Digital health and professional identity in Australian health libraries

Evidence from a 2018 census of the Australian health information workforce

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1

Census Method

Developed by Australian expert group in the health information professions in 2016-18.

Census online in May 2018 for anyone who *self-identifies as part of the health information workforce and works in the Australian health sector*.

"any role where the main function is related to **developing, maintaining, or governing systems for managing health data, or health information or health knowledge**."

1,597 participant usable responses = ~ 20% of actual HIW workforce.

http://www.utas.edu.au/business-and-economics/hiwcensus
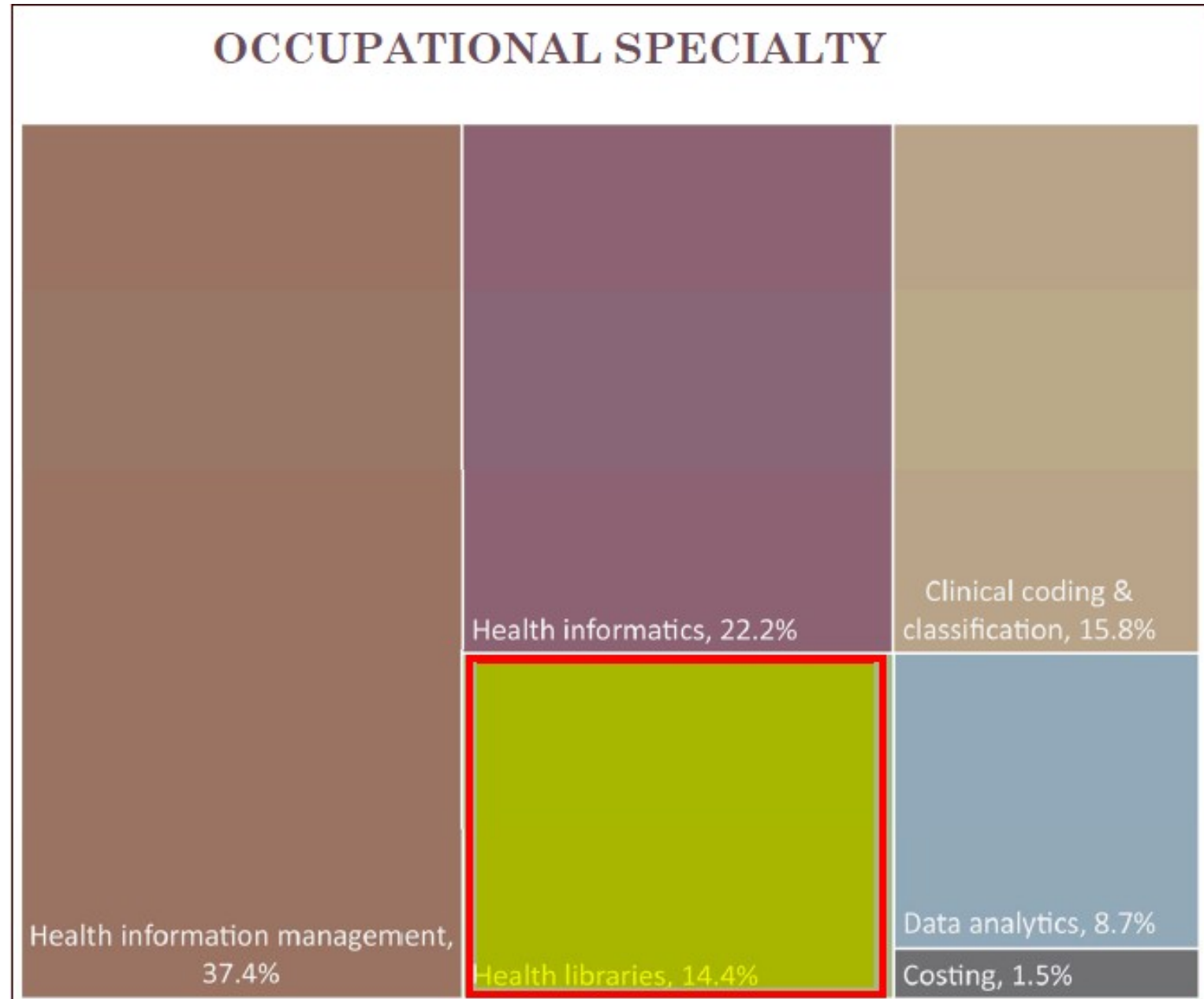
Next Australian Census - May 2020. Global: New Zealand in late 2018.

14.4% – 238 respondents – chose **health librarian** as their health information specialty.

Analysed responses on:

- Demographics
- Employment
- Qualifications
- Professional membership
- Learning activities
- Future work intentions

OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY

Health information management, 37.4%

Health informatics, 22.2%

Health libraries, 14.4%

Clinical coding & classification, 15.8%

Data analytics, 8.7%

Costing, 1.5%

Demographics

81%
aged 45+ years

Photo by Renee Fisher on Unsplash

Median age 50-59 years

88% female

97.5% hold Australian citizenship

80% born in Australia

Fewer than 5% identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

71% live in the 3 large east coast cities (Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane)

4% reported a disability or health condition limiting participation in activities

Employment

Majority (85%) work in publically owned organisations

Over half
work in a hospital
or health service

- 94% had permanent job status

- Average weekly paid hours = 28.6

- 9% are actively seeking HI work

- 40% in current role for 10+ years

Functions

Respondents listed **850** Job functions in their work.

Translating job functions to competencies

Using the 2018 ALIA Health Librarian competencies*

*https://www.alia.org.au/groups/HLA/hla-professional-development-education-and-training

	Share of all job functions
Reference and information research	26%
Manage information resources	22%
Leadership & management	17.5%
Health literacy & teaching	16%
Digital technology & systems	10.4%
Health research	6%

Qualifications and Continuing Development

Highest qualification held:
- Certificate or diploma 15%
- Bachelor degree 27%
- Graduate certificate/diploma 37%
- Masters 12%
- Doctorate 4%

5% have no tertiary qualification in the health information field.

85% had undertaken **CPD** in past year:

Work-based learning 35%
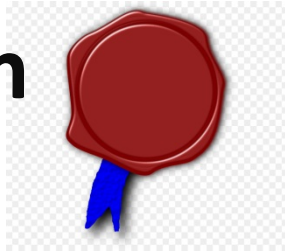
Professional Association event 30%

Self-directed learning 28%

Formal education 6%

Industry Certification

- 25% hold a certification
- most are certified as a health information practitioner (ALIA CP)
- Others have health informatics (CHIA) or health information management (CHIM) certification

Professional membership

65% are members of a professional or industry association

- 90% national group Health Libraries Australia (ALIA)
- 7% regional group Health Libraries Inc. (Victoria)
- 3% in Health Information Management Association of Australia

35%
Have not joined any professional or industry body

Future intentions

Remain in paid Health librarian work?

When asked about intention to leave or stay…

Half (95) plan to stay 5+ years

One-third (69) plan to leave within 5 yrs

Remainder (34) are unsure

Continue in volunteer role after work?

21% intend to volunteer after retiring, for 1-10 years.

Comparison with full health information census cohort

Key Differences:

	Health librarians	Health information workforce
Female gender	88%	78%
Aged **45+ years**	81%	52%
Average time **since graduating**	21 years	15 years
Retire within 5 years	33%	17%
Average weekly **work hours**	28.6 hrs	33.4 hrs
Member of **professional body**	65%	55.5%

Conclusion

The Census provides timely evidence about:
- The Australian health library workforce
- The nature and context of health library work.

This gives a base for further

- Workforce planning

- Training e.g. in wider areas of health information work

- Advocacy to government, peak bodies etc.

Our Objectives:
- Enable such work to adapt successfully to other health information workforce functions
- Contribute to contemporary digital health environment.

Thank you

Questions ? Comments?

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Gray & Gilbert (2019). Health information work – a scoping review protocol.

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