

ALLA Member Survey 2007

Executive summary

In 2007, the Australian Law Librarians' Association (ALLA) National Executive made a commitment to undertake an online member survey, the main aims of which were to provide a forum for members to identify challenges being experienced in the workplace, to seek input into the future direction and priorities of the Association and to develop a national demographic membership profile.

A national survey was considered to be an important 'next step' in the development of ALLA and was designed to incorporate the overarching objectives of the Association -

- provide a state and national network for law librarians in Australia
- provide a national focus for law librarianship and legal and business information
- act as a lobby group to promote the interests of law libraries, law collections and legal information services in the wider community
- benefit members and enhance the status of the profession by the further education and training of law librarians, legal information officers and others

The survey comprised three separate but interrelated components:

1. Membership information
2. ALLA Structure
3. ALLA Priorities and advocacy

Over 170 members responded representing approximately 30% of the ALLA membership. Respondents were predominantly employed in law firms (43%) followed then by government departments and agencies (29%).

Overall more than a third of survey respondents have significant professional knowledge and expertise gained through more than 20 years in the library and information industry, however 27% of respondents indicated that they have worked in law libraries for 5 years or less.

Members rated networking, support and professional development opportunities as their main reasons for membership.

Data from the survey has provided the National Executive with a valuable insight into the key issues impacting members and the profession. In response to feedback a number of initiatives have commenced including the formalization of cooperative agreements with other professional associations and a review of the current ALLA structure and the development of a potential national membership.

A full copy of the 2007 ALLA Member Survey is available from Divisional Presidents and the National Executive.

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Major Issues

For the first time at a national level, members were asked to identify and prioritise those issues of concern impacting both their role and the profession. Four major issues were identified in the survey and are consistent with emerging concerns and trends in the broader information industry.

- Financial constraints – an increasing discrepancy between the cost of information, library budgets and client expectations
- Education – concerns regarding the relevance and quality of library and information courses
- Skills shortage – the impact of ageing profession, a lack of succession planning and the challenges of retaining and recruiting staff at all levels
- Perception - libraries and information services perceived as optional cost centres

ALLA Priorities

In this section respondents were asked to evaluate ALLA's effectiveness in representation of members' priorities. Using a rating scale of 1 (strongly agree) – 5 (strongly disagree) members expressed an overall high level of satisfaction with the work of ALLA.

The areas of priority on which feedback was sought included:

- continuing education and conferences
- legal publishing
- promotion of the interests of law libraries, law collections and legal information services in the wider community
- promotion of the profession to library educators and graduate librarians
- coordination of the interests, opinions and activities of legal information professionals with a single influential voice
- enhancement of the professionalism and status of legal information professionals

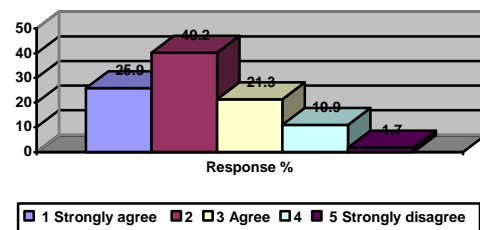
Sample responses

1. ALLA devotes adequate priority to continuing education programs and conferences.

Chart 1

Table 1

Rating	Response
1 Strongly agree	25.9%
2	40.2%
3 Agree	21.3%
4	10.9%
5 Strongly disagree	1.7%



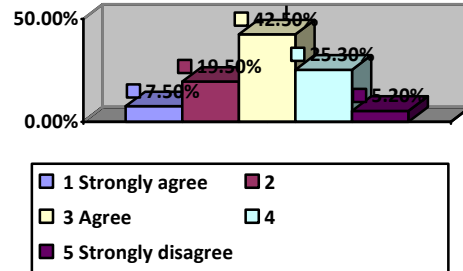
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2. ALLA promotes law librarianship to library educators and graduate librarians

Table 2

Rating	Response
1 Strongly agree	7.5%
2	19.5%
3 Agree	42.5%
4	25.3%
5 Strongly disagree	5.2%

Chart 2



ALLA Advocacy

One of ALLA's aims is that of advocacy of the profession, law collections and legal information services. To determine the importance and value placed in this role members were asked to indicate its importance. Using a rating scale of 1 (very important) – 5 (Very unimportant), members identified that ALLA should take up a strong role in representation and liaison in two key areas – the legal publishing industry and with government and policy bodies.

Areas of ALLA advocacy include:

- representation to government and policy bodies, on matters of legislation, intellectual property and information policy
- representation of law librarians to employer groups on matters relating to funding and employment
- liaison with the publishing industry on issues relating to commercial and government information
- lobby of the education sector on the development of library and library technician education programs
- cooperative relationships with other library association

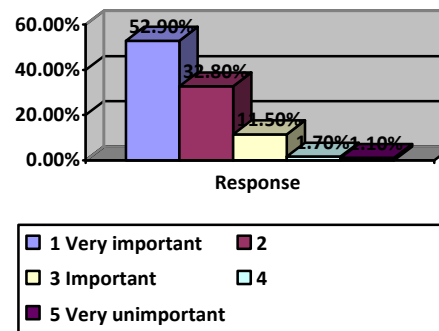
Sample response

1. Liaison with the publishing industry on issues relating to commercial and government publishing

Table 1

Rating	Response
1 Very important	52.9%
2	32.8%
3 Important	11.5%
4	1.7%
5 Very unimportant	1.1%

Chart 1



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ALLA Structure

This component of the survey was focussed on benefits of membership and the structure of ALLA.

Networking and professional community was perceived by approximately 80% of respondents as the major benefit of membership followed then by professional development, advocacy and current awareness. This strong sense of community is supported by the local ALLA Divisions which provide networking and support opportunities.

In response to a question regarding a review of ALLA Divisions 70% of respondents indicated the current Divisional structure did not require review; however verbatim comments received in the survey suggest that the current structure has resulted in an unnecessary duplication of committee infrastructure and competing interests potentially impacting an agenda of national advocacy and innovation.

Two specific questions were asked regarding interest in a national membership model.

1. Would you be interested in national ALLA membership, with a levy to support Divisional activities?
2. Would you be interested in national ALLA membership, inclusive of an ALL subscription?

Members expressed a positive response to both of these questions – 60% and 69% respectively. Additional comments indicated that the implementation of national membership would facilitate the setting of a national strategic direction, the development of a more coordinated influential voice and a professional development program available to all members.