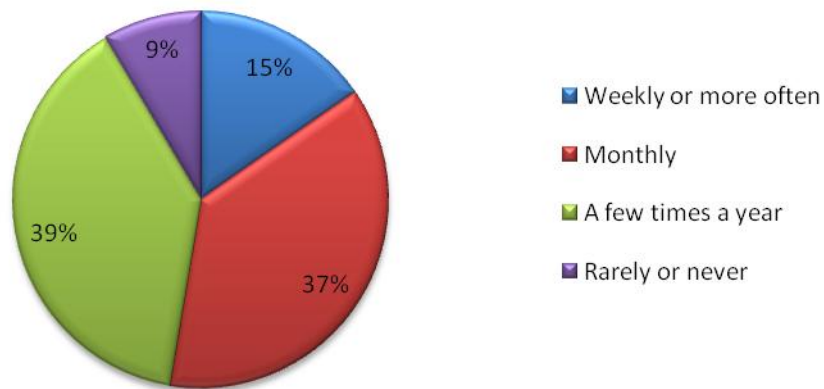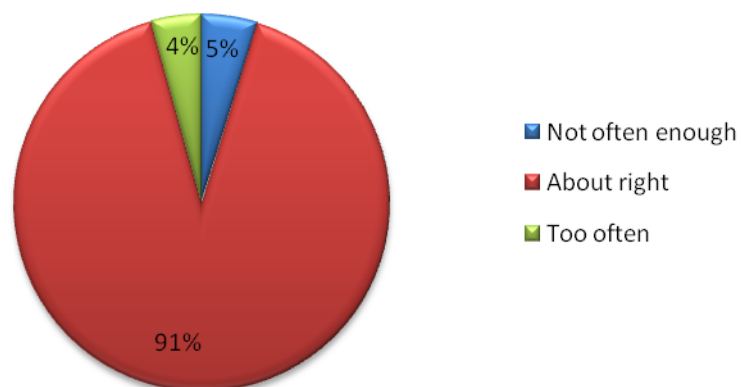### (Answered: 697 Skipped: 51)

- 15% Weekly or more often
- 37% Monthly
- 39% A few times a year
- 9% Rarely or never

Figure 20: Do you feel the amount of communication from ALIA to member is...
(Answered: 693 Skipped: 55)

- 5% Not often enough
- 91% About right
- 4% Too often

When asked 'How would you rate your awareness of the following ALIA activities?' 34% of respondents said that their awareness of ALIA's campaigns, such as Cooking for Copyright, was 'very high' and 90% said that their awareness of ALIA's commitment to professional development' was 'high' or 'very high'. Awareness fell below 50% for ALIA's Member benefits and salary scale, position, and work level guidelines (figure 21).

Figure 21: How would you rate your awareness of the following ALIA activities? (Answered: 651 Skipped: 97)
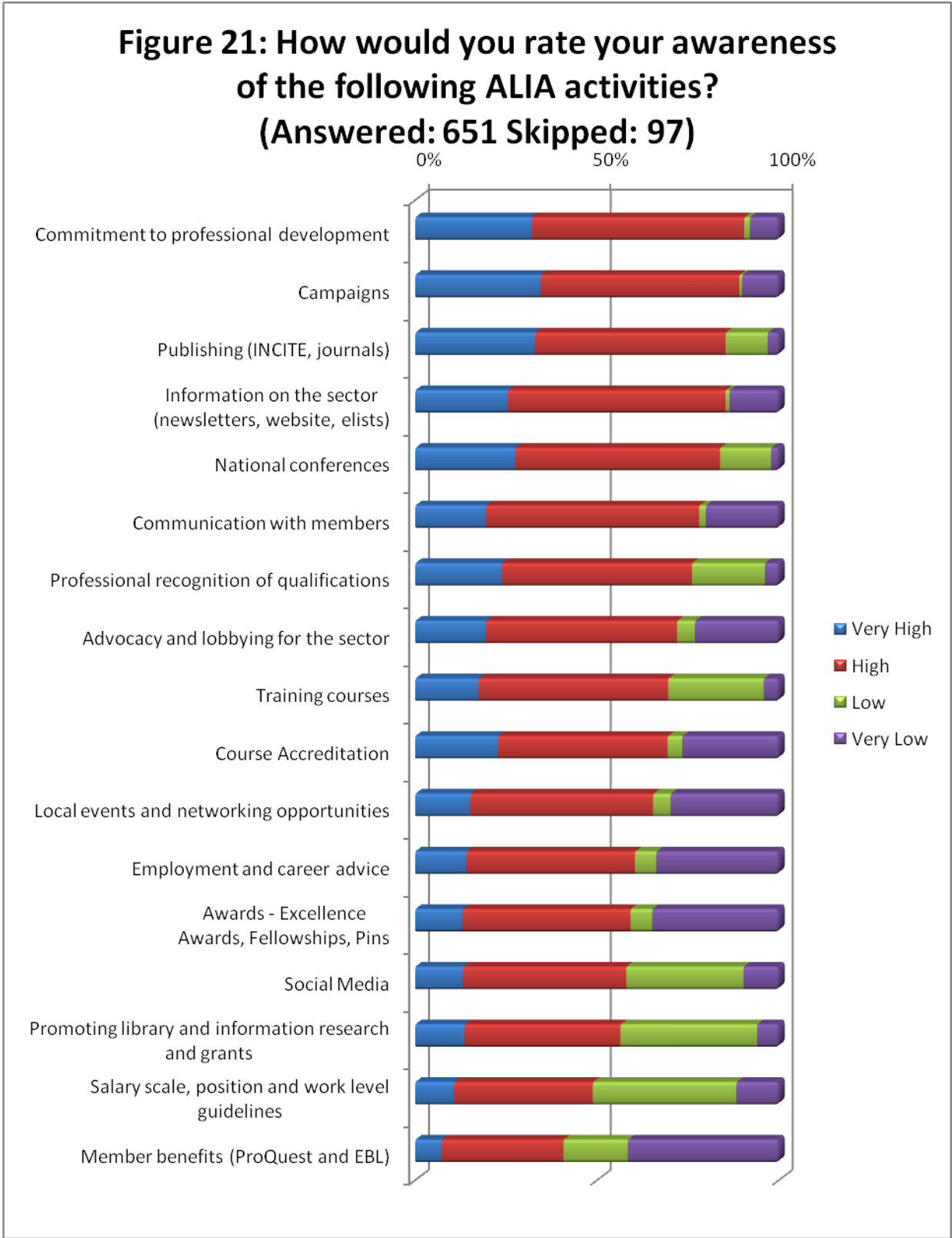
3.5 ALIA customer service

Almost three quarters of respondents (73%) had come into contact with ALIA staff within the last 12 months (figure 22). This compared to 72% in the 2015 survey and 61% in 2013. Of the 481 respondents, 95% were satisfied or very satisfied with the service that was received (figure 23), which was the same level as was achieved in the 2015 survey. More detailed comments provided encouraging feedback from Members who felt supported by ALIA and appreciated the friendly and knowledgeable service.

When given the opportunity to write in an open-ended response field about the service provided by ALIA staff, 64% used the question to praise the work done at ALIA House; 4% used the opportunity to appreciate the work done by their local State or Territory Manager; 17% made a complaint about the communication skills shown by ALIA and ALIA staff, and 10% perceived a lack of advocacy and lobbying by the organisation.

Figure 22: How often have you come into contact with ALIA staff in the last 12 months? (Answered: 656 Skipped: 92)
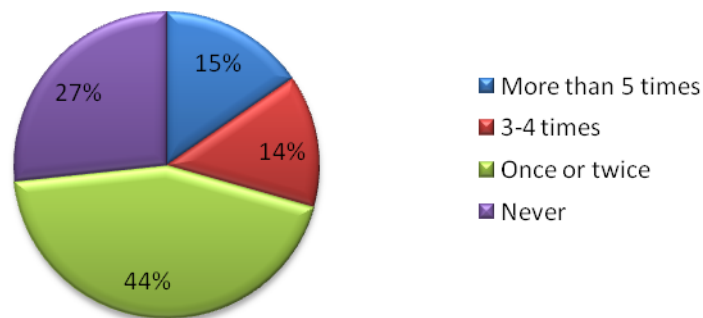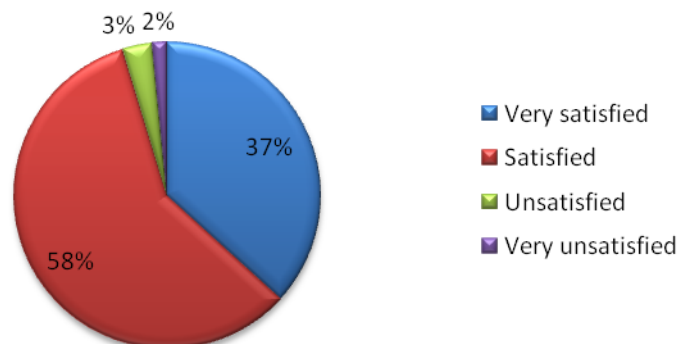
- More than 5 times: 15%
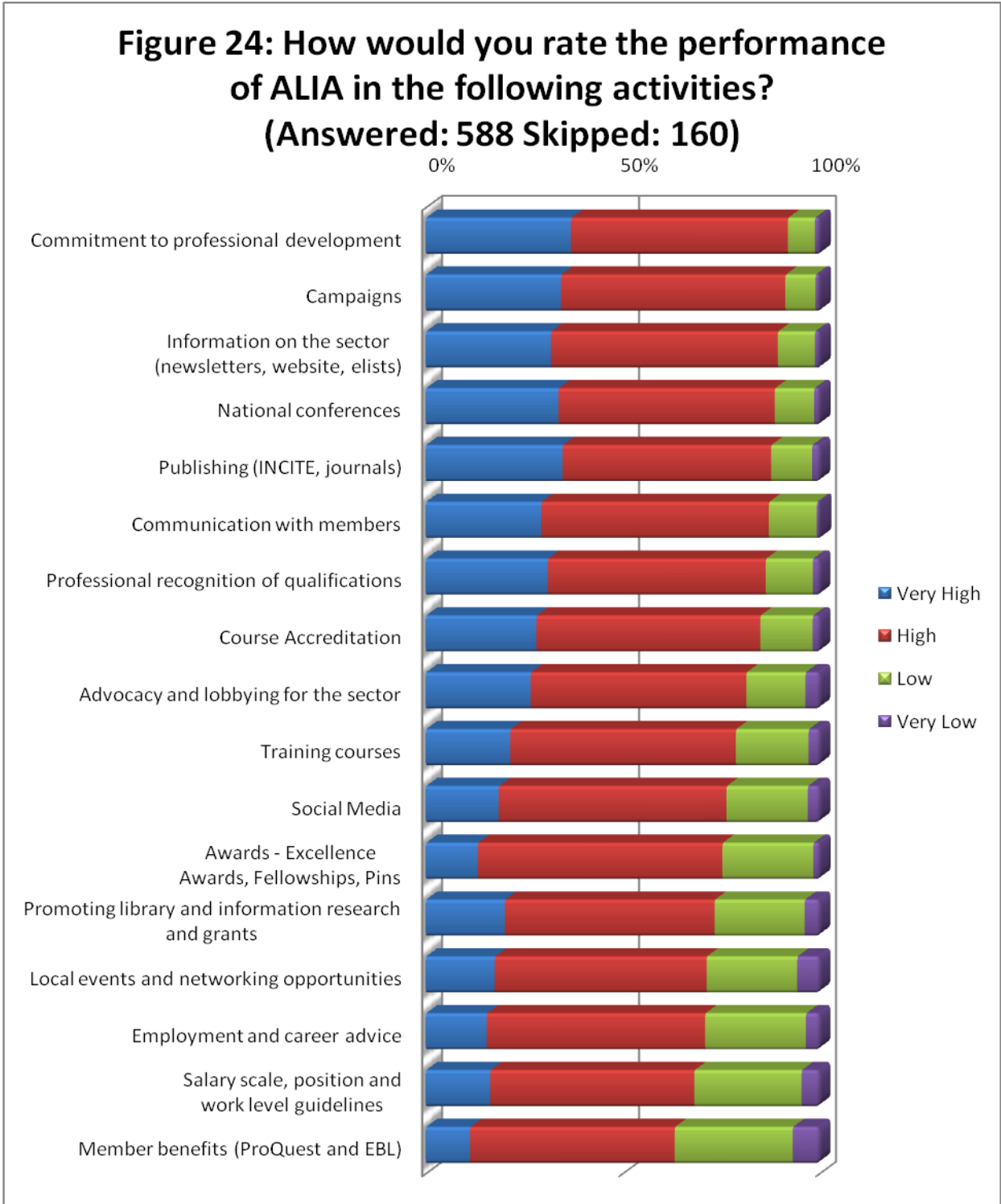- 3-4 times: 14%
- Once or twice: 44%
- Never: 27%

Figure 23: Overall, how satisfied were you by the level of service from ALIA staff? (Answered: 574 Skipped: 174)

- Very satisfied: 37%
- Satisfied: 58%
- Unsatisfied: 3%
- Very unsatisfied: 2%

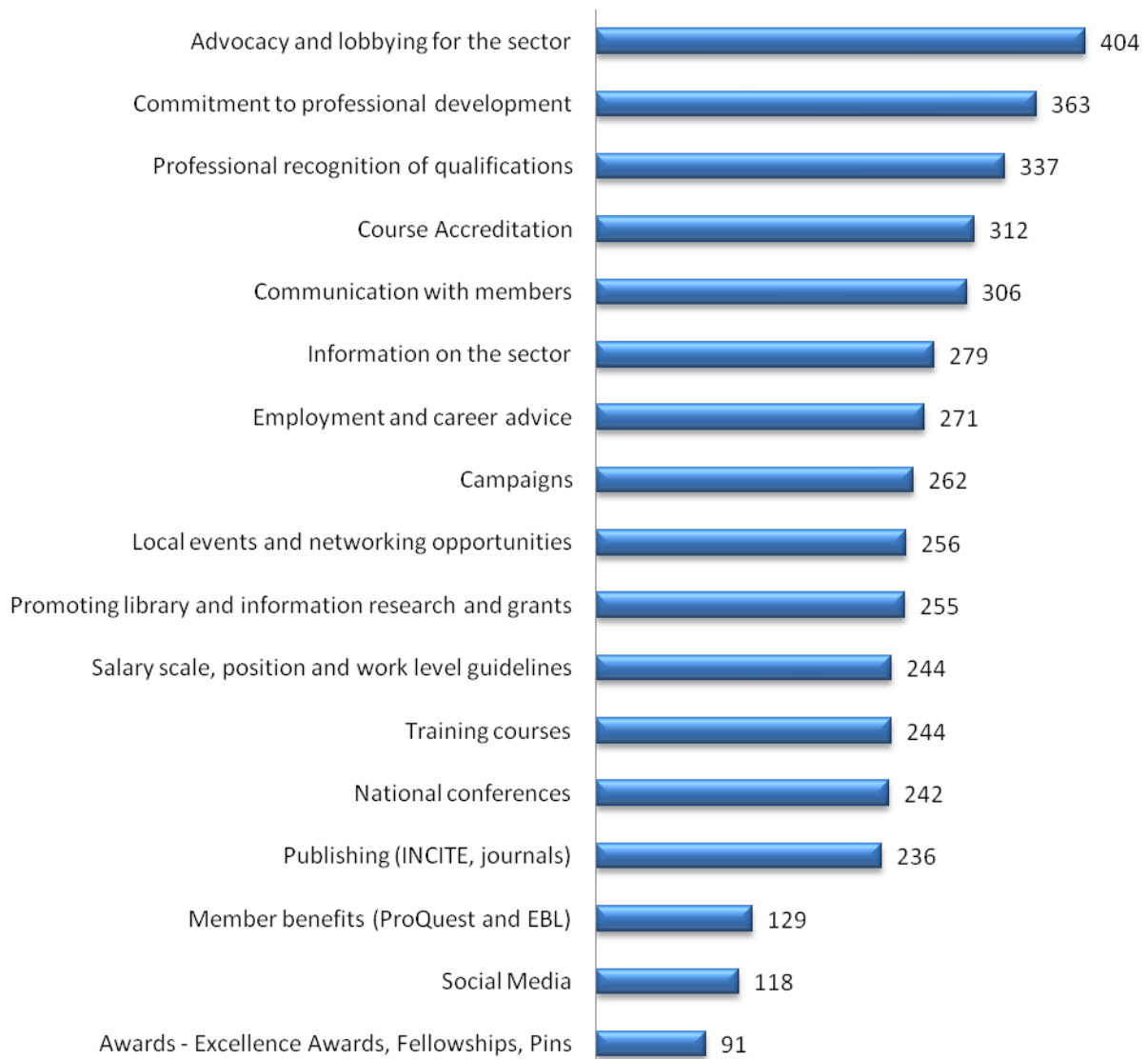## 3.6 ALIA performance in various areas of activity

Respondents scored ALIA's performance between 75% and 92% (high or very high) for overall performance in commitment to professional development, campaigns, providing information on the sector, national conferences, publishing, communication with Members, recognition of professional accreditation, course accreditation, advocacy and lobbying, training courses, use of social media, as well as in awards and fellowships (figure 24). The ratings for ALIA's promotion of libraries, local events and networking, employment and career advice, salary scale and work level guidelines, and membership benefits scored between 63% and 74%.

Figure 24: How would you rate the performance of ALIA in the following activities? (Answered: 588 Skipped: 160)

3.7 Reasons for membership

Advocacy and lobbying for the sector had the largest number of 'very high' responses to the question 'How would you rate the importance of the following ALIA activities?' While Members placed a great deal of emphasis on the professional aspects of the Association's activities, with professional recognition of qualifications and PD opportunities being the next two most important activities. This was similar to the top three answers in the 2015 and 2013 member surveys. Course accreditation, communication with Members, and information on the sector were also well represented in the results (figure 25).

Figure 25: 'very high' responses to 'How would you rate the importance of the following ALIA activities'. (Answered: 639 Skipped: 109)

| Activity	Responses
Advocacy and lobbying for the sector	404
Commitment to professional development	363
Professional recognition of qualifications	337
Course Accreditation	312
Communication with members	306
Information on the sector	279
Employment and career advice	271
Campaigns	262
Local events and networking opportunities	256
Promoting library and information research and grants	255
Salary scale, position and work level guidelines	244
Training courses	244
National conferences	242
Publishing (INCITE, journals)	236
Member benefits (ProQuest and EBL)	129
Social Media	118
Awards - Excellence Awards, Fellowships, Pins	91

Responding to the question 'Do you believe that your membership fees provide value for money?' 56% replied 'always' or 'almost always' (figure 26) compared to 65% in 2015. 82% said they would recommend membership to a colleague (figure 27), compared to 91% in 2015.

Figure 26: Do you believe that your membership fees provides value for money? (Answered: 649 Skipped: 99)

- Always — 20%
- Almost always — 36%
- Sometimes — 36%
- Rarely or never — 8%
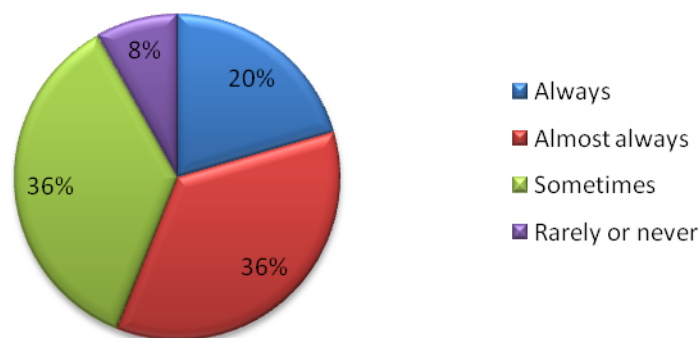
Figure 27: Would you recommend ALIA membership to a colleague? (Answered: 566 Skipped: 182)

- No 18%
- Yes 82%
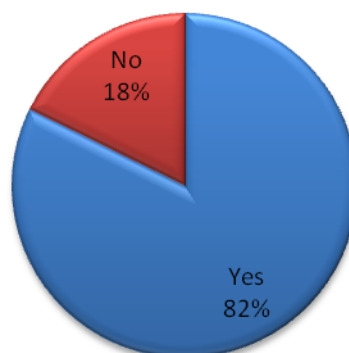
Comments showed that affordability was the most important determinant for a large number of respondents. Others noted that ALIA membership provided them with opportunities to grow and develop their professional networks. Many cited how their membership enabled them to remain up-to-date, informed and connected with industry issues, and motivated to keep up their professional development. Others noted the importance of coming together as a profession and having a 'strong unified sector'. A number of Members mentioned that they would like ALIA to remain relevant to the changing roles of library and information professionals, and to the evolving library and information sector.

3.8 Issues for the sector

When asked what issues they felt were important and/or interesting for them as an individual or LIS professional, respondents highlighted the large number of issues that are of note (figure 28). The responses to the question 'Please rate each of the following according to their importance and/or interest to you' ranged from 69% of respondents having 'great' or 'some' interest in 'Literary skills' to 49% of respondents having 'great' or 'some' interest in the 'Understanding of LGBTIQA issues.' This minimal variation across the 12 issues within the question reveals the high regard that the members of the sector pay to all the issues involved.

Figure 28: Please rate each of the following according to their importance and/or interest to you. (Answered: 740 Skipped: 8)
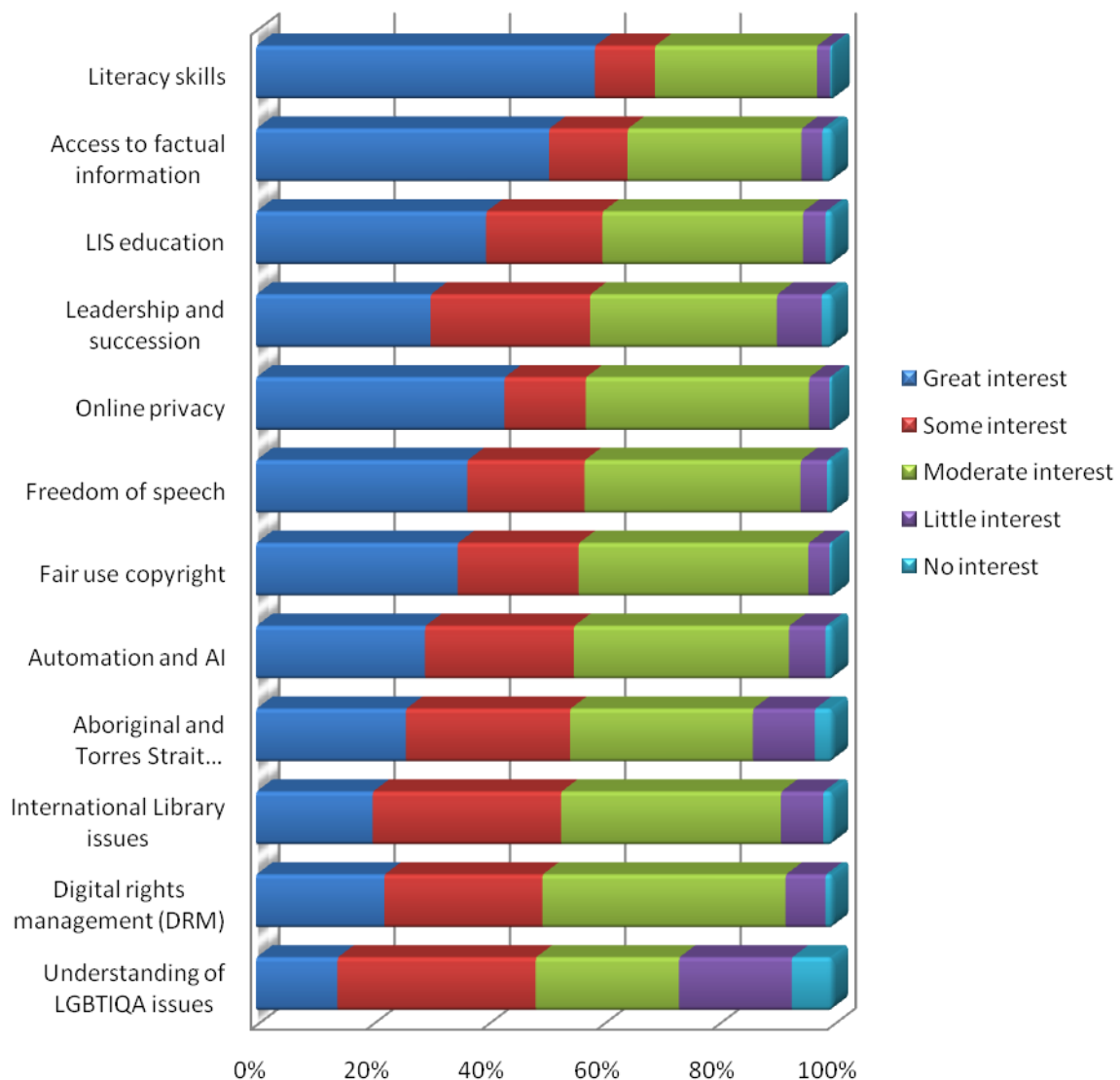
When asked what issues they felt were important and/or interesting to the respondent as part of an organisation the responses still resulted with the topic having a small variation. With the highest importance placed on 'Digital access to collections', with 65% holding 'great' or 'some' interest/importance to their organisation, while the lowest, 'UN Sustainable Development Goals', had 45% of respondents rating it as of 'great' or 'some' interest/importance (figure 29).

Figure 29: Please rate each of the following according to their importance and/or interest to your organisation.
(Answered: 714 Skipped: 34)
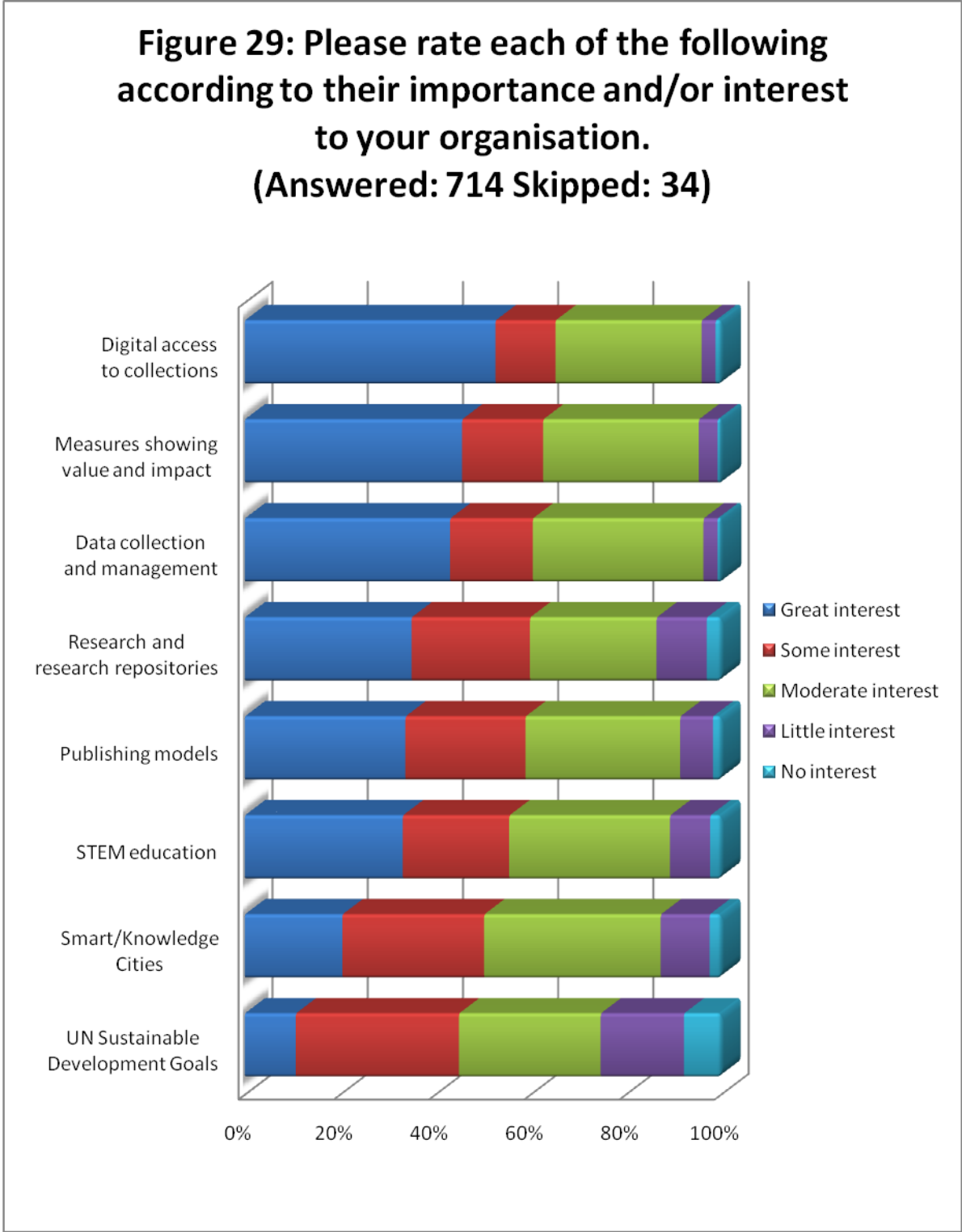
In response to the first open question about further issues, topics and feedback, comment from 136 respondents included:

- Cost of conferences.
- More awareness around scholarly journals and open access issues.
- Greater focus on special and school libraries.
- Concern about the loss of professional positions.
- Changes in professional roles and responsibilities.
- Downgrading of positions in terms of LIS skills and qualifications.
- More focus on LIS professionals working outside traditional library settings.

4. Next Steps

The ALIA Board will review the results of the ALIA Member survey and the findings will inform the further development of the ALIA strategic plan. A number of the issues raised will be addressed in the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan which will be published on the ALIA website in December 2017. https://www.alia.org.au/about-alia/governance-and-structure