



Australian Library and
Information Association

ALIA/Health Libraries Australia (HLA) Competencies for Health Librarians and Health Library Technicians

2026

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ALIA/Health Libraries Australia (HLA) Competencies for Health Librarians and Health Library Technicians 2026

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Introduction

The ALIA/Health Libraries Australia (HLA) health specialist competencies¹ apply to all Australian health librarians and health library technicians, who are library and information professionals who have obtained qualifications from an ALIA-accredited, post-secondary educational institution and are eligible for professional librarian membership or professional library technician membership of ALIA.

The health specialist competencies build on and extend the foundational [ALIA Framework of Skills, Knowledge and Ethics for the Library and Information Services Workforce](#) (July 2025). (See a graphic representation of the Framework's relationship to the HLA Competencies at the end of this document.)

Health librarians and health library technicians have unique responsibilities in the organisations in which they work, where the related concepts of evidence-based healthcare and clinical governance are fundamental features of the environment. Health librarians and health library technicians must understand and be competent in the information skills associated with these two concepts – that is, they must know how to find the evidence and manage evidence-based information and knowledge resources that are used in clinical decision-making and policy development.

Notes for applying the HLA Competencies:

- All health librarians and health library technicians, from entry level novice to experienced expert, need at least a basic awareness of each of the nine health specialist Competency Areas (referred to as CA1 through to CA9).
- Job (or position) descriptions define the scope of practice and the breadth and depth of competence required in a role. A role generally has a primary focus on one or more of the Competency Areas. The points enumerated in the Competency Areas describe the range of competencies (knowledge, skills and attributes / capabilities) that may be encountered in a role.

¹ The ALIA/Health Libraries Australia (HLA) Competencies for Health Librarians and Health Library Technicians 2026 replace the previous 2018 edition.

- Job (or position) descriptions of health librarians and health library technicians generally classify a position at a graded level²
 - The levels of professional health librarian positions and the breadth and depth of the associated competencies depend on the requirements of the job. They range from:
 - 'Entry level' – inexperienced (or limited experience) professional with basic knowledge and skills;
 - 'Developing professional' – professional with some experience;
 - 'High level of expertise, includes team leaders' – highly knowledgeable and skilled specialist who has a depth of experience in one or more functional areas;
 - 'Experienced professional, manager, head of department, chief librarian' – professional with deep knowledge and expertise, and broad experience in health libraries.
 - All levels of health library technician positions require at least a basic awareness of the health specialist Competency Areas. Depending on the focus of the role and the responsibilities outlined in the position description, the application of the knowledge and skills in one or more Competency Areas is required. The levels generally range from:
 - 'Entry level' – inexperienced (or limited experience) library technician with basic knowledge and skills;
 - 'Developing library technician' – library technician with some experience;
 - 'High level of expertise, includes team leaders' – knowledgeable and skilled specialist library technician who has a depth of experience in one or more functional areas in health libraries.

² ALIA's [Work Level Guidelines](#) may be used in conjunction with HLA's Competencies.

Competency Area 1:

Health reference and information services

SCOPE	DESCRIPTION
 Delivering best practice health reference and information services. Roles include but are not limited to: liaison/embedded/ clinical librarian, informationist, knowledge manager.	Health librarians and health library technicians are experts in the delivery of reference and information services that find, organise and connect users (e.g. clinicians, researchers, executive, students etc) with the health and related information that they need, at the right time and place, and in the right format. They have knowledge, skills and capabilities in the following: • Reference and research consultation services; • Designing, executing and recording expert literature search strategies and protocols to ensure that the best available evidence is found, and that the research results are replicable; • Information needs analysis for individuals and on an organisational scale; • Managing reference inquiries and using reference management systems; • Advising and instructing how to access and navigate information resources (e.g. databases, generative AI tools, grey literature, etc) • Advising on citation management and article screening tools; • Advising on appropriate evidence data sources, evidence synthesis and critical appraisal methodologies; • Supporting and participating in conducting well-designed knowledge and evidence syntheses; • Sourcing and delivering information resources in customised formats;

	• Design and curation of integrated subject guides to the literature and information resources; • Design and delivery of curated alerting services; • Participating in scoping, systematic and other types of literature reviews; • Advising on the dissemination and publication of research results and other knowledge translation services; • Participating in policy reviews and compliance auditing.
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Competency Area 2:

Health data, information and knowledge management

SCOPE	DESCRIPTION
 The management of health knowledge and information resources in a variety of formats.	Health librarians and health library technicians are responsible for managing health data, information, and knowledge resources in a variety of formats, ensuring access to authoritative, evidence-based information for diverse clients, communities, and organisational needs. They have knowledge, skills and capabilities in the following: • Assessing client needs and collection requirements considering trends in health practice, specialty resources, preferred formats, and access methods; • Collection analysis, development, and management, including the creation of collection development policies, interpreting usage statistics, and tracking publishing trends to inform resource decisions; • Procurement services and strategies, including vendor negotiation, budgeting, and licensing to align with organisational requirements; • The systems used to organise and facilitate access to information and resources, including library management systems, discovery layers or tools, authentication methods, repositories, and databases, and the integration and optimisation of these systems; • Organising and classifying information using cataloguing, metadata standards, indexing tools, controlled vocabularies, and thesauri in a variety of formats for discoverability and effective retrieval;

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifying and addressing biases in systems and technologies that impact priority populations, including but not limited to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, LGBTQI+ communities, women, people with a disability, culturally and linguistically diverse groups, and other underrepresented groups;• Ensuring copyright and licensing compliance, in collection management, interlibrary loan, and referencing and attribution practices;• Supporting the research data life cycle, including planning, data collection and creation, documentation, analysis, deposit, sharing and reuse, using appropriate systems and platforms;• Applying digitisation and preservation strategies for print-based and digital health collections, including long term storage, security, retention, and disposal;• Adapting knowledge in data services and emerging technologies, including data security, data curation, big data, data analysis and visualisation, data analytics, business intelligence tools, computable knowledge, large language models and artificial intelligence. |
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Competency Area 3:

Health information literacy and educating for evidence-based inquiry

SCOPE	DESCRIPTION
 Health information literacy, curricular design and instruction, and teaching the information skills associated with evidence-based inquiry and application in practice, policy and research.	Health professionals (clinicians, educators, researchers and students) apply evidence from trusted sources in their daily practice. Health librarians and health library technicians understand health information literacy (including digital health literacy) and use adult education methods to teach the information skills associated with evidence-based practice to health professionals and consumers. They have knowledge, skills and capabilities in the following: • Developing and delivering targeted health information literacy programs for health professionals (clinicians, educators, researchers and students) and healthcare consumers; • Identifying and integrating existing educational frameworks, benchmarks, and health literacy standards (including clinician training and clinical registration requirements) into professional practice; • Conducting training needs assessments of both health professionals and healthcare consumers; • Applying instructional methodologies to support multiple learning styles, including innovative technologies and technology-enhanced learning, to support the development of health information literacy in clinical, education, research and public health settings; • Teaching the practical application of evidence-based practice models (e.g. PICO, 5As of EBP) using contextually relevant clinical scenarios, to improve patient care and evidence informed practice;

- Teaching the information management skills associated with the research information lifecycle;
- Evaluating the impact of health information literacy initiatives by identifying changes in health literacy, confidence, behaviours, or practice, and using findings to improve future programs;
- Modelling evidence-based information practice to support health literacy initiatives, i.e. identifying the need for information, searching the literature, critically appraising evidence and synthesising and applying knowledge to improve practice;
- Engaging in and developing health literacy programs that are culturally competent and inclusive to address the needs of diverse consumer populations;
- Using organisational learning management systems and integrating library programs and resources where appropriate;
- Collaborating with health professionals, educators and other stakeholders to integrate health information literacy principles into clinical practice, education, research and patient care;
- Collaborating with stakeholders to embed research information skills into clinical education, orientation, and continuing professional development for health professionals and students;
- Championing consumer health literacy and informed consent, including making available plain English, evidence-based, health information materials in accessible formats, particularly for their communities, and culturally and linguistically diverse groups.

Competency Area 4:

Digital health and technologies

SCOPE	DESCRIPTION
The digital and ehealth context, and the technology and systems used to manage data, information and knowledge resources that are integral to the delivery of digital library and information services and digital models of care.	Health librarians and health library technicians are responsible for enabling access to authoritative, evidence-based information, and share responsibility with the other health information professions for upholding the principles of information governance in their organisations. Their scopes of practice include the ability to recognise, evaluate, and apply information and communications technologies to manage digital libraries, and integrate library resources with computable knowledge 'pushed' models of service delivery. They have knowledge, skills and capabilities in the following: • The systems and technologies used to provide and manage access to data, information and knowledge resources for library clients; • Library management systems and associated tools, and integrating them into the broader organisational environment; • Identifying and addressing biases in digital systems and technologies that impact priority populations, including but not limited to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, LGBTQI+ communities, women, people with a disability, and culturally and linguistically diverse groups, and other underrepresented groups; • The systems, technologies, and digital infrastructure used to support patient care, including electronic medical records, patient portals, artificial intelligence;

	• The systems and technologies used to facilitate business or organisational decision-making, including data analytics, big data, and business intelligence systems; • The principles, laws, and organisational policies related to cybersecurity and information privacy, and effective application of them to ensure compliance and secure management of information; • New developments in emerging digital health technologies, systems, digital infrastructures including the ethical considerations and health literacy implications; • The systems, technologies and digital infrastructure essential for health research, including data repositories, artificial intelligence and related tools; • Partnerships and digital alliances with stakeholders across their organisations to advocate for the safe and judicious use of technologies in the digital and ehealth context.
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Competency Area 5:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health context

SCOPE	DESCRIPTION
 Delivering culturally respectful and inclusive health information services that reflect the values, priorities, and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	This Competency Area outlines the knowledge, skills, and values required of health library and information professionals to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures, values, and priorities are meaningfully considered in the planning and delivery of health information services. It includes a commitment to cultural understanding, ethical information practices, the promotion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and authorship, and collaboration with communities and organisations to support equity and relevance in health information access and delivery. Health librarians and health library technicians have knowledge, skills and capabilities in the following: • First and foremost, recognition and significance of Country and how it is connected to First Nations' peoples' views of holistic health that encompasses social, spiritual and emotional wellbeing; • Understanding of the specific health challenges faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as a result of historical and current injustices, including racism and colonialism; • Active awareness of policies, research, and initiatives aimed at improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health outcomes, such as Closing the Gap, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs), and local-level programs;

	• Development of respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, communities, health units, or organisations when conducting research or collaborating, in line with the <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services</i>, <i>AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research</i> and the <i>NHMRC Ethical Guidelines for Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples</i>; • Identification, curation, and promotion of culturally relevant and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific health resources, ensuring that materials are respectful and accurate; • Promotion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authorship and knowledge in health-related literature, research, digital resources, and technologies; • Support of health literacy initiatives tailored to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including activities aimed at healthcare workers or community members, ensuring resources are culturally appropriate and easily accessible; • Knowledge of ethical issues, relevant principles, policies, and laws related to the collection, use, and dissemination of health information, research and data specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, such as Indigenous data sovereignty, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property principles, and the <i>CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance</i>; • Advocacy of inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait health priorities in library research, policy, and service planning.
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Competency Area 6:

The health environment, communities and stakeholders

SCOPE	DESCRIPTION
 The health sciences and healthcare environment; the user and consumer communities served by the library; the stakeholders in these environments and communities. All roles are active in this Competency Area, engaging in various activities at different stages of their careers and professional lives.	Health librarians and health library technicians maintain current knowledge of health and social care systems, particularly within Australia, ensuring their professional information management expertise supports their communities and stakeholders. Within their organisations, health librarians and health library technicians have a unique responsibility for providing access to trustworthy, authoritative information for evidence-based decision-making and policy development, while upholding the principles of sound information governance is a responsibility that is shared with other health information professionals. They have knowledge, skills and capabilities in the following: • The structures, interconnections and priorities of the health, social care, research and education sectors; • Health policy, systems research, evidence-based healthcare and practice; • Trends and advancements in emerging health priorities, disease prevention, wellness initiatives and medical/healthcare research. • Health professionals' education pathways, accreditation and professional development needs; • Legal, ethical and regulatory frameworks, policies and standards governing healthcare, health professions and health information management; • The parent organisation's structure, strategy and priorities;

	• Organisational and consumer health literacy; • Funding bodies, sources, and opportunities that can impact health information services; • Digital health innovations, and disruptive and emerging technologies; • Stakeholder engagement and consumer representation in the health communities that the library and its parent organisation serve; • Partnerships with health professionals, educators and policymakers; • Commitment to equitable access and working with diverse client groups and third parties; • The unique health needs of diverse and underrepresented communities, including but not limited to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, LGBTQI+ communities, women, people with a disability, and culturally and linguistically diverse groups.
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Competency Area 7:

Health research

SCOPE	DESCRIPTION
Health research and the application of health research methodologies including the design, implementation, evaluation and management of research projects.	Health librarians and health library technicians understand the research information lifecycle and how to manage research information, data and metadata about research activities and outcomes. They support and are equipped to undertake scientific research. They have knowledge, skills and capabilities in the following: • Quantitative and qualitative research methods; • Systematic review methodologies (e.g., PRISMA guidelines), meta-analyses, and other evidence synthesis practices; • Critically appraising the quality, validity, and applicability of research evidence to inform clinical decision-making and policy development; • Methods of statistical analysis; • Critically examining and filtering research literature from many related disciplines; • Teaching research information and data literacy skills, methodology, tools, and evidence-based practices (e.g., via journal clubs, workshops, one-to-one consultations); • The responsible use of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies and how they are applied in research, and the librarian's / library technician's role in facilitating or guiding their use; • Data science, research data management systems, 'big' data, data analysis and predictive analytics; • Promoting scholarly communication including an understanding of open science, research outputs and scholarly publishing;

	• Understanding how primary research and evidence synthesis inform the development of policies, procedures, protocols and clinical guidelines and support their translation into practice; • Conducting research, program evaluations, quality improvement and innovation projects; • The application of ethics and governance frameworks in health research; • The research funding landscape, including support for research impact, managing data and open publishing requirements.
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Competency Area 8:

Health leadership and management

SCOPE	DESCRIPTION
Health leadership and management theory and practice. Health library managers have a high level of health specialist knowledge of all competency areas.	Health librarians and health library technicians know and apply leadership and management theory to the healthcare context, selecting actions that are appropriate to the role and the situation at a personal level, at a library service level, and at a professional level. They have the knowledge, skills and capabilities to: • Drive the provision of expert library services to support health professionals, ensuring alignment with organisational strategic plans and priorities, and demonstrating the library's impact on organisational goals and client services, including patient care; • Enable evidence-informed client services (including patient care), and advocate for an evidence-based approach to decision making, policy and protocol development, and changes to practice; • Establish the library in an organisation's information governance structure as the department which has as its primary responsibility the provision of authoritative, evidence-based health information; • Ensure the library is positioned as the provider of trusted advice and expert consultation on the information skills related to finding and managing evidence-based health information for health professionals and consumers; • Champion health literacy, digital health literacy and equitable access to quality health information;

	• Design and apply measurable outcomes to demonstrate the value of library services; • Ensure compliance with institutional procurement and contract management policies; • Manage resources effectively and efficiently, ensuring the service provides value for money to the health organisation, and that services meet organisational needs; • Procure and account for external funding sources and alternative income streams; • Collaborate with non-librarian health leaders/ executives, represent the library in multi-disciplinary work groups, contribute to organisational strategy and advocate for library integration into healthcare decision making; • Inspire, motivate and empower library teams to provide the highest quality services contextualised to the health environment, leveraging digital transformation and emerging technologies; • Foster an innovative mindset and ideation culture among the library team; • Engage in horizon and environmental scanning to identify emerging trends and technologies that may have an impact on library services, ensuring the library is proactive, future-ready, operating according to best practice in health information services, and aligned with transformative models of digital health service delivery and evolving healthcare needs; • Practise continuous improvement that responds to organisational needs and the changing health environment, embedding adaptability in service delivery;
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	• Demonstrate resilience, resourcefulness, and an ability to work in a challenging and rapidly changing healthcare environment; • Engage in critical conversations with a high level of emotional intelligence; • Drive continuing professional development of the library team, embedding a culture of learning, mentorship, and succession planning; • Cooperate within the profession in areas of mutual interest; • Model professionalism and uphold professional values and ethics in all aspects of the role.
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Competency Area 9:

Health professionalism

SCOPE	DESCRIPTION
Health library and information professionalism. All roles are active in this Competency Area, engaging in various activities at different stages of their careers and professional lives.	Health librarians and health library technicians maintain currency of professional knowledge and practice, and uphold professional standards and values through: • Membership and active participation in their professional associations; • Undertaking formal and informal continuing professional development activities; • Attaining and maintaining professional certification through the ALIA Health Specialist CPD Scheme; • Conducting research and publishing in the professional literature; • Sharing expertise with colleagues in the health information profession through conference presentations and peer learning; • Teaching, coaching and mentoring others; • Advocating for the health information professions; • Collaborating with other professionals to improve health care, health literacy and access to healthcare information; • Contributing to the broader goals of the health system, to their communities, and to society in general through sharing specialist knowledge and expertise; • Providing inclusive, respectful, and accessible services and resources that acknowledge and support the diverse information needs of health service staff and consumers, including but not limited to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, LGBTQI+ communities, women, people with a disability, culturally and linguistically diverse groups, and other underrepresented groups.

Graphic representation of the relationship of the ALIA/Health Libraries Australia (HLA) Competencies for Health Librarians and Health Library Technicians 2026 to the ALIA Framework of Skills, Knowledge and Ethics for the Library and Information Services Workforce (July 2025).

