EVALUATION OF THE LIBRARIES AUSTRALIA FORUM 2014

PURPOSE

1 To inform the Libraries Australia Advisory Committee of the success of the Libraries Australia Forum, which was held at the National Library of Australia on Friday 30 October 2014; and of plans for future forums.

PRESENTATIONS

2 The opening address and welcome was given by the Director-General of the National Library of Australia, Ms Anne-Marie Schwirtlich. Keynote speakers at the Forum were as follows:

- Mr Carl Grant, Chief Technology Officer and Associate University Librarian, University of Oklahoma Libraries “Give those who pay for libraries reasons to use them! Applying next generation library technologies to provide real value to communities”
- Mr Geoff Strempel, Associate Director, Public Library Services, State Library of South Australia “Perpetually Beta - public libraries continuous transition to meet customer needs”
- Ms Robyn van Dyk, Head, Research Centre, Australian War Memorial “Anzac connections - delivering new connections and open data”
- Ms Mylee Joseph, Consultant, Public Library Services, State Library of New South Wales “More than the sum of its parts: outcomes of effective collaborations beyond libraries”

3 A panel made up of Ms Monika Szunejko, Director Database Services, National Library of Australia, Ms Margarita Moreno, Manager, Document Supply Service, National Library of Australia and Ms Eve Woodberry, Chair, Public Lending Right Committee & Chair Book Industry
Committee and chaired by Ms Sharan Harvey, Manager, Library Services, Brisbane City Council provided different perspectives on the topic “eBooks - the end of library cooperation”.

The presentations from Libraries Australia staff were: Dr Marie-Louise Ayres “2014: Libraries Australia at 30-something”, Ms Nikki Darby “Libraries Australia Value Statement”, Ms Mel Hunt “Libraries Australia Member Services”, and Ms Nikki Darby along with five user group convenors “Making the most of your user group”.


**ATTENDANCE**

The Forum was promoted via the regular channels - messages to the Libraries Australia and Libraries Australia Document Delivery mailing lists, at state user group meetings and on the Libraries Australia website. This was the second year Twitter has been used to promote the Forum.

There were 142 attendees for the Forum this year, including 17 National Library staff. The number of attendees has decreased in each of the last five years.

![Figure 1: Attendance 2010-2014](image)

Seventy nine percent of attendees were from three states/territories: Australian Capital Territory (31%), Victoria (30%) and New South Wales (18%). As in previous years, there were a disproportionate number of attendees from the state in which the Forum was held.
ANALYSIS OF ATTENDEES BY SECTOR AND WORK AREA

Attendees were invited to fill out an evaluation form. In total, 71 attendees (or 50%) provided responses, compared to 36% in 2013 and 56% in 2012. Following the poor response rate in 2013 when only online forms were used, this year evaluation forms were also made available in hard copy; however, no attendees completed the hard copy forms. The evaluation responses are summarised in the remainder of this report.

The total portion of attendees from Technical Services areas remained steady compared to both 2012 and 2013. Attendance from other work areas seems to be highly variable over time: fewer attendees were from Management (12% - down from 22% in 2013, but comparable to the 13% achieved in 2012), Information Technology (11% - down from 14% in 2013 which was up from 5% the previous year) and more from Reference (10% - up from 7% but not as high as the 15% achieved in 2012). Attendees from Document Delivery have been consistently decreasing with 12% this year compared to 16% in 2013 and 25% in 2012).

This year two new categories were included, Other and Single Person Library, and these accounted for 14% of attendance. Responses in the other category included Resource Sharing, Archives, Circulation Desk, Training and Consultancy, Digitisation, Public Library Services.
This year's program attracted 34% of registrations from the University/ TAFE sector followed by the National/State Library sector with 22% of registrations, largely National Library staff. Attendance was also high from Special - Government Departments, with 21% of attendees from this sector.

Seventy three percent of respondents to the evaluation rated the Forum overall as Above Average or Excellent. Twenty one percent of respondents rated the Forum as Average, and seven percent of respondents gave a Below Average or Poor rating in response to this question. These results are below those achieved for the 2013 Forum where no respondents gave a Below Average or Poor rating in response to this question.
Comments included:

- The first two speakers and the last two speakers were excellent, and it was definitely worth coming to the Forum to hear their talks.

- Keynotes speaker was excellent and LA team and project work presentations was very good. Congratulations and well done for the LA Team of the hard work, very successful event!!

- This was my first opportunity to attend a LA forum and I really enjoyed it. The speakers were varied and all very interesting and relevant.

- The mix of big picture issues and LibrariesAustralia detail is a good combination.

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**FORUM CONTENT**

Seventy two percent of respondents rated the content as Above Average or Excellent. Twenty one percent rated the content as Average, and seven percent rated the content as Below average or Poor.

Comments included:

- Presenters were positive and enthusiastic about their topics on the whole.

- Overall a well-balanced program with some very interesting highlights.

- I thought the programme was professional, inclusive and reflected very well on LA.
QUALITY OF PRESENTATIONS

Seventy five percent of respondents rated the quality of presentations as either Above Average or Excellent. Twenty percent rated the quality as Average, and five percent of respondents considered the presentations to be Below Average or Poor.

Some comments:

- Enjoyed keynote address most. I felt that our library, Deakin University, practices what Carl Grant preaches, and it was a good feeling. Thanks should go to our current University Librarian's leadership.

- I personally found the Anzac connections session very useful, having had great-uncles who fought in WW1. It was possibly not as relevant work wise, but very fascinating.
Panel & User Group Sessions

19 At the 2013 Forum an information session was held over afternoon tea to allow the opportunity for interaction with Libraries Australia staff. This year a Panel session and User Group session were added to the Forum program.

20 Thirty seven percent of respondents rated the User Group session as Above Average or Excellent, thirty nine percent as Average, and twenty three percent as Below Average or Poor. The User Group segment of the program was intended as a one off and to be interactive. Information gained from the session will improve the ability of Libraries Australia staff to better support user groups in future, and the opportunity to be heard was greatly appreciated by the convenors.

21 Some comments:

- User group sessions were nice to have but I felt too short to really be informative. Each user group provided a summary of themselves, while I would have been more interested in hearing about one or two achievements the group had made - such as a particular problem they had solved or been working on.

- It was interesting to hear from the chair of each user group. However, we possibly didn't need to hear the same responses from each presenter. Slightly different questions for each may have been more useful, or just one combined report.

- It was good to see the user group reps present issues and achievements; it was good to have a variety of 'big picture' and 'detailed case study' style presentations.

- Concurrent sessions for the User Group content may work better. The Panel session on eBooks was a good idea (and it was well facilitated), but I think it could have had some presenters from different sectors to show the differences and the 'on the ground reality (maybe just 1 presenter from NLA would be enough).

Figure 8: Panel & User Group Sessions 2010-2014
Fifty eight percent of respondents rated the Panel session as Above Average or Excellent, twenty eight percent as Average, and fifteen percent as Below Average or Poor.

Some comments:

- The ebook session was great and very helpful in discussion issues of importance to libraries.
- In the future I would like More panels and/or discussions on issues from different perspectives.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCUSSION

Fifty four percent of respondents rated the opportunities for discussion as Above Average or Excellent. Forty one percent rated these opportunities as Average, and five percent of respondents rated the opportunities for discussion as Below Average or Poor.

Some comments:

- Discussions are difficult if there's not a lot of time for questions and it's in front of everyone and if you want to ask someone a question you have to track them down in the breaks and they're already crowded and busy with other people, There was no questions on notice section which is usually a good opportunity to ask things.
- Always find the forum useful - great opportunity to interact with colleagues, network and exposure to new ideas/progress on programs etc.

Twitter was also used to interact at the Forum and 252 tweets mentioned the Libraries Australia Forum hashtag #LAF2014. A snapshot of tweets made at the forum is below.
FORUM VENUE & CATERING

27 Seventy three percent of respondents rated the venue as Above Average or Excellent. Twenty three percent rated it as Average, and three percent rated the venue as Poor.

28 Fifty nine percent of respondents found the catering to be Above Average or Excellent. Thirty six percent rated it as Average, and five percent as Below Average or Poor.

29 Some comments:

- Catering for those with special dietary requirements was excellent.
- The seats in the theatre - they are too uncomfortable to sit in all day. The food was very good, though.
- Catering - use mugs instead of cup and saucer, too hard to also hold food when there are not enough seating areas or tables to use - only have two hands!
RELATED EVENTS
30 In conjunction with the Forum, the Libraries Australia Advisory Committee meeting was held on 30 October. Other related events included the 2014 Libraries Australia Trainers meeting, the 2014 Libraries Australia ISO ILL Partners meeting, and the 2014 VDX Users Group in Australia and New Zealand all held on 30 October.

FUTURE FORUMS
31 The Libraries Australia Forum continues to be of value to attendees, although juggling the dual functions of inspiring the library community (keynote presentations) and providing practical information (the presentations and sessions by Libraries Australia staff) remains a challenge. Some attendees felt that future Forums should be less Libraries Australia focussed, whereas others wanted more Libraries Australia specific content. Libraries Australia staff will further develop the user groups as a forum for sharing information about Libraries Australia services.

- More about technical achievements and planning for LA
- Future direction for Libraries Australia
- examples of how libraries have used Libraries Australia products to impact on their library operations - whether that be user services/technical services.
- The Libraries Australia speakers usually talk more about technical achievements and planning, and I felt this was lacking in the Forum this year

32 A range of ideas for future Forums were offered by attendees and these can be clustered by two broad topics.

DATA AND SYSTEMS

- Metadata schema and ontologies
- Linked data, VIAF, ISNI, data visualization, copyright, anything which could be useful to libraries.
- Metadata schemas and possible replacement for MARC
- Linked data in the workplace - how and when
- More on different ILMS ...
- Relationship between OCLC and Libs Australia
- Let’s talk about wider developments in the library world and talk about worldcat/worldshare, ebooks, streaming videos, different ways to get exposure on google, etc.

TROVE AND INNOVATION
- More sessions similar to those of the lunch session PhD research students - ways of using information within libraries and a way of keeping libraries relevant to today’s world
- Case studies from Trove content partners
- What different software people (e.g. at Trove, etc) are making and using and how it could be used
- Relationship between Trove and Libs Australia.

Planning has commenced for the 2015 Libraries Australia Forum in conjunction with the OCLC conference in Melbourne in December. Libraries Australia staff would welcome the Committee’s suggestions on the content and organisation of the 2015 and future forums.

RECOMMENDATION(S)
1. The Libraries Australia Advisory Committee notes the report.

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