Commonwealth Government Agency Libraries Review

Research Report

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Executive summary

The Commonwealth Government Agency Libraries Review was commissioned by the Executive Committee of the Australian Government Library and Information Network (AGLIN). The review sought to identify how Commonwealth Government library and information services might best meet their users’ needs, ensuring that the services provided are efficient, cost-effective and equitable. The principal research objectives were: to explore the issues and challenges relevant to contemporary government library and information services; to examine the financial, administrative and technological context of Commonwealth Government library and information services; and to present and discuss potential models which could ensure the sustainable delivery of efficient, cost-effective and equitable library and information services to support the business requirements of Commonwealth Government agencies.

The project commenced with a literature review and environmental scan to examine and discuss the diverse issues impacting on the provision of government information and research services, including current developments in government administration, national and international trends in government library services, and the skills and competencies required by library and information professionals working in this sector. A primarily quantitative survey was used to collect data about the individual library services, and focus groups were held to capture qualitative data from respondents employed in Commonwealth Government libraries.

The findings revealed that those government library and information services responding to the main survey were far from homogeneous. Some information services supported regulatory bodies, some supported research-intensive agencies, while others were aligned with the policy portfolios of a particular government department. There was a considerable range of size – in terms of the number of staff, the allocation of space for the library, the extent of the collections, and the technologies used – as well as significantly diverse subject foci for the individual information services. Despite the differences, respondents shared a passionate commitment to provide high quality services and to ensure that the specific information needs of the users of the services were met.

It was apparent, however, that these library and information services faced many challenges. For the smaller services, the professional isolation of the librarians was a major concern, which increased the vulnerability of the services in times of fiscal uncertainty. The administrative complexities caused by Machinery of Government (MoG) changes, frequently accompanied by reductions in funding and downsizing of staffing levels, had had a direct and negative impact on the provision of timely and relevant information and research services. The information and communications technology (ICT) environment represented a further significant challenge for many of the respondents. Although some government library and information professionals were able to drive a new digital agenda in their agencies, others had found themselves stymied by restrictive ICT policies and practices.

Nevertheless, respondents were keen to ensure that good professional practice was sustained, with library staff supporting and leading change within their agencies. Current developments in the public service which encourage a digitally literate public service, a culture of innovation, and the imperative of informed, evidence-based policy will stimulate the development of alternative approaches to delivering information services. Four options for potential models of service delivery are outlined: Option 1 – Status Quo; Option 2 – Shared Services model; Option 3 – Cluster model; Option 4 – Collaborative Projects model. The advantages and disadvantages of each model are highlighted, together with the requirements which should underpin the respective models if efficient, cost-effective and equitable services are to be offered to users across the Commonwealth Government.
Recommendations

The Executive and membership of AGLIN are encouraged to review the research findings presented in the report and to work together to consider the range of strategies which will build the capacity of and secure a strong and relevant future for the association, and by extension, for the individual member library and information services.

1. The AGLIN Executive establishes a Future Directions Taskforce, comprising a representative sample of the membership, charged with the responsibility to review this research report.

2. The AGLIN Executive and the Future Directions Taskforce host a workshop for members to discuss the research findings and to commit to a preferred model for library and information services across the Commonwealth Government.

3. The AGLIN Executive and the Future Directions Taskforce use the research findings presented in this report to inform the discussion and development of the future strategic directions for the organisation, with associated responsibilities and operational plans, to lead the changes required to develop a new model of service.

4. The AGLIN Executive and the Future Directions Taskforce host a sector-wide forum to identify and prioritise the areas for valuable, effective collaboration across and beyond government library and information services.

5. The AGLIN Executive and the Future Directions Taskforce develop a government-wide advocacy campaign to promote the current and potential roles of library and information professionals, the value of high quality information and research services to government stakeholders and the benefits to be achieved through a new model of service. This campaign should be supported by a media and communications plan to ensure AGLIN members commit to and participate in the advocacy activities, both individually and collectively. Champions, who will play a leading role in supporting and promoting the government-wide advocacy campaign, should be invited to be involved.

6. The AGLIN Executive and the Future Directions Taskforce work with the Consortia Taskforce to examine the current licensing arrangements for eResources across the government agencies to identify opportunities to offer more equitable, cost-effective access to high quality information.

7. The AGLIN Executive and the Future Directions Taskforce work with the Training & Development Taskforce to commission and/or develop and deliver a CPD program of future-focused activities designed to inspire government library and information professionals and enhance their skillsets. Members should be encouraged to participate in the ALIA PD Scheme, with its Government Library specialisation.
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1. Introduction

The Commonwealth Government Agency Libraries Review (CGALR) was commissioned by the Executive of the Australian Government Libraries and Information Network (AGLIN). Established in 1993, AGLIN is an independent association of Australian Government public sector library and information services which aims to represent and supports the interests of its constituent members. As an association, it is not endorsed or funded by the Australian Government.

1.1 Background to the study

A common characteristic of government library and information services is the strong client focus: managers and staff are committed to designing and delivering efficient, cost-effective and equitable programs and services to meet the information and research needs of public service staff in the performance of their work for the Commonwealth Government. At the same time, however, government libraries are characterised by their distinctiveness. The agencies themselves are far from homogenous as they include policy agencies, research organisations and regulatory bodies which represent the spectrum of government functions (United Nations, 2011).

AGLIN has a deep interest in safeguarding the roles and responsibilities played by its members, both individually and collectively, to support the achievement of the Government’s own goals and objectives, with a clear focus on informed, evidence-based policies and programs. Government library and information services work to ensure that government staff are provided with access to authoritative and relevant information resources to support their specific business requirements in a timely and cost-effective way.

However, ongoing financial, administrative, and technological changes present significant challenges and opportunities for the management of these information services. A number of factors impact directly on service delivery, including:

- Frequent changes to public service administrative arrangements
- Increasing budgetary pressures
- Reductions in the need for physical information repositories in individual agencies
- Increasing availability of electronic research information resources
- Recognition of the need to increase the level of sophistication for information management activities in the agencies
- Awareness of the lack of equitable access to relevant research information across the sector
- Recent new developments within government which seek to introduce digital transformation and e-government initiatives.

The Executive of AGLIN believed it was important to review the current Commonwealth government landscape to identify the areas of strengths of and the challenges faced by library and information services and to investigate the future service delivery options.

1.2 Objectives for the study

The key objective of the project was to undertake in-depth research into the current model of government library services, to identify the advantages and disadvantages of this model, and to examine current service delivery trends. The research project was guided by the following research question:

1 AGLIN: www.aglin.org
How can Commonwealth Government agency libraries deliver services which support their clients’ needs in the most efficient, cost-effective and equitable way?

This question could be distilled into a number of project objectives:

• To explore the issues and challenges relevant to contemporary government library and information services
• To examine the financial, administrative and technological context of contemporary Commonwealth Government library and information services
• To capture the views and opinions of Commonwealth Government agency library managers and staff, as well as a wider range of stakeholders, relating to current and future models of service
• To present and discuss potential models which could ensure the sustainable delivery of efficient, cost-effective and equitable library and information services to support the business requirements of Commonwealth Government agencies.

The project specifically focused on gathering a sound evidence base about the current state of the profile and performance of government library and information services, including budget, space, staffing, business models and service standards.

1.3 Research approach
The research activities were informed by a literature review and environmental scan which examined and discussed the issues impacting on the provision of government information and research services. The study sought to collect the critical quantitative and qualitative data to permit the development of an accurate, evidence-based understanding of these services supporting the Commonwealth Government. Data collection instruments included an extensive online survey about the individual library services; a series of focus groups held in Canberra which were attended by government library managers and staff; and an online questionnaire made available to stakeholders to extend the reach of the consultation activities.

1.4 Structure of the report
This research report presents the details of project and its findings. Following a brief introduction to the research methodologies applied in the study (Section 2), the research findings are discussed in detail, encompassing both the data collected through the online survey (Section 3) and through the consultation with stakeholders (Section 4). After the implications of the findings are explored (Section 5), the report provides a number of options for future service delivery (Section 6). Four options are examined critically to consider their respective advantages and disadvantages, together with a brief synopsis of the steps required to adopt each service model. The report concludes with a summary and a series of recommendations (Section 7) for the AGLIN Executive and membership to consider. Supporting documentation is provided in the Appendices: the literature review, online survey and focus group questions.

2 Research methodologies
The research project encompassed several approaches to data collection:

• A literature review and environmental scan
• A major online survey instrument to collect all relevant data about the individual library and information services
• A qualitative data collection instrument used as the framework for focus group discussions, as well as an online questionnaire to achieve wider consultation.
2.1 Literature review

The literature review built on and updated the literature review completed as part of a review of Queensland Government agency libraries (Hallam, 2010a). The primary foci were the developments in government administration, national and international trends in government library services, developments in contemporary special libraries, and the skills and competencies required by special librarians. The preliminary literature review was distributed to the AGLIN membership in early December 2015. The research team continued to monitor developments across the areas of interest, with the final updated version of the document released in April 2016. The literature review is presented as Appendix 1 of this report.

2.2 Online survey

The development of the online survey was undertaken collaboratively by members of the project team. The team worked from the core survey instrument used in the Queensland Government study, with amendments and revisions made to ensure that the questions were relevant to the Commonwealth Government context. The online survey (LibList.Info) is a custom designed survey and census tool created specifically to support research activities in the library and information management sector. It has been built using an industry-standard, highly secure Oracle database system, APEX. It allows respondents flexibility in the ways they navigate the questions, allowing time to consider and collect data for the responses. The system has also been designed to enable surveys to be replicated in the future to facilitate the collection of longitudinal data. Over the past decade, LibList.Info has been used for a range of workforce related research projects across the Australian library sector.

The research subjects for this online survey were the managers of Commonwealth Government agency library services. While the members of AGLIN were the main target group, the survey was also open to library services which did not belong to the association.

The survey comprised ten sections, with questions relating to:

1. Details about the library/information service
2. Library staffing
3. Service delivery
4. Library users
5. Library resources
6. Library automation
7. Space and storage
8. Library finance
9. Library trends
10. The roles of AGLIN.

The online survey questions are presented in Appendix 2.

The survey was piloted by five test respondents over the period 23-25 November 2015 with minor adjustments subsequently made to the wording of several questions. The survey was open from 27 November 2015, with data collection continuing until 4 February 2016.

The survey data collected within the online tool was downloaded to a powerful business intelligence tool, QlikView, for detailed analysis. QlikView allows the researcher to drill down into the survey results, highlighting relationships within the data which are often not evident in traditional data analysis tools.
2.3 Focus groups and online questionnaire

The data collection instrument used for the focus groups and online questionnaire was again developed collaboratively by members of the project team. The instrument included 20 questions designed to capture the views and opinions of library and information professionals about the relevance of government agency library and information services today; the most valuable attributes of the services; and the difference these services make to the agency or department itself. Specific attention was given to the areas of evidence-based public policy, the government’s information and communications technologies (ICT) and information management strategies, and human resources issues. Respondents were also asked to share their vision for government agency libraries. The questionnaire is presented in Appendix 3 to this report.

Six face-to-face focus groups took place in Canberra on 15-16 December 2015, and one additional focus group was conducted by teleconference on 17 December 2015. All seven discussions were recorded and transcribed. The online questionnaire was available from 18 December 2015 until 4 February 2016.

A second online questionnaire was developed to seek the views of respondents within the executive branch of the government. This questionnaire comprised three questions seeking to examine the most important contribution made by the library service to the agency; the reasons underlying perceptions about government libraries’ lack of traction or influence within their agencies; and the respondents’ vision for future library and information services. This second online questionnaire was also available from 18 December 2015 to 4 February 2016. As only four valid responses were received, the data collected has not been included in the analysis of the research data. The low level of interest contrasted strongly with the study of Queensland government library services, which attracted over 500 responses from senior managers and clients (Hallam, 2010b).

To ensure objectivity in the analysis of the qualitative data, coding was undertaken by three individual coders. Each coder completed the process of identifying, arranging and systematising the key themes and ideas captured in the textual data of the transcripts. A coding frame was developed to articulate the principal concepts and their interpretation. Intercoder reliability was confirmed through an iterative process of comparing the different coders’ results, leading to refinements in the coding frame.

The analysis and interpretation of the data collected are discussed in detail in the following sections of the report. All research activities were conducted in line with the principles of research ethics, with the commitment that all responses would remain completely confidential, anonymous and de-identified. No individual agency details have been revealed and all data collected is retained securely with the project leader.

3 Characteristics of Commonwealth Government agency library services

A total of 24 responses were received for the online survey; 21 of these respondents were current members of AGLIN. The other three respondents represented Commonwealth Government agencies, but they were not AGLIN members. In terms of AGLIN membership, the response rate, excluding these three non-member libraries, was 53%. Each respondent completing the survey provided the name of the library and information service and details of their location. In order to maintain confidentiality, however, no reference is made to any individual department or agency library services in this report. The analysed data presents the anonymised characteristics of the different library services.
It should be noted that one large library service funded by the Commonwealth Government was excluded from the data analysis process as the information provided by the organisation – specifically in terms of staffing, funding arrangements, space, client profile, and services and programs offered – was substantially different from the other smaller, more specialised library and information services. The inclusion of the data provided by this respondent would have skewed the research results significantly. Of the 23 responses which were analysed, 21 provided responses to all the questions (100%), while survey completion rates for the other two responses were recorded as 68% and 62% respectively.

As noted above, the online survey comprised ten thematic areas of questions (Appendix 3). The research findings are discussed within the framework of these themes.

3.1 Profile of the library and information services

It was found that the overall profile of the respondent organisations was generally representative of the AGLIN membership, both in terms of size (based on the details of human resources and financial resources) and the focus of the government department or agency it supported. With regard to the particular administrative arrangements, there was an even split across government departments (48%) and government agencies (48%), although some more complex governance arrangements were highlighted by a small number of respondents (4%). The agency portfolios encompassed the broad range of functions of government, including general public services, economic affairs, public order and safety, community services and health (United Nations, 2011). The host organisations included regulatory bodies, policy agencies, operational services and research intensive organisations. The library and information services were located across the country, with 15 in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), three in New South Wales (NSW), two in Victoria and one in Queensland. One respondent reported having a presence in both the ACT and Victoria, plus small library collections in other states; another library and information service had multiple locations across Australia.

Two thirds (65%) of the library and information services had directly experienced government or departmental changes over the past three years. Over one quarter (27%) stated that their library service had been moved to a different department or agency during that period. Machinery of Government (MoG) changes were cited as having a major impact on library funding, with 47% of those affected reporting significant funding cuts and 33% highlighting staff cuts. Structurally, 13% of respondents reported that the service where they had originally been employed had been closed, while 20% of library services had been affected by mergers with other library services, and a further 20% had been charged with a wider remit to provide library and information services to a larger cohort of users under cross-agency arrangements.

A question was presented to determine the range of agency services and functions which were the direct responsibility of the library and information service, i.e. the library unit provides specific agency-wide services. Respondents were able to indicate as many services as they felt were applicable and to add details of further services in a comments box. The 23 respondents allocated a total of 137 services and functions, which equates to an average of 6 agency-wide services per library. The lowest number reported was two services, and the highest was ten.

Not unsurprisingly, the data revealed that the core services related to library services (100%) and research services (96%) (Figure 1). Other functions which featured strongly were training (70%), collection of agency publications (61%), managing historical records and photographs (52%) and managing the agency’s intellectual property, including copyright, rights permissions and Creative Commons licensing (43%).
Comments from respondents captured additional functional areas such as the management of publications (e.g. the administration of ISBN and ISSN) and work on systematic reviews.

Respondents were asked to indicate the discipline or subject strengths of the library’s physical and electronic collections and research services. Despite the request to report only the top five fields, a number of respondents provided larger numbers of subject areas, which confounded the analysis process. The word cloud presented in Figure 2 graphically presents the range of fields which represent the libraries’ foci. While the listing of subjects to select from were, by necessity, fairly general, respondents provided further facets of the various subject areas in their comments.

Figure 2. Key subject strengths of the physical and digital collections and research services
Deeper analysis of the subject areas revealed that the library collections and research services were closely aligned with the core functions of the agencies served.

3.2 Library staffing

Respondents were asked to provide details about the total number of permanent staff positions, expressed as full-time equivalent (FTE) (as at 1 November 2015). It was found that almost one third (30%) of the responses represented a one-person library and information service (Figure 3). The majority of libraries ranged between 2-5 staff (39%) and 6-8 staff (17%). No responses were recorded for the values 9-12, 13-15, 16-20 or 21-25 staff, but 13% of libraries reported having 26 staff or over.

![Figure 3. Permanent staff positions](image)

This data was further examined from the perspective of Australian Public Service (APS) classifications. Agencies which did not use APS classifications had the option to provide further information in the comments box. Only one agency reported that it did not use APS classifications. Only 16 responses (70%) actually provided the relevant details of the levels of staff employed; the data therefore relates to 64 staff across these 16 services (Figure 4). The majority of positions (81%) were clustered around the levels of APS4 (17%), APS5 (25%) and APS6 (39%). Representation at EL1 was recorded as 13%, with a very minor distribution (1%) across the levels of APS3, EL2 and SES.

![Figure 4. Classifications of library staff](image)
Only 17% of agency libraries employed commercial contract staff. The responsibilities of the contract staff included website maintenance, professional indexing and short-term activities in the library.

3.3 Library users

Respondents were asked to indicate the size of their user base, i.e. active users of the library service. Half of the respondents (50%) stated that they had over 500 active users, while about one quarter (23%) had under 50 active users (Figure 5).

In their comments, a few respondents noted that it could be difficult to ascertain the precise number of users of eResources, as they did not track individual logins to the various databases.

The total number of possible internal users varied greatly across the respondent organisations, from as few as 25 potential users (4%) in compact agencies to over 100,000 (4%) in large, distributed organisations (Table 1). The most common organisational profiles were up to 200 potential users (40%) and 1,000-5,000 potential users (44%).

![Figure 5. Number of active users of the library service](image)

Table 1. Number of potential users of the library service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of potential users</th>
<th>Percentage of libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-100</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101-200</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201-500</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>501-1000</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1001-2000</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-5000</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5001-10000</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>100,000+</td>
<td>4%</td>
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</table>

The collections and resources were generally only available to users within the agency itself (87%), although a number of respondents noted that staff from other agencies and academic researchers could request access to the physical collection, by appointment. Licence restrictions meant that no electronic access was made available to non-agency users. A large proportion of respondents (39%) therefore indicated that internal users made up 100% of their user base, compared with just 4% stating that 80% of their user base was external to the agency. It was unusual to include members of
the public as users: only 4% reported that 20% of their users were in fact members of the public. There was also a common theme that as the collections included classified or confidential information. There were limitations on access to the library itself and to its resources. In some situations, specific security or cultural restrictions were applied to manage diverse user groups within a single agency.

All respondents stated that the electronic library services and resources could be accessed via the agency Intranet, while 57% also provided Internet access. No libraries were using GovCloud or GovDex. Authentication provisions were generally in place, with IP recognition being the most common arrangement. It was found that access arrangements were more complex when a library and information service was provided to a number of different agencies or departments.

3.4 Library services

The questions in the section of the survey relating to service delivery focused on the range of services offered to users; the breadth and depth of information and research services; current awareness services; and the financial aspects of service delivery, for example where charges were levied.

Range of services offered to users

A group of questions related to the range of services that the libraries offered directly to their various user groups, as opposed to agency-wide service support (as presented in Figure 1). Possible areas of library-centric service delivery encompassed the provision of print and electronic resources, work and study space, access to and support for technology, training etc. Respondents were asked to indicate all those services that applied to their specific situation. It was found that all library and information services provided print books, ILL and/or document delivery, alerting or current awareness services, and research for users and/or work on literature reviews (Figure 6). The majority also provided access to electronic resources (96%) and offered training (91%).

![Figure 6. Range of library services provided to users](image)

About half of the libraries provided group meeting space and individual study space. Technology support was lower, with only around one quarter (26%) helping users with mobile devices and 17% specifically providing access to wifi networks.
Information and research services

As noted above, assistance with research activities was of primary importance to these library and information services. Library staff were involved in online searching, conducting tailored literature searches, complex information retrieval activities (e.g. legal research, business and statistical research, media monitoring, compiling Endnote bibliographies) as well as ensuring close engagement with and support for users throughout the life of a specific project. No distinctions were discovered between the services in regulatory agencies, policy portfolios or more research intensive organisations.

Respondents were positive about their ability to meet user needs. While it was uncommon (4%) to have a client charter or any guidelines relating to turnaround times for research support, there was clearly a strong professional ethos of providing highly responsive services to users, with an emphasis placed on negotiation to establish priorities for the work undertaken, and aligning those with the immediate needs of the agency staff, taking into consideration the complexity of the queries and the immediate deadlines for the work. Over half (57%) felt that the users’ needs were met ‘very well’ or ‘extremely well’ (Figure 7). Only 8% expressed any negative views about the ability to meet user needs. It is acknowledged that this data reflects the perceptions of the staff working in the library, rather than the views of the users themselves. Although it had originally been hoped to capture data directly from respondents who were either senior managers with responsibility for library and information services within their portfolio, or who were active users of the services, the research study failed to attract strong interest from these stakeholders.

Almost half (44%) of the respondents reported that service levels had increased over the past three years, while 39% indicated that service levels had increased (Figure 8). However, there were no clear patterns across the different types of agency (i.e. whether primarily regulatory, policy focused or research intensive).
The survey sought to develop insights into the amount of work undertaken to support government staff in their research activities, with respondents asked to indicate how many staff hours might be spent on research tasks over a typical month (Figure 9).

The interpretation of this data was complex given the diversity of the library and information services themselves and their staffing profiles. Although it might be assumed that high research workloads (201+ hours per month) would be associated with the larger library services, it was found that the responses citing higher workloads (201+ hours per month) were in fact provided by some libraries with smaller numbers of staff (2-5 staff and 6-8 staff), as well as those with large numbers of staff (30+ staff). The picture for the libraries staffed by only one person was interesting, as there was a wide range of hours spent on research activities (Figure 10).
Figure 10. Average number of hours spent on research activities in a typical month (one-person libraries)

Once again, there were no significant differences between the libraries supporting policy intensive departments, regulatory bodies, scientific organisations or operational services.

The research findings clearly reveal that the provision of reference and research services to users is a significant component of the work profile and that is a primary function of government library and information services. These services are delivered primarily to internal clients: just over one third of respondents (35%) indicated that they worked with internal clients only; almost another third (30%) stated that 90% of their work was with internal clients. Almost one fifth (17%) reported that they also offered research assistance to users from other agencies, but only one service reported that they had a significant role to play in the provision of information to the public, representing 30% of their users.

Current awareness services

The questions drilled down into the format and frequency of the current awareness or alerting services sent out to users. While electronic alerting services were the most common (83%), it was noted that 17% still distributed current awareness services in print; the frequency of distribution of electronic alerting services varied: 42% on a daily basis and 26% on a monthly basis (Figure 11).
Library bulletins may be used as a communications tool for library staff to inform their users about matters of interest to them. Only 13% of respondents distributed their library bulletins in print; this was found to be generally in addition to, not instead of, electronic bulletins. Almost two thirds (61%) of respondents distributed electronic tables of contents for a range of journal titles and it was noted that it was common practice for library staff to send out a suite of electronic alerting services: e.g. current awareness, tables of contents and library bulletins.

A good number of libraries (61%) provided tailored news services for specific groups of clients, often on a daily basis (43%). It was noteworthy, however, that over one third (39%) did not offer their users any such services. Nevertheless, some of these libraries maintained a library blog, with varying frequency of updating: daily, weekly or just occasionally. While 39% of respondents blogged about library services and resources, far fewer encouraged social media activities: only 8% ran a Twitter account. One respondent catered to a wide range of user communication preferences: social media, electronic alerts and print bulletins. There was no pattern to practice: the libraries with mature communication strategies were again representative of the different staffing profiles: a library service run by only one person was just as likely to provide daily communication with users as was a library with more than 30 staff.

**Training activities**

Survey questions focused on the training activities run by library staff across a range of potential areas: library orientation, eResources orientation, Internet searching (i.e. Google and other search engines), introduction to the library’s databases, database-specific training, subject-specific training, alerting services, bibliographic referencing software (Endnote), and the use of mobile devices. Most library and information services provided a range of training activities, although it was found that 17% of respondents did not answer the question or indicated that it was not applicable to them. The most common and most frequent areas of training were general library orientation (83%) and eResources orientation (83%) (Figure 12). Training sessions to offer an introduction to the library’s databases (70%), database-specific searching (74%), subject-specific searching (65%) and Internet searching (61%) were also widespread. The areas least likely to be covered by any training activities were mobile devices (17%), Endnote (30%), and helping users to set up their own current awareness and alerting services (43%).

![Figure 12. Training offered by library and information services](image-url)
Only one library and information service offered training across all these areas, ranging from weekly (for most activities listed) to occasionally (for training relating to mobile devices and specific subject areas). In this area of the investigation, it was not surprising to note that the range and frequency of training was directly correlated with the libraries with higher staffing numbers; nevertheless, one-person libraries indicated that they did offer training ‘occasionally’ across the different areas of information activity.

3.5 Library collections

A further section of the survey posed questions about the range of resources managed by the library and the extent to which library holdings were contributed to Libraries Australia\(^2\), the national resource sharing service run by the National Library of Australia. Library collections across the country can be identified and located through Trove\(^3\). Respondents were also asked to indicate which electronic resources they had access to, by selecting from an extensive list of subscription titles.

Bibliographic records

It was found that almost half of the libraries (45%) had over 50,000 bibliographic records for the materials held in their collections (Figure 17), covering a wide range of subject areas, including business, law and legislation, scientific, technical, defence, intellectual property, resources, policy areas (c.f. the subject word cloud presented in Figure 2). A small number of libraries (15%) reported that they had over 100,000 bibliographic records. At the other end of the scale, however, one quarter (25%) had far smaller – but arguably highly specialised – collections, with under 10,000 bibliographic records (Figure 13).

![Figure 13. Number of bibliographic records](image)

Library holdings were contributed to Libraries Australia by 74% of respondents, with the majority of this group (77%) indicating that over three quarters of their collections were reflected in the national database and that the holdings were updated regularly. However, 17% of libraries contributed less than 50% of their holdings to Libraries Australia and were less diligent about ensuring that the holdings information was kept current.

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The Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) was the most common classification scheme used by the government library and information services (77%). Other schemes in use were the National Library of Medicine (9%), Universal Decimal Classification (UDC) (5%) and Moys (for legal materials) (5%).

Respondents were asked to provide information about any unique or significant resources which featured in their library collection, e.g. plans, maps or legislation. Over one third (35%) held specialised collections of legislation, and 30% managed collections of photos. Almost one quarter (22%) reported that they managed maps. Overall, 43% of respondents were responsible for historical resources, thus managing and providing access to materials relating directly to the activities of the agency or to specific regulatory activity over time.

Electronic resources

A schedule of 34 electronic resources, listed at the vendor level rather than the database level, was presented in the survey, with respondents asked to indicate which services they subscribed to on behalf of their users. The eResources which were most commonly subscribed to are presented in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>eResources (vendors)</th>
<th>Percentage of libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EbscoHost</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informit</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macquarie</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAI Global</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCH Australia</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science Direct</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LexisNexis</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proquest</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomson Reuters</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiley</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factiva</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IbisWorld</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dow Jones</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown Content</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerald</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J-Store</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safari</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialog</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dun &amp; Bradstreet</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Single subscriptions were also recorded for Business Research, Fairfax, Forrester, Gartner, Scopus and Web of Science.

Funding arrangements varied across the different library and information services and across the different electronic services. A total of 166 subscriptions were recorded, of which 77% (127 subscriptions) were directly and fully funded by the library, 3% (5 subscriptions) were fully funded by the library via consortia, and 6% (10 subscriptions) were partly funded by the library (Table 3). Beyond this, 11% (19 subscriptions) were fully funded by the department or agency and 3% (5 subscriptions) were identified as whole of government subscriptions.
The whole of Government subscriptions were reported for IbisWorld, Macquarie and OECD resources. Interestingly, a diverse range of funding arrangements was in place for the subscriptions to these electronic resources. A total of 6 subscriptions was reported, for example, for IbisWorld, including fully funded by the library, partly funded by the library, fully funded by the library via consortia, fully funded by the agency, and funded under whole of government subscription arrangements.

### 3.6 Resource sharing

A series of questions asked respondents for information about the use of library resources, covering both print and electronic resources, either as loans to internal clients or as external activities through ILL and document delivery. Almost one fifth (19%) of respondents stated that they did not have any physical loans activities as they focused purely on the provision of digital information services. It was found that those libraries which did loan print books (79%) primarily supported the needs of internal clients. Only a small number of libraries (13%) loaned print materials directly to external users. No clear pattern emerged about loans traffic, with a distribution of responses across all options, from one book per month (10%) to over 2,000 books per month (5%).

Inter-agency loans represented an important aspect of the services provided, with around one third of the respondents lending to other agency libraries through reciprocal borrowing arrangements and one quarter through ILL. Almost half the library services used ILL arrangements to lend books from their collections to other libraries across Australia. The aggregated data revealed that, in a typical month, these libraries loaned a total of over 4,000 books to internal users and around 120 books to other libraries through ILL. The ILL traffic highlights the relevancy and value of the collections held by government libraries.

The supply of journal articles was another important area of activity. Across the 23 library and information services, almost 6,000 journal articles were supplied to internal users in a typical month, ranging from smaller libraries supplying under 50 articles per month to larger libraries supplying over 1,200 articles per month.

In terms of cost recovery, two thirds (67%) of respondents stated that the ILL arrangements were cost neutral to internal users who requested materials, while 14% indicated that users may be charged on a selective basis, depending on the relationship with the other libraries. The full ILL costs were passed on to internal users by one fifth (19%) of respondents (Figure 14).
When lending their own resources to other government agency libraries through ILL or document delivery, a similar pattern emerged: 14% stated that they would always levy charges to be paid by the library service receiving the materials, while 67% declared that it depended on the relationship with the other library. Around one fifth (19%) would not seek any payment for the loans provided (Figure 15).

Respondents were also asked about borrowing from other libraries. The aggregated monthly data revealed that, on average, around 116 books and 667 journal articles were received through reciprocal arrangements and ILL. While inter-agency loans using ILL represented the most common approach to borrow books, it was only for one third of respondents who reported that they might request about one book per week. One single library recorded higher traffic, borrowing around 30 books per month. Locating books in non-government libraries was not frequently undertaken. One third of respondents stated that they did borrow through general ILL arrangements: half of these libraries would borrow on average about one book per week, and the other half around two books per week.
Just under half the respondents reported that they requested copies of journal articles from other libraries through reciprocal borrowing arrangements, with the volume of articles distributed evenly across the scale of 1 article per month to 32 articles per month. A similar number of libraries located the journal articles they needed through inter-agency ILL arrangements, again ranging from 1 article per month to 50 articles per month. Sourcing materials from non-government libraries was more common, however, with 7 libraries borrowing around 1-2 articles per week, and 2 ‘high end’ borrowers, each requesting around 50 articles per week.

In the context of ILL, it was found that government libraries loaned more resources to other libraries (average 980 items per month) than they borrowed (average 788 per month).

**Collaborative arrangements**

Respondents were asked to provide information about any collaborative, reciprocal or consortia arrangements they had. Collaborative arrangements were considered very important for government libraries as they supported access to a wider range of information resources, the sharing of resources and ideas, and the opportunity to collectively reduce the costs of running library and information services. The principal collaborative arrangements were seen as being those managed by AGLIN\(^4\) (76%) (Figure 16). Over a quarter (29%) of the respondent libraries were members of the Australasian Libraries in the Emergency Sector (ALIES)\(^5\) network, while others shared resources through Gratisnet\(^6\) (24%) for resource sharing across the health sector, and Ebsco Publishing (24%) for access to online databases. Only one library service indicated that it operated autonomously, with no collaborative arrangements in place.

![Figure 16. Collaborative arrangements in place](image)

Respondents provided information about other collaborative arrangements they were involved in; some were formalised through specific industry connections which offered reciprocal borrowing arrangements with other libraries (e.g. Fishnet, IAMSLIC and Tranzinfo), and some were informal cross-institutional arrangements. It was noted that Libraries Australia\(^7\) was viewed as a valuable resource for ILL and document delivery. The importance of consortial purchasing as a strategy to

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\(^4\) AGLIN: [www.aglin.org](http://www.aglin.org)

\(^5\) ALIES: [www.alies.org.au](http://www.alies.org.au)

\(^6\) Gratisnet: [www.gratisnet.org.au](http://www.gratisnet.org.au)


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reduce costs was highlighted, specifically the Standing Offer arrangements covering print serials subscriptions and eResources licences managed by the Defence Library Service. Considerable benefits, beyond simply financial savings, were acknowledged, citing greater staff efficiency, increased service delivery to users, wider access to information and the sharing of professional knowledge and expertise across government library and information services.

3.7 Library automation
The data on library management systems (LMS) painted an interesting picture. All but one library service reported that they had a LMS: 86% were proprietary platforms and 14% were open source systems. It was found that there was very little commonality across the different libraries in terms of the systems being used, the different versions of these systems, and the installation and maintenance costs. The various LMS arrangements are summarised below.

Open source LMS
Koha was used by three libraries: two were installed in 2013, one was installed in 2015. The installation costs ranged from $8,140 to $33,400; support costs were quoted by one respondent as $2,600 per annum.

Proprietary LMS
SirsiDynix was the most common LMS provider, with products including Symphony (3), Horizon (2) and EOS (3). Other systems included First, Alma Primo, Spydus and Softlink Liberty. In terms of hosting, 40% of the LMS were operating on internal servers, 30% were hosted on external servers and 30% were Software as a Service (SaaS/Cloud). Three quarters (75%) of the systems were web-enabled, while 10% were not. A small number of respondents were not sure (15%).

The installation dates ranged from 2006 to 2015. The set up costs also varied: $10,000-$20,000; $20,000-$30,000; $30,000-$40,000; and over $40,000. The annual maintenance fees ranged from under $10,000 to over $40,000 per annum. Inevitably, the dates for renewal were not aligned: seven contracts were due for renewal/replacement in 2016, and two in 2018. Three library services had no plans for the future and two remained uncertain about their plans. Of those with plans in place, four were budgeting for installation costs of under $100,000, with one library anticipating costs of over $100,000. It was found that there was significant interest in open source options (Figure 17), with 57% of respondents keen to learn more.

![Figure 17. Level of interest in open source options for the LMS](image-url)
There was also considerable interest in the idea of moving to SaaS as an option. Of those respondents planning for a new LMS platform, almost two thirds (64%) were keen to explore ideas about SaaS (Figure 18).

A good proportion of library functions were automated, as outlined in Table 4. Almost all library services had an OPAC (95%), automated circulation (90%) and serials control (88%). The least automated functions were acquisitions and ILLs with around half of the respondents (47%) reporting that these tasks were undertaken manually. In relation to managing reference enquiries, an equal proportion of respondents worked with an automated system (41%) and manual systems (41%). The remaining 18% indicated that they were in transition, as they moved to a new automated system.

Table 4. Automation of library functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library function</th>
<th>Automated</th>
<th>Manual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OPAC</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulation</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serials control</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federated search</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cataloguing</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquisitions</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interlibrary loans</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference query tracking*</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relative values for the data (manual or automated) are also presented graphically in Figure 19.
3.8 Library space and storage
A series of questions were asked to ascertain the amount of physical space and storage allocated to the library services. It was unsurprising to find a range of responses, from under 50m² to over 500m² (Figure 20). Libraries with smaller staff numbers (e.g. one person libraries) tended to have the smallest space allocation (under 50 m²). Although one respondent stated that the area for their library was only 7m², another one-person library had a footprint of almost 400m².

Figure 20. Space allocation for the library and information service

Four respondents managed a second location (three being up to 100m² and one larger at 300m²). A further two respondents reported they ran libraries in a third location (both being up to 100m²). Further examination of the library space aimed to consider the relative proportion (expressed as a percentage) of the space allocated to the collection, to the staff workspace and to the user workspace. Unfortunately, as a number of respondents did not answer this question accurately, it was not possible
to report on the data collected. Almost one third of respondents (30%) stated that they had additional storage space, either in government buildings (67%) or in commercial buildings (33%). It was not possible to report on the area allocated to, nor the cost of supplementary storage.

3.9 Budget & finances
Respondents were asked to provide details about the financial arrangements for the library and information service, based on the appropriation from Treasury, grants and contributions (i.e. own source revenue) and user charges (e.g. through service level agreements). As confidentiality was assured, it is not possible to present the precise financial arrangements for each library. Overall, however, it was found that the appropriation from Treasury, based on nine responses, ranged from a low of $30,000 to a high of $1,100,000. Only four respondents provided details of grants and contributions, which ranged from $20,000 to $850,000. There was insufficient data to report on income from service level agreements.

In terms of expenditure, respondents were asked to report on the proportion allocated to employee related expenditure, supplies and services, and depreciation and amortisation. The proportion of expenditure on staff, as reported by 12 respondents, ranged from a low of 30% to a high of 80%. It was not possible to correlate expenditure ratios with the size of library service. Unfortunately, the remaining financial data collected was not considered reliable enough to present in this report. A small percentage of respondents (30%) stated that they outsourced some work, primarily in the areas of digitisation, indexing, cataloguing, training and to meet specific staffing needs.

Cost recovery
The extent of cost recovery is presented in Figure 21, with questions asked about whether the libraries sought full cost recovery (i.e. factoring in staff time and on costs) or direct cost recovery (i.e. the actual cost of the item) for the services they provided. The most likely areas where direct cost recovery was applied were identified as the purchase and acquisition of information resources which were retained by a specific business unit (40%) and document delivery (20%). Only two library services charged the business units for resources which were purchased on behalf of their immediate staff, but housed in the library. Comments were received which indicated that it was generally considered more cost efficient for the library staff to manage all purchasing activities independently, drawing on their professional knowledge, rather than seeking approvals from managers.

It was rare for charges to be levied for training activities (5%), but it was pointed out that, where the library supported more than one user group, eg through memoranda of understanding with another department or portfolio agency, the various subscription costs, library management systems administration, client liaison etc were charged back to the individual agency concerned.
3.10 Trends (2010-2015)

An important area of the study of government libraries relates to the changing environment in which they operate, and the impact of this on the libraries’ operations and on the services they provide. Looking specifically at the past five years (2010-2015), respondents were asked to consider the extent to which various aspects of the library service had changed. Sixteen factors were presented, with instructions for respondents to state how they felt the situation may have changed; using a Likert scale, the values covered whether the individual factors had decreased significantly, decreased to some extent, remained the same, increased to some extent or increased significantly. There was also an option to indicate that a specific factor was not applicable to the respondent.

Figure 22 presents the trends through the combining of the responses for ‘decreased to some extent’ and ‘decreased significantly’ and the responses for ‘increased to some extent’ and ‘increased significantly’, as well as ‘remained the same’.

One quarter of respondents (26%) reported that library base funding had increased, with positive indications in terms of the staffing budget. This reflected a clear move into the electronic environment: the eResources budget had increased, with an associated increase in the range of eResources available to users. The data reflected the distinct trend towards electronic resources, balanced by a dramatic drop in the budget for print resources (76%) and a reduction in the space allocation for the library.

In counterpoint to this, almost two thirds of respondents (62%) recorded a drop in library base funding. Here the situation was less rosy: there was a general reduction across most factors: space allocation, staffing and the size of the collection. The eResources budget had also decreased for 59% of these libraries. It was noteworthy, nevertheless, that despite the funding cuts, the budget for electronic resources and the range of eResources available to users had in fact increased for over one third (38%) of library services.
It was reported that the hours of service had tended to remain the same (90%) over the past five years and the range of services provided remained the same (50%), or had even increased (10%). Again, despite the funding cuts, the range of departmental or agency functions falling under the responsibility of library staff increased (60%). There is clear evidence of the staff of the library and information services ‘doing more with less’ and refocusing their services in a changing environment.

*It is important to realise that the library is there for the benefit of the organisation and when the organisation changes, we need to change with it and fit to the strategic direction. This could mean re-skilling and working on non-traditional library tasks.*

Respondents were invited to provide information about changes to staffing that may have occurred over the past five years (2010-2015). While 10% reported no change, there were multiple instances of the elimination of positions (41%), the relocation of staff (28%) and the downsizing of positions (21%) (Figure 23). One agency had experienced all three factors: elimination of positions, relocation of staff and downsizing of positions. Two libraries had seen positions both eliminated and downgraded, and two libraries noted that positions had been eliminated and staff relocated.
Respondents were able to provide their own views about the changing environment they were operating in.

*Important for the Library profession to acknowledge that the labour market is shrinking and our tasks are changing.*

While a few negative comments were received, the general tone was positive: respondents felt that there was a significant role to be played by library staff individually and collectively to ensure a bright future:

*We have to be constantly evolving to fit within the changing landscape of the APS, willing to do new things and take on new responsibilities, prove our “value add”.*

*The current environment provokes both apprehension and exhilaration. Librarians have faced change before and have generally been good at dealing with it – those who can demonstrate innovation and client focus should find their skills appreciated by the people they help.*

One respondent expressed concern about the uncertainty of the political context in which government libraries have to operate:

*What complicates this for government libraries are the ideological swings that each election can bring and the specific MoG changes that follow... arrangements established under one government can be torn apart by the next.*

In spite of the challenges of the past few years, there was a clear sense that the staff of the government library and information services had plans for the ongoing development of their services, particularly with the application of new technologies. The key themes which emerged were reducing the footprint for print resources with the aim of establishing more multi-functional spaces, the increased use of online repositories and linked data to improve discovery and repurposing of information resources, and the digitisation of some of the collections.

The comments provided stressed the importance of ensuring close alignment with the strategic directions of the department or agency, deepening the understanding of user needs, streamlining workplace practices, and building opportunities for cross-agency collaboration.

*The future of libraries is changing and to avoid downsizing or closure I am working on closer ties with other agencies and also greater cooperation.*
Organisational arrangements also featured in the comments, including merged departments, wider departmental responsibilities, shared service models. It was encouraging to see that several respondents highlighted they were developing contemporary policies for the library and information services, conducting evaluative reviews of their services and undertaking strategic planning work.

3.11 The role of AGLIN

The survey concluded with a group of questions about the role of AGLIN. Respondents were asked to consider a list of activities that AGLIN, as an association, might be involved in, and to indicate the three most pertinent activities which should be, in their view, the focus for AGLIN. These activities encompassed advocacy topics, facilitating collaboration and cooperation, advice and guidance, and professional development. One quarter of the responses received (n=18) underscored the importance of AGLIN promoting the value of government libraries, followed by representing the interests of member libraries (n=13), running cooperative schemes and resource sharing activities (n=13) and serving as a forum for issues affecting government libraries (n=12). The coordination of professional development activities was also valued (n=8) (Figure 24). The data also provides a clear indication of activities which are not highly valued by the membership.

Three quarters of respondents (74%) felt that the current name, the Australian Government Libraries Information Network, was appropriate for the contemporary environment and should be retained (Figure 25). Some respondents appreciated the inclusion of the word ‘Network’, although there was also a sense that using the term ‘Association’ might be more powerful. A small number of respondents questioned the immediate relevancy of the word ‘Library’, preferring ‘Information Professionals’ and the need to include the wider remit of records, knowledge management and collections.
suitable when it is widely recognised and acknowledged for the work it undertakes.

Whatever its merits or deficits, AGLIN has some name recognition. A campaign to change perceptions of what libraries can provide might be of greater value.

AGLIN does a fantastic job in very difficult circumstances. Lots of people who might complain never actually volunteer themselves I’ve noticed. They have assisted me greatly in my career and the training and forums have been invaluable.

The online survey produced a wealth of data which contributes to a more accurate understanding of the nuances of government library and information services and establishes an evidence based foundation for future research. This information is enriched through the qualitative data to provide insights into the experiences of those working in the sector.

4 Consultation with the government library community

One valuable aspect of the research project was the ability to capture the opinions and views of people working in the government library and information sector. Two key approaches were adopted to ensure wide consultation: a series of six face-to-face focus groups and one online focus group held in mid December 2015, and an online questionnaire with 20 open-ended questions was made available to stakeholders. These questions were aligned with the topics discussed at the focus groups. Unfortunately, efforts to engage senior managers and executives with the research activities proved difficult, with only four valid responses received to a brief survey with three key questions.

The matters explored through the consultation process focused on the relevance of government agency library and information services today; the most valuable attributes of the services; and the difference these services make to the agency or department itself. A group of questions examined the contribution made by library and information services to the achievement of the government’s strategic directions; to the development of high quality, evidence-based public policy; to the government’s information management strategies; to its ICT strategies and the Digital Transformation Agenda (DTA). Human resources issues were also investigated, to consider the role played by LIS qualifications in the Australian Public Service (APS) workforce and how these related to the APS capability map, as well as the opportunities for training and staff development. Scrutiny was given to different models of service delivery, the perceived shortcomings of the current model, and what opportunities may lie ahead for government libraries.
A total of 27 people attended the focus groups and there were 14 valid responses to the online questionnaire. The extensive body of qualitative data gathered through the consultation process was analysed and synthesised to develop a rich picture of the world of Australian government libraries, as viewed by the managers and staff working in this field. The findings are discussed under the themes of the current model of library services, the services’ alignment with the strategic directions of the Commonwealth Government, user behaviour, and the skills and competencies of government library and information professionals.

4.1 The current model of government library and information services

Commonwealth Government library and information services are, for the most part, department- or agency centric: they manage the information resources for and support the information needs of a specific government department or agency. However, one conundrum for the sector is the actual range and variety of agencies and departments, each with quite diverse – often niche – roles and functions played by the different cohorts of staff within the organisation itself. It can be difficult to achieve an agency-wide understanding of the work and the potential of the library and information service, but establishing productive relationships with users is critical:

> [It] is important to build trust… You have to be tied to the people who are using you in the corporate structure, they understand how much money you need and what it is that you do, so it makes a huge difference...

The specific strengths of the current service model were found to be the deep understanding the library staff had of their agency’s role and activities, as well as their mastery of the subject matter at the heart of the business of the agency. In some situations, there were legislative requirements to retain copies of departmental resources, with agency libraries having oversight over confidential material that needs to be well managed in-house:

> [Often] it is sensitive; you may not want to talk to an outsider about it...

There was a keen sense of the importance and value of the relationships with the users or clients of the services offered by the library, which ensured that the staff could draw on their highly specialised knowledge to provide responsive, targeted support.

The library and information services should be directly aligned with the organisation’s own functions, whether that might have an emphasis on research, regulatory matters, or . The relevance of the service was felt to be dependent on positioning. On one hand this could be beneficial:

> We were incorporated into the policy department. This pushes you right into the middle of research.

> We are not a typical government department, more like a small university department, totally research oriented. Find and disseminate. No other services provided.

On the other hand, positioning may be problematic: being placed in corporate services was found to be less meaningful than being located with policy and research areas. Where possible, librarians have taken steps to address the issues:

> We are moving to make sure we are more embedded in the Policy Office - embed there and go out selling the library to other departments.

The most valuable attributes of the library and information services were associated with the benefits brought to the department: the efficient and cost-effective management of information resources through the negotiation of subscriptions and licenses to online resources; the curation and
discoverability of grey literature; and the strong client relationships. These were all underpinned by the knowledge, skills and expertise of the library staff.

Similar themes were reflected in the participants’ understanding of the single most important contribution the library and information service made to the agency:

- In-house knowledge
- Client relationships
- Environmental scanning, current awareness, proactively pushing information out to clients
- Immediacy of information provision
- Saving time and ensuring increased efficiency
- Loyalty and confidentiality.

The contribution made by the library staff is acknowledged by some of their users:

\[ \text{We get recognition sometimes...} \]
\[ \text{We always do well in surveys... seen as an extra person for each team.} \]

Many participants reported that they followed up with their users to ensure that they were satisfied with the work undertaken on their behalf and to capture positive feedback which could subsequently be used to build a business case for new services through formal presentations within the department, or presented as evidence in staff performance reviews.

In discussions with a wider group of stakeholders during the research project, one view was presented to suggest that media monitoring services represented a direct competitor for library and information services. It was believed that executive managers found it easy to introduce a media monitoring service directly tailored to the business of the agency, but this would be to the detriment of the library and information service. Focus group participants refuted this view, however, noting that they were very aware of departmental arrangements with media monitoring services, but they felt that the role and function of these services was quite distinct from the information services provided by the library. The focus of media monitoring tended to be specifically on the profile of the agency in the media. While that could include the impact of policy decisions in the public arena, it was not associated with the sourcing of research and information to support the development of policy. One focus group participant stressed that in her agency, library staff worked in partnership with the media and communications teams, using daily media services to provide information to keep their clients up-to-date.

In response to the question about what participants believed might happen if their library and information service was closed tomorrow, two prospects were aired. Some librarians stated that the service they provided to the agency was ‘mission critical’: the agency itself would not be able to function without access to the core information resources used across the agency. This was particularly important in regulatory and research agencies and those with a strong legal focus.

\[ \text{If the server goes down we have 3 minutes before we hear from all the scientists!} \]
\[ \text{People are working in critical area, checking applications etc} \]
\[ \text{We are part of the workflow. They value and would miss that service.} \]

Other librarians felt that they would not be missed immediately, but the quality of the agency’s work and the productivity of the staff would certainly deteriorate:

\[ \text{They would not [getting] the quality and [would] not realise it for the first month or so - they will realise it in the long term.} \]
\[ \text{Researchers will criticise where they see no evidence-based material in the report. A recent report was widely disparaged – and overseas too.} \]
Quality of advice to Ministers would drop.

The quality of the management of information resources would deteriorate: costs would increase and a lack of coordination would result in the widespread and unwieldy duplication of resources. Some of the key library and information functions would still need to be provided, but the responsibilities would be passed to executive assistants or new graduates who had no professional knowledge or understanding of information management practices and procedures, and would not establish and maintain the mutually beneficial relationships with other information professionals. As noted in Section 3.6 of the report, there are considerable benefits from the professional interaction between libraries, especially in the area of collaboration and resource sharing.

Material would be dumped at Recall, much is not electronically available. Services would need to be outsourced, ILL and networking would be lost. Licences would still have to continue.

Focus group participants agreed that there were some drawbacks associated with the current model of service delivery, as the internal focus inevitably results in a myriad of agency-specific systems, processes and purchasing arrangements:

Duplication of resources, licensing, pricing problems. Less value for money.

In response to these concerns, there was some discussion around the concept of shared services:

The discussion on shared services is not sophisticated or granular. They mean a thousand things by ‘shared’.

One instance of shared services amongst Commonwealth Government libraries was cited, with a combined library service in place for the Department of Education and Training and the Department of Employment. Overall, respondents’ views about the shared services tended to be more negative than positive:

The siting of shared services is problematic...

The specific information needs of the different units or groups of staff was found to be challenging: it was difficult to pay centrally for specialist databases, and firewalls in the different departments could cause immense barriers to access to the required online resources. There was also a sense that perceived inequities and competition produced their own challenges in a shared services environment:

... other agencies can perhaps monopolise or drop priority...

Focus group participants and online survey respondents were anxious about the fact that many stakeholders regarded libraries as being no longer relevant in some government departments:

[Libraries] are no longer seen as relevant, that is why they were closed!

Some participants believed that government support services in general were under threat:

It is not just libraries that have lost their relevance, it is also records and IT.

It was argued that some executive managers were unable to recognise the distinction between public libraries and departmental libraries; the term ‘librarian’ was in itself misleading.

The perception of us, they see us as public library activity, they believe it is procurement.

...we are not a public library, we are a service, so people can take or leave it, most people leave it...

Comments were also made to indicate that librarians failed to market their skill sets effectively. By working quietly and efficiently, they were at risk of concealing the sophisticated nature of the professional activities they were involved in, in effect putting their roles at risk.
Maybe we have not lost relevance, but maybe just failed to demonstrate it as effectively as some others competing.

You can do too good a job, make it all too seamless.

It was felt that, while many managers could identify the types of information-centric functions they wanted performed in the agency, they were unable to make the connection with the role of ‘librarian’. Accordingly, ‘librarian’ positions have been removed from the organisational structure, or positions have been downsized, leaving immense gaps in the department’s capabilities and performance.

4.2 Alignment with government’s strategic directions

An important theme which was explored in the focus groups was the degree of alignment with the Government’s strategic directions, through the contribution made by library services at the departmental or agency level. Particular attention was paid to the sub-themes of evidence-based policy, and ICT and information management strategies.

Evidence-based policy

The importance of evidence-based government policy is examined in the literature review (Appendix 1). It was noted that in government departments with responsibility for high quality policy development, there was a central role to be played by the library and information services. The library staff were able to facilitate access to accurate information published in authoritative resources, and to deliver this in a timely manner, with a tangible, positive impact on the rigour of policy work and the quality of government communication.

The library aligns itself with government strategic directions through evidence-based information

We contribute to the quality of government papers.

Evidence-based information is our life blood really.

Although the sophistication of their research skills was highlighted by focus group participants, it was felt that the capabilities of some library staff were actually underutilised. They felt the situation could be improved if policy staff understood the value of involving library staff in the preliminary stages of their work, to ensure that detailed, relevant research could be undertaken to directly inform the policy development process.

Fears were expressed by a large number of focus group participants and online survey respondents about the capacity for government staff to develop strong, evidence based policy documents. In particular, with the push for self-sufficiency across the public service, there were major concerns about how policy makers were actually obtaining the information they were working with. Increasingly tight time pressures meant that departmental staff are no longer relying on trusted, authoritative sources, but just “doing a quick Google search and copying text from Wikipedia”.

They are Googling it, looking for free things, they might be on some newsletters, from other libraries, see a video, ring up a friend...

It was important for library staff to openly discuss the roles they play in managing traditional published information, in both print and digital formats, and in curating informally published resources, particularly grey literature. Only a few libraries, however, had direct responsibility for coordinating the agency’s own publications, e.g. with an institutional repository and/or a digitisation program.

Nevertheless, a number of managers clearly articulated their understanding of the imperative to develop a strategic focus for the library and information service: their very existence depended on it.

In our agency plan there is explicit mention of the library as one of the strengths of the organisation.
We make a big contribution and we do make sure everyone knows that we do. We need our reporting to tie in to the strategic direction. A lot of this is in our hands. Execs should not have to ask what our relevance is.

We have a monthly and 3-monthly report that goes to the Commissioners and GM’s meeting. We are mentioned in the annual report.

Some librarians felt they were fortunate that the agency had its own Act which mandated their roles and responsibilities.

ICT and information management strategies

The Digital Transformation Office (DTO), with the associated Digital Transformation Agenda (DTA), and the growing need for data curation and data management, were highlighted as new areas of interest across government. Some government departments hold their own datasets and are under pressure to make these available to researchers outside the department. Some librarians viewed this as an opportunity to extend their expertise in digitisation, metadata and data management, but all too often “the first port of call was IT”. Some respondents believed that library staff often failed to promote their knowledge and experience:

*IT are placing themselves much better than librarians, blow their own trumpet, placing themselves where people want to go.*

Departmental managers were criticised for not understanding the complexity of the contemporary information ecosystem, with no real comprehension of the management of information resources, but they also showed no interest in seeking out advice from library professionals.

*IT has no understanding of IM and how it works... We are locked out of the debate, even when they set up DTO, they see that as an ICT role.*

Some managers were turning to records managers for support and guidance:

*Records managers do have that big stick and the ear of management at the moment.*

*DTA is being led by the National Archives, records people are the go-to people for that.*

Many of the participants felt that they faced significant challenges in the area of ICT activities. Technology managers often failed to acknowledge the fact that productive library and information services relied heavily on a contemporary ICT infrastructure. As a result, library staff were often locked down behind firewalls, using out-of-date systems which could not mesh with the content provided by the online publishers, and with little or no ability to introduce any new technologies which would enhance their service delivery. One case was cited where the business case to upgrade from Internet Explorer 7 to Internet Explorer 8 was knocked back, at a time when users beyond the government sector were already working with Internet Explorer 11. The opportunities to design and develop innovative information services were frequently, and frustratingly, blocked by their own IT departments.

The lack of continuity in government services was also found to be problematic, with the complex impact of MoG activities, changing ideas and shifting priorities.

*They have shut down websites because of MoG changes.*

Digitisation projects were particularly at risk:

*... so much from previous governments is removed or not digitised or no longer available because ideas have changed...*
Some librarians reported, however, that they had managed to develop some creative technical workarounds, while others indicated that they went to great lengths to establish useful and productive relationships with their colleagues in IT.

The level of engagement with broader information management activities often depended on the size of the agency.

*In a smaller agency often you become involved in IM, become an expert in TRIM etc. Often in a bigger department you are sidelined.*

In some agencies there were opportunities for collaboration and integration:

*I have recently been moved into the Records Management team as it was considered IM was related.*

*We sit with the web team and have input into the intranet and a library page.*

In other agencies, the library staff continued to be victims of management perceptions, seen as procurement officers rather than information professionals.

### 4.3 User behaviour

Despite operating in an increasingly online environment, participants in the focus groups noted the paradoxical situation where many library users continued to be heavily dependent on print materials.

*People perceive everything is available online. But some people, including Commissioners, refuse to use things online and demand print.*

Given the view amongst some agency managers that “everything will be online”, participants expressed grave concerns about the closure of library collections, the relocation of resources to “inconvenient” locations (e.g. basement areas or off-site storage) or the irretrievable disposal of materials, which inevitably restricted access to the required information and resulted in service degradation. The library was regarded as space which could be better utilised, in order to achieve ‘efficiency dividends’. Where these actions were also associated with the retrenchment of qualified library staff, the decline in library use became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In contrast, some librarians had accepted the hand they were being dealt and had turned the situation to their advantage.

*Be prepared to give up the real estate, but fight for space online and branding that tells you – ‘brought to you by the Library’.*

*If they are more inclined to let their physical materials go, then concentrate on building the networks that allow you to digitise print, get a chapter etc. Move in that direction, organisation gets the space, less rent. There is a residual niggle that you prove value by having a collection, but you have to prove it in services.*

*I think we need to move with them and adapt: be seen as adaptable, you are seen as obstructive otherwise…*

It was recognised that this was a period of transition for many government staff, as was emphasised in the literature review. However, it was noted that many users lacked the skills required to work productively in this new digital environment, and library staff were not necessarily leading the way:

*We still have not made the transition from information literacy to digital literacy.*

If library staff were keen and prepared to promote the development of new skills to the agency staff in order to build the confident use of eResources, they were often told that training was not actually required, or when training courses were offered, there were no takers. Where skills development did take place, it was usually on a one-to-one basis, especially in smaller agencies. Some other librarians
believed that it was not their responsibility to be concerned about the development of digital literacy skills amongst agency staff. This is in contrast with academic and public libraries, where a wide range of training activities is provided to support their users in the digital environment. There were situations where smart devices were being rolled out in an agency, but some library staff did not feel that they needed to be directly involved.

It was again stressed that building trusted relationships with clients was critical:

*Relationship management is important: find out what people are doing.*
*We are situated with academics and they strongly support us.*

New graduates were singled out as a valuable target market for building relationships with users:

*It is important to get in touch with graduates when they start out and also a bit later, for more in-depth training.*

Nevertheless, meeting the needs of new graduates was sometimes difficult. As they tended to be used to the wide array of databases made available to them at university, they were frequently disappointed to realise that they had access to far more limited resources now they were working for the government. There was often a naïve expectation that government libraries could simply partner with university libraries to open up their collections:

*What the department would really like is to have a university library; government would like to hand over a big cheque.*

There were accompanying accusations that the librarians were the actual obstacle:

*Clients want access to the world’s scientific intellectual property... They are constrained by people like us.*

Anecdotal evidence was provided in the focus groups to report that some graduates enrolled in postgraduate studies in order to continue to have access to materials through the university library, or they ‘borrowed’ the login authentication from family or friends. In situations like this, the academic library inevitably becomes an unequal competitor to the government library.

There was further anecdotal evidence to highlight that when government staff relied on Google or other search engines, they were frustrated by the paywalls they encountered to access journal articles or reports. There seemed to be a significant lack of awareness amongst government staff about the information services that they legitimately had access to at work. One participant argued, however, that paywalls could work in the library’s favour, if users could be encouraged to contact the library whenever they hit one. Paywalls could in fact direct people back to the library. It was critical to translate obstacles into opportunities.

4.4 The skills of government library and information professionals

Participants were asked about the value of and the extent of recognition for LIS qualifications in their organisations. Responses were very mixed, with little uniformity across the agencies. “Eligibility for membership of ALIA” tended to be the accepted approach and there was a strong push to have LIS qualifications included in job descriptions, at the minimum as ‘highly desirable’, if not ‘essential’ criteria. A small number of people stated that LIS qualifications were a requirement when they applied for the position they currently held, whereas other people highlighted the problems resulting from agency managers not understanding the academic discipline of library and information science. Librarians are assumed to have no qualifications and the work is easy to do:

*They think anyone can do a librarian’s job...*
One line of thought linked back to the expectations for self-sufficiency in the public service, with information work simply being an ubiquitous, generic skill:

*Because people can find information themselves they do not believe that we can do better.*

The APS Capability Map, used to determine job level standards in the public service, was found to be particularly problematic: LIS work did not fit with the overall mapping process.

*When you look at the standards, some of our skills are listed at quite a low level (e.g. all level 3 do research)*

Specific challenges were noted for library technicians as the qualification was not recognised by HR in the workforce profile of a number of agencies.

It was felt that the ways in which the LIS field was rapidly evolving added further complexity: new skills such as data management and visualisation were regarded as ‘specialist’ (i.e. non-LIS) skillsets. One focus group participant believed that there would be greater value if recruitment was organised around skillsets, as opposed to formal qualifications. In smaller agencies, however, LIS staff felt satisfied with the opportunities they had to broaden and deepen their skills. Nevertheless, compared with other fields, librarianship was not accepted as a career pathway in the public service:

*There is no career progression. No specialist line. If you are in IT you can go straight to the top.*

There were very mixed views about professional development (PD). On the one hand, some people were concerned that funding for PD had been significantly reduced so that they were not allowed to attend PD events, or they could only attend something if it was free. Other participants eagerly reported that they had plenty of opportunities to attend a wide range of developmental activities, to participate in online forums, and even to develop their own training programs for their staff. It was stressed that the individual needed to take ownership of their own PD pathways, not just sit and wait for managerial direction.

*The lawyers were happy that I went to the legal specialisation course and I got more of that sort of work.*

While only a few people were aware of the government library specialisation in the ALIA PD scheme, there was a level of interest:

*We would be interested in investing in such a scheme.*

*Maybe it will help you get a better job.*

The discussion about LIS skills led to the importance of marketing the skills that library and information professionals had, and how these were applied in their work.

4.5 Marketing and promotion

Many participants sensed that the lack of relevancy, as perceived by the senior managers and executives of the government agency, was directly aligned with the failure to promote library and information services effectively.

*I am disappointed at the lack of leadership. Why our services are not valued is that we do not market them. It is up to us to make ourselves visible. We can offer a lot more!*

*We should get people in the department who say we are amazing, to tell senior management more.*

Participants observed that some library staff failed to recognise their true responsibilities to the parent department or agency, choosing to focus on their own library-centric interests and therefore, to a great extent, ignoring the changing world around them.
I think we see ourselves as librarians first... the organisation should be the librarian’s primary responsibility, not being a librarian.

... some government libraries are trying to keep the status quo. It was critically important to ensure that government library and information services strive to support clients achieve their specific organisational objectives, to justify service provision through demonstrable strategic outcomes. It was argued, however, that the challenges currently faced by government library and information professionals are far from new:

It is still about being proactive. This has been happening for a long time and if you have not adjusted or streamlined your service, you need to update.

A small number of librarians have established effective strategies for collecting evidence and articulating the intrinsic value of the collections they manage and the services they provide to clients.

We have a mantra which goes ‘the budget is covered if I save each person in the building 20 minutes a week’. They really get it then. I have not been challenged over an increasing budget in a decade.

Usage figures are there, 2 million downloads of library materials every year.

It was argued that demonstrating the value of the work performed was directly connected to the future roles of government library services.

4.6 Future directions for government library and information services

Focus group participants and respondents to the online questionnaire were invited to consider any untapped opportunities for Commonwealth Government library and information services. The main topics that emerged were: liberating themselves from the print world and venturing deeper into the digital world (e.g. eBooks, big data, mobile apps); introducing new channels of communication with users (e.g. social media, blogs); and ensuring that their services were appropriately branded and marketed.

Get proactive, go online, go selling yourselves, have apps, stop moaning about being misunderstood, and go out and show it.

To ensure that the library and information services do have a strong future, participants not only emphasised the importance of needing to operate in leaner and smarter ways, but also to establish a stable, sustainable model for service delivery.

We should look at the things that cause most problems. The collection has to move every time government changes. There is so much wastage; resources thrown away or stored.

There were tensions between the ‘individual’ and the ‘collective’ nature of library and information services. On the one hand, it was especially important to highlight and promote the specific characteristics of the diverse functions of government (United Nations, 2011). The library and information services which support these government functions are equally distinctive, highly specialised and ‘individual’:

We are not a bland mix of pasteurised milk

We are boutiques...we are not Target.

On the other hand, it was felt that there were immense opportunities for a ‘collective’ approach to service delivery: greater collaboration had the potential to reduce duplication and to leverage the benefits from the synergies to be achieved from overlapping objectives and interests. A number of benefits which could be achieved through collaborative initiatives were presented: building stronger relationships between the library services, both operationally and professionally through AGLIN; streamlining collections; eliminating duplicated processes with the goal of improving access to digital
resources across all government departments and agencies. Figure 26 presents the participants’ ideas in a word cloud.

Figure 26. Future directions for government library and information services

Specific attention should be given to the opportunities offered by next generation library service platforms which are able to significantly reduce the financial and labour overheads of library operations and improve access to and the discovery of government information resources.

While the staff of some individual agency libraries felt they were making some progress towards some of these collaborative goals, many potential developments were siloed. There was a very strong interest in learning to work together in new ways, with lots of ideas expressed: sharing costs; purchasing consortia, whole of government licences, a single LMS for all government library and information services, and the concept of a central advisory agency.

A central agency/repository could be a good solution to hold (non-sensitive) material.

I like the ‘Library of Last Resort’ idea, then we will be sure materials will be there.

The discussion could be distilled into several intertwined themes:

- To ensure equitable access to quality information by all government staff, regardless of the agency they worked in
- To collectively manage government information resources
- To leverage the opportunities offered by ICT
- To reduce the operational silos, while retaining client relationships
- To have a common voice to promote the knowledge, skills, expertise and the values of library and information professionals.

There was a strong belief in the idea that ‘together we are more’.

That boundary spanning is what I am interested in – synergies, getting traction, hybridising, whatever it takes to survive.

The challenges facing government libraries were not underestimated, but there were opportunities for a collective voice, effective advocacy, champions amongst the senior executives, and “some political backing or leverage”.

4.7 The role of AGLIN

There was a general acknowledgement across the focus groups that AGLIN was a valuable organisation, yet not without its own challenges. It was recognised that, more recently, AGLIN had adopted a more strategic approach:
AGLIN is doing some amazing work at the moment.
In the last 12-18 months they have really upped their game.

It was important to have a viable membership base: some people thought it should be obligatory for Commonwealth Government libraries to become members, while others encouraged a widening of the membership to include, for example, state government library services, “to build more clout”. There was a clear sense that, even though AGLIN was essentially a volunteer group, the sector needed a strong voice:

We work among ourselves as we can, but we need to up the ante...
We need the authority to speak at the top...
Could government libraries be better served by some different advocacy of support?
We need a representative for government libraries...

Echoing the responses to the online survey (see Section 3.11), focus group participants did not see any specific reason to change the name.

5 Discussion

Together, the quantitative data relating to the management and operations of Commonwealth Government library and information services, and the qualitative data capturing the perceptions, views and opinions of the library and information professionals managing and working in these services, contribute to the development of a deeper understanding of the government library sector in Australia at the current time. In this section, some of the key themes which have emerged in the research findings are linked back to government issues discussed in the literature review (Appendix 1) and in the recent press.

5.1 The current government library environment

The current agency-centric model of service delivery has a number of strengths, but at the same time, it presents a number of challenges. The focus group participants and the respondents to the online questionnaire outlined the critical importance of ensuring that their users have equitable access to high quality information which they require to productively contribute to the achievement of the department’s or agency’s goals, regardless of the particular department or agency they might work in. It was particularly important to ensure continuity of information access for all users and provide efficient and sustainable research services: they underscored the need to be resilient and prepared for the greatest challenges, which in many cases were the inevitable rounds of MoC changes resulting from government activities.

The staff of library and information services who were based in regulatory or research-intensive agencies felt that they had greater security than their colleagues who worked with government departments with a policy focus. Nevertheless, given that the topic of evidence based government policy is in the spotlight across the world, the civic demands for improved decision-making are high on the list of priorities for open, responsible and accountable government. Government library and information professionals clearly have a significant role to play in the collection and curation of increasingly digital resources of interest and relevance to decision makers to ensure that policy developers draw on accurate and high quality information from a wide range of authoritative sources. Librarians can make a major contribution towards the mitigation of the risks associated with the likelihood of policy decisions being made based on incomplete or poorly argued information (Shergold, 2015, p.21).
There is undoubtedly the potential to improve the management of and access to grey literature and to work with open linked datasets through collaborative eRepositories. Shergold’s views that “increasing access to government data supports innovation by unlocking the economic and social value of information” (Shergold, 2015, p.19) are echoed in a recent report which considers the economic impact of open government data (Bureau of Communications Research, 2016). Developments in the area of open data and data-driven products and services, such as the recent release of IP Australia’s datasets, will stimulate new practices for research data management and open up further new, exciting career pathways for library and information professionals across the government sector. Current discussion points to new directions for government services in Australia, with opportunities for information professionals to re-imagine the roles they play.

5.2 New directions for government services

The Commonwealth Government’s Digital Transformation Agenda (DTA) requires the public service to meet community expectations for new ICT-driven models of service delivery. Leading public servants have heralded the “rich period of opportunity” offered by the current government. As Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull has been described as “an open book, he wants our ideas... This presents us public servants with opportunities like we’ve never had before” (The Mandarin, April 20, 2016). The Digital Transformation Office (DTO) is a prospective partner for many new initiatives. Echoing the Prime Minister, government library and information professionals are encouraged to “open their minds and be bold” (The Mandarin, April 20, 2016) and to seek out new ways of working with and for their users in the digital environment.

The Director General of the National Archives of Australia (NAA), David Fricker, has emphasised the imperative for society’s participation in the development of public policy, declaring that “if you’re going to have evidence-based, informed, policy development, government information has to be available, anywhere, anytime” (Fricker, 2016). Shergold also articulated the importance of access to information created by the government: “The community should be actively encouraged to use public information for all sorts of public purposes. Factual information collected at public expense should generally be available to the public to use as it pleases” (Shergold, 2015, p.19-20). Through their understanding of information management and information flows, librarians can offer productive guidance about the sharing of information and present ideas to support the development of more open, agile and adaptive government and citizen-centred governance. Frey has proposed that libraries can transform themselves into a dynamic network, “using iterative business models, based on sharing ideas and inviting comments, feedback, and collaborations” (Frey, 2014).

Recently, criticisms have been raised about the dangers resulting from the lack of willingness to share information across government agencies. Concerns were expressed about the low priority afforded to information resource management within government agencies and the associated lack of confidence of public service staff to navigate the digital information landscape, yet “we live in an information age” (The Mandarin, March 30, 2016). Declarations such as these should inspire government library and information professionals to ensure that the roles they play, together with their professional skill sets and their strong professional relationships across the government sector, are recognised and respected by agency managers.

If you happen to work for an innovative, forward-thinking organization, where the value of information and its importance to success is well understood, consider yourself lucky. You probably have at your disposal a corporate library and at least one librarian (a.k.a. Information Specialist, Knowledge Manager, Cybrarian, Information Broker).
Modern corporate libraries are like hive-minds; acquiring, filtering, synthesizing and distributing information where it’s needed most, keeping organizations vital and relevant... In an age where separating good information from the irrelevant is increasingly difficult, libraries and librarians are more crucial than ever. (Culhane, 2013, p.121)

Library and information professionals have the transformative potential to develop the critical information and digital literacy skills needed by the government workforce to find, evaluate, use and re-purpose relevant information resources they need.

The Australian public service finds itself not only in a state of transition, but also subject to the forces of rapid and unrelenting change. In October 2015, NAA released its Digital Continuity 2020 Policy (NAA, 2015). This policy document emphasises that information is an asset to be valued:

Australian Government information is a key strategic asset and economic resource of the Commonwealth. Information is as important as finances, property and equipment. It informs public policy and debate, ensures accountability and underpins how the government conducts its business.

When information is accountably created, managed, described and stored the potential future value of information increases. Future value of information is dependent on its ability to be used, reused and shared. (NAA, 2015, p.4)

The Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) has stressed the growing importance of information management skills, with a new framework being introduced to build the capabilities of staff working with digital information. This is marked as a movement away from viewing information-related tasks as generic, something that anyone can do, to promote digital information management as a specialist role (Easton, 2015). Library and information professionals must step out from the shadows to stake their claim in this space, to emphasise the value of the qualifications they hold and to demonstrate their potential for active leadership roles.

As there is clearly an imperative to transform skill sets across the public service, library and information professionals have the opportunity to contribute to the staff development process, both by modelling the skills through their own professional practice and by playing a lead role in the design and delivery of new digital programs across the public service. There are many opportunities for information professionals to drive the change processes: “If we are looking at the digital revolution, you have got to have people who understand that, get it and go with the right level of ambition but also manage the risks going forward” (KPMG, 2014a).

Government librarians have the immense potential to promote their deep understanding of the contemporary information ecosystem, “opening up new ways of engaging with people and transacting and doing business” (KPMG, 2014b). They can take full advantage of the ways in which technology can drive and support the libraries’ own management processes and the services they offer to users. While the data collected in the online survey revealed that there is, at the present time, a veritable patchwork of LMS arrangements across the respondent libraries (Section 3.7), there are clear possibilities to change the landscape. As the Commonwealth Government seeks to reduce overheads and achieve significant efficiency dividends, it is timely to undertake a critical appraisal of the ways in which government information resources are managed. Librarians can successfully leverage these opportunities to move away from legacy library systems and capitalise on the benefits offered by next generation library systems. Vendors such as OCLC WorldShare and ExLibris offer a range of exciting solutions:
... an integrated suite of cloud-based library management and discovery applications packaged together to give librarians a comprehensive and cost-effective way to manage library workflows and improve access to library collections and services...

(OCLC, 2016)

It goes beyond the scope of this report to review specific vendor platforms, but it is argued strongly that, collectively, Commonwealth Government library and information services would achieve significant benefits by introducing new, integrated and collaborative solutions to streamline their existing service processes, reduce their costs, manage their collections of published materials and grey literature, and open up their resources to far wider audiences by contributing to national discovery tools. Such an initiative would, in itself, support the Government’s push for joined-up services and contribute to a far greater return on the government’s investment in information services.

To move in this direction means completely re-examining and re-imagining the governance and funding arrangements for the individual siloed library services. It would require ICT managers in the different agencies to develop a clearer understanding of the information services, both actual and potential, to be provided. In some agencies, barriers to effective information provision have resulted from the lack of interest and/or understanding on the part of the IT departments. In other agencies, on the other hand, productive relationships with their IT colleagues have facilitated the introduction of new digital services which are highly valued by the users. It is critical that library and information professionals are forward thinking, proactive and strategic in their understanding of technology solutions to safeguard their roles and to enhance the government’s access to, use of and creation of information assets.

5.3 A future-focused library and information profession

The relative ‘invisibility’ of library and information professionals was felt to be a challenge associated with professional isolation. Many of the issues examined in the studies of special libraries conducted by ALIA had not yet been fully addressed by the sector: there was scope to build the profile of government library and information professionals by demonstrating the impact of their services and programs on the parent organisation (ALIA, 2010) and discussing the factors relating to the return on investment achieved by library services (ALIA, 2014).

There was an intuitive awareness amongst the focus group participants of the value of their skills. Some librarians had successfully translated their skillsets to fit the new contexts of a changing government workplace, while others took the initiative to independently invest in the development of new skills. The disruptions caused by new technologies are not restricted to the government library environment, but are manifest across all types of library. Along with colleagues in the public library, academic library and children’s library sectors, special librarians have reviewed the competencies required for contemporary professional practice. In the United States, the association for specialised information professionals, SLA, has recently released a new version of the document Competencies of Librarians and Information Professionals (SLA. Professional Competencies Task Force, 2016). Compared with the earlier version (SLA, 2003), this revision steps presents a renewed focus on the specialised concepts of information and knowledge services, systems and technology, resources and the organisation of data, information and knowledge assets.

“Having a deep understanding of why information is needed, how it will be used and how the business works is now key” (Lord, 2014, p.258). A white paper released by LexisNexis (2014) examined the range of skillsets required by information professionals in an increasingly demanding digital world. The impact of the continued growth of online information resources will mean that library and information professionals will need to:
• Ensure that the context of the information gathered is clear, especially to others
• Help others understand how the information professional aggregates and synthesises the information he/she gathers
• Help others interpret the outputs of the information that is aggregated and synthesised by the information professional
• Present information in different ways for different audiences
• Present information in ways that can be more easily understood by others, e.g. visualisations and dashboards.

These skills are very closely aligned with understanding the clients’ requirements: the ability to understand user behaviour, the user experience, and user engagement through effective service models and diverse communications channels is of crucial importance. “Librarians move from being knowledge navigators to being experience creators and navigators” (Inayatullah, 2014, p.28). They can build connections between people and innovation (Arup, 2016).

As workplace activities and research-focused initiatives become more collaborative, librarians need to provide the connections “between activities and between people” (Tancheva et al., 2016, p.36). Researchers seek connections with other researchers as a natural part of the research process, and librarians can create and foster research linkages within and across institutions. They can “play a greater role in making available their resources in customizable platforms that would allow individual preferences in searching, storing, tagging, citing, writing, and sharing with respect to knowledge consumption, production and dissemination... The library... lies at the juncture of customization and collaboration” (Tancheva et al., 2016, pp.39-40).

Although library and information professionals have always emphasised their critical understanding of their users’ expectations and requirements, the public service is now awakening to this reality: “The tools of the digital economy start with people, rather than technology, so services can be designed around user needs and underlying problems” (Webb-Smart, 2016). As some of these tools include methodologies to support a deeper understanding of user needs, design thinking, co-design of services etc, library and information professionals are well placed to provide guidance to their government colleagues. Thus, in addition to all the technical skills relating to the web, databases and content management, the essential skills for the future are identified as analytical skills, business intelligence, and communication and consultancy skills.

Lord has argued that, today, information professionals operate as client-centric, decision enablers. They “communicate constantly with the rest of the organisation, integrate themselves into new areas, build key and productive relationships, and proactively demonstrate their value to senior colleagues” (Lord, 2014, p.258). This work is underpinned by their skillsets:

• Communication to foster long-term engagement with users
• Understanding the business and how their users think
• Managing the processes associated with information and knowledge transfer
• Mastering the technological tools they use
• Providing decision-ready information, i.e. “to transform mountains of information into pinnacles of knowledge” (Shergold, 2015, p.17).

The role of the government library and information professional has been transformed “from gatherer and supplier to analyst, educator and indispensable guide” (Lord, 2014, p.265). Within the context of the Commonwealth Government, there are new opportunities to leverage the national attention being paid to the work of the DTO. Collective strategies should be shaped to facilitate inter-agency communication, so that library and information services can work with the DTO on determining...
priority areas of common interest where they can make a significant contribution to progress the digital agenda within the various departments and agencies.

It is critical that AGLIN engages its members in the discourse about the professional competencies and skills required in the government library sector, to adopt a clear understanding of the future-focused skillsets that will provide a secure career path. Individual library and information professionals not only need to be confident about the expertise they have, but also to articulate the value they provide. The ideas presented in documents such as the LexisNexis exploration of the past, present and future of information management (LexisNexis, 2014) and Lord’s analysis of the attributes required by modern information professionals (Lord, 2014) have found further structure in the business plan developed by the Federal Library and Information Network (FEDLINK) in the United States. FEDLINK presented five goals to guide the organisation through the period 2012-2016:

1. Coordinate cooperative activities and services among federal libraries, information centers and other information users
2. Serve as a forum to consider and make recommendations to the federal information community
3. Encourage and promote development of librarians and information professionals
4. Support procurement efforts to centralize and streamline options to provide efficient and cost-effective use of federal library and information resources and services
5. Manage proactively to achieve results.

(FEDLINK, 2012)

Similar goals sit at the centre of current developments in the Canadian government library arena (Federal Libraries Consortium, 2015; Marin-Cormeau & O’Connell, 2015). The Commonwealth Government library and information sector in Australia has much in common with the federal government sectors in Canada and the United States. This research study has opened up the opportunities for library and information professionals to think more deeply about the role they play in the government sector in this country and to consider alternative ways of scoping and managing their services.

The study revealed that the dangers of professional isolation for those working in the special library sector were very real. Over two thirds of the respondents worked in library and information services with fewer than five staff, and almost half of these were one-person libraries. Faced with diminishing resources, yet increased responsibilities, and the professional determination to provide relevant, quality services to their users, these library staff feel exceptionally time poor. It has been noted, therefore, that although their ability to contribute to professional organisations such as AGLIN or ALIA may seem problematic, there is undoubtedly great potential for government library and information professionals to work together to find collective solutions to some of the challenges experienced at the individual level.

The research findings indicated that AGLIN had a genuinely important role to play, especially in terms of promoting the value of government libraries, representing their interests and coordinating cooperative and resource sharing arrangements. Members saw no specific benefits in changing the name from the current one (Australian Government Libraries Information Network) as it was believed that this was a well established brand which represented the identity and integrity of the group. There were, however, tensions between the need for AGLIN to have a strong voice across the sector, and the fact that it operated as a volunteer organisation. Strong professional values were clearly articulated, but there was a conflict between the expectation, as an individual, to deliver quality professional services to one’s own users, and the desire to see productive professional outcomes as a collective.
6 Options for future models of service

One of the principal objectives of this review of Commonwealth Government library and information services commissioned by AGLIN was to identify and discuss the options that might ensure efficient, cost-effective and equitable government library services. Reference is made to an earlier study of Queensland Government agency library services (Hallam, 2010b) which presented a series of options for future service delivery. It must be noted that, although some characteristics are shared by the programs and services delivered by State Governments and those delivered by the Federal Government, there are also some clear differences. While it goes beyond the scope of this report to discuss the distinctiveness of State Government and Commonwealth Government contexts in detail, it is acknowledged that the options presented in the Queensland Government review cannot be directly transposed to Commonwealth Government agency libraries. Nevertheless, some areas of commonality will be reflected in the discussion about the positive and negative factors of the various models of service.

The Queensland review included one option whereby proposed oversight for government library services could be assigned to the State Library of Queensland (SLQ) (Hallam, 2010b, pp.23-37). Although the option was considered by some stakeholders as “a retrograde step” at the time (Hallam, 2010b, p.27), the developments which followed the election of Campbell Newman as Premier of Queensland in 2012 (which may be described as ‘disruptive’ for government agency libraries in the state) resulted in the closure of a number of State Government library services and the downsizing of many more. Following a focused review, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet Library was in fact relocated – or “reincarnated” – as the Queensland Government Research and Information Library (GRAIL), a unit of SLQ (Vilkins, 2014). Today, services operating out of SLQ are provided to a range of government agencies, based on memoranda of understanding and service level agreements. This model for oversight of government agency libraries, if translated to the Commonwealth Government context, would infer that the National Library should assume responsibility for some or all of the government department and agency libraries. This idea is discussed in Option 2 (Section 6.2).

A further distinction between the two studies relates to the fact that the Queensland review was sponsored jointly by the Director-General, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, and the Director-General, Department of Public Works. Accordingly, all Queensland Government Agency library services completed the survey, with the result that comprehensive data was collected about all state funded department and agency library and information services. As noted earlier in the report, the response rate for the survey in this study, commissioned by AGLIN as an independent association, was lower (53% of AGLIN members, plus three agencies which were not members of AGLIN). The fact that this study has not achieved 100% response rate means that the quantitative and qualitative data cannot be regarded as fully comprehensive.

Consequently, the options presented in this review are based on the analysis and interpretation of the available research data. Four models of service are presented: each option is briefly discussed, with a supporting table to encapsulate the respective advantages and disadvantages of the model. It should be noted that no weighting is ascribed to the various advantages and disadvantages presented, and no attempt has been made to flesh out the logistics for or costs involved in establishing the different models.
6.1 Option 1: Status Quo

In any planning situation, there is always an option to maintain the status quo and make no changes to the organisation and operations of the library and information services already in place. Maintaining the status quo would see the current autonomy of individual departmental and agency library services preserved. The research data highlighted the value of the libraries being embedded in the individual agency and being directly involved in the business of the agency itself, which ensures that strong relationships are established between library staff and their users, fostering a clear understanding of the information patterns and resources required by the business unit.

Figure 27 presents a schematic diagram of the Status Quo model: the individual, autonomous library and information services are agency-centric. Interactions between the libraries are informal, with some semi-formal networks to support ILL and document delivery.

This option would, however, result in the continued vulnerability of some library and information services. The picture would continue to be one of a patchwork of services, with differing perceptions of value across the various government departments and agencies. While some library and information services find themselves in a secure position due to the information-intensive focus of the agency’ operations, others are subject to the pressures of management seeking to find ‘easy targets’ to reduce overheads and achieve efficiency dividends.

The current model of service means that the users of the agencies’ library and information services could not be guaranteed continuity of access to the high quality information resources required for their work, especially when MoG changes impact on the actual ownership and location of physical resources and on the electronic licensing arrangements distributed across the agencies. In terms of library management, multiple independent library services will continue to result in considerable duplication of effort and overlap of expenditure.

![Figure 27. Option 1 - Status Quo model: agency-centric model of government library and information services](image-url)
Advantages and disadvantages of the Status Quo

The relative advantages and disadvantages of the current model are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5. Option 1 - Status Quo model: advantages and disadvantages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of practice</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisational issues</td>
<td>All library and information staff located in the agency</td>
<td>Vulnerability to MoG changes, involving merging or dividing library collections and services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong relationships with users</td>
<td>Significant duplication of effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subject specialisation for information resources</td>
<td>Information silos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Autonomous decision making</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial issues</td>
<td>Direct responsibility for budget</td>
<td>Funding insecurity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relative invisibility of library and information collections and services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources issues</td>
<td>Multiple licensing models</td>
<td>Inequitable access to information resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology issues</td>
<td>Agency firewalls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional issues</td>
<td>Multiple ILMS platforms</td>
<td>Professional isolation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Requirements for the adoption of the Status Quo Model

There are no specific requirements associated with maintaining the Status Quo: individual agency libraries continue to operate as they have traditionally done.

6.2 Option 2: Shared Services Model

There has been considerable discussion in and beyond the government sector about the value, benefits and shortcomings of shared services. Attention is generally paid to the cost-savings achieved through the streamlining of staffing arrangements, particularly for common or generic business support services such as human resources, accounting services, property and facilities management, and ICT support. The Shared Services Centre (SSC) has been established by the Commonwealth Government and currently supports ten services covering payroll, property and facilities, and technology solutions. In South Australia, Shared Services SA has rationalised the core business functions across a number of departments and agencies.

There are examples of early models of centralised services, including in Victoria when, for a period in the 1980s-1990s, the State Library of Victoria assumed responsibility for the staff working in the state government agency libraries. However, this model was found to be problematic, with the outcome that library staff were once again employed by the host agency. More recently, however, the push for whole-of-government services has seen a new shared services model introduced for library and information services: this is the Victorian Government Library Service (VGLS) (Atkinson & Lewin, 2012). The way in which the VGLS has brought together 15 discrete library services into a central business unit is discussed in the literature review (Appendix 1).
In the United States, the Federal Government Library and Information Network (FEDLINK) operates as a part of the Library of Congress, with the mission, vision and activities directly aligned with the values of this central body. The National Library of Australia (NLA) was approached to consider the potential for this institution to serve as the central management unit for Commonwealth Government library and information services. Senior NLA staff advised that they maintained a watching brief over developments impacting on agency libraries, particularly at a time of budgetary constraints, and they were keen to support these specialised services where possible. It was believed that, at the present time, there were no service opportunities to develop a new role for the NLA. The current arrangements whereby the NLA had a representative serving on the AGLIN Executive Committee was acknowledged to be a productive model for engagement with Commonwealth Government library and information services.

Although participants in the focus groups were generally unsupportive of the concepts of shared services for libraries, it was recognised that there could be benefits from greater coordination and collaboration within a model that would still accommodate the specialisations of individual services. Many of the operational aspects of running a library service would be consolidated, but the research staff would be embedded in the different agencies to provide users with tailored information services. The centralised activities could potentially encompass a range of areas including, but not limited to:

- **Technology**
  - Gateway or portal
  - ILMS
  - Discovery tools
  - Digitisation
  - eRepositories
- **Purchasing and licensing**
  - Print materials
  - Databases, eJournals, eBooks
- **Human resources**
  - Workforce planning
  - Staff development
- **Quality assurance**
  - Evaluation and reporting

Atkinson and Lewin have argued that the shared services model offers a framework for improved service delivery within a collaborative, productive and professionally satisfying environment for staff” (Atkinson & Lewin, 2012, p.10). Figure 28 illustrates the Shared Services Model, with a central management unit having overarching responsibility for technology, purchasing and licensing, human resources and quality assurance.
Advantages and disadvantages of the Shared Services Model

The relative advantages and disadvantages of the model are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Option 2 - Shared Services Model: advantages and disadvantages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of practice</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisational issues</td>
<td>Impervious to MoG changes</td>
<td>Challenges of developing a business case for the proposed model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity for strategic leadership and direction</td>
<td>Extended timeframe for planning and implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased visibility of library and information services</td>
<td>Extensive change management processes required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research support staff embedded in</td>
<td></td>
<td>Diversity of government agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agencies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinated administrative functions</td>
<td></td>
<td>Differing values and expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elimination of duplication of effort</td>
<td></td>
<td>Disparate user requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved evaluation and reporting</td>
<td></td>
<td>Physical relocation of staff to new site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider distribution &amp; sharing of staff</td>
<td></td>
<td>Multiplicity of library policies and procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge and skills</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of shared commitment and mutual trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Challenges of transition to new model</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reduction in support staff</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Potential for agencies to grow back mini services</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Resistance to change</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Potential industrial relations matters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial issues</td>
<td>Funding security</td>
<td>Loss of autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced overheads</td>
<td></td>
<td>Complexity of funding arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced wastage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective purchasing arrangements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Requirements for the adoption of the Shared Services Model

1. Government-wide agreement to move to shared services arrangements
2. Establishment of shared services provider
3. Establishment of central management unit for government library and information services within the shared services provider
4. Contractual arrangements, policies and procedures relating to:
   a. Funding
   b. Roles and responsibilities
   c. Technology
   d. Procurement and licensing
   e. Service provision
5. Change management processes, including industrial relations advice.

### 6.3

#### 6.4 Option 3: Cluster Model

Although there are many concerns associated with a shared services model, it was recognised that there would be beneficial to achieve greater coordination, increased collaboration, clearer visibility of information resources and the opportunity to maximise the benefits of the digital information environment. Government agency library and information services already had some successful collaborative arrangements in place for resource sharing, particularly through ILL and document delivery, and for some consortial licensing arrangements. An major challenge, however, was the disparity of the various government departments and agencies, and their staff, and as a consequence, a lack of homogeneity for Commonwealth Government library and information services.

Some groups of libraries already tended to work more closely together, particularly when the business focus of the agencies were similar, whether across particular subject areas or across functional lines (e.g. research, technical, regulatory or policy). In the review of government libraries in Queensland, an option was presented to establish a model which reflected the model frequently found in academic libraries, based on discipline-specific or faculty libraries, for example Health, Legal Services, Education, Science and Resources. The users (staff and students) not only have full access to all information resources across the whole service, but also to specialist research staff at the local level. It should be
pointed out, however, that the functions of academic institutions – teaching and research - may be considered more tightly focused than the functions of government, which means that the university library model cannot be directly replicated.

The cluster model would entail establishing a centralised unit to offer a coordinated approach to the management of government library and information services, providing leadership, strategic direction and professional guidance to the clustered groups of library services. Individual library and information services would be released from the current agency-centric arrangements. The clusters would allow much closer interaction to support common areas of interest and practice, as well as the increasingly multi-disciplinary nature of government activity.

As an example of the cluster model, reference is made to the FEDLINK arrangements in the US, where the Library of Congress (LoC) provides central oversight. Internally, the LoC operates along the lines of a cluster model, with designated areas of research expertise. In Australia, the Australian Parliamentary Library (APH), like many other parliamentary libraries, employs highly qualified researchers who are supported by subject specialist librarians. If this model is transposed to the government agency environment, specialist teams would provide dedicated services as analysts, educators and consultants, to the relevant government staff. Their services would include tailored data and information products, such as literature reviews, systematic reviews and meta-analyses, data visualisation etc. Skills development would be offered through highly specialised training in the area of digital research technologies: collaboration with the Digital Transformation Office would offer further value to this model. Importantly, research support librarians would be co-located with government researchers and policy makers, while a dedicated team would manage the administrative activities of the service. Close connections and interactions would facilitate the essential communication channels between the units.

In Canada, the work being undertaken to establish the Federal Science Library (FSL) demonstrates how these arrangements will work in practice. The proposed “collaborative model” will ensure that government staff, whether working in science, technology, health research or policy, “have virtual access to both high-quality library and information resources and the services of skilled library professionals and subject experts provided by departments” (Marin-Cormeau & O’Connell, 2015).

In line with the goals of the shared services model, many of the operational aspects of running a library service would be consolidated, freeing research support staff up to work closely with their clients:

- Technology
  - Gateway or portal
  - ILMS
  - Discovery tools
  - Digitisation
  - eRepositories
- Purchasing and licensing
  - Print materials
  - Databases, eJournals, eBooks
  - Consumables
- Human resources
  - Workforce planning
  - Staff development
- Quality assurance
  - Evaluation and reporting
Research staff would no longer be located in the individual agency, but be embedded with their clients in the cluster information centres. The centralised management team would have oversight of the administrative and operational functions to negotiate whole-of-government benefits. Due to changes in the licensing arrangements, government staff, regardless of the agency they work with, would have equitable access to the specialised resources most relevant to the focus of their work. The Cluster Model is shown in Figure 29.

![Cluster Model Diagram](image)

Figure 29. Option 3 - Cluster model of government library and information services

Some logistical challenges would be inherent in this model as, unlike many academic institutions, Commonwealth Government departments and agencies are not co-located on a campus. Although some agencies have related or overlapping areas of interest, they may currently be located in different areas of the ACT, or even in different states or territories.

The Cluster Model is presented here as a principle, requiring additional in-depth research. The DTO could be approached to garner support for the concept and provide advice and guidance about the most appropriate structures and relationships. Given that not all Commonwealth Government libraries participated in the review commissioned by AGLIN, as well as the lack of clarity around the subject strengths as collected via the survey, it is essential that a further process of investigation and analysis is undertaken as a first step.

**Advantages and disadvantages of the Cluster model**

The advantages and disadvantages of this model are outlined in Table 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of practice</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisational issues</td>
<td>Impervious to MoG changes</td>
<td>Challenges of developing a business case for the proposed model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity for strategic leadership and direction</td>
<td>Extended timeframe for planning and implementation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased visibility of library and information services</td>
<td>Extensive change management processes required</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitates cross-agency research collaboration</td>
<td>Diversity of government agencies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas of practice</td>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>Disadvantages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research staff embedded in cluster libraries</td>
<td>Geographic distribution of government agencies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinated administrative functions</td>
<td>Differing values and expectations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elimination of duplication of effort</td>
<td>Disparate user requirements across agencies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved evaluation and reporting</td>
<td>Physical relocation of staff to new sites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider distribution &amp; sharing of staff knowledge and skills</td>
<td>Multiplicity of library policies and procedures</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lack of shared commitment and mutual trust</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Challenges of transition to new model</td>
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<td>Reduction in support staff</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Potential for agencies to grow back mini services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Resistance to change</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Potential industrial relations matters</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial issues</td>
<td>Funding security</td>
<td>Loss of autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced overheads</td>
<td>Reduced wastage</td>
<td>Complexity of funding arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources issues</td>
<td>Streamlined licensing arrangements: opportunities for whole-of-government licenses</td>
<td>Physical relocation of collections and staff to new sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single point of access to information resources</td>
<td>Comprehensive, discoverable collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equitable access to information resources</td>
<td>Shared offsite storage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology issues</td>
<td>Single ILMS</td>
<td>Differing priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased collaboration</td>
<td>Complexity of merging catalogues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for innovative practice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional issues</td>
<td>Professional collegiality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career progression</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Requirements for the adoption of the Cluster Model**

1. Further in-depth research into all Commonwealth Government library and information services
2. Government-wide agreement to move to cluster library arrangements
3. Consensus regarding the appropriate structure for the clusters of library and information services
4. Establishment of central management unit for government library and information services
5. Determining locations of cluster libraries
6. Contractual arrangements, policies and procedures relating to:
   a. Funding
   b. Roles and responsibilities
   c. Technology
   d. Procurement and licensing
   e. Service provision
7. Change management processes, including industrial relations advice.
6.5 Option 4: Collaborative Projects Model

The Collaborative Projects model can be regarded as a hybrid model. It offers a leaner version of both Option 2: Shared Services model and Option 3: Cluster model, as it focuses solely on collaborative efforts to achieve coordinated systems, while retaining the agency-centric benefits of Option 1: Status Quo. The model would seek to establish coordinated oversight over a series of projects which would bring collective benefits to all Commonwealth Government agency libraries. The collaborative project work could be sequenced and/or scaffolded in line with the priorities and capacity of the various library services.

Examples of possible projects include:

- A single gateway or portal to provide access to all Commonwealth Government agency library services
- Coordinated purchasing and licensing to ensure cost effective and equitable access to information resources
- A shared ILMS platform to coordinate bibliographic and discovery functions
- A shared eRepository to capture and provide access to the government’s grey literature
- A common off-site archival facility to support the reduction of physical library space while assuring continuity of access to resources of ongoing value to government services
- A coordinated staff development program to prioritise training activities across agency libraries and to build the knowledge and skills required to build capacity and future proof the provision of research and information services.

The Collaborative Projects model is shown in Figure 30.

![Collaborative Projects Model Diagram](image-url)

**Figure 30. Option 4 - Collaborative Projects model of government library and information services**
A major barrier to achieving productive outcomes, however, would be the absence of any formal structure or responsibilities for initiating or managing the projects within the current government library sector. The potential exists for representatives of AGLIN, with the support of its membership, to be granted the authority to play a leading role in the Collaborative Projects model.

**Advantages and disadvantages of the Collaborative Projects model**

Table 8. Option 4 – Collaborative Projects model: advantages and disadvantages  
(NB project dependent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of practice</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisational issues</td>
<td>Increased visibility of library and information services</td>
<td>Vulnerability to MoG changes, involving merging or dividing library collections and services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research staff embedded in agencies</td>
<td>Challenge of achieving consensus on strategic direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitates cross-agency collaboration</td>
<td>Lack of governance and authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elimination of duplication of effort</td>
<td>Diversity of government agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wider distribution &amp; sharing of staff knowledge and skills</td>
<td>Differing values and expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disparate user requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Complexity of inter-agency projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of shared commitment and mutual trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of project management skills</td>
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**Requirements for the adoption of the Collaborative Projects Model**

1. Cross-agency agreement to establish collaborative arrangements  
2. Establishment of coordination group with authority to manage collaborative activities  
3. Contractual arrangements, policies and procedures relating to: 
   a. Funding  
   b. Roles and responsibilities  
   c. Technology  
   d. Procurement and licensing  
   e. Service provision.
All four options have their specific advantages and disadvantages. The options are presented to stimulate discussion within the AGLIN Executive and membership, and amongst other stakeholders in the public service, about the opportunities to develop a future-focused model of service delivery for Commonwealth Government library and information services. Further detailed analysis is required in order to prepare a sound business case which articulates the establishment and operational requirements of a preferred alternative model.

7 Summary and recommendations

The research activities undertaken in the Commonwealth Government Agency Libraries Review, sponsored by AGLIN, encompassed a detailed online survey to capture data about the management and operations of the library and information services funded by the Federal Government, as well as a series of focus groups to discuss the perceptions and opinions of library managers and staff. There was also an opportunity for stakeholders to provide individual views through an online questionnaire. Managers of just over half of the AGLIN member library services provided responses to the survey. As respondents were found to be generally representative of the membership profile, the findings can be broadly interpreted to reflect the current state of play in Commonwealth Government library and information services.

The quantitative data relates to 23 government library services, including those providing information and research services to legal, regulatory, research and policy bodies. The views and ideas of library and information professionals are included in the analysis of the qualitative data. The landscape that is presented is an amalgam of negative and positive factors: government library and information services currently face a number of significant challenges, but developments in the public service sector open up many new avenues to develop and deliver digital information services. The findings illustrate that some government agencies are characterised by a strong, vibrant information and knowledge culture, while other agencies are less aware of the value of reliable, trustworthy information and the role it plays in the development of public policy and the delivery of relevant, targeted government services. While the libraries hosted by these agencies may be vulnerable to the impact of MoG changes, to be an easy target for cuts or even obsolescence, the current discourse in government circles presents new opportunities.

The initial breaths of change are being felt: ideas relating to the importance of the digital agenda, of innovation, open government, of evidence based policy and of strategic information management are on the table for discussion. The potential expanded roles to be played by library and information professionals should not be underestimated: there are clear benefits inherent in the opportunities to contribute to the new working environment the public service seeks to create. Across the government landscape, librarians must “make a fundamental shift from being isolated, technical experts to being multi-skilled team members who enable decisions and proactively integrate themselves into the organisation” (Lord, 2014, p.265). Government library services need to take full advantage of developments in ICT and the emerging trends in other library sectors to consider new, collaborative approaches to service delivery.

Through the present study, the AGLIN Executive has been provided with a body of rich quantitative and qualitative data to review. One major limitation of the study was the fact that not all managers of Commonwealth Government library and information services contributed to the data collection, meaning that it was not possible to relate the findings to the entire sector, nor present an explicit and comprehensive answer to the research question about how government agency library services might deliver services to support their clients’ needs in the most efficient, cost-effective and equitable way.
Nevertheless, the study has achieved the principal research objectives: it has enabled the issues, challenges and opportunities relevant to contemporary government library and information services to be explored through the lenses of the literature review and environmental scan, the focus group discussions and the online questionnaire responses. The financial, administrative and technological context of Commonwealth Government libraries has been reviewed through the data relating to over half of the services which are members of AGLIN, and stakeholder views and opinions about current and future models of service delivery have been examined. Accordingly, four potential models of service delivery have been presented, in order to help the AGLIN Executive and membership debate the opportunities to ensure the sustainable delivery of efficient, cost-effective and equitable library and information services to guide and support the business requirements of Commonwealth Government agencies, today and into the future.

The data collected contributes to a sound evidence base about the current state and performance of a significant proportion of the AGLIN membership, including budget, space, staffing, business models and service standards. The online survey platform has been designed and developed to support further research in the future, either to augment the data sets, or to repeat the survey at a later date to monitor ongoing trends in government agency libraries.

The AGLIN Executive is invited to draw on the research findings to stimulate further discussion amongst the membership about the ways in which the sector might work together to ensure a sound future for Commonwealth Government agency library and information services. While the recommendations presented to AGLIN do not propose that a single model of service delivery should be adopted, they do seek to encourage the Executive and membership to review the findings and to collaboratively consider the strategies which will help build the capacity of AGLIN. By securing a strong and relevant future for the association, there will be, by extension, immense benefits for the individual member library and information services.

7.1 Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. The AGLIN Executive establishes a Future Directions Taskforce, comprising a representative sample of the membership, charged with the responsibility to review this research report.

2. The AGLIN Executive and the Future Directions Taskforce host a workshop for members to discuss the research findings and to commit to a preferred model for library and information services across the Commonwealth Government.

3. The AGLIN Executive and the Future Directions Taskforce use the research findings presented in this report to inform the discussion and development of the future strategic directions for the organisation, with associated responsibilities and operational plans, to lead the changes required to develop a new model of service.

4. The AGLIN Executive and the Future Directions Taskforce host a sector-wide forum to identify and prioritise the areas for valuable, effective collaboration across and beyond government library and information services.

5. The AGLIN Executive and the Future Directions Taskforce develop a government-wide advocacy campaign to promote the current and potential roles of library and information professionals, the value of high quality information and research services to government stakeholders and the benefits to be achieved through a new model of service. This campaign should be supported by a media and communications plan to ensure AGLIN members commit to and participate in the advocacy activities, both individually and collectively. Champions, who will play a leading role in
supporting and promoting the government-wide advocacy campaign, should be invited to be involved.

6. The AGLIN Executive and the Future Directions Taskforce work with the Consortia Taskforce to examine the current licensing arrangements for eResources across the government agencies to identify opportunities to offer more equitable, cost-effective access to high quality information.

7. The AGLIN Executive and the Future Directions Taskforce work with the Training & Development Taskforce to commission and/or develop and deliver a CPD program of future-focused activities designed to inspire government library and information professionals and enhance their skillsets. Members should be encouraged to participate in the ALIA PD Scheme, with its Government Library specialisation.
References


Appendices

Appendix 1: Literature Review

Appendix 2: Online Survey

Appendix 3: Focus Group Questions
Appendix 1: Literature Review
Literature review prepared for the

Australian Government Libraries Information Network (AGLIN)

www.aglin.org

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1. Introduction

Ongoing financial, administrative, and technological changes present significant challenges and opportunities for government libraries in delivering services to their clients. Determining how government library and information services might best confront these challenges and take advantage of new opportunities is crucial for the future of the sector. The Australian Government Libraries Information Network (AGLIN) has commissioned a review of service delivery models in Commonwealth Government libraries. The goals of the Commonwealth Government Agency Libraries Review (CGALR) are to evaluate the libraries’ current service delivery models and to develop an options paper outlining some future models which might better serve needs of clients across government.

As an initial step in the CGALR project, a literature review has been undertaken in order to consider the issues which impact directly on government library service provision today. It will allow government librarians to deepen their understanding of current service trends and provide an evidence-based framework to support the development of the options paper. Accordingly, AGLIN will be in a strong position to make informed decisions about reforming service provision in their organisations and designing future-focused Commonwealth Government library services. The literature review builds on and updates the review prepared for the Queensland Government Agency Libraries Review (QGALR) five years ago (Hallam, 2010).

Libraries are commonly classified into several different types: public, academic, school and special libraries. Vargha (as cited in Ralph & Sibthorpe, 2009) notes that special libraries are usually dedicated to specialised subjects and collections, while O’Connor (2007) states that the users are a correspondingly defined group with very particular requirements. The Special Libraries Association (SLA) defines special librarians as “information resource experts who collect, analyse, evaluate, package, and disseminate information to facilitate accurate decision-making in corporate, academic, and government settings” (SLA, 2010a). As government libraries represent a specific sub-group of special libraries, many issues relating to government libraries are common to special libraries.

In Australia, government libraries operate at federal, state and territory levels. Australian government library and research services underpin important work conducted at the highest levels of public office, including policy development and analysis, provision of tailored advice, and delivery of health and legal services. AGLIN’s constituency specifically covers those government libraries which support the work of Commonwealth Government agencies. A number of the factors identified in the QGALR continue to impact on library and information service delivery across government, including: changes to public service administrative arrangements; increasing budgetary pressures; increasing availability of electronic resources and reductions in physical collections; the need for improvements in information management expertise; equity of access to information resources; and the rapid development of e-government (Hallam, 2010).

This literature review considers a range of current perspectives on library and information services, focusing on the specific issues and challenges facing contemporary government libraries and librarians. The review incorporates four key areas:

- Directions in government administration
- National and international trends in government library services
- Developments in contemporary special libraries
- Skills and competencies required by special librarians.
Given the extensive coverage of these themes in the published literature, the review does not seek to be exhaustive, but distils the key trends presented in recent professional, government and academic publications, along with commentary made by library and information associations from Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US).

2. Directions in government administration

Issues impacting on government libraries should be viewed within the wider context of government service delivery. Modern governments face many challenges that affect service delivery. Key challenges for the Australian Public Service (APS) discussed throughout the literature include:

- The increasing complexity of problems, solutions and policy development
- The increasing public expectations of government
- Tight fiscal and time pressures
- Technological change
- A tightening labour market.


To ensure the APS addresses these challenges effectively and remains a high performing public service, the Federal government appointed an Advisory Group in 2009 to develop a blueprint for the reform of Australian government administration. While the Group’s 2010 report contained no explicit references to library services, a number of its recommendations have direct implications for government libraries and librarians:

- **A whole of government strategy for service delivery**
  The blueprint (Advisory Group, 2010, p. 19) noted that there was no whole of government strategy, meaning “agencies risk developing services in isolation which can affect citizens’ outcomes and government efficiency.” It recommended that federal government services be delivered in closer partnership with state, territory and local governments (Advisory Group, 2010). It also recommended greater information sharing across all levels of government (Advisory Group, 2010). Through their networks, government libraries are well positioned to contribute towards such coordination.

- **Enhancing policy capability**
  In a highly contested market for policy ideas, the research undertaken and advice provided by APS staff must be high quality, evidence based and impartial (Advisory Group, 2010). This not only highlights the important role of government libraries to contribute to the development of evidence based policy by managing and providing access to high quality, relevant information resources, but also the need for evidence based management of government libraries themselves. Librarians have the potential to leverage their networks to build stronger partnerships between the APS and the academic sector, another key recommendation to enhance policy capability (Advisory Group, 2010).

- **Addressing skill shortages in the APS**
  The blueprint identified a number of skills shortages, including in information and communications technologies (ICT), high level policy and research work, and project management (Advisory Group, 2010). It argued that the pace of technological change demands improvements in knowledge and information management capabilities (Advisory Group, 2010). Given the centrality of these skills to successful government library and research services, the sector has potential leadership roles to play.
• Expanding and strengthening workforce learning and development
Stronger mechanisms to encourage APS employees to develop their skills and career experiences were recommended (Advisory Group, 2010). There is scope for library and information professionals to add value to workforce capabilities across the APS, particularly in the areas of information and digital literacies, through the development and delivery of both formal and informal learning opportunities.

Governments are essentially information intensive organisations. Shergold reported that “good government is founded on good policy, and good policy depends on good advice... Good advice is factually accurate and backed by evidence” (Shergold, 2015, p.iii).

Ministers have access to a wider range of sources than ever before, including their party colleagues, political advisers, industry lobbyists, community advocates, policy think tanks and academia. They also hear from their constituents and individual citizens. This is a good thing: being able to draw on more information and multiple perspectives supports better decision-making. Public servants need to have the capacity to argue their case against alternative views.

(Shergold, 2015, p.15)

Good government therefore depends on access to high quality, authoritative information, which requires the expertise of library and information professionals to manage the resources and to support policy makers as they develop and use their skills to “transform mountains of information into pinnacles of knowledge” (Shergold, 2015, p.17). In government circles there is also increasing interest in the economic role of information, data and data-driven products and services (Bureau of Communications Research, 2016).

One key focus of the government reform agenda in many jurisdictions is the use of ICT to ensure governments meet their objectives effectively and efficiently. In the UK there has been particular interest in the role of ICT to provide better, more efficient services for less cost. Digital transformation of the government’s services has been vast and rapid. A 2010 review of the government’s web presence recommended a ‘digital by default’ approach to service provision across government and a single web point of entry for services to satisfy public expectations and cut costs (Fox, 2010). In response, the government established the Government Digital Service (GDS) within the Cabinet Office. The GDS is responsible for leading digital transformation of public services in the UK. All transactional services must meet the GDS’ Digital by Default Service Standard to build high quality services (Government Digital Service, 2015). The importance of digital services across government has been underscored by the private sector: “from funding to jobs, medicine, health and education, digitisation is completely transforming how the public service looks” (KPMG, 2014).

In 2015, the Australian Government established the Digital Transformation Office (DTO) with strategies and standards modelled on the GDS. Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has moved the DTO from the Communications portfolio to the Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio (Burgess, 2015). This demonstrates the importance of the government’s digital service delivery program to the new political leadership. The Prime Minister’s office highlights the inconsistencies that currently prevail across government, noting that “users expect to access information and services from one government, not dozens of government agencies operating as silos” (Malcolm Turnbull, 2015).

At a recent forum hosted by the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) University and Research Librarians (ACT) group and AGLIN, Change, challenges and opportunities: recasting your library skills (AGLIN, 2015), the possibilities for collaboration between the DTO and government libraries were noted. The common commitment to the delivery of public services and the shared
motivations to meet user needs were underscored. In his presentation, the DTO’s Lead of Engagement, Brant Trim, noted that there was currently a lack of common or consistent standards in tagging content created by and about government departments. Librarians’ own specialised skills in applying standards and organising content could assist the DTO in addressing this. While the forum did not propose any direct strategies to facilitate communication between government librarians and the DTO, it was recognised that there would certainly be opportunities for future planning and discussion.

There has been considerable scrutiny in the UK of the use of evidence in policy making (Rutter, 2012; Haddon, Devanny, Fosdick & Thompson, 2013; Rutter & Gold, 2015). Research revealed that there was often little incentive for ensuring that policy decisions were made on the best available evidence, as “there were few obvious political penalties” if good practice was not followed (Rutter & Gold, 2015, p.5). As a result, the Institute of Government developed a framework for assessing the use of evidence to guide decision making, arguing that governments are accountable to citizens and to the electorate, to Parliament and to other areas of government. Policy making would be improved if government representatives:

- Have properly analysed the issue they are trying to address
- Have conducted a wide-ranging search for evidence, both on what has gone before and of other interventions
- Have comprehensively considered the form of proposed interventions
- Are clear on the assumptions on which they assess the benefits and costs (and possible risks around them)
- Put in place plans for feedback, testing, evaluation.

(Rutter & Gold, 2015, p.16)

In a collaborative project, the Institute for Government will work with Sense about Science and the Alliance for Useful Evidence to test the new framework in order to determine its usability and its usefulness. This work will feed into an initial benchmarking activity to compare the work of individual government agencies (Rutter & Gold, 2015, p.17) and form part of nation-wide campaign to raise public interest in the imperative for evidence based policy and practice (Ask for Evidence, 2015). Increased emphasis is being placed on public participation in the policy making process, with many voices demanding access to information and data created by the government, which in turn makes the management of digital information resources a priority (Bureau of Communications Research, 2016; Fricker, 2016; National Archives of Australia, 2015; Shergold, 2015; Webb-Smart, 2016).

The challenges of electronic publishing in the context of government were examined in detail in a Linkage Project funded by the Australian Research Council. In the discussion paper, Where is the evidence? Realising the value of grey literature for public policy and practice, it was argued that “The internet has profoundly changed how we produce, use and collect research for public policy and practice, with grey literature playing an increasingly important role” (Lawrence, Houghton, Thomas & Weldon, 2014, p.2). The study articulated a range of concerns relating to grey literature: “searching, sifting, evaluating and accessing information and research are time-consuming and often frustrating tasks occupying a large portion of the day for those engaged in policy work” (Lawrence et al., 2014, p.3). This is in no small part due to the curation of policy resources being “dispersed and fragmented” (Lawrence et al., 2014, p.3). Research findings revealed that the most important sources of information for policy workers were government department and agencies (94%), academic institutions (83%) and scholarly or commercial publishers (78%).
Two key concerns raised in the report were that, firstly, policy makers and practitioners struggle to find and evaluate relevant resources, and secondly, the lack of digital curation is compounded by outdated legislation. Government library and information professionals can contribute significantly to resolving these issues, in terms of developing information and digital literacy skills across the government workforce, ensuring effective information management policies and practices are in place so that grey literature is findable and accessible, and drawing on their professional networks to minimise duplication of curation activities. Shumaker emphasises the fact that high performing teams ensure that each team member works to his or her strengths. This means that, when library and information professionals are hardwired to manage the information dimensions of the working environment: “They’re best able to formulate the solutions that enable team members to use information effectively, and free up other members to do what they, in turn, do best” (Shumaker, 2015, p.1).

Government service delivery increasingly involves not simply collaboration across government, but also between government and non-government providers. Governments at all levels are outsourcing services to drive efficiencies and find savings. A 2013 review of the Victorian Government’s community and human services sectors examined how government, public service agencies, community service organisations and private providers coordinated service delivery in what the report calls “intergovernmental cross-sectoral collaboration” (Shergold, 2013, p. 5). Public administration, the review argued, should be re-conceptualised as a “strategic commissioner” rather than a provider of services, in order to reflect the growing importance of contracted providers to delivery (Shergold, 2013, p. 5). The review recommended embracing collaboration with the private and community sectors to enhance the diversity and efficiency of government service delivery. Once again, librarians are ideally placed to draw on their collaborative skills and multi-sector networks to potentially assume leadership roles in these efforts.

The concept of shared services in Australian government has been a topic of discussion in the academic and professional literature (Grant & Kortt, 2012; Victorian Auditor-General’s Office, 2014; Local Government Association of South Australia, 2015). The Australian Institute of Management (AIM) (2012) pays particular attention to the challenges associated with the implementation of shared services in the public sector and provides some valuable insights into the behavioural dimensions of the issue. The interface between state government and local government is clearly noted in the collaborative arrangements for the delivery of public library services. The barriers to and enablers of cooperative service models for public libraries were examined by the Centre for Local Government at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) (2015). It was found that there have been a number of advantages relating to shared service arrangements in the public library context, for example lower overall costs, increased service provision (number of branches and opening hours), streamlined ICT infrastructure and the delivery of more innovative and popular programming. The Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (SSROC) (2015) also seeks to achieve significant benefits by introducing shared service arrangements, resulting in standardised processes and a reduction in the range of technology platforms utilised in public libraries.

Within the Commonwealth Government, the Shared Services Centre (SSC) provides corporate and IT services to 32 customers through a partnership between the Department of Education and Training and the Department of Employment (Shared Services Centre, 2015). Services covered include payroll, financial processing, application hosting, integrated desktop technology solutions, digital communications support, and property and facilities. Given the growing use of technology in library services across all library sectors, it is critical that government librarians monitor developments in this approach to service management.
The changing roles of public servants were the focus of a 2014 report prepared by the Melbourne School of Government. This report, *Imagining the 21st Century Public Service Workforce*, noted increasing public expectations that governments would employ new technologies in service delivery, yet efforts were seen to be largely confined to the periphery (Dickinson & Sullivan, 2014). There is a new focus on information management skills within the government sector (KPMG, 2014; LexisNexis, 2014; Easton, 2015; Fricker, 2016; The Mandarin, 2016).

Government librarians might ask how they can contribute to these efforts, and whether they are able to lead by example in their delivery of programs and services. Librarians might also consider how well equipped they might be to take on or directly support the new roles which the Dickinson and Sullivan (2014) argued will characterise the future public service. As more voices enter public debates, public servants’ roles might be viewed as moving away from being ‘advisors’ to becoming ‘experts’ (Dickinson & Sullivan, 2014). Such a shift places greater emphasis on high quality analytical skills, professional judgment and experience, and the ability to synthesise evidence (Dickinson & Sullivan, 2014; LexisNexis, 2014) and increasingly, it is government librarians who have the potential to demonstrate these skills.

Another key role with potential for librarians is the reticulist, who draws on connections to build up new networks of expertise, rather than working within silos (Dickinson & Sullivan, 2014). The report presents a skills framework for the future public service which is valuable in distinguishing between technical, human and conceptual skills. The latter category – encompassing skills like diagnosing complex problems, designing complex systems and being flexible (Dickinson & Sullivan, 2014) – might prompt librarians to reflect on the extent to which they currently devote resources to these more systematic, future-focused activities amid more day-to-day concerns.

Government libraries are nested within this complex context of reform, change and innovation. As the peak body for the library sector, ALIA has for many years supported the need for open, equitable and enduring access to government information through policy, guidelines and submissions to relevant government committees (ALIA, 2004; ALIA, 2009a; ALIA, 2009b; ALIA, 2010; ALIA, 2012; ALIA 2013). Specifically, ALIA has advocated for the critical role of government libraries: “government library and information professionals connect politicians and government employees to the essential information they need to make decisions based on facts, not fiction” (ALIA, 2014a), underscoring the dangers of failing to comprehend the importance of high quality information to effective, evidence based decision making, at all levels of government.

ALIA has expressed concern about the potential for Australian federal department libraries to be closed or outsourced as a result of cuts and reviews of services (ALIA, 2014b). The association is sensitive to the potentially negative implications of rapid technological change and has underscored the importance of ensuring that core principles are in place to ensure the effective creation, use and dissemination of government information (ALIA, 2009c). ALIA has specifically highlighted the need for greater collaboration and centralisation of services in the special library sector to demonstrate value and to pool resources (ALIA, 2014c).

3. **Trends in government libraries**

A selection of topics relating to special libraries is discussed in the book *Special libraries: A survival guide* (Matarazzo & Pearlstein, 2013). The fate of special libraries is encapsulated in the foreword, where James (2013) discusses the ways in which the librarians’ knowledge and skills, particularly in corporate libraries, may be realigned as the parent organisation undergoes its own journey of mergers and acquisition. This requires the need “to embrace the flexibility and readiness to adapt to new
economic realities and conditions in order to survive” (James, 2013, p.x). Given the highly specialised nature of the sector itself, it is valuable to review the challenges and opportunities facing government library services through both national and international lenses.

3.1 International perspectives

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) released a set of Guidelines for Libraries of Government Departments in 2008. The guidelines outline recommended practices for government libraries and were designed to be easily adapted to specific organisations across the world. IFLA defines government libraries as “any libraries that are established and fully supported by government to serve government. (While their primary audience is government, the actual audience served may be broader than government.)” (Bolt & Burger, 2008, p. 5).

In 2014 IFLA worked with partners in the library and development sectors to draft the Lyon Declaration on Access to Information and Development. The Lyon Declaration seeks to influence the United Nations’ 2030 development agenda across the globe. While it outlines how access to information empowers governments and citizens, and supports sustainable development, it also acknowledges the crucial role of the library sector (The Lyon Declaration, 2014). IFLA’s Government Information and Official Publications Section (GIOPS) published a response to the Declaration which highlights the role of government libraries and government librarians to assist achieve these objectives by ensuring that government information is widely accessible and by offering expert advice (GIOPS, 2014). The response makes two recommendations with significant implications for government libraries:

- That the contribution of libraries and librarians be recognised and documented in achieving the goals of the 2030 development agenda
- That countries develop and maintain strong networks of libraries with government information expertise to achieve sustainable development objectives.

(GIOPS, 2014)

The second recommendation is particularly valuable in suggesting a leadership role for government libraries and librarians within the profession. Within individual countries, their expertise can be harnessed in other types of libraries in order to assist the public in accessing and using government information, thereby contributing to the achievement of global sustainable development goals.

In the US, government librarians are represented by a division within the Special Libraries Association (SLA) – the Government Information Division – and a unit of the Library of Congress named the Federal Library and Information Network (FEDLINK). Both organisations provide forums to discuss the value and use of government information and government libraries. The activities of SLA’s Government Information Division are relevant not only for government librarians but for all users of government information (SLA, 2010b), while FEDLINK focuses specifically on issues impacting federal libraries and librarians. FEDLINK’s mission is to optimise federal libraries’ use of resources through common services, resource sharing and ongoing professional development (FEDLINK, 2014). It provides significant cost savings to government, for example, by managing consortial acquisitions of information products and services (Library of Congress, 2013). This initiative demonstrates the capacity of government library associations to contribute greater efficiency and cost effectiveness across government.

In 2007, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) library service was effectively shut down, but subsequently re-opened. Matarazzo and Pearlstein (2013) presented a candid analysis of the EPA saga, which is in turn further updated by Balsamo (2013), who explained how the EPA network of libraries was able to reverse its fortunes. By developing a strategic roadmap for the future, the library staff
have sought communicate the true value of the service to all stakeholders. Despite this successful outcome for one agency, the vulnerable position of government libraries in the US was again revealed during the 2013 government shutdown. Any government services considered ‘nonessential’ were closed for over two weeks. This included many government libraries. The Census Bureau’s library, which operates using contract staff, remained closed after the government and other bureau functions re-opened because the contract for library services expired during the shutdown (Huffine, 2014). Only after significant advocacy on the part of the employees was the contract renewed by management so that the library could re-open (Huffine, 2014).

The threat of severe budget cuts remains present for many US government libraries. In 2014 the American Library Association (ALA) passed a resolution in support of stable funding for Air Force libraries. Libraries across the Air Force network experienced six successive years of budget cuts, resulting in large reductions in staff, service and hours of operation (ALA, 2014). It was reported that six libraries were closed in the 2013-14 financial year, with a further three in the process of closing and eight no longer employing a professional librarian (ALA, 2014).

FEDLINK undertook an environmental scan to identify the major challenges faced by government libraries in order to chart the organisation’s future directions (FEDLINK, 2012). Seven major trends were identified, which guided the development of the new business plan aimed at strengthening the collective activities of those working in the sector:

1. Demonstrate returns on investment
2. Establish mission critical programs
3. Integrate mobile devices, apps and dashboards into workflows
4. Expand roles as analyst, educator and consultant
5. Cultivate use of the Semantic Web, cloud computing and Web 3.0
6. Customize and personalize information to meet the needs of users
7. Collaborate via knowledge transfer and information sharing.

An infographic has been created by Federal library professionals to present a Blueprint for success: A Federal library checklist (Coady, Camerer & Clark, n.d), as a resource to encourage government librarians to have a broader understanding of their environment. The infographic refers to competences and standards, principal areas of professional practice, and career enhancement strategies such as professional development, mentoring and networking.

In the UK, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) represents the nation’s library and information professionals across all library sectors. Included in CILIP’s special interest groups are the Government Information Group (GIG) and the Health Libraries Group (HLG). The GIG represents those working in central government or who are interested in government information (CILIP, 2014a), while the HLG is a network of information professionals working in the health sector, including in the public health service and in government departments (CILIP, 2014b). The HLG has been especially active in advocating for the role of government LIS professionals in government initiatives. In 2012 the UK government opened up consultation about a workforce strategy for the public health system. Major foci of the consultation activities were specific strategies to strengthen public health information and academic public health (Department of Health, Health Education England & Public Health England, 2013). HLG endorsed the emphasis on evidence based practice, and identified a greater role for knowledge and information professionals in supporting evidence based practice in public health (CILIP, 2012). The group suggested health libraries in the public service “present an opportunity to improve access to published evidence and the skills to appraise evidence” (CILIP, 2012, p. 6).
Canadian government libraries also acknowledged that there was much to learn from the health and biomedical sciences library sector. A study undertaken in Canada sought to redefine the federal libraries service model: Libraries and Archives Canada (LAC) conducted situated research to inform the Government of Canada Assistant Deputy Minters Task Force (ADM Task Force) on the Future of Federal Library Service. The embedded librarian was viewed as a particularly valuable way to develop a deeper understanding of an organisation’s requirements, to find gaps where new solution-oriented services could be introduced (Zeeman, Jones & Dysart, 2011). The ADM Task Force sought to establish clustered services (i.e. groups of libraries with overlapping subject interests) and centralised services (generic back-end services available to all) as options to leverage the professional expertise of government librarians.

It was hoped that, by 2015, Canadian public servants have seamless access to a “federal library service without borders through the interconnected network of government librarians, library services and all information resources” (McPherson, 2012, cited in Jordan & de Stricker, 2013, p.6). The proposed whole-of-government library service in Canada did not eventuate. The Federal Libraries Consortium (FLC) began as a grassroots organisation, but has been formally incorporated into the LAC. The primary goal of the FLC is to better manage the purchase and management of information resources across government agencies. Collaborative activities “maximise cost benefits, reduce administrative duplication, leverage procurement expertise, and provide access to otherwise unattainable resources” (FLC, 2015). Further developments have been noted, with the LAC working with the Canadian Federal Libraries Strategic Network (CFLSN) to consult with federal librarians about critical matters impacting on the sector, and to provide collaborative input into the Federal Science Library (FSL). This initiative involves eight science agencies, with the ultimate aim being “to ensure that GC employees - science, technology, and health researchers, program planners, and policy makers - have virtual access to both high-quality library and information resources and the services of skilled library professionals and subject experts provided by departments” (Marin-Cormeau & O’Connell, 2015). Common systems, common purchasing and seamless client service are key elements of the project.

Government libraries in New Zealand represent the largest cohort of special libraries in the country. Ralph and Sibthorpe’s 2009 report, Emerging trends in New Zealand special libraries, provided a comprehensive review of the sector. The review highlighted the extent of rationalisations and mergers of agencies, centralisation of resources in Wellington, and reductions in physical space allocation as the significant trends and issues affecting government libraries (Ralph & Sibthorpe, 2009). In 2013, Ralph and Sibthorpe noted that these trends were continuing to be significant challenges for the special library sector, reporting that reductions in funding and services had resulted in significant job losses and the closure of about 30 special libraries across all sectors since 2009. The authors also found that there had been extensive centralisation of collections, budgets and services, heavy increases in workloads, and greater use of contract workers in government libraries (Ralph & Sibthorpe, 2013).

It is interesting to note that the closure of government libraries stands at odds with trends in the corporate sector, where a study of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the UK found that there were very real barriers hindering business people’s access to quality information: a lack of awareness about where to find the required information, about comprehending the value of the information to their work, or about how to actually access, retrieve, use and interpret the information (Mark Ware Consulting, 2009). Cost barriers through subscription costs and paywalls added further complexity. In contrast with the situation in government, professional societies were finding that the opportunity to provide access to quality information through their library and information services was a very highly regarded value for their members.
A positive, but challenging, future is painted by LexisNexis in their white paper on the contemporary information management environment (2014). Drawing on the qualitative data gathered through an online survey of information professionals across Europe and a series of interviews conducted with senior information executives in France, Germany and the Netherlands, the authors discuss the implications of the exponential growth of information and data, particularly for the vast majority of people who assume that information skills are generic, rather than specialised. Information overload is accompanied by the pressure to provide instantaneous access to the required resources, as well as presenting the information in new visual formats, while continuing to maintain the highest standards of accuracy and quality. Nevertheless, information managers are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunities to utilising technology to reduce the time spent on routine, repetitive tasks and to build their communication and investigative skills to develop new roles as consultants and analysts with the ability to present information in different ways for different audiences and to add significant value to the strategic priorities of the organisation.

These ideas echo trends in the government library sector presented by FEDLINK (2012). Correlations with the academic research library have are also evident: the librarian’s ability to connect people with ideas has also been explored in the recent report *A day in the life of a (serious) researcher: Envisioning the future of the research library* (Tancheva et al., 2016). In the corporate research sector, the value of these skills have been recognised by Arup University, with a librarian and knowledge specialist appointed to the leadership role in Australasia to “drive innovation and collaboration both internally and externally to support Arup clients and staff, and connects with the global Arup University leadership team” (Arup, 2016).

### 3.2 Australian perspectives

Here in Australia, ALIA has strengthened its representative efforts for government libraries and librarians since establishing its Special Libraries and Information Services Advisory Committee in 2009. The committee advises the ALIA Board to encourage the development of strategic programs for special librarians or those interested in special librarianship, including in the government sector (ALIA, n.d.). Ralph and Sibthorpe (2013, p. 137) argue that the association “is ahead in achieving some of the critical requirements for an advisory body to support and mentor special librarians, who are currently being challenged in every way.”

In 2010 the advisory committee completed a survey of Australian special libraries which has provided valuable statistical information about the sector and its workforce, information that library associations have generally been slow to collect (Ralph & Sibthorpe, 2013). While the ALIA findings reflect special libraries as a whole, more than half of respondents worked in federal, state or local government libraries. The majority of respondents stated their staffing and client base had not changed significantly over the previous five years; however, those who answered the opposite cited budget cuts, amalgamation of services and machinery of government changes as reasons for changes in service delivery (ALIA Special Libraries and Information Services Advisory Committee, 2010). The survey also highlighted a lack of attention to mechanisms for collecting feedback about and demonstrating the library service’s value to the organisation. Gathering informal feedback at the time of service delivery far outranked service reviews, with questionnaires and surveys being the most common feedback mechanism. It was found that two-thirds of special libraries were unable to demonstrate the impact of their services and programs on the parent organisation (ALIA Special Libraries and Information Services Advisory Committee, 2010).

The professional group, ALIA Health Libraries Australia (HLA) has worked to ensure high level professional recognition with a major study into future workforce requirements for librarians working...
in the health sector (Hallam et al., 2011). ALIA, HLA and Health Libraries Inc. commissioned an independent study into the return on investment, expressed as community returns, provided by health libraries (SGS Economics, 2013). It was found that there was a $9 return for every $1 spent on library and information services across the health sector. Further research is currently being undertaken by ALIA HLA through a census of health libraries, to create an accurate picture of government, academic and commercial health libraries in Australia. The report on the census will be available in early 2016. The preliminary findings of a national survey of law librarians have also recently been presented (Brown, 2015), with a full report to be released in the near future.

ALIA works closely with AGLIN to support government libraries throughout Australia. AGLIN specifically represents Australian Federal Government library and information professionals, facilitating information provision to clients within the APS. The group has recognised that there is no cohesive model for government library services, nor are there any guidelines for best practice across the sector. AGLIN’s Statement of strategic intent 2009-2013 (AGLIN, 2009) underscores the challenges facing government libraries in the current economic environment, particularly the low level of understanding of the costs and value of quality information and services: “new resource management frameworks have resulted in greater accountability, greater scrutiny of resources and decision making at higher levels, with a concomitant decrease in flexibility for libraries” (2009, p. 4).

AGLIN was well positioned to publicise an independent survey commissioned by ALIA in 2013 to assess the return on investment of special library and information services in Australia. The research findings indicated that special libraries return $5.43 for every $1 invested (ALIA, 2014d). Moreover, this may be considered a conservative estimate, as the findings take into account time saved by clients – for example, political advisers – searching for information, but not the enhanced quality of the information supplied by special librarians (ALIA, 2014d). With effective advocacy, research such as this could contribute to building stakeholders’ understanding of the value of government libraries across government and the wider community.

AGLIN (2009, p. 4) has also noted “a move towards shared services” and “a greater requirement for coordinated procurement across government” following the 2009 reform of federal administration process. The Victorian Government introduced a new model for government library services in 2009 (Shine, 2010; Staggs, 2010). The new Victorian Government Library Service (VGLS) has been described as an “extraordinary transformation” (Atkinson & Lewin, 2012). The process of building “one high-powered streamlined information machine” from “fifteen independent library services, 40 in-house catalogues and platforms, 14 sites managed by over 50 staff serving a total workforce population” (Atkinson & Lewin, 2012, p.1). The complexity of government information services is discussed, including the diversity of subject interest, yet with some overlap across the agencies, resulting in artificial barriers to information access, and the diversity in research needs depending on the nature of work in different areas of government. The benefits of the whole of government approach to information services are clearly articulated: to the government itself, to those working to deliver public services, and to the library staff themselves (Shine, 2010; Atkinson & Lewin, 2012). Valuable insights are provided about the “framework for improved service delivery within a collaborative, productive and professionally satisfying environment for staff” (Atkinson & Lewin, 2012, p.18).

Within the Queensland Government context, opportunities for collaboration and cooperation between government libraries have been examined extensively in Hallam’s (2010) Queensland Government Agency Libraries Review (QGALR). Noting that the “patchwork of libraries” (Hallam, 2010, p. 3) across government presented barriers to research services and facilitated wasteful duplication, the review recommended establishing a network of research centres with a central hub to coordinate
common goals, systems and processes. Specific projects were recommended to enhance service quality, efficiency and cost-effectiveness, including a single portal for all government information services, coordinated purchasing arrangements, and access by government officers to all libraries regardless of their agency affiliation (Hallam, 2010).

While the options presented in the final report (Hallam, 2010) offered the basis for discussion about the future directions for government library services in Queensland, political winds blew in a completely different direction. In March 2012, Campbell Newman swept into power as the Premier of Queensland, changing the political landscape completely. It was not an easy time for the public service, with an immense program of ‘rationalisation’ taking place. Government agency libraries were not exempt from the pain. One major change in service delivery took place in 2013, with the library of the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) “packed up and moved across the river to settle in the State Library of Queensland in its new incarnation as GRAIL (Government Research and Information Library)” (Vilkins, 2014). The focus of the service concentrates on online/desktop delivery of tailored information, with users benefitting from access to the expansive resources of the State Library of Queensland, which is a ‘legal deposit’ library. By August 2014, seven government agencies had moved across to become part of the GRAIL community (Vilkins, 2014).

The QGALR discussion is particularly useful in suggesting how such initiatives might better equip government libraries and librarians to navigate machinery of government changes such as those affecting Queensland Government libraries in 2009 and 2012. Rationalising management, pooling resources and centralising services can mitigate the need to split collections and catalogues, renegotiate licences, relocate the service and dislocate from clients (Ralph & Sibthorpe, 2013; Hallam, 2010). At the same time, the review recognises limits on the effectiveness of centralised arrangements in the government library sector, as the embedded nature of libraries means that the staff develop expert understandings of their agency’s information needs and establish strong relationships with clients (Hallam, 2010). A key challenge is the need to determine how a network of government libraries is able to balance centralisation with embeddedness in order to provide services that are more efficient, effective, and equitable.

4. Determining the value of government library and information services

The literature reports the difficulty of obtaining current statistics of the number of special libraries in Australia. O’Connor (2007) and Ralph and Sibthorpe (2009) referred to the number reported in 1999 and concluded there were around 1125 special libraries in Australia; however, they argued that this number was likely to be reduced due to downsizing and restructuring over the prior decade. A search on Australian Libraries Gateway\(^8\) indicates there are currently around 1650 special libraries and 570 government libraries. However, it is difficult to verify this data’s accuracy, as some entries in the database are branches of a central library or unstaffed collections. While statistical information focuses, of course, on the quantitative perspectives, attention today is often on qualitative perspectives, in order to determine the value of library services.

Traditionally, special libraries have evaluated their performance by measuring levels of client service – for example through surveys and focus groups – and capturing data about library collections and services such as size and usage. The data can be used to justify the present library service and support decisions about resourcing such as funding, space, staffing, collections and technology requirements. However, it is important to recognise that examining whether special libraries are efficiently and effectively delivering services is not the same as determining the value clients gain from using those

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services (Botha, Erasmus & Deventer, 2009). As Botha, Erasmus & Deventer (2009, p. 108) state: “the mere fact that a service is being used does not mean that the service is a valuable one, or that it makes a difference to the user.” Library size, usage and user satisfaction data can help identify strengths and weaknesses in library services and facilitate comparisons between libraries (Kelly, Hamasu & Jones, 2012), but they are unlikely to be clearly aligned with measures of success in the wider organisation (Oakleaf, 2010). Their usefulness in demonstrating impact to the institution as a whole is likely to be limited. It is therefore important for special libraries to demonstrate their worth and capture their intangible value.

Matthews (2013) discusses Taylor’s model of value-added processes in information systems (Taylor, 1986), which seeks to conceptualise how the information use environment adds value for the user. Taylor identified six criteria where there may be perceived benefits to the user:

- Ease of use: reducing the difficulties associated with information resources or services
- Noise reduction: providing the optimum amount of information resources or services
- Quality: ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the resources or services
- Adaptability: responding to users’ needs and requests
- Time savings: saving the users’ time
- Cost savings: saving money for the users.

(Matthews, 2013, pp.165-167)

However, one major challenge for special libraries and information services in measuring value is that value as a concept remains highly contested in the literature. In particular, many studies use the terms ‘value’ and ‘impact’ interchangeably (Calvert & Goulding, 2015), without clarifying definitions. This can prompt confusion, given these terms can already appear ambiguous and subjective, especially for library users. Streatfield and Markless (2012) regard ‘impact’ as the effect of a program or service on individuals or groups, so research studies may focus either on social impact, or on economic value.

Research measuring value in the special library sector can be broadly divided into economic and impact studies (Oakleaf, 2010). Economic studies are interested in return on investment (ROI), which measures the library’s perceived benefits divided by its perceived costs. ROI metrics include time, money and labour savings, productivity improvements, quality enhancements, quicker responses, and lower risks of incorrect information (Oakleaf, 2010). For example, an independent survey commissioned by ALIA in 2013 found special library and information services in Australia return $5.43 for every $1 invested (ALIA, 2014c). Moreover, this may be considered a conservative estimate, as the findings take into account time saved by clients – for example, political advisers – searching for information, but not the enhanced quality of the information supplied by special librarians (ALIA, 2014c). It is important to recognise, however, that financial values do not always align with the overriding values of the organisation. Oakleaf (2010) suggests this is true of higher education, but it is also the case in the government sector, where it is not always easy or appropriate to ascribe monetary value to an agency’s use of information.

Measuring the impact of information on users of special libraries might be more suitable. Impact studies typically survey special library users to examine impacts of services on their practices (Oakleaf, 2010). Botha, Erasmus and Deventer (2009) apply this approach to determine the most important indicators of impact in a South African research library on its clients. The authors’ (2009, p. 109) definition of impact is “the effect the product or service has on the efficiency of the researcher” and “the contribution the product or service makes to the effectiveness of the researcher.” This definition ensures the research is targeted specifically at impact on the organisation’s bottom line. Importantly, the authors (2009) contextualise their approach with a stakeholder framework setting out the
service’s mission of enabling researchers to produce quality research which gains them recognition and additional funding, which in turn allows the organisation to contribute to the wider research needs of the country. This “spiral of impact” (Botha, Erasmus and Deventer, 2009, p. 111) demonstrates a multi-faceted, interconnected understanding of value and impact. Understanding the client leads to a service which positively impacts their research, which enhances the organisation’s reputation and the wider research environment, which feeds back into the organisation, continuing the cycle (Botha, Erasmus and Deventer, 2009).

The authors’ qualitative data suggest researchers see the service’s impact on research success and time saved in search and delivery as the most important indicators of impact (Botha, Erasmus and Deventer, 2009). While the findings are limited by a small sample size and an associated lack of quantitative data, the authors developed an impact measurement template for libraries to capture quantitative data measuring users’ perceptions of key impact indicators. They advocated using measurable indicators of impact that stand in for actual impact. Rather than claiming correlations between impacts and library services, they look for pieces of information indicating impacts or differences.

In a case study investigating the impact of an information unit on a property firm in the UK, Reynolds (2013) found considerable uncertainty surrounding the concept of impact. The employees of the firm showed little understanding of how to define impact or how it applied to organisational goals (Reynolds, 2013). They also expressed concern that impact is difficult to quantify and is highly subjective (Reynolds, 2013). Reynolds concludes that conceptualising corporate information services in terms of their impact to employees, workgroups and fee-earning work “is not generally how the IU [Information Unit] is seen and that a different way of discussing this might be worth investigating in the future” (Reynolds, 2013, p. 66). While Reynolds’ research applies to a specific organisational context, it suggests special librarians should ensure concepts of value and impact are clearly understood within their organisation. Otherwise, their attempts to demonstrate their worth are unlikely to be effective: “unless the customer receives value, then the service really has no value at all” (Matthews, 2013, p.167).

Each special library has unique characteristics and attributes, which makes the process of measuring impact and value exceptionally challenging. There are currently no systematic methods allowing for rigorous data collection and analysis in special libraries. Simon (2011) notes the difficulty of introducing standards and best practices for measurement and assessment when the special library sector’s defining characteristics are diversity and difference. Consequently, she argues, the sector lags behind other types of libraries in developing quality standards and measuring service value. On a more positive note, Simon (2011) highlights the potential for special librarians to find information about best practices and competitive intelligence to aid organisation-wide benchmarking programs. This points to an opportunity for special librarians to more visibly demonstrate value to decision makers across their organisation.

A 2013 report commissioned by the Financial Times and SLA highlights the need for special libraries and librarians to measure and demonstrate their value to the organisation. The report draws on survey and interview data from a large sample of information professionals and executives working in corporate, government and academic contexts. Considering the perceptions of those who manage the organisational strategies and finances in these contexts adds richness to the findings. For example, one of the information professionals’ major concerns is that their users are bypassing their expertise to access information directly, potentially increasing exposure to organisational risk (Financial Times Corporate, 2013). At the same time, the executives report suffering from information overload and
perceive a lack of high quality, efficiently delivered information within the organisation (Financial Times Corporate, 2013). Both groups of respondents identify a common objective – a greater role for information professionals in saving user time, filtering and retrieving high quality information and minimising organisational risk – yet fail to recognise it, let alone achieve it, as the value of information services and professionals is not being successfully communicated or understood.

Indeed, the report suggests information professionals currently overestimate the level of value they provide to the organisation. Whereas 55% of surveyed information professionals believe they add “a lot of value”, this view is shared by only 34% of executives (Financial Times Corporate, 2013). The performance gap is greatest in the government sector, where the percentages are 50% and 14% respectively (Financial Times Corporate, 2013). The most important attributes for information professionals identified by respondents – communication skills, identifying user needs, and providing decision-ready information – are also characterised by strong disparities in performance ratings between providers and users (Financial Times Corporate, 2013).

The literature also advocates positioning special libraries at the centre of their organisation’s innovation agenda as crucial to demonstrating value. The Pharma Documentation Ring (P-D-R) (Renn, Archer, Burkhardt, Ginestet, Nielsen, Woodward, & the P-D-R Library Affairs & Copyright Group, 2012) has developed a blueprint for corporate information centres in the pharmaceutical industry to become “innovation partners.” The blueprint (Renn et al., 2012) recognises that information has vital competitive value for research-based companies in fostering innovation, facilitating access to knowledge, and integrating content into everyday workflows. This is undoubtedly also true of the services provided by government libraries to their clients and departments or agencies. Given the renewed focus on innovation policy at the national level since the elevation of Malcolm Turnbull to the Prime Ministership, the sector might consider whether it is doing enough to demonstrate this value in the wider organisation and community.

The blueprint (Renn et al., 2012) identifies four major functions of corporate information centres: information access; information research; information technology; and knowledge management. At least the first three of these functions have long been traditional occupations of librarianship, but this means they are arguably very localised. Dempsey has long argued that libraries operate at the institutional level, whereas the users operate at the “network level” (Dempsey, 2008, p.115). Government library and information professionals need to consider the value they provide to make their users’ lives more productive and meaningful.

The blueprint is helpful in that it uses business terminology to reveal how these core areas generate significant innovative value for organisations. Information access, for example, is about providing a basis for sound processes and decision-making, and information research ensures money spent on information access boosts innovation and thereby restrains spending in research and development (Renn et al., 2012). This is a sophisticated approach to demonstrating value, by aligning the library’s goals with the organisation’s mission and embedding the information centre’s functions in the strategic imperatives of the agency. This ensures that the value of the library and information service is intrinsically linked to the achievement of organisational outcomes.

Renn et al. (2012) characterise librarians and information professionals as possessing the skills and experience to successfully undertake all of the elements under information access (information acquisition and vendor relations, information and library services, and marketing), the majority of those under information research (awareness and training, information consulting services, retrieval and analysis, news intelligence business, and text analytics), and IT and informatics. Special librarians
should therefore see themselves as central to organisation-wide innovation initiatives, even potential leaders.

Town (2010) offered a more holistic approach to measuring value and impact in library services. Rather than separating measures of worth into economic and impact dimensions, Town (2010, p. 268) proposed “a broader assessment of the meaning of value; and recognition that value is dependent on values sets or systems.” Town (2010, p. 269) believes libraries should strive for a “transcendent” level of value, looking beyond immediate concerns to recognise the full range of intangible benefits they bring to organisations. This means contributing not only to the organisation’s goals and bottom line, but also to its value systems. As values are chosen by an organisation, value measures cannot be devised until these values are agreed upon and known (Town, 2010). Town’s connection between organisational values and value is key. It reveals how libraries’ human, structural and relational capital is highly valuable to organisations and society. It also differs from other literature in arguing libraries should measure their value based on organisational value statements rather than goals, as these specify how to act, not what to do (Town, 2010).

Like much of the literature, however, Town offers little direct guidance on specific ways to measure value. Calvert and Goulding (2015) agree with Oakleaf (2010) that multiple methods may be required to estimate the value of library and information services, While it has been stressed that impact and value studies are “time consuming, technical and resource intensive” (Calvert & Goulding, 2015, p.280), some practitioners have sensed that “there is an agenda that isn’t going to go away”, so they need to be prepared by having “killer facts at our fingertips, to be able to pull them out when talking to somebody” (Calvert & Goulding, 2015, p.281). Urquart (2015) moves beyond the idea of data and facts to the need for narratives “to tell a coherent story, or a set of stories, to our users (and the funders and policy makers) about how our services matter to them” (Urquart, 2015, p.99).

5. Skills and competencies of government librarians

A number of professional organisations have developed frameworks of core skills and competencies for information professionals. The most relevant frameworks for special librarians, particularly those in the government library sector, are the SLA’s Competencies for information professionals of the 21st century (SLA, 2016) and the Federal Library and Information Center Committee’s (FLICC) Competencies for federal government librarians (2011). Together these frameworks set out the knowledge, skills and attributes considered vital for the profession. They consider both the generic and specialist skills required by information professionals in a special library context. The documents’ key implications for government librarians and libraries include:

- **‘Traditional’ librarianship competencies remain vital**
  The competency frameworks emphasise skills in managing information organisations, resources, services, and technology – cornerstones of librarianship. Government librarians should remain confident their core skills will continue to be valuable in tackling emerging opportunities and challenges.

- **Competencies should be conceptualised in business terms**
  While the documents largely reinforce traditional sets of competencies, the enabling competencies highlighted by the SLA (2016) emphasise the business context for special librarians, e.g. networking, relationship-building, marketing, project management, business ethics. In an environment where greater efficiency and effectiveness are sought, government libraries and librarians need to ensure they are maximising and demonstrating their value to wider organisational objectives and operations.
Organisational knowledge is a gateway to collaboration
The FLICC (2011) framework foregrounds agency and organisational knowledge as a specialised competency for government librarians. This includes being able to evaluate and explain the agency’s role within the government and its relationships with other agencies (FLICC, 2011). Using this knowledge, the FLICC (2011) states that government librarians also need to assess and propose inter-agency and government-wide library initiatives. The need for more integrated and coordinated government services was stressed in the Commonwealth Government’s blueprint (Advisory Group, 2010). Australian federal government librarians are well placed to draw on their in-depth agency or departmental knowledge and their networks across government to develop and lead more extensive collaborative efforts.

Collaboration is an enabling competency
While the FLICC framework focuses specifically on collaboration within government and frames collaboration as a specialised competency, the SLA framework identifies collaboration as an enabling competency for information professionals (SLA, 2016).

The ongoing validity of these different competency frameworks reflects how the government library sector understands and defines its professional standards; however, without advocacy for incorporating them into professional practice their value remains largely abstract and theoretical. Jaeger and Bertot (2011) discuss the apparent disconnect between LIS education courses and the competencies required by government information librarians; Matarazzo and Pearlstein (2013) also argue that the concerns expressed in competency documents for special librarians have not been widely taken up in LIS education. The challenge for government libraries and librarians is to translate these competencies into meaningful decision making processes and work to embed them in everyday practice.

A 2010 report for the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) offers a more empirical basis for discussion of skill sets required by librarians in a Web 2.0 environment. The report draws on focus group data from information professionals representing all library sectors across Australia – including special libraries – to examine perceptions of Library 2.0 skills. Eight themes emerge from the data: technology; learning and education; research or evidence based practice; communication; collaboration and teamwork; user focus; business savvy; and personal traits (Partridge, Lee & Munro, 2010). While most of these themes overlap with the competencies identified in the SLA and FLICC frameworks, several pose additional implications.

The research reveals productive tensions surrounding the levels of ICT skills desirable for Librarian 2.0. Participants agreed successful librarians do not need to be IT professionals, but also noted that boundaries between IT and LIS professionals are rapidly narrowing (Partridge, Lee & Munro, 2010). This suggests that, as the world of digital information continues to evolve, further clarification of information professionals’ desired technological skills is required. It also highlights a recent trend examined by Schneider and Barron (2014) that is particularly pronounced in special libraries: the emergence of the hybrid librarian-IT expert. This hybrid professional has emerged as information organisations recognise that integrating information and technology functions has significant benefits (Schneider & Barron, 2014).

In the context of law firm libraries, Schneider and Barron (2014) argued that information services can enhance and expand their role by demonstrating how their knowledge of the organisation makes them ideally placed to add value to technology and data. Employing staff with the skills to identify
how information services and IT support overlap “is essential to the survival of the firm” (Schneider & Barron, 2014, p. 48). These hybrid professionals possess skills such as facilitation and contract negotiation that span both fields and promote greater collaboration between them in the organisation (Schneider & Barron, 2014). Like law firms, government agencies traditionally separate their library and IT services. There are therefore considerable opportunities for government libraries to become more visible within their organisations by fostering skills that transcend these divides. This could become a feature of future planning and discussion between Australian government librarians and the DTO.

Partridge, Lee and Munro emphasised the “paradigm shift” (2010, p.11) that new technologies brought to library and information work. However, as government libraries often need to adapt to the seismic changes resulting from budgetary and machinery of government decisions, they should not be daunted by changes in their ICT world. As the Web 2.0 world has introduced a networked, connected way of working within and across enterprises (Dempsey, 2008; Frey, 2014), library and information professionals must re-conceptualise the roles that they play – and the skills they require – to engage with and support their users’ information needs (Inayatullah, 2014; LexisNexis, 2014; Lord, 2014). The skills required for a successful information professional are becoming more complex and plentiful (Partridge, Lee & Munro, 2010). In government libraries, this is occurring concurrently with the increasing complexity of problems, solutions and policies across government (Culhane, 2013; Marincormeau & O’Connell, 2015) (see also Section 2 of this literature review). Commitment to ongoing personal and professional development as well as the confidence to move out of their comfort zones will be unavoidable if government librarians are going to possess the necessary range of skills to navigate this changing environment.

In a boost for government librarians around Australia, ALIA recently introduced a Government Specialisation strand to its professional development (PD) scheme. The PD scheme supports ALIA members in achieving professional certification in government library and information services. Modelled on ALIA’s initial Health PD scheme, the program is built around developing nine core competencies:

- Understanding Government information environments and the policies, issues and trends impacting them
- Understanding your agency’s vision and strategic direction and the principles and practices related to providing information services that meet your users’ needs
- Understanding management of Government information resources
- Understanding how leadership, finance, communication and management theory and techniques are applied in the public sector
- Understanding and using ICT to manage information
- Understanding laws, regulations, standards and policies applicable to your agency
- Understanding Government research methods and being able to critically evaluate resources from many fields
- Developing an understanding of discipline specific and specialised subject matter required by your agency
- Maintaining currency of professional knowledge and practice.

(ALIA, 2015)

This new PD specialisation provides government librarians with the opportunity to promote the breadth and depth of their skillset to stakeholders. Technical skills and expertise across all areas of digital information management will continue to be important, but increasing weight will be put on new skills relating to the creative presentation of information, the focused analysis of data and
information, and the articulation of business intelligence (LexisNexis, 2014). Such skill sets will support staff across the public service “transform mountains of information into pinnacles of knowledge” (Shergold, 2015, p.17).

This reinforces the business-inflected terminology of the SLA competencies (SLA, 2003) and can contribute to the development of a more informed, evidence based approach to the management of library and information services. By adopting a more future-focused position in their careers, government librarians can be well positioned to not only manage their rapidly changing environment, but also to drive productive change within their information service and their agency (Partridge, Lee & Munro, 2010).

6. Conclusion

This literature review has presented and critically analysed key issues and challenges facing today’s government libraries and information professionals working in the sector. It found that governments are changing and evolving in response to technological developments, financial pressures, and demands for more collaborative and whole of government service delivery strategies. It also revealed how government libraries across the developed world are beginning to leverage their potential as leaders within government through more streamlined and cooperative approaches to service which are more effective, efficient and equitable, and that better utilise the skills and attributes of their staff.

Finally, the literature review examined how the 21st century information environment is prompting government librarians to re-conceptualise their traditional competencies and to develop new skills not only to remain central to their agency’s operations, but also to extend their reach. In this environment of rapid change, there are enormous opportunities for government agencies to design and create new and better service models. Shumaker believes that government libraries and librarians are ideally positioned to lead the way:

This is a far different level of service than the old model of the librarian at the reference desk. It’s active, not passive; engaged, not apart; customized, not generic. It gets librarians out of the library and into the life of the organization... where they can apply their skills to the maximum benefit.

(Shumaker, 2015, p.1)

The research undertaken in the literature review has informed the development of two data collection tools: an extensive online questionnaire seeking factual details about the operations of the diverse Commonwealth Government agency library and information services, and the open qualitative questions to be explored by library staff in a series of focus groups. A short questionnaire will also be made available to senior executives and managers in order to canvass their views about their agency’s information services. The detailed information gathered during the project will be analysed and synthesised, to be presented in a final report in early 2016.
References


Appendix 1

AGLIN literature review


Appendix 1
AGLIN literature review A1-23
April 2016


Appendix 2: Online Survey
Commonwealth Government Agency Libraries Review

Online Survey

Introduction
This online survey represents a key component of the Commonwealth Government Agency Libraries Review, commissioned by the Australian Government Library and Information Network (AGLIN). The information and comparative data collected through the survey will inform the development of an options paper to determine potential future service delivery models for the government departmental and agency libraries.

Before you start:
This is an extensive survey, with ten sections and a total of 78 questions. The questions seek detailed responses about your library/information service and it is anticipated that you will have to undertake some research at the local level to collate the information required. If your library service operates from more than one location, you have the option to either complete the survey for each individual service, or you can merge them into one single survey response.

The sections are:

1. Details about the library/information service
2. Library staffing
3. Service delivery
4. Library users
5. Library resources
6. Library automation
7. Space and storage
8. Library finance
9. Library trends
10. AGLIN.

While the information collected in the survey is identifiable to the researchers, all data will be handled according to the principles of research ethics.

The closing date for the survey is [date].

Concerns or queries regarding the study:
If you have any questions about the research study in general or the survey in particular, please contact the Project Leader.

Thank you for supporting the study.
Part 1: Details about the library/information service

1.1 What is the name of your library/information service?
1.2 Which Government Department or Agency hosts the library/information service?
1.3 What is the physical location of the library/information service?
1.4 Please provide details of any additional physical locations for this library/information service.
1.5 Please indicate the administrative arrangements for the library/information service.
1.6 Has your library been impacted by any Government/Departmental changes in the past 3 years? If so, please briefly state the nature of these changes in the comments box.
1.7 Please indicate the range of agency services and functions that are the direct responsibility of the library (ie the library unit provides the services for the agency as a whole.)
1.8 Please indicate the key subject strengths of your physical and electronic collections and research services. Select your TOP 5 subject areas from the following list. Please consider the subject areas that are reflected in your library collection and the focus of the research services you provide.

Part 2: Library staffing

2.1 Please indicate the total number of permanent staff positions, expressed as full-time equivalents (FTE) in your library service as at 1 November 2015.
2.2 Please indicate the number of library staff, expressed as full-time equivalent (FTE) in the following classifications. For Non-APS classifications please provide details of the staffing profile in the comments box
2.3 Are there currently any commercial contact staff employed in your library? If yes, please provide details in the comments of: Number of commercial contract staff, and the duties/roles/responsibilities of these staff.

Part 3: Service delivery

3.1 Please indicate whether you charge your agency business units for any services, through recovery of costs. Direct costs = the actual cost of the item Full costs = costs including staff time and oncosts Please provide details of any other arrangements in the comments box.
3.2 Does your library provide direct user assistance with research?
3.3 If your library does provide direct user assistance with research, do you have any specific guidelines or turnaround times for research requests? Please provide brief details of any guidelines you do have in the comments box.
3.4 Please consider the extent to which the library service meets user needs.
3.5 Please estimate the average number of staff hours spent, in a typical month, on direct research assistance for users. You should consider the actual reference and research activities; do not include collection development and maintenance of loans.

3.6 Please consider the relative proportion of direct research assistance that is provided to the different user groups. There are 3 questions, relating to Internal users, External users, Members of the public. The total percentage for these 3 questions should be 100%.

3.7 Please indicate the range of services that your library provides to users.

3.8 Please indicate the range and frequency of awareness or alerting services that your library provides to users. If you offer any other alerting services, please outline these in the comments box.

3.9 Please indicate the range and frequency of training activities that your library provides to users. If you offer other training, please indicate these in the comments.

3.10 Please provide details of any collaborative arrangements your library has with other libraries (eg reciprocal borrowing, consortia purchasing or licensing). Please indicate the benefits gained from these collaborative, reciprocal or consortia arrangements in the comments box.

3.11 Please estimate the average number of books loaned from your collection in a typical month.

3.12 Please estimate the average number of journal articles supplied from your collection (physical and electronic) in a typical month.

3.13 Please estimate the average number of books borrowed from external sources in a typical month.

3.14 Please estimate the average number of journal articles acquired from external sources in a typical month.

3.15 Does your library charge for providing resources through interlibrary loan/document delivery to internal users?

3.16 Does your library charge for providing resources through interlibrary loan/document delivery to other agency libraries?

3.17 Does your library charge for providing resources through interlibrary loan/document delivery to non-government libraries or organisations?

Part 4: Library users

4.1 Please estimate the total number of active users (using physical and/or online services, do not include interlibrary loan users).

4.2 What is the total number of possible internal users (ie staff from your own agency)?

4.3 Are members of the public or other external users able to visit and use your library and its resources?

4.4 Are staff from other government agencies able to visit and use your library and its resources and services?
Appendix 2
AGLIN Online Survey

Part 5: Library resources

5.1 What classification scheme is used to classify all or most of your collection?

5.2 Does your library currently contribute holdings to Libraries Australia?

5.3 If you contribute holdings to Libraries Australia, what percentage of your holdings are reflected in Libraries Australia?

5.4 If you contribute holdings to Libraries Australia, are the holdings regularly updated?

5.5 Please indicate whether any of the following unique or significant resources feature in your library collection.

5.6 From the following list, please indicate the electronic resources your library currently has access to. (Part 1 of 4.) The resources are listed at the vendor level to give an overall guide. The research team may seek more detailed information as required at a later date.

5.7 From the following list, please indicate the electronic resources your library currently has access to. (Part 2 of 4)

5.8 From the following list, please indicate the electronic resources your library currently has access to. (Part 3 of 4)

5.9 From the following list, please indicate the electronic resources your library currently has access to. (Part 4 of 4) Please note any other services you wish to highlight in the comments box.

5.10 Please provide an estimate of the number of bibliographic records for your library. You should consider the records for books, reports, audio-visual materials, journal titles, etc. (ie. Not the records for individual issues of journals or journal articles)

Part 6: Library automation

6.1 Does your library have a library management system (LMS)? Note: If you respond with ‘No’, the following few questions can be answered with the default “N/A” response.

6.2 If there is an LMS, what type is it?

6.3 If the LMS is an open source system, please provide the system name, installation year (YYYY), setup costs and any other related charges.
6.4 If the LMS is a proprietary system, please provide the system name and version number and year of installation (YYYY).

6.5 If the LMS is a proprietary system, what were the setup costs?

6.6 If there is an LMS, what is the annual maintenance fee?

6.7 If there is an LMS, is the LMS hosted internally or externally? If externally hosted please provide the name of the host agency in the comments box.

6.8 If there is an LMS, is it web enabled?

6.9 If there is an LMS, when is the anticipated year for renewal or replacement of the LMS? (YYYY) Please outline any plans you may already have for a replacement system.

6.10 If you are planning to replace the current LMS, would you consider an open source system?

6.11 If there is an LMS to be replaced, how much is the projected capital budget for the LMS replacement?

6.12 If there is an LMS to be replaced, would you consider Software as a Service (SaaS) as an option?

6.13 Please indicate which of the following library functions are automated in your library.

### Part 7: Space and storage

7.1 Please indicate the area (m²) allocated to your library. Enter the names of the locations in the comments.

7.2 Please indicate the percentage of space allocated to Location 1. Put details of the location in the comments.

7.3 Please indicate the percentage of space allocated to Location 2. If no second location please enter zero [0]. Put details of the location in the comments.

7.4 Please indicate the percentage of space allocated to Location 3. If no third location please enter zero [0]. Put details of the location in the comments.

7.5 Do you have any storage facilities in addition to the library collection space?

7.6 If you do have storage facilities, please indicate the arrangements.

7.7 If you do have storage facilities, please indicate the area (in m²) allocated for additional storage space.

7.8 If you do have storage facilities, please indicate the rental cost ($ per m², per annum) of the additional storage space.

### Part 8: Library finance

8.1 Please provide details of the library’s budgeted revenues for the 2014/15 year. Please enter zero [0] if not applicable. Note: Questions relating to changes in budgeted revenues are asked in Section 9: Trends
8.2 Please consider the relative proportion of the budgeted expenditure for the period 2014/15. There are 3 questions, relating to Employee related expenditure; Supplies and services (eg collections, subscriptions, licences, hardware, software, consumables); Depreciation and amortisation. The total percentage for these 3 questions should be 100%.

8.3 Are there any services or programs which are outsourced or have external contracts?


9.1 Please indicate the extent to which the following aspects of your library service have changed over the past five years (2010-2015) (Part 1)

9.2 Please indicate the extent to which the following aspects of your library service have changed over the past five years (2010-2015) (Part 2)

9.3 Has your library experienced any changes to staffing over the past five years (2010-2015)?

9.4 Please outline any new initiatives or developments planned for your library during the next three years (2015-2018).

9.5 Do you have any further comments to add about the changing library environment?

Part 10: The roles of AGLIN

10.1 Please indicate the top 3 things you would like to see AGLIN involved in.

10.2 Do you feel that the name Australian Government Libraries Information Network (AGLIN) represents the contemporary environment?

10.3 Do you see any value in proposing a change of name for AGLIN? If so, which name appeals to you?
Appendix 3: Focus group questions
Commonwealth Government Agency Libraries Review

Focus Group Questions

Consultation with Library Staff

Consultation with library staff represents an important element in the data collection activities for the Commonwealth Government Agency Libraries Review (CGALR), commissioned by the Australian Government Libraries Information Network (AGLIN). The research activities will inform the development of an options paper to determine potential future service delivery models for Commonwealth Government departmental and agency libraries.

The research team is aware that government library services are highly specialised and have long played an important role to support the work undertaken by government staff in a wide range of positions. The current model of library services within the Commonwealth Government is department-centric.

In order to consult widely with the government library community, the research team invites library staff to contribute their views and opinions, either at focus groups to be held in Canberra on [date] or through the online questionnaire.

Confidentiality

In line with the principles of research ethics, all responses will remain completely confidential, anonymous and de-identified. No individual agency details will be revealed. All data will remain with the project leader. The overall research findings from the review will be analysed and summarised in the final project report.

Questions for Government Library Staff

1. Please indicate name of the government agency that you are working with.

2. Given your knowledge of and experience with government agency library services, do you believe that these services continue to have relevance and/or value to the department or agency? Can you please explain why you think this is the case?

3. The current model of service delivery sees libraries directly associated with a specific department or agency. What do you feel are the strengths of this model?

4. Do you believe that there are any shortcomings or problems with the current model? Please explain the reasons which support your views.

5. What do you believe are the most valuable attributes of government agency libraries in general, or the library that serves your agency specifically?

6. What do you believe is the single most important contribution that your library makes to your agency? What is the impact of this contribution?
7. Concerns have been expressed about the current climate for government library and information services, with evidence that libraries have lost traction, influence or representation in many government departments. What do you believe are the underlying causes for this situation?

8. If your library closed tomorrow, what difference do you think it would make to your agency?

9. How, and to what extent, do you believe that government agency libraries support, or contribute to the achievement of the government’s strategic directions?

10. How, and to extent, do you believe that government agency libraries support or contribute to the development of high quality, evidence-based public policy?

11. How, and to what extent, do you believe that government agency libraries support or contribute to the achievement of the government’s ICT strategies, including the new digital transformation agenda?

12. Do you feel that there are any specific barriers to the role that libraries might play in supporting the achievement of the government’s ICT strategies or digital transformation agenda? Please provide some reasons to support your views.

13. How, and to what extent, do you believe that government agency libraries support or contribute to the achievement of the government’s information management strategies?

14. Do you feel that there are any specific barriers to the role that libraries might play in supporting the achievement of the government’s information management strategies? Why do you think this?

15. Do you believe that library and information studies (LIS) qualifications – professional or paraprofessional – are understood by stakeholders in your department or agency? Are LIS qualifications (or eligibility for membership of ALIA) considered an essential requirement for employment within your library and information service?

16. To what extent is the employment of staff, and their professional development, determined by the APS capability map? To what extent do professional or paraprofessional qualifications play a role in recruitment and staff development?

17. To what extent do you believe that you receive sufficient and/or appropriate training and professional development support from your department or agency? Where do you feel that staff development falls short of your needs?

18. Do you believe that there are any untapped opportunities for government agency libraries? Can you please outline your ideas?

19. Blue sky thinking: What would your vision for government agency libraries be?

20. Finally, thinking about the role of AGLIN in the government library sector: how relevant do you feel the organisation is today? In what ways do you think this might, or could change in the future?