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# **Professional development in the South Australian Library and Information Services sector: an examination of current trends, needs and opportunities.**

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose** – In a climate of under employment and perceived lack of upward career opportunities for new graduates, this study explores the role of professional development (PD) in assisting established and new Library and Information Services' (LIS) practitioners to update and extend their knowledge and skills.

**Design/methodology/approach** - Three methods of data collection have been used: literature review, content analysis of job descriptions and interviews.

**Findings** – The literature identifies PD as an integral part of being professional and a review of job advertisements indicates an employer demand for a wide range of generic skills in addition to library specific skills. Interviews with LIS practitioners and graduates determines PD is a useful tool in expanding knowledge and skills, with evidence of a generational difference in needs.

**Research limitations/implications** The study is limited to a research sample of ten persons and was conducted in the calendar year of 2006. Volunteers were recruited with the aim to discuss their PD activities, therefore it is a reasonable assumption that all participants would have some commitment to PD. Although this study has identified that some employers require generic skills at a high level a study comparing job advertisement requirements with the skills of successful applicants may give a truer indication of the current skills level of the 21<sup>st</sup> century LIS worker.

**Originality / value** – This study offers a snapshot of generic skills required in the twenty-first century Library and Information Services industry. It identifies how, in a depressed labour market, PD can be an useful tool to assist established practitioners and new graduates to remain current, competitive and to fulfill basic professional requirements. The generational approaches to PD offers an useful insight into meeting the wants and needs of work.

**Keywords** – Libraries, Professional education, Information Services, Australia

## **Paper type – Research paper**

### **Introduction**

The past decade has seen considerable organisational and educational changes, along with developments in information and communication technology, which have transformed the workplace, education and society. Research (Todd & Southon 2001) (Clyde 2002) (Myburgh 2003) (Deekan & Thomas 2006) (Kennan, Willard & Wilson 2006) indicates that 21st century Library and Information Services' (LIS) workers require a broader range of skills than their predecessors. There is evidence (Kennan, Willard & Wilson) of increased requirements for IT skills and certain behavioural characteristics along with interpersonal skills. It has been argued (Bridgland 2001), (Smith 2002) (Woolls 2005) that rapid changes in the LIS industry increases the need for additional learning after graduation, and keeping up to date is essential for professional and organisational success. Discussion, reflection and speculation on the evolving role of the LIS professional (Corrall 2005) has highlighted the importance of maintenance of competence through continuing professional development (PD).

One recent study, identifying current LIS job skills, (Kennan, Willard & Wilson) concluded by discussing the limitations of the small data set and the limited period of collection. Suggestions for further research included analysing jobs over a longer period of time and interviewing practicing librarians, to discover how the LIS field is developing in practice. This study builds on these suggestions and proposes that PD is a useful tool in assisting new and established practitioners to remain competitive and current.

### **Literature Review**

#### *Generational Profile*

The current profile of the LIS workplace is a mix of four generations, dominated by an aging workforce (University of Sydney 1998; Wilder 1999) supplemented by mature age LIS graduating students, (Genoni & Smith 2005) and, demographically, considerably older than the public sector and workforce average. (Commonwealth of Australia 2006). An aging workforce and impending retirements have implications for work force planning, recruitment strategies, staff development and continuing education needs. (Wilder). There is suggestion (Jurkiewicz 2000) that issues such as the demise of mandatory retirement, lack of financial planning and personal

satisfaction gained from work, has resulted in Boomers, those born 1946-1964, remaining in the workforce limiting opportunities for upward movement for Gen X, those born 1964-1980. Research suggests (Mannheim 1972) individuals belonging to the same generation, sharing the same year of birth, are endowed with a common location in the historical dimension of the social process and have definite modes of behaviour, feeling and thought.

Cohorts sharing birth years and experiences have resulting generational characteristics (Kupperschmidt 2000) including values, attitudes, preferences and behaviours which influence aspects of life, such as attitude towards authority and organisations, the wants and needs of work and how these are met. The Baby Boomer cohort is depicted as placing emphasis on self, personal growth and happiness, (Jurkiewicz) they value achievement and success, (Perryer & Jordan 2004) believe in self interest (Hutley & Solomons 2004) and embrace the psychology of entitlement. (Kupperschmidt) Generation X are portrayed as a group of self-reliant, resourceful, multitasking people (Tulgan 1996) who are prepared to take risks and have learnt not to take anything for granted. This cohort turn to friends for encouragement (Smola & Sutton 2002) use the team to support their individual efforts and express loyalty to individuals (Perryer & Jordan)

Anecdotal evidence, in the popular press, provides a consistent view of generational differences however the lack of empirical evidence to support generational value typology is acknowledged. (Lyons, Duxberry & Higgins 2005). This study proposes that generational differences can influence the choice of PD activity and the individual's approach to PD.

### *Professions and Professionalism*

The common and continual themes of education for professionals (Carr-Saunders 1928) and the need for continuing PD (Stone 1974) are historically evident in literature as is the role of the professional organisation in monitoring and endorsing educational programmes. (CILIP 2006) Research in the U K suggests (Gold, Rodgers & Smith 2002) that it is becoming common for PD, with a formal monitoring system, to be a mandatory condition of membership of a professional organisation.

The Australian Library & Information Association (ALIA) have introduced a sub-category of membership, known as the PD scheme, (ALIA 2005b) which enables ALIA members holding either a bachelor or post graduate degree or technical college diploma, in library studies, to voluntarily, formally record and be acknowledged for,

their participation in formal and non-formal professional development activities. Successful compliance over a three year period will entitle financial Associate and Technician members to use the additional Certified Practitioner post-nominal (CP), demonstrating to interested stake-holders their commitment to PD and enhancement of professional practice.

Literature offers many definitions of professionalism, (Carr-Saunders) (Stone) (Downie) with Downie suggesting that if a profession is to have credibility it must be independent, disciplined by its professional association, actively expanding its knowledge base and concerned with the education of its members.

Abbott (1998) alleges that as a profession librarianship has always consisted of a loose aggregation of groups, sharing a common orientation but doing different types of work. He refers to this as a federated profession that has the ability to adapt to changes in work and organisations more readily than the associational professions. Abbott claims librarians are generalists with the ability to be ready for any contingency, have knowledge available to follow new developments and can absorb the sub fields that challenge them, thereby surviving rapidly changing environments in ways that specialists cannot.

This claim is partly supported by recent research (Todd & Southon) (Clyde) (Myburgh) (Deekan & Thomas) (Kennan, Willard & Wilson) which indicates that 21st century LIS workers have a broader range of skills than their predecessors, with employers demanding a wider range of generic skills, (Kennan, Willard & Wilson) including IT, interpersonal skills and certain behavioural characteristics.

#### *The South Australian Profile*

The role of employers in providing PD opportunities for employees has evolved from a paternalistic approach, evident in the 1960's and 1970's, to a mutual obligation approach in the 1980's and early 1990's. As the 20th century drew to a close the ramifications of industrial reform and subsequent downsizing and cost-cutting became apparent to the national library industry, (Teece 1999) with resultant rampant casual jobs and serious under-employment. The South Australian climate saw a stagnant job market, offering limited opportunities for new graduates. Many newly qualified librarians were employed as library assistants, an unqualified entry level, with little opportunity to move to a professional position, either within or outside their organisations. (Henderson et al.) At the time of the 2006 census (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008) South Australia had 732 persons employed as librarians and 953

persons employed as library assistants. A comparison with the more affluent states of New South Wales and Victoria shows NSW had 3,176 librarians and 2,709 library assistants and Victoria employed 2,593 librarians and 1,456 library assistants. Frustrations at the lack of opportunities for new graduates resulted in the forming of a now successful South Australian social networking group, South Australian Library and Information Network (SALIN 2006). General membership is inclusive and free providing social and professional networking through seminars, forums and social nights. In 2006 the SALIN e-list was used as a distribution medium to conduct a survey to determine factors that rate an employer as an “Employer of Choice”, (Wheal & Ellard 2006) a concept to describe an organisation’s reputation as a desirable place in which to work. Over eight hundred responses were received nationally from a broad range of library sectors, age groups and locations, two hundred and three were from South Australia. Ninety per cent of respondents considered training and development an important factor when assessing the merits of a potential employer.

### **Research Methods**

To determine if professional development is useful tool to employers, employees and graduates three methods of data collection have been used: literature review, content analysis of job descriptions and interviews.

The Literature Review explored various studies, (Todd & Southon) (Clyde) (Myburgh) (Kennan, Willard & Wilson) that used job advertisements for information professionals, to identify key areas of desirable attributes, skills and understanding required in the early 21st century LIS job market.

Using content analysis, job descriptions of 68 advertised vacancies, posted on the ALIA (ALIA 2006a) Employment Webpage, from 1 January to 30 June 2006, were examined to further determine the range of skills, knowledge and experience required by a 21st century LIS worker. The source of data was selected for ease of access and relevance. The advertisements were manually scanned for words, sets of words or phrases that described the advertised position or the attributes needed by the potential employee. The majority of the advertisers established the need for a qualified librarian and therefore LIS specific skills, by stating ‘tertiary qualifications in library/information services’ or ‘eligibility for professional membership of ALIA’ or other similar terminology.

Using the SALIN e-list, volunteers were recruited to discuss the role of PD in their professional life since graduation. SALIN was selected for the large number of subscribers in the target group, South Australian graduates, new and established practitioners. The discussions were on a one to one basis and the interviews audio-taped. Participants were given the broad objectives of the research and confidentiality assured. To determine the scope of PD participants were given a copy of ALIA's "*Statement on Professional Development*" (ALIA 2005a) and then encouraged to discuss their experiences since graduation. The intention of the interviews was to identify new skills and knowledge that have become mandatory since the participants graduated, to discover how participants remain current and how they develop skills and knowledge to remain competitive.

An interview guide of open ended questions provided the framework for the interviews. Although participants were encouraged to tell their own story the guide was designed to answer the following questions:

1. Is PD a useful tool for new and established practitioners to remain competitive and to avoid obsolescence?
2. What is the commitment of employers, employees, graduates and professional organisations to PD in the South Australian LIS industry?
3. What are the current PD trends and opportunities in the South Australian LIS industry?

The criteria for eligibility to participate in this research were an ALIA recognised LIS qualification and some paid employment, in the South Australian LIS sector, since graduation.

## **Results**

The analysis commences with an overview of the profile of the skills required by a 21st century LIS worker, as identified from job descriptions. Using the three questions above, as the foundation, the subsequent section presents the findings of the interviews.

An examination of 68 job descriptions of advertised vacancies on the ALIA Employment Webpage, from January to June 2006, shows evidence of a demand for a wide scope of generic skills, knowledge and attributes. ALIA, acknowledges the need for generic attributes and in its Core Knowledge Statement (ALIA 2005c) identifies the range of such skills required by LIS employers.

Table 1 '*Composite Position Description*' uses each ALIA generic skill as a heading and provides samples of each category, drawn from the job advertisements, to illustrate the span of generic skills demanded by employers.

<b>ALIA Generic skills</b>	<b>Position Description</b>
Effective communication skills	Excellent customer service skills, Excellent written and oral communication skills, Good interpersonal skills, Ability to communicate clearly and succinctly in a range of situations, verbally and in writing, Ability to negotiate effectively. Commitment to quality customer service, an effective communicator, exceptional skills in interpersonal relationships and communication
Professional ethical standards and social responsibility	Good general knowledge and awareness of News, Current Affairs and Australian politics. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate an understanding and commitment to the principles of Equal Employment Opportunity, Affirmative Action, Occupational Health and Safety and the Charter of Principles for a Culturally Diverse Society. Successful applicants will be expected to abide by the SSWAHS, Eastern Zone Code of Conduct and be committed to ethical practices. Compliance with child protection legislation is essential for this position.
Project management skills	Experience in delivering measurable outcomes. Experience in planning and implementing library building projects, Demonstrated experience in proposal writing and narrative reports, use of logical frameworks or other planning/performance tools
Critical, reflective, and creative thinking	Use their strategic thinking, innovation and planning skills to continue improving library services. Well developed conceptual, analytical, skills of a high standard.
Problem-solving skills	Good analytical skills, You will possess problem-solving skills based on data and information analysis. Well developed interpersonal and problem solving skills.
Business acumen	Lead strategic policy development, demonstrated management abilities, Demonstrable ability to manage physical and financial resources Extensive management expertise. Sound knowledge of marketing and promotion techniques
Ability to build partnerships and alliances	Ability to establish a positive rapport with young people, Demonstrable ability to manage human relationships, Experience in international or multi-cultural settings and in working with second language learners. Skills in establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with key counterparts, such as library boards, county commissioners, community leaders, professional groups, sub-ordinates, and the public. Ability to establish and maintain relationships
Effective team relationship skills	Demonstrated leadership abilities, ability to contribute to an innovative productive team, ability to work independently and collaboratively, ability to work across a multi-function team are essential. ability to supervise and motivate a team An excellent leader, you'll inspire a high standard of customer service from a varied and multi-disciplinary workforce

Self management skills	Highly motivated and dynamic, Enthusiastic. Energetic. Desire to break the 'traditional' librarian mould. Flexibility in order to manage competing priorities and innovative practices. Strong organisational skills. Talented, motivated and innovative librarian. Can perform under pressure
Commitment to life-long learning	... prides itself not only on training its people well but also by providing them with development opportunities and offering them a comfortable level of responsibility according to their skills and abilities. Provide staff development training in the area of information management and privacy
Relevant information and communications technology and technology application skills	Provide first level support for the network and the internet; provide assistance and training in using the internet; Responsible to the library manager for the planning, co-ordination and support of library systems, digital resources and information systems. Demonstrated IT skills, problem solve hardware and software faults, recommend system improvements and train staff in the use of these systems.

**Table 1**

An examination of each section identifies a range and level of skills desired for each component. For example the ALIA generic skill calls for 'effective communication skills' a basic necessity for LIS personnel especially frontline staff dealing with user needs. The job advertisements called for 'excellent customer service skills' or 'good interpersonal skills', with one employer advertising for 'an effective communicator with exceptional skills in interpersonal relationships'.

Interpersonal skills, in various forms, appeared frequently in the job advertisements and the ALIA generic skills 'ability to build partnerships' and 'effective team relationship skills' would fall in to this category. As with the communication skills these job advertisements were looking for more than a basic skill. One employer was seeking 'skills in establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with key counterparts' another required 'demonstrable ability to manage human relationships'.

IT skills were also highly sought after and are identified by ALIA as 'relevant information and communication technology and technology application skills'. Job advertisements called for expertise such as 'provide first level support for the network and the internet' or 'demonstrated IT skills, problem solve hardware and software faults and train staff in the use of systems'.

These findings corroborate the literature claims that organisational and educational changes, along with developments in information and communication technology, have resulted in 21st century LIS workers requiring a broader range of skills than their predecessors.

### **Is PD a useful tool for new and established practitioners to remain competitive and to avoid obsolescence?**

Having established that the 21st century LIS practitioner requires a wide range of generic skills, this research suggested that PD could be a useful tool, for new and established practitioners, to remain competitive and to avoid obsolescence. By encouraging interviewees to discuss personal experiences with PD since graduation, a variety of issues were revealed. This included identification of the new skills and knowledge that has become mandatory since some participants graduated, an insight on how participants remain current and how they further develop their skills and knowledge to remain competitive and competent.

For those who have been in the industry for more than ten years the issue of keeping up with technology was a major concern. Electronic databases and Internet searching skills, now considered basic, mandatory skills, has proved challenging for some. The evolution from card catalogues to C D Roms and then to electronic databases and Internet resources necessitated new learning. The challenge was met with attendance at workshops, seminars and taking advantage of training offered by library vendors. Information literacy and the need to train prompted several respondents to gain a Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment, the basic level qualification required for employment in the training field. One respondent regarded gaining this qualification as part of the 'upskilling' process and viewed upskilling as an integral component of being a librarian. A view not shared by everyone, the changing nature of work in libraries impelled another interviewee to gain knowledge and qualifications in the traditionally non-library area of marketing and knowledge management. Progression of career was the consideration behind this choice, rather than focusing on improving skill base.

It was not the changing nature of library work but the changing nature of library users that prompted another respondent to comment on the need for updating communication and customer service skills. The issue of mental health has become a concern to those in the public arena and this respondent spoke about dealing with transient users displaying signs of schizophrenia and depression, resulting in a demand for specialised training in handling difficult situations.

Conferences, as a PD activity, offered the opportunity to learn about new trends, to present papers, hear the views of prominent industry speakers, and the chance to network. One library manager viewed conference attendance as a convenient and focal means to negotiate with library vendors and to build relationships. Not all interviewees were so enthusiastic. Attendance at conferences and other ALIA events, with the purpose of networking, initially proved disappointing for one new graduate who perceived established practitioners were ignoring the new comers. Discussions with colleagues experiencing the same frustrations led to the forming of the now successful networking group SALIN. This research used the SALIN e-list to advertise for interview volunteers. It is therefore a reasonable assumption that all respondents would have some interest in SALIN and its activities. However the positive feedback from all interviewees, particularly younger practitioners and new

graduates, warrants recognition. SALIN's role in providing PD opportunities for South Australian practitioners is further discussed in the following section

### **What is the commitment of employers, employees, graduates and professional organisations to PD in the South Australian LIS industry?**

#### *The commitment of employers*

Wheal and Ellard's survey (Wheal & Ellard 2006) as discussed in literature raises a couple of interesting issues. First, the ability of a small South Australian networking group to attract such a large response must be acknowledged. Secondly, with nine out of ten respondents considering training and development an important condition of employment, what is the reality of employer sponsored PD?

This study identified employer participation ranged from organisations offering a formal staff development programme with an allocated budget, to organisations offering basic in-house training to meet legislative requirements. Respondents were specifically asked if their employer sponsored PD activity. Organisations identified as having the strongest commitment offered a formal PD scheme with a dedicated budget, with one library being externally audited for compliance to Australian Standards. Another library manager deplored the constant budget cuts with resultant staff reductions that impacted on PD activity. Whilst acknowledging the individual's responsibility to maintain skills it was felt that the organisation and therefore management had a responsibility to provide opportunity and support

Lack of PD support was exacerbated by the employment of non-library personnel in management positions that influenced the operations of the library. It was considered that such management under valued librarians, lacked appreciation of the librarian's role in the organisation and in turn failed to realise the importance of maintaining or developing library skills. Qualified librarians being replaced by unqualified staff with resultant curtailment of traditional library services, such as information literacy, was cited as evidence of failure to preserve library skills. This downsizing of library services and employment of fewer qualified staff had led to management curtailing PD activities.

A limited budget and lack of support from the parent organisation for library PD activity forced another library manager to consider cost effective activities. A solution that had minimal impact on the budget was to encourage staff to participate

in mentoring programmes, to publish and present papers and to take advantage of the low or nil cost training offered by some library vendors.

A librarian employed as a contract worker had suggestions for non-employer funded PD activities. Deploring the lack of permanent opportunities that contract work offered, this person advised

*“create your own, which may mean organising your own or taking advantage of what other people organise”.*

The discussion so far has identified various levels of employer commitment to PD activities, with the main obstacle to receiving comprehensive employer support being a lack of funding. For those practitioners wishing to maintain or advance their skills the advice *“organise your own”* appears to be the viable option. The following section discusses employees and graduates involvement in PD activities.

### ***The commitment of employees and graduates.***

Literature suggests cohorts sharing birth years and experiences have resulting generational characteristics, (Kupperschmidt) although respondents in this research were not specifically asked their age, information volunteered on life experiences and number of years since graduation gave a good indication of their generational cohort. Some volunteered their age. Those interviewed consisted of a balanced mix of Boomers and Generation X.

As discussed in literature the Baby Boomer cohort places emphasis on self, personal growth and happiness, (Jurkiewicz) value achievement and success, (Perryer & Jordan) believe in self interest (Hutley & Solomons) and embrace the psychology of entitlement. (Kupperschmidt) Generation X are portrayed as a group of self-reliant, resourceful, multitasking people (Tulgan) who are prepared to take risks and have learnt not to take anything for granted. This cohort turn to friends for encouragement (Smola & Sutton) use the team to support their individual efforts and express loyalty to individuals. (Perryer & Jordan) This research recognizes that the generational and needs characteristics are generalizations and therefore individual differences are acknowledged; however they provide a useful tool to understanding diversity in the workplace and in identifying PD needs.

At the commencement of each interview participants were asked to relate their PD experiences since graduation, this offered participants the opportunity to focus on the type of activities they considered to be a priority.

The group identified as belonging to Generation X placed a high priority on networking and its benefits. This included the role of friends in supporting each other and the opportunity to meet people to learn about employment in other LIS fields and to ascertain possible future career moves. Interviewees from this group claimed friends and colleagues are important and working together builds confidence and broadens horizons. This is the group that literature describes as resourceful and prepared to take risks, when the networking door appeared to be closed at ALIA events it was a Generation X group who formed SALIN. This is also the group that does not take anything for granted, they do not expect employer sponsored PD opportunities, they create their own.

Literature views the Baby Boomers as a group who emphasise self and personal growth and value achievement and success. When asked to discuss their PD activity most interviewees from this group expressed pride in their achievements, with several respondents gaining formal qualifications in other disciplines or at Masters level. This group was also a strong advocate for mentoring as a means to share their experience and knowledge, although it could be argued that being a mentor offers an opportunity to promote personal achievement and success and to receive individual feedback. During this study the psychology of entitlement was evident with most Baby Boomers having an expectation of access to employer sponsored PD. This should not be viewed as a criticism but rather a reflection of their commitment to the profession through actively expanding their knowledge base.

#### ***The commitment of professional organisations.***

SALIN and ALIA are the predominant LIS organisations with South Australian membership. This research was interested in the LIS practitioner's perspective of the involvement and usefulness of professional organisations in providing PD opportunities and in meeting PD needs. The general consensus from respondents was that SALIN, with its free membership, offers a relevant, user friendly, cost effective service to the South Australian LIS industry. The younger interviewees and those new to the profession considered SALIN a valuable contribution to their PD activities.

ALIA is the professional organisation for the Australian LIS sector, a range of major LIS conferences are endorsed by ALIA. ALIA also operates a number of groups, formed by members for members, focusing on particular aspects of the library and information profession. All persons interviewed reported attending either ALIA conferences, or workshops and seminars, organised by the ALIA groups. Attendance

at these activities usually accrues points towards the ALIA PD scheme as discussed in literature. None of the interviewees indicated they belong to this scheme although one person expressed uncertainty on its operation and compared it to SALIN, claiming when using the ALIA Webpage it was difficult to find information whereas the SALIN system “*was simple and works well*”.

Another person expressed concern that the ALIA PD scheme was not mandatory as in other industries.

### **What are the current PD, trends and opportunities in the South Australian LIS industry?**

The discussion so far has identified a strong commitment to PD by South Australian LIS practitioners. Budget restrictions, in the Public Library, Special Libraries and TAFE (Technical and Further Education) sectors, have impacted on PD in terms of release time and funding for the activity. This has resulted in practitioners, especially new graduates and Generation X selecting cost effective methods of maintaining and extending their skills base. SALIN and ALIA groups offer a number of workshops at \$5.00 a head to members that, in addition to updating skills, offer the opportunity to network. The general consensus was SALIN events are favoured over the ALIA events as the SALIN annual membership is free, information about events is easy to find and the SALIN members are able to relate to each other. By contrast the ALIA Webpage is seen as confusing, the annual ALIA membership is prohibitive to new graduates and those on contracts and established ALIA members are viewed as remote and unwelcoming.

For practitioners who have employer sponsored PD or those in full employment conferences offer a range of PD opportunities. In addition to networking many conferences are organised by the ALIA members, in a voluntary capacity, offering the opportunity to use and develop skills needed for such an event. This has led to criticism with claims that ALIA is placing too much reliance on voluntary office bearers and constant employer budget cuts are impacting on the availability of volunteers.

Those who have been in the industry for sometime expressed an interest in on-line networking. The SALIN e-list was praised as being useful and efficient and because it is local, the topics were seen as relevant.

Conversely one respondent, a free lance researcher, is a member of a global on-line networking group-the Association of Independent Information Professionals. The lack of people in Australia, involved in the same type of work, has limited local networking opportunities. The opportunity to interact with like minded people and the level of support offered by the group was cited as reasons for pursuing this PD opportunity.

Another form of networking favoured by established members of the profession is the mentoring of new comers; this was viewed as an opportunity for established members of the profession to share experience and knowledge. However the youngest person interviewed expressed a disinterest in formal mentoring claiming colleagues could fill that role and the opportunity to network had a higher importance.

### **Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to identify current PD trends, needs and opportunities in the South Australian LIS sector and thereby assist new graduates, current practitioners and employers gain an understanding of the contemporary South Australian LIS industry. The trends identified by this study show a high level of commitment to PD by South Australian LIS practitioners and by professional organisations.

The lack of commitment by some employers has been attributed to budget restrictions, lack of empathy from decision makers towards LIS workers' needs and the employment of unqualified staff with resultant cuts to traditional LIS services. Some employers, cited by interviewees in this study, offer generous PD support. For others who have withdrawn support, attesting budget restrictions, this research suggests that approach might be a false economy. Evidence shows (Tovey 1997) that working conditions that prevent new skills from being learnt hinder productivity and efficiency.

Literature suggests (Jurkiewicz) Boomers remaining in the workforce have limited the opportunities for upward movement for Gen X, this was not an issue raised in this study. Lack of opportunities was attributed to short term contracts and budget restrictions; the issues of funding and finance have emerged as the main determinant to PD commitment. New graduates, casual and contract workers are unable to afford ALIA membership or conference attendances, the majority of which are held interstate. These factors have contributed to the lack of PD opportunities for some South Australian LIS workers.

Literature claims the LIS industry is a federated profession that has the ability to adapt to changes in work and organisations and to survive rapidly changing environments. These claims are supported by this research, which has identified that PD is an useful tool to enable LIS practitioners expand their knowledge and skills. PD is an integral part of being professional; it is the responsibility of all stakeholders, employees, graduates, employers and professional organisations to ensure that PD opportunities are readily accessible to all LIS workers.

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