

New Zealand special
librarians survey
2012

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Table of Contents

Key findings	3
Background	4
Professional memberships	4
Professional registration	4
Location.....	5
Sector.....	6
What’s hot or tough?	6
What would you not do again?.....	7
What would you most like to hear from your peers?	7

Key findings

- *Most special librarians are members of at least one professional group.*
- *Just over half are professionally registered*
- *Most are located in either Wellington or Auckland*
- *Government is a large employer of special librarians*
- *Over 50 per cent would attend a professional meeting at least bi-monthly*
- *Technology and resource constraints are hot topics*
- *Special librarians want to hear from other special librarians about what they are up to*

Background

We wanted to know what was top of mind for special librarians to help us as professional groups (SLIS-North and SLIS-NZ) better support our members in their challenges.

We prepared a survey asking for responses to three central questions:

- What's hot or tough?
- What would you not do again?
- What would you most like to hear from your peers?

We also collected statistics on location, sector, professional memberships and registration, and attendance at professional meetings.

The survey was sent out on Friday the 28th of September and closed on Friday the 12th of October, allowing people two weeks to respond. We received 70 responses in total.

Professional memberships

Most special librarians who responded to the survey were members of at least one professional organisation.

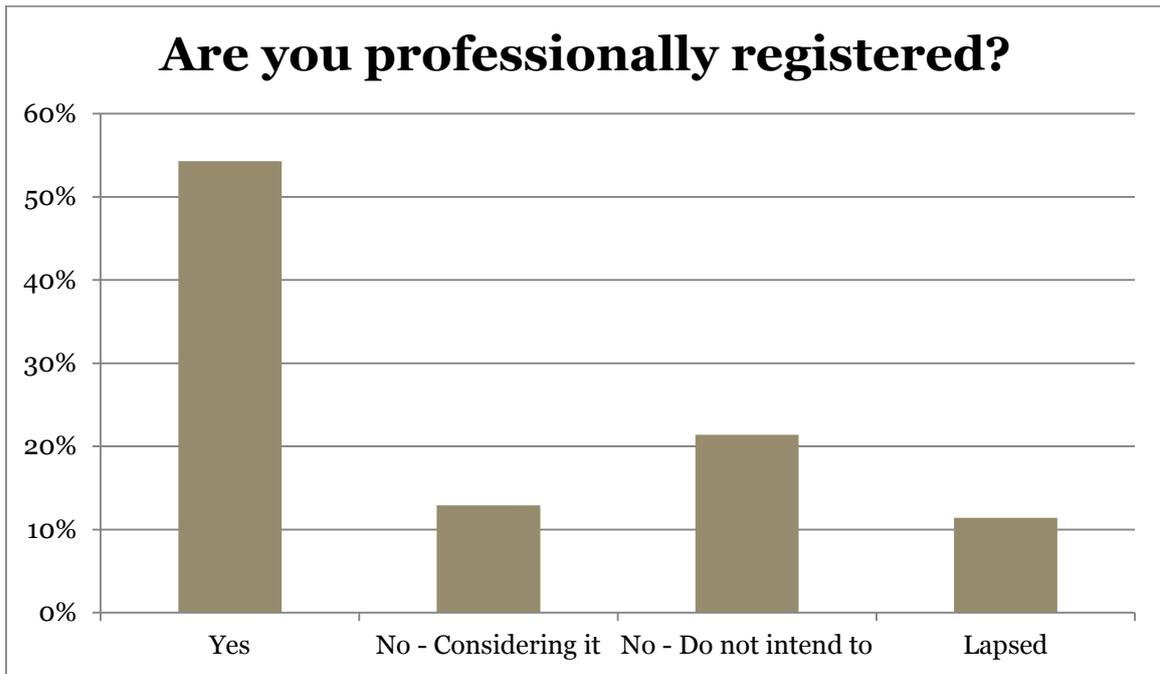
The majority (86%) were LIANZA members, 46 per cent belonged to SLIS-NZ, 20 per cent to SLIS North and just 7 per cent were not members of any professional group.



Professional registration

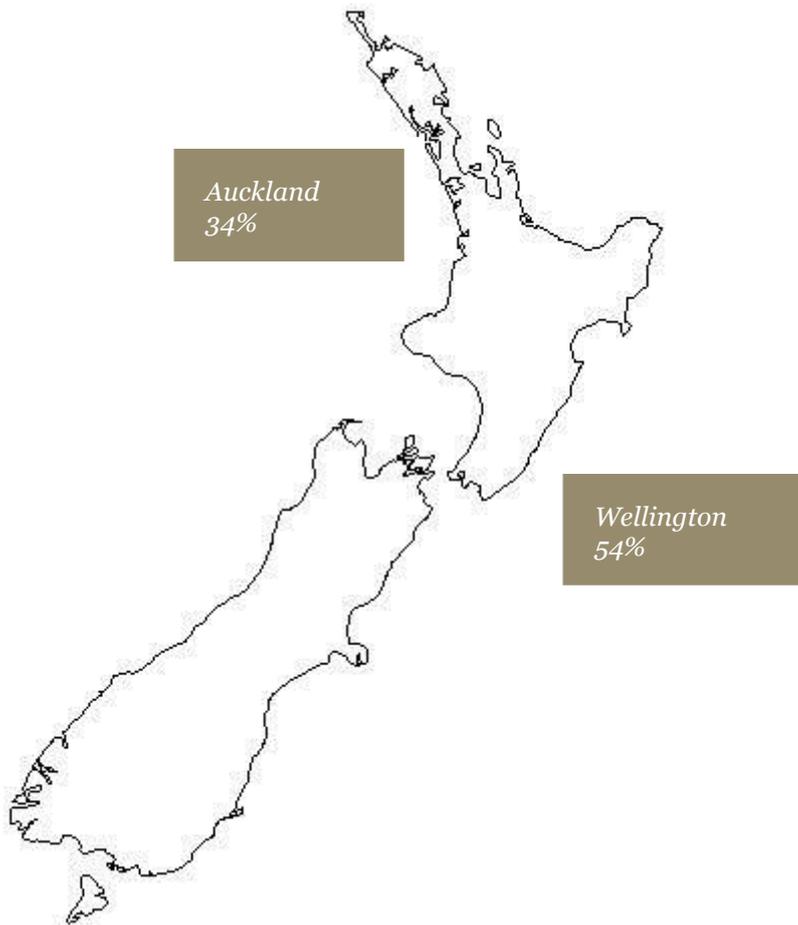
There was almost an even split between those respondents who are professionally registered with LIANZA and those who are not.

Nearly 55 per cent of respondents are currently registered but significantly over 20 per cent are not registered and have no intention to register.



Location

Most respondents were from Wellington or Auckland

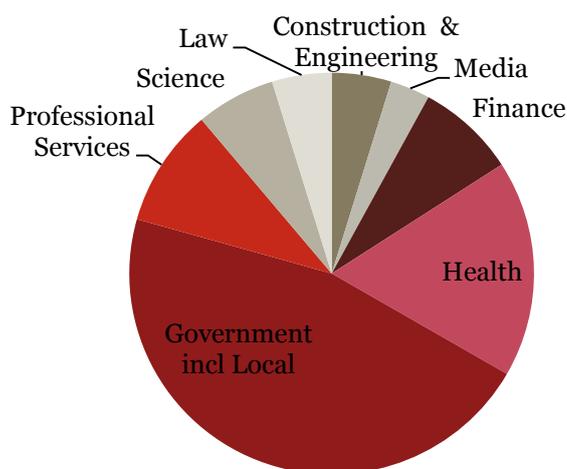


The remaining 12 per cent were located mainly in the North Island outside of Wellington and Auckland (9%) with just a very small number of respondents from the South Island.

Sector

Most respondents work in central or local government

Responses to 'What sector do you work in?'



Nearly half of all survey respondents were working in either Central or Local Government.

The health sector is also a significant employer of special librarians who responded to this survey with professional services and the finance sector rounding out the top four sectors.

In keeping with the diverse nature of special libraries other respondents were employed across a range of industries.

What's hot or tough?

Technology and resource constraints are hot topics for many special librarians

Technology, in various forms, was identified as both “hot” and “tough” by a number of respondents. An ever-evolving technological environment is presenting both challenges and opportunities for special librarians.

Specific topics identified included BYOD (Bring Your Own Device), social media tools, library software, and eBooks.

Funding issues and “doing more with less” were also identified as hot or tough topics with a number of respondents citing the current public sector environment of cost cutting and restructuring.

Raising and maintaining awareness of library resources and services, demonstrating the value of librarians and library services and the challenges associated with sole charge librarianship

What would you not do again?

Most special librarians accept they will inevitably make mistakes, and then learn from them

Making bad purchasing decisions, rolling out un-tested services and poor recruitment or job choices were among the regrets expressed by respondents. As were putting off hard or unpleasant tasks, paying for/completing a Masters degree in librarianship and professional registration.

The majority of survey participants answered this question with “nothing”, with one respondent summing up the feeling of many in their reply, “Everything can be classified as a learning experience good or bad so [I] do not have any regrets”.

What would you most like to hear from your peers?

Special librarians want to hear from other special librarians

The vast majority of respondents said they wanted to know what other special librarians were up to. They want to hear about the challenges and solutions, new ideas and experience of their peers.

Specific topics of interest identified reflected a lot of what was said in response to question one about what was hot or tough. Those mentioned most often included:

- marketing the library
- social media
- eBooks and mobile devices
- new databases and resources (particularly free ones!)
- career progression and registration
- benchmarking
- current awareness or news services.