

21st Century“, um eine neue Generation an Bibliothekaren auszubilden und einzustellen⁸⁰.

Berücksichtigt man aber, dass Neueinstellungen aufgrund von Budgetkürzungen und aufgrund der Bibliotheksgröße nicht immer realisierbar sind, so ist ein kostengünstigeres „Mitarbeiter-Sharing“ eine Option. Zwei oder drei Bibliotheken könnten sich über ein Konsortium oder eine Kooperation beispielsweise einen Webmaster oder einen Seniorberater teilen⁸¹.

Auf jeden Fall sollte das Alter sowohl bei internen als auch bei externen Besetzungen frei gewordener Stellen nicht zur Entscheidung beitragen. In den USA und Großbritannien sind Bewerbungsfotos beispielsweise nicht mehr zugelassen. Es sollte so in jedem Fall der Grundsatz gelten, allen Bibliotheksmitarbeitern dieselben Chancen einzuräumen und niemanden zu benachteiligen.

Fazit

Es gibt kein allgemein gültiges Rezept für die altersgerechte Gestaltung von Arbeit. Allerdings gibt es bereits viele Instrumente, die von Unternehmen oder anderen Institutionen entwickelt, erprobt und eingesetzt wurden. Instrumente müssen von Bibliotheken also nicht unbedingt neu erfunden, aber in den meisten Fällen auf die Belange von Bibliotheken angepasst werden. Der demographische Wandel bewirkt, dass sich Arbeitgeber an den Potentialen, Bedürfnissen und Wünschen der Mitarbeiter orientieren und mit der Ressource „Personal“ sorgfältiger umgehen werden müssen. Er bietet somit die Chance, Bibliotheksziele mit den Zielen der Mitarbeiter zu vereinen.

Der Service für den „internen Kunden“ muss individueller werden, genauso wie der Einsatz der Instrumente. Denn diese sind abhängig von den Arbeitsbedingungen, den Problemlagen und den Voraussetzungen der arbeitenden Institution. Voraussetzung dazu ist eine grundlegende Sensibilisierung aller Akteure zum Thema „Altern“. Es muss aufgeklärt werden, so dass sich das negative Stereotyp eines älteren Mitarbeiters nicht weiter festsetzt bzw. beseitigt wird. Diese Thematik sollte Gegenstand vorausschauender Arbeitsgestaltung und Personaleinsatzes sein. Dazu sind langfristige Planungen und Personalanalysen die nötige Grundlage. Ein Umdenken sowie die Umsetzung von Maßnahmen wird viel Zeit in Anspruch nehmen, so dass ein steigendes Durchschnittsalter in den Belegschaften von Bibliotheken bereits heute mehr Aufmerksamkeit erhalten muss.

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⁸⁰ Vgl. Lenzi, Rebecca T.: The graying of the library profession. A survey of our professional association and their responses. In: Searcher. The Magazine for Database Professionals 10 (2002) 7 <<http://www.infoday.com/searcher/jul02/lenzi.htm>> [Zugriff: 23.07.2007] S. 88-97.

⁸¹ Vgl. 8Rs Research Team (Anm. 22) S. 175.

Gillian Hallam

Library workforce planning in Australia: Can the present inform the future?



In Australia, the library and information services (LIS) sector has become increasingly aware that people are the key drivers in the profession and that a strong professional future will depend on the effective management of workforce issues. The paper discusses some of the findings from an Australian research initiative, the neXus census, which examines the current LIS workforce.

Personalplanung in Bibliotheken in Australien: Kann man für die Zukunft aus der Gegenwart lernen?

Im australischen Bibliotheks- und Informationswesen (LIS) setzt sich zunehmend die Einsicht durch, dass die wesentlichen Triebkräfte des Fortschritts in diesem Sektor Menschen sind. Die Zukunft des Berufszweiges hängt also vom effektiven Management in Personalangelegenheiten ab. Der Artikel analysiert die Ergebnisse des australischen Forschungsprojektes neXus Census, in dessen Rahmen Befragungen von Bibliotheksmitarbeitern und LIS-Institutionen zu ihrer gegenwärtigen Situation durchgeführt worden.

Planification du personnel dans les bibliothèques en Australie: est-ce que le present peut-il informer l'avenir?

En Australie, le secteur des services de bibliothèques et d'information (LIS) s'est de plus en plus aperçu que le personnel est l'instigateur clé dans la profession et qu'un avenir professionnel fort dépend d'un management effectif du personnel. L'article discute quelques découvertes réalisées dans le cadre d'une initiative de recherche en Australie, le recensement neXus, qui analyse l'actuel personnel LIS.

Demographic change in Australia

Along with many other developed societies, Australians are living longer and having fewer babies. The 2006 census reports that the median age of Australians climbed from 35 in 2001 to 37 in 2006, with the proportion of people aged over 55 years increasing from 22.0 % to 24.3 %. The proportion of people aged under 15 years had decreased by 1 %¹. Population projections highlight the impact of sustained low levels of fertility combined with increasing life expectancy at birth. The median age is projected to increase significantly from the current 37 years to between 44.6 years and 48.2 years by 2051. Consequently the age composition of Australia's population will also change considerably: by 2051 there will be a much greater proportion of people aged 65 years and over, and a lower proportion of people aged under 15 years².

The changes anticipated in Australia's population will inevitably have considerable social and economic impact, including pressure on the labour force. Recent labour market data indicates that the national unemployment rate has dropped below 5 % for the first time in thirty years³, and employers across all areas of business and industry are reporting difficulties in hiring the 'right' people. The anticipated competition for skilled workers, as predicted by Professions Australia is already becoming a reality: „Demographic change will develop into the challenge of replacing skilled older workers from a much smaller pool of younger workers“⁴. The Australian government itself is aware of these growing pressures: „A tighter labour market is in prospect, a factor of wider demographic shifts and the ageing of the population. In the Australian Public Service (APS) we are already experiencing shortages for some skills and will face increasing competition for others. We need to be well positioned to succeed in the 'war for talent'“⁵. The issues are undeniably complex due to the interplay between social and economic factors, education and training, and migration policy. This situation is stimulating research into the economic, political and industrial issues associated with the workforce, for example with the Centre of Labour Research at the Australian Institute for Social Research in Adelaide and the Workplace Research Centre in Sydney.

The importance of workforce planning

The library world has frequently heard that our goal is to ensure that our customers and clients have access to 'the right information, in the right format, at the right time'. The value of the collections we hold and the services we deliver is underpinned by our belief in this guiding principle. Similarly, the field of human resources management focuses on the principle of ensuring „the right number of people with the right skills, experiences and competencies, in the right jobs, at the right time“⁶. In a recent interview, a leading special librarian, Nerida Hart, clearly stated that „Libraries aren't about books. Libraries are about people.“ She argued strongly that information professionals are enabled „to focus on the people, on the people who require our services and *the people who provide them*“⁷ (emphasis added).

Workforce planning focuses on the people who provide the services, to work towards the goal of ensuring the right number of people with the right skills, experiences and competencies, in the right jobs, at the right time. Work-

force planning is very closely aligned with, and indeed integrated into, the strategic planning processes of an organisation: „Just as strategic planning helps you map where you are, where you're going, and how you plan to get there, workforce planning identifies human resource needs and strategies for meeting those needs in order to ensure you achieve your strategic plan goals“⁸. Workforce planning starts with „mapping where you are“, as well as developing a keen understanding of the context your business is operating in.

The literature abounds with references to the rapidly changing context of library and information services: „Google challenges for academic libraries“⁹, „Change the lightbulb or flick the switch – our choice“¹⁰, „The role of the library in the wired society – compete or withdraw“¹¹, „Ambient

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS): 2006 Census QuickStats. Australia (2007). Retrieved on June 30, 2007 from <<http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/ABSNavigation/pre-nav/ViewData?subaction=1&producttype=QuickStats&areacode=0&action=401&collection=Census&textversion=false&breadcrumb=PL&period=2006&javascript=true&navmapdisplayed=true&>>.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS): Population Projections, Australia, 2004-2101 (Reissue) (ABS 3222.0) (2006). Retrieved July 28, 2007 from <<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/3222.0?OpenDocument>>.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS): Labour Force, Australia, June 2007 (ABS 6202.0) (2007). Retrieved on July 28, 2007 from <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6202.0/>>.

⁴ Professions Australia: Skills Mapping: Assessing Australia's Longer Term Requirements for Professional Skills (2005). Retrieved on June 24, 2006 from <<http://www.professions.com.au/skills.html>>.

⁵ Australian Public Service Commission (APSC): Managing and Sustaining the APS Workforce (2005). Retrieved on July 28, 2007 from <<http://www.apsc.gov.au/mac/apsworkforce.htm>>.

⁶ State of California: Workforce Planning Model (2006). Retrieved on June 10, 2006 from <http://www.dpa.ca.gov/general/publications/manuals/WF_planning/files/WorkforcePlanningModel.pdf>.

⁷ SMR Knowledge Services: Nerida Hart at Australia's FaCSIA: 'Libraries aren't about books – libraries are about people' (2006). SMR Knowledge Services e-Profile. Retrieved June 10, 2006 from <http://www.smr-knowledge.com/eProfiles/e-Profile_06-15-06_Hart.pdf>.

⁸ State of California (Note 6).

⁹ MacColl, John: Google challenges for academic libraries. In: Ariadne 46 (2006). Retrieved on July 29, 2007 from <<http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue46/maccoll/>>.

¹⁰ Cleyle, Susan E. and Louise M. McGillis: Change the lightbulb or flick the switch – our choice. In S. E. Cleyle & L. M. McGillis (Eds.): Last One Out, Turn off the Lights. Is this the Future of American and Canadian Libraries? Lanham, MD 2005.

¹¹ Sommers, Patrick C.: The library in the wired society: compete or withdraw. A business perspective. ALIA 2004 Biennial Conference: Challenging ideas. Gold Coast, September 21-24, 2004. Retrieved on June 24, 2006 <from <http://conferences.alia.org.au/alia2004/powerpoint/patrick.sommers.ppt>>.

findability: libraries at the crossroads of ubiquitous computing¹², „Libraries now have the power to be so much more, or so much less“¹³. These are indeed challenging times for the library and information services (LIS) sector. Some commentators have suggested that the specific demographic picture of the Australian LIS sector intensifies the challenges. In 2002, in his role with the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) as advisor in the area of industrial relations and employment, Teece openly challenged employers in the LIS sector, with its „acutely ageing workforce“, to give serious consideration to succession planning issues to counter the predicted „crisis in labour supply that ageing of the baby-boomer population bulge [would] inevitably create“¹⁴. Later, in 2004, Teece warned that „more effective succession planning via employment of younger people should clearly be a vital policy issue for the sector“¹⁵.

The Australian library and information services sector

In common with many jurisdictions, it is difficult to ascertain the exact make-up of the Australian LIS sector. There are public, academic and special libraries, and people with qualifications in library and information science may work beyond traditional libraries in the areas of information and knowledge management, archives or public policy. Statistical information indicates that in addition to the National Library of Australia and eight State and Territory Libraries, there are around 1 800 public libraries. There are 38 university libraries and about 70 libraries in the colleges of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sector. The latest available figures suggest that there were 1 128 corporate and government libraries in 1999¹⁶. In addition there are about 9 500 school libraries.

Drawing on a range of sources published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), Australian Job Search contends that the LIS sector in Australia comprises a total workforce of 29 000, with 13 400 (46 %) being librarians; 6 700 (23 %) being library technicians; 8 800 (30 %) working as library assistants¹⁷. The LIS sector has been reported as having a highly feminised, ageing workforce, with published figures stating that 65 % of workers are aged 45 years or over, compared with the figure of 35 % across all occupations, and only 14 % are under 35 years of age, compared with 42 % across all occupations¹⁸. However, this demographic picture of the ageing LIS workforce is not limited to Australia: indeed around the world professional alarm bells have been ringing, stimulating research in a number of countries such as Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom.

The international research into workforce planning issues in the LIS sector¹⁹ has been discussed in an earlier paper by the author²⁰. These international studies focus on common factors: the concept of an ageing workforce and the associated retirement of senior LIS professionals; low unemployment levels which give rise to a dwindling pool of applicants from which to recruit; flattening or potentially even declining numbers of LIS graduates; the increased competition from other career sectors; less than competitive salaries; and the lingering negative image of the profession. While there were some scattered initiatives taking place in Australia which sought to develop a better understanding of the issues in the local con-

text²¹, there was scope for a major Australian study to capture demographic, educational and employment data about LIS professionals at the individual level, as well as

¹² Morville, Peter: Ambient findability: libraries at the crossroads of ubiquitous computing. In: Information Today 29 (6) (2005). Retrieved on June 24, 2006 from <<http://www.infotoday.com/online/nov05/morville.shtml>>.

¹³ Tennant, Roy: Determining our digital destiny. In: American Libraries 30 (1) (2000) p. 54-58.

¹⁴ Teece, Phil: Coming soon: a very different workforce. In: InCite 23 (3) (2002). Retrieved on December 7, 2006 from <<http://alia.org.au/publishing/incite/2002/03/workwatch.html>>.

¹⁵ Teece, Phil: America shows way on ageing workforce. In: InCite 25 (1-2) (2004). Retrieved on December 7, 2006 from <<http://alia.org.au/publishing/incite/2004/01-02/workwatch.html>>.

¹⁶ Smith, Kerry: One-person libraries in the Australian special library environment. Rivers of knowledge. 9th ALIA Specials, Health and Law Libraries Conference, Melbourne: 26-29 August 2001.

¹⁷ Australian Job Search: Careers (2007). Retrieved June 10, 2007 from <<http://jobsearch.gov.au/careersearch.aspx>>.

¹⁸ Australian Job Search (Note 17).

¹⁹ Usherwood, Bob; Proctor, Richard; Bower, Gordon; Coe, Carol; Cooper, Jeff & Tony Stevens: Recruit, Retain and Lead. The Public Library Workforce Study. Sheffield 2001. Retrieved on December 7, 2006 from <<http://cplis.shef.ac.uk/workforce.pdf>>. Re:source: Towards a Strategy for Workforce Development: A Research and Discussion Report Prepared for Re:source (2003). Retrieved on November 17, 2006 from <http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets//id423rep_doc_6787.doc>. Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA): Learning for Change: Workforce Development Strategy (2004). Retrieved November 17, 2006 from <http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets//W/wfd_learning_for_change_pdf_5661.pdf>. Ingles, Ernie; De Long, Kathleen; Humprey, Chuck and Allison Sivak: The Future of Human Resources in Canadian Libraries (2005). Retrieved on November 17, 2006 from <<http://www.ls.ualberta.ca/8rs/8RsFutureofHRLibraries.pdf>>. Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS): The Future of Librarians in the Workforce (2006). Retrieved on November 17, 2006 from <<http://libraryworkforce.org/tiki-index.php>>.

²⁰ Hallam, Gillian: Future perfect: will we have made it? Workforce planning issues in the library and information services sector. Click06: ALIA 2006 Biennial Conference. Perth, 19-22 September 2006. Retrieved on June 10, 2007 from <http://conferences.alia.org.au/alia2006/Papers/Gillian_Hallam.pdf>.

²¹ Bridgland, Angela: To fill or not to fill – that is the question. Succession planning and leadership development in academic libraries. In: Australian Academic Libraries 30 (1) (1999) p.20-29. McCarthy, Jenny: Planning a future workforce: In: An Australian perspective. New Review of Academic Librarianship 11(1) (2005) p. 41-56. Whitmell, Vicki: Workforce and succession planning in the libraries of the Australian Technology Network: preparing for demographic change. In: Huthwaite, A. (Ed.): Managing Information in the Digital Age: The Australian Technology Network Libraries Respond. Adelaide 2005, p. 157-178. Van Wanrooy, Brigid: Workforce sustainability and leadership: Scoping report. Commissioned by the State Library of Victoria. University of Sydney, Workplace Research Centre, Sydney 2006. Retrieved on November 17, 2006 from <http://www.libraries.vic.gov.au/downloads/Public_Libraries_Unit/final_workforce_scoping_report_jul_06.pdf>.

about the specific recruitment, retention and training and development practices at the institutional level. A clearer picture of the current LIS sector was needed to help inform the future.

The neXus research project

The *neXus* research project sought to build on the local and international research initiatives. The project comprises three different, yet interrelated, studies, with the key stakeholders in the initiative being Queensland University of Technology (QUT), the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and CAVAL Collaborative Solutions, a consortium of academic libraries in the state of Victoria. Stage One, referred to as the *neXus* census, was an online survey of individual LIS professionals conducted in September-October 2006. Stage Two aims to investigate workforce policies and practices in LIS institutions to examine four main areas of workforce activity that are considered important pieces of the LIS workforce jigsaw puzzle: general staffing information, recruitment and retention, staff development and succession planning. In addition, two international study tours (October-December 2006 and May 2007) have provided the opportunity to understand some of the international perspectives that are relevant to the *neXus* project.

The *neXus* census (Stage One) was launched at the ALIA Click06 Conference held in Perth in September 2006. The self-administered questionnaire was accessible online for one month, with a direct link from the home page of the ALIA website, and was promoted widely via ALIA, LIS special interest groups and organisational e-lists. The survey sought to capture a range of data about the LIS profession, including demographic, employment and educational data, to help the research team better understand the nature of our profession in 2006. The survey attracted 2 346 valid responses. To date, the data collected has been analysed from a range of perspectives: in its entirety, ie all respondents; state-based (eg Victoria); sector-based (eg public libraries in Victoria; TAFE library staff; reference staff; paraprofessional staff etc).

Developing a picture of the LIS profession in Australia

The *neXus* census has been an important first step in the process of understanding our professional future. The demographic, educational and career data collected helps to develop a clearer picture of the LIS profession in Australia: who is currently in the profession and where they believe they are heading. It could be valuable to update the data on a regular basis, for example every five years, to allow the profession to follow changes and trends that might emerge.

86.4 % of all respondents in the *neXus* survey of individuals stated that they had completed their studies in LIS, while 7.7 % were still enrolled in a course. Of those who had qualified or were studying, 79.2 % already had or were working towards university-level 'professional' qualifications (librarians), while 16.8 % had qualified with or were studying towards a vocational 'paraprofessional' certificate (library technicians). 4.0 % of respondents indicated that they had no formal LIS qualifications. 17.8 % of respondents

identified themselves as new graduates, ie that they had gained their qualifications as an LIS professional or paraprofessional in the last five years.

Demography

The most recent figures published by the website Australian Job Search²² (2007) reported that 65.1 % of librarians were 45 years and over. However, the data collected by the *neXus* census gives a lower age demographic for librarians, with 49.9 % of librarian respondents being 46 years and over. The Australian Job Search data presents 24.7 % of librarians being over 55, while the *neXus* census recorded that 16.1 % of respondents with librarian qualifications fell into the category of 56 years and over. In the *neXus* census there were noticeably more respondents in the age group 26-35 (18.8 % professionals), compared with the Australian Job Search figures which report 8.7 % librarians aged 25-34. Figure 1 presents a general comparison of the data, but it should be noted that there is a marginal difference in the actual age groupings in the two studies, eg 26-35 (*neXus*) compared with 25-34 (Australian Job Search).

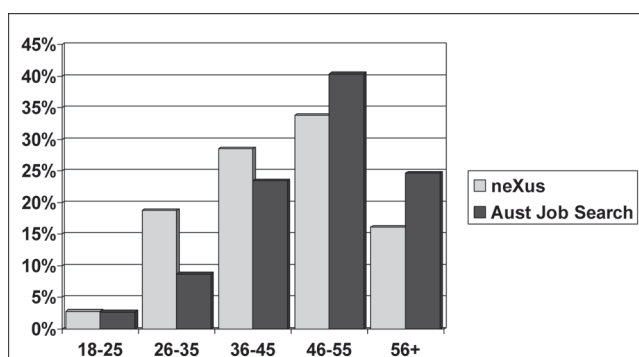


Figure 1: Comparison of age demographics for librarians: neXus and Australian Job Search (2007)

It was felt that there was a fair geographical distribution of respondents across the Australian States and Territories. The *neXus* data revealed that 70.8 % of respondents worked in a state or territory capital city, 22.7 % in a regional town or city and 6.5 % worked in a non-metropolitan or rural area. As a comparison, 2006 Australian data indicates that 66.3 % of the population lives in the major cities, 31.4 % in regional areas and 2.5 % in remote areas²³ (BTRE, 2007). While the ratio between the different age groupings remains fairly similar for both the capital cities and for the regional towns, there is a noticeable older demographic in the rural areas. There was a fairly even split between respondents in the age range 18-35 regarding the willingness to seek employment in rural libraries: 43.8 %

²² Australian Job Search (Note 17).

²³ Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics (BTRE): About Australia's Regions (2007). Retrieved on July 28, 2007 from <http://www.btre.gov.au/publications/47/Files/Australias_Regions_07.pdf>.

indicated they would not want to, while 40.0 % said they would be prepared to, if personal and family conditions made it possible. On the other hand, 72.2 % of this age group declared they would be prepared to work overseas, with only 26.2 % discounting the option. Personal and family issues were not seen to be a problem when considering international employment opportunities.

Employment

Naturally enough, respondents represented the different sectors of the profession (Figure 2). Staff from university libraries represented 24.6 %, public libraries 23.4 %, special libraries (eg in Federal or State/Territory government, local government, corporate or not-for-profit organizations) 21.1 %, National, State and Territory libraries 8.5 %, school libraries 7.5 % and TAFE libraries 5.3 %. A further 2.0 % of respondents were employed in non-traditional LIS workplaces.

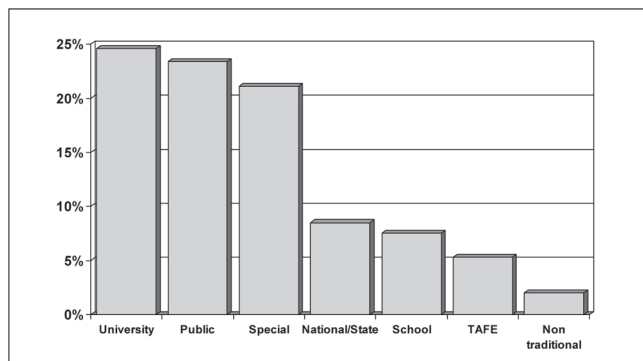


Figure 2: Respondents by LIS sector

The Australian LIS profession attracts a significant number of career change workers, ie graduates of LIS courses may be entering a second or third career. This has led to the need to distinguish between chronological age and career age. Following the model used in the Canadian study²⁴ (Ingles et al, 2005, p.43), LIS workers can be grouped into three discrete career stages:

- Recent entrants – 5 years or less in the sector.
- Mid career – 6-15 years experience in the sector.
- Senior – 16 years or more working in the sector.

16.9 % of respondents indicated that they were new entrants in the profession, so had been working in the sector for five years or less. 31.8 % can be described as mid career workers (6-15 years experience) and 43.8 % fit into the category of senior career workers (16 years or more experience).

In the context of workforce planning issues, it is important to understand the interplay between new entrants to the profession who may potentially wish to gain a variety of experience and diverse employment opportunities early in their careers, which can result in more frequent hiring and induction processes for employers, and a stable workforce in the mid and senior career stages that may see little change in personnel, but where the jobs themselves may manifestly reflect incremental changes in the functions that individual workers may need to perform. Training and skills development are therefore critical to both these groups of workers. In terms of continuity of employ-

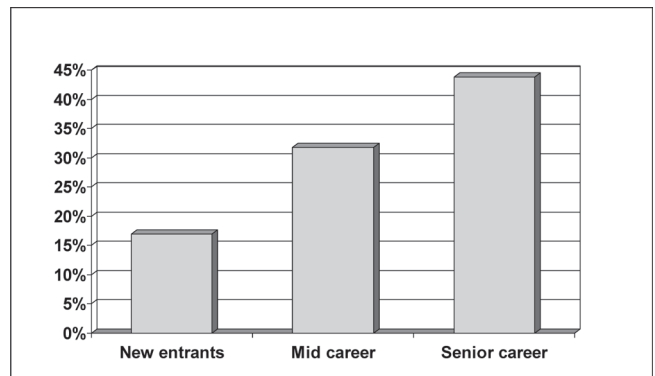


Figure 3: Career stages of respondents by professional/paraprofessional qualifications

ment, the number of people who had been employed by the same organisation for five years or less was 41.7 %, while 33.4 % had been with the same employer for 6-15 years and 17.4 % had stayed with the same institution for 16 years or more. 53.3 % of respondents had held their specific job for less than five years, 19.0 % had the same position for 6-10 years and 19.9 % had been in the same role for more than 10 years.

Retirement

The *neXus* questionnaire sought to examine people's retirement plans, to determine whether or not there might potentially be a dramatic exodus from the profession in the next five to ten years. The loss of older workers through retirement is directly related to the skills debate: the ability to attract and retain a skilled workforce, as well as to introduce more flexible employment options, will be a critical factor if the LIS sector is to survive – and indeed prosper – in a highly competitive labour market. Respondents in all age groups and career stages were asked how long it would be until they would retire. While the 'normal' retirement age in Australia is 65 years, it is acknowledged that in the 21st century retirement decisions do not necessarily correlate with chronological age. Some workers may wish to consider early retirement and some may wish to continue working beyond age 65.

15.8 % of respondents indicated that they aimed to retire from the workforce within the next five years, with the figure of 6.5 % retiring within the next three years and 9.3 % retiring between 3 and 5 years. A further 15.9 % plan to retire in the period of 6-10 years time, meaning that at this point in time almost one third (31.7 %) of the workforce will have retired by 2015 (Table 1).

This figure is in fact almost double that of those who actually fall into the chronological age group of 56 years and older, and once again it must be stressed that current plans for early retirement may not be realised. One positive aspect of these figures is that the process is likely to be progressive, rather than a dramatic shedding of older and more experienced staff. Indeed, Canadian research

²⁴ Ingles et al. (Note 19).

has highlighted the prospect of ameliorating the effects of retirements by changing the rate of retirement itself, for example through the introduction of more flexible work arrangements which can encourage later and more gradual retirement²⁵ (McMullin and Cooke, 2004).

Table 1: Anticipated time until retirement

Years until anticipated retirement	%
1-3 years	6.5%
3-5 years	9.3%
6-10 years	15.9%
Total 2006-2015	31.7%

The *neXus* study also sought to determine the types of skills that would be lost when people in the senior career stage left the workforce. The research findings indicated that of those planning to retire within the next five years, 40.2 % were at the middle management level and 21.4 % at the senior management level. These groupings of respondents were then examined from the perspective of the tasks they performed, with specific attention paid to the professional and job functions they reported performing 'often' or 'very often'. It was not surprising to find that the functions performed at the senior management level had a strong administrative and managerial focus: 89.8 % were regularly involved in organisational planning activities (three quarters of them 'very often') and 87.7 % regularly involved in budget and financial activities (again, three quarters stated 'very often'). Policy development and the management of training and staff development were also key functions (83.6 % and 81.6 % respectively). Other significant responsibilities included space, facilities and building management, marketing and public relations, and human resources planning and management. Senior managers moving towards retirement indicated that they were still involved, on a regular basis but to a lesser extent, in other functional areas such as collection development and evaluation, the acquisition, receipt and payment of library resources, information literacy, and liaison activities.

Middle managers heading towards retirement reported that they continued to be regularly involved in discipline-specific functions such as collection management (66.3 %), or reference, information service and research support (58.7 %). However, it was interesting to note that there were significant differences between two groups of middle managers in terms of the responsibilities and functions they reported, firstly those retiring within five years and secondly those who would be employed for a further six years or more. When compared with those at the middle management level who would be retiring within five years, those aiming to continue their careers for a longer period of time reported a higher occurrence of work in almost all functional areas of management. A correlation made with the ages of these two groups of middle managers determined that those who planned to retire within five years were all 46 years and older, albeit with almost one third of those actually aged 46-55, so retiring in advance of the 'normal' retirement age. Those who would not be retiring within five years presented a considerably younger age demographic, with 52.8 % being 45 years and under, with about 30 % of those being 40 years and under. The comparison of chronological age, career stage and the profes-

sional functions performed augurs well for the future, as it could be interpreted as evidence that there is indeed some significant progress being made in terms of succession planning, with younger middle managers more regularly acquiring greater responsibility for a wide range of managerial activities, whereas this situation was less frequently the case for their older, pre-retirement colleagues.

Professional engagement

Respondents were asked to report on the level of their involvement in professional activities, with 27.8 % reporting that they were professionally active 'often' or 'very often', and a further 25.3 % being professionally active 'sometimes'. Almost a half of LIS workers (47 %) state that they have little or no professional engagement. 42 % of respondents said they were currently a member of the national professional body, ALIA, with a further 10.2 % planning to join in the next twelve months.

When the cohort of respondents who were members of ALIA was analysed from the perspective of career stage, the results showed that around 50 % of senior career workers were members, around 30 % of mid career members and about 20 % of new entrants, again being very similar to the ratios for the career stages of all respondents. The impact of retirement on the membership of ALIA is an important factor for the association: 16.8 % of current ALIA members indicated their plans to retire within five years, with a further 16.3 % retiring before 2015. ALIA will need to seriously consider membership recruitment strategies to retain the current membership base, should one third of its members leave the association when they retire from the workforce in the next ten years.

An interesting correlation can be made when using professional engagement as the determinant for interest and participation in training and development activities (Figure 4). The data collected indicates that membership of the

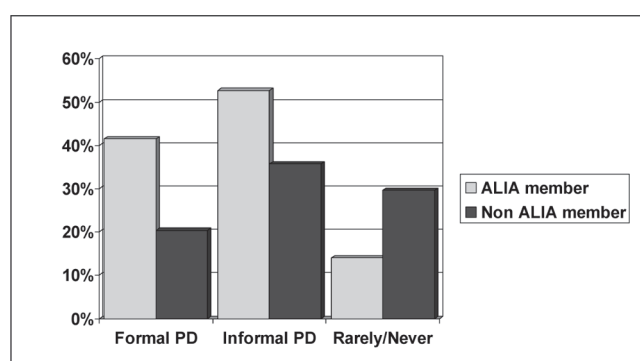


Figure 4: Correlation between membership of ALIA and participation in continuing education activities

²⁵ McMullin, Julie Ann and Martin Cooke: Labour Force Ageing and Skill Shortages in Canada and Ontario. 2004. Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN), Research Report W/24. Retrieved on July 20, 2007 from <<http://www.cprn.com/doc.cfm?doc=1088&l=en>>.

professional association, ALIA, is directly related to the respondents' regular (ie, often' or ,very often') attendance at formal training and development activities such as conferences, seminars or workshops, as well as participation in informal workplace learning activities. The opposite also applies, that non-membership of the professional association is linked to higher levels of ,rarely' or ,never' participating in continuing education activities.

The interrelationship between professional membership and training and development is a significant issue for associations such as ALIA.

Conclusion

This paper presents some of the initial preliminary findings from the current research into some of the workforce issues that are pertinent to the LIS sector in Australia. The LIS profession undoubtedly faces a range of challenges as it faces a rapidly changing world of information technology, new media and the convergence of traditional and non-traditional dimensions of professional work. At the same time, there are significant changes taking place in the workforce, at both the macro and micro level, which cannot be divorced from the information environment in which the LIS profession operates. The current research project, with both Stage One, the *neXus* census, which aims to develop a clearer understanding of the individuals, their careers and their aspirations and Stage Two, which hopes to develop insights into the institutional policies and practices that govern staff recruitment and retention, as well as staff training and development, will hopefully encourage all stakeholders to work more effectively together to plan for the future of the profession in Australia. It is too dangerous to leave it all to chance; we need to „take a step forward in collaboration and create a flexible professional development system that is part of a serious, adequately-resourced, well-planned attack“²⁶ (Williamson, 2006, p. 559). There needs to be an ongoing focus on people entering and leaving the profession, along with the skills they bring with them, skills they need to develop as their career grows and matures, and the skills that will need replenishing as they retire. It is essential that we consider how individuals can be motivated and challenged to work keenly and productively, and to recreate the image of the library and information professional as being dynamic, engaged and in a state of perpetual growth.

The LIS sector cannot ignore the reality and the impact of its own dynamic environment: the faster the pace of change, the greater imperative for staff development. The development of effective managers and perceptive leaders as part of the career development process is imperative if the progressive pace of retirement from the profession, with its associated loss of skills and experience, is to be matched by incremental staff development strategies within it. At the same time, those continuing to work in the sector cannot be allowed to stagnate, but should have the opportunity for ongoing professional growth and stimulation. The process of developing innovative, visionary and successful library and information professionals is not the sole responsibility of the individual or of the LIS educator, but must be viewed as a sector-wide process that involves the individual, universities, training providers, employers and professional associations. Importantly it is the combination of formal external development events and the

informal workplace training activities that, when combined with an active professional life, offer the richest opportunities for us all to focus on a strong professional future.

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²⁶ Williamson, Vicki: Surviving change and growing the profession together. Libraries of the 21st Century Symposium, Melbourne, February 23, 2006. Retrieved on June 24, 2006 from <<http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/programs/events/2006/symposium/learning/williamson.html>>.