

FUTURE READY

Inspiring Diverse Library Pathways



Image: Libraries Change Lives Banner, sourced from librarieschangelives.org.au

PROJECT SCOPE

Most careers in librarianship are not linear, and information about how to move in, out or through the profession is limited.

This report aims to inspire current library staff to further their careers, and to also provide guidance for future library staff on how to start a career in public libraries.

PROJECT TEAM

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Libraries**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

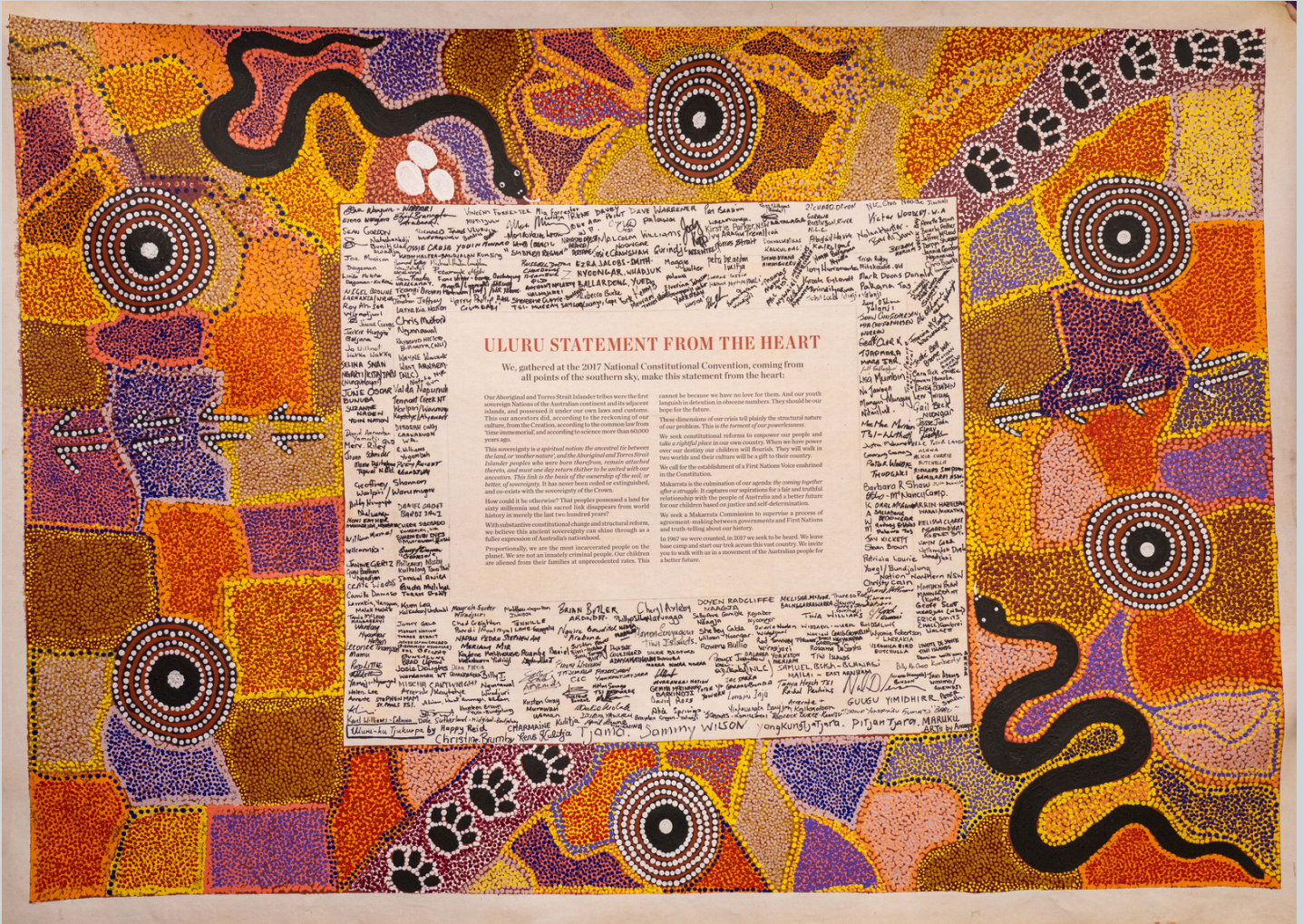


Image: The Uluru Statement from the Heart official banner, sourced from <https://ulurustatement.org/take-action/supporter-kit/>

We acknowledge the traditional lands of all the Victorian Aboriginal clans, and their cultural practices and knowledge systems.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and we acknowledge their sustained and ongoing custodianship, knowledge, management and protection of their land and waterways.

We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

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TEAM INTRODUCTION

The Future Ready: Inspiring Diverse Library Pathways team is made up of Anita Castanho from Wyndham City Libraries, Eleanor Wight from Ballarat Libraries, Peter Huynh from Yarra Libraries, Jonathan Gosden from Whitehorse Manningham Libraries and Ian Wedlock from Yarra Plenty Regional Library. Our project sponsor is Monique Godbehere, Library Services Senior Coordinator at the City of Greater Dandenong Libraries.

Our team shares a passion for diverse library career pathways- even reflecting on our career paths in libraries and finding ways to inspire people into the library profession and current library professionals.

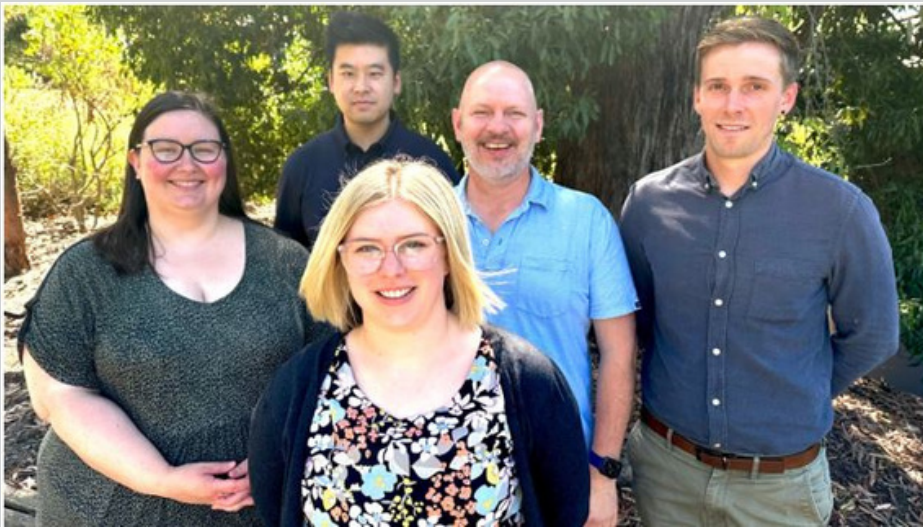


Image: Pictured from left to right: Anita Castanho, Peter Huynh (back), Eleanor Wight (front), Jonathan Gosden and Ian Wedlock.

Anita Castanho, Wyndham City Libraries

Anita Castanho has been working in public libraries for over 10 years after stints in bookselling, publishing, administration support and English language training abroad. She decided to pursue a Graduate Diploma in Information Management after finally realising libraries were the perfect combination of the things she enjoyed; helping people, and learning and discovering new things. After her first role as a Library Officer, Anita continued taking on various acting roles which helped build her experience and gave her a better understanding of her strengths. In her current role Anita enjoys developing programs and activities for adults as Team Leader Adult Programs and Services at Wyndham City Libraries. She loves hearing people say 'I didn't know libraries did that' when they discover something unexpected.

Eleanor Wight, Ballarat Libraries

Like many people in libraries, Eleanor started her library career by accident. Deferring University after school Eleanor got a twelve-month traineeship with the Wellington Shire Libraries, with the intention of going back to university after completing the traineeship but has stayed in libraries since. Eleanor has worked in public and school libraries doing a mixture of casual and temporary roles. Through secondment and temporary roles Eleanor has gained skills and experience in many areas in libraries and is currently Acting Team Leader of Sebastopol Library, her substantive role is Community Programming Librarian. It wasn't until recently in Eleanor's career that she decided to go to university and study her Bachelor of Information Services specializing in Librarianship and move into management roles. Eleanor's future goals in libraries is to continue to work in management roles, and continue to inspire and support future library professionals.

TEAM INTRODUCTION

Ian Wedlock, Yarra Plenty Regional Libraries

Ian Wedlock is currently Senior Manager, Engagement and Operations at Yarra Plenty Regional Library. His career started in education and he gained a passion for libraries as places for learning through his early roles at the State Library Queensland. Ian sought out professional learning in leadership and management to advance his career. He has worked nationally and internationally on high profile projects for Code Club Australia and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO). Ian's experience outside of the public library sector set him up for success as he gained strong skills in stakeholder management, project management and leading teams. Ian firmly believes that the library team must be a reflection of the community and that's why valuing diversity in the profession is so important.

Jonathan Gosden, Whitehorse Manningham Libraries

Jonathan has been working in public libraries for 20 years after earlier careers in industrial electronics and then youth ministry. He was inspired to work in libraries after spending time doing research with the Manuscripts collection at State Library Victoria (SLV). While the dream of working with manuscripts and rare books was never fulfilled, Jonathan has had a wide range of roles in public libraries. Starting as a library officer doing processing and repairs, he has had roles in acquisitions, cataloguing, youth services, technical services management, branch management and is currently Manager Library Operations at Whitehorse Manningham Libraries. Throughout his library career, Jonathan has taken advantage of secondments to develop his skills and try out different elements of library work. Jonathan's current role involves a large amount of recruitment and he enjoys seeing the diverse backgrounds people bring to library work.

Peter Huynh, Yarra Libraries

Peter Huynh is a professional with a diverse career path that highlights his versatility and passion for technology and community engagement. Beginning as a Library Officer and System Administrator at the Melbourne Athenaeum Library, Peter honed his skills in library operations and systems management for three years. Seeking further knowledge, he pursued a Master's degree in IT, expanding his expertise. Peter then explored opportunities outside of libraries, working as a Business Analyst for Australia Post for two years, utilising analytical skills to drive business improvements. However, his passion for libraries drew him back and he joined OCLC as a system consultant, providing software support and solutions for three years. Eager to work with the community, Peter joined Yarra Libraries as an IT Officer, contributing to some high-profile projects. His dedication and acting opportunities within the organisation led him to become a permanent IT & Projects Team leader.

Monique Godbehere (Project Sponsor), Greater Dandenong Libraries

A career in libraries was introduced to Monique by her career's counsellor in high school, when she had no idea what path to follow after year 12. It felt like a safe bet in the early 1990's – the course covered emerging technology such as "the world wide web" and coding, records management and research. If the library part didn't pan out, there was always archiving, computer jobs or public records office as choices. Starting as a casual Library Customer service officer, Monique's career has spanned both regional and single council services, and permanent or seconded roles as a Children's librarian, Library Technical Services officer, Branch Manager, Library Operations Coordinator and even Finance Manager. Her workplaces have provided support, opportunities for growth and constant learning experiences of which she is passionate about supporting for her service and the sector.

INTRODUCTION

The library profession in Victoria today embraces diverse career trajectories that often include lateral movements, breaks from the sector, or transitions from entirely different industries. This report will explore some of these movements by taking a closer look at the background of the work force of Victorian public library and State Library Victoria staff via an open survey, with a deeper exploration via several case studies. Further, this report considers ways to promote career movement through the profession, aiming to inspire current staff to further their careers while providing guidance for future library professionals on how to start a career in public libraries.

This report serves as an invigorating call to action for current library staff, encouraging them to consider stepping into leadership roles within their organisations. By inspiring staff to take on new responsibilities and roles, we not only enrich professional growth but also cultivate leaders who can guide the field through the challenges and opportunities of the future. Nurturing our talent pool enables libraries to develop a highly skilled and adaptable workforce capable of meeting the evolving needs of library users into the future.

The ever-evolving nature of public library work requires a workforce that brings various skills and experiences to the table. As library professionals, we understand that our collective expertise is enhanced by the diversity within our ranks. Many of us have joined the library sector through non-traditional routes, capitalising on the breadth of opportunities available within libraries. Some have embarked on career changes, transitioning from unrelated industries and enriching the profession with their unique perspectives and skill sets. Professionals from different industries and backgrounds bring unique perspectives, enabling libraries to adapt to the evolving needs of their patrons. Public libraries establish deeper connections, build trust, and encourage greater community engagement and participation by reflecting on our communities.

This report is an introductory guide to inspiring current library professionals to embrace their unique career journeys and providing aspiring professionals with valuable insights into starting a fulfilling career in public libraries.

OBJECTIVE / SCOPE

For many of us, our library career hasn't been linear, we have moved through positions, left the library sector and returned, or for some of us, we have had a career change into the library sector from another industry.

This report aims to inspire current library staff to further their careers and provide guidance for future library staff on how to start a career in public libraries. Note, for this purpose of this work, all general references to a career in public libraries also includes a career at the State Library Victoria.

The project will focus only on Victorian public library career pathways, therefore, will exclude the following:

- Education Libraries
- Special Libraries
- Other GLAMR institutions

METHODOLOGY



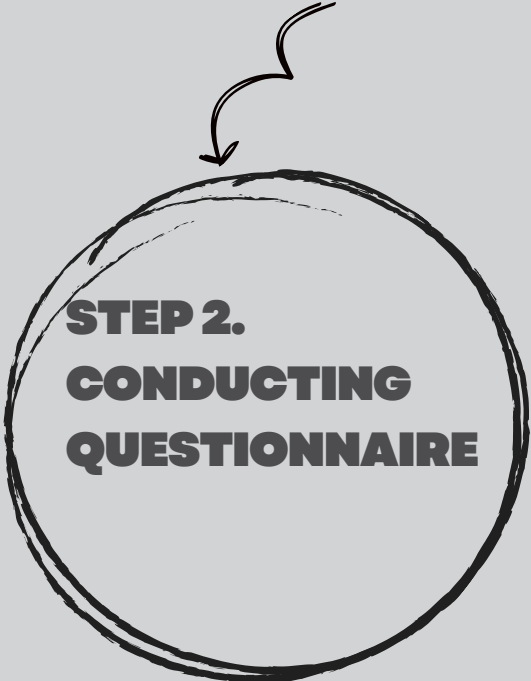
Springvale Community Hub, sourced from City of Greater Dandenong

METHODOLOGY



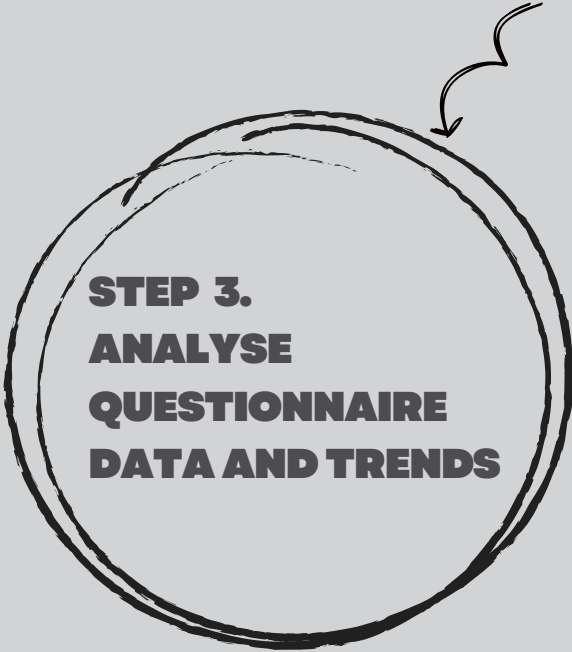
STEP 1. DEVELOP A QUESTIONNAIRE

- Clearly define the objectives and the information required for the project.
- Identify the target audience.
- Design a structured questionnaire with relevant, concise questions aligned with the project's objectives.
- Test the questionnaire with a small group to ensure clarity and understandability.
- Revise and finalise the questionnaire based on the feedback received.



STEP 2. CONDUCTING QUESTIONNAIRE

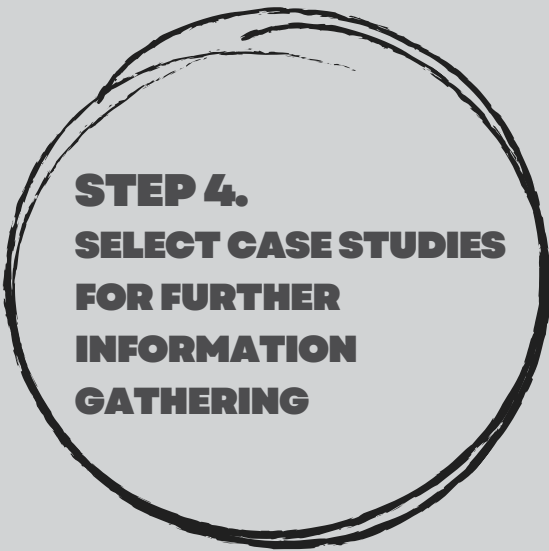
- Select appropriate methods for data collection.
- Distribute the questionnaire to the selected respondents from the sector.
- Monitor and ensure a reasonable response rate, following up with reminders if needed.



STEP 3. ANALYSE QUESTIONNAIRE DATA AND TRENDS

- Clean and organise the collected data for analysis, ensuring accuracy and consistency.
- Identify trends, patterns, and correlations within the data.
- Interpret the findings and draw meaningful conclusions related to the project objectives.


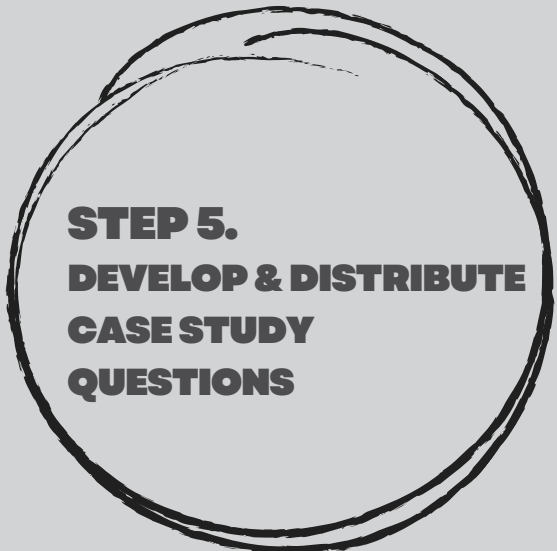
METHODOLOGY (CONT.)



STEP 4. SELECT CASE STUDIES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION GATHERING

- Identify potential case study candidates based on their relevance to the project objectives.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of the available case study candidates and select a manageable number for further investigation.

- Determine the critical areas of inquiry based on the project objectives and the information required from the case studies.
- Design a set of structured questions for the case study participants.
- Distribute the case study questions to the selected participants.



STEP 5. DEVELOP & DISTRIBUTE CASE STUDY QUESTIONS



STEP 6. ANALYSE CASE STUDY RESPONSES AND CONTENT FOR REPORT

- Collect the case study responses from the participants.
- Extract relevant content and quotes from the case study responses to support the findings and conclusions of the report.



STEP 7. REPORT WRITING

- Outline the structure and critical sections of the report, including an introduction, objective, background, methodology, literature review, analysis, conclusions, and recommendations.
- Present the questionnaire data analysis, case study findings, and trends identified coherently and logically.
- Incorporate relevant visuals, tables, and graphs to enhance the understanding and visualisation of the data.
- Interpret the findings, draw connections between the questionnaire data and case study insights, and provide meaningful conclusions based on the project objectives.
- Develop actionable recommendations based on the research findings to address the identified issues or support decision-making processes.
- Review and proofread the report to ensure accuracy, clarity, and consistency.
- Submit the final report to relevant stakeholders.

Diamond Valley Library, sourced from Yarra Plenty
Regional Library

LITERATURE REVIEW

LITERATURE REVIEW

To better understand the non-linear movements of library staff and the motivations behind these, we undertook a review of existing literature. In undertaking this research, we established the following areas of focus:

- Why people choose Library and Information Management (LIM) as a career;
- Career development of library professionals and progress into management roles;
- Career stagnation.

Why people choose Library and Information Management (LIM) as a career

In this area, we focused our research on second-career librarians and those transitioning from non-Library backgrounds. We discovered that there was limited research on this specific topic in Australian literature, but some interesting examples from international settings.

Lo et al. (2015) questioned students at four universities in Canada, China, Hong Kong, and Japan about their motivations for choosing LIM programs. These students were from non-library backgrounds, with responses varying from research assistants and software support to circus performers and associated fields such as knowledge or information management and heritage and museum education. Teaching and education fields were also well represented.

While the survey revealed that respondents from different groups shared both common and unique reasons for selecting LIM as their profession, there were six top factors that influenced students across all four universities in choosing LIM: (1) the desire to assist library users, (2) job security, (3) a stable working environment, (4) opportunities for intellectual growth, (5) prospects for career advancement, and (6) the potential for a career change. It was also noted that to make realistic career-change decisions, mature students needed to strike a balance between family life and work.



Image: Sabina Wills, smiling while standing at children's picture book shelving.



It is immensely satisfying to help all sorts of people day to day. To see that I make an immediate difference is much more satisfying than doing programs that are removed from day to day job satisfaction.

SABINA WILLS



LITERATURE REVIEW (CONT.)

Why people choose Library and Information Management (LIM) as a career

Corry and Mendez (2006) invited a group of second-career librarians to tell their stories. They were brought together because they all experienced burnout in their previous careers and eventually found their way to librarianship. The group included individuals from various professions, such as teachers, a social worker, a former Navy officer, a pharmaceutical salesperson, a furniture salesman, a candle maker, and a power plant worker. Only a few had considered library work earlier, while others stumbled into the profession accidentally.

During their conversation, three main themes emerged. Firstly, each participant viewed their mid-life career change to librarianship as a positive and rewarding experience. Secondly, despite having yet to actively plan a library career, they all expressed greater happiness and fulfilment as librarians compared to their previous professions. Lastly, they unanimously recognised the social importance and worthiness of library work. The group expressed satisfaction and happiness as librarians, finding fulfilment in their work. Each day they brought new experiences, emphasising the importance of changing when feeling burned out in a current job.



My diverse and dynamic library career showcases the value of acquiring a broad range of skills and experiences which support the values of the public library. My transition from education to the public library sector exemplifies the transferability of skills and the profound impact one can have on the community.

JENNY MUSTEY



Image: Jenny sitting at desk at Echuca High School 1986.

LITERATURE REVIEW (CONT.)

Why people choose Library and Information Management (LIM) as a career (cont.)

Research conducted by Dukic (2017) examined how occupational backgrounds shaped the motivation of students to choose a LIM career. It revealed that an increasing number of individuals from diverse backgrounds transitioned into librarianship as a second career option. Factors influencing their decision include recommendations, stability and salary, and the opportunity to work with people and help others. For many career changers, entering the LIM profession is often more of a drift than an active choice. It was noted that former school teachers, in particular, are attracted to library work for its similarities to teaching, ease of transferring skills, and growth opportunities.

Interestingly the study found that students who were already library-employed prioritise stability, job security, and income. In contrast, those from other fields balance these extrinsic factors with intrinsic ones, such as the environment and personal development. Understanding these differences can help employers recruit candidates who align with their needs and values.

A small study by Agyemang (2019) focused on why teachers transition into librarianship. The results found that their motivations included: former library positive experiences, recommendations from others, flexible working hours, dissatisfaction with their previous career, the poor job market in their preferred profession, personal interests, and the joy of helping others through information services. Dissatisfaction with teaching, including poor working conditions, remuneration, and overloaded duties, also contributes to the decision to switch to librarianship. Further, teachers often perceived similarities between teaching and library work, such as a service orientation and working with people.



Image: Anna-Marie dressed as a butterfly at Storytime.

I went into teaching to connect with humans on a different level without the pressure of always having to make money. I wanted to serve and connect and genuinely help others. I get all of this and more from being in public libraries. I work with like minded people where the bottom line is about serving our communities, not the dollars we make.

ANNA-MARIE RESTALL

LITERATURE REVIEW (CONT.)

Why people choose Library and Information Management (LIM) as a career (cont.)

The WILIS 1 project conducted by Rathbun-Grubb and Marshall (2009) used a web survey of LIM graduates from 1964 to 2007 to explore their career paths, recruitment and retention issues, retirement plans, and work-related concerns in public libraries and other work settings. Rathbun-Grubb and Marshall (2009) found that respondents were drawn to the profession because it aligned with their interests and allowed them to make a difference by working with people. Respondents also expressed high satisfaction with their jobs and career. It was noted that despite the profession's challenges, the collegial work environments, job autonomy, and the intrinsic rewards of public librarianship contribute to sustaining a commitment to the profession.

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For me libraries are uniquely placed to make effective, real change within their local community. I have always grown up with a very strong sense of community. Seeing the effect that library programs can make to individuals and greatly improve their lives is a very powerful thing.

DYLAN OOSTERWEGHEL

”

However, several issues emerged as potential threats to retention, including low salaries, organisational bureaucracy, and limited career advancement opportunities. These drawbacks may discourage prospective professionals from entering the field or pursuing a career in public librarianship. To address these issues, the study suggested that LIM employers and educators worked to provide public librarians with intellectual resources, skills, political awareness, and best practices. This will help advance their careers, maintain an exciting and challenging work environment, and achieve the objectives of their organisations.

When considering why people chose LIM as a career path, it is valuable to consider the recent work by the Australia Library and Information Association (ALIA). While this report limited its scope to Victorian Public Libraries and the State Library Victoria (SLV), ALIA's work at a national level will also have an impact.

LITERATURE REVIEW (CONT.)

Why people choose Library and Information Management (LIM) as a career (cont.)

ALIA currently accredits several diplomas, bachelor, graduate diplomas and master's education programs, and the number of these courses has decreased over the last few years. The *ALIA LIS Education, Skills and Employment Trend Report 2020* (2021) reported that 21 institutions offered ALIA-accredited courses, comprising six universities and 15 TAFEs. In 2023 there are eight institutions, including three universities and eight TAFEs, excluding institutions with no further intake (*ALIA Accredited Courses*, 2023). The following courses are currently accredited according to the ALIA website (*ALIA Accredited Courses*, 2023)

- Diploma of Library of Information Services: 12 courses
- Bachelor of Information Studies: 1 course
- Graduate Diploma of Information Management: 5 courses (2 no further intake)
- Masters of Information Management: 5 courses (2 no further intake)
- Master of Education (Teacher Librarianship): 1 course

According to the *ALIA LIS Education, Skills and Employment Trend Report 2020* (2021), 1,772 full-time equivalent students were studying LIS in 2019, evenly distributed between Vocational Education and Higher Education.

ALIA's sector-wide consultation on the future of LIM Education (ALIA, 2020) engaged nearly 500 individuals highlighting the widespread interest in shaping the future of LIM education. It confirmed that designing, delivering, and managing contemporary library and information services required many other professional skills besides traditional LIM skill sets.

ALIA's Future of LIM Education (2020) found that participants acknowledged the significance of having qualified library staff with the necessary technical skills, and there were concerns regarding the perceived dilution of the profession with non-LIM qualified individuals. While non-LIM qualified individuals have taken some roles, librarians and library technicians were recognised as essential and forming most of the workforce. There was an acknowledgement of the need for a balanced mix of professionally trained LIM individuals and staff with allied skills to strengthen the capacity of libraries.

LITERATURE REVIEW (CONT.)

Why people choose Library and Information Management (LIM) as a career (cont.)

The cost of LIM qualifications was also identified as a significant barrier to achieving greater diversity in the LIM workforce. To promote diversity and inclusivity, it was suggested that LIM education should be more affordable, accessible, and flexible.

This work led to ALIA's more expansive *Professional Pathways* project, where one of the main objectives is to develop an appropriate knowledge, skills and ethical behaviour framework to offer alternative options for entry into the LIM profession. In mid-2022, the Professional Pathways team introduced the first draft graphical representation of their inclusive framework, designed to support individuals from different backgrounds and career stages (Hallam et al., 2022). The work is in phase two, with a final report and consultation expected in mid-2023. The outcome of this work may impact the career pathways of staff into Victorian public libraries and the SLV.

Career development of library professionals and progress into management roles

In researching this area, it was clear that attempts to map the diverse library pathways have been common and that a similar methodology to our work in this report has been common. Yet again, there were few available examples from Victorian or Australian settings.

Yoh's 2010 research studied the factors influencing the career movements of librarians and chief librarians. The findings showed that public libraries had the highest staff retention rate, followed by university libraries, agencies, special libraries, and school libraries. 92.9% of public librarians in the study reported that their whole career was in public libraries, which was higher than in other fields.



Image: Robyn Ellard at 2nd New Librarians Symposium in Adelaide.

I don't believe I would have had the career trajectory or opportunities if I worked in another industry. There are very few industries that would allow me to work in a strategic capacity directly with communities.

ROBYN ELLARD

LITERATURE REVIEW (CONT.)

Career development of library professionals and progress into management roles (cont.)

Emery et al. (2023) agree that the career pathways of librarians are diverse and distinct. They posit that building supportive connections with fellow library professionals can be crucial for professional and personal satisfaction. Further, the chapter shares their experiences of connecting with fellow librarians and how it assisted them in recognising and seizing opportunities, fostering intellectual growth, avoiding monotony and career stagnation, and combating burnout.

According to Emery et al. (2023), mentorship in libraries typically focuses on new librarians, but it also benefits experienced librarians by offering instrumental support, such as career advice and idea sharing, and psychosocial support, such as affirmation and friendship. Psychosocial support is significant for mid-career librarians who often face balancing family responsibilities with increased work demands. The article offers practical solutions for mid-career librarians who wish to develop peer relationships.

A study by Rutledge (2020) investigated the career progression of women academic librarians in management roles. Barriers to pursuing management roles included not wanting to supervise employees, dealing with stress, contentment in current roles, preference for non-managerial assignments, and concerns about a boys' club culture. Balancing work and family responsibilities emerged as a significant challenge. Skills such as emotional intelligence, collaboration, communication, conflict management, and stress management were identified as crucial for success.

It is important to embrace a multidisciplinary career path, seeking out training to support strategic thinking. These skills not only support your professional practice but also enhance your organisational awareness.

ALIX MASSINA

In the case of public libraries, Di Pilato (2016) discovered that directors demonstrate extensive engagement with professional organisations and networks, actively participate in continuing education and leadership development initiatives and value reflective practice. Further, the research discovered that the participants did not passively stumble into leadership positions; instead, they actively pursued the development of their leadership abilities with the support and guidance of others, such as family members, mentors, and role models.

LITERATURE REVIEW (CONT.)

Career development of library professionals and progress into management roles (cont.)

As well as understanding the challenges of career progression for library staff, there has also been research into the leadership competencies required for effective library management. For example, Wilkins-Jordan (2012) conducted a Delphi study involving public library directors to identify leadership competencies. In the initial round, the directors were presented with a list of 34 competencies. Of these, 18 were recognised as significant, and the directors proposed five additional competencies. Through three rounds of inquiry, ten crucial competencies were identified:

- 1.integrity,
- 2.customer service,
- 3.accountability,
- 4.communication skills,
- 5.credibility,
- 6.vision,
- 7.political understanding,
- 8.interpersonal skills,
- 9.demonstrating leadership,
- 10.advocacy skills.



My journey from a writer and researcher to a Learning Services Officer demonstrates the power of embracing one's passions and aligning them with the services libraries provide, while having a fulfilling career.

TAMARA SHEWARD



In 2019 the State Library Victoria and Public Libraries Victoria undertook a skills audit of library managers and staff to monitor the changing importance of specific skill sets and track changes in staff confidence levels. This work identified that foundation skills were considered highly valuable and expected to retain their importance. With a growing demand for digital literacy, cultural literacy, digital literacy, and local awareness were regarded as the most essential foundation skills. The most important professional skills supported the core functions of the public library, such as information services, promoting library collections, and lending services. Managers also recognised the emerging significance of community development skills, community needs analysis, engagement, and relationships. As user behaviour changed, skills related to physical collection management, acquisitions, bibliographic records, and lending services were expected to become less critical. Traditional LIM skills would diminish as libraries expanded into a broader range of community activities, requiring staff to embrace different skill sets. Behavioural skills highly valued by managers and individuals included customer engagement, ethics, values, empathy, oral communication, teamwork, flexibility, and self-management. Managers emphasised the importance of positioning the library service within the organisational context, highlighting political and business acumen, building partnerships, written communication, and leadership.

LITERATURE REVIEW (CONT.)

Career stagnation

Career stagnation, job satisfaction, and positive career pathways are discussed in detail in business literature but are less frequently discussed in library literature.

According to Bardwick (1988), there are three main types of career stagnation, structural, content and life. Structural stagnation refers to organisational structures preventing employees from progressing in their careers. Most people will reach this point as positions become fewer at higher levels.

Content stagnation occurs when individuals feel they have mastered all necessary skills and need more new challenges, irrespective of workload or accomplishments. Although this is a logical progression, there is a potential downside as employees might respond by developing resistance to change and making every effort to enhance their feeling of security due to the fear that change could result in failure.

The third, life stagnation happens when work becomes the dominant aspect of one's life, defining their self-worth. It often occurs when people prioritise their careers over personal lives. It can result in a midlife crisis when they realise they have missed out on other aspects of life due to excessive career focus or they are in a career and life that lacks fulfilment. Defining stagnation is challenging as it affects various aspects of life, and its effects are interconnected.

Libraries have been concerned about career stagnation since at least the 1980s, as highlighted by Chapman (1985), who discussed its causes, consequences and cures. The author's suggested solution to overcome career stagnation starts with avoiding self-pity and recognising that feelings of insecurity and frustration are common among library staff regardless of their level or experience.

Treebak & Thomsen's (2021) micro study on career stagnation uses an in-depth interview style which provides valuable insights. The report identifies that career stagnation can encompass both situational and emotional aspects. The situational aspects are evident when participants mention the hierarchical career ladder they are expected to climb, experiencing rejection for lower-level positions, being restricted from pursuing other projects, facing potential age discrimination, and encountering barriers to further education due to cost. On the other hand, the emotional aspects are observed through feelings of being out of place, fear of financial insecurity, frustration with job mobility constraints, a sense of meaninglessness in work organisation, disengagement, fatigue, and a loss of passion for their profession.

LITERATURE REVIEW (CONT.)

Career stagnation (cont.)

Neville & Henry (2017) surveyed and interviewed senior academic librarians and found salary was the most common concern, followed closely by the lack of promotion or advancement opportunities. It was observed that reaching the highest rank often resulted in limited salary growth. Other frustrations included a lack of recognition, organisational influence, job creep, and inadequate employer support. In this study, many senior librarians also expressed the importance and personal fulfilment they found in mentoring. One interviewee mentioned that their career had been influenced by luck and timing, which motivated them to offer opportunities to newer librarians who may have yet to enter the field under favourable circumstances.

Montgomery (2002) recounts her experience with career stagnation and shares the strategies she learned to rejuvenate her career and personal life continually. The author observed that their decision to remain in their first library position, driven by seniority benefits, including freedom, flexibility, and a good salary, ultimately led to a lack of progress in their early career. Her solution was to continue feeling challenged in her job by learning and developing new skills and becoming more active in the profession.

In libraries, it is not uncommon for staff to choose to stay at a certain level due to their preference for specific types of work. Montgomery (2002) gives the example of a reference librarian who may decline administrative roles in favour of working directly with the public. It is also acknowledged that the predominance of women in the profession also leads some employees to remain at a particular level due to family responsibilities, such as caring for young children or aging parents, which makes it challenging to assume higher-level positions with increased responsibilities.



Keep taking up opportunities through professional organisations and peak bodies. ALIA, PLV and SLV offer so much, not just in the formal training courses but also the SIGS, committees, working groups etc. Being involved with various networks gave me incredible experiences, personally and professionally.

JENNY MUSTEY



DISCUSSION



Sebastopol Library, sourced from Ballarat Libraries

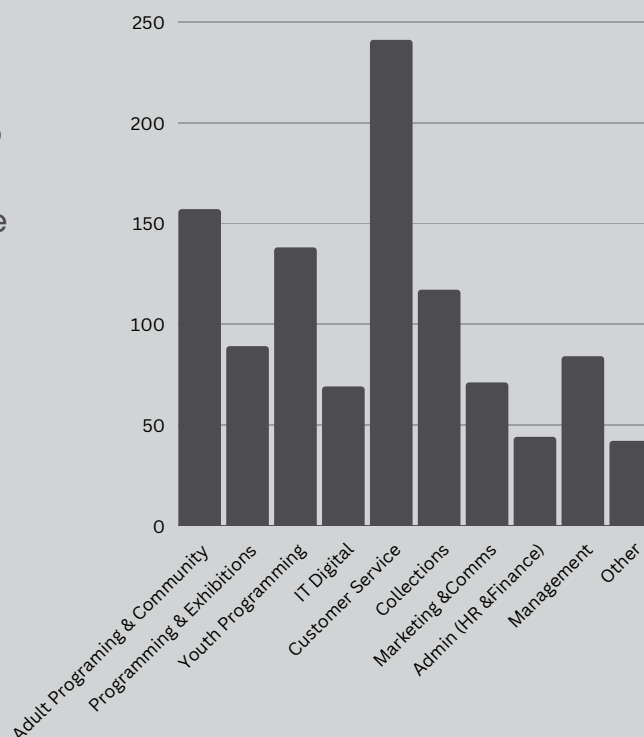
DISCUSSION

Range of responses

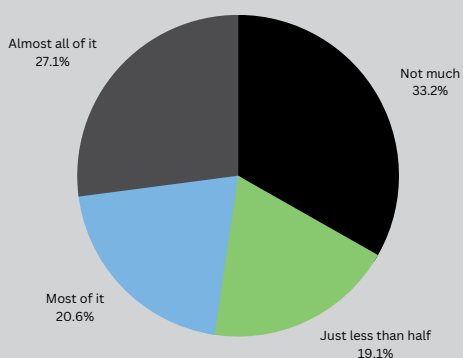
A total of 277 people responded to the survey. 273 responses were from people currently working in Victorian public libraries and 1 working in SLV. Responses were also received from 3 people who do not currently work in public libraries or SLV but have done so previously. 214 were from metropolitan libraries, 47 from regional, and 15 from rural libraries.

Respondents represented a wide range of library staff with different roles, different experience levels, and having worked across a range of library departments.

What areas of public libraries have you worked in?



How much of your career has been spent in the public library sector or State Library Victoria?



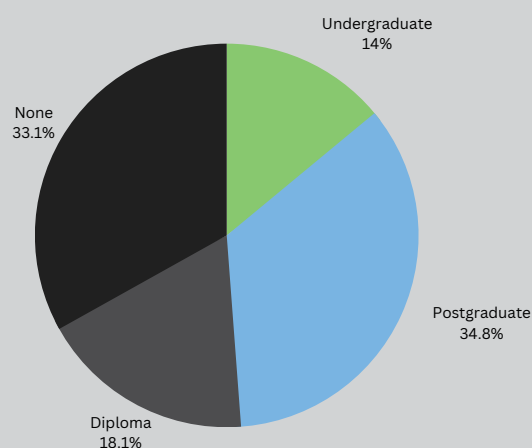
Respondents were asked to nominate how much their career was spent in libraries. Results were relatively evenly spread, slightly leaning towards those having spent over 75% or under 25% of their careers in libraries.

DISCUSSION (CONT.)

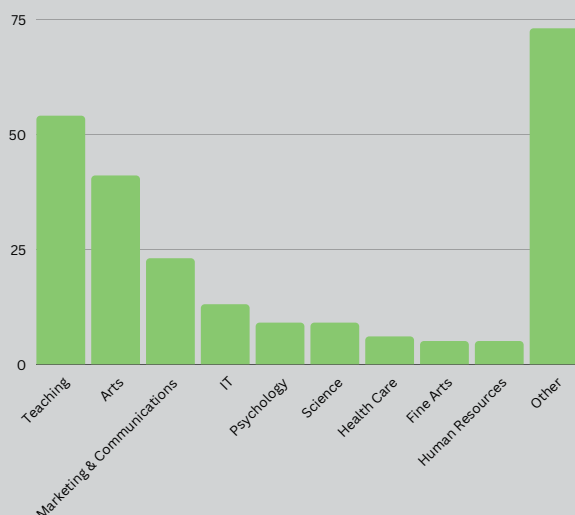
Qualifications

Over one-third of respondents (34.8%) have postgraduate library qualifications, while 33.1% have no library qualifications. 18.1% had diploma qualifications, and 14% had undergraduate library qualifications. 15 people (5%) had multiple library qualifications. It is unclear if this represents the broader industry, as those with qualifications may have been more likely to respond to the survey. It may be assumed that many without library qualifications are in front-line customer service roles (usually called library officers or customer service officers). Some will also be in other specialist roles, such as IT or marketing. They could also be filling professional librarian or management roles, as while some library services will require a library qualification, other services do not.

Do you have a Library & Information Science qualification?



Do you have other qualifications?



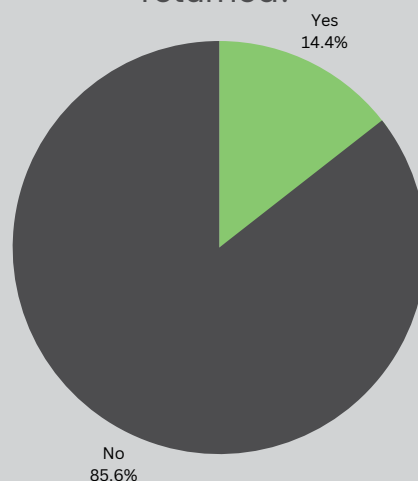
Of particular interest to this study was the number of people who came into library work with non-library qualifications. 77% of respondents had non-library qualifications, with many having multiple qualifications. Teaching, Arts, and Marketing & Communications were the most commonly reported. There were a total of 82 different areas of qualification reported.

DISCUSSION (CONT.)

Left the sector and returned

40 respondents (14.4%) had left the public library sector and returned. Of this group, about half left public libraries to work in other types of libraries or library-related occupations. Of these 40 people, 31 felt their skills were enhanced. Areas of enhancement included gaining a broader view of the library profession, people management, leadership, collections management, technology, public speaking, strategic planning and community engagement.

Have you ever left the public library sector or State Library Victoria and returned?



"My digital services role throughout COVID in a school environment empowered me to challenge myself, get out of my comfort zone and increase my digital literacy"

"Provides a wider view of the library and information profession."

"Greatly! The academic library sector is very different to the public library sector."

"I gained a perspective of working in a totally different profession"

"Moving to a sector of the industry where I worked on my own meant I had to learn how to do everything in a library!"

"More rounded knowledge of the profession as a whole"

"It was beneficial to a high degree as provided opportunity to work in a different environment and learn about the different governance, management, reporting requirements."

DISCUSSION (CONT.)

Left the sector and returned (cont.)

6 respondents mentioned that leaving public libraries made them realise how much they liked the sector. Several people reported returning because they missed the sector and working with the community.

"Leaving the sector made me realise just how great it is!"

Similarly, most respondents reported an increase in confidence after leaving the sector and returning. Only 2 reported reduced confidence after returning, while a small number reported little or no increase in confidence. Increased confidence was usually attributed to the advanced skills developed or exposure to a broader range of experiences.

"Felt less 'imposter syndrome'. Felt more like a professional."

"It greatly developed my confidence as I developed strong skill sets in areas that don't really get stretched in the public sector."

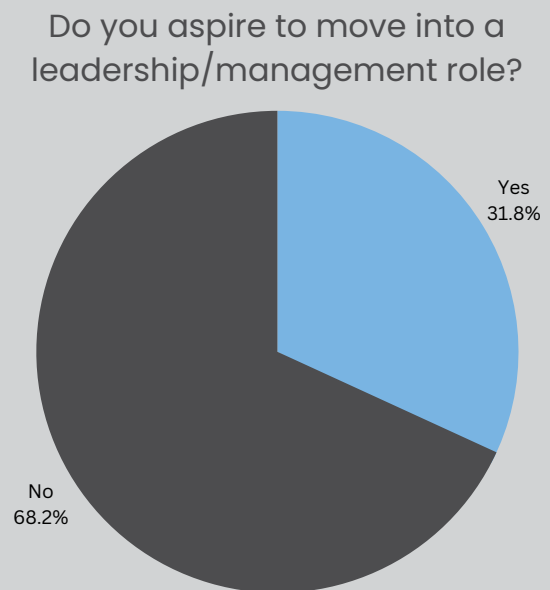
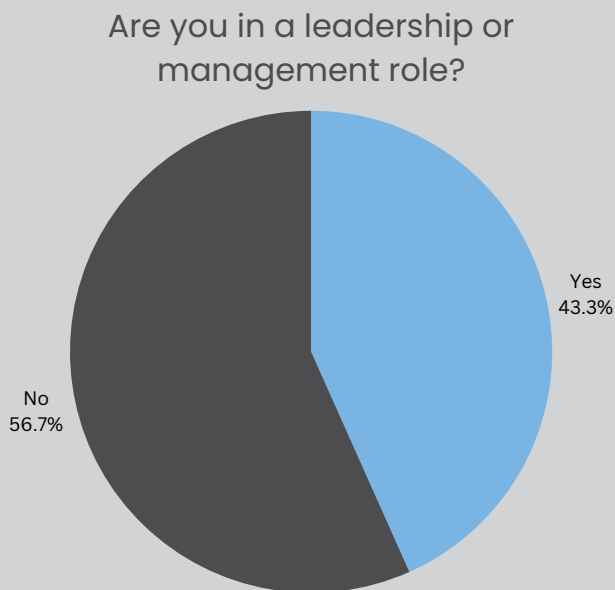
"Confidence gained from seeing that leadership skills are transferable"

"It benefited my confidence to a high level as new and expanded skills and knowledge provided a wider view of the library and information sector."

"It gave me more depth of experience in the world outside of libraries."

"Definitely boosted confidence to have additional skills and learnings."

Comparison of managers and non managers



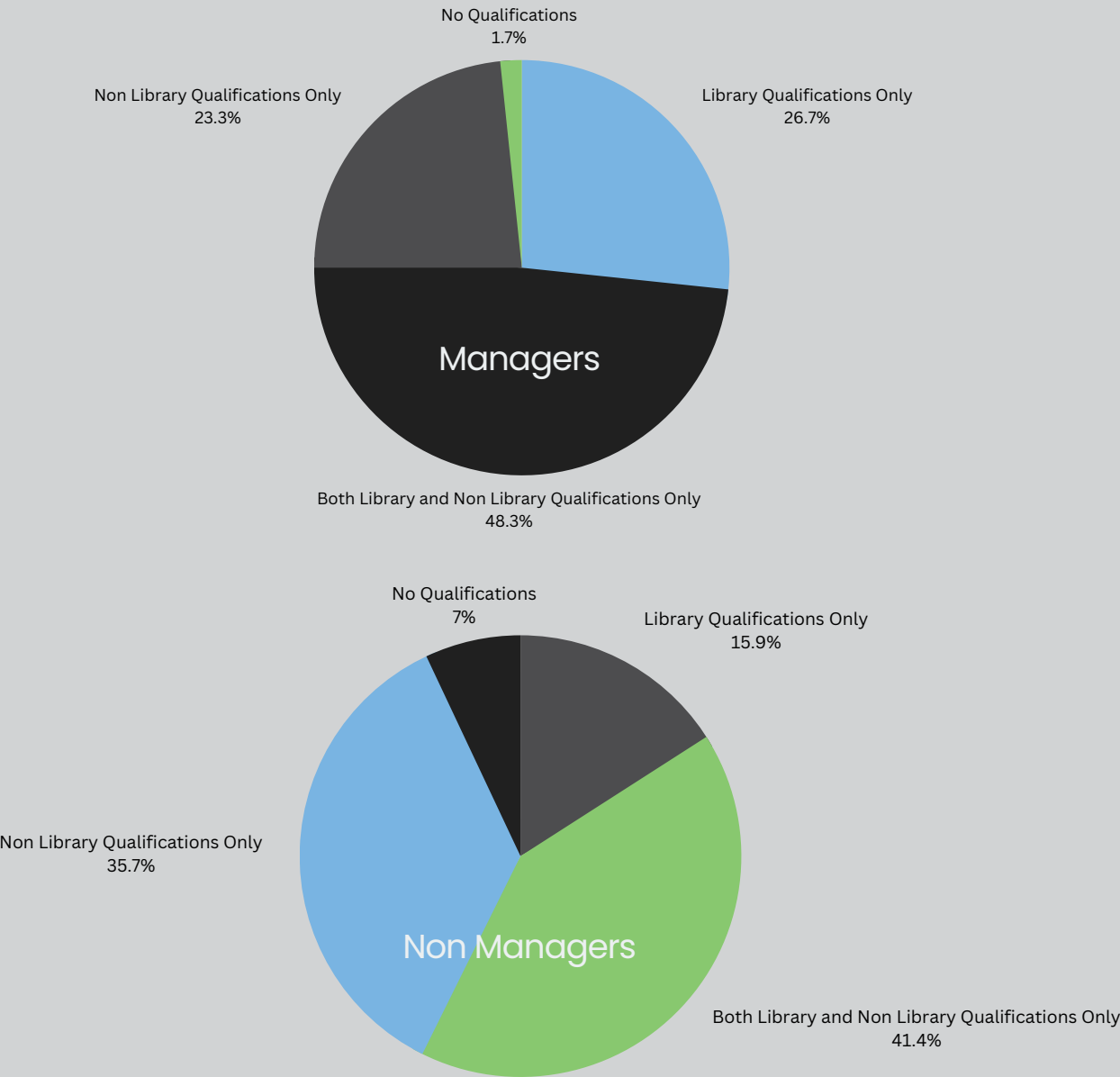
43.3% of respondents are currently in leadership or management positions. Of those not currently in management, 31.8% aspire to be so.

Of those in management positions, 26.7% have library qualifications only, 48.3% have both library and non-library qualifications, and 23.3% have only non-library qualifications. Of those not in management positions, there were fewer people with library qualifications but more with non-library qualifications. These figures are unsurprising as there would be a general expectation that more people in leadership roles have library qualifications.

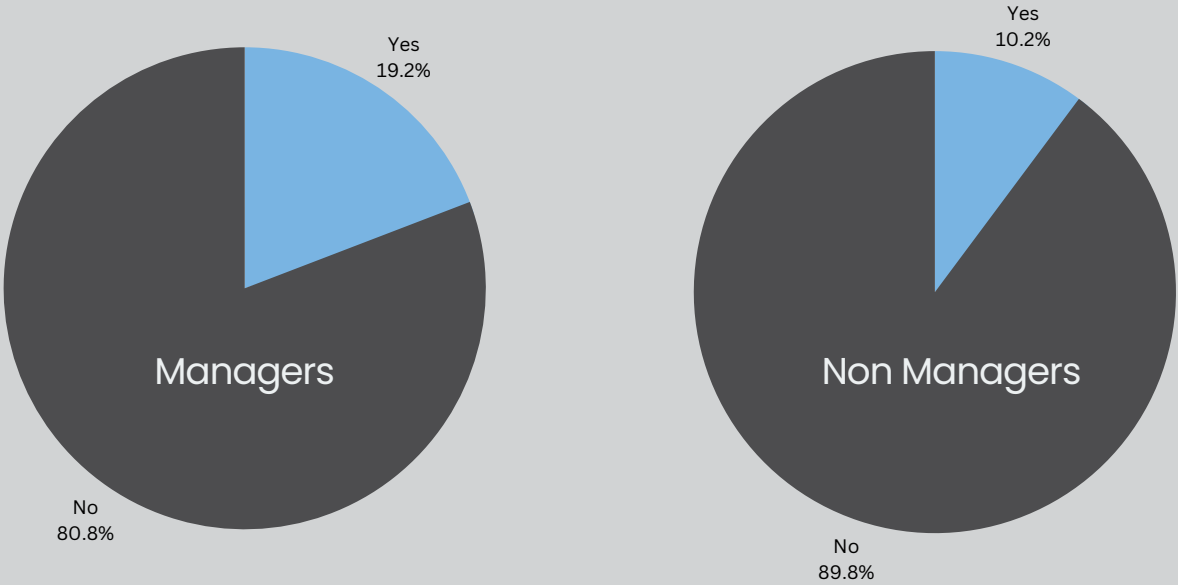
Interestingly, those in management roles are almost twice as likely to have left the sector and returned (19.2% compared to 10.2% of those in non-management roles). This supports the notion that gaining work experience in different sectors can develop skills and confidence.

Regarding career progression, only 22% of respondents have remained in the same role for their library career, with 78% moving to other roles and into management. This indicates substantial career progression opportunities within the sector.

Comparison of managers and non managers (cont.)



Have left the sector and returned



Thomastown Library, sourced from Yarra Plenty
Regional Library

A woman with glasses and a black t-shirt is standing in the center of a library, leading a group of children in a dance or movement activity. She has her arms raised in a 'V' shape. Three children are visible in the foreground, also with their arms raised. They are in a library with bookshelves filled with children's books. The ceiling is decorated with many small flags of various countries. The text 'CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS' is overlaid in large white letters at the bottom of the image.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

When starting this report, the project group knew there would be a diverse range of library staff to draw on. However, our survey results and case studies show that there are countless pathways for entering and progressing through the library profession. This diversity provides a workforce rich with experience that forms a robust public library workforce prepared to deal with the future challenges of the sector.

From this research, the following recommendations can be made:

Expand Libraries Change Lives campaign to a Librarians Change Lives campaign highlighting the job satisfaction opportunities in a library career.

This initiative would aim to shift the focus of the existing Libraries Change Lives campaign to highlight the job satisfaction and rewarding opportunities that a career in the library profession offers. By showcasing the fulfilling aspects of working in libraries, this campaign seeks to attract and inspire individuals to consider pursuing a library career.

Webinar presenting some of the case studies featured in this report

Organise a webinar to present this report's case studies highlighting successful career journeys and achievements within the library profession. This webinar would provide a platform for library professionals to share their experiences, lessons learned, and insights, inspiring others to explore diverse career pathways within the field.

Share case studies on the Public Libraries Victoria (PLV) careers website

Public Libraries Victoria (PLV) will feature a collection of case studies on its career website. The website is a hub of job opportunities, is well-known by current library staff, and is discoverable by those looking to enter public libraries. Sharing these case studies on the website aims to inform and inspire individuals considering a career in libraries, providing valuable insights into the possibilities within the profession.

Sharing this report's findings via professional networks

By leveraging professional networks, these findings seek to reach a broad audience of library professionals, encouraging them to engage with the report's content, reflect on their career pathways, and explore opportunities for growth and advancement within the profession. Examples could include an article in the ALIA Incite magazine, a conference presentation, or LinkedIn.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS (CONT.)

Share case studies with employment professionals, careers advisors, schools, work experience students, and new staff as an induction tool

The case studies highlighting library professionals' career journeys can be shared with employment professionals, career advisors, schools, and other relevant stakeholders to reach a wider audience. Sharing this information aims to raise awareness about the diverse and fulfilling career opportunities available within the library profession and the availability of a range of pathways to employment in the profession. This would encourage individuals to explore library careers as a viable option.

Revival of the LibSTEP: A Library Staff Exchange Program Proposal

This project group sees value in recommending reviving the 2019 Shared Leadership Project proposal *LibSTEP, a Library Staff Exchange Program* (Mason et al., 2019). LibSTEP recommended creating opportunities for library professionals to participate in temporary staff exchanges between libraries. This program would facilitate knowledge sharing, foster collaboration, and enable library staff to broaden their perspectives by working in different libraries. This would be valuable in inspiring career development, supporting peer networking and mentoring opportunities, and providing opportunities to work through career stagnation.

Greater promotion of the ALIA mentoring scheme, other mentoring opportunities, and relationship building in and across workplaces

The research in this report has highlighted the value of mentoring and networking, particularly in supporting professional development and career growth. Library leaders could encourage their staff to participate in existing programs, such as the ALIA mentoring scheme, as part of their professional development. Facilitating and promoting mentorship and relationship building across the profession will enhance career development and the overall professional experience of staff.

Informing the work of the Libraries Future Ready Program

The SLV and PLV Libraries Future Ready Program focuses on proactive planning and strategising for the evolving workforce needs of the library profession. This report and the associated case studies could provide valuable insights into the work of this program. The case studies are particularly noteworthy as they offer inspiration and real-world examples, while the rest of the report presents various ideas and recommendations.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS (CONT.)

How to advance my library career

For our current Victorian public library and SLV staff looking to advance careers consider the following:

Continuous Professional Development

Engaging in lifelong learning and professional development is crucial for career advancement in the library sector.

Stay updated with the latest trends, technologies, and practices by attending conferences, workshops, and webinars. Participate in online courses and obtain relevant certifications, such as professional certifications like ALIA's Certified Practising Librarian (CPL), which can also enhance your credibility and employability.

Gain Diverse Experience

Seek out opportunities to broaden your skills and knowledge. Volunteer to take on project-based work or secondments in different library settings to gain experience in areas such as programming, collection management, digital libraries, or information technology. Embrace roles allowing you to work with diverse user groups or specialised areas.

This versatility will make you more competitive for advanced positions and develop professional networks.

Demonstrate Leadership

Seek out leadership opportunities within your current workplace. Taking on leadership responsibilities, such as supervising a team, managing a project, or leading a working group, showcases your ability to take the initiative and handle increased responsibilities. These experiences will strengthen your resume and demonstrate your leadership potential.

Pursue Higher Education or Further Study

Consider pursuing advanced degrees or postgraduate qualifications in LIM if you are not already qualified. Higher education can open doors to leadership positions, research opportunities, and specialised roles within the library field. If you already have a library qualification, consider studies in an aligned field that will enhance your skills and knowledge.

Many workplaces also offer study assistance you can access to help with your studies.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS (CONT.)

How to advance my library career (cont.)

Embrace Technology

In today's digital age, libraries are increasingly integrating technology into their services and operations. Stay current with emerging technologies such as library management systems, digital preservation, data analytics, and user experience design. Demonstrating proficiency in these areas can set you apart and make you a valuable asset.

Networking

Building a solid professional network is essential for career growth. Attend industry events, join online communities, and engage with fellow professionals. Participate in local library committees, ALIA interest groups, or other relevant associations. Networking can provide valuable insights, mentorship opportunities, and potential job openings.

Publish and Present Professional Literature

Consider contributing to the professional literature by writing articles or blog posts related to library and information management. Presenting at conferences or workshops allows you to share your knowledge and insights with others in the profession while also showcasing your expertise and leadership.

Seek Mentorship

Find a mentor who can provide guidance and support as you progress in your library career. A mentor can offer valuable advice, share their experiences, and help you navigate challenges and opportunities.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS (CONT.)

How to start my career in public libraries

A career in public libraries is fulfilling and rewarding, providing opportunities to serve the community and make a positive impact. If you're interested in starting a career in public libraries in Victoria, here are some steps to consider:

Be Flexible and Open to Opportunities

Public library roles vary widely, from reference librarians to youth services librarians, program coordinators, or digital content specialists. Be open to diverse opportunities that may arise and be willing to start in entry-level positions to gain experience and prove your dedication. As you gain experience and expand your skill set, you can explore specialised roles and pursue career progression.

Research Job Opportunities

Keep an eye on job websites dedicated to library positions in Victoria, such as the PLV Careers website, ALIA, and individual library websites. Subscribe to job alerts, join library-specific mailing lists, and follow library-related social media accounts to stay informed about new opportunities. Reviewing the position descriptions to understand the duties of different roles and skills required is also helpful.

Tailor Your Job Applications

Customise your application to highlight relevant skills and experiences when applying for public library positions. For example, emphasise your customer service skills, communication abilities, and knowledge of library resources and systems. Pay attention to the specific requirements outlined in the job description and demonstrate how you meet those criteria in your application, even if you are drawing on experience from a non-library background.

Pursue Relevant Education

While a formal degree is not always mandatory, it can significantly enhance your prospects in the field. Consider pursuing a Bachelor's or Master's in Library and Information Management from a recognised Australian university. This education will equip you with the foundational knowledge and skills needed in the profession.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS (CONT.)

How to start my career in public libraries (cont.)

Networking and Professional Development

Connect with professionals already in the field. They can provide valuable insights, mentorship, and potential job leads. ALIA provides membership to students at a reduced rate, providing access to professional development opportunities and networking platforms.

Demonstrate a Passion for Community Engagement

Public libraries place a strong emphasis on actively engaging with their communities. Showcase your commitment to community and ability to connect with diverse populations by highlighting any previous experiences working with community groups, organising programs or events, or collaborating with local organisations.

Gain Practical Experience

Look for opportunities to gain hands-on experience through volunteer positions and casual or part-time library jobs. These opportunities can expose you to library operations, services, and interactions with patrons, which can build your experience.

Embrace Continuous Learning

Libraries are constantly evolving to meet the needs of their communities. Show that you are committed to staying current with emerging trends, technologies, and best practices by engaging in continuous learning opportunities such as online courses and workshops to expand your knowledge and skills.

Williams Landing Library, sourced from Wyndham
City Libraries

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDIES

Alix Massina

Seek out the right training to support your career progression!

Alix Massina is currently Manager of Libraries, Arts and Culture at Maribyrnong City Council, she has had a diverse professional journey spanning 29 years, with 24 years spent in the library sector. Alix's career path highlights her ability to adapt and excel in various domains, including ICT retail, architectural administration, and library management. Her multifaceted experiences have equipped her with a broad skill set, enabling her to contribute significantly to the sustainability and growth of State Library Victoria (SLV) and local government libraries.

Alix's career began with a one year stint in ICT retail before transitioning to architectural administration, where she remained for four years. Her background in architectural administration proved invaluable when she joined SLV in a project role supporting a major capital refurbishment project. During this time, Alix pursued a Bachelor of Business (Information Management) at RMIT, envisioning a career in special libraries rather than specifically aiming for a public library role. Her studies and work experience aligned with the architectural practice's focus on cultural facilities and storage of the State collection, further enriching her knowledge base.

While Alix acknowledges that her career development has been relatively passive compared to some, her commitment to learning and growth has remained steadfast. She joined SLV in 1999 and completed her undergraduate degree part-time in 2000. Notably, Alix had the privilege of attending the Aurora Leadership Institute in 2001, an experience that enhanced her leadership skills. Additionally, she obtained PROSCI change management practitioner accreditation, Victorian Government policy skills, internal consulting skills and portfolio management expertise. These additional professional learnings complemented her library career and broadened her organisational awareness.

CASE STUDIES (CONT.)

Throughout her career, Alix has demonstrated a diverse range of skills, strategic thinking and achieved significant milestones. While her technical expertise includes strong ICT skills, her contributions extend beyond the confines of traditional library work. Alix's strategic and commercial achievements include securing funding for the Vision 2020 redevelopment, establishing the venue hire business, delivering the library's first ticketed exhibition, and creating catering and event infrastructure to support ongoing financial sustainability. These endeavours have resulted in notable outcomes, such as a 35% increase in daily visits post Vision 2020 project and over 2 million visitors annually. Alix takes pride in preserving and providing access to Victoria's cultural and documentary heritage while catering to a diverse range of visitors.

Having now transitioned to local government library leadership, Alix finds herself invigorated by the opportunity to amplify the work being done within the local community. She witnesses first-hand the meaningful differences librarians make in people's lives every day. Alix emphasises the importance of embracing a multidisciplinary career path, seeking out training to support strategic thinking and drawing from her diverse experiences in facilities management, change and project management, business development, contract and lease management, finance, strategic and business planning, data analytics, performance reporting, policy, risk and governance. These skills not only support her professional practice but also enhance her organisational awareness.

Alix's unwavering dedication to libraries is evident as she expresses no desire to leave the sector. Despite not considering herself a librarian in the traditional sense, Alix has played a pivotal role in positioning and ensuring the financial sustainability of the SLV. She recognizes the need for collaboration and incorporating expertise from various professions to meet the evolving needs of libraries. Alix emphasizes the importance of career development, valuing experience and values over qualifications, and cultivating a workforce that believes in the transformative power of libraries.

Alix Massina's career journey exemplifies the remarkable diversity of her professional experiences within the library sector. Her path demonstrates the value of cross-disciplinary skills, strategic thinking, and the ability to adapt to changing landscapes by keeping up to date with professional development. Through her leadership and accomplishments, Alix has made a lasting impact on the sustainability and growth of SLV and local government libraries. Her story serves as an inspiration to embrace a multidimensional career and collaborate across professions to harness the full potential of libraries in changing lives.

CASE STUDIES (CONT.)

Jenny Mustey

Find the link between your experience and the value public libraries bring to communities!

Jenny Mustey is currently Library Services Manager in a public library service in regional Victoria. Jenny's career path showcases her transition from education to public libraries and highlights the transferability of her skills and experiences. Her dedication to professional development, involvement in professional organisations and commitment to community engagement have been instrumental in her success.



Image: Jenny Mustey smiling.

While Jenny initially pursued a Bachelor of Education with a major in Librarianship, her path led her to gain experience in a metro library service as a casual library officer during university. This exposure to the public library sector left a lasting impression and planted the seed for a potential future career. Jenny's tenure as a Teacher Librarian in a rural high school further strengthened her skills in team leadership, program planning and delivery, time-management, public speaking, cataloguing, collection development, reference and research skills and technology. The experience also emphasised the importance of creating a safe and welcoming space for students to feel a sense of belonging and support.



Image: Jenny holding 40th Birthday Cake for Tongala Library.

Motivated by a desire for a change in direction, Jenny made the transition from education to the public library sector, drawn by the sense of community and diverse opportunities it offered. Her previous experience in a public library setting and involvement in the School Library Association of Victoria provided a solid foundation for her new role. Recognising her potential, Jenny's manager encouraged her to participate in state-wide development projects and middle management courses, enabling her professional growth.

CASE STUDIES (CONT.)

Additionally, her workplace provided opportunities to pursue certifications in business development and frontline management. Jenny's involvement in state-wide initiatives, collaborations with professional organisations like ALIA, Public Libraries Victoria (PLV), State Library Victoria (SLV) and her continued personal and professional development through courses in family history and mental health, further broadened her skill set and expertise.

Jenny's career is marked by numerous accomplishments. From successfully transitioning from casual relief officer to Library Services Manager within seven years to receiving prestigious awards such as the Pierre Gorman Award from SLV and encouraging her colleague Nerida to receive the Barrett Reid Scholarship for her library service, her dedication and commitment to excellence are evident. Jenny's involvement in pilot programs, partnerships with local organisations, connections with authors and booksellers, and participation in national and international networks like the International Librarians Network and INELI Oceania have further enriched her professional experiences. She has also made impactful contributions through her involvement in the PLV Executive and ACPL, her role as a mentor, and her engagement with health and wellbeing workgroups.

For Jenny, the most rewarding aspect of her career has been the extraordinary people she works with daily. The passion, skills, and creativity displayed by her colleagues and the sector as a whole inspire her. Jenny finds joy in witnessing the impact of their initiatives and the excitement of achieving new milestones within their library service. Her career journey has provided her with opportunities to develop skills, explore new ideas, and leverage her network for the benefit of the community. Jenny's advice to aspiring library professionals is to seize opportunities, be courageous in sharing ideas, and actively engage with professional networks. She emphasizes the importance of continuous learning and utilizing the support and resources provided by organizations like ALIA, PLV, and SLV.

Jenny Mustey's diverse and dynamic library career showcases the value of acquiring a broad range of skills and experiences which support the values of the public library. Her transition from education to the public library sector exemplifies the transferability of skills and the profound impact one can have on the community. By embracing change, actively participating in professional organizations, and pursuing personal and professional growth, Jenny has made significant contributions to the library sector and continues to inspire others. Her story serves as a testament to the immense rewards of a diverse and fulfilling library career.



Image: Campaspe Library Team 2020.



Image: Delegates of INELI Oceania Fiji 2018.

CASE STUDIES (CONT.)

Robyn Ellard

Networking and relationships are key to supporting your career growth!

Robyn Ellard is currently the Executive Manager Public Participation at Yarra Plenty Regional Library. Robyn's journey showcases her extensive experience across various library sectors and roles, her career emphasises the importance of adaptability and seizing opportunities. Her diverse skill set and strong network have played instrumental roles in her professional growth and contributed to her impact on libraries and communities.

Robyn's career has spanned across academic libraries, special libraries, the State Library Victoria (SLV), public libraries, and even roles with the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA). She has excelled in traditional library positions such as cataloguing, reference librarian, visitor services, and branch manager.

Additionally, she has ventured into sales, marketing and communications, events, project management, and strategic advisory roles. Prior to her library career, Robyn gained valuable experience in retail, hospitality, and administration. Despite stumbling upon libraries initially, she quickly developed a passion for the field and sought to contribute to communities through public libraries.

Throughout her career, Robyn took calculated risks by accepting acting and temporary contracts, as well as relocating to different states. Her active involvement in professional organisations, such as her participation in setting up the South Australian Libraries and Information Network (SALIN) and her role as program convenor for the second NLS in South Australia, has helped her build a strong network. By embracing these opportunities, Robyn has widened her professional horizons and expanded her knowledge base.



Image: Robyn Ellard smiling.



Image: Robyn at ALIA Conference 2009 with colleagues.

CASE STUDIES (CONT.)

Robyn holds a Bachelor of Arts degree, specialising in Classical Studies and English Literature. She further pursued her passion for libraries by obtaining a post-graduate diploma in Library and Information Management. While Robyn acknowledges the value of project management and business qualifications, she emphasises the importance of having a learning mindset and investing in continuous professional development. Robyn's active membership in ALIA has provided her with invaluable resources, connections, and growth opportunities.

Robyn's accomplishments and contributions throughout her career have been remarkable. She played a pivotal role in generating a 4% increase in ALIA's membership, reversing the previous trend of declining membership. Additionally, she contributed to the successful delivery of a national campaign and played a key role in designing and implementing strategic frameworks for Victorian public libraries. Robyn's extensive national and international networks have enhanced her professional growth and allowed her to make a significant impact within the library sector.

Robyn firmly believes that her career trajectory and the opportunities she has received would have been unlikely in other industries. The library field has provided her with the chance to work directly with communities in a strategic capacity, which has been both fulfilling and rewarding. The unique nature of the library sector has allowed Robyn to make a tangible difference in supporting and serving diverse communities.



Image: Robyn at IFLA with fellow delegate in Quebec City 2008.

Drawing from her own experiences, Robyn offers valuable advice to aspiring library professionals. She encourages individuals to take on contracts, secondments, and mentorships, while remaining open to relocating regionally or interstate. Recognising transferable skills and actively joining professional organisations like ALIA are also crucial steps toward professional growth and networking.

Robyn's career journey exemplifies the importance of taking risks and building professional networks within the library field. Her diverse experiences across library sectors, combined with her strong network, have propelled her professional growth, and allowed her to make a tangible impact on libraries and communities. Robyn's story serves as an inspiration for aspiring library professionals, emphasising the rewards that come from embracing opportunities and cultivating connections.

CASE STUDIES (CONT.)

Sabina Wills

An Information Studies degree isn't essential to success in the sector!

Sabina Wills has recently entered the public library sector as a Team Leader in a regional library service. Sabina has achieved success in the library sector despite not possessing a library degree. Sabina's diverse professional background and unique skill set enabled her to make a valuable contribution to the library sector and highlights the importance of transferable skills in achieving success in any field.

Sabina has a background in sales, environmental engineering and non-profit work. She embarked on a career transition to the public library sector in February 2022. Sabina's move into the sector highlights that having a library degree is not a prerequisite for success in the sector.

Sabina's diverse professional experiences played a pivotal role in preparing her for a career in the library sector. Her prior work in sales provided her with valuable interpersonal skills and the ability to effectively engage with diverse individuals. As an environmental engineer, Sabina developed expertise in handling various issues, project pitching, and report writing, which proved beneficial in her library role. Furthermore, her experience in the non-profit sector equipped her with grant application development, partnership building and fundraising skills.

Sabina's lifelong patronage of libraries and her hobby of writing comic books for children sparked her interest in the library sector. Having conducted workshops in libraries, she was captivated by the role libraries played in fostering creativity and education. Despite lacking a formal library qualification, Sabina meticulously reviewed the job application to ensure her eligibility, recognising the value of her diverse skill set and its potential applicability to the library sector.



Image: Sabina Wills smiling.

CASE STUDIES (CONT.)

Sabina's previous experiences provided her with essential transferable skills that greatly benefited her library work. Her expertise in grant writing, gained through assessing and applying for grants at the state government level and as a consultant in the non-profit sector, proved invaluable in securing funding for library projects. Additionally, Sabina's proficiency in report writing, combining data and storytelling to inspire action, enabled her to effectively communicate project outcomes and advocate for future initiatives.

Initially, Sabina had only considered state government positions during her job search, aiming to transition from the non-profit sector. However, a friend's difficulty in recruiting for a library role prompted her to explore opportunities in the sector. While she initially assumed a library qualification was necessary, Sabina realised her transferable skills made her a strong candidate for library positions. This realisation opened her eyes to the untapped potential of the library sector for her career.

Sabina's enthusiasm for comic books led her to pitch and deliver the Picture This! Comic book competition in 2023, combining her love for writing, teaching, and fostering creativity in young people. Witnessing the excitement of children as they delved into graphic novels and participated in the competition brought her immense joy. Sabina also found great satisfaction in the day-to-day interactions and immediate impact she made in the local community, which surpassed the fulfillment she experienced in her previous non-profit work.



Image: Sabina, smiling while standing and holding a book at children's picture book shelving.

Sabina Wills' career exemplifies how transferable skills and a passion for the industry can drive success in the library sector, even without a library degree. Her diverse background, encompassing sales, environmental engineering, and non-profit work, provided her with a unique skill set that translated well into the library profession. Sabina's journey serves as an inspiration for those seeking meaningful and fulfilling roles in non-traditional fields.

CASE STUDIES (CONT.)

Tamara Sheward

Show your passion for the services libraries provide and the people they reach!

Tamara Sheward is a Learning Services Officer who discovered her dream job in the public library sector. Tamara's background as a writer, researcher, and time in frontline admin during the pandemic equipped her with valuable skills and a deep appreciation for the services libraries provide to the community. Tamara's success in the public library sector highlights the significance of being passionate about library work, the role of continuous learning, and the positive impact of fostering connections with patrons and colleagues.

Tamara's diverse professional background, which includes writing, researching and customer service, along with her desire to make a positive impact, led her to pursue a career in the public library sector.

Tamara's previous roles centred around writing, journalism and research, allowing her to cultivate strong communication skills, research capabilities and a deep love for reading. Despite her desire to work in a library, her travel writing and editing commitments kept her constantly on the move. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic halted her travel-related work, Tamara seized the opportunity to shift her focus towards studying and realising her dream of working in a public library.

While pursuing a Certificate 3 in Library and Information Services, Tamara had the opportunity to complete a library placement, providing her with valuable insights into the field. This led her to secure her role as a Learning Services Officer and gain further valuable experience on the job. Tamara's focus has been to engage in on-the-job learning, including Early Years programming and heritage projects, while considering future study options accredited by the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA).

Tamara's standout strength as a Learning Services Officer lies in her exceptional customer service skills, effective communication, and research expertise.



Image: Tamara Sheward smiling.

CASE STUDIES (CONT.)

Her passion for helping patrons shines through as she assists them with resources, resolves technology-related queries, offers advice, and locates information. Tamara takes pride in planning and hosting Storytimes, witnessing the joy that songs and stories bring to young library patrons. Working in a collaborative team further enhances her ability to provide exceptional service and enrich the community's library experience.

Tamara's career in the library sector has had a profound impact on her personal growth and job satisfaction. The experience has cultivated her patience, understanding and resilience, allowing her to handle diverse situations with ease. Stepping out of her comfort zone, she has discovered newfound capabilities, such as entertaining large groups with songs and dances during library programs. Tamara's work in the library has reinforced the importance of literacy in the community's well-being and has facilitated meaningful connections with both community members and fellow staff.



Image: Tamara holding a children's picture book.

Tamara Sheward's story highlights the significance of being passionate about the services libraries provide for the community. Her journey from a writer and researcher to a Learning Services Officer demonstrates the power of embracing one's passions and aligning them with a fulfilling career. Tamara's experience highlights the value of continuous learning, the transformative nature of engaging with library patrons, and the personal growth that can be achieved by working in a sector that positively impacts people's lives.

CASE STUDIES (CONT.)

Cristopher Pizarro

Try and learn and try again!

Cristopher's story highlights the importance of persistence, continuous learning and embracing new opportunities. Originally from Chile, he embarked on a journey that led him to Australia and eventually to a fulfilling career in the public library sector. His background in engineering and diverse work experiences have shaped his path.

After working as a logistics and maintenance engineer for Komatsu in Chile for over a decade, Cristopher arrived in Australia on a working holiday. Inspired by his desire to utilise his project management skills and work with diverse communities, he sought employment in the library and community development sectors. Despite facing challenges, Cristopher's determination fuelled his perseverance in applying for multiple positions over a two-year period.

Cristopher's persistence paid off when he secured a role as a Coordinator – Programs and Engagement at Yarra Plenty Regional Library. This achievement came after his second application to the organisation, highlighting the importance of not giving up easily and seizing the right opportunity. Cristopher found the perfect balance between making a difference in the community and utilising his planning and project management skills in the library service.



Image: Cristopher, with the Easter Bunny and colleague.



Image: Cristopher, shelving books in LGBTQ+ display with Kira the Reading Dog.

Having experienced career progression through training and networking in his previous role, Cristopher is keen to apply the same approach to his library career. Now that he has secured a position, he actively seeks internal opportunities within the library to gain diverse experiences. Cristopher is proactive in applying for temporary positions outside the organisation at higher levels, aiming to acquire acting experience and advance his professional journey.

CASE STUDIES (CONT.)

Cristopher's career journey has exposed him to various skills and experiences that contribute to his success in the library sector. His background in engineering, with a focus on logistics and planning, equipped him with essential project management skills necessary for his role as a Coordinator. Moreover, his employment in retail in Australia provided him with customer service, stock management and membership sales expertise, complementing his abilities in serving library patrons effectively.

Cristopher faced the difficulty of capturing the attention of hiring managers. However, he persevered by applying repeatedly until he found the opportunity he sought. Reflecting on his experience, Cristopher believes that opportunities to connect with library professionals and understand the values of the library service would have greatly benefited him.



Image: Cristopher, holding a child's drawing at community development in Haiti with Komatsu.

Cristopher has found joy in working with the Spanish-speaking community within the library service, particularly through technology programs. He appreciates the opportunity to contribute his skills and knowledge from his country of origin and work background.

Cristopher's journey offers valuable lessons for aspiring professionals. He encourages them not to give up if they are not successful in securing a job on the first attempt. Instead, each interview should be seen as a learning opportunity to improve for the next opportunity. Continuous learning and research are crucial for growth. Cristopher also emphasises the importance of perseverance and resilience in pursuing one's career goals.

While Cristopher acknowledges the possibility of moving to a higher position in the future, his ultimate desire is to continue working in community development. His commitment to making a positive impact and his passion for professional growth will undoubtedly shape his future endeavours in the library sector.

CASE STUDIES (CONT.)

Anna-Marie Restall

There is always value in helping others!

Anna-Marie's diverse professional background in aviation, training coordination, and teaching has significantly enriched her library career. Her ability to connect with people from different walks of life and bring unique perspectives has strengthened her role in supporting the community. Anna-Marie's passion for serving and genuinely helping others led her to the fulfilling world of public libraries, where human connection takes precedence over financial gain.



Image: Anna- Marie Restall smiling

Starting as a casual Library Customer Service Officer, Anna-Marie has advanced to become a Senior Librarian. She is currently pursuing a Graduate Diploma in Information Management, specialising in Library and Information Management.

Anna-Marie's prior qualifications include a Master's in Teaching (Primary), which provided her with essential teaching skills, critical thinking and IT skills applicable to diverse age groups.

Anna-Marie's previous roles have equipped her with valuable skills that seamlessly align with her library career. These skills include program coordination, teamwork, time management, leadership, literacy teaching, and effective communication with individuals from various backgrounds. Her experience in dealing with critical situations and challenging patrons has also proven beneficial in managing difficult library scenarios.

Although Anna-Marie's teaching degree provided many transferable skills into the profession, she initially felt like an outsider in the library profession. The lack of librarian credentials hindered her participation in secondments and other opportunities. Reflecting on this experience, Anna-Marie emphasises the importance of early support and encouragement to gain relevant credentials to overcome such barriers or support from others to overcome these personal perceptions.

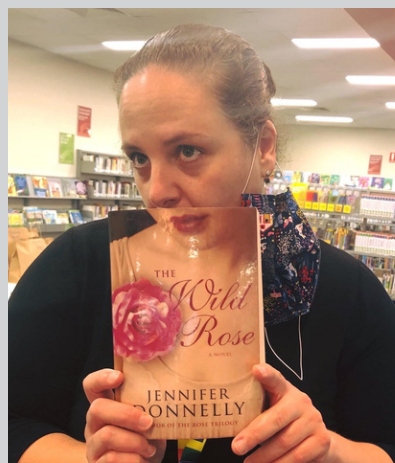


Image: Anna-Marie Book Face Friday

CASE STUDIES (CONT.)

Helping people is at the core of Anna-Marie's passion. She finds immense satisfaction in being an advocate for the community, assisting individuals in navigating complex systems and processes. Anna-Marie's library career has provided her with a greater sense of purpose and an avenue to share valuable resources and support within her network and the broader community. Her work brings comfort, warmth and a lifelong commitment to making a positive difference.

Anna-Marie envisions herself remaining in the library profession until retirement, recognising the enduring fulfillment it offers. The library industry, where community satisfaction is the ultimate measure of success, brings joy and appreciation from all who encounter its services. Anna-Marie eagerly welcomes newcomers to this rewarding career, emphasising the significance of the work done and the invaluable connections formed within the library community.



Image: Anna-Marie with children at Storytime.

Anna-Marie's journey exemplifies the importance of valuing human connection, embracing diverse experiences, and genuinely helping others in the library profession. Her background prior to entering libraries, combined with his transferable skills and passion for community service, has contributed to her growth and impact within the library sector. Anna-Marie's story serves as an inspiration for individuals seeking a meaningful career where every action matters and where the library becomes a beacon of comfort and support in people's lives.

CASE STUDIES (CONT.)

Josie Shaw

Libraries are places of learning and librarians love learning, seek out opportunities to learn!

Josie's career path is a testament to the power of continuous learning to advance in the library sector. Having worked in various fields, including education, sales, hospitality and small business, Josie recognises the invaluable role that learning plays in enhancing her skills and advancing her career. Her commitment to acquiring diverse knowledge and experiences has allowed her to excel in the library sector and make a meaningful impact on the communities she serves.



Image: Josie Shaw smiling.

Josie's diverse background in education, sales, hospitality and small business has equipped her with a unique skill set that enriches her library career. Her teaching experience has honed her ability to effectively communicate and impart knowledge to individuals of all backgrounds. Her sales skills have enabled her to identify patrons' needs and provide them with tailored resources and information. Additionally, her hospitality experience has equipped her with crowd management skills and the ability to handle challenging interactions with empathy and professionalism.

Josie's journey exemplifies the importance of continuous learning for professional growth. From starting as a shelver in a public library to pursuing degrees in teaching and librarianship, Josie's desire for knowledge has been a driving force in her career progression. She actively sought out diverse opportunities, including contract roles overseas, managing corporate libraries, and even building web libraries for clients. Josie's openness to learning and embracing new challenges has allowed her to expand her horizons and discover her strengths as a trainer and coordinator.

Josie acknowledges the value of ongoing training and networking to enhance her skills and stay current in the library field. While she has taken advantage of courses and training opportunities throughout her career, she also recognises the need for further studies in libraries to deepen her expertise. Josie actively engages in benchmarking and networking with professionals in the industry, fostering valuable connections and staying updated on best practices.

CASE STUDIES (CONT.)

One of the most rewarding aspects of Josie's library career is her ability to make a positive impact on the lives of others. Whether it's assisting patrons in discovering relevant resources or providing support to a diverse range of individuals and communities, Josie finds great satisfaction in those "aha" moments when she witnesses the impact of her assistance. This sense of purpose fuels her passion for the library profession and inspires her to continuously improve her skills.

Josie's experience offers valuable insights for those considering a career in libraries. She emphasises the importance of building connections within the industry, sharing knowledge and being prepared for the unique challenges and rewards of working in a library environment. Josie encourages aspiring professionals to be open to different learning opportunities, both formal and informal, and to embrace the small but interconnected world of Library Land.

CASE STUDIES (CONT.)

Dylan Oosterweghel

Libraries make a meaningful impact and need passionate and inclusive people to run them!

Dylan Oosterweghel is Team Leader of Community Engagement and Outreach at Yarra Libraries. Before finding his calling in libraries, he had a background in hospitality, marketing and design. Dylan's journey highlights the vital role libraries play in making a tangible difference within local communities. His insights emphasise the importance of employing vibrant and inclusive individuals in running libraries effectively.

Dylan's career path started in hospitality and events, where he gained valuable skills in customer engagement, problem-solving and operational efficiency. Transitioning into libraries, Dylan discovered the remarkable parallels between bar experiences and library interactions – both attracted people from all walks of life. He quickly realised that his diverse experiences, including marketing and graphic design, were assets in his work within libraries.

Dylan's journey within the library sector showcases his resilience and adaptability. Starting as a casual library officer, he gradually took on various roles during the pandemic, including managing emergency relief operations and leading community engagement initiatives. His commitment to continuous learning and his academic background in business and design equipped him with the skills needed to navigate the diverse challenges faced in the library sector.

Recognising the significance of diversity, Dylan advocates for libraries to embrace not only the physical appearance of their workforce but also the diversity of ideas, educational backgrounds, skills, religions, culture and processes. Dylan strongly supports the notion that a non-homogeneous workforce makes the library industry stronger and more robust. Dylan's enthusiasm for diverse cultures and their experiences in volunteering with various community organisations further enhances his ability to connect with community members.



Image: Dylan Oosterweghel smiling.

CASE STUDIES (CONT.)

Dylan's belief in the transformative potential of libraries centres around his role as crossroads for individuals experiencing change in their lives. He emphasises the importance of supporting, teaching and empowering library patrons to make effective changes in their own lives. Dylan encourages library staff to love and empathise with all customers, question their own roles, embrace change and remain innovative.



Image: Dylan with colleague holding food pantry supplies.

Dylan's story highlights the vital role libraries play in making a meaningful impact within local communities. Libraries serve as catalysts for positive change, supporting individuals on their journey of transformation. Dylan's experiences demonstrate the significance of vibrant and inclusive individuals in running libraries effectively, embracing diversity and fostering innovation. By understanding and addressing the unique needs of communities, libraries can truly become powerful agents of change.

Bargoonga Nganjin, sourced from Yarra Libraries

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Warrandyte Community Centre, sourced from
Whitehouse Manningham Libraries



APPENDICES

QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS

1. Do you have a Library & Information Science qualification?

- Undergraduate
- Postgraduate
- Diploma
- None

2. Do you have any other qualifications?

- Health Care
- Teaching
- Social work
- Marketing & Communication
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Other (please specify) _____

3. What percentage of your career has been spent in the public library sector or State Library Victoria?

- 0-25%
- 25-50%
- 50-75%
- 75-100%

4. Have you ever left the public libraries sector and returned (including State Library Victoria)?

- Yes (branching – Can you provide further details?)
- No

5. If you left the public library sector or State Library Victoria and returned to either to what degree do you feel this benefited your skills in your career?

6. What is your first position in public library sector or State Library Victoria (including volunteer roles)?

7. What other industries have you worked in, if any?

8. Do you work in a public library?

- Yes
- No (branching – Do you work at the State Library of Victoria? Y/N)

9. What is your current job title?

QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS (CONT.)

10. Is your library located in a Metropolitan, Regional or Rural area?

- Metropolitan
- Regional
- Rural

11. Are you in leadership/manager/supervisor role?

- Yes
- No

12. Do you aspire to move into a leadership/management role?

- Yes
- No

13. What areas of public libraries have you worked in?

- Adult Programming & Community Programming
- Programming & Exhibitions
- Children's and Youth Programming
- IT Digital
- Customer Service
- Collection
- Marketing & Communications
- Administrative (HR & Finance)
- Management
- Other

14. The Project Team will be looking for stories of Library Professionals with a diverse career pathway to develop case studies. Would you like to be involved?

- Yes (**branching – Contact details**)
- No

CASE STUDY QUESTIONS

Career Background

1. Have you always worked in the public library sector (including State Library Victoria) or in other industries? If you've worked in other industries describe how this has supported you in your public library or State Library Victoria career.
2. What inspired you to pursue a career in the public library sector or at State Library Victoria?
3. How have you progressed your library career? Describe what this pathway looked like for you. (Secondment, went to other industries, additional study, etc.).

Qualification & Education

1. What have you studied to support your career in the public library sector or State Library Victoria? Describe how this has supported your career development.
2. What transferrable skills did you have coming into the public library sector or State Library Victoria? Describe where you gained these skills and how they've supported you.
3. What skills or professional development would have helped you transition into the public library sector (including State Library Victoria) or what would help you move up in the public library sector?

Current Position

1. Describe your biggest achievements or best memories working in a public library (including State Library Victoria). What do you love about your career?
2. How has working in the public library sector of State Library Victoria changed your life? #librarieschangelives
3. What insights or advice would you give to someone wanting to join the public library sector or State Library Victoria?
4. Do you see yourself leaving libraries in the next X years and why? (E.g. Industry change, retirement, family commitments, etc.)

CASE STUDY QUESTIONS (CONT.)

Conclusion

1. Tell us anything else you think will be relevant for this project.

2.Full Name

3.Do you consent to be contacted if more information is required?

- Yes
- No