Australian Library and
Information Association

ALIA LIS EDUCATION, SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT
TREND REPORT 2014

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

Having been both an LIS practitioner and an academic, I think it is important for educators, students, employers and the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) to have a clear picture of what is happening in the field of LIS education.

Educators have so many demands on their time — planning, teaching, assessment, research and student support — that it is rare we can make time to look at the bigger picture beyond the walls of our own institutions. This report provides a valuable overview of what has been happening in LIS education over the last five years and will contribute to our understanding of how best to direct our efforts.

Students can use this report to inform their decisions about the level of study they wish to pursue. Employers will find it useful in identifying the available pool of library and information professionals, and, as the Association, we will use the key findings to support our approach to course accreditation.

This is the first edition of the ALIA LIS Education Trend Report but it is intended that this becomes a regular feature of the ALIA education program. We would welcome any thoughts you have about the content of future editions and we would welcome your feedback to education@alia.org.au.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the commitment and expertise of the team at ALIA — Judy Brooker, Director of Learning; Lisa Strickland, Education Manager, and Anne Newton, Learning Coordinator.

Damian Lodge AALIA (CP)
ALIA President

1. VIEWPOINT

Although some might disagree, there are not many information studies schools in Australian universities and those that exist are all victims of the politics of the universities under which they serve. Sometimes these politics are most favourable and academic colleagues and students survive and thrive, and in other cases the situation can be quite the opposite and challenging.

This is where the strong and vital support of the professional body, like ALIA , is absolutely paramount. My own experience before I retired from academia in 2013, proved that the formal course accreditation programme that ALIA provides stood our own school in good stead in offering professionally accredited courses through the, then, rigour of the course recognition process. It was worth the pain for the gain. Universities love to boast about their strong achievements and accredited courses is one such boast.

In my many, but not as many as some, years of teaching and administration of academic areas in the discipline, the one issue that I felt was not helpful to any of us was when competition among the far too many universities in Australia reared its ugly head. There was a time when co-operation and collaboration, two basic mantras of the library profession, were practiced and valued in the education sphere, but this is rarely the case today.

My experiences enforce my long held belief that the integration, and not separation, of principles and practices in librarianship, archives and records management are important in the education of today's LIS professional. But much to my dismay, each profession clings desperately to its principles and values and identity as an information agency. True, some of the principles and practices I am experiencing in these three domains as I now undertake pro bono work for a community organisation, contradict each other, so what to do? The debate on such matters must be heard and investigated academically.

Library and information studies education has jumped on many bandwagons in order to be seen as competitive, relevant and attractive to the discrete and relatively small number of students it attracts in Australia. I see that Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are being considered, if not offered. The 'open' part of this trend should satisfy my wish for cooperation and collaboration between teaching schools. But will it? What about the intellectual property and copyright issues of the content? And how will bodies like ALIA accredit such offerings?

We live in interesting times and what has happened over the last five years — covered in this report — will influence how we face the next five years. We must encourage a collaborative approach between educators, employers, students and ALIA to ensure that the future is a good one, and that the graduates coming out of LIS courses have the knowledge and skills they need to make a significant contribution to the LIS profession.

Dr Kerry Smith FALIA

Dr Kerry Smith taught for more than 20 years in the Department of Information Studies at Curtin University, and was often its Head, retiring as Associate Professor in 2013. She was President of ALIA in 1997 and awarded a Fellowship in 2002. In 2014, she was made a Fellow of the Library Board of WA. She has made a significant contribution to the library and information profession both nationally and internationally, through her active involvement with the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA).

2. THE LIS EDUCATION YEAR IN REVIEW 2013–2014

There have been many significant influences driving change in library and information science (LIS) education over the last 10 years. These have included:

- The 2008 global financial crisis (GFC)

- Federal, state and institutional reforms in the higher and vocational education sectors

- Developments in the education expectations of similar, peer professions

- Growth in distance and part time LIS education

- The increasing dominance of the 'I' for information in LIS

- The imperative of digital literacy

- The evolving requirements of LIS employers.

For ALIA, the financial impact of the GFC reinforced concerns about the sustainability of course registration based on a free, on request model, for any institution offering LIS courses at Diploma, Bachelor, Post graduate Diploma or Masters. The assessment and approval of LIS courses is considered a core business of the Association. However, what was becoming increasingly apparent was the cost of the process, in staff time and implementation; its reliance on volunteers, and the administrative burden for educators.

The ALIA Board set about reviewing ALIA's approach to education, updating the terminology from course registration to course accreditation in line with current thinking — ALIA's role was much more than just listing courses — followed by increased emphasis on continuing professional development (CPD); a review in conjunction with educators, of the ALIA *Library and Information Sector: Core Knowledge, Skills and Attributes* policy; a landscape report on course accreditation by Dr Gill Hallam, and, in 2013, the ALIA Board's confirmation of new processes for LIS education.

A course accreditation and LIS education reform agenda was also being looked at by higher educators themselves. This resulted in the undertaking of a major project and the publication of a final project report to the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) on the Framework for the Education of the Information Professions in Australia (2011). Despite decades of involvement in the education of the profession, ALIA barely rated a mention in the report. However, developments since this publication have proven that it is in the mutual interests of educators and the Association to continue to work together, to respond together to change, to emphasise common goals and to acknowledge the benefits of mutual support. This has especially resonated with the educators in the VET sector.

Federal, state and institutional reform in tertiary education has accelerated over the last five years. Regulation jostling and financial cost shifting have dictated the agenda. The strengthening of federal reforms with the influence of the AQF, the roles of TEQSA and ASQA and the introduction of the Skills Councils in VET, and the prioritising of private RTOs has been lurching between federal and state or territory politics depending on the ideology of the elected government of the time. Tertiary education is increasingly vulnerable to short term and expedient political agendas.

LIS education has not been immune; the tension between teaching LIS students and the increasing demand for research output from LIS schools has intensified the pressure on academics. The lack of recognition within the academy of the special requirements of higher educators teaching professional education has compounded this pressure.

The developing preference for LIS distance education by students has also changed the dynamic of LIS higher education supply, with increasing dominance of fewer higher education providers. The profile of higher educators themselves has changed, and the battle for student numbers rumbles below the surface. The personal cost of education for students will become increasingly important in the decisions students make around course choice.

VET education is similarly affected by external political agendas causing dramatic reductions in funding within some states and with convergence on the agenda for the TAFE systems. Individual LIS VET courses have been significantly affected by the introduction of Skills Councils, training packages and the reforms to homogenise vocational education nationally.

A preference for face to face education at the VET level had led to an increase in LIS courses seeking accreditation however online courses are becoming increasingly popular in VET education as well.

The development of private RTOs and their increased support within the new federal government agenda is impacting especially on VET.

All these developments are taking place in the context of changing requirements for professional recognition by our peer professions. The health and education professions regulated the compulsory requirement for CPD, changing the landscape for professionalism. A formal commitment to ongoing learning to maintain professional status is now regulated, structured and expected by our peer professions.

ALIA has responded with a 2020 commitment to acknowledge the importance of CPD by introducing a new level of membership: Certified Professional with compulsory CPD. By 2020, this will be THE requirement for ALIA LIS professionals. LIANZA and CILIP have already moved in this direction.

In summary, we are living through interesting times for LIS education and increasingly we will need to rely on our agility, resilience and ethics as a profession to continue to produce flexible, responsive and intelligent solutions to the challenges ahead, knowing that our profession, in the era of the information revolution will be increasingly needed to support a civilised society. The objects of the ALIA constitution continue to underpin our strength and determination.

Judy Brooker AALIA (CP)
ALIA Director of Learning

3. INTRODUCTION

As the peak professional body for the library and information science (LIS) sector, ALIA understands the value of a vibrant and successful environment for LIS education.

Our academics and educators make an important contribution to the sector. They encourage the development of the next generation of library and information professionals; they provide support for ongoing learning and they carry out research to provide evidence and insights to help shape the future of LIS.

LIS students bring new skills and a fresh approach to the sector. Often working while they study, they are not only critical to grassroots library and information services, they also go on to be managers and leaders, helping to take their institutions and the sector to the next level.

ALIA supports LIS education through course accreditation and through partnerships with educators to provide professional development opportunities for Members. We have a strong research agenda, working with academics and practitioners to identify underlying trends, best practice and innovative 'next' practice, which helps inform course content. We also provide information and resources through our ALIA website.

We cannot talk about education without also discussing employment. The new generation of qualified professionals need jobs and our institutions and library vendors need employees with the necessary skills.

This *ALIA LIS Education Trend Report 2014* will help give educators, employers and students greater clarity about the education and employment landscape and about the qualifications that will help ensure their success. It will also be a useful addition to the information ALIA supplies to government and other agencies.

4. KEY FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

4.1   The facts

4.1.1   In 2014, there are 26 institutions delivering 39 ALIA accredited courses around Australia. In addition, there are VET (Vocational Education and Training) providers offering Certificates II, III and IV in library and information studies. This is a decline since 2012, when there were 29 institutions and 49 courses.

4.1.2   There are, based on a three year average, approximately 4,800 students studying for an LIS qualification every year, 25% through higher education, 75% through VET. Of these 4,800 students, approximately 2800 are enrolled in ALIA accredited courses leading to professional membership of the Association. The most popular qualifications are the Master's degree in higher education and the Diploma in the VET sector.

4.1.3   The number of LIS students enrolled in higher education courses remained virtually unchanged between 2010 and 2012. They represent less than 1% of the total higher education student population. This compares with three-year average growth of 2.9% for all higher education students. In the VET sector, growth in LIS student numbers dropped from 7.8% in 2010 to -2.5% in 2012, compared with a fall from 5.4% in 2010 to 3.3% in 2012 for all VET students.

4.1.4   In terms of the characteristics of employees , LIS workers are significantly older, with the median age between six and 10 years higher, compared with all occupations. Average full time earnings per week for Librarians are 30% higher than the average for all occupations, while full time hours worked are 12% less. Technicians' earnings are on a par with all occupations, but full time hours worked are 21% less. Library Assistants' average weekly earnings are 13% less than for all occupations, with hours worked 16% less.

4.1.5   In the last five years, there has been a 22.5% drop in the number of Librarian positions in the workforce; a 4.2% fall in the number of Technician jobs and a 9.2% increase in the number of Library Assistant positions. This situation is predicted to be partially reversed by growth in Technician and Librarian positions between 2013 and 2018 and a decrease in Library Assistant jobs.

4.1.6   Librarians, Technicians and Library Assistants have significantly higher education attainment compared with people employed in all occupations in Australia. For example, some 60% of Librarians have a Post Graduate or Graduate Diploma or a Graduate Certificate, compared with 9% for all occupations. The essential role of education underpinning participation in the sector remains strong, with 69% of workers having Librarian or Technician qualifications.

4.1.7   As well as library and information service delivery positions, there are also approximately 1,000 jobs working for the Australian vendors who supply library and information related products.

4.1.8   Although fine-grain employment figures for the sector are in short supply, available statistics show that the proportion of LIS qualified professionals in the workforce remains steady at approximately 30% for public libraries and 60% for university libraries. Together, public and university libraries account for approximately 45% of all library and information jobs.

4.1.9   The core skills, knowledge and attributes required by library and information professionals are evolving and it is important that educators, employers, students, professionals and ALIA work together to ensure people working in the sector are equipped to deliver quality services.

4.2   Our interpretation

4.2.1   Library and information science is an occupation with a relatively small, highly qualified workforce (fewer than 30,000 out of 11.5 million, or 0.2% of the Australian labour force) and this is reflected in its equally small education footprint (0.2% of VET students and 0.1% of higher education students).

4.2.2   Although the LIS workforce is small, our sector has significant reach and profile because millions of Australians use library services. More than 10 million Australians are registered public library users (*source: National and State Libraries Australasia*) and still more use university, VET, special and school libraries, although there will be some duplication.

4.2.3   The library and information sector remains an attractive proposition for qualified professionals looking for relatively well paid positions and regular hours, but there is undoubtedly competition for jobs. There will be a modest increase in the number of positions available over the next five years and Baby Boomer retirements will create new openings in existing positions. However, the job market will remain tight, with as many as 1,800 professionals graduating each year and seeking employment. While many of these graduates will already be employed in the sector, others will be new entrants.

4.2.4   LIS courses have been particularly vulnerable to changes in the TAFE system at a state and territory level, which have seen pressure on individual courses and substantial increases in student fees. Proposed federal government reforms in higher education could also have a harmful effect on LIS courses in universities.

4.2.5   Vendors in the library and information sector saw their income effectively halved between 2009 and 2011 and this had a significant impact on jobs. There were a number of factors affecting their business performance, including the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis and the strength of the Australian dollar, which made imports a more affordable option, negatively impacting their sales performance.

4.2.6   As the majority of library and information services are local, state, territory or federally funded, they are subject to the effects of government budget cuts. As a result, there is some despondency about job prospects in the sector. However, the figures from government and other sources suggest that this lack of confidence may be over-played and the reality may be less damaging than anticipated.

5. DETAILED FINDINGS

5.1 Institutions providing LIS education

In 2014, there were nine higher education institutions offering 22 ALIA accredited courses, including Master's, Bachelor and Graduate Diploma. Three of these institutions offered courses specifically for Teacher Librarians. There were 17 universities, TAFEs and polytechnics offering 17 ALIA accredited Diploma courses, making a total of 26 accredited institutions and 39 accredited courses. This was a decline from 2011 and 2012, when there were 29 institutions and 49 courses. [See figures 1, 2, 3].

In addition, the VET institutions included above offered courses leading to Certificate II, III and IV qualifications. These were not ALIA accredited, as the minimum requirement for ALIA professional membership is a Diploma.

Figure 1: Number of ALIA accredited institutions
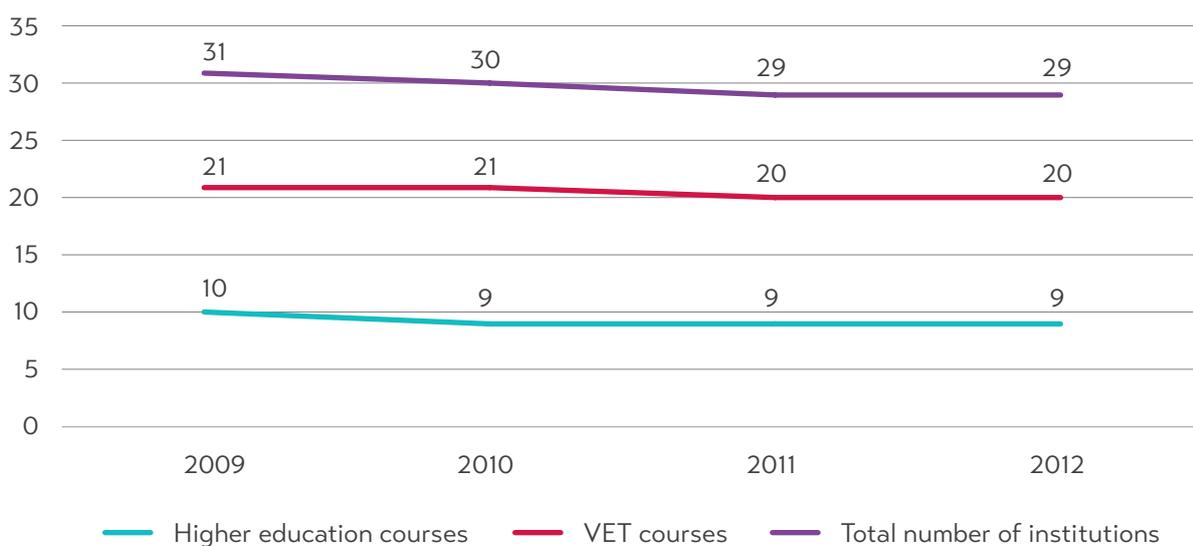
*Source: ALIA course accreditation records*

Figure 2: Number of ALIA accredited courses
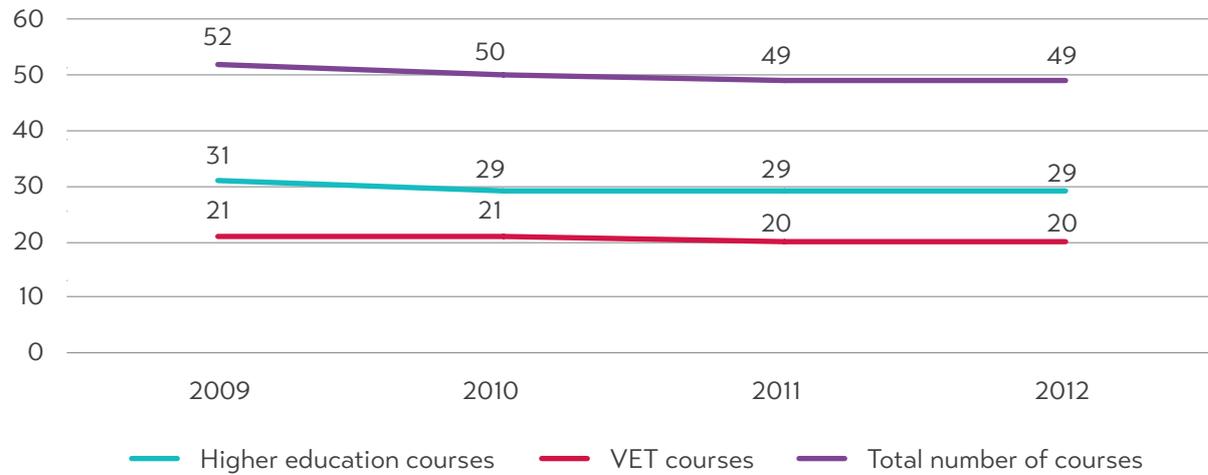
Source: ALIA course accreditation records

There are ALIA accredited courses offered by institutions in every state and territory [figure 3] but many institutions are now offering distance education and location is no longer a barrier to course delivery.

Figure 3: ALIA accredited LIS courses by state/territory 2014
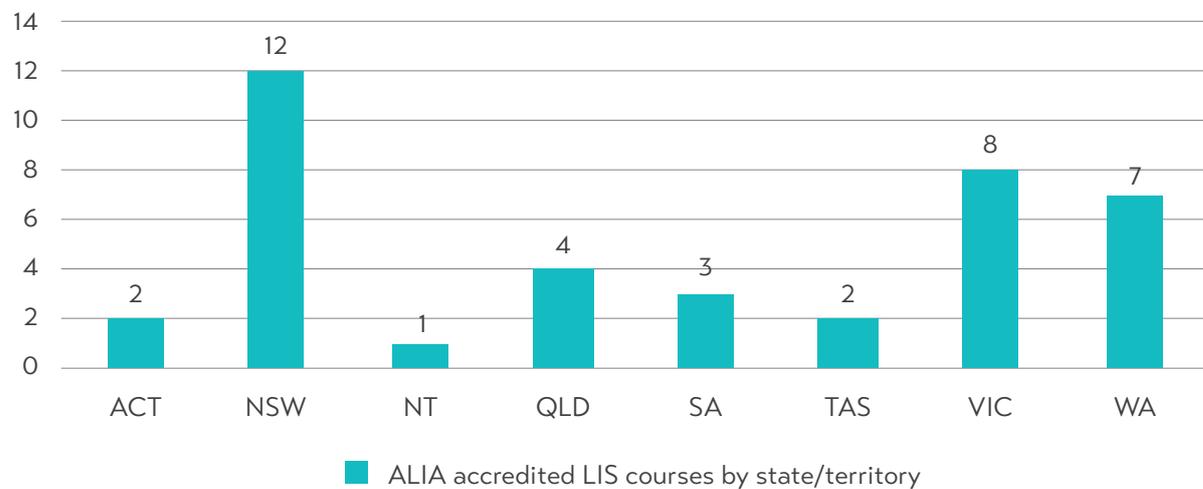
Source: ALIA course accreditation records

The majority of ALIA accredited courses sit within a business and IT environment within the institution [figure 4].

Figure 4: ALIA accredited LIS courses by faculty 2014

Source: ALIA course accreditation records

ALIA LIS EDUCATION, SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT TREND REPORT 2014
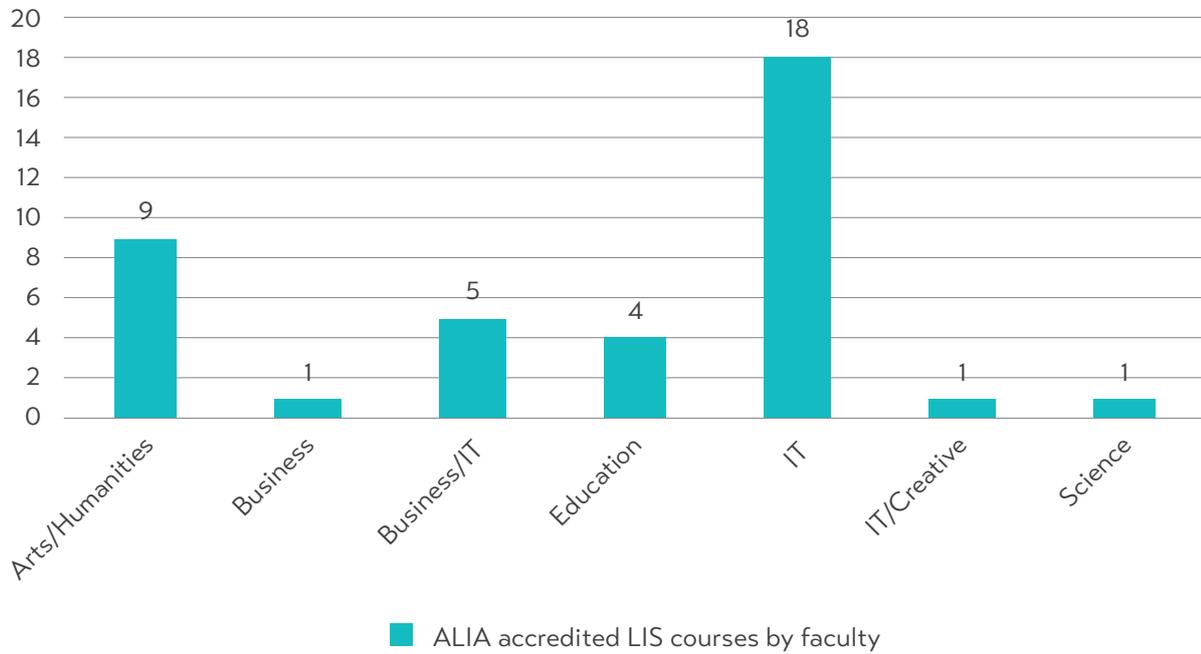
5.2   LIS students

Between 2009 and 2012, the number of LIS students averaged 4,821 per annum, with approximately 25% in higher education and 75% in VET [figure 5].

There were, on average, 2,827 students enrolled in ALIA accredited courses during this period [figure 6]. For these accredited courses, the number of students studying at VET Diploma and Advanced Diploma level declined by 435 over the four years, while the number of students studying for a Bachelor, other undergraduate degree or a Master's increased by 296.

The Master's qualification has overtaken a Bachelor or other undergraduate degree as the most popular LIS qualification in higher education [figure 7]. In the VET sector, the Diploma remains the most popular qualification, followed by the Certificate III [figure 8].

Figure 5: Number of students enrolled in LIS courses in Australia
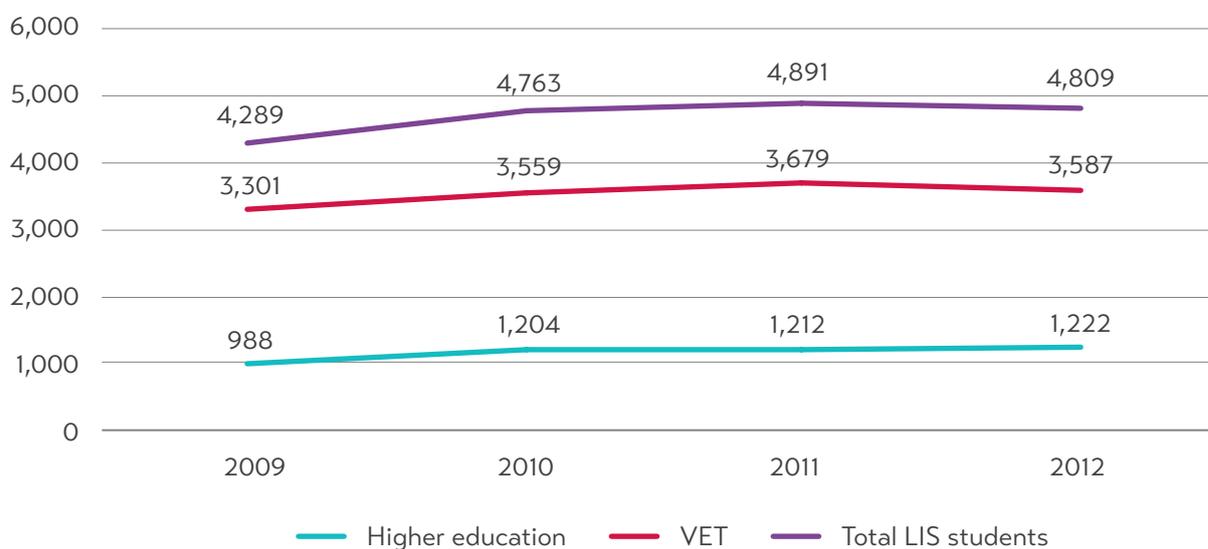
Source: ALIA, Department of Education, National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)

Figure 6: Number of students enrolled in ALIA accredited LIS courses
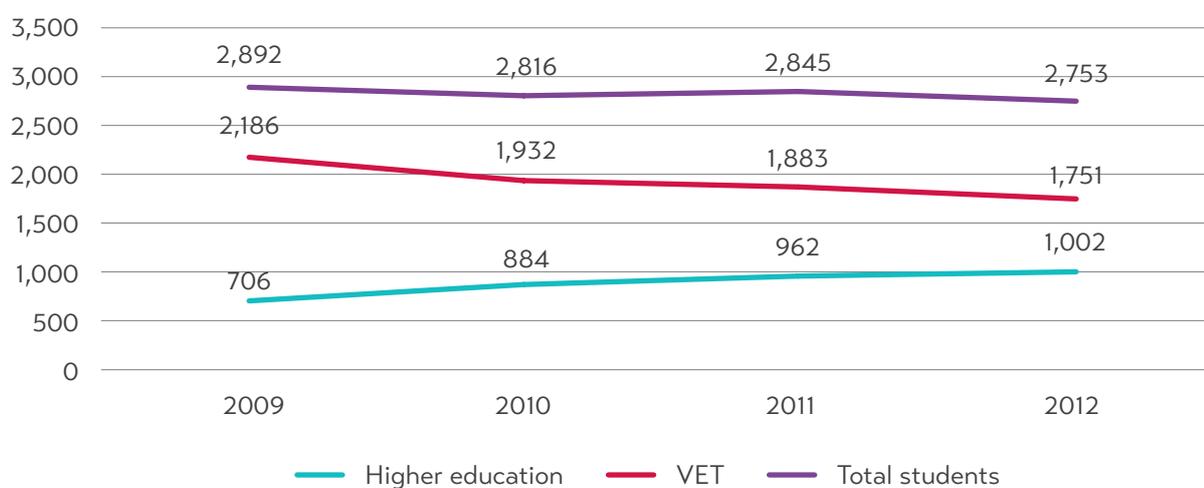
Source: ALIA, Department of Education, NCVER

Figure 7: Number of higher education students enrolled in Librarianship, Information Management and Curatorial Studies at various levels
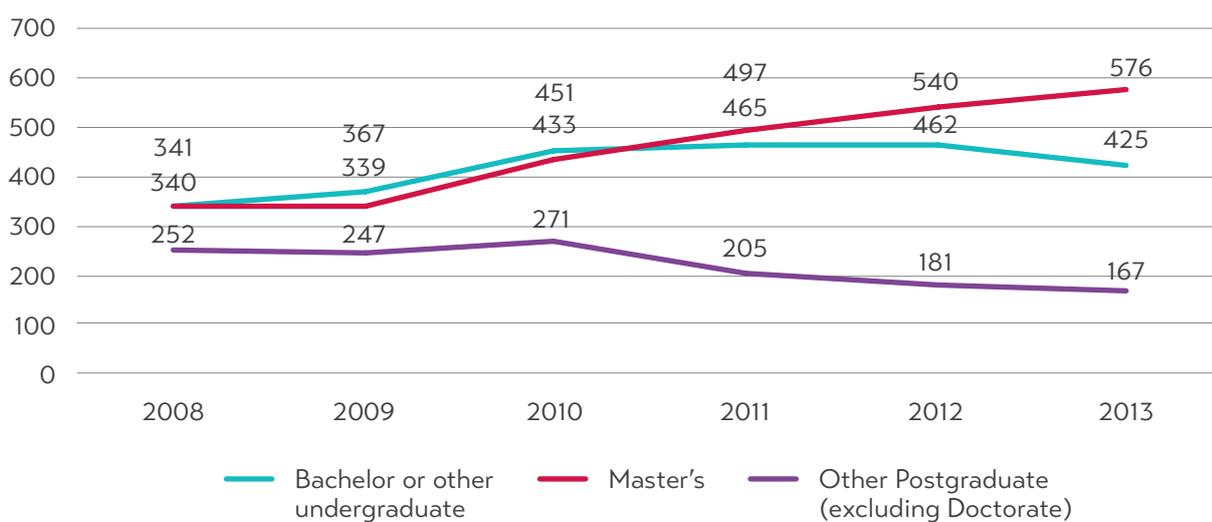
Source: Federal Department of Education

Figure 8: Number of VET students enrolled in Library, Information and Cultural Services courses at various levels
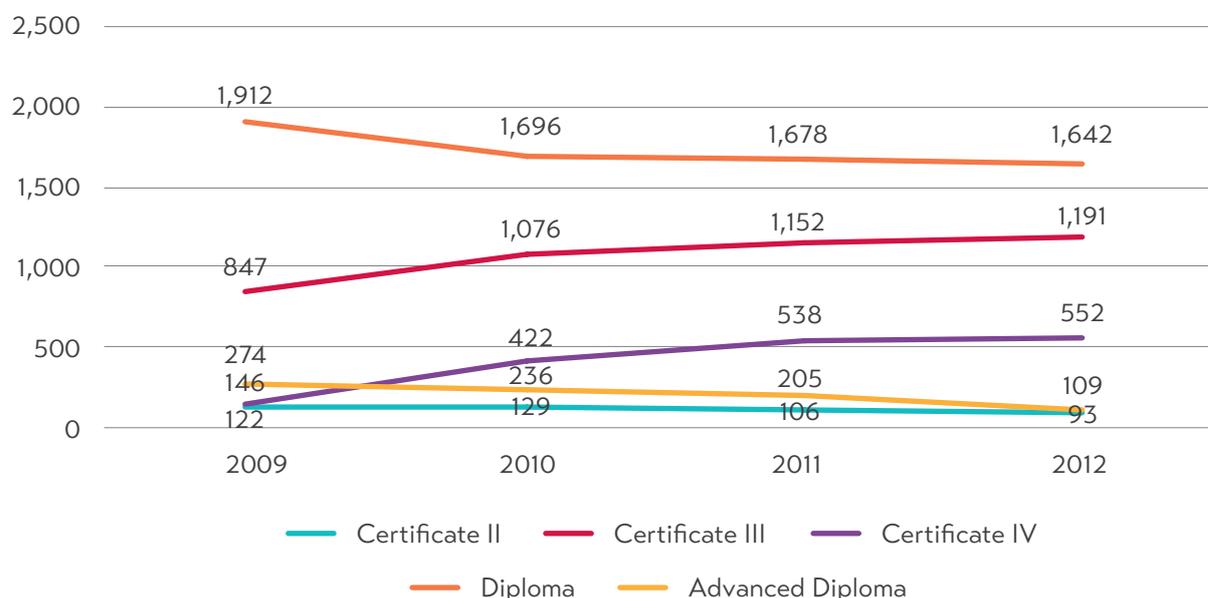
Source: NCVER

There was a significant spike in the number of LIS students between 2009 and 2010, with higher education enrolments increasing by nearly 22% and VET by 8%. Since then, growth has been negligible in higher education and there has been a decline in the number of VET students. The performance of LIS student numbers is tracking well below that of the total number of students in higher education and VET institutions. [See figures 9 and 10].

According to Federal Department of Education statistics, LIS students account for approximately 0.2% of all VET students (3,587 of 1,939,200 in 2012) and 0.1% of all higher education students (1,223 of 937,661 in 2013).

**Figure 9: Percentage of year on year change in higher education student numbers**

Figure 9 line chart. X-axis years 2008–2013. Y-axis 0–25.

% year on year change in LIS HE students (teal): 2008: 1.1, 2009: 1.2, 2010: 21.9, 2011: 0.7, 2012: 0.8, 2013: 0.1

% year on year change in all HE students (red): 2008: 4.4, 2009: 7.3, 2010: 6, 2011: 2.2, 2012: 2.6, 2013: 3.8
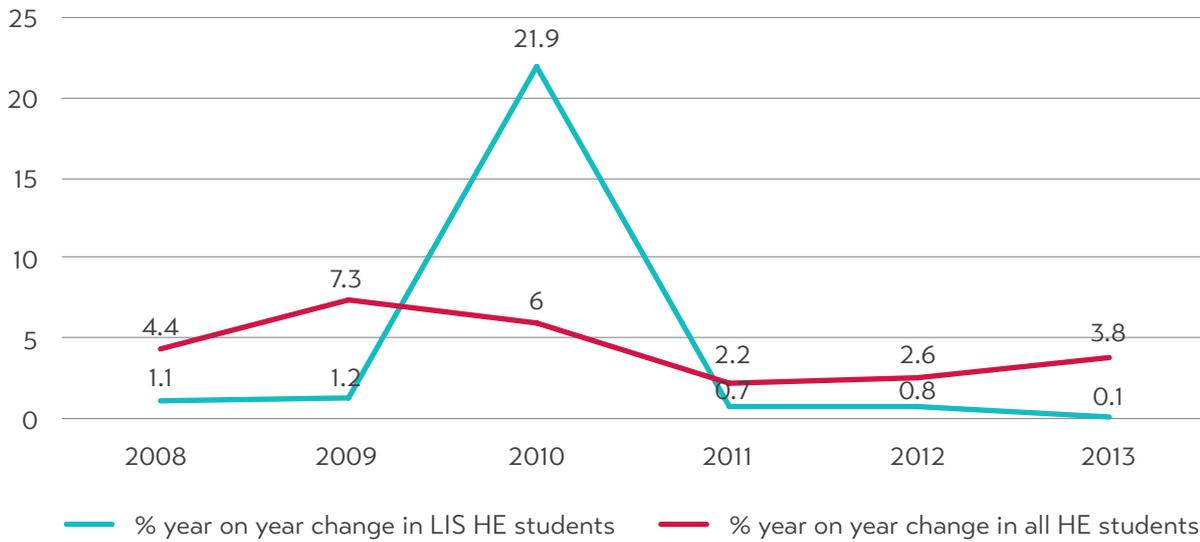
Source: Federal Department of Education

Figure 10: Percentage of year on year change in VET student numbers

Figure 10 line chart. X-axis years 2010–2012. Y-axis -4 to 10.

% year on year change in LIS VET students (teal): 2010: 7.8, 2011: 3.4, 2012: -2.5

% year on year change in all VET students (red): 2010: 5.4, 2011: 4.6, 2012: 3.3
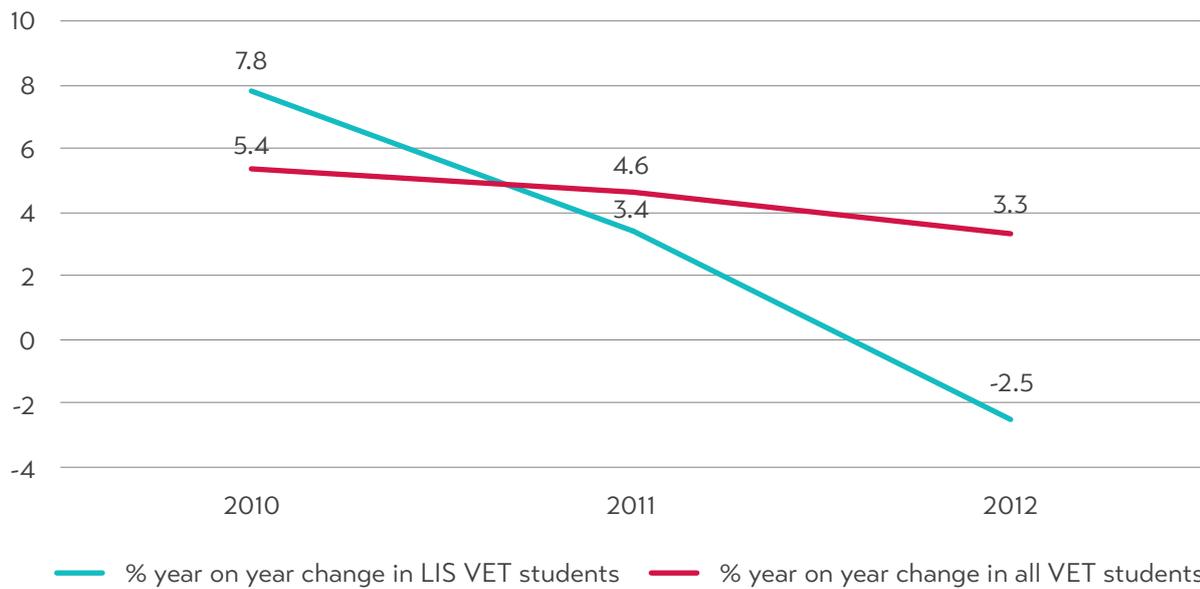
Source: Federal Department of Education

5.3   Education and employment

ABS Labour Force Survey 2013 statistics provide insight into the characteristics of workers and jobs in the library and information sector compared with all occupations [table 1].

Table 1: Characteristics of LIS employment

	Librarians	Technicians	Library Assistants	All occupations
Median age	49	46	48	40
Weekly full time earnings pre tax	$1,500	$1,150	$1,000	$1,152
Weekly full time hours worked	36.3	34	35.4	41.1
Job growth over the last five years	-22.5%	-4.2%	9.2%	6.5%

Source: ABS Labour Survey 2013

Federal Department of Employment figures show jobs in the library and information service delivery sector have remained steady at around 25,000 over the last three years and projections suggest there will be a modest 3.6% overall increase in the number of positions by 2018 [figure 11]. The biggest growth in employment is predicted for Technicians (11.3%), followed by Librarians (6.2%). Library Assistant jobs are expected to decrease by 9% [figure 12].

Figure 11: Employment in the library and information sector
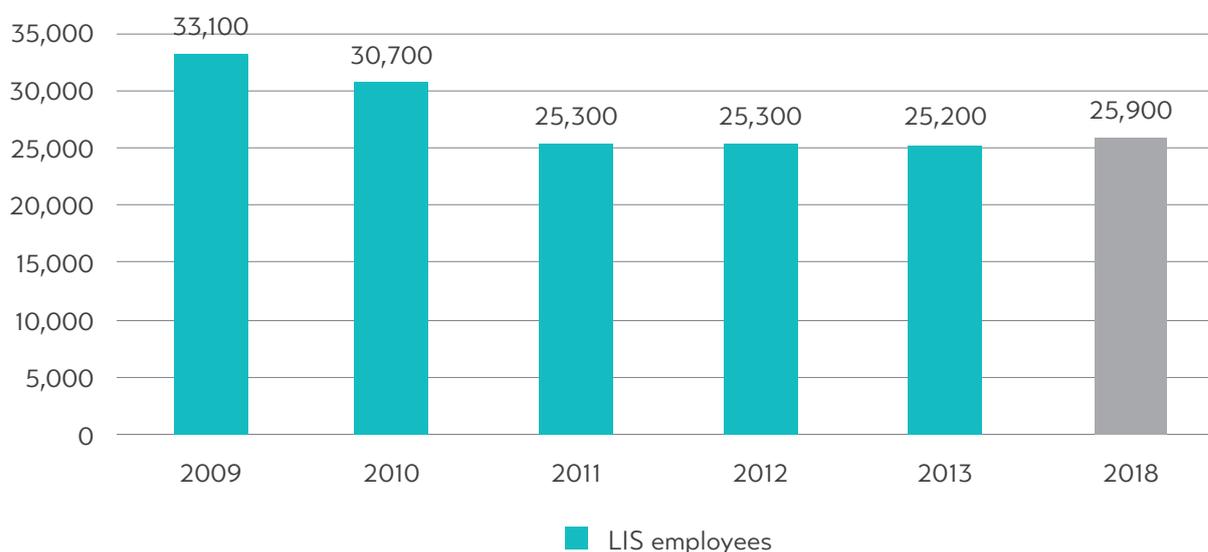
Source: ABS Labour Force Survey, Federal Department of Employment trend data

Figure 12: Employment levels for Librarians, Technicians and Library Assistants

Source: ABS Labour Force Survey, Federal Department of Employment trend data

People who work in library and information service delivery have significantly higher educational attainment than those in all occupations [figure 13]. This underlines the importance of a strong and successful environment for library and information studies.

There are an additional 1,000 jobs in the library and information supply sector, identified by the ABS Australian Industry statistics [table 2]. The figures for employment 'should be used with caution' (as stated in the table) but suggest average weekly earnings of just over $1,000 for people working for LIS vendors. Often, the employees of these companies are qualified library and information professionals.

Figure 13: Educational attainment (percent of employment)
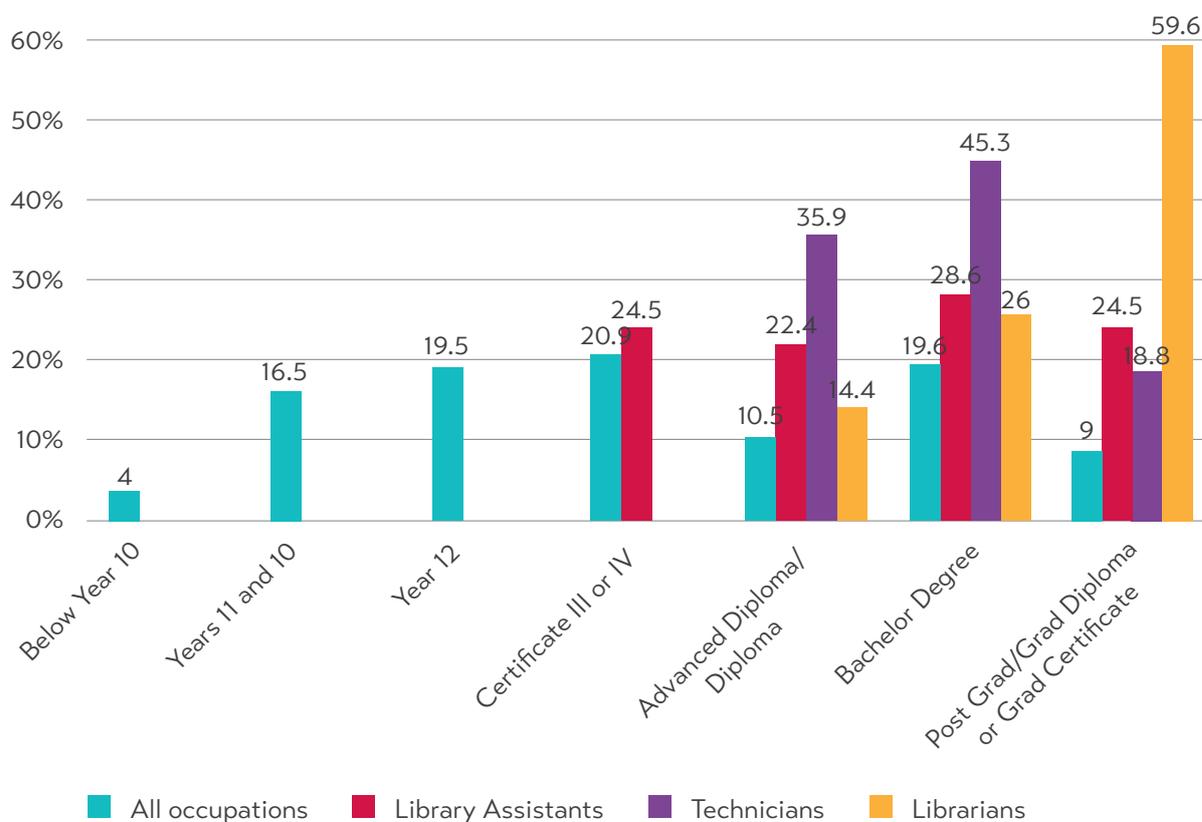
Source: ABS 2013 Survey of Education and Work

Table 2: Employment and financial performance of LIS businesses (vendors)

	Employment end of June*	Wages and salaries $m	Total income $m	Total expenditure $m	Earnings before tax (EBITDA) $m
2009	2000	115	381	341	33
2010	1000	64	208	174	30
2011	1000	54	192	160	23
2012	1000	55	205	180	19
2013	1000	53	212	184	26

*Estimate has a relative standard error of 10% to less than 25% and should be used with caution
Source: ABS Australian Industry 2012–2013

The data about library vendors' employment and financial performance indicates that businesses have experienced significant shrinkage since 2009 [figure 14] — in the region of 40–50% — but are showing some signs of recovery. In 2013, earnings before interest, tax depreciation and amortisation were 21% below the level of 2009, but showed a 37% increase over 2012 earnings.

Figure 14: Employment and financial performance of LIS businesses (vendors) shown as year on year percentage growth/decline
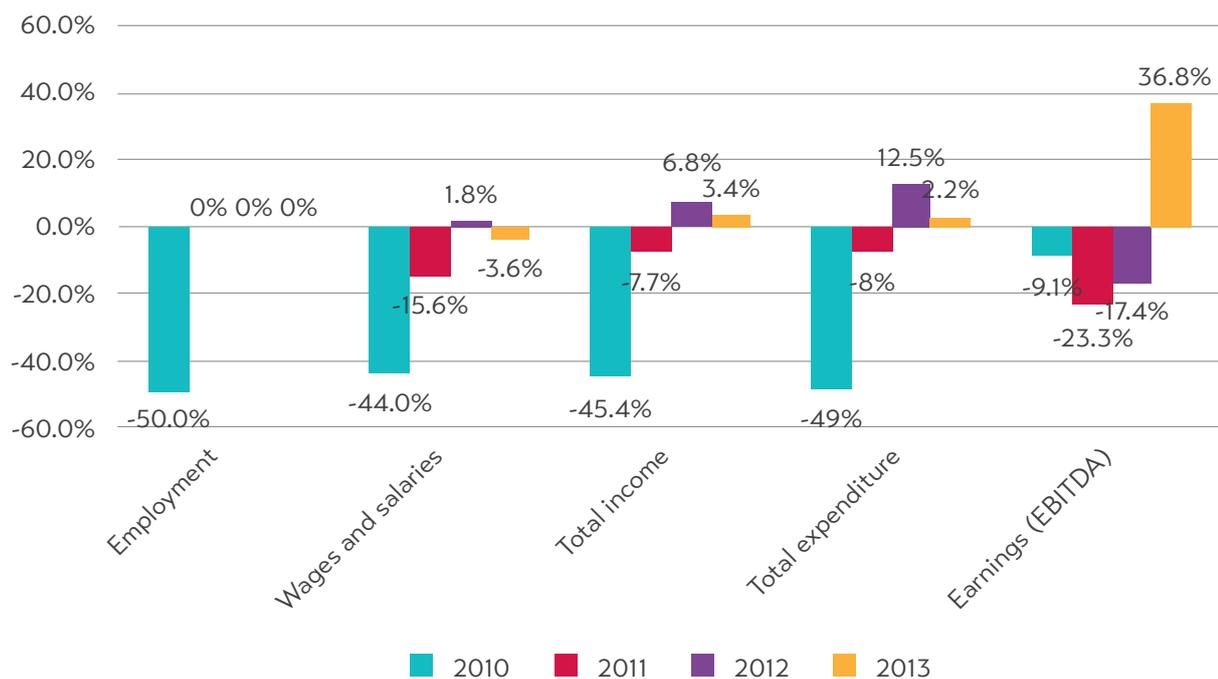
The number of employees working in public libraries fell from 8,462 in 2009–2010 to 7,567 in 2011–2012, a drop of 11% [figure 15], while the proportion of staff with library and information professional qualifications remained constant at around 30%.

In university libraries, LIS professional staff accounted for a little over 60% of the total workforce between 2009 and 2012 [figure 16]. There were 4,181 staff in university libraries in 2009 and 4,050 in 2012, a decrease of 3%.

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Figure 15: Employment in Australian public libraries

	2008–2009	2009–2010	2010–2011	2011–2012
Staff without LIS qualifications (FTE)	6,029.73	6,145.14	5,219.36	5,239.56
Qualified Librarians (FTE)	2,251.16	2,316.54	2,292.63	2,327.88

■ Staff without LIS qualifications (FTE)   ■ Qualified Librarians (FTE)
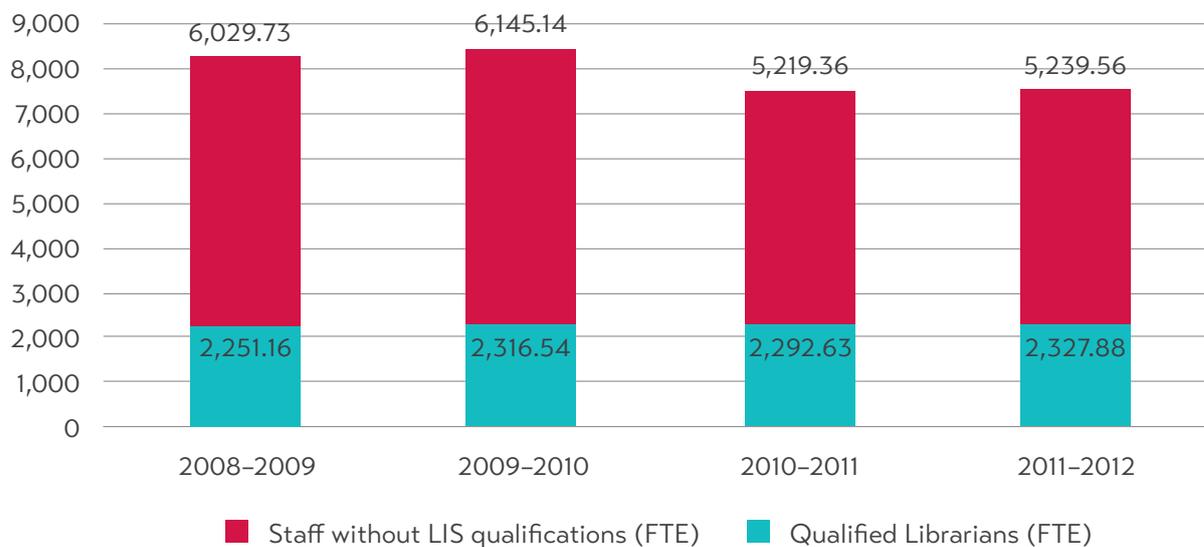
Source: National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA)

Figure 16: Employment in Australian university libraries

	2009	2010	2011	2012
Staff without LIS qualifications (FTE)	1,630	1,541	1,632	1,554
Qualified library staff (FTE)	2,551	2,605	2,683	2,496

■ Staff without LIS qualifications (FTE)   ■ Qualified library staff (FTE)
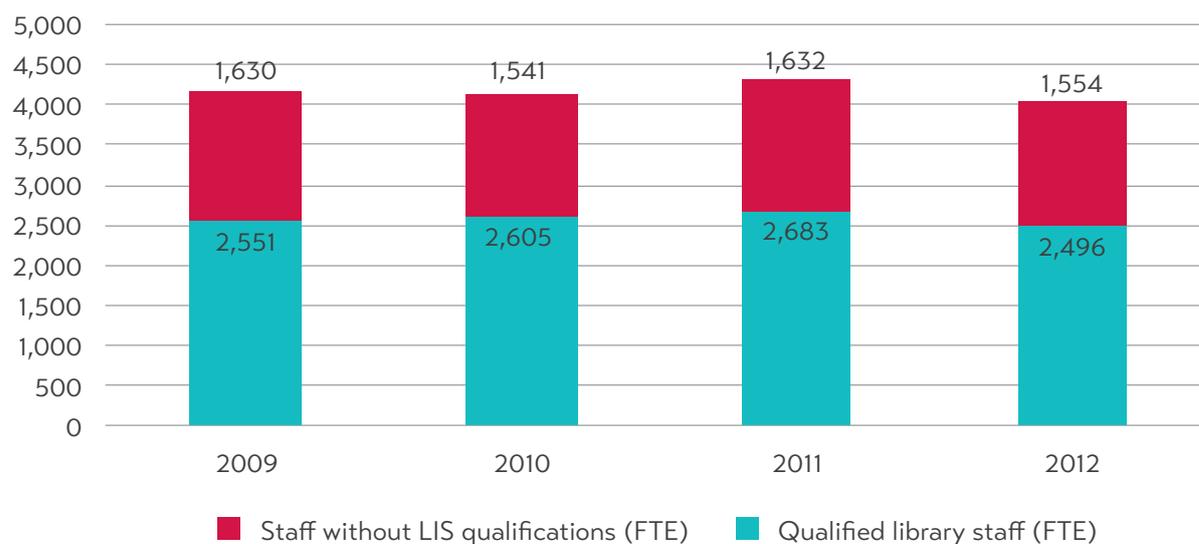
Source: Council of Australian University Librarians

5.4   Education and skills

In 2012–2013, ALIA worked with LIS educators to update the Association's statement of *Core Skills, Knowledge and Attributes*. This resulted in a new statement based on seven domains:

1. Knowledge of the broad context of the information environment;

2. Information seeking;

3. Information architecture;

4. Information organisation and access;

5. Information services, sources and products;

6. Information management; and

7. Generation of knowledge.

Each of the seven domains contains a subset of requirements. The full statement can be found on the ALIA website www.alia.org.au/about-alia/policies-standards-and-guidelines/library-and-information-sector-core-knowledge-skills-and-attributes.

6. ALIA FUTURES

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

- How will libraries remain relevant for users?

- What changes will institutions and individuals in the sector experience?

- Will the 'library and information professional' continue to be a necessary and desirable occupation?

We received challenging, insightful, inspiring responses to our request for feedback at events held all around Australia. As a result, we were able to identify themes and develop actions that will support positive outcomes. The findings from the project were produced as seven reports, available as pdf downloads from the ALIA website www.alia.org.au/futureoftheprofession.

A number of education-related actions arose from these reports and will play an important part in setting the Association's agenda going forward.

6.1   LIS course content

- We will work with educators to ensure that LIS courses continue to evolve their technology units.

- ALIA will work with LIS educators to ensure library and information professionals graduate with the skills required to support the needs of collecting institutions, for example in the areas of digital preservation; the needs of school libraries; and the requirement to support academic research through university libraries.

6.2   LIS education and employment

- We will map and monitor the LIS workforce to identify the ebb and flow of job openings to new entrants. This will help identify when the sector has sufficient people in the workforce and active recruitment campaigns need to be implemented.

- We will promote the library and information sector as a positive career choice, with the aim of increasing the diversity of the workforce.

6.3   LIS ongoing learning

- ALIA will introduce ongoing learning as an essential part of professional membership by 2020.

- Our ALIA PD and Training will reflect the needs identified in these reports, including enhanced skills in areas such as purchasing, community publishing, digital resources and managing big data.

- We will deliver PD and training opportunities to support library and information professionals and library staff who come from other disciplines.

7. REFERENCES

7.1   Links to resources referenced in this report

ALIA's website has extensive information about the library and information sector, education, employment, professional development and training, specifically ALIA Futures www.alia.org.au/futureoftheprofession and ALIA Education, Employment and Careers www.alia.org.au/employment-and-careers

The Australian Bureau of Statistics provides data about Australian education and employment from a number of different perspectives, including Labour Force, Australia www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6202.0 and the 2013 Survey of Education and Work www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/6227.0/

The Council of Australian University Librarians collates annual statistics about university libraries www.caul.edu.au/caul-programs/caul-statistics

The Department of Education hosts the Higher Education Statistics gathered from all Australian higher education institutions www.education.gov.au/student-data

The Department of Employment Job Outlook gives information about employment for Librarians, Technicians and Library Assistants joboutlook.gov.au

National and State Libraries of Australasia publishes annual statistics about public libraries www.nsla.org.au/publication/annual-australian-public-library-statistics

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research data provides data about VET students data.ncver.edu.au/resources/vsi.html

7.2   Links to other resources

Career information for Librarians, Technicians and Library Assistants provided by Myfuture
www.myfuture.edu.au

The 2011 Australian Learning and Teaching Council report *Re-conceptualising and Re-positioning Australian Library and Information Science Education for the 21st century*
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