



WHAT IS RESEARCH? WE'RE ASKING YOU!

Following on from Annemaree Lloyd's report in the March issue of INCITE announcing ALIA's commitment to undertaking an environmental scan of library and information studies (LIS) research, INCITE asked researcher Michael Middleton to give our members an update on this important project. Michael is undertaking this project with Christine Yates and will be reporting on the scan at the ALIA National Conference in September.

establish new conclusions or concepts. A similar definition was used in an earlier investigation of two Australian library journals by Maxine Rochester, described in her article Library and Information Science Research in Australia 1985-1994: A Content Analysis of Research Articles in *The Australian Library Journal* and *Australian Academic & Research Libraries*, published in *Australian Academic & Research Libraries* in 1995.

FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS SCAN WE ARE ALSO INCLUDING SIGNIFICANT ITEMS OF SCHOLARSHIP WHERE CRITICAL ESSAYS, STUDIES OR ACHIEVEMENTS (SUCH AS IMPLEMENTATIONS OF NOVEL PROCEDURES) ARE REPORTED AT A PROFESSIONAL OR PARAPROFESSIONAL LEVEL.

Our analysis firstly begs the question of 'what is research?' We are adopting a broad view. Typically, research is defined along the lines of investigations involving systematic method and study of materials and sources in order to

However, for the purposes of this scan we are also including significant items of scholarship where critical essays, studies or achievements (such as implementations of novel procedures) are reported at a professional or paraprofessional level.

A key way in which we are doing this is by asking you, the profession.

This is by means of a survey that seeks your reporting of research in which you've been involved. We've tried to keep the survey form fairly simple though you have the opportunity to provide more complex answers if you wish. If you haven't already seen the survey coming to you via an elist, you can look at it directly and respond at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/FD5GTSN>.

We're also complementing your responses with material from other sources. For example we are building several databases of material for consideration by ALIA's Research Committee. These include a database of completed LIS research degrees awarded, including degrees from schools offering courses accredited by ALIA. Along with these, we're identifying LIS degrees awarded by other Australian schools.

We are establishing a database of research grants obtained by practitioners and academics. To some extent we can track the academic grants through databases, but we particularly need to hear about grants obtained by practitioners to support research projects.

We are also creating a database of publications on LIS published by Australians or published in Australia. This is being built by merging searches of a number of specialist bibliographic databases.



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Categorising material for these databases means that we must also try to be more specific about defining LIS. We are doing this in two ways. Firstly we will define by sector of application (academic, public and so on): we've started with the sectors that ALIA identifies on its website and extended this somewhat. You'll see the options on the survey form. Technicians are covered within their appropriate working environment.

We will also be defining research by subject area: we've attempted this by referring to earlier published academic material that categorises research output, and then trying to establish a limited number of categories that encompass LIS activities regardless of sector of application. You'll see these on the survey form too.

If you don't think your work fits into one of these categories you have the option to provide an alternative – but we'd like you to squeeze your response(s) into one of the existing categories if you can. We've developed them by consideration of earlier research categorisations, modified to accommodate the current range and application of literature in the bibliographic databases.

If you are thinking 'well just what does LIS encompass and how is material categorised', then consider some of our examples of titles of publications that fit within our scope. These items are not necessarily by people working as LIS professionals or academics. Among the outcomes of the analysis will be indications of the extent of LIS research being carried out by other than LIS professionals, and comparison of the extent of Australian publication nationally and internationally. It looks like there will be up to 4000 of these for the period we are covering (from 2005 on).

We will also anticipate having useful lists of publishing outlets (would you have considered *First Monday* or *Journal of Informetrics* or *Prometheus*?) and of grant options.

We'll accompany our report with an analysis of the research agendas and policies of other professional information associations.

So if you are doing, or have recently done, some research work on testing a new system or work approach in your library, or curation of a collection for a special community, or perhaps if you are into learning object metadata, or another of the multifarious areas of LIS, we'd be pleased to hear about it via the survey form.

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YES PLEASE

Some examples of publications of interest to the ALIA library and information studies research project:

- 'Changing User Behaviour Using a Digital Repository System' (information behaviour in the university and college libraries sector).
- 'Pedagogical and Learning Strategies for Promoting Internet Information Literacy' (information literacy in the school libraries sector).
- 'Using Online Discussions to Provide an Authentic Learning Experience for Professional Recordkeepers' (education in the records and archives sector).
- 'Cultural Change: Improving Indigenous Library Services and Collections' (role in the state and national libraries sector).
- 'The Evolution of the Sleep Science Literature Over 30 Years: A Bibliometric Analysis' (informetrics in the unspecified sector).
- 'Networking for Sustainable Development: The Papua New Guinea National Agricultural Information System' (management in the special libraries sector, by Australian author).
- 'Bibliotherapy for Health and Wellbeing: An Effective Investment' (information services in the public libraries sector).

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