LIANZA

Te Rau Herenga O Aotearoa
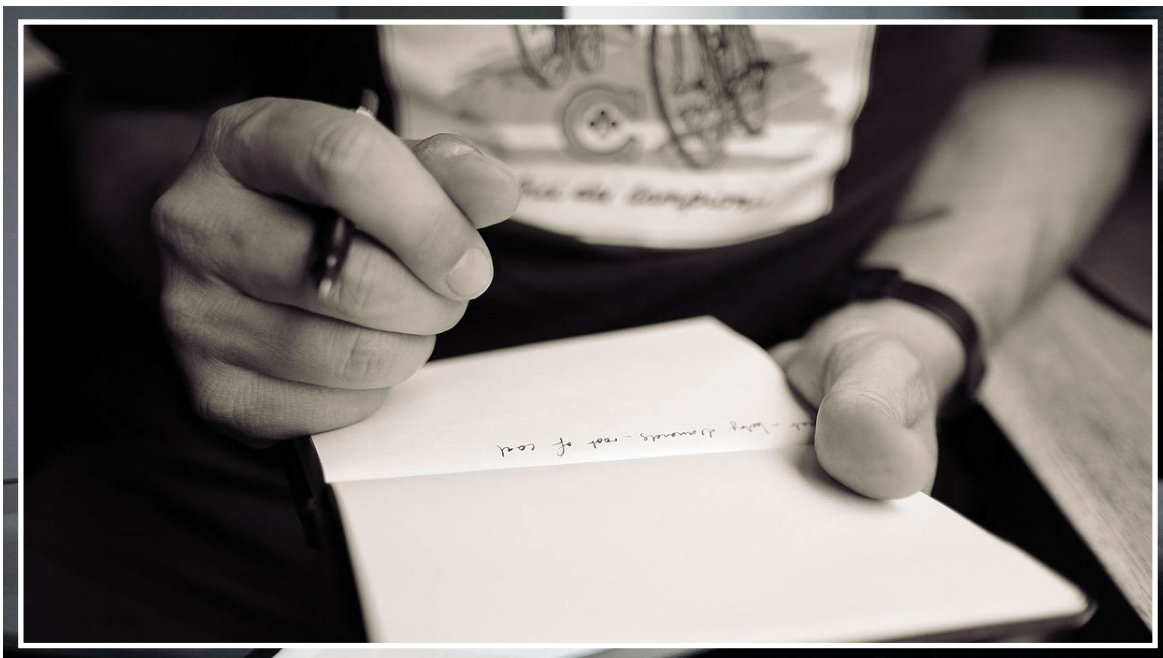

survey 2016
SPECIAL LIBRARIES

CONTENTS

Editor: Laurinda Thomas

INTRODUCTION

The value of special libraries has been clearly articulated, with special library information specialists saving considerable time in completing research queries, and producing higher quality research with greater success than their colleagues (LIANZA 2014). In addition special library staff are able to negotiate significantly reduced pricing for access to key resources than if information were purchased on an as needed basis – returning as much as $5.43 for every dollar invested.   However, the value of special libraries is not always understood by the organisations within which they sit.

In 2009 Gillian Ralph and Julie Sibthorpe analysed the emerging trends of special libraries in New Zealand, in response to a number of closures. This survey acts as a follow-up to this work, to understand what has changed for special libraries in the intervening 7 years.

Survey Delivery

We modelled our survey on the ALIA Special Libraries Survey conducted in 2010, with permission from ALIA. This was to allow comparability between New Zealand and Australia survey results.

As with the ALIA survey responses were sought from both library managers and individual library staff who worked in special libraries in New Zealand. In total we received 153 responses with a completion rate of 78%.

Two of the questions did not operate as designed during the survey process – and this was reflected in the comments from respondents. Our analysis of these questions has been adjusted based on feedback provided.

Implications of results for the sector

Many of the challenges identified in 2009 are still visible for the special libraries sector. Closures and restructures continue and both optimism regarding the future of New Zealand special libraries and job satisfaction are lower than in equivalent organisations in Australia.

Despite concern expressed by a significant number of respondents regarding the future of special libraries, we noted that there was still an opportunity for special librarians to get better at telling their story. With a third of libraries surveyed using only informal means of getting customer feedback there is room for improvement in seeking feedback from library users.

Affordability of resources was another area where special libraries were struggling with static budgets and fluctuating exchange rates.

Aging of the profession continued to be an issue with the majority of respondents over forty. Career progression was also identified in the comments as a concern, with a lack of promotion opportunities available within the wider organisation.
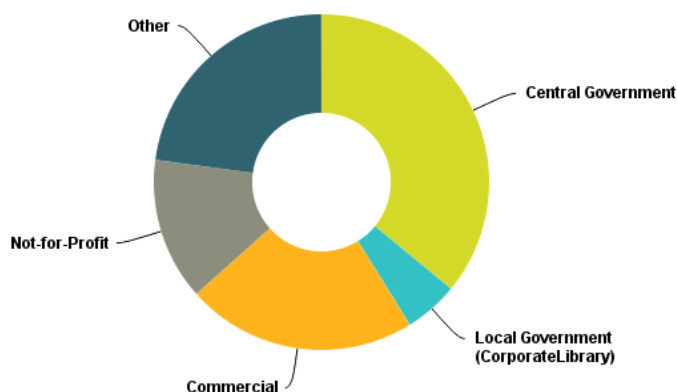
Our respondents were:

- 84% female
- 90% had a formal library qualification
- 78% were a personal member of a library association with 68% a member of LIANZA
- 76% were aged between 40 and 60
- 40% earned 70,000 or more

About the Library

What Sector best defines your parent organisation?

Q1 What Sector best describes your parent organisation?

Answered: 153   Skipped: 0

36% of survey responses were from government libraries, with 22% operating within a commercial organisation, and only 14% working within not-for-profits. "Other" included Crown Research Institutes, District Health Board libraries, and the parliamentary library. This is in contrast with Australia where over 50% of their responses were from government libraries, and where there were an equivalent number of not-for-profit and commercial libraries.

How would you classify your library?

Q2 How would you classify your library?

Answered: 153   Skipped: 0
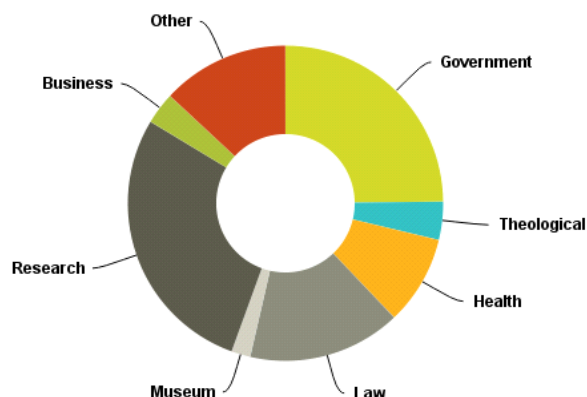
28% of our respondents were from Research libraries, with 25% from government. We had no respondents to this survey from music libraries. Other (13% of those who responded) included dis-

ability, youth, arts, materials, technical, parliamentary and media.

In which organisational department does your library sit?

Q3 In which organisational department or team does your library sit?

Answered: 140   Skipped: 13

Similarly to the ALIA study (2010) we discovered that there was significant variation as to where libraries sit within their organisation. However, unlike ALIA we did have several areas of concentration. 42% of libraries sat within a Corporate Services team or some similar variation such as administration or finance and this was the most common location. A further 19% of libraries had their own department / unit labelled library or information management. As visible in the word cloud libraries depending on their primary role, sat within legal, marketing, education, and research.

Staffing the Library

How many paid staff are currently employed in your library?

How many full-time equivalent staff (FTE's) are currently employed in your library?

As visible in the below chart while 67% of libraries had up to three total staff employed, 71% of libraries had 1-3 FTE's indicating a small amount of job sharing within special libraries. One library under other had no employees and was staffed entirely by volunteers. This is similar to Australia where 70% of libraries surveyed had up to 3 staff.
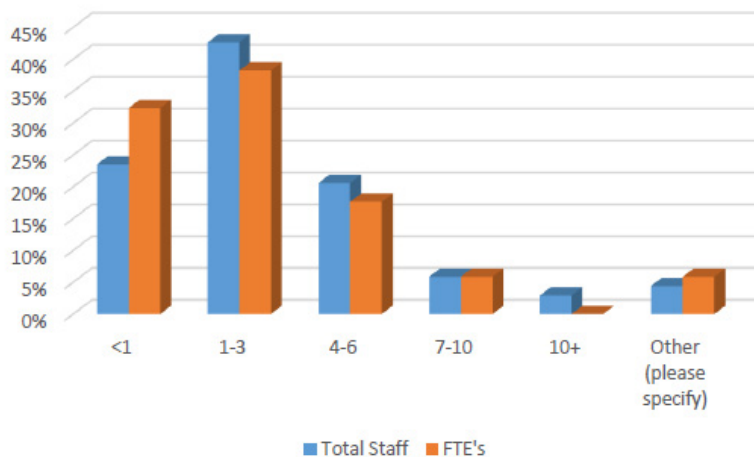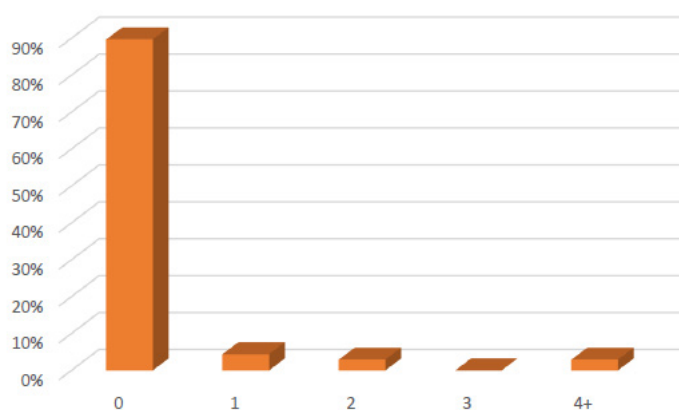
libraries cited reduction in workload as a reason for downsizing. Libraries that had increased staff had taken on responsibility for business intelligence and a broader range of services, or sat within growing organisations.

The role of special libraries

*What major projects has the library been involved in over the last 5 years?*
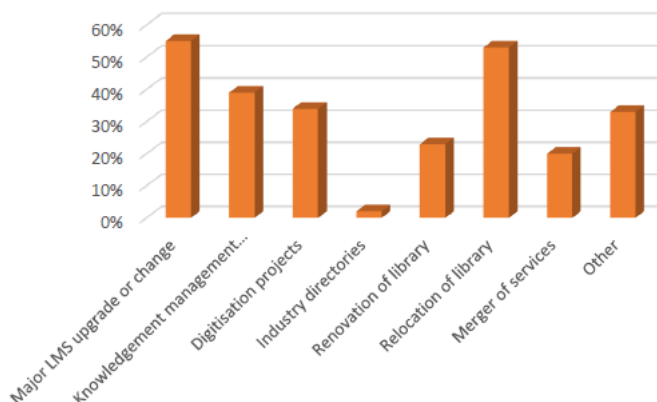
*How many volunteers, if any, work in your library?*

Libraries were able to select more than one project if relevant – only one library indicated they had undertaken no major projects in the last five years. 66% of those libraries who had relocated had also undergone a renovation and 20% had also merged services. "Other" included the creation of an entirely new library service, offshoring of a research function, introduction of intranet, a move to RFID, major weeding or collection development work, and participating in a project group for major bids.

The vast majority of special libraries do not use volunteers, however, 8% of those surveyed indicated 1 or more volunteer and 2% had more than 4 volunteers. One library was staff entirely by volunteers.

In the last five years have you seen....

What are the library services you deliver? (Please select as many as apply)
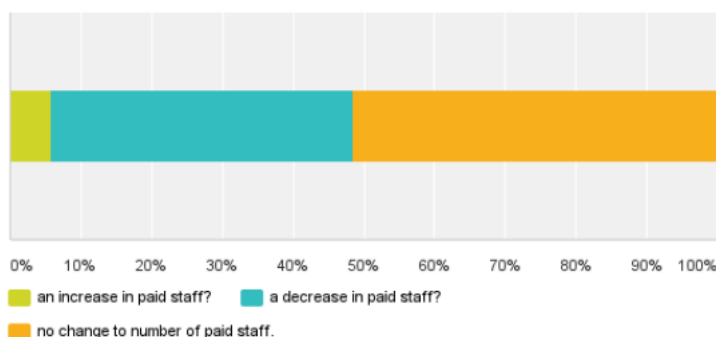
While only 6% of libraries had seen an increase in paid staff, 43% of libraries had seen a decrease in paid staff. The primary reason given for a reduction in numbers was restructure, followed by cost-cutting and a lack of funding. One library mentioned that increasing costs of resources including journal subscriptions had impacted their viability. Three
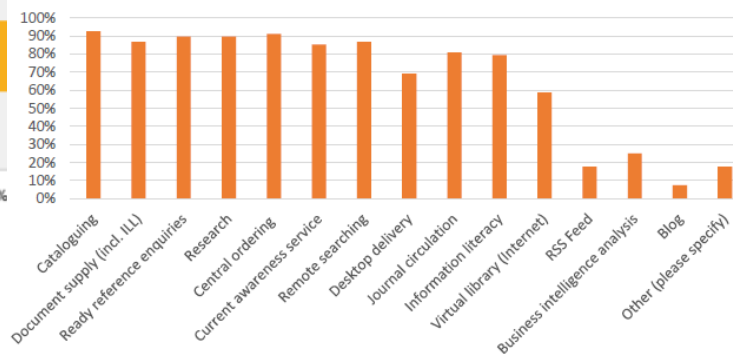
As in Australia the services most common to all libraries were Cataloguing, and central ordering of books / acquisitions. Other services common to most libraries include Document Supply, Ready Reference Enquiries, and Research. "Other" includ-

ed report editing and publication, and providing training - especially in digital literacy.

Are there any other organisational / business services you deliver?

Respondents were also asked to comment on other organisational or business services they delivered. 33 libraries indicated that they delivered services outside those traditionally offered by libraries.

These included:

- Media scans for the senior leadership team
- Reference checking
- Responding to public enquiries
- Proof-reading / Document editing
- Management of archives including production of metadata
- Legal deposit for the organisation's own publications
- Induction of other team members
- Maintaining organisation's web presence

*How many library service points are there in your organisation?*
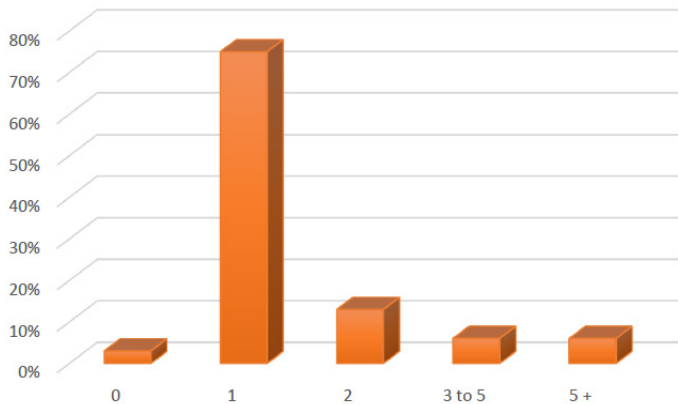
78% of New Zealand libraries had only one service point. This is comparable to Australian libraries where approximately 80% of libraries had 1-3 service points.

*Who are the current users of your library service?*

As expected for special libraries the bulk of users were internal – and the spread between other libraries and students / researchers matched closely to trends in the Australian data. "Other" related primarily to contractors and subsets of the general

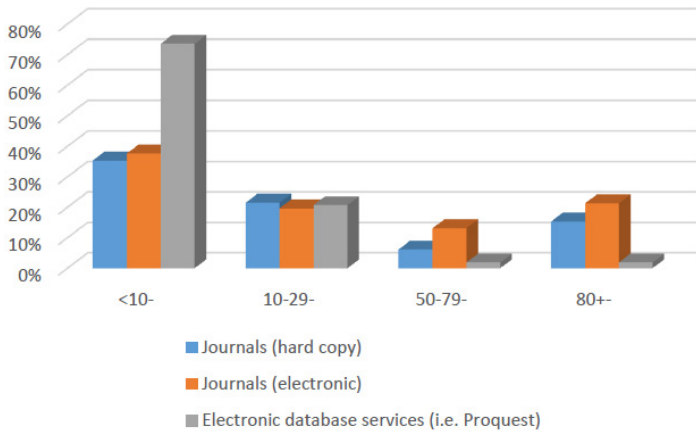public such as specific user groups.
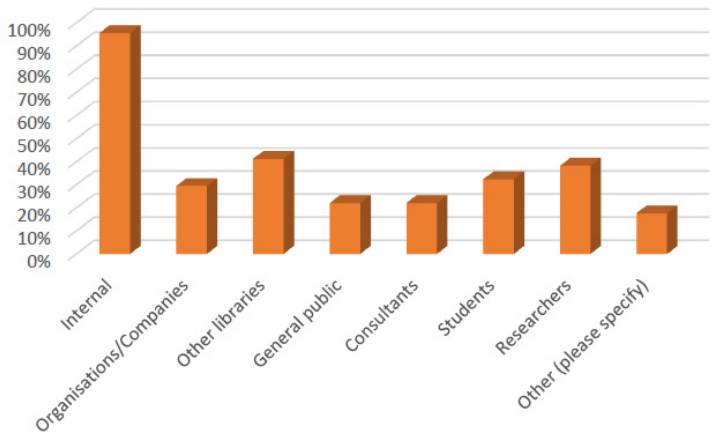
Collections held by special libraries

How many items are in your collection?
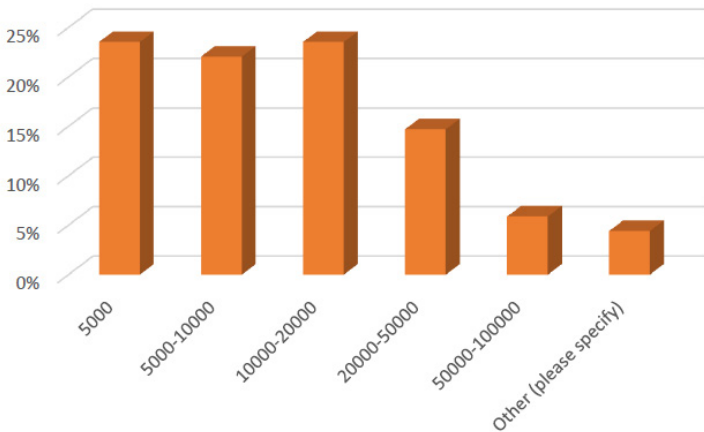
70% of libraries had less than 20,000 items with 85% holding under 50,000 items. 4.5% of libraries held no physical collections.

What do you currently subscribe to?

- Journals (hard copy)
- Journals (electronic)
- Electronic database services (i.e. Proquest)

Is your library struggling to afford access to research journals?

54% of special libraries were struggling to afford

access to research journals with static budgets, exchange rates, and annual price increases cited as some of the challenges.

*Does your library hold special collections?*
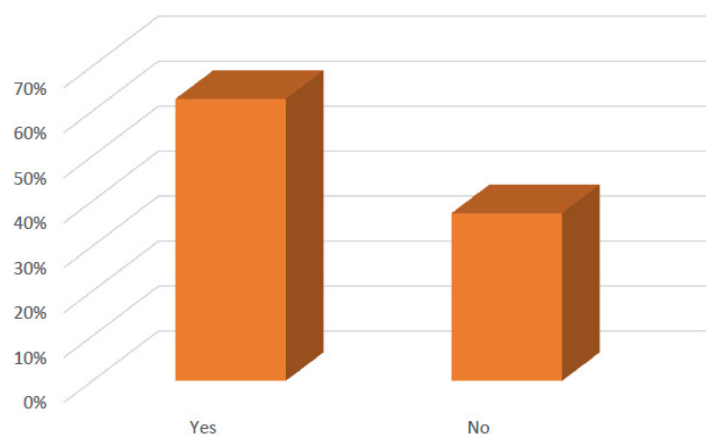
62% of respondents held a special collection in their libraries. These contained unpublished material, rare historic material, photographs and other ephemera, theses and research repositories. One library held samples of building materials and associated technical documents and another held historic training packages. This is lower than Australia where 95% of respondents indicated they held special collections.

Where is information on your library's holdings accessible? (Please choose all that apply)
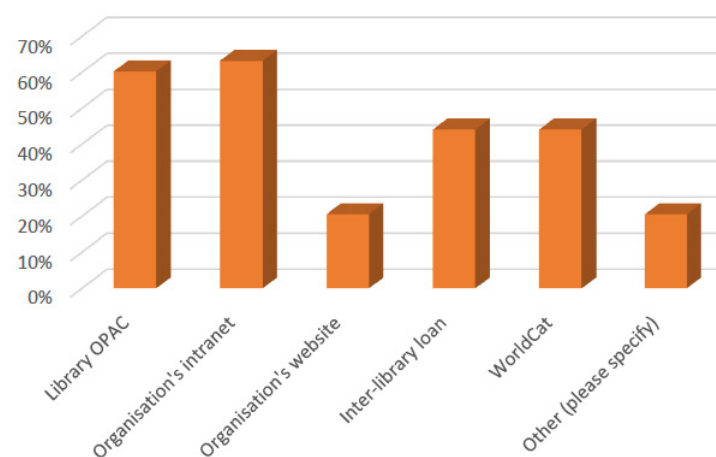

"Other" included stand-alone computers in the library, excel spreadsheets, and systems accessible only to the librarian. 6 respondents noted that only a portion of their collection is accessible via the online mechanism used to offer access.

What collection management system do you use?
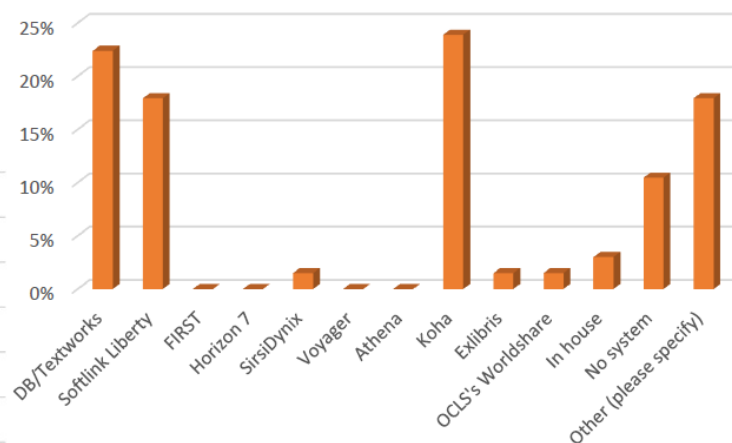
The most popular library management systems were DB/Textworks, Softlink Liberty, and Koha. Koha had greater uptake in New Zealand than Australia – perhaps not surprisingly as it was developed here. "Other" included bespoke LMs, .eLM, LibrarySoft, NOTEbookS, and spreadsheets. Those on .eLM noted it was about to become defunct so were looking for replacements.

*Is your library part of a sharing network or resource sharing consortia?*
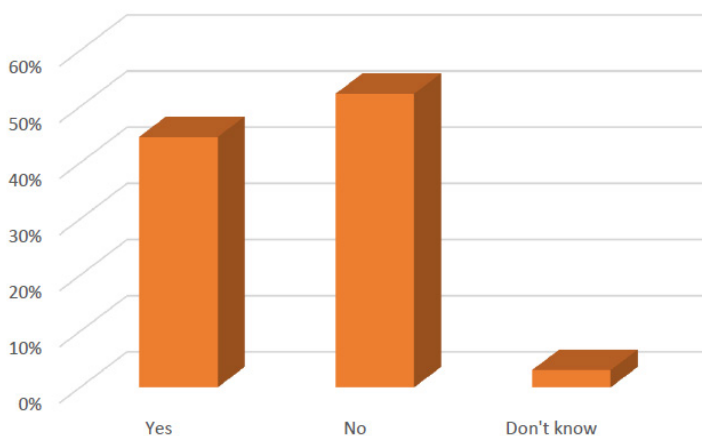
44% of libraries were part of a sharing consortia which was low in comparison to Australian special libraries where 71% of respondents were part of sharing consortia.

Is your library working to incorporate more bicultural practices into its operations?

30% of libraries were working to incorporate more bicultural practices into their operations. Those who commented on this question noted that the key barrier to this was whether this was an organ-

isational priority. Several respondents felt that maintaining bicultural practices was unnecessary given their user base.
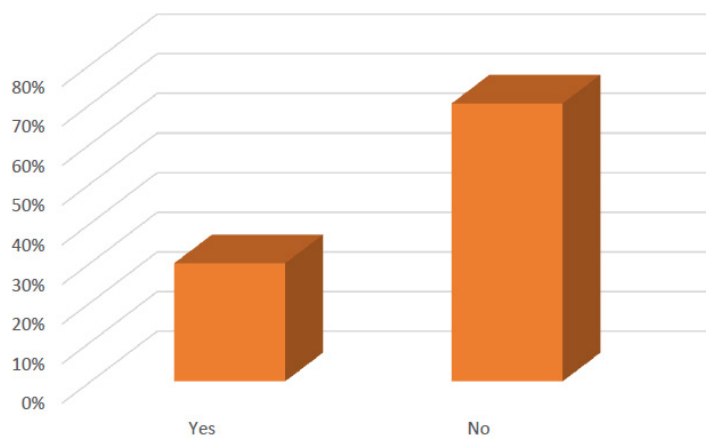
*What kind of documents does your library service produce?*
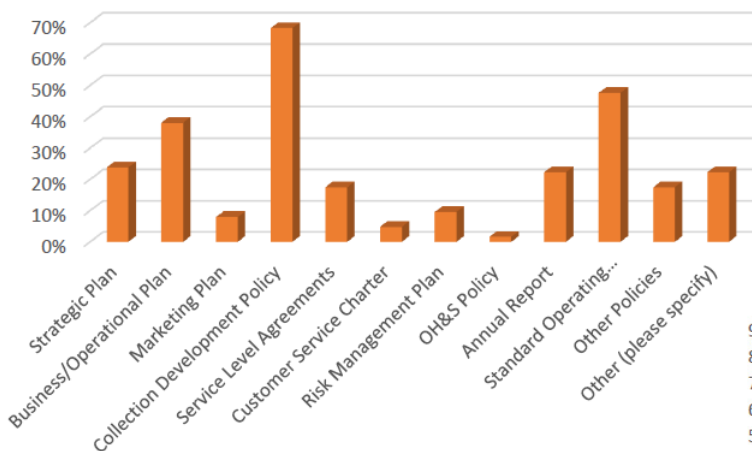
As can be seen special libraries are involved in the production of a wide range of organisational documents from the strategic plan to standard operating policies. 68% of New Zealand libraries produced a collection development policy compared to 57% of Australian Libraries, however, 48% of New Zealand libraries had a standard operating procedures manual compared to 53.8% of Australian libraries. The number with service level agreements was comparable between the two. "Other" documents included training manuals, national standards, usage statistics, subject guides, and budgets.

How does your library gather feedback on its service? (Please choose all that apply)

It was great to see that over half of all survey respondents had some sort of formal mechanism for testing user perceptions of their performance.

However, given the concerns noted by special librarians about the future of their organisation it was alarming to note that of those who collect feedback informally about the performance of their library, one third had no other mechanism for capturing feedback. "Other" in this case included measurement of KPI's, benchmarking against the organisational strategic plan, and feedback through performance appraisals.
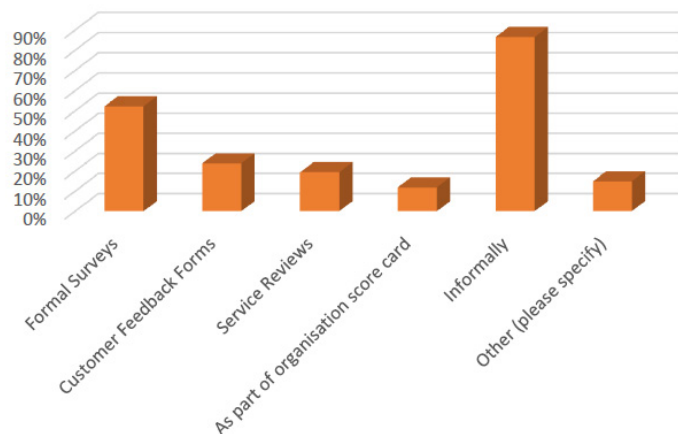

Who within your organisation is provided with information on the library's performance? (Please choose all that apply)
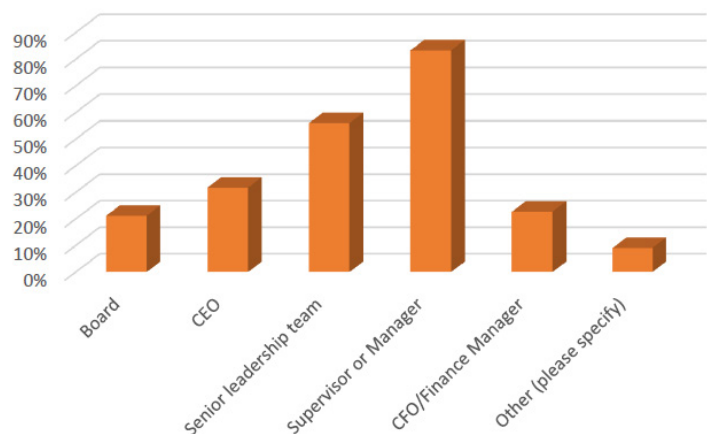
Those who noted "other" in response to this question generally shared information with the whole team, or had a governance structure that did not include a board but shared information at this level. It bodes well for the sector that over 50% of respondents have the opportunity to provide information about the library's performance with their senior leadership team giving them an opportunity to advocate for services with decision makers within the business.

Funding of special libraries

What is your annual budget for library services?
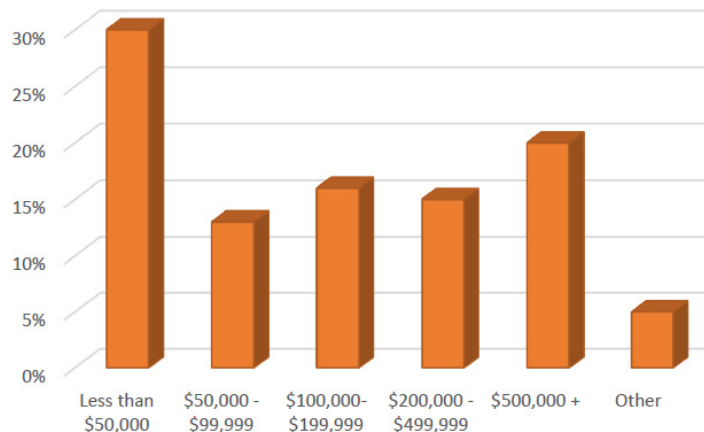
30% of special libraries had a budget of less than $50,000 with one library getting by on $6,000 in total. 20% of libraries had budgets over $500,000. Those libraries who selected other noted that their budgeting information was confidential – or that they had no direct budget – the resources they managed were purchased by other departments.

New Zealand libraries appear to be less well funded than their Australian counterparts with 30% having a budget of less than $50,000 compared to 13.6% of Australian libraries.

How many years have you worked in special libraries?
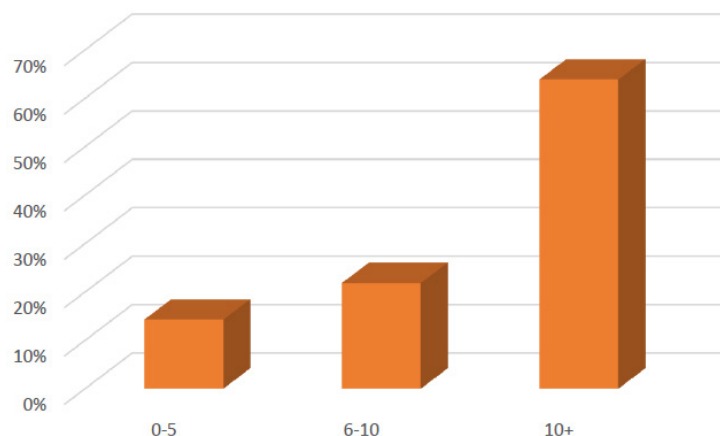
64% of respondents had worked in special libraries for more than 10 years. This was similar to Australia where 60% of respondents had worked in libraries for ten years.

Do you enjoy working in the special library sector?
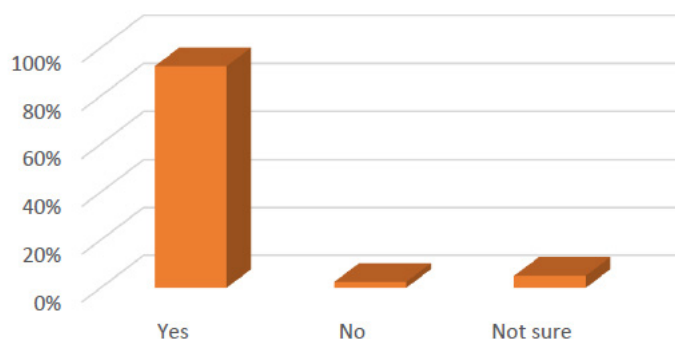
92% of librarians enjoyed working in the special library sector – just under the 96% of librarians who responded yes in the Australian survey. Reasons given were similar – individuals liked the wide variety of duties on offer, the research aspect of the position, and the autonomy of the role. However, many librarians also noted that declining budgets was a demotivating challenge.

Which of the following skills are the most important skills and knowledge for a special librarian?

Respondents were asked to select from Library Qualifications, Collection Management, Strategic Planning, Marketing, Subject specialisation and ICT expertise.

The majority of respondents felt all of these skills were important with the Strategic Planning and Marketing highlighted as the most important. The comments in this area were illuminating with many librarians stating that resilience and a sense of humour were also incredibly important assets in a special library role. There was agreement that the ability to market services was incredibly important, and in addition respondents listed Research and Analysis skills, the ability to train others in systems, and strong customer service / people skills as hugely important.

Skills required have not changed hugely from the 2009 Ralph / Sibthorpe study, however, they identified skills such as patent searching and experience with oral history and specific IT programmes that were not noted in our survey responses.

Are you confident about the future of the special library sector?
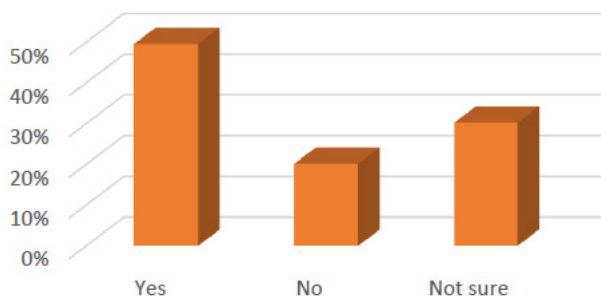

50% of respondents were confident about the future of the special library sector, while 62% of Australians were. Broadly respondents to the 2010 Australian survey were significantly more optimistic than New Zealand respondents.

Are you satisfied in your current role?
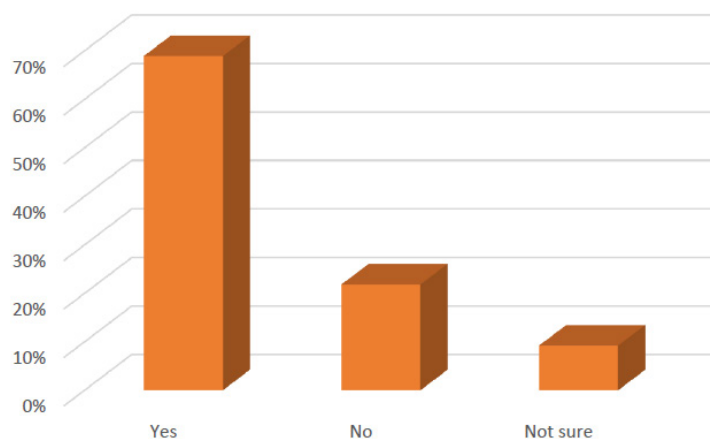
Job satisfaction was considerably less in New Zealand than Australia with only 69% of kiwis satisfied in their current role, and a whopping 85% of Australians satisfied with their position.
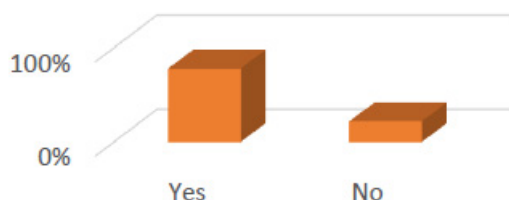
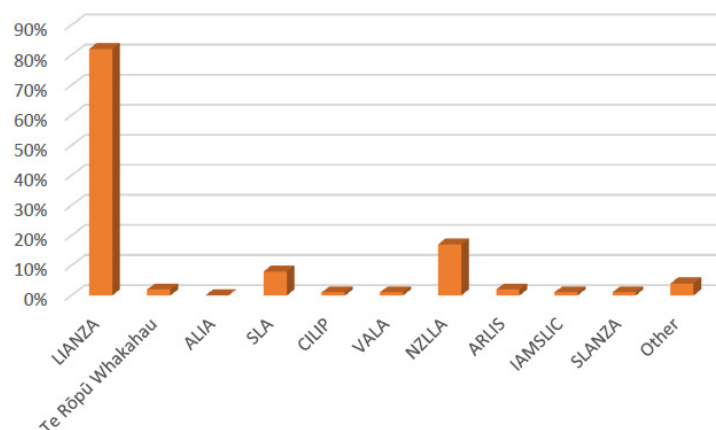*Do you plan to continue the same job over the next*
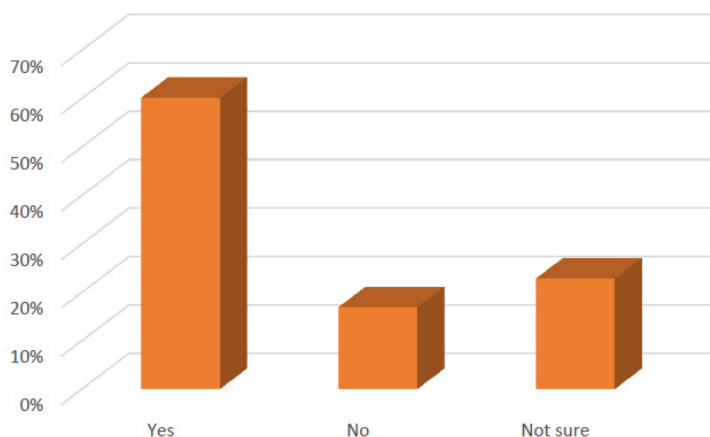
3 years?

60% of those surveyed planned to remain in the same job over the coming years, with 23% unsure. This was similar to Australia where 65% of respondents planned to continue in the same role.

Are you a personal member of a library association?


Please state which one

78% of respondents were a personal member of a library association.

LIANZA and the New Zealand Law Libraries Association (NZLLA) were the two most popular association memberships with 35 librarians belonging to more than one association.
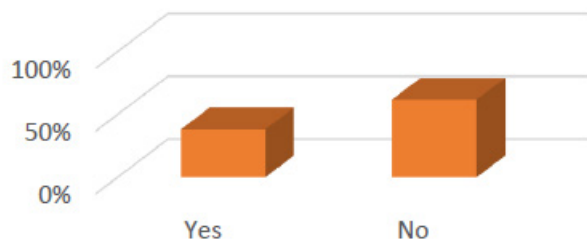
"Other" included corporate memberships, IAMSLIC, and ANZTLA.

Do you have a formal library qualification?
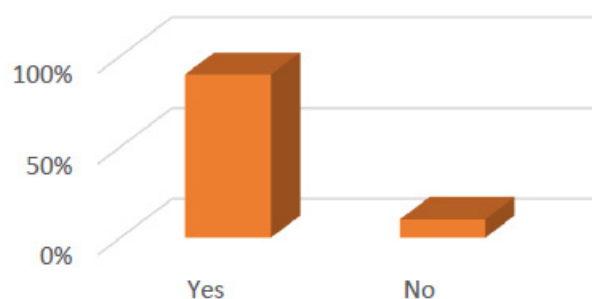
90% of respondents held a formal qualification, and this result mirrored that of the 2012 Careers Survey.

Are you professionally registered?

38% of those who responded were professional-ly registered. LIANZA estimates that 15% of the profession overall is professionally registered, with approximately 40% of those holding the required pre-requisites currently registered. This is in line with the Careers Survey conducted in 2012 where 45% of respondents were registered. Thus the number of special librarians registered aligns with the wider profession.

Please state your gender
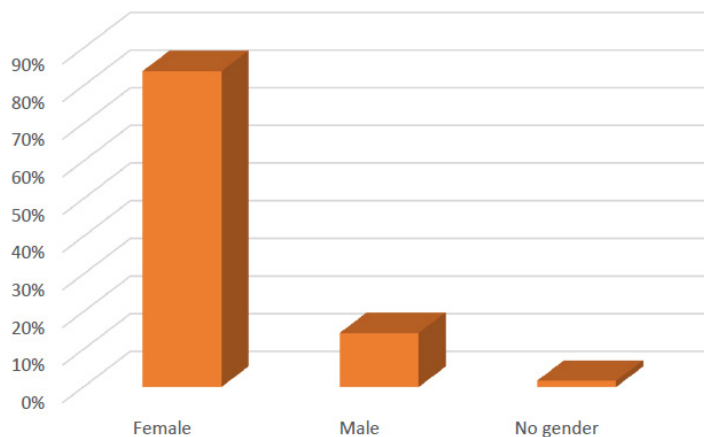
Data from New Zealand statistics tells us that librarianship is a female dominated field with 77.4% of the workforce made up by women. This varies slightly with our survey results which shows that in special libraries 84% of the profession were female and is similar to Australia where 88% of those working in special libraries were female.
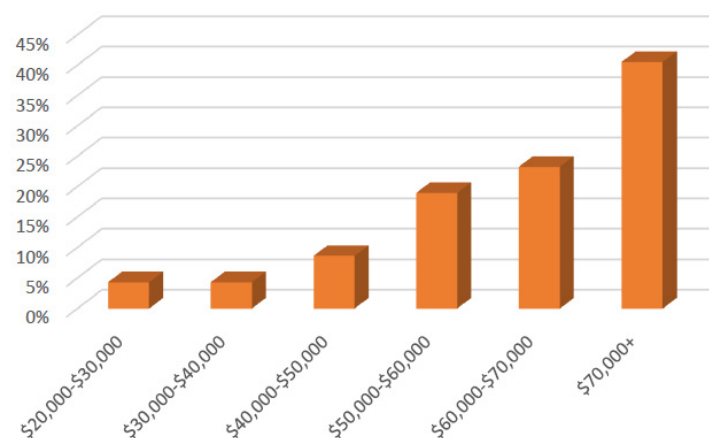
2 individuals chose not to disclose their gender.

How old are you?

Just under 50% of our survey respondents were over 50, with only 5% in the 20-30 age range. This aligns with other areas of the sector where grey-ing of a profession is a concern. These numbers are similar to Australia where 54% of their special librarians were 50 plus.
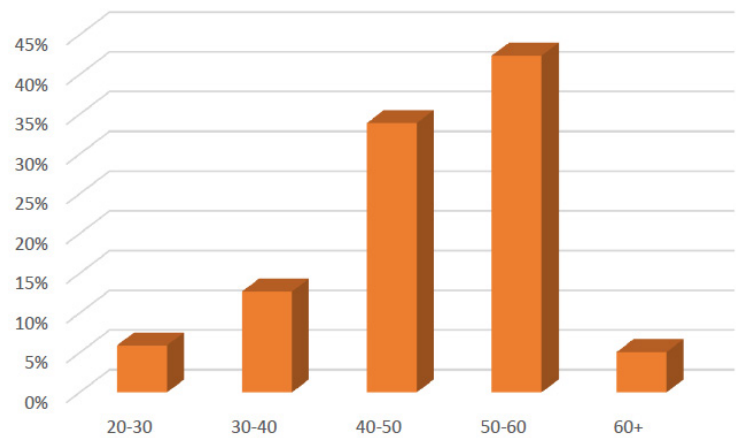
What is your annual salary?

116 of our respondents answered this question and the majority (63.71%) were paid over $60,000 per annum. This aligns with Australia were 53% were paid over $60,000.

While data from Strategic Pay shows that as a whole there is no gender imbalance with regard to pay in the Library and Information profession, with-in special libraries just over half of male respon-dents were paid over $70,000 per annum, while this was true for only 38% of female respondents. How-ever, our male sample size was not large enough for this difference to be statistically significant.

Salaries were demonstrated to increase with the age of the respondent.

Other Comments

Participants were asked if there were any other comments they would like to make. Feedback included:

- Career paths for special librarians felt limited with respondents expressing dissatisfaction with both pay scales and future opportunities

- Professional isolation remained a significant challenge for those working in special libraries

- Concern for the future of special libraries was expressed by some participants who had seen a significant number of library closures in their career – the importance of internal marketing of services was emphasised

References

Australian Library and Information Association (2010) ALIA Special Libraries Survey Report December 2010

https://www.alia.org.au/sites/default/files/ALIA-Return-on-Investment-Specials.pdf

Ralph and Sibthorpe, (2009) Emerging trends in New Zealand special libraries

http://www.lianza.org.nz/sites/default/files/LIANZA%20report%20v1.0.pdf

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