

Embedding Readers' Advisory Services in Professional Practice as a Key Collaborative Strategy in Queensland Public Libraries

Queensland Public Libraries Australia Research Scholarship

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Readers' advisory is identified as a public library service in the Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries, with 'promoting the value of reading' listed in various strategic documents as a key practice. The degree to which this service is embedded in professional practice post-National Year of Reading was investigated, with recommendations provided for greater application to support community development. This paper outlines the investigative process and results, with an emphasis on information and resource sharing and training to support service development.



Readers' Advisory Poster Auckland City Council Libraries

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Readers' advisory is identified as a public library service in the *Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries*, with 'promoting the value of reading' listed in various strategic documents as a key practice. The degree to which this service is embedded in professional practice post-National Year of Reading was investigated with recommendations provided for greater application to support community development and to overcome barriers to implementation. This paper outlines the investigative process and results, with an emphasis on information and resource sharing and training to support service development.

The internationally distributed survey and subsequent research findings highlighted variables that impact on this profession's ability to deliver a consistently high standard of readers' service to support community development. These variables were not addressed in the national focus on reading despite having been raised by the profession in preceding years. It is acknowledged that the Australian Library and Information Association's Agenda (2013, p. 18) supports a national network of public libraries with the *Standards and Guidelines* 'providing a benchmark to influence investment by state and local governments' with federal government endorsement which could enable a focus on staff development as the foundation to strong service delivery. State Library of Queensland (2013, p. 9), Queensland Public Libraries Association and Local Government Association of Queensland are 'developing action plans to deliver on four priority areas identified through the consultation (including) the library workforce' which should then be able to address the recommendation of state-wide readers' advisory services professional development.

The survey was built on the foundation of two surveys conducted across Australia and New Zealand in 2008 by Dr Alan Bundy and Vicki Darling respectively. In an analysis of position descriptions of respondents and of advertised positions, the percentage of public library staff (from the two countries combined) with readers' advisory in their position descriptions appears to have risen between 2008 and 2013 - from 27% to 41%, and 52% of recently advertised positions. This is attributed to professional awareness rather than a direct industry association focus on strategic service planning. The lack of consistency and endorsement across the profession for an explanation of what a quality readers' advisory service is (despite the *Standards and Guidelines*' inclusion) was evident from responses gathered from the survey, position descriptions, training providers, tertiary educators, a literature review, interviews, and personal conversations.

This research project included a visit to nine Auckland Libraries, interviews and personal conversations with many public library staff or those associated with public library service, promotion of the research in various forums, practical application of concepts, and the use of online tools to promote collaboration. The application and execution of this professional practice in public libraries was explored, with this report recommending the following actions to endorse and embed readers' advisory service in professional practice as a key collaborative strategy in Queensland public libraries.

It is recommended that;

1. The State Library of Queensland, Queensland Public Libraries Association and public library services support a state-wide professional development strategy in readers' advisory services for all relevant staff in an application of G7.2 in the *Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries* (2012, p. 33), and with the library workforce being a priority area for action identified in State Library of Queensland's *The Next Horizon: Vision 2017* (2013, p. 9). This professional development to be delivered to staff, and generated by staff, and be ongoing.
2. A distributed model of professional expertise be established in Queensland with specific positions throughout the state identified as readers' advisory positions, with these representatives and other volunteers collaborating in a state-wide response to capacity building and ongoing skills development training with support from State Library of Queensland, Queensland Public Libraries Association and each library service. This model will include development of agreed competencies, and the facilitated development of a set of collaborative programs, with the possibility of the model being articulated nationally in partnership with the Love2Read campaign. This model to be informed by British Columbia's Readers' Advisory Interest Group and State Library of Queensland's working groups.
3. A collaborative online space on the State Library of Queensland's Public Libraries Connect site be established as a central point for Queensland public librarians to promote dynamic readers' advisory practice, build a knowledge base for service, and to facilitate professional development in readers' advisory service. Widespread use of this space will endeavour to overcome the identified barriers of budget, time, and isolation. For national online collaboration, utilise the Love2Read site pending the campaign's continuation.
4. Public library services unite to support readers' advisory service through the application of strategic documents, from the *Standards and Guidelines* section on information services and readers' advisory services, and Queensland's *The Next Horizon: Vision 2017* guiding principles, to individual services' strategic documents, with relevant staff having readers' advisory service and professional development articulated in their position descriptions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Alison and Jo especially thank the Queensland Public Libraries Association Committee for the opportunity to pursue this research with the inaugural scholarship. We also appreciate management support from CityLibraries Townsville, Logan City Council Libraries and Toowoomba Regional Council Libraries to participate in this project.

We hold a special place in our hearts for the staff of Auckland Libraries for hosting our visit, and thank Sylvia Thompson and Greg Morgan for their staff's time.

“Tēnā rāwā atu koe” to Paul Brown for his in-depth tour of nine Auckland libraries and his ongoing challenge to achieve more in readers' advisory practice.

“Aroha nui” to Sally Pewhairangi of *Finding Heroes* for collaboration and inspiration.

Thank you Desley Cullen and Tammy Morley from State Library of Queensland for the opportunities to present about readers' advisory practice to the Rural Libraries Queensland staff.

Thank you also to the many people we interviewed or talked with about readers' advisory practice, and those who provided support in other ways; including Jennie Bolitho, Warren Cheetham, Jane Cowell, Kate Davis, Ellen Forsyth, Catherine Johnston, Paula Kelly, Fiona Mackie, Chris Orpen, Nadia Patch, Sherrey Quinn, Jamie Treble, Nic Kilah, Briengan Rodgers, Sharon Uthmann, Rachel Van Riel, Diane Velasquez, Vassiliki Veros, Tosca Waerea, Adele Walsh, Lyndelle Gunton, Karla Chisolm, Mallory Owens, library staff who completed our survey, and our wonderful blog followers.

STATEMENT FROM MANAGER

Warren Cheetham

Coordinator Information and Digital Services

CityLibraries Townsville

Alison Miles has undertaken the 2012 QPLA Research Scholarship project with dedication, maturity and creativity, and has had the support of CityLibraries Townsville during the project. She has worked consistently on the project over the last 12 months or so, and the information and experiences she has gained have been extremely beneficial in her ongoing role at CityLibraries Townsville. Alison has been a positive ambassador for our library service and the wider Queensland Public Library community during her work on the project. The experiences and the relationships she built during her visit to New Zealand have already proven to be fruitful and I am confident this will continue for many years.

I've observed Alison's work with Jo Beazley to be cooperative, productive and most importantly, full of fun and enjoyment. They are to be congratulated on working and communicating so well, while working apart from each other, and this should be used as an example of how staff in Queensland public libraries could work better together on cooperative projects.

I commend QPLA for awarding this inaugural research scholarship to Alison and Jo. I have great confidence that the results of their work, and the positive manner in which they have worked, will set a high standard for future grant recipients to live up to.

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INTRODUCTION

Readers' Advisory (RA) is identified as a public library service in the Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries, with 'promoting the value of reading' listed in various strategic documents as a key practice. The degree to which this service is embedded in professional practice post-National Year of Reading was investigated, with recommendations provided for greater application to support community development. This paper outlines the investigative process and results, and details the value of collaboration and information sharing, and of building a strong service supported by strategic professional development.

While National Year of Reading focused attention on readers and reading, there was a lack of strategic focus on professional development to support programming, with many libraries unable to participate due to barriers such as staff having had no readers' advisory training, readers' advisory service not being recognised in position descriptions and strategic plans, and lack of time and budget for this service. The investigative process revealed a need for Queensland public library staff to work more collaboratively across services on program development and information sharing to counteract identified barriers while simultaneously building the profession's expertise. A national or at least Queensland-wide approach to inclusion of readers' advisory service in strategic documents would support the intention of its inclusion in the Standards and Guidelines, while a state-wide approach to professional development would strengthen the profession's ability to meet the community's expectations of delivery of this core service. Results indicate that having trained staff working together to offer a quality readers' advisory service across Queensland public libraries will be a strategic step towards library futures, both generally and to support national developments that arise from the National Year of Reading.

A variety of definitions for the term 'readers' advisory' were collected during the course of research with a succinct working definition chosen for inclusion on the survey -

A readers' advisory service is one in which trained library staff actively work with and for their community to connect members of the community with their reading needs.

This service is also known as readers' engagement, reader development and reader services. Responses across Australia and New Zealand to the bi-national focus on reading and the public library's role in supporting readers have ranged from limited and isolated to extensive, active and innovative. Vicki Darling noted (2008, p. 103) the 'need for a shift in focus away from collecting and processing and toward added value activities and (community) support.' Sherrey Quinn (2008a, p. 185) noted a similar focus on people when she quoted from Branching Out, 'it starts with the reader and the individual reading experience.' Libraries Alive! (2012) provides a definition in the Standards and Guidelines -

A readers' advisory service is one in which knowledgeable, non-judgemental library staff help readers with their leisure reading needs. With a focus on the reader's tastes and requirements, the readers' adviser uses his/her knowledge of fiction and non-fiction material, reference tools, and familiarity with the library collection to help the reader answer questions such as 'What do I read next?'

‘Reading can transform people’s lives.’ (The Reading Agency, 2012). Reading is an enjoyable leisure activity and it is the foundation for learning. Reading is a complex process where readers actively interact with texts to construct meaning. Readers are those actively involved in reading. These terms are used across formats and the community to include readers, viewers and listeners and their connections with printed, visual and audio material. This position reflects current theory as supported by the New South Wales Readers’ Advisory Group (Forsyth, personal communication, 15 March 2012) and Library Journal’s Neal Wyatt (2012) who writes the column *Readers’ Advisory Crossroads* in which ‘books, movies, music and other media converge, and whole-collection readers’ advisory services goes where it may.’ The Standards and Guidelines (Libraries Alive!, 2012, p. 33) includes this definition, where ‘reading materials includes such other forms as audiobooks, ebooks, CDs and DVDs.’ This could be extended more broadly to include the Read Watch Play Reading Group’s (2013) note not to be ‘textist about format, or length of work, or context of the reading’ because ‘all reading is reading no matter the format’ or purpose.

Paul Brown (2013), of Best Sellers, is taking South Australian library staff to the next level of service with contextualised readers’ advisory service which presents ‘libraries with the means by which to manage enormous information sets, minimise cognitive overload for the reader, and heighten the discovery of bold and original connections across the collection.’ He quotes Neal Wyatt (n.d.) when advocating librarians ‘offer patrons the best of the library in terms of resources, expertise and imagination’. Priestner (2013) notes that ‘offering a responsive, agile service is key - it may create expectation, but it also creates engaged users.’ This paper outlines that the way for the profession to achieve best practice readers’ advisory service with engaged users and benefits to local communities is to advocate proactive behaviours in the national Standards and Guidelines and endorse their use, introduce State and nationally supported professional development, include readers’ advisory service in strategic documents, and establish a collaborative information sharing network.

METHODOLOGY

With a focus on readers' advisory service to the public library's community, research covered an exploration of various aspects of professional practice with;

- A literature review
- Collaborative online tools used for project work
- Creation of a public collaborative online space - projectREADja blog
 - collaborative work with Sally Pewhairangi
- Analysis of results of an internationally distributed online survey to public library staff in Australia and New Zealand
- A research visit to Auckland Libraries hosted by Paul Brown
- Consultation with key readers' advisory staff
 - top tips from readers' advisory practitioners
- Interviews and discussions with some public library staff
- Communication with lecturers about tertiary courses featuring readers' advisory
- Analysis of position descriptions in newly advertised positions
- Promotion of the research project to encourage discussion at conferences, training days, and in industry publications.
- Professional development

Literature Review

The early stages of research uncovered two particularly relevant papers from 2008 in Auslib's APLIS journals; Vicki Darling's *Reader Development in New Zealand Public Libraries* and Dr Alan Bundy's *A Nation Reading For Life: The Challenge for Australia's Public Libraries*. Darling and Bundy had both conducted surveys about the state of readers' advisory in their countries' public libraries at a time when librarians were becoming aware of the value of this service and what could be achieved on a national scale. Both developed recommendations for actions that are essential to the success of readers' advisory service, but as this research has identified; many of these have yet to be realised.

In a review of the literature, people and organisations most active in the readers' advisory field were identified. Some very recently published documents were among those that informed the research, including strategic documents from State Library of Queensland, Auckland Libraries, Australian Library and Information Association, Public Libraries of New Zealand, and reports on the National Year of Reading in Australian Library Journal and Australian Bureau of Statistics. Further papers of interest documented the position of readers' advisory in public libraries in the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Melbourne. These papers drew on themes of strategic planning, core service, training, collaboration and service evaluation. Papers referenced in this report are accessible through the attached reference list.

Collaborative online tools for project work

A shared passion for readers' advisory service and an understanding of the foundations of service delivery led to a joint application for the research scholarship. With the research authors in communities 1400 kilometres apart, online work was essential for efficient and effective communication. The authors used Google Drive to create and share documents and regularly used Skype for project meetings. Personal use of Twitter was continued for communication, information sharing, information gathering and promotion of new blog posts.

Creation of a public collaborative online space - projectREADja blog

The *projectREADja* blog was established as a collaborative online space to encourage conversations among the public library community; to promote the survey and research project, and to promote the value of online tools and collaboration. It is accessible at <http://projectreadja.wordpress.com>. The research partners chronicled the development of their research and exploration of readers' advisory services with regular posts over the year. The blog attracted international interest and active participation (see table 1 below) with 53 regular followers and 3157 views to date.

Blog posts chronicled the authors' visit to Auckland Libraries, their participation in Rural Libraries Queensland training days, and their exploration of readers' advisory practice, including book talks, book clubs, reading maps, reading groups, One Card membership, contextual readers' advisory, regular professional development, attitudes, programming, position descriptions, and use of social media. Photos were shared on personal Instagram accounts and added to the project blog and Flickr account (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/90866929@N02/>) to convey concepts and support engagement. Personal Twitter accounts were used to promote new blog posts. The use of online tools is recommended to overcome the identified barriers of budget, time, and isolation which manifest in lack of training, skills development, industry standard, and community engagement.

3157 views	96 views - highest views in one day during Auckland study visit
53 followers	277 people accessed the survey on the blog
28 comments	Audience mainly Australia, New Zealand, USA
26 posts	Most popular tags: readers' advisory, social media, community, collaboration, and Auckland.
	Promoted on Twitter, Facebook, email, blogs, QPLA news, Public Libraries Australia, Public Libraries Connect, at Rural Libraries Queensland training days, at TropicALIA PD day, at Kansas' Readers' Advisory Conference, and in person.

Table 1 Blog statistics 17 August 2012 to 21 July 2013 (11 months).

Like Sharon Uthmann's research scholarship blog (Dunn & Wilson Scholarship 2005 at <http://dunnandwilson.blogspot.com.au/>) that inspired this blog, *ProjectREADja* employed a conversational tone while providing information about topics under exploration. *ProjectREADja* had the added advantage of social media share capability which opened up the number of ways people could discover the blog and therefore the research and survey. With most public library services operating independently of one another there are few examples of collaborative resource sharing which results in each service spending time in program development and budget allocation in collateral design and production leaving less time and money for readers' advisory skills development and service delivery - to the detriment of each community. Sharing information, ideas and resources among Queensland (and Australian) public libraries is good economic sense.

It was found that:

- 29 percent of survey respondents noted that their library, to some extent, has a limited budget for readers' advisory services - with another 42 percent recording 'to a moderate extent' and 'to a large extent'.
- 38 percent of respondents noted that to a large extent time impacted on their ability to deliver readers' advisory services.
- 34 percent responded that they saw great collaborative value in the idea of 'an online site with shared program spaces and downloadable collateral for all Australian public libraries for readers' advisory information sharing and collaboration.'
- 38 percent saw value 'to some extent' in discussion lists and groups like aliaREAD for collaboration. Respondent 2 noted the benefit in 'a group for those responsible for RA in each library service to meet and share ideas and information quarterly or so like YPLG for Youth Services.'

Four noteworthy examples of collaborative online resource sharing are the national Summer Reading Club (SRC), Dads Read, ReadUp, and Get Reading!; the former three are library-generated projects promoting reading to a youth audience. The State Library of Queensland promotes SRC and Dads Read online, with the opportunity for librarians to provide content for SRC booklets (<http://www.summerreadingclub.org.au/for-libraries/>). Each program has downloadable and online resources to share. ReadUp was developed by Moreton Bay Region Libraries and made available to public and school libraries through a partnership with Book Links. It was promoted initially through email listservs and a Young People's Librarians Group meeting, with the developers 'hoping that people will spread the word via their networks and word of mouth' (Spelman, 2012). This valuable and innovative program developed by Queensland public library staff is an example of a program that would achieve best market reach if accessible online through Public Libraries Connect in Reader Advice. New librarians or those who move into young people's service will have missed the email and meeting but should be able to find program resources on one central site.

The opportunity to work with colleagues and to share information resources, ideas and program resources to the benefit of our communities is an idea valued by library staff nationally. The optimum online sites to host or promote these collaborations are identified as each State Library, particularly State Library of Queensland's Public Libraries Connect for Queensland public libraries:

<http://www.plconnect.slq.qld.gov.au/services/reader-advisory> A collaborative online space on this site would be a central point for Queensland librarians to promote dynamic readers' advisory practice, build a knowledge base for service, and to facilitate professional development in readers' advisory. A precedent has been set by the New South Wales Readers' Advisory Group which manages an online wiki <http://readersadvisory.wetpaint.com/>. Thirty-four percent of survey respondents indicated 'to a large extent' the value of an online site with shared program spaces and downloadable collateral for all Australian public libraries. Respondent 3 said, '*I think it makes sense that, rather than reinvent the wheel in every library service around the state, we share our ideas and learnings and maybe even develop and run programmes across multiple services.*' Thirty-five percent of respondents 'to a large extent' see value in a national reading strategy as an information sharing, collaborative tool. Merging the Get Reading! campaign and Love2Read campaign could be a start along this road.

There is surprisingly little content for professionals about readers' advisory or the Love2Read campaign on any of the accessible State Library sites despite their founder partnership. Love2Read noted (2013) that they 'would put a framework in place—a logo, a few national programs, some partnerships, ambassadors and friends—then ... would set it free, inviting anyone and everyone to use the campaign to promote reading in their community.' A commitment to add professional skills to the Love2Read (2013a) Unified National Network Statement would be welcomed as it would show recognition of the importance of including a skills foundation beneath programming (e.g....'and people with skills to help them find something they want to read').

We want anyone who sees a Love2Read logo out there – whether at a library, business, school, pre-school organization, or community centre – to instantly know they will find something to read, somewhere to read, or simply people who share a love of and belief in the importance of reading.

Consideration should be given to creating a reading professionals' area on the Love2Read website if the project has reach and longevity. Love2Read's proposal (2012) for taking the brand beyond National Year of Reading noted they would 'leverage <http://www.love2read.org.au/> as a central destination for information on reading and reading related information – both for the general public and for reading professionals. (They would) raise the profile of libraries and the role they play as catalysts within their communities by highlighting their work on the website.'

Thirty percent of respondents would like to see 'to a large extent' a collaborative reader services coordinator position at each State Library to support library staff professional development, training and information sharing, followed by 30 percent 'to a moderate extent'.

There is value in each State having a readers' advisory group similar to New South Wales' with face to face and online meetings and training. In the larger states, a distributed model of professional expertise is recommended, with representatives from library services volunteering to be involved in state wide response planning, and ongoing skills development training. Staff in isolated areas would not then have to travel to the capital city for training, and one State Library trainer would not have to visit all libraries.

Respondent 4 noting, *'There aren't really many opportunities for RA training and discussion out therewhich is a shame given that RA should be one of our most important core tasks in a library service. I think putting together a group to bring this to the forefront of library managers' attention and to improve the service we all offer, could only be good for our customers and our library services in general.'*

This report recommends the establishment and use of a collaborative online space with similar aims to that of British Columbia's Readers' Advisory Interest Group (2012); as a central point for Queensland public library staff to promote 'dynamic readers' advisory service , build a knowledge base for service, develop and share resources and expertise (state-wide), facilitate professional development in readers' advisory service, promote the development, awareness and use of digital and online readers' advisory tools - in order to foster a community of readers.'

Collaborative work with Sally Pewhairangi

Collaborative work with Sally Pewhairangi (Waimakariri District Libraries in New Zealand and Finding Heroes online) arose from discussions during the research visit in Auckland where Paul Brown outlined his developing theories of contextual readers' advisory practice - on which he presented at ALIA's Information Online conference in Brisbane. The resulting project included the tangible outcomes of a book talk event and a complementary reading map booklet available online and in print. The project involved online collaboration using a wiki and Skype and delivered a multi-format program to our communities which supported readers' needs and utilised collection-based programming. This fits Calderone, Herald and Cords' (2008) definition of a Readers' Advisory 2.0 service with;

the art of using digital tools not only to share information with and advise readers on finding the right book for the right mood, but to collaborate with both colleagues and patrons/readers to create, enhance, and use old and new readers' resources and forums; RA 2.0 helps us create community and address the social aspects of reading by going to where the readers are, as well as inviting them into our organizing, reviewing, and publicizing processes.

Alison Miles presented two book talks in a local cooking school, while the chef created desserts for the participants and participated in the discussion. The book talk format included readings and synopses with discussion of the themes of food, cooking and relationships as derived from the originating book *Chocolat* by Joanne Harris. Sally Pewhairangi designed the reading map which was provided in print and available online with 31 other titles accompanied by synopses, quotes, and online links to the books in both Waimakariri and Townsville library services. The program was promoted on CityLibraries Facebook, and live-tweeted by Jo Beazley who was able to attend the first book talk. The program received a 99.13% customer satisfaction rating from participants with requests for further programs. One participant was inspired to create her own reading map on sustainable tropical gardening (her area of expertise). This program's reading map is available online at <http://issuu.com/readingmap/docs/beyondchocolat>. Labels were added to each book cover with a QR code pointing back to the Townsville Reads page online for future readers to discover the reading recommendations.

The development of this program supported staff skills development in several competencies as outlined in Appendix One.

Analysis of results of an internationally distributed online survey to public library staff in Australia and New Zealand

The survey (questions included as Appendix Two) was developed to gather data from public library services and opinions from library staff on current readers' advisory practices in Australia and New Zealand. Some survey questions were drawn from Bundy's and Darling's 2008 surveys from Australia and New Zealand respectively to enable some comparison of data. This would then inform our conclusions on whether National Year of Reading and the renewed focus on reading had had a measurable effect on the professional practice of readers' advisory in Queensland (and Australian) public libraries. While Bundy's survey was mailed to all Australian public library service managers in 2008 with a recognised poor return rate, our 2012 survey monkey link was emailed to Australian and New Zealand public library service managers with a request to share with their staff. The survey link was also shared on Twitter, in presentations to Townsville's TropicALIA PD day and Rural Libraries Queensland PD day, on the Public Libraries Australia site, the Celebrate the Book Readers' Advisory Conference in Kansas, and in person to librarians on our Auckland tour. We included the incentive of a \$50 iTunes gift card for one respondent each from Australia and New Zealand. We contacted some survey respondents for further comment which enriched our knowledge about the readers' advisory environment.

It is acknowledged that survey results cannot provide a definitive illustration of the opinions of a whole cohort, but rather the opinions of the subset of those in the profession who responded to the survey. Darling's survey (2008, p. 93) returned just 28 responses from a possible 72 services, and Bundy's (2008) 74 responses from 532 library services. This project's survey resulted in 284 responses from across Australia and New Zealand, 94 percent of whom worked in public libraries. It is suggested that a survey schedule be established by Queensland Public Libraries Association or Australian Library and Information Association to survey a large standard sample of the profession in order to develop performance measures for this core public library service.

It was found that,

- 63 percent of library services had readers' advisory in strategic or planning documents. The authors gathered a selection of strategic plans and found their content varied greatly in the inclusion of readers' advisory service. The content ranged from non-existent, to general and specific. The following specific examples noted the link between a readers' advisory service and the need for program development.
 - Yarra Libraries Strategic Plan 2013-2016 (2012, p. 4) 'actively supports development of the love of reading and the joy of learning' and includes as its first objective for Goal One: Build Community Capacity; *'to develop and deliver programs and activities to support and enhance reader development, lifelong learning and participation for all.'* (p. 9).

- Geelong Regional Library Corporation Library Plan (2013) states that their vision is ‘a strong vibrant connected community enriched by reading’, their mission; ‘*will create opportunities for our community to read, learn and connect with each other and the world.*’ Their first goal is ‘*living to read, reading to live.*’ Their fourth strategy is ‘*reading community; promote and deliver engaging library programs, events and activities that encourage a lifelong love of reading and increase social inclusion.*’
 - Goldfields Library Corporation Library Plan 2013-2017 (p. 5) noted that it would meet community needs by ... ‘*continuing to identify and develop programs and services for... reader development, literacy and learning.*’
 - Auckland Council (2013, p. 15) notes in its focus area of customer and community connection, that it will ‘*support readers and promote reader development (with) programs and services that inspire learning and participation.*’
- 44 percent of respondents did not have readers' advisory in their position description.

“Because RA is not owned by any one member of staff, we are not always sending a cohesive message. Different staff are producing very different promotional material, and it is not all in keeping with what I learned at SLNSW. Because it is not in my PD, it is not appropriate for me to impose my ideas about RA on other staff. I find it frustrating when I see my library producing material that I do not think is best practice” – Respondent 1
 - From a selection of position descriptions that included the term, phrases ranged from;

Mentioning the term but not defining it:

 - ‘Provide effective, professional readers advising, reference and information services to all library users.’
 - ‘Provide reference and reader services to branch clients’.

Defining the term proactively:

 - ‘Have an interest in and knowledge of adult reading materials and the ability to engage adults with reading and other services of the library. Respond directly to customers’ reference and readers’ advisory enquiries, including those referred by other staff. Proactively serve library users who are seeking adult reading materials and services.’
 - ‘You will plan and coordinate high quality reader development activities, programs and projects across the library service; and oversee facilities management. This role provides support for the day to day operations of the library, and provides leadership and support to the reader development team, including providing strategic direction and day to day guidance.’
 - 38% of respondents believed that to a large extent time and 32% believed to a large extent staff knowledge and skills impacts on their ability to deliver readers’ advisory services.

‘I don’t think the issue for me is lack of support – it’s lack of TIME. The tools are out there but I have to have the time and the technological expertise to use them. And I’m light on in both areas.....’ (Respondent 6).

- 34% of respondents believed that to a large extent staff numbers in a library service impacts on their ability to deliver readers’ advisory services. A librarian from a small rural library noted that this type of library ‘limits what can be achieved.’ It is hoped that a more collaborative state-wide approach will lessen isolation and staff numbers as a barrier
- A large proportion of staff use social media for readers’ advisory service, including;
 - 53% using Facebook,
 - 30% using Twitter
 - 25% using a blog.

Many services ‘are not allowed’ to use social media at all. Only 12 percent of respondents use Diigo or Delicious as social bookmarking tools despite many libraries offering useful links on their websites. This is an area of opportunity for collaboration. CityLibraries Townsville tags ‘readers’ advisory’ resources on its Diigo site: <https://www.diigo.com/user/townsvililelib/reading>. Just 28 percent of respondents use GoodReads or LibraryThing in readers’ advisory service - another area of opportunity for growth.

- Blacktown Library (2012) identified a barrier to the success of National Year of Reading being the ‘lack of state-wide or national performance measures/evaluation tools’. Generic performance measures are most used by survey respondents:
 - 47 percent measured impact by the number of people attending and participating in their reading programs,
 - 46 percent measured impact by the number of reservations placed.
 - Between 22 and 45 percent of respondents measured impact on the collection in State-sanctioned ways - issues generally and issues of specific collections, collection performance, and numbers of requests and reservations placed.
 - Just 20 percent of respondents measured the numbers of reviews added to the catalogue. This is an area of opportunity for community engagement, and an area that can be successfully addressed collaboratively, particularly among the Rural Libraries Queensland staff who share one catalogue system.
 - Nearly 43 percent of library services do not report the measurements of impact of readers’ advisory.

Research visit to Auckland Libraries

Staff at Logan City Council Libraries and CityLibraries Townsville participated in Paul Brown’s Best Sellers readers’ advisory training in 2010 and 2012 respectively. Paul Brown has delivered *Best Sellers: Readers’ Advisory at the Core of Public Libraries* training to many large library services in Queensland, South Australia, Auckland and other New Zealand locations. Paul’s knowledge, experience and innovation in readers’ advisory practices were the catalyst to instigate a research visit to Auckland

Libraries. As Library Advisor - training and development, Paul hosted the tour of nine of Auckland's 55 libraries where the authors met many passionate library staff and observed a range of readers' advisory practices. This was followed by a catch up with Paul Brown and Sally Pewhairangi in Brisbane during the New Librarians' Symposium and ALIA Online. Subsequently, Alison Miles and Sally Pewhairangi began a successful three month online collaboration on a multi-format readers' advisory project.

Auckland Libraries is the largest public library system in Australasia after an amalgamation in 2010.

Auckland Libraries has:

- 55 physical libraries and four mobile libraries.
- 1300 public library employees
- 1.5 million residents with 37% aged 25 and under
- More than 180 different ethnic groups represented in the population
- 25 online NextReads eNewsletters, online recommended titles lists, blogs, and staff reviews.
- A staff picks (recommendations) blog with all staff contributing under the guidance of the Social Media Librarian.
- A focus on children and young people 'to work in active partnerships so that every child in Auckland from birth has the opportunity to experience the magic of reading and discover all that libraries offer' (Auckland Council, 2013, p. 21).
- A focus on customer and community connection with the direction to 'support readers and promote reader development'. 'Library programming will offer people the skills necessary to participate and will broaden the reading experience of customers. A strong underlying theme in all of our programming is the encouragement and development of readers and a reading culture.' (Auckland Council, 2013, p. 30).
- A Reader Services team for program planning and delivery
- Built readers' advisory practice into relevant position descriptions:
 - *Professional Specialist Areas: Provision of readers' advisory service to adults. Assisting other staff in reader's advisory services with training and mentoring.*
 - *Expected Outcomes: Appropriate programmes are developed and delivered to target groups which are well received and meet programme objectives. Staff are well trained and competent in the delivery of readers' advisory services* (Auckland Council, 2013a).

The authors met many Auckland Libraries' staff, including Karen Craig (Team Leader, Reader Services), Greg Morgan (Manager Service Development) and Paul Brown (also Best Sellers), who hosted our visit. Nine very different libraries were included on the tour, with different programs and methods for connecting readers to collections and services on show. Karen Craig hosted the tour of Auckland's Central Library, highlighting how physical spaces enhance a readers' advisory service. Karen spoke about the training staff receive on building professional displays that sell collections and resources, with importance placed on signage, location, recommendations on bookmarks, and resource selection.



Central Library staff participate in Author of the Month promotions with the creation of a physical display and online content <http://www.aucklandlibraries.govt.nz> with links to the catalogue. This program supports collection knowledge development for staff. Karen discussed Take 5, and the Tic Tac Toe Genre Book Challenge - customers are given a card with eight genres and are encouraged to read and mark off at least three to go into the draw to win a prize.



Jolene West and Anne Dickson, Library Advisors from the Youth Service Development team discussed their summer reading program *Dare to Explore*, and their teen readers' advisory program *Fuse* which launched that week. Both programs involve tracking reading, completing challenges and fostering relationships between young people and their families, libraries and library staff. There is an expectation that all staff across Auckland complete at least one of the challenges. *Auckland Libraries Te Kauroa - Future Directions 2013 - 2023* (Auckland Council, 2013) has a focus area solely devoted to children and young people to 'support whole families with their literacy and reading journey...and taking programmes out into schools and the community..'.

Tosca Waerea, Social Media Librarian, discussed making social media streams relevant, and the need for staff in these spaces to stop, collaborate and listen. She discussed readers' advisory and the role social media can play in this field, with the library being in spaces where the community is rather than making them come to the library. Social media channels can demonstrate the relevance of collections and services using connections, content and staff. Tosca is responsible for the library service's social media streams and eNewsletters which she populates heavily with content for readers. Tosca recently participated in the Dark Knight discussion panel which aimed to 'question, challenge and celebrate sex and sexuality on the page, stage and screen with a special series of thought-provoking events for over 18s'. (Stuff.co.nz, 2013). Auckland Libraries staff issued books and memberships in city bars as part of the Dark Night season. <http://events.stuff.co.nz/2013/dark-night-discussion-panel-the-new-erotica/auckland> this is an example of successful contextual readers' advisory programming in the community.

Otara's Tupu Youth Library is a purpose built library created to meet the needs of the community's youth, and to provide safe spaces for young people. Richie Misilei and his staff of children and teen librarians have a vision for their service built on community and respect, and have created a welcoming space reflecting this. The team collaborates with community elders and members to roll out programs that build a wide range of literacy skills. The library's recent *Apocalypse Z* program saw young people attend a disaster workshop, and learn and develop research skills to help them problem solve tasks. Dr Matt Finch noted (Auckland Council, 2013b) that 'the library is a gateway for Auckland's youth to explore culture, learning and imagination through many activities.' Of particular interest was the contextual zombie reading list created to enhance the program.

<http://www.aucklandlibraries.govt.nz/EN/News/NewsArticles/Pages/zombiestupuyouthlibrary.aspx>.

Botany Library is located in a shopping centre and was built with modern retail principles in mind. The library includes extended opening hours, purpose built equipment for collection displays and staff recruited to reflect retail principles of customer service. The Manager, Karen Harbers noted that shelve

get asked the best questions so all staff are encouraged to shelve and to engage with customers in the library; to be where customers are. While talking with staff at Titirangi Library, the authors asked their standard question: ‘What type of things do you do for readers’ advisory in this library?’ The Manager responded straight away that ‘We all read here and love talking to our customers about books!’ This attitude saw staff willingly engage with customers to promote their collection.



Onehunga Library is located in what was traditionally an industrial, lower socio-economic area that is changing into a boutique community. Rachel Town-Treweek, Manager, believed attitude makes a big difference to the service staff provide, and had staff greeting community members as they entered the library and spending time with them in the library. Rachel’s commitment to creating a community of readers was evidenced by her recommended reads display featuring a photo of children who recommended the displayed books. This soft entry point into the library service is very successful, with many parents, siblings and whānau coming in to view displays and talk with staff.

The Massey Community Library - co-located with a YMCA and a daycare centre - has spaces built around ecological principles with water features outside helping cool the inside of the building. Of interest was the amount of staff on the floor engaging with and helping customers. This library successfully promotes adult reading programs like Take 5 (promoted to adults across Auckland Libraries over summer). Training in appeal characteristics and collection knowledge is required to gather together five similarly themed books and DVDs. This is a great program for fast issues with RFID. Readers have the chance to extend their reading and to discover new reading experiences.



Waitakere Central Library is co-located with a Unitech across the road. This library had a strong local studies collection with more of a research focus reflecting the local community it serves. Takapuna Community Library, on Auckland’s North Shore, has strong ties with the Michael King Writers Centre. Helen and Jacque discussed their library’s initiatives for readers and the community, noting that ‘book shovelling is very different to readers’ advisory’ (personal communication). Their neighbourhood project involves outreach to the local community with the intention of getting to know the local businesses, and sharing relevant library information with them, including a readers’ advisory service. They were also piloting a personalised readers’ advisory service for older readers that has been received well.

East Coast Bays Library was the last library on the tour. The authors met Anne, Joy and Sarah who felt very strongly that the reading experience must engage customers and promote the collection. This library serves a strong reading community and all staff have readers’ advisory in their internal position descriptions. In support of collection-based programming, staff contributed local history themed bookmarks for the local heritage festival. East Coast Bays Library holds a twice monthly book chat where people bring two or three books in and talk about them with the group, facilitated by staff.

While in Auckland, the authors took the opportunity to meet Fiona Mackie, President of the School Library Association of New Zealand after reading the National Librarian Bill McNaught's article in *Collected* about Fiona's work with the National Library in conceiving Word Up. Word Up is New Zealand's response instead of a National Year of Reading. McNaught (2012, p. 16), wrote '*The Word Up proposal has been put together by a group of organisations with a shared belief in the importance of reading for the educational, social and economic well-being of New Zealanders. Its focus is reading for pleasure and it aims to reach people - especially families - who are not in the habit of reading.*' McNaught noted that the organisers did not want to confine their efforts to a single year, instead 'devising a programme that can achieve sustainable results into the future, planned from the outset for cumulative long term impact.'

The authors also met in Auckland with Sally Pewhairangi of Finding Heroes. Sally had recently relocated to Waimakariri District Libraries in Rangiora, but returned for the weekend to discuss readers' advisory strategies and cross-library collaborations in public libraries. This led to a contextual readers' advisory program collaboration between CityLibraries Townsville and Waimakariri District Libraries. The authors subsequently met Sally Pewhairangi and Paul Brown again in Brisbane during NLS6 and ALIAOnline.

Online and in-person interviews with key readers' advisory staff

Online and face to face meetings were held with key readers' advisory staff identified by the authors, including Ellen Forsyth and Catherine Johnstone, Vassiliki Veros, Paul Brown, Sally Pewhairangi, Adele Walsh, Nadia Patch and Rachel Van Riel.

The authors interviewed Nadia Patch, Reader Services Coordinator at Brisbane City Council Libraries, in September at a QPLA event. Nadia had also trained with Paul Brown and was enthusiastic about her role. She is responsible for training 300 staff in readers' advisory service, accomplishing this through regular meetings and workshops with the team leaders of Brisbane's 33 libraries and targeted emails. She gives staff skills to make them look like they are big readers. She noted that while not all staff read, or are comfortable discussing reading, it is a trainer's role to equip them with the right tools and skills, and training in events programming.

Nadia teaches staff 'hand-selling', a personal way of promoting books, similar to the World Book Night concept. She advocates partnerships with bookshops for visiting authors. Her team was responsible for creation of the Top 40 Book Club Reads booklet available in print and online. The authors suggest State Library of Queensland partner with the Rural Libraries Queensland group to create a similar multi-platform booklet to promote book club sets to rural communities. The Get Reading! campaign has this in place currently each September with author tours to complement people's reading. An online collaborative space would enable library staff to share ideas on programming to support this campaign.

Nadia noted that all Brisbane City Council Libraries position descriptions include readers' advisory service. The following is an example gathered by the authors' in their collection of position descriptions.

- Senior Librarian: Lead the provision of library services with a strong customer focus on developing a passion for reading, information, and learning services amongst the library team. Lead, support and facilitate the functions of reference & information services, readers' advisory services to a professional standard which are strategically aligned with Library Services and Council's business ensuring that the library and staff are:
 - Capable and responsive to customer needs
 - Demonstrating a passion for reading and for library services.
 - Able to use a wide range of library collections, databases, online resources, and other reference sources.

Much work has already been done by the State Library of New South Wales on readers' advisory with state-wide library training (Rewarding Reading), establishment of a wiki at <http://readersadvisory.wetpaint.com/>, an annual seminar, and regular meetings throughout the state. Staff involved in New South Wales' Readers' Advisory Group (NSW RAG) include Ellen Forsyth (Consultant, Public Library Services), an internationally recognised expert in the field, and Catherine Johnstone. The authors interviewed Ellen and Catherine at ALIA Online. The NSW RAG created the Love2Read Online Reading Group which continued in 2013 as the Read Watch Play Online Reading Group. Ellen, also Administrator of the aliaREAD discussion list, is a strong advocate of collaboration and information sharing to best support professional practice, and has invited all Australian public library staff to contribute to the wiki. Both Ellen and Catherine are strong social media advocates.

The authors' Skyped with Vassiliki Veros (also on NSW RAG, and at the time ALIA State Manager for NSW). Vassiliki is a passionate reader and readers' advisor who recently presented at the 4th international POPCAANZ conference (Popular Culture Association of Australia and New Zealand) and GenreCon. Her advice included getting out in the community and outside the library industry to talk about libraries and library services, having staff run genre-based or multi-title book groups (not single titles), use social media in readers' advisory service, and include passive readers' advisory tools (bookmarks) so those people who don't come in contact with a librarian are still given reading options.

Adele Walsh's job as Program Coordinator at the Centre for Youth Literature involves programming, professional development for teachers and public library staff, school visits, writing, management of nationally recognised online spaces (Inside a Dog and ReadAlert) and promotion of Australian authors. Readers' advisory underpins all aspects of Adele's role.

Adele raised many issues of relevance to all readers' advisory services as she noted that it is important to;

- Go places where teens are and talk about books. The Inky Awards is a conversation.
- Build relationships with teens and allow them to talk about reading with us and to us.
- Ask, and talk to all customers about what they are reading - 'reading is not a solitary pastime. People want to share and talk, so staff should use tools like Real Men Read, GoodReads, LibraryThing and Book Smugglers.'
- Build collaborative partnerships
- Have all staff develop readers' advisory skills
- Be aware of trends, including the changing face of Young Adult with the new genre of 'New Adult'
- Not rely on library displays - readers' advisory is about people and relationships

- Use innovative programming like graphic novel speed dating.

Top tips from readers' advisory practitioners

In interviews and conversations with library staff and leading readers' advisory practitioners, the authors asked for their top five recommendations for best practice. Recommendations have been grouped into one list of the best advice from our experts.

1. Promote a leadership culture in the library service that fosters readers' advisory work and communicates to staff that promoting reading is a fundamental role of a public library.
2. Read across the collection and make your Library Management System work for you and your community. Use its features and functions to generate lists, tailor alerts, and recommend more great reads. Reporting from your LMS can identify areas that are popular, areas that need promotion, etc.
3. Hang a whiteboard in the staffroom for staff members to write up which book they are reading.
4. Share and track what you read and encourage your customers and staff to do the same. Discover readers' advisory tools like GoodReads and LibraryThing. Write a review and share it with others online.
5. Plan for One Queensland (like One Card South Australia and Rural Libraries Queensland Tourist Card).
6. Keep your knowledge current with readers' advisory tools. Read the newspaper reviews each week, check bookshop catalogues for new releases. Track the reviews that staff and customers have added to your catalogue. Talk with your community about what they have enjoyed reading, watching and playing.
7. Take your books and resources outside the library building and into the community, because you are the library! Going to a council or community meeting? Take a handful of books that you think might appeal to other attendees and lend them out. East Coast Bays Library in New Zealand partners with a local heritage festival and produces a themed book list of resources and books.
8. Involve your readers and show them they are important. Find an adult, a group of children or a book group. Ask them 'Which book have you read recently that you enjoyed?' Take their photo (with the book if they have it) and create a recommended by (name) poster and display it proudly. Onehunga Library had a wonderful example of this from their younger readers.
9. Promote staff as readers' advisory experts using Staff Picks. Each staff member at Logan North has a colour coded bookmark with a 5 star graphic and their name. They simply choose a book they enjoyed and would recommend, place the bookmark inside with the label showing, and place it on designated end displays. Logan North Library loaned over 11,000 'staff picks' in the first 12 months.
10. Use displays to highlight authors, subjects, topical events, local events and history, or collection areas that are not highly used. Displays can also feature what's hot, hot off the press, just returned, study guides, author of the month (each staff member gets a turn). East Bay Libraries shelving and display of newly returned items, and new books has created a browsing zone for customers, who then borrow heavily from this area, effectively reducing returns shelving by up to 47 percent.

11. Bring your interests to work. Interested in movies, gaming, cars, Elvis memorabilia? What display can you put together based on the Read, Watch, Play principle? (books, movies and gaming)
12. Promote themed collections and resources on Council intranet. For example Top 5 books to movies, Top 5 audio books, Top 5 eBooks. If you are a large library service, spread responsibility around the libraries. If you are in a small library, spread responsibility around your staff members and avid readers in your community, or partner with another service.
13. Front face as many books as possible. People want to see the front cover and touch the book with ease.
14. Include readers' advisory discussion as part of your operational and strategic plans and discuss at weekly staff meetings.
15. Create a genre based readers' advisory challenge for staff to participate in. Make a list of twelve genres that you may not know much about, feel comfortable or be interested in reading. Find a book/resource that fits that category and challenge yourself to read one each month. Discussions can take place in staff meetings or online via Twitter, Facebook or on blogs.
16. Promote the librarian as the community's reading expert - develop programs that support readers, and that reach readers in different ways.
17. Program collaboration across services, and be innovative (for example, a multi-city book club discussion across Skype on NBN, and other different book club ideas - <http://projectreadja.wordpress.com/2013/02/11/do-different-bookclubs-and-reading-groups/>)
18. Read widely.



Communication with lecturers about tertiary courses featuring readers' advisory

While the authors advocate state-wide support for readers' advisory training for currently employed library staff they were also interested to discover what library students were being taught at TAFE and University level in Australia. The authors found conflicting opinions about its value in a theoretical context. 14.8 percent of survey respondents said that they had gained knowledge about readers' advisory from TAFE or University studies. The National Year of Reading campaign did not address the inclusion of readers' advisory skills development in tertiary education, although ALIA did partner with Love2Read and TAFE NSW to deliver the tailored subject *Promote Client Access to Literature*. Alison participated in this online short course in 2012 and found it rewarding from a knowledge-development and information sharing perspective. Wiegand noted (2006) in his article 'Where library and information science fails the library profession', that 'the vast majority... (of) nearly five thousand students graduating from ALA-accredited library and information science programs in the next year... will have been schooled to think that an intellectual curiosity about what millions of their patrons read, and why, is not only beyond the scope of their practice as an information professional, but actually none of their professional business. What a shame.'

The question of inclusion of readers' advisory in tertiary courses was raised at the Reading Critical Conference in 2008, with Sherrey Quinn (2008b, p. 188) noting that 'in readers' advisory work it is important to have a range of training opportunities. It would be good to get a greater acknowledgement of readers' advisory work into our tertiary courses (because)... we are now seeing a glaring gap.' Christine Mackenzie, CEO of Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service, (2008, p. 188), suggested that 'there is just not room (in a graduate diploma or undergraduate course) to specialise down to that area. People have to take some responsibility for their own learning, and also be provided with on the job training courses like Sherrey's (Rewarding Reading).'

The authors found strong readers' advisory program content at both Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and University of South Australia (UniSA). Kate Davis, Lecturer, discussed the readers' advisory content of a couple of her subjects at QUT. Students in INN531 Collection Management look at readers' advisory as a collection marketing tool; finding alternative ways of arranging collections to promote discovery, and of developing products (e.g. subject guides). Davis noted that students discover librarians as the libraries' point of difference in an increasingly online world - librarians add value with recommendations, training and assistance. Readers' advisory is also raised in INN333 Information Programs; students explore a range of products, programs and services with a user-centred view aiming to design programs to meet users' needs (Davis, personal communication, 15 May, 2013).

Dr Diane Velasquez, Program Director, co-teaches LIBR5013 Reading for Leisure and Learning at University of South Australia. Her research interests include reader's advisory and librarians' perception of readers of genre fiction, especially the romance genre. Students are taught readers' advisory skills such as the customer interview, preparing programs, and resources to build reading into the community. Students prepare genre guides online, encouraging research and skills development. (Velasquez, personal communication, 11 June 2103). Dr Velasquez' enthusiasm for her course was evident in her discussion. Course content included 'Popular fiction for adults, adolescents and children; understanding the reader; how texts reflect the society that produces them; social debates over what people should or should not

read, and what is good literature; book selection, annotations and reviews; resource based learning; the librarian's professional responsibilities in regard to the provision of leisure reading materials' (University of South Australia, 2013).

Other responses received from Universities were less clear on the readers' advisory content or focus of their courses and were unclear about their interpretation of the term 'readers' advisory'.

ALIA's partnership with Love2Read and TAFE NSW enabled many library staff from Australia and New Zealand to participate in readers' advisory training in April 2012 with the tailored subject *Promote Client Access to Literature*. This practical unit continues to be offered in a handful of Australian TAFE colleges (Box Hill, Victoria, TAFE NSW, TAFE SA, Canberra IT, ACT, Southbank IT and Sunshine Coast TAFE, Queensland, and Charles Darwin University, Northern Territory) as *Promote Literature and Reading*.

The CULINL501A *Promote Literature and Reading* unit 'describes the performance outcomes, skills and knowledge required to promote literature and reading in a wide variety of contexts. Particular emphasis is on promoting literacy by creating environments that provide access to relevant and attractive reading material in a variety of formats to suit a range of ages and reading levels.' (Box Hill Institute, 2013).

TAFE NSW's *Promote Client Access to Literature* (TLIB301A) aimed to introduce participants to the wide range of literature in library collections and the ways libraries can promote its use to clients. Students were encouraged to consider how libraries organise and provide access to collections, respond to clients' requests, and promote literature collections.

Analysis of position descriptions in advertised positions

One hundred position descriptions for public library jobs in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, advertised between August 2012 and June 2013, were collected and analysed for inclusion of some form of 'readers' advisory' skills and responsibilities. Sites used to source these position descriptions included Seek.com, ALIA's job site, LG-Jobs, PUBSIG-L discussion list and Council websites. There was an equal distribution overall between those that did not include, and those that did include 'readers' advisory' and related terms. It was found that the percentage of public library staff (from New Zealand and Australia combined) with readers' advisory in their position descriptions has risen between 2008 and 2013, but it was concluded that the national campaign had little direct correlation to this result - although it may have raised awareness - therefore its effectiveness in empowering library staff to address Australia's literacy issues is unclear. New Zealand was the only location where the inclusion rate was larger than, and more than double that of non-inclusion.

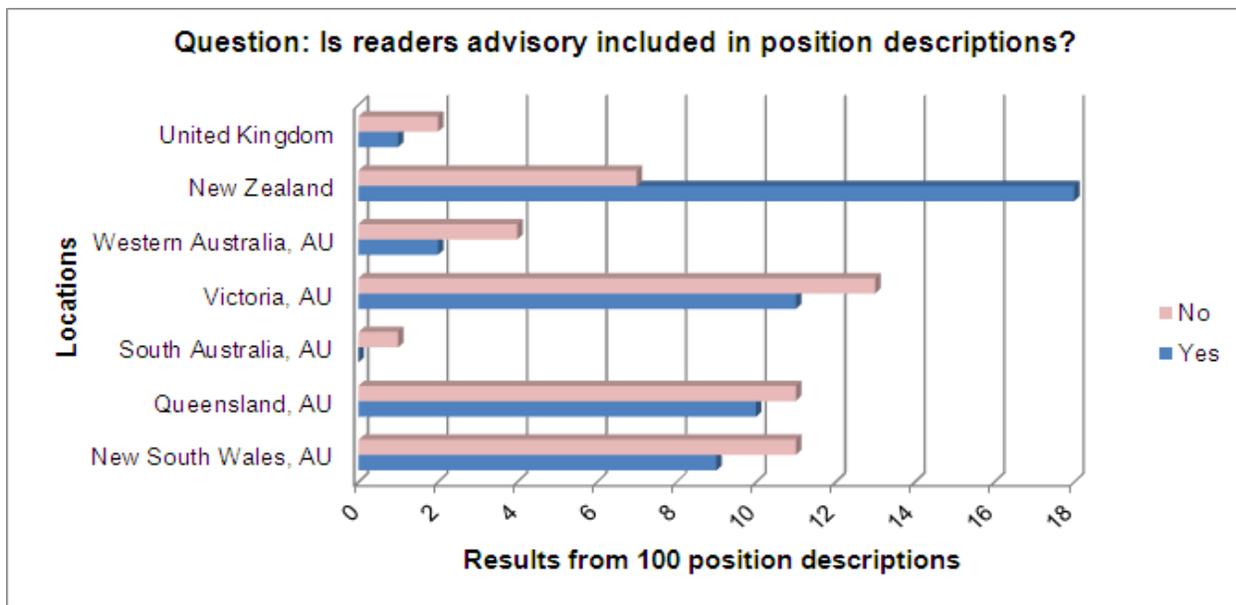


Figure 1 Is readers' advisory included in position descriptions?

These findings align with survey results where 44% of respondents said they have readers' advisory in their position description. Vicki Darling noted in her comprehensive report on *Reader Development in New Zealand Public Libraries* (2008) that 'to be fully effective, reader development needs to be considered holistically and it needs to be articulated in a library's documents - including strategic or annual plans and staff job descriptions.'

Similarly, one of the recommendations in Dr Alan Bundy's *A Nation Reading for Life* report (2008) was that 'reader development is articulated in public library strategic plans and staff position descriptions.'

Darling and Bundy conducted similar surveys in 2008 on readers' advisory in public libraries in New Zealand and Australia respectively. Darling reported that 50 percent of survey respondents had 'reader development/advice specified in (their) staffing structure and/or job descriptions' while Bundy reported 18 percent of Australian respondents had 'literacy and reader development specified in (their) staffing structure'. Our survey, conducted in 2012, received 2.7 times more responses than both Darling and Bundy's surveys combined, but both return results from the same pool; that is, from position descriptions of public library staff employed in Australia and New Zealand.

Both Darling and Bundy's reports were written at a time when library staff from both countries were beginning to discuss the possibility of a national or joint year of reading after the United Kingdom's campaigns in 1998-99 and 2008, and their related focus was on supporting national initiatives with three foundation strategies: strategic planning, training and staff position responsibilities. This focus was not evident in Australia's National Year of Reading campaign, although the former two were identified in Ellard, Kelly and McKerracher's report (2012), *National Year of Reading: A year-long celebration and a lasting legacy*. They note that 'many (libraries) now employ reader development librarians, who are trained to support reading for pleasure and literacy initiatives.' Without data to support this statement it is difficult to validate, but it is proposed that this statement could not be said to be the case in Queensland public libraries.

Just four of the 100 position descriptions for recently advertised jobs were for reader development librarians; one in New South Wales, two in Victoria, and one in New Zealand. The only established specific ‘reader development librarian’ positions in Queensland are identified as the Coordinator Reading at Brisbane City Council Libraries and the Community and Reader Advisory Services Librarian at Moreton Bay Region Libraries.

Readers’ advisory service is included as a subset of Information Services in *The Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries* (Libraries Alive!, 2012) which states that ‘appropriate training in information service and readers’ advisory work and procedures are provided to all staff; appropriately trained staff provide information literacy and reader/library customer education services.’ That is, all staff have a role in the provision of a readers’ advisory service and as such should have this responsibility articulated in their position descriptions, supported by strategic documents and training.

With all Australian State Libraries and public library associations partnering to deliver the National Year of Reading, it was the most opportune time to develop a national strategic approach to staffing and delivery of readers’ advisory services. That approach, however, *The Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries* (Libraries Alive!, 2012), is not universally endorsed, with an individualised local approach more in evidence. Sherrey Quinn, Director of Libraries Alive! and co-creator of the Standards document noted that ‘Everyone managing or working with public libraries has a role in achieving this aim:

- NSLA, ALIA and the public library associations in promoting the existence of the standards and their value in benchmarking, in aiming at least for equity and for improvement in those areas that are below recommended targets.
- Library managers to assess their own library performance, in benchmarking, fine-tuning, and continuous improvement in service delivery.
- Any concerned stakeholder to use the guidelines and standards in advocacy for improved resources for their own public library or any others’ (Quinn, personal communication, 19 February, 2013).

State Library of Queensland endorses on its website both the 2012 national document and its own now outdated 2009 document *Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines: Reference Services Standard* which contains a minor reference to one kind of reader service on its final page. Despite National Year of Reading lacking a strategic staff focus, and the National Standards not being endorsed nationally, it can be seen in **Figure 2** that:

- The percentage of public library staff (from New Zealand and Australia combined) with readers’ advisory in their position descriptions has risen between 2008 and 2013 - from 27 percent to 41 percent, and 52 percent of recently advertised positions.
- The percentage of public library staff from Australia with readers’ advisory in their position descriptions has risen between 2008 and 2013 - from 18% to 42%, and 45% of recently advertised positions.

- The percentage of public library staff from New Zealand with readers' advisory in their position descriptions shows variation between 2008 and 2013 - from 50% to 35%, but then 72% of new positions.

With the national campaign having little direct correlation to this result - although it may have raised awareness - the readers' advisory content of position descriptions and expectation of staff in Australian public libraries varies greatly, which leads to public library services and librarians collectively making less of a contribution 'to the goal of a Literate Nation' (Ellard, Kelly & McKerracher, 2012) than is possible and required.

Conversely, Mathieson (2008) notes that the Readers for Life Regional Strategy in North West England included the strategy that 'libraries across the North West region will:

- Recruit staff with genuine enthusiasm for reading and ensure that reader development is reflected in job descriptions, an integral part of induction and continuous staff training.
- Improve methods of evaluation of local reader development activities so that impact is monitored and recorded and to enable future activities to be improved.'

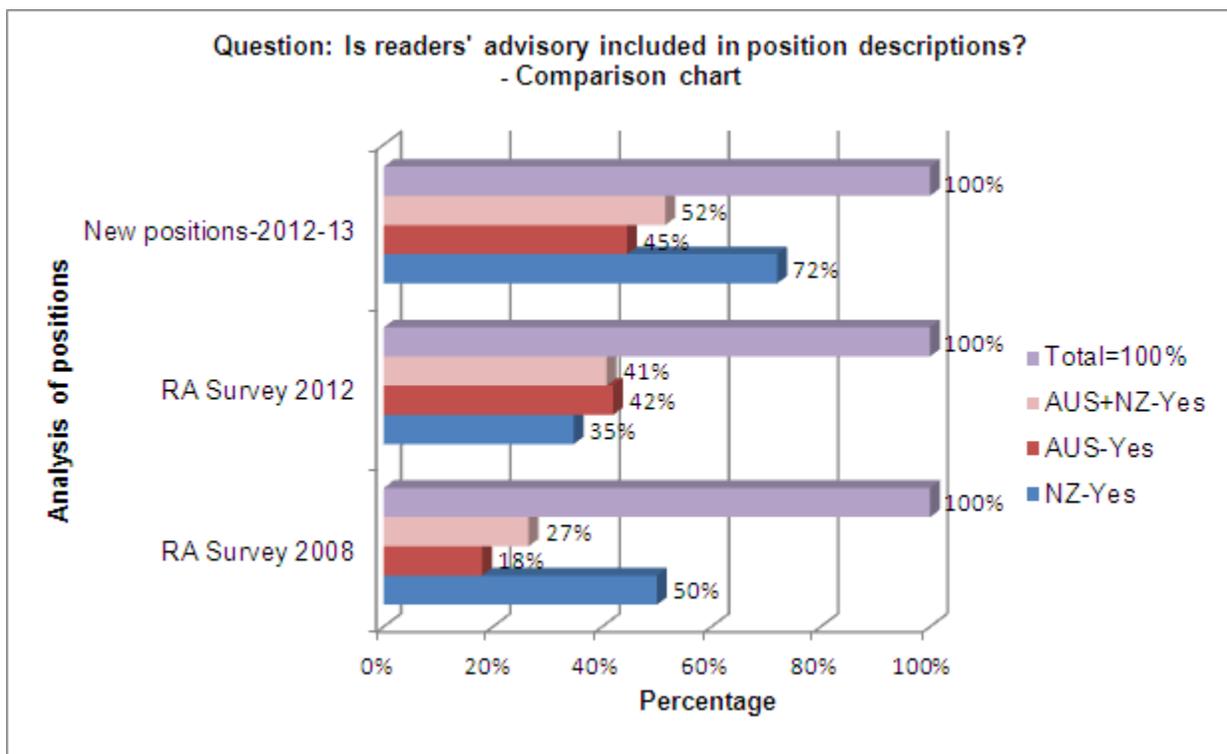


Figure 2 Is readers' advisory included in position descriptions? - Comparison chart

The national *Standards and Guidelines* states that all staff should be trained to provide readers' advisory services. It is recommended then that all relevant staff have this responsibility articulated in their position descriptions supported by strategic documents and training so as to take the best profession-wide action for our communities. There is also value in having specific positions throughout Queensland identified as readers' advisory positions to best support collaboration and professional development (as noted in Creation of a public collaborative online space above). As one survey respondent noted, 'we do have

limited budget and resources for RA, as do many libraries. I see our biggest barrier to providing an excellent service is lack of responsibility. It is not in anyone's position description, or anyone's specific responsibility, so it is easily forgotten.'

It is also recommended to adopt a distributed model of professional expertise be established in Queensland with specific positions throughout the state identified as readers' advisory positions, with these representatives and other volunteers collaborating in a state-wide response to capacity building and ongoing skills development training with support from State Library of Queensland, Queensland Public Libraries Association and each library service. This model will include development of agreed competencies, and the facilitated development of a set of collaborative programs, with the possibility of the model being articulated nationally in partnership with the Love2Read campaign.

Promotion of research project to encourage discussion at conferences, training days, and in industry publications.

The authors engineered opportunities and were offered opportunities to promote the research project and share their growing knowledge of readers' advisory practices. They presented to these audiences -

By invitation:

Two Rural Libraries Queensland professional development days, by Skype (November, 2012 and April, 2013).

TropicALIA professional development day (November, 2012), Townsville

Lyndelle Gunton's video presentation on practitioner research at New Librarian's Symposium, Brisbane (February, 2013)

Public Libraries Connect eNewsletter (November, 2012)

QPLA eNewsletters

Opportunities:

Public Libraries Australia promoted the survey (October-November, 2012)

Promotional poster at Celebrate the Book Readers' Advisory Conference, Kansas (November, 2012).

InCite article (January-February, 2013) '*Reading can transform people's lives.*'

The authors received a request for a copy of their *Top Ten Low Cost/No Cost/High Return Ideas for readers' advisory service in public libraries* delivered at the second RLQ workshop from a small regional library service in New South Wales whose librarian planned to put the ideas into practice.

Professional Development

Paul Brown, of Best Sellers, stated in 2008 (Brown, 2008, p. 153) that,

Despite being a core function of public libraries, there currently exists in New Zealand no accredited training regime in the provision of readers' advisory services. In the absence of formal education programs much of what is delivered still strongly depends upon local initiative and individual application, but which also

renders readers' advisory services susceptible to large variation in quality and effectiveness.

Dr Alan Bundy (Bundy 2008, p 182), noted that 'many Australian public libraries do not have the knowledgeable staffing, staff training funding, and state/territory based encouragement and support to become proactive providers of reader development for their communities'.

While 80 percent of survey respondents said they had undertaken some sort of readers' advisory professional development within the last three years, this was spread across training with external consultants, in-house training, professional reading, conference sessions, and study of TAFE and university subjects. The State Library of New South Wales has funded Rewarding Reading training for New South Wales public library staff, and the State Library of Victoria has funded Frontline online reader development training program for three years. Kelly (2008) noted that Frontline training would be delivered to '890+ librarians from 42 out of 45 library services' in a three year training program completed in September 2013. It is hoped that Victorian libraries can provide some strategic lessons for public libraries nationally.

Ellard, Kelly and McKerracher (November, 2012, p. 262) reported,

Many libraries... have taken a more active role in reader development. Many now employ reader development librarians, who are trained to support reading for pleasure and literacy initiatives. Victorian public libraries are ... embracing reader development training... with other states also considering this creative reading programme (Frontline).

State-wide training has not eventuated in Queensland (and some other states) despite its ability to support the goals of the National Year of Reading, and Brown's observation above is unfortunately still relevant today. Darling (2008, p. 104) reported the 'high levels of duplication of effort, and less well-resourced libraries not being able to effectively offer key services. Finding effective methods for collaboration is a priority... if we want to ensure there is no service divide in public libraries.'

The forty-four position descriptions for jobs advertised by New South Wales and Victorian libraries over the ten months showed that 9% more of the jobs did not include readers' advisory. In contrast with Queensland where there has been no State-funded training (although several larger local governments have funded staff training), there is no significant difference in results. Lack of time, staff knowledge and skills, staff numbers, staff interest and isolation were key factors that impacted on library staff ability to take an active role in reader development - and thus impact on Queensland and Australian public libraries' ability to 'offer a readers' advisory service to all library customers' (Libraries Alive!, 2012, p. 33) and ability to fully participate in Love2Read's Unified National Network. Staff training is the foundation that will best support a successful national (or Queensland) reading strategy. Respondent 5 replied, "I think training has helped me personally in my own readers' advisory skills, I feel much more confident when responding to readers' advisory requests. I have also used lots of ideas gained in the training such as creating displays, shelf talkers, face out display, customer book reviews in our online & printed newsletter etc."

Respondent 3 noted that *'RA should be one of our most important core tasks in a library service'*, and it can come to be so with state-wide or national support for readers' advisory training and professional development. Quinn (Reading Rewards, 2008) states, 'Reading for pleasure is core business for public libraries, and library staff need to be equipped to talk with readers about books, to promote the pleasures of reading, to take a proactive role in suggesting reading materials, and in making the books and reading material more accessible and appealing'. The *Standards and Guidelines* (2012, p. 33) advocates the provision of training for all staff and includes the guideline that 'Staff have a responsibility to maintain their reference and readers' advisory skills and knowledge to a professional standard by participating in training and self-development/education.'

It is recommended that the State Library of Queensland, Queensland Public Libraries Association and public library services support a state-wide professional development strategy in readers' advisory services for all relevant staff. This professional development to be delivered to staff, be generated by staff, and be ongoing.

CONCLUSION

In the course of this research project, the authors investigated readers' advisory professional practice in Queensland public libraries from a variety of angles - from the literature to position descriptions, staff perceptions, practical examples, professional development training and education and collaborative opportunities. While readers' advisory is identified as a public library service in the *Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries*, with 'promoting the value of reading' listed in various strategic documents as a key practice, the degree to which this service is embedded in professional practice post-National Year of Reading varies across the country. Recommendations have been provided in the areas of strategic support, training, and collaboration and information sharing with the aim of building strong services and a united professional expertise. A state-wide (or national) approach to readers' advisory practice in these areas would strengthen the profession's ability to meet the community's expectations of delivery of this core service. Results indicate that having trained staff working collaboratively and strategically to offer a quality readers' advisory service across Queensland public libraries will be a strategic step towards library futures, both generally and to support Queensland communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that;

1. The State Library of Queensland, Queensland Public Libraries Association and public library services support a state-wide professional development strategy in readers' advisory services for all relevant staff in an application of G7.2 in the *Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries* (2012, p. 33), and with the library workforce being a priority area for action identified in State Library of Queensland's *The Next Horizon: Vision 2017* (2013, p. 9). This professional development to be delivered to staff, and generated by staff, and be ongoing.

2. A distributed model of professional expertise be established in Queensland with specific positions throughout the state identified as readers' advisory positions, with these representatives and other volunteers collaborating in a state-wide response to capacity building and ongoing skills development training with support from State Library of Queensland, Queensland Public Libraries Association and each library service. This model will include development of agreed competencies, and the facilitated development of a set of collaborative programs, with the possibility of the model being articulated nationally in partnership with the Love2Read campaign. This model to be informed by British Columbia's Readers' Advisory Interest Group and State Library of Queensland's working groups.
3. A collaborative online space on the State Library of Queensland's Public Libraries Connect site be established as a central point for Queensland public librarians to promote dynamic readers' advisory practice, build a knowledge base for service, and to facilitate professional development in readers' advisory service. Widespread use of this space will endeavour to overcome the identified barriers of budget, time, and isolation. For national online collaboration, utilise the Love2Read site pending the campaign's continuation.
4. Public library services unite to support readers' advisory service through the application of strategic documents, from the *Standards and Guidelines* section on information services and readers' advisory services, and Queensland's *The Next Horizon: Vision 2017* guiding principles, to individual services' strategic documents, with relevant staff having readers' advisory service and professional development articulated in their position descriptions.

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APPENDIX 1

Readers' Engagement Service Competencies, CityLibraries Townsville - adapted from lists produced by Arrowhead Library, Minnesota (2003) and by Paul Brown, Best Sellers (2012, p. 18-24).

Competency	Demonstrated by:
Readers' Engagement	
Develops and demonstrates knowledge of readers' engagement resources and practices	Understands the purpose, philosophy and practice of readers' engagement services
	Understands the value of reading as a life skill for all people
	Establishes and pursues strategies to stay informed about current and relevant resources and programs to meet the needs of the community, including training, professional development and self-or-group development
	Maintains knowledge of the content creation industries (publishers, filmmakers, online designers, etc)
	Demonstrates a broad knowledge of the library's collection and of a wide range of resources and information of interest to the community
	Demonstrates broad knowledge of authors, literature and readers' resources
	Understands the theory of appeal and bases recommendations on an interpretation of what appeals to the user
	Identifies and uses a variety of online, print and community readers' engagement resources to identify appropriate materials
	Maintains an ongoing current knowledge of major new authors, fiction genres, nonfiction subjects, current releases and popular culture through a variety of channels
	Is able to write informative reviews/comments about readers' resources
	Is able to write about readers' engagement practice and experience for newspapers and professional publications
	Has the knowledge and ability to encourage reading and literacy development in children and young adults and their families (and others)
	Keeps up to date with what members of the community are reading
	Is able to link authors to various genres and groups

	Demonstrates the ability to read and review widely, across genres
	Shares knowledge of books and resources with other staff and customers
	Keeps informed concerning trends, topics, research and issues in librarianship, adult services, adult readers, reading and education through professional publications, learning networks and training
	Engages with professional communities and learning networks to seek and share best practices for readers' engagement, including through presentation
Creates the connections that cause people to read	Demonstrates the ability to formulate connections between people and readers' resources
	Is able to connect children and young adults and their families (and others) with resources that encourage reading and literacy development
	Develops programs that connect people with reading and authors and other content creators
	Develops both physical and digital resources that connect people with reading
	Is able to develop personal and general reading lists and infographics to enhance community awareness
	Is able to physically organise and effectively display readers' resources to enhance access and use
	Is able to organise and effectively display readers' resources online to enhance access and use
	Is able to create and deliver book discussions
	Identifies and recommends a selection of resources that align with what appeals to the customer
	Uses online tools (blogs, wikis, GoodReads, social media, etc.) to encourage participation from and engagement with readers
	Is able to write informative reviews/comments about readers' resources
	Is able to write about readers' engagement practice and experience for newspapers and professional publications
	Is able to develop resources that recognise the information seeking needs of readers (e.g. prepared lists)
	Is able to educate customers to be able to self-serve (e.g. loans,

	reservations, requests, information searching)
	Is able to suggest sources for appropriate fiction and nonfiction in response to enquiries
Trained library staff actively work with and for their community through engagement	Demonstrates the ability to read widely, formulate connections between resources and converse with users about the resources
	Supports content creation in the community
	Understands the theory of appeal, listens carefully to information elicited from the user, and bases recommendations on an interpretation of what appeals to the user
	Uses online tools (blogs, wikis, social media, etc) to encourage participation from and engagement with readers
	Seeks feedback from readers on recommended material and adjusts future recommendations accordingly
	Encourages an ongoing relationship with readers
	Keeps up to date with what customers are reading through engagement
	Shares knowledge of books and resources with other staff and customers
	Is able to design, plan and organise readers' engagement learning units
	Advocates reading and readers' engagement services internally and externally
	Connects with professional communities to seek and share best practices for readers' engagement
	Creates and sustains partnerships and collaborations with individuals, internal colleagues and other agencies
Strategic application: researches and designs systems and services to ensure the community is connected with reading	Establishes and pursues strategies to stay informed about current and relevant resources, programs and practices to meet the needs of the community, including training, professional development and self-or-group development
	Able to experiment with the library's physical environment to facilitate customer engagement
	Is able to use appropriate ongoing evaluation methods to measure the service's value, and report these appropriately
	Is able to design, plan and deliver readers' engagement learning units

	Develops and applies targeted marketing strategies
	Develops strategies that support circulation and use of the library's collection
	Creates and sustains partnerships and collaborations with individuals, internal colleagues and other agencies
Promote an active and engaged reading culture in the Townsville community while raising the recognition of the value of reading as a life skill for all people	Is involved in the development and delivery of programs and of physical and online resources that promote reading
	Able to experiment with the library's physical environment to facilitate customer engagement
	Advocates reading and readers' engagement services internally and externally
	Actively promotes reader services through collaboration, community engagement and targeted marketing strategies including through online and conventional media

APPENDIX 2

Survey Questions

Q1. Please indicate the library sector in which you work

Q2. Please list your current work organisation details (all identifying information will be kept confidential. Responses enable us to track geographically).

Q3. Regarding the library service in which you are employed, is readers' advisory specified in the library's planning documents? (Strategic plan, operational plan, collection development statement, etc).

Q4. In your current position, does your library service include readers' advisory as an item in your position description?

Q5. What readers' advisory activities and services has your library service offered for at least two years (response column 1) and which have been added since the start of Australia's National Year of Reading (response column 2)? Note - column 2 responses are only required by respondents working in Australian libraries.

Q6. On a scale of 1-5, how do the following considerations impact on your ability to deliver readers' advisory services? 1 = not at all to 5 = to a large extent. For example, answering 5 to budget suggests that the library has a limited budget for RA services.

Q7. Does your library service use social media in readers' advisory service? If yes, which of the following are used?

Q8. Which training and professional development activities have you participated in within the last three years (from 2010) to do with readers' advisory?

Q9. Please indicate how often you discuss readers' advisory with other staff at your current place of employment.

Q10. If your library offers a readers' advisory service, please indicate how your library measures the impact of this service.

Q11. Please indicate how your library reports the measurements of impact of readers' advisory?

Q12. Please indicate if your library service currently works with another service in any way to provide readers' advisory services.

Q13. On a scale of 1-5, please indicate to what extent you see value in the following collaborations for readers' advisory information sharing among library staff state wide, nationally. For example, answering 5 to aliaREAD indicates that you see great collaborative value in this list.

Q14 We would like to be able to follow up on some survey responses. Are you willing to discuss your survey responses in more detail if necessary?

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Alison Miles joined CityLibraries Townsville as Information Services Librarian in 2009 after working in a variety of library services since 1994. She had input into the information services and readers' advisory section of the *Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries* and has been a member of two working groups through State Library of Queensland; Performance Management Framework Working Group and Public Librarians' eReference Group. After completion of the research grant Alison will continue her exploration and application of contextual readers' advisory services, blogging at reading360.wordpress.com.

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