



Australian Library and
Information Association

FUTURE OF THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE PROFESSION: **COLLECTING INSTITUTIONS**

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Australian Library and Information Association

Future of the Library and Information Science Profession: Collecting Institutions

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ALIA FUTURES

*Initiatives for the future of the library
& information sciences profession.*



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ABOUT COLLECTING INSTITUTIONS

The nation's nine collecting institutions are the National Library of Australia, the State Libraries of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia, the ACT Heritage Library and the Northern Territory Library. The primary role of these libraries is to collect, preserve and provide access to the documentary history of Australia, including books, manuscripts, documents, images, maps and other materials, in print, digital and other formats. The collective body representing these institutions is the National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA).

The state and territory libraries play a leadership role in supporting public libraries within their jurisdiction, and there is a close bond with archives, museums, galleries, university and special libraries, which also hold unique collections.

Current services for users include:

- Access to historic and contemporary collections of books, newspapers, pictures, maps, papers and digital resources.
- Access to genealogy records for family history researchers.
- Purpose designed spaces for group interaction and quiet study.
- Assistance from specialist librarians.
- Exhibitions, talks, events and activities.

The role of library and information professionals:

- Collect, preserve and make accessible our documentary heritage.
- Curate collections, providing context and identifying items of special significance.
- Implement legal deposit requirements to ensure that copies of all published items are available for posterity.
- Ensure all materials and the ways they are used are copyright compliant.

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

- In-depth knowledge of their subjects and their collections.
- High level research, information and digital literacy and learning support.
- Original cataloguing and metadata application.
- Digital preservation.

Statistics

The latest available figures from NSLA show that during the 2011–2012 financial year:

- 12 million people visited our library buildings.
- 217 million pages were viewed on our websites.
- 1,703 terrabytes of digital collections were stored.
- \$37 million was the total spend on collections.
- \$5.2 billion was the asset value of our collections.
- \$1.02 billion was the asset value of our buildings/sites.

These institutions together employ approximately 1,700 staff, including librarians, library technicians, archivists, curators and professionals from other disciplines.





THEMES

THEME 01

NATIONAL TREASURES DIRECT TO YOUR DEVICE

The National, State and Territory Libraries are home to manuscripts, maps, diaries, photographs and other materials of Australian significance. Local history collections can be found in public libraries, while government departments, companies, schools, universities and other organisations have their own unique collections. The vast majority of these materials are print-based, and significant investments will be required for digitisation, to make these rich resources widely available through the internet.

The prime example is Trove, a world-leading initiative from the National Library of Australia, which features more than 391 million Australian and online resources, including books, images, historic newspapers, maps, music, archives and more.

Libraries are critical agents in broadening the range, increasing the depth, and improving the quality of the information on the web. The question is who will pay for the digitisation process that will enable this to happen — government or philanthropic; arts, culture or education?

In the past, people have deposited correspondence from ‘men of letters’, now and in the future our collecting institutions will need the capacity and capability to collect, store and make discoverable digital records. Our collecting institutions will play a leadership role in heritage collections at local, state/territory and national level.

THEME 02

LINKED DATA ENRICHES THE EXPERIENCE

Libraries are part of the GLARM sector — galleries, libraries, archives, records and museums. Historically, these institutions have operated at arms length, but digital technology will bring new opportunities to interweave collections, providing visitors, students and researchers with a richer, deeper experience. For example, several institutions will be able to bring together items in the online environment — artifacts, documents and illustrations — that together give a much more comprehensive picture of a subject's life and times.

For the user, this will be a seamless experience, made possible by linked data generated by the institutions. This will mean even greater levels of collaboration between our major cultural institutions, and it will need a significant investment in staff time and technology to enable this to happen.





THEME 03

THE NEED FOR NEW LEGISLATION

Alongside colleagues working in archives and information management, library and information professionals in these institutions are concerned with collecting, preserving and making available our documentary heritage, capturing human memories, contributing to Australia's nation-building.

Legal deposit, enshrined in the *Copyright Act 1968*, has made it possible at a national level to capture printed outputs, requiring publishers by law to provide the collecting institution with a copy of every item produced. This has not carried over to digital formats in all states and territories, and there is also an urgent need for new legislation to be passed by the federal government.

Reform will be needed to address anomalies in the current copyright legislation, which hinder preservation in an environment where multiple copies are needed to move digital items from server to server, and to keep pace with changes in formats.

THEME 04

MANAGING VOLUME

The State Library of NSW, with one of the nation's largest collections, needs approximately two kilometres of additional storage every year for new physical items. Pandora, the Australian web archive managed by the National Library, contains more than ten terrabytes of information and is growing at a rate of some three terrabytes per annum.

Managing volume in both the physical and digital spaces will be a significant challenge for collecting institutions in the future. A partial solution lies in even greater collaboration to reduce duplication, but there will also need to be investment in increased storage capacity to keep pace with the exponential growth in content creation.

THEME 05

CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

In the past, collecting institutions have provided access to materials created by others. In the future, it is likely these libraries will engage in partnerships with individuals and groups to co-create content that will then also become part of the collection. This could take the form of community publishing, or using items from the collection to develop new works.

This cultural participation will require a different mindset for library users, librarians and curators and it opens up exciting opportunities to bring collections to life and give them new meaning for future generations.

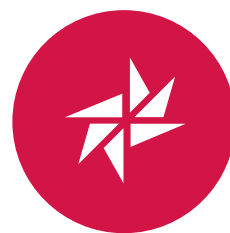


ACTIONS ARISING

Collecting institutions are the bedrock of the library and information sector and their continued role in society is guaranteed. However, there are significant challenges facing these libraries in dealing with the massive volume of content that is generated every year in print and digital formats.

ALIA

- ALIA will work with LIS educators to ensure library and information professionals graduate with the skills required to support the needs of collecting institutions, particularly in the area of digital preservation.
- We will also provide professional development and training opportunities for staff, to secure ongoing learning.



Advocacy

- Copyright reform is essential to support legal deposit in the digital environment and to reduce an unnecessary administrative burden on collecting institutions.



Professionals and their organisations

- The collecting institutions will continue to bid for funding to digitise materials and increase access to items that are in the public domain.
- The GLARM sector will converge in the online space, with even greater levels of cooperation between cultural institutions at local, state, territory and national levels.



