

# THE FUTURE OF THE PROFESSION

We all want to know what the future holds for library and information services, and while it is, of course, impossible to predict in exact terms, we have used global trends, early indicators, and futurist thinking to develop themes which can guide our discussion about where we might be headed.

Our ideas are contained in the *Future of the Profession* discussion paper, which is now available to download, read, debate, and comment upon. The purpose of the paper is to provoke discussion across the sector between library leaders, information service providers, vendors, practitioners, students, commentators, colleagues in Australia and internationally – anyone and everyone with an interest in the field.

This discussion paper is a work in progress. We have set out a proposition based on our findings, now we would like to hear what you think – do you agree with our three themes, or do you think there are further alternatives we need to explore? Do you think our scenarios have merit or are there other outcomes that you feel are more likely?

## Theme 1 is convergence.

In a tighter economic environment, governments and organisations will be looking for ways to operate more efficiently and at lower cost. Convergence will be more attractive than people and services working independently from multiple locations.

Technology will encourage this view of the world. It is already possible to provide information services remotely to thousands of users, removing the practical need for on-site professionals. This works from an efficiency perspective but it can compromise customer service.

In a digital environment, where the emphasis is on economies of scale, what could this mean for library and information services?

## Theme 2 is connection.

With the basic necessities of life – water, food, and fuel – in shorter supply, people will be encouraged to cluster together in a tight urban footprint, to make best use of the transport and utilities infrastructure. While this supports the practicalities of existence, it threatens people's quality of life. To counteract this, government will invest in civic spaces – buildings, parks, plazas, where people can meet, mingle, and breathe in the air. Space to study, work, create, and connect will be at a premium.

## Theme 3 is the golden age of information.

Our proposition is that, while there is an ever-increasing volume of information, we have yet to reach the golden age of information, where all knowledge is available to everyone, all the time – albeit at a price. In this environment, library and information professionals can embrace the concept of big data while government, businesses, and other organisations struggle to manage the deluge of facts, knowledge, and insight.

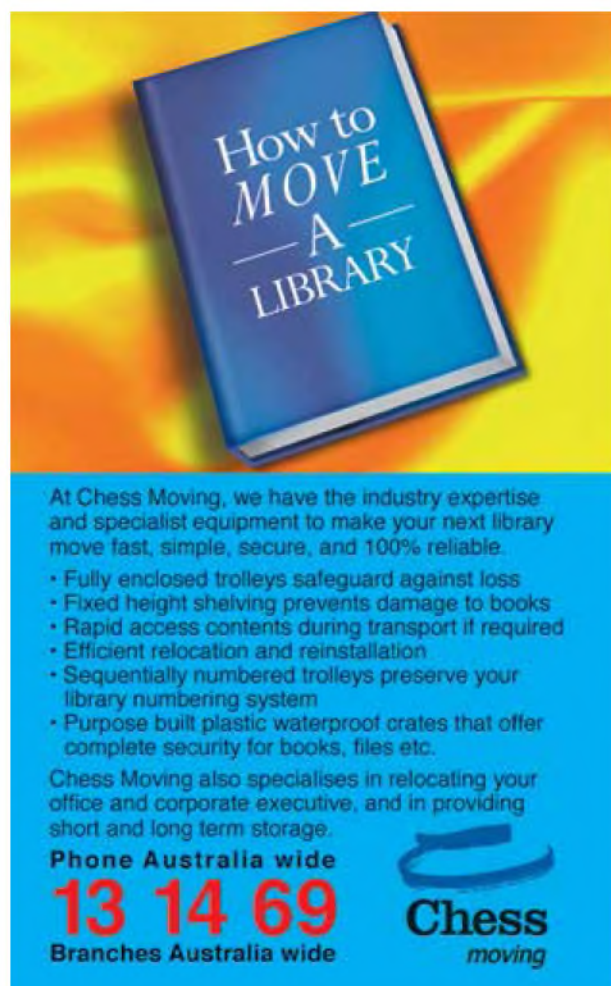
## Consultation

In addition to our library and information colleagues, we will be asking social and political commentators, technology experts, corporate strategists, and other top flight thinkers to tell us what they think about our visions of the future.

The 2013 ALIA National Advisory Congress will see a series of two-hour workshops held in every capital city around Australia between August and October to talk about the Future of the Profession. The workshops will be based on the discussion paper, published on 1 May, and the feedback generated in the intervening months.

There will be a Future of the Profession Summit in Sydney in October 2013, at which we will present the outcomes of the various discussions of the previous six months. The event will provide the opportunity for library leaders to define what our public-facing position should be on the future of the profession and how this should inform ALIA's strategies, policies, and activities in 2014 and beyond.

You can comment now, and at any time through to the end of October 2013. Become a wiki editor [aliafutures.wikispaces.com/home](http://aliafutures.wikispaces.com/home), email [advocacy@alia.org.au](mailto:advocacy@alia.org.au), or join the discussion on ALIA's Facebook page and through Twitter #aliafutures.



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