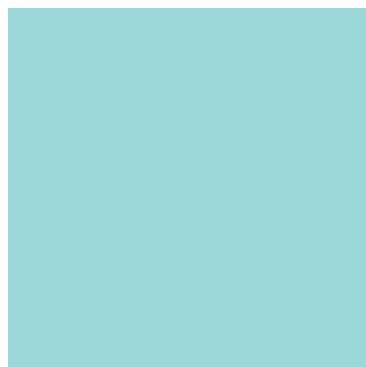
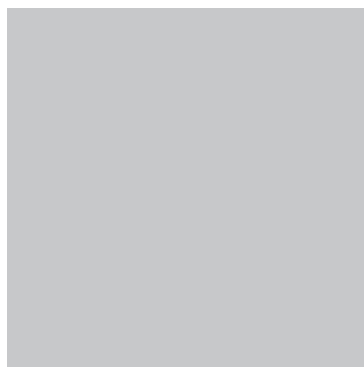
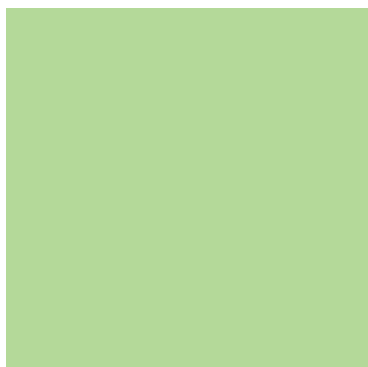
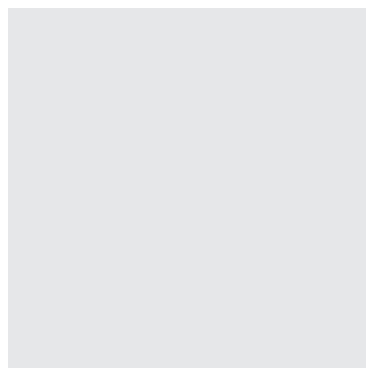
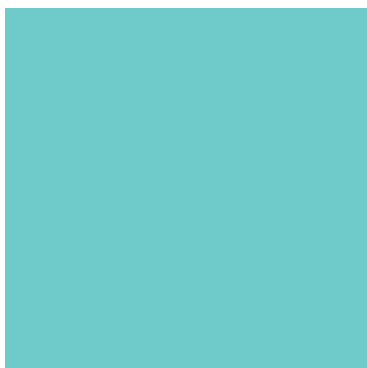
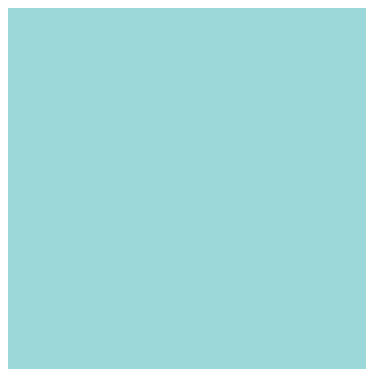
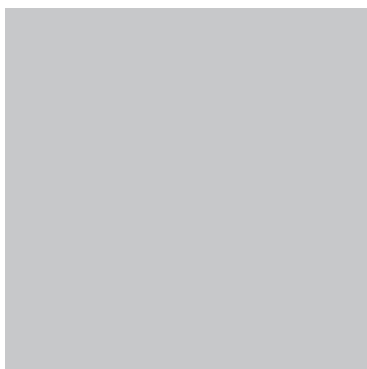
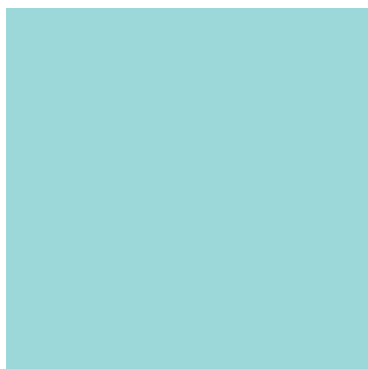


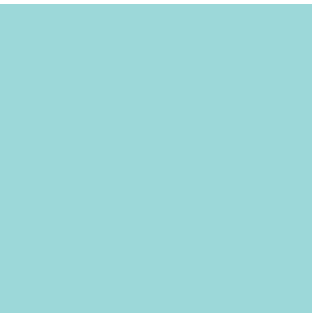
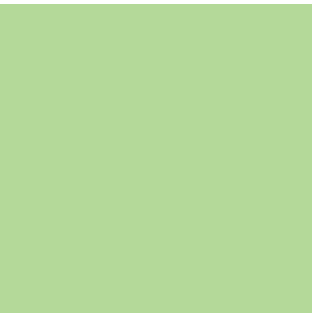
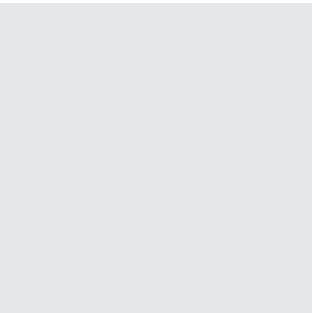
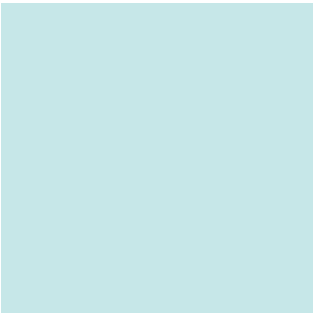
PUTTING A VALUE ON 'PRICELESS'

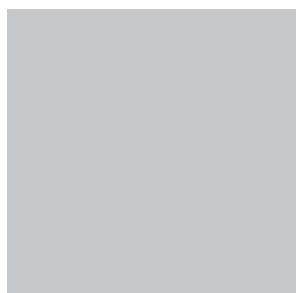
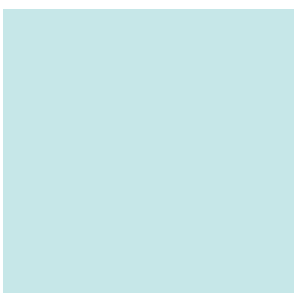
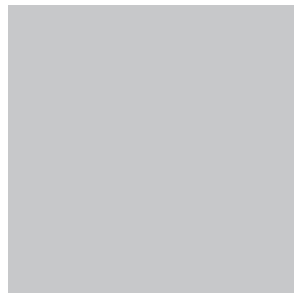
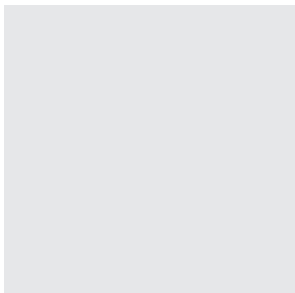
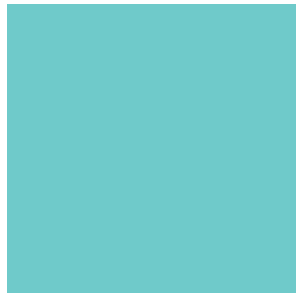
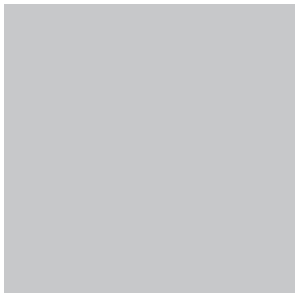
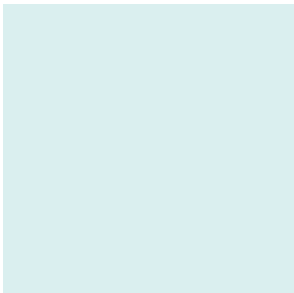
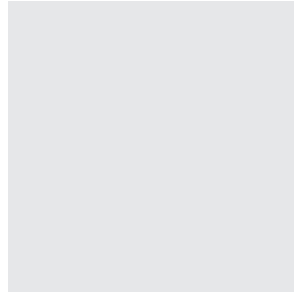
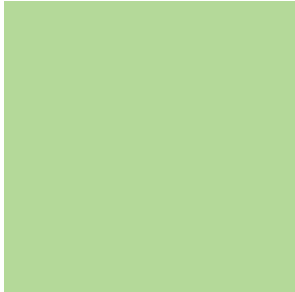
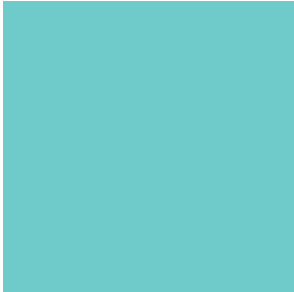
An independent assessment of the return on investment of special libraries in Australia



PUTTING A VALUE ON 'PRICELESS'

An independent assessment of the return on investment of special libraries in Australia





INTRODUCTION

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), Health Libraries Inc (HLInc), ALIA Health Libraries Australia (HLA), and the Australian Law Librarians' Association (ALLA) have collaborated to carry out this investigation into the return on investment of special library and information services in Australia.

The partners commissioned award-winning firm SGS Economics and Planning to survey special libraries across the nation and from this to assess the return on investment of these services to their organisations.

The definition of 'special' includes health, law, government, business, industry, media, research and other library and information services that are designed around a specific user group. These services are often hidden from public view, but are essential contributors to the knowledge-base of their organisations.

The survey took place between June and September 2013, and was supplemented by in-depth case studies.

The indicative result from this work is that special libraries have been found to return \$5.43 for every \$1 invested — and that's a conservative estimate of their real contribution. For example, it takes into account the time saved by doctors, lawyers, corporate executives and political advisors searching for answers, but it does not take into account the improved quality of the results supplied by trained information specialists. It looks at how much it would cost users to have to buy the information they gain for free from the library, but it does not assess the savings achieved by library staff negotiating advantageous prices with information suppliers.

The results provide a snapshot of the continued outstanding value of special libraries against a backdrop of greater usage but declining investment. Over the last three years, the majority of special libraries have remained static or experienced a decrease in their print/eresources budget, staff hours and space.

The purpose of this report is to assist library and information professionals to present the business case for their service. By doing so, we hope special libraries will be able to maintain their excellent service to their organisations: a service which impacts directly on Australia's performance in the global knowledge economy; on sound policy, research and business decision-making, and on the health, safety and wellbeing of our citizens.

You would be pleased to know that our counsel was very impressed with the research that was undertaken and was particularly impressed with the fact that you were able to find a case for them in less than 10 minutes that another firm was not able to find over the course of several months.

PARTNER



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
THE EVIDENCE	5
AN OUTSTANDING DOLLAR RETURN	5
THE IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYING INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS	6
ABOUT SPECIAL LIBRARIES IN AUSTRALIA	8
RETURN ON INVESTMENT	10

I want to express my gratitude to your staff and my opinion that they play an essential role in the hospital and specifically the work of the Centre for Palliative Care. Your staff have proved invaluable to me, by teaching me to use Medline and EndNote from scratch and of course performing literature searches for me and sourcing some more obscure articles. They are always prompt, saving me literally hours of time, and enabling me to do what I otherwise couldn't without their time, resources and expertise. As a clinician researcher who is primarily trained as a medical doctor, I need to collaborate with library staff to be effective. I think any reduction in health library services would result in poorer quality clinical research and ultimately clinical care.

RESEARCH FELLOW



THE EVIDENCE

This report is based on *Community returns generated by Australian industry libraries* produced by SGS Economics, and published by ALIA in partnership with HLInc, ALIA HLA and ALLA, in March 2014. The SGS study can be found on the ALIA¹ website.

AN OUTSTANDING DOLLAR RETURN

According to independent economists SGS Economics & Planning, Australian special libraries return an average of \$5.43 for every dollar invested. SGS says this is a conservative estimate and the true value of special libraries is likely to be even higher.

SGS assessed the benefits provided directly to special library users, including time saved and value of 'out-of-pocket' expenses such as journal subscriptions. However, the client focus of the study omitted the return on investment in terms of good outcomes for the end user — citizens, patients, taxpayers, clients, consumers, customers — and SGS said 'it is highly likely that the benefits of industry libraries outweigh their costs considerably'.

The *Community returns generated by Australian industry libraries, 2013* report into the return on investment of special libraries was based on a survey of industry libraries, supported by a number of in-depth case studies. There was a good participation rate for Australian special libraries, with 5% of the nation's estimated 2200 special library and information services submitting detailed returns.

Today we met with our client, to discuss, among other things, how the relationship was tracking and to update each other on developments within our respective organisations. Our client made a point of thanking the firm for some research that the library undertook recently for one of the client's directors. Apparently, the director was looking for some explanatory memoranda to a Corporations Act provision late one afternoon/evening and the librarian stayed back to assist with the query and provide the answer they were searching for (at no cost to the client). The director was very grateful for the assistance which was demonstrative of both excellence in service and rapport with clients.

PARTNER



¹ www.alia.org.au/roispecials

THE IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYING INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS

Special libraries are changing. Electronic resources are expanding rapidly, while physical collections are shrinking; physical space is less important as more services are delivered online. The one thing that remains constant is the importance of employing library and information professionals.

The expertise of the staff is essential to achieving the \$5.43 for every dollar return on investment of Australian special libraries.

RECOGNISING SPECIAL SKILLS

ALIA, HLIInc, ALIA HLA and ALLA recognise the special skills needed by special librarians and library technicians.

ALIA accredits fully qualified members who commit to ongoing learning in their chosen field, as part of the ALIA MyPD Scheme. Although it is a voluntary rather than a compulsory form of registration, this commitment to professional development enables library and information professionals to stand shoulder to shoulder with colleagues from other disciplines — law, health, business, government.

Indeed, the concept of 'embedded librarianship' is exemplified by many library and information professionals working in these sectors. Embedded librarians are those who are not confined by the walls of the library, but build a strong working relationship with clients by taking their skills to the places where they are needed. Embedded librarians develop a deep understanding of the clients' goals and become integral to the delivery of important outcomes.

These are just some of the specialist skills library and information professionals bring to their roles:

- Specific experience managing subject-related journals, books and ebooks.
- Knowing what to look for and where, for literature and database searches and advanced searches.
- Specialist knowledge supporting cataloguing, abstracting and thesaurus constructing.
- Embedded awareness of the dynamics of the sector.

While being involved in project work it is the gathering of research data and resources that often takes up the most time. As an organisation that has locations spread widely across Victoria, it has been invaluable for me to rely on our library staff to supply this information more efficiently.

COUNSELLOR



THE ROLE OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION PROFESSIONAL

For users, the service we provide will include:

- Fast and thorough searches, presenting the latest, most comprehensive and accurate information to executives and practitioners.
- Training to enable library users to carry out their own searches of electronic databases more efficiently and effectively.
- Filtered, evaluated and packaged search results.
- Relevant, tailored, current information from national and international sources.

In some cases, there will also be assistance for people who are studying for a tertiary qualification and training to achieve a higher level of competency.

Behind the scenes, we:

- Manage a dynamic collection of physical and online resources, so staff can access up-to-date, authoritative resources, and make well-informed decisions.
- Negotiate with publishers of books, journals and online resources, to achieve the best value for the department.
- Ensure the materials and the ways they are used are copyright compliant.

Your service has been such a support in the research, grant applications and publications that I have been involved with over the years, from literature searches to systematic reviews. We have acknowledged the library staff member in our last palliative care publication but I think it is worth considering the potential for staff to be involved as authors and a more recognized role.

RESEARCH CLINICIAN



ABOUT SPECIAL LIBRARIES IN AUSTRALIA

Best estimates suggest there are as many as 2,200 special libraries in Australia, including agriculture, art, audio-visual, business, cultural institutions (historic properties, museums and galleries), engineering, financial services (banks, consultancy firms), government, health, law, media, medical, military, music, parliamentary, religious, research, science and technology libraries.

To have a research team that is always happy to help, and does so efficiently with a high degree of expertise, is a privilege I am lucky to have had.

SENIOR ASSOCIATE



The role of library and information professionals in this sector is to connect people with the information they need and so to ensure the decisions they make in the workplace and the advances they make with their research are based on solid facts. Take up tends to be high, with the findings of the SGS survey suggesting an average of 40% of potential special library users taking advantage of the service. The number of potential users in the survey responses ranged from just 20 to 46,000, demonstrating the broad scope of the sector.

While many retain a physical library presence, others have become a virtual information service, focusing on online responses to requests for information. Most lie somewhere between the two, with print books, reports and journals, as well as online access to ebooks, full-text articles and other essential multi-media resources. Respondents to the SGS survey provided a picture of user-interaction being 56% electronic, 27% face-to-face and 17% by phone.

These services support self-directed research, as well as providing expert information retrieval. Larger hospital, government, law and research libraries, for example, will be well-staffed, but there are also many special libraries run by just one or two information professionals. The SGS survey indicated a fall in staff hours over the last three years, as well as a drop off in terms of annual expenditure and floorspace.

THE VALUE OF SPECIAL LIBRARIES

The indicative average benefit cost ratio for special libraries emerging from the SGS report was \$5.43. The value of special library and information services can be explained in a number of ways.

- Special libraries have specialised, unique and irreplaceable collections. They have current collections of specialist journals (electronic and print) and databases to inform operational, corporate, administrative and training practices. These complete, comprehensive and tailored collections do not exist elsewhere — not in state and territory libraries, not in university libraries, not in public libraries.

- Much of the current information used by organisations is still only available in hard copy format and the digitisation of unique collections is in its infancy. Historic records, dating back to the late-1800s, are likely to be paper-based.
- Library and information services provide a significant return on investment in terms of output and resource sharing. Special libraries are often part of formal and informal Australian and international networks of libraries. Arranging inter-library loans is a valuable service that libraries provide, ensuring the secure delivery and return of specialist items from other collections.
- Library and information professionals can source facts in a few minutes, which would take other executives hours to find. This not only saves time, but also costs significantly less per hour when pay levels are compared.
- Library and information professionals generate higher quality results. Most people Google for quick answers to everyday questions and few ever get past the first page. Ask people to find something online and you will find that: 56% search for under a minute, 69% only look at the first page of results and 98% never use advanced search features². Library and information professionals use specialist databases.
- Library and information professionals have the skills and knowledge to manage and organise data for public accessibility, where this is a consideration.
- Using the services of a library and information professional is part of an organisation's due diligence and guards against ill-informed decision-making, the results of which can be at best embarrassing, at worst fatal.

The firm really benefits from having a librarian with your experience and knowledge — I'd be rich if I got a dollar for every hour you save me (and the other lawyers working on the matter) in research. Our clients appreciate it too.

PARTNER



RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The *Community returns generated by Australian industry libraries* report found that budgets for participating special libraries ranged from just \$10,000 up to \$1.6 million, with a median of \$256,819. This suggests an overall expenditure on special libraries of approximately \$565 million per annum (a tiny fraction of the turnover from the industries and organisations served by these libraries), with a potential return of \$3 billion.

With an indicative return of \$5.43 for every dollar invested, it makes sense for organisations to look again at their library and information expenditure. The investment in these services is small in the scheme of things and a modest move upwards would unleash the potential for significant incremental benefits.



*Thank you — you've saved me hours
— really. How fantastic to have all the
resources we do.*

RECENT GRADUATE





Australian Library and
Information Association

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is the national association for library and information professionals. Our 5,500 members include libraries and individuals with library and information science qualifications. We also welcome people from other disciplines who work in the library and information sector.

www.alia.org.au



ALIA Health Libraries Australia is the national ALIA health library group. The vision for HLA is that all Australians benefit from health library and information professionals' expertise that is integral to evidence based health care. Activities are undertaken in five portfolios, all aimed at realising the vision: Professional Development, Education & Training; Advocacy, Research, Marketing & Awards; Partnerships & Collaborations; Publishing and Communication; Membership.

www.alia.org.au/groups/HLA



SGS Economics exists to shape policy and investment decisions to achieve sustainable places and economies. Its vision is to be a college of professionals providing Australia's best independent policy advice.

www.sgsep.com.au



The Australian Law Librarians Association Ltd (ALLA) is the national association for library and information professionals in the legal industry. We have over 500 members across Australia who deliver information services in the private, government, university and court sectors. Since 1969, ALLA has been encouraging and supporting law librarianship and the legal community.

www.alla.asn.au



Health Libraries Inc is a dynamic group of information professionals committed to health information provision, resource sharing, professional development, consortia implementation and relevance to the community that we serve. Based in Victoria, Health Libraries Inc promotes excellence in health libraries across Australia.

www.hlinc.org.au

