



Re-conceptualising and Re-positioning
Australian Library and Information Science Education
for the 21st Century

Discussion Paper 2: A Profile of Australia's Information Educators

An Australian Learning and Teaching Council Priority Project
March 2011



Forward

This is the second of a series of papers exploring future directions for Australian library and information science (LIS) education. The papers are part of an Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Priority Project being led by Professor Helen Partridge from the Queensland University of Technology (QUT). The project is being undertaken in partnership with LIS educators from eleven institutions that represent the broad spectrum and diversity of university and vocational LIS education in Australia.

The papers will provide information on the project such as preliminary findings and will be released progressively during the course of the project. They are being produced as a way of encouraging open and critical discourse and reflection on a topic that is of fundamental importance to the future of LIS education in Australia. They will also serve as an important component of the project's evaluation and information communication strategy. Your critical comments and questions are therefore encouraged and welcome.

These papers will be of interest to a number of different audiences. Within the LIS discipline they will be of interest to current professionals, employers, educators and students both in Australia and internationally. The papers will also be of interest to colleagues in other disciplines that may inevitably face the need to re-position and re-shape their approach to professional education.

Papers produced during the project will be freely available from the project website at <http://www.liseducation.org.au>. If you have any questions or would like to provide comment or contribute to the project, please contact Professor Helen Partridge at h.partridge@qut.edu.au.

This paper outlines preliminary findings from the Tertiary Sub-Study Team. Team members include Professor Helen Partridge, Associate Professor Philip Hider, Sally Burford and Dr Leonie Ellis. The team also acknowledges the contribution Research Assistant Carrie Munro.

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Introduction

Whilst research exploring the nature and characteristics of information professionals abound both here in Australia and elsewhere, very little is known about the people who are responsible for information education. Given that the future of Australia's information industry hinges in large measure on the quality of new graduates entering the profession, it would be seem useful therefore to have a well informed understanding of the people who educate and train these graduates. This paper contributes to advancing understanding of an as yet poorly understood but vital part of the information profession, its educators. Preliminary findings from a recent study aimed at establishing a profile of Australian information educators are provided. It must be emphasised that this is an initial examination of data obtained, and further analysis will be provided at a later date. The results of this study will contribute to the workforce planning of Australia's information educators.

Information Educators: A Brief Review of the Literature

Since 1980 the Association for Library and Information Education (ALISE) has provided an annual report that seeks to understand the "activities of the academic programs that provide the underpinnings for education for the library and information professions" (Wallace & Naidoo, 2010, p. xxvii). The report provides valuable insight into the changing nature of education within the schools of library and information science (LIS) in the USA and Canada. The report outlines five key areas, faculty (i.e. educators), students, curriculum, income & expenditure and continuing professional education. In terms of educators, the characteristics explored include number, age, gender, diversity, rank and salary. The 2010 report noted that there were 724 academics with slightly more females to males, a mean of nearly 17 full time academics per LIS school which is an increase of almost a half a percent from the previous year. It was observed that ethnic backgrounds other than Asian or Pacific Island and Caucasian continue to be poorly represented at all academic ranks, and that there was a decline in the number of faculty with tenured positions (1.9% less than the previous year). Using data from 1996-1997, White (1998) sought to make the ALISE report "more interesting" by identifying the characteristics of the "best" LIS programs and key attributes determining the "health" of LIS education in North America. White observed that faculty size and income were the best predictors of subjective esteem: the larger the faculty, the higher the ranking; the larger the income of the school, the higher the ranking. He also observed that a "healthy" LIS school would have long term growth in areas such as student enrolments, income, ethnic diversity of students, number of faculty (especially full time relative to part time), and the number of scholarships and fellowships available. Whilst the ALISE annual report provides a basic level of description of the North American LIS educators it does not explore areas such as workload, research productivity, teaching activities and job satisfaction.

A 2005 project funded by the European Association for Library and Information Education and Research and the SOCRATES Accompanying Measures Scheme provides insight into European LIS education. Two hundred LIS schools were invited to participate in an online questionnaire exploring school size, programs offered, entrance requirements, and nature of the curricula (Borup Larsen, 2005). Fifty schools completed the questionnaire. The majority of European LIS schools are relatively small in size with less than 200 students enrolled. Nearly two thirds of the schools have fewer than 20 academic staff and just over a quarter of the schools operate with ten or less full time staff members. It was noted that in LIS schools with small full time staff numbers, the staff "will have time for little else than performing the day-to-day tasks including teaching and administration of the school" (p. 240). Hence these schools will face considerable challenges to actively participate in research projects and other collaborative endeavours at the European or international level. The challenges associated with small LIS schools or departments are not unique to the European context with a similar situation being noted in the USA (Dalrymple, 1997) and the UK (Lowe, 2006; Um & Feather, 2007). The Borup Larsen study focused on describing the European LIS schools and departments; as such it provides only a limited understanding of the European LIS educators themselves (e.g. it does not explore qualifications, experience, age, gender and workload).

Borup Larsen (2005) observed that “European LIS schools have a lot in common but... are still very dissimilar” (p. 240). This is perhaps true for all LIS schools and departments worldwide. In 2009 the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) published a monograph exploring the situations and challenges within the LIS sector across the world (Abdullah, 2009). Nine areas of the world were examined including Africa, Middle East and Central Asia, Europe, Latin America, North America, Australia and Asian Arab (Abdullah, 2009). Each of these areas has chapters devoted to describing the local regions’ activities, and issues associated with public libraries, academic libraries, special libraries and LIS education. The seven chapters on LIS education provide insight into the diverse challenges and opportunities being faced by the world’s LIS schools and departments. Whilst there are distinct regional differences there are also areas of similarities, for example curriculum, staffing and students numbers. The chapters are not intended to report the findings of research per se; instead they provide a critical synthesis of key works to date that paint a picture of LIS education within a geographic region. Like the work of Borup Larsen (2005) the chapters describe LIS education more broadly, and as such do not necessarily provide detailed discussions on LIS educators themselves.

Closer to home, the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) gathers information on educators teaching within ALIA recognised programs at university and vocational education and training (VET) institutions. This data is collected as part of the association’s Annual Course Return but is not publicly available. Hallam (2007) provides a brief analysis of the data gathered by ALIA in 2006 and concludes that there were too many LIS programs, staffed by too few academics, competing for too few students. From 1996 to 2005 there was a steep decline in the number of LIS educators. In the university context, numbers decreased from 130 full time equivalent (FTE) to 64 and from 79.2 FTE to 45 in the VET sector. In addition Hallam observed that not only are the number of LIS academics declining but current educators are themselves ‘greying’ and that this will have implications on the currency and relevance of the LIS curriculum. Hallam also points to challenges in the recruitment of educators in the university context; currently the PhD is an essential selection criterion for academic appointments, yet a PhD remains a relatively scarce commodity in the Australian professional LIS culture (Macauley, Evans & Pearson, 2010).

In 2006 Smith undertook a survey of Australian LIS academics with the view to understand more about their educational qualifications and professional development activities. Twenty-three (of 62) members of the Information Studies Forum (ISEF) completed an online questionnaire. Smith’s analysis confirmed that the LIS academic workforce was ageing and that LIS faculty was becoming increasingly feminized. It also showed that more men held doctorates than women, that all academics held a degree higher than bachelor, and predicted that in the near future about 80% of the academics would hold doctorate qualifications.

More recently, Wilson, Kennan, Willard and Boell (2010) provide a historical insight into the nature of Australian LIS educators by analysing data obtained from sources such as institutional academic handbooks, LIS program brochures and news items in LIS journals. 382 academics with at least two years of service in LIS education from 1959 to 2008 were included in the analysis. They concluded that whilst there has been a steady decline in the number of Australian LIS educators since the 1990s, the level of academic qualifications and percentage with doctorates has risen, thus conforming to a major requirement of academia. However they saw the relative decline in junior academic positions as a worrying trend.

The studies by Smith (2006) and Wilson et al (2010) focussed on the university context. Information education in Australia occurs at two levels, the professional via university programs at the undergraduate and postgraduate level, and the para-professional via VET programs at the diploma level. Consequently any study seeking to establish greater understanding of Australia’s information educators must include both educational domains. Very little is currently known about information educators within the VET sector. In 2009 the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) as part of its course recognition process conducted site visits to all 17 institutions offering the Diploma of Library/Information Services. ALIA produced a ‘state of the nation’ report providing an overview of these site visits and key issues impacting on library technician courses in Australia including course design, curriculum content, resourcing,

infrastructure and staffing (ALIA, 2010). In terms of the latter point concerns were noted in regard to workload, succession planning and the difficulties in attracting new staff. The report does not provide any specific details on the library technician educators (i.e. age, gender, number, qualifications). It must also be noted that the report (and this is equally possible with the studies by Smith & Wilson et al) does not include institutions offering degrees within the information field not recognised by ALIA (e.g. records management, archival studies).

The information profession is not alone in its interest to establish greater understanding of its educators and studies profiling Australian academics have also been conducted in the fields of science (Edwards & Smith, 2010), health (KPMG, 2009) engineering (Engineers Australia, 2008) and education (Cumming, 2010). Many of these studies have emerged in response to Hugo's (2005; 2008; Hugo & Morriss, 2010) argument that demographic issues facing Australian universities in the 2010's and 2020's will result in the need for regeneration within the academic workforce, as the baby boomer generation reaches retirement age. The growing importance in developing a better understanding of the current academic workforce is also evidenced by the Changing Academic Profession or CAP Project (Research Institute for Higher Education, 2008). Twenty-two countries conducted a survey of their nation's academic workforce. By using the same online questionnaire the project was able to establish individual national profiles as well as provide international comparisons, and a number of similarities and differences were noted between the nations. A vast majority of the participating countries reported a growing number of academic staff with higher degrees, especially doctorates, higher job satisfaction, increased pressure on faculty in the research arena and a feminisation of the workforce (Huang, 2008).

Coates, Goedegebuure, Van Der Lee and Meek (2008) analysed the Australian CAP survey. Data was obtained from 1250 academics at 21 Australian institutions. The analysis shows that the average academic was born in 1960, is married with two children, is the first academic in the family and has English as their first language. The study also reveals that Australian academics earn salaries that are commensurate with their international peers but not when compared to their Australian colleagues in other sectors. It also reports that Australian academics are less satisfied with their work than international colleagues (and possibly other professionals in Australia), that they have one of the higher propensities for job change and work among the longest hours per week (Coates, Dobson, Edwards, Friedman, Goedegebuure & Meek, 2009).

The need to learn more about Australia's educators is not confined to the university sector. It was recently acknowledged that "little is known about the vocational education and training workforce" (Karmel cited in Simons, Harris, Pudney & Clayton, 2009, p. 4). In the last seven years a number of studies have emerged to fill this gap (Australian National Training Authority, 2004; Guthrie, 2010; Simons et al, 2009). These studies have begun to show that the VET sector is characterised by high levels of mobility, has an equal number of males and females, is no older than the workforce at large and that two out of three VET professionals have a post school qualification.

From the small but growing body of knowledge exploring information educators within Australia, two observations can be made: (i) studies to date have focussed on library educators and not information educators (i.e. those educators involved in education all aspects of the information profession including library, records management, archives, teacher librarianship, information management); and (ii) no studies have explored information educators at both the university and VET sector. The current study will fill these gaps. The results of this study will contribute to the workforce planning of Australia's information educators.

The Research Project

The Research Aim

The aim of this study was to establish greater understanding of the nature of Australian information educators.

Data Collection

The survey instrument used in the Changing Academic Profession Project (Research Institute for Higher Education, 2008) informed the questionnaire design for this study. Drawing upon the CAP project instrument will allow for easier comparison with national and international data on the worlds' academic workforce. Although the CAP instrument informed the study, questions were modified and added to accommodate the VET context and the specific needs and interests of the information sector in Australia. Ethics approval for all data collection techniques was obtained from the QUT Ethics Committee. Members of the project's Reference Group with expertise in research generally or questionnaire design were specifically invited to provide feedback on the data collection instrument. A revised questionnaire was then pilot tested using a subset of the target population, with the aim of testing clarity of wording, interpretation and acceptance of the questions and to complete the online instrument using a range of web browsers. The questionnaire used for final data collection consisted of 53 questions that would provide both quantitative and qualitative data. The instrument was divided into five sections: demographic, teaching and learning; publications, projects and research; service; perceived issues and challenges; and the future of education for the information professions.

The questionnaire was accessible online in August and September of 2010. The population for the current study was information educators based in Australian tertiary educational institutions (e.g. universities, TAFE, VET). Information was defined broadly to include areas such as library studies, archive studies, records management, information and knowledge management and teacher librarianship. A purposive sampling approach was used. Participants were recruited via information educator elists, emails to heads of schools and departments and emails to course, program or degree coordinators. Whilst the advantages of online data collection are widely acknowledged (Granello & Wheaton, 2005), it is also accepted that the process brings with it some challenges and limitations. Most notably, the sampling techniques used with online data collection will inevitably result in the self-selection of respondents. Consequently this will have implications for the level of potential bias in responses, the overall validity of the survey and the generalisability of the findings. However, it has also been found that online surveys can indeed increase response rates with specific target populations. Increases in data accuracy and reliability have likewise been reported as respondents tend to make fewer errors in completing questionnaires, answer more items, provide richer answers to open-ended questions and disclose more about themselves (Gunter, Nicholas, Huntingdon & Williams, 2002).

Analysis and Results

The preliminary descriptive analysis presented here was undertaken using Microsoft Excel. Prior to data analysis the data was examined for accuracy of data entry. Whilst 110 responses were obtained, after data cleansing, 69 valid responses were identified and used for analysis.

Numbers

In the current study 45 (65%) respondents considered themselves to be educators within the university sector, and 24 (35%) in the TAFE/VET sector. Hallam (2007) observed that there had been a progressive decline in the number of educators in the LIS discipline in the last decade. Drawing from data available in the Australian Library and Information Association's (ALIA) 2005 Annual Course Returns she noted that Australia's information educators within the university context had declined by half and that there was a loss of 43% of educators in the VET sector. It is important to note that Hallam's work draws solely upon ALIA's data. As such educators involved in information programs not recognized by ALIA but recognised by other professional associations such as Records and Information Management Professionals Australasia, and the Australian Society of Archivists were not considered. Unfortunately statistics regarding the educators in the non ALIA programs are currently not available. It is therefore challenging to determine how many

educators are currently working within information education in Australia. Nevertheless, assuming that the number of information educators has continued to decline from 2005 to the present, and factoring in a small number of educators who would not have been captured via ALIA statistics, the number of educators within the broad domain of the information profession would not be large. An informed estimate would suggest between 110 and 120 FTE information educators working within Australia at the current time. It is important to note that this figure refers to FTE and not people per se, as such with casual positions and part time options the total number of actual individuals may be more in the vicinity of 130 to 150. Whilst the number of information educators is decreasing the total number of academic staff (teaching and research) within the Australian university context increased 2% from 2009 to 2010 (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2010). The data presented cannot provide comment on the number of staff per information school or department as the current study's focus was on profiling the individual educators not the organisational unit.

Age

The age of respondents in the current study ranged from twenty-seven to sixty-four years with an average age of 50. Just over 68% of the participants were aged 50 years or older. Figure 1 provides a profile of the respondents' age. Not only are the numbers dropping but the information educators themselves are 'greying' (Hallam, 2007).

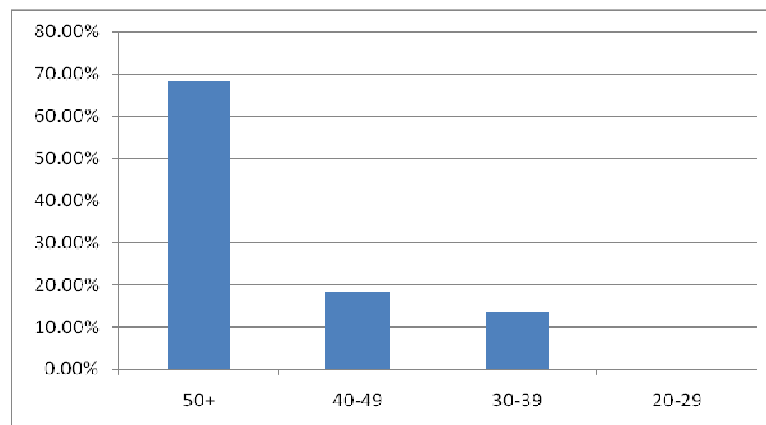


Figure 1. Age of respondents

For almost a decade, the Australian demographer Graeme Hugo has been warning about the “lost generation of academics” (2005). According to Hugo (cited in Cervini, 2010) “generation X are pretty thin in universities compared to baby boomers, who are strongly represented” (para. 11). The findings in the current study provide strong support for Hugo’s observations. Of the university academics who participated in the study almost 61% were fifty years or older and only 3% (n=2) were 30 years of age or younger and 18.6% (n=8) were 40 years of age or younger. The results of this study suggest that the information academic workforce is considerably older than the total Australian academic workforce, where only 40.3% are aged 50+ (Hugo & Morriss, 2010). Whilst studies profiling the Australian VET sector are relatively new, a recent study indicates that the ageing VET workforce is a pressing issue, with 48% of the TAFE (the largest subset of the VET sector) workforce aged over 50 years in 2008 (Guthrie, 2010). The findings of this study are therefore very striking: almost 83% of the VET educators who participated in the study were aged 50+ and only one VET educator was younger than 40 years of age. Not surprising therefore the study revealed that over half of the participants, regardless of institutional context, were looking to retire within the next ten years.

This study has shown that the ageing of Australia’s information educators is an issue of profound importance for the profession. Hallam (2007) suggests this situation raises serious issues in terms of the currency and relevance of the curriculum in such a dynamic field as the information profession. She notes that “libraries and information centres are very different places in 2006, compared with twenty or even ten years ago”. For this reason Hallam (2007) argues that staff

development for existing educators is crucial. Whilst professional development is an important step to help alleviate the symptoms, this will not lead to a cure. With over two-thirds of information educators approaching retirement age in the next ten to fifteen years and over half indicating that they are indeed looking to retire in the next ten years, the more pressing issue is that of recruitment. The Australian information profession must start finding ways now to entice new educators into the field.

Gender

The majority of the study's respondents were female (79%). The high proportion of females mirrors the preponderance of women in the information professions (at least in terms of the narrower library definition). Whilst the female dominance within information education may not at first glance appear to be a significant issue, a number of interesting points bare noting. Recent studies both in Australia and overseas have shown that male academics are more likely to occupy the higher academic ranks (Level D Associate Professor and Level E Professor) than female academics (Coates, Goedegeburre, Van Der Lee & Meek, 2008). The current study supports this observation. Just over two-thirds of the participants held junior level positions (Tutor, Level A Associate Lecturer & Level B Lecturer). Of the information academics who participated in the study there were no Level E appointments and only three Level D appointments, of which only one was female. In 2010 nearly 20% of the 46,969 Australian university teaching and research staff were Level D and E (DEEWR, 2010). Figure 2 compares the university academic rankings of the respondents of the current study with the Australian academic workforce (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2010). The information profession has more junior academic staff (Associate Lecturer and Lecturer) and fewer senior staff (Associate Professor and Professor) than the general Australian academic population. The issue of academic rank is important; it is the senior academics that are best placed to influence university and higher education policy and ensures that the discipline, even one as small as the information field, is positively regarded (Smith, 2006).

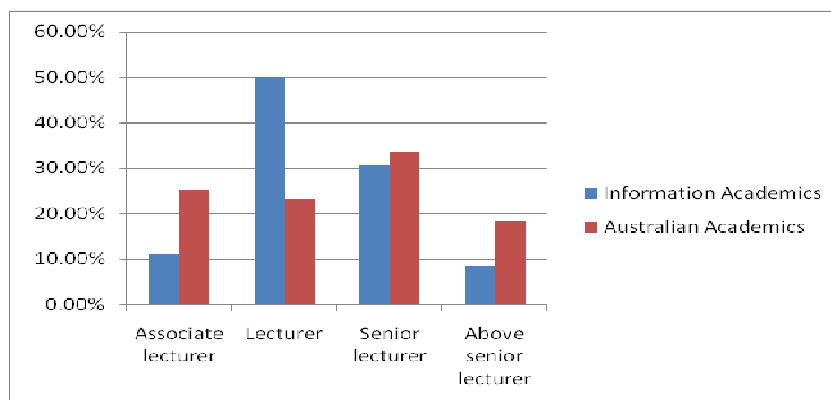


Figure 2. Academic ranking comparing current study's academic respondents with Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2010) figures

Studies have also suggested that females tend to hold more casual, contract or part time positions both in the university and VET contexts. Employment in this capacity makes obtaining tenure a difficult task. In the current study almost 38% of the participants were employed in a casual, contract or part time capacity and of this total 97% were female. This is slightly higher than the academic workforce in general where 27.7% of FTE are employed on a fractional or casual basis (DEEWR, 2010). Coates, Dobson, Edwards, Friedman, Goedegeburre and Meek (2009) note that the move to greater casualisation in academia is indicative of the broader trend in the Australian workforce. They also note that casualisation may not be problematic and that very little is known about casual staff.

Qualifications

All but one of the 45 university academics in the current study had a postgraduate qualification; over half had a PhD while another 15% were currently completing their doctoral studies. This is similar to the findings by Smith (2006) who surveyed members of the Information Studies Forum and noted that 52% of LIS academics had a PhD with another 26% completing one. The figures in

both studies contrast significantly to the Australian academic workforce where almost 67% have a doctorate (DEEWR, 2010). They also sit in contrast to the US context in which 90% of LIS faculty during the 1990's had a PhD (Durrance, 2003).

Three quarters of the VET educators in the current study had postgraduate qualification, with only one educator possessing a PhD. This is striking when considered against the 2008 figures that showed only one quarter of teachers within the TAFE workforce had a post graduate qualification (Guthrie, 2010). Australia's information educators in the VET sector are more qualified than their teaching peers. As the VET educators in the current study are considerably older than the overall VET workforce it may be that they have had more time to acquire their higher than normal number of post graduate qualifications. One third of the VET educators indicated that they were currently studying, at a variety of levels including diploma, coursework masters, research masters and PhD.

The range of fields in which respondents, both university and VET, studied for their highest academic qualification was quite diverse, although Library Studies and Education accounted for over 45% of the qualifications. Other areas of study included information and knowledge management, information systems, business, archival studies, history, politics and internet studies. A variety of reasons were given by respondents for choosing to engage with ongoing studies – only a minority were doing a course because they 'had' to, many were 'life-long learners', some were looking to change career, and others were studying primarily out of interest. What this study reveals is that Australia's information educators have embraced the importance of being "learning professionals" (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999).

Work Activities

The respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of their work time spent on various types of activity, both in and out of teaching sessions. Activities included research (e.g. writing grants, conducting research, writing publications), teaching (e.g. preparing class materials, teaching, consulting with students) and service (e.g. 'internal' service includes committee work and undertaking leadership roles within the work institution; 'external' service includes membership of and participation in professional and industry bodies). The mean percentages of those estimates that added up to 100% are given in Figure 3. As expected, more time is spent on teaching when classes are in session, although even then it accounts for less than half of respondents' estimated work hours. A significant amount of time, about a quarter, is spent on administration. Even when classes are not in session, less than a third of time is spent on research or project work. The information educators are quite active within their own institutions and within the information profession; 16.8% of their time is spent on service activities when classes are in session and 21.5% of their time is devoted to service activities when classes are not in session.

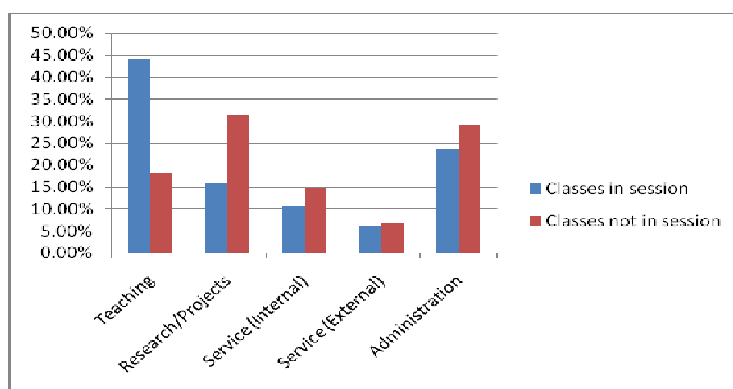


Figure 3. Respondents work activities (classes in session v's classes not in session)

Figure 4 shows the breakdown of staff job satisfaction. Findings suggest that Australia's information educators appear to be rather satisfied with their educator's life; with over 80% indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with their job and less than 20% indicated that they were not satisfied or very unsatisfied. It appears however that the educators in the VET sector are more likely to be very satisfied (60.87%) than compared to those in the university context

(27.27%). Although, compared to the findings from the Changing Academic Profession's project it suggests that the Australian information academic is more satisfied (77.27%) than Australian academics generally (55%) (Coates, Goedegebuure, van der Lee & Meek, 2008).

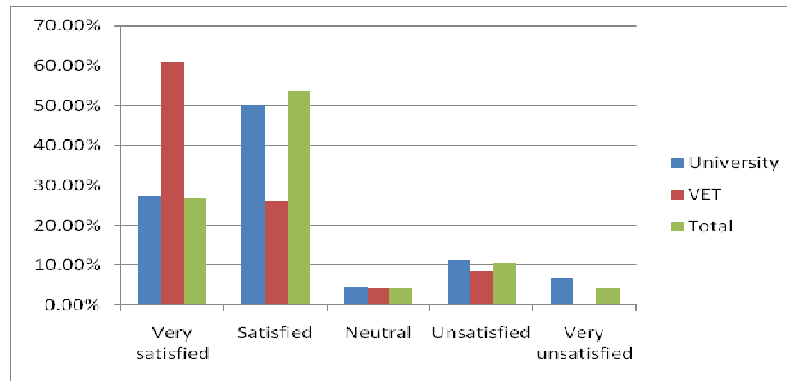


Figure 4. Respondents' job satisfaction

Further support for this high degree of job satisfaction is evidenced by the fact that most respondents were not looking for another job, as Figure 5 shows, though about 10% were looking for a similar position at another institution, and another 10% were looking for a job outside of information studies education.

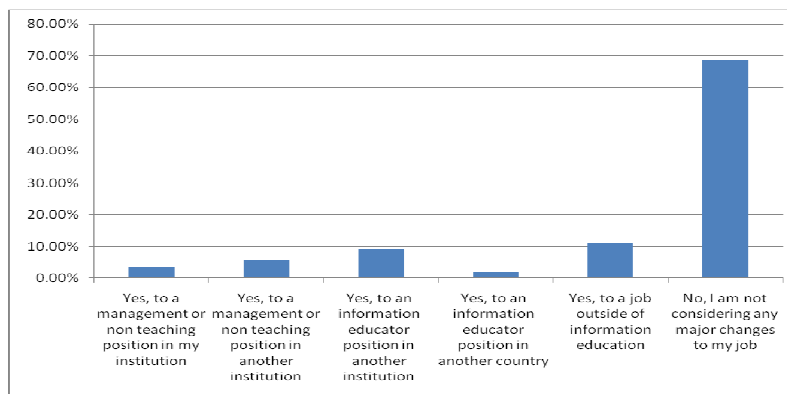


Figure 5. Respondents job seeking activities

Engagement with Industry

Hallam (2007) observed that “these are indeed challenging times for [LIS] educators” (p. 1) noting that the “disparate viewpoints that exist between LIS educators and LIS professionals” is perhaps the most significant barrier for the profession to overcome. Many in the profession suggest that information professionals and information educators inhabit two different worlds, with insufficient interplay and interaction between them. Moran (2001) notes that’s “many librarians have little firsthand experience with library education after they graduate”. Likewise, Hallam (2007) suggests that LIS educators can “be totally out of touch with current industry practice”. The findings of the current study clearly reveal that Australia’s information educators actively seek to connect with the industry they support. Less than 3% have never worked within the information profession and over thirty percent of information educators are, in addition to their work as an educator, also currently employed within the information profession. Although it must be noted that over 45% have been actively employed within the profession for more than five years, and 25% had not done so for more than ten years (see Figure 6).

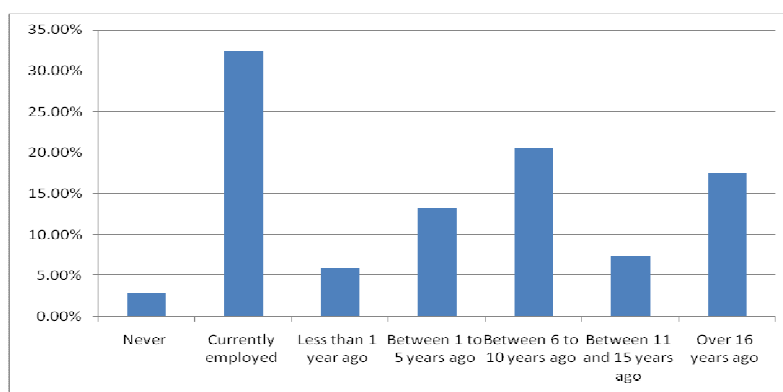


Figure 6. Respondents work in the information industry

The respondents' engagement with the information profession is also reflected by the number of professional memberships they held an average of one and a half subscriptions per respondent (see Table 1). Almost three quarters of respondents were members of ALIA; by far the most strongly supported professional body.

Association	%
Australian Library and Information Association	72.5%
Records Management Association of Australia	11.6%
Australian School Library Association	10.1%
Australian Computer Society	7.3%
Higher Education and Research Development Society of Australasia	7.3%
American Society for Information Science and Technology	5.8%
Australian Society of Archivists	4.4%
Special Libraries Association	4.4%
Associations for Library and Information Science Education	4.4%
Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals	4.4%
International Association of School Librarianship	2.9%
Society of American Archivists	1.5%
Archives and Records Association	1.5%
American Library Association	1.5%
Australian & New Zealand History of Education Society	1.5%
NSW Teachers Federation	1.5%
Australian and New Zealand Map Society	1.5%
Australian Geoscience Information Association	1.5%
Association for the Study of Australian Literature	1.5%
School Libraries Association of Victoria	1.5%
Australian Law Librarians Association	1.5%
Queensland College of Education	1.5%
Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education	1.5%
International Society for Technology in Education	1.5%
AIM Institute	1.5%
CCI	1.5%
The Australian and New Zealand Comparative and International Education Society	1.5%
International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions	1.5%

Table 1. Respondents' professional membership

Limitations of the Research

The research has several possible limitations that must be considered. Firstly, whilst attempts were made to have representation from educators across all sub-fields within the information profession, and also from both the university and VET context, it cannot be guaranteed to what extent this has been genuinely achieved. A second potential weakness is the use of self reported measures to assess the main variables of interest in the research. Self reported measures provide a useful opportunity to collect data otherwise not readily available. But self reported data is limited by what “individuals know about their attitudes and what people are willing to relate” (Nunnally, 1967, p. 590). As such a potential limitation in the current study was the overall validity of the measures employed. Finally, there is the issue of a potentially biased sample. Involvement in the study was completely voluntary and it may be that individuals who took part did so because they are more interested in the topic than other information educators. Thus the profile established may be skewed because of the self-selecting nature of the recruitment process.

Conclusion

This discussion paper has presented the preliminary results of a study aimed at establishing a more holistic profile and understanding of Australia’s information educators. Even the small snapshot provided here clearly illustrates that change is needed. Australian educators are ageing and this is a significant issue facing the future of the profession. Now is the time for action. Further analysis of the data will continue and be disseminated over time. This study is only one of several that are occurring within the research project *Re-conceptualising and re-positioning Australian library and information science education for the twenty-first century*.

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