

ALIA FUTURE OF THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE PROFESSION TERTIARY EDUCATION LIBRARIES

Introduction

In 2013, we set out to investigate the big questions about our future.

- How will libraries remain relevant for users?
- What changes will institutions and individuals in the sector experience?
- Will 'library and information professional' continue to be a necessary and desirable occupation?

We received challenging, insightful, inspiring responses to our request for feedback at events held all around Australia. As a result, we were able to identify themes and develop actions to support positive outcomes. The findings from the project were produced as seven reports, available as pdf downloads from the ALIA website www.alia.org.au. These were published in May 2014, to coincide with ALIA's Annual General Meeting.

Three years on, we have reviewed the themes, actions and what we have learned since the original investigation. This is our May 2017 update.

Themes: Did we get it right?

There were 10 themes that emerged, specific to university libraries.

- 1. The switch to digital**
Further challenges and opportunities lie ahead with electronic resources.
- 2. Libraries, MOOCs and online learning**
Large student cohorts engaged in online learning will be a game-changer for university libraries.
- 3. Competing effectively in the global market**
The library experience will provide a point of difference for universities competing internationally.
- 4. The best online experience**
The online library will not only need to be functional, the best will also be intuitive and engaging.
- 5. Maintaining visibility in an online environment**
A seamless experience for users will be balanced with the need to identify the library as the service deliverer.
- 6. Subject matter experts**
There will be active recruitment of library and information professionals with first degrees in other disciplines.
- 7. Making space**
Libraries will reimagine spaces for resources, study and research.
- 8. Patron driven acquisition**
Users will play a greater role in collection development and resource acquisition.
- 9. Supporting research**
Library and information professionals will be part of university research teams.
- 10. Libraries as publishers**
University-produced data and materials will become even more accessible via the library.

Most of the themes have been realised. The switch to digital can be seen in the overwhelming proportion of the university collection budget now assigned to eresources.

The recruitment of professionals from other disciplines has resulted in ALIA extending our Allied Field membership category in 2017. Many universities have invested in new buildings and refurbishments to help create contemporary learning environments. Increasingly, university libraries are looking at options for 24/7 access.

Active participation in research and support for the storage and dissemination of research data and publications has become a primary feature of the university library role and function. Open access to data has been an important focus, supported by the Australian Government's own push for greater data availability and use. ALIA has responded to several related inquiries, including the Productivity Commission National Education Evidence Base and Data Availability and Use Issues Papers, the inquiry into the National Research Infrastructure Roadmap and the Australian Government's first Open Government National Action Plan¹.

An area where the theme has not played out in the way we originally thought is in the focus on MOOCs. In 2012-2013, MOOCs were being held up as the new big thing for education providers and their libraries. Three years later, MOOCs have settled into the online learning landscape and their impact on library services has been light. Another area is that of international education in the private sector. Instead of libraries being held up as indicators of the excellence of Australian tertiary education for international students, a number of private colleges are cutting corners, offering the bare bones of a collection and no qualified library and information staff.

There were five themes for VET (TAFE and registered training organisation) libraries.

1. Disruption

There will be systemwide uncertainty in the VET sector in the short to medium term.

2. A VET future

We see a strong future for VET in the long term, and institutions will gain competitive advantage from offering an enhanced library experience for online students.

3. Level playing field

We will be advocating for library standards to be built into the government VET accreditation process.

4. Professional support

VET students will continue to need a high proportion of qualified staff to support their learning needs.

5. Our vision

The future will see consistent, well-resourced, appropriately staffed VET libraries helping students achieve the best outcomes.

Disruption has been a hallmark of the VET sector over the last three years and there is no end to the uncertainty, as restructuring continues.

It has been a difficult time for TAFE libraries caught up in the organisational changes, and our vision for a strong future has not yet been realised.

¹ <https://www.alia.org.au/advocacy-and-campaigns/submissions> accessed 15 May 2017

Scorecard: How did we perform 2013-2017?

This was the action list for ALIA.

<p>1. ALIA will seek out further opportunities to work with CAUL and other stakeholders to keep members informed about trends and activities in the sector that will impact on their roles and workplace.</p>	<p>We have had regular online discussions and meetings with our colleagues in CAUL. In March 2014, in partnership with the State Library of Queensland and OCLC, ALIA and CAUL held a seminar on MOOCs in Brisbane. Since then, we have made joint approaches to TEQSA providing feedback on the Information Resources Guidance Note, and we have worked together through GLAM Peak and the Australian Libraries Copyright Committee.</p>
<p>2. We will support university library modernisation programs.</p>	<p>We have shared stories about modernisation programs in INCITE and <i>ALIA Weekly</i>, and we have included an academic library category in the inaugural ALIA Library Design Awards 2017.</p>
<p>3. ALIA PD and training will look at helping library and information professionals further develop the skills they need to support academic research.</p>	<p>The ALIA Learning team introduced an Academic and Research Libraries specialisation for the ALIA PD Scheme in 2016. ALIA Training course topics for 2017 include RDA, copyright, digitisation, library spaces, metadata and managing digital repositories.</p>
<p>4. We will continue to advocate for TAFE libraries through submissions to government and active participation in hearings and public discussions.</p>	<p>In 2014, we responded to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the role of the Technical and Further Education system and its operation². We have also been part of the discussion about access to Australian Standards³ and we responded to the 2016 inquiry into Driving Innovation, Fairness and Excellence in Australian Higher Education⁴.</p>
<p>5. We will work through our TAFE Library Advisory Committee to create national standards, guidelines and statements of best practice for VET libraries</p>	<p>In 2016, we carried out a survey of TAFE libraries to identify the issues our Members were facing. We also developed and published Guidelines for Australian VET Libraries and carried out a mapping exercise, which resulted in a comprehensive listing of TAFE libraries on the ALIA website⁵.</p>

This was the action list for university and VET libraries.

1. University library consortia purchasing through CAUL is long established, but further innovation and collaboration will be needed to ensure collections keep pace with changes in pedagogy and advances in technology.

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<https://www.alia.org.au/sites/default/files/documents/advocacy/ALIA%20AHR%20Inquiry%20into%20the%20role%20of%20Technical%20and%20Further%20Education%20system%20and%20its%20operation.pdf>
 accessed 15 May 2017

³ <https://www.alia.org.au/sites/default/files/ALIA%20submission%20to%20WA%20Government%20-%20Australian%20Standards%20January%202015.pdf> accessed 15 May 2017

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<https://www.alia.org.au/sites/default/files/ALIA%20response%20to%20the%20Australian%20Government%20Higher%20Education%20paper%20May%202016.pdf> accessed 15 May 2017

⁵ <https://www.alia.org.au/node/184/university-and-tafe-libraries> accessed 15 May 2017

2. University libraries will need to ensure that their online presence is not only functional and informative, but also engaging, helping to create an exceptional library experience online.
3. The library brand must be visible, even while the library experience is seamless for students, academics and researchers.
4. VET libraries will need to develop their web presence to help support their institution's competitive edge in the online learning market.

Conclusion: What have we learned?

As a generalisation, while university libraries continue to be valued and supported by their institutions, the same cannot be said, for the most part, for library services in the hands of private higher education providers.

In April 2017, TEQSA had 54 self-accrediting institutions (SAAs) and 113 accredited higher education providers. We understand there are another 100 or so institutions in the pipeline. The SAAs are low risk in terms of the quality of library and information service offered. Our concern remains for the level of library services delivered to students from non-SAA providers.

It is impossible for TAFE libraries to be shielded from the disruption experienced right across the VET sector. The situation varies between states and territories but our picture is of library and information professionals who continue to support students to the best of their ability, with reduced budgets and in an atmosphere of uncertainty.