ALIA:
Existential Questions for CAUL

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This brief presentation is about

- The ALIA Library Workforce Summit

- The ALIA National Advisory Congress

- Where university librarians fit in

- The correct answer to the existential question

- You could start here:
  http://dereksaliablog.blogspot.com/2007/08/existential-issues-for-librarians.html

We have always contributed

- Denis Richardson, Uni Melbourne,1980

- Barrie Mitcheson, RMIT, 1983

- Alan Bundy, UniSA, 1988

- Bill Linklater, Swinburne, 1994

- John Shipp, Wollongong/Sydney, 1998

- Alan Bundy, UniSA, 2001

- Imogen Garner, Curtin, 2004

More than two of these have something in common.

Now is particularly important . . . .

- Being a librarian has always been worth promoting

- But currently librarians are concerned about

  - Their image

  - Recruitment to librarianship

  - Skills deficits

  - The crisis in library education

  - Identity issues
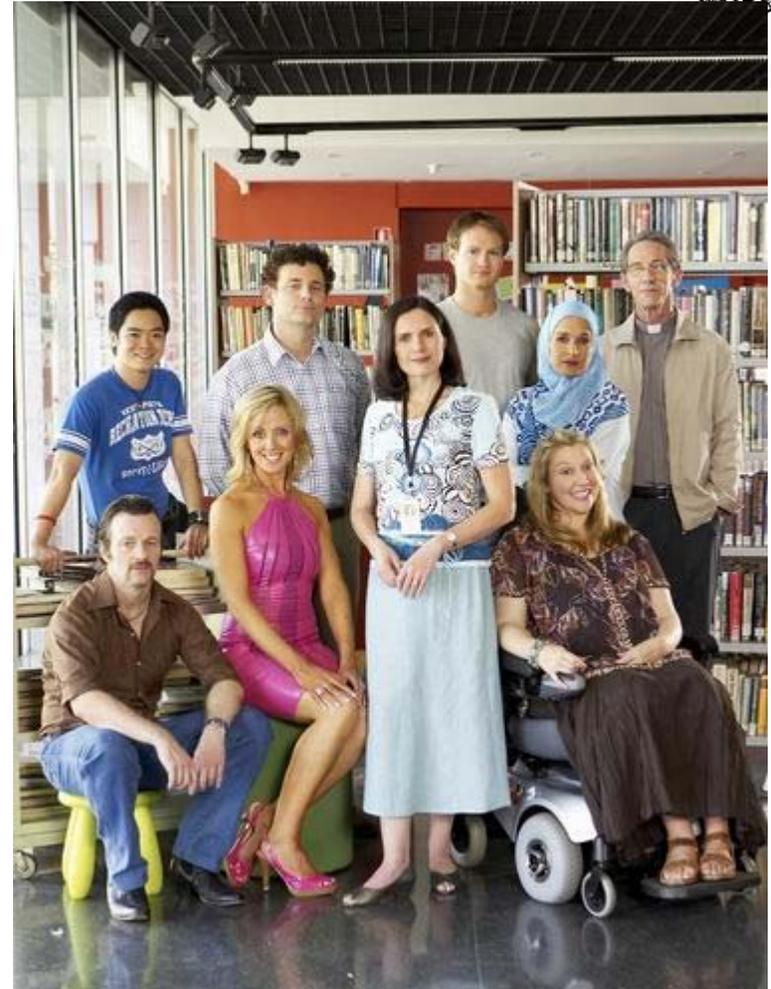
  - Being on TV: starts 31 October

Image is everything

- The Librarians kicks off on 31 October

- " With a plot like that, the series seems set to tackle some outdated librarian stereotypes. Why not break some of these stereotypes by joining other ALIA groups in planning big screen viewings in local pubs."
  (ALIA)

- ALIA will establish a blog – we will be briefly in the limelight – how can we use that?

- "The image from CSI episodes and Lynx deodorant ads is of repressed types who have all sorts of weird and wonderful secret pastimes" (Dana)

More about image

- Short videos about libraries http://youtubeandlibraries.pbwiki.com/ from Kathryn Greenhill

- Angry Librarian on Youtube – 238,000 view so far http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7XvAakX__cQ

- The NY Times article A Hipper Crowd of Shushers http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/08/fashion/08librarian.html?ex=1190260800&en=9182b6cec2b98d9e&ei=5070

- And you can't go past http://dereksaliablog.blogspot.com

- This is the time to work on the brand "librarian". But how?

Library Workforce Summit

- To be held on 28 March

- Purposes:

  - Bring together employers, educators, researchers, professionals

  - Discuss and achieve some agreement on issues relating library education and the library workforce

  - Recommendations to ALIA for action.

  - Recommendations to other players

  - Assemble a body of knowledge as a basis for decision-making
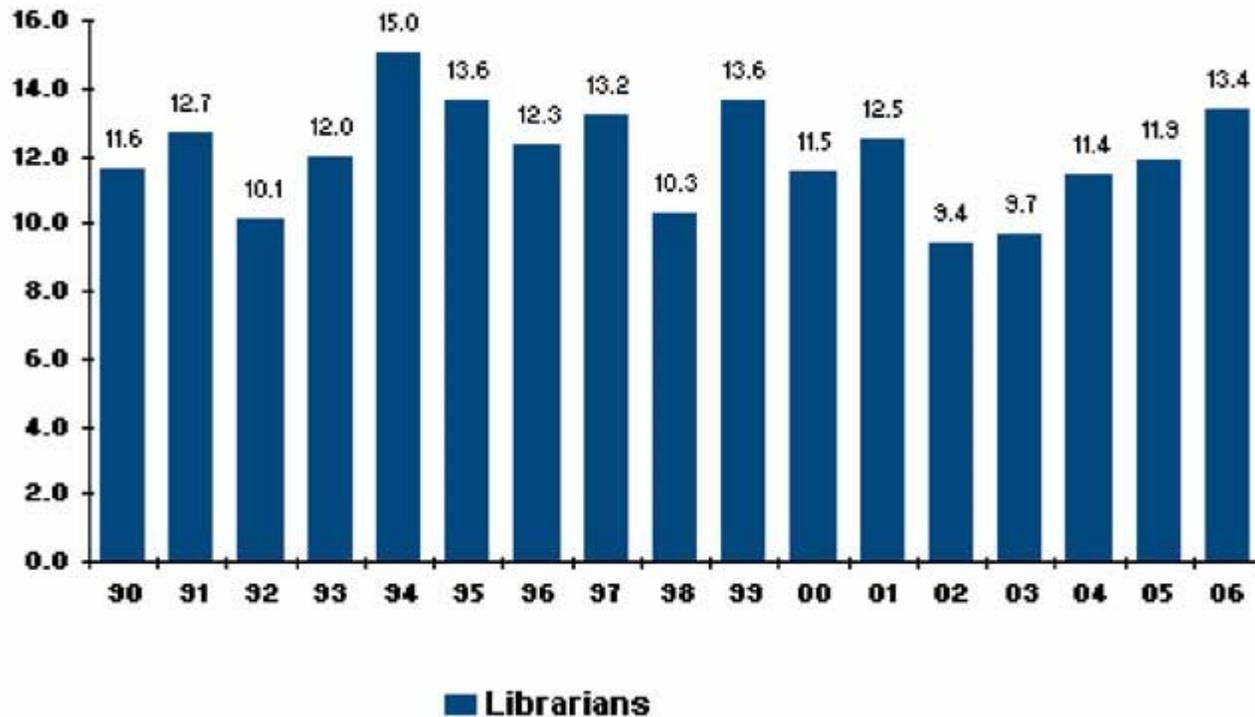
Library Workforce Summit

- Scope – five areas
  - ☐ Role of ALIA in library education and workforce development
  - ☐ Skills and attributes required by employers in new graduates
  - ☐ Recruitment – getting and keeping the best people in the library industry
  - ☐ Defining the industry – what do we mean? What do others mean?
  - ☐ Basic professional qualifications – what should they be?
- Behind these issues sit issues of image.
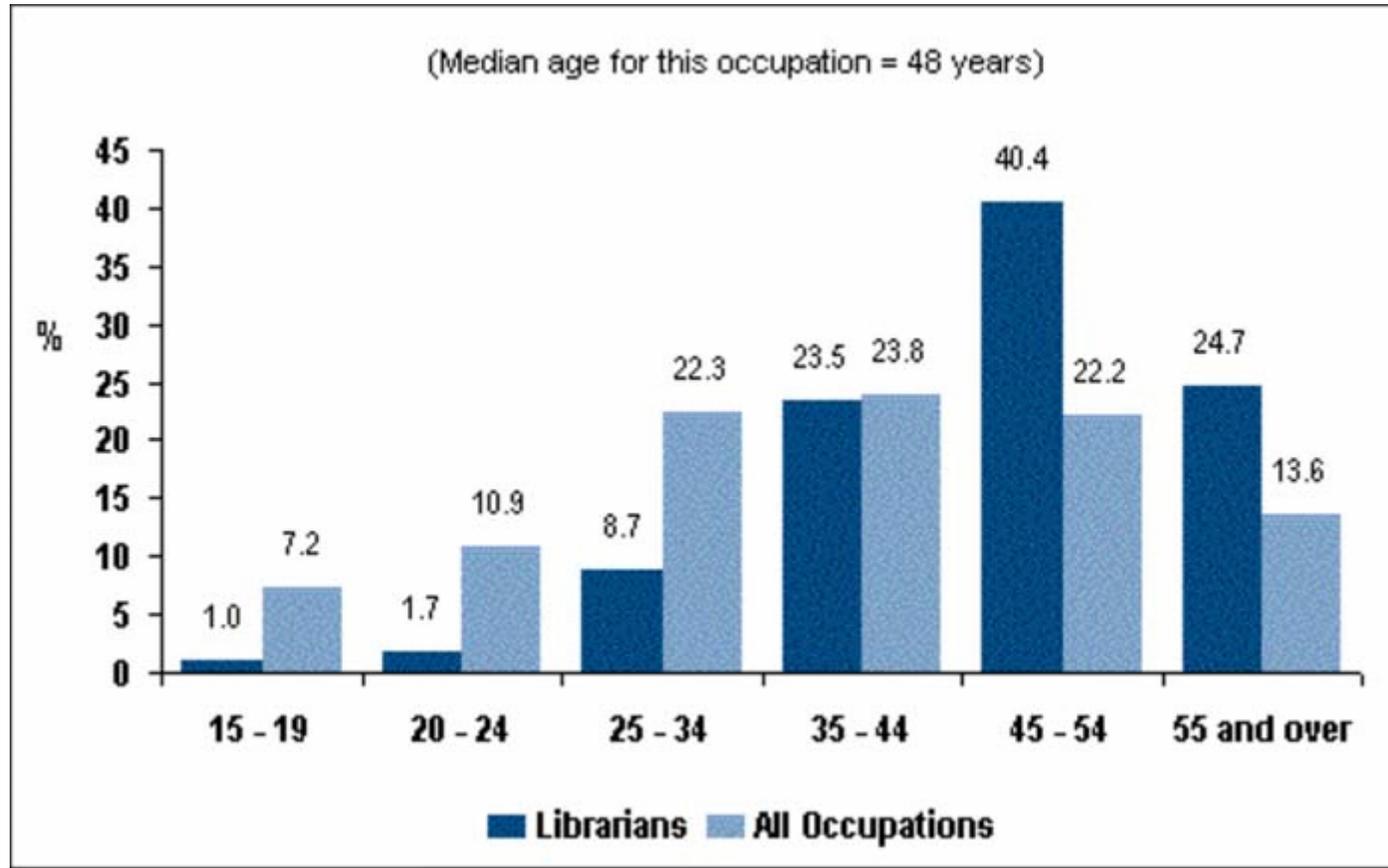
National Advisory Congress

- Series of meetings in all states and territories

- http://alia.org.au/governance/nac/2007/

- Includes meetings in regional areas, state capitals – 17 in all, the final one a teleconference of representatives

- The core topic for the meetings is "providing leadership in professional education and workforce planning."

- Meetings are throwing up lots ideas – all over the place, not necessarily agreed. Consensus is elusive.

ABS data – on the way up?

■ Librarians

Problem or opportunity? 2006 Census

(Median age for this occupation = 48 years)

Is there a consensus?

- The word "librarian" works fine – we just need to enhance the semantic content. We are librarians.

- Identity and image are up to us.

- We made too large a claim when we made a grab for the "information" territory.

- There is a core set of skills but we find it hard to agree on what it is.

- Employers need to support education and education needs to focus on workforce needs

What is a library?

- How do you know you are standing in a library? – there is an easy short answer.

- Early workplace experiences are very important – most people don't know what really happens in a library.

- Different library types are more different from each other than they used to be

- There is a dichotomy between book and Web – we can have both, but not always at the same time.

- People outside libraries have a better idea than we do.

What is a librarian?

- Promoting a career to schools is most important.

- The professional paraprofessional divide has always been problematical.

- There is definitely a (patchy) shortage of the right people.

- There has been a decline in commitment to a professional association

- Terms like knowledge management don't do us any favours

Are there core attributes?

Attributes like these have been suggested

- Organised, methodical, analytical, lateral

- Curious, detective skills,

- Good literacy, good communication skills

- Interrogating people and information, seeing possibilities

- Commitment to information and access to it

- "This is a librarian" – an emerging website with examples – watch for it, contribute to it

Millennials think clearly too

"I think Lili's point that we need to encourage secondary school work experience students to come to work in a library by giving them a task that is tangible, online and accessible to can show their friends and family was very valid.

I was pleased that her perspective on what millennials want from their job in a library involves engaging with the needs of our users.

I agree with your assumption, Derek, that the core elements of good librarianship are ageless, and as a millennial librarian, it is my responsibility to adapt them to fit a new era and continue to stay in touch with our users."

Three things we want you all to do

1 Be a good example

- Please join ALIA – most university libraries belong, but individuals can join too – cost is $22.68 per month or around $15 after tax – encourage staff to join

- Promote library careers – it's a job that suits lots of people, and it is more interesting that the stereotype, different to what people imagine

- Participate in ALIA activities and events

- People see librarians as having a clear identity and professional identity and integrity. Respect goes with the professional territory.

- Be active, participate, support. Seize a clear identity.

- Be a professional. Be a librarian

2 Adopt good employment practices

- Cadet programs are a really good idea

- Participate in mentoring programs – these have declined but there is still a need

- Expose students to a work environment earlier: take work experience students – secondary and higher education

- Longer placements

- Host meetings, encourage them and brand them ALIA

- Encourage use of ALIA PD programs as part of your staff development operations

3 Support the things we believe in

- ALIA sets our values and provides a voice. There's a lot going on. Currently ALIA is concerned at a national level with

    - ☐ Online content and regulation

    - ☐ Issues of free speech and Internet freedom

    - ☐ The public library network

    - ☐ Broadband and Internet access for all

    - ☐ Support for the national library

    - ☐ Freedom of information

    - ☐ Open copyright

- And at state and local levels too

- Take a public stance on important issues – academics like it, even if bureaucrats don't

Its all about identity

- We all have many identities

- Such as

  - Mother/father/grandparent/great-grandparent/cousin/sibling/unqualified relative

  - Student/employee/retired

  - University functionary

  - Professional librarian

- You are a librarian . . . Embrace it. You have a choice.

University functionary

- Drab

- Besuited

- Cautious

- A known blockage

- Organisation man

- Respected

- Deliberate & judicious

- . . . and more

- Like Dexter here

University librarian

- Fairly cool

- Respected

- Popular

- Helpful

- Sometimes rash

- Passionate & committed

- Organised

- . . . and more

- Like Frances here

The Librarians