

The

Special Library

FEATURE



Liberty  iLLumin

Softlink

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Introduction

Special Libraries offer unique and valuable services across many industries. They play an integral role in the success of the organisations' they represent and the delivery of important research outcomes. Softlink has represented and supported Special Libraries for over 20 years with software that is flexible to meet the many varied requirements of our Special Library customers.

In April 2015, Softlink conducted telephone interviews with Special Libraries customers in Australia, New Zealand and the USA to investigate the range of services being offered and the ways in which these libraries are evolving.

The responses from these interviews are represented in this document.

Responses were received from Special Libraries in the following industries.

The responses explored how the role and activities of Special Libraries are changing based on advances in technology and information services. Respondents were also questioned about the strategies they were adopting to promote their services, improve workflows and build positive perceptions of their libraries and information centres.



The multitude of services Special Libraries deliver

The interviews highlighted that Special Libraries and Information Centres offer much more than just lending services and content curation. Librarians, Information Managers and Research Managers in the Special Libraries environment play an active role in the success of their broader organisations through the delivery of research and reference services, reporting, subscription management and personalised assistance to end-users.

Respondents were asked to describe the most important or key services their library or information centre provided.



We support ESR's non-financial KPI reporting which includes institutional H Index type reports on items published. The reporting is based on a specific methodology which is a measure of science quality based on the citation rankings of the journals that you are publishing in.

Beryl Anderson, Institute of Environmental Science and Research Limited (NZ)

Responding promptly and thoroughly to staff enquiries, particularly research enquiries. Also sourcing the best and most appropriate resources to meet our staff's needs and ensuring our subscriptions are current.

Maxine Mojarrabi, Thynne & Macartney (AU)

The most important service my library provides is detailed reference service. My users look for work all day and then write their appraisal reports at night. We provide a base for them to begin their research at their convenience, and then provide advanced reference support when needed. We are the main body of knowledge in the US. To make all of our literature available electronically is paramount.

Eric Goodman, Appraisal Institute (USA)

Our most important service is business and technical research because it has the greatest impact. We often perform research for C-Suite executives which enables the library to maintain a high profile.

Jim Smallwood, Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories (USA)

Full text access to scholarly electronic journals. We provide these journals to our researcher staff.

Suzanne Lester, BRANZ (NZ)

The reference interview to really target what our users are looking for is key. We provide information services to people living with dementia, their families, carers and our staff.

Stroma Mauritzen, Alzheimer's Australia Victoria (AU)

Providing information to lawyers including up-to-date cases and latest legislation.

Lorraine Pearce, Kott Gunning (AU)

We provide Legal and Competitive Intelligence Research. Legal research has always been the primary service we provide our firm. The Competitive Intelligence Research function has grown 2-3 fold over the past three years.

Amy L. Noll, McNeas Wallace & Nurick (USA)

Because our Theological Students come from such a diverse background personalised support and service for their research is our priority. We spend a lot of time in a whole variety of ways, seeking to make their experience in the library, and therefore their experience with study, as positive as possible.

Moira Bryant, Camden Theological (AU)

Providing ready access to good quality information to the community support workers who are practitioners for our organisation is our key service. Our organisation is focused on disabilities so our information is often distributed to parents and people with disabilities as well.

Melanie Stassen, CCS Disability Action (NZ)

We provide a reference service to our 7,000 members. We also answer reference questions from legislators, academic researchers, the media, and taxpayers.

Mary Odom, International Association of Assessing Officers (USA)



Promoting the library

The need to push information out to end-users was a common theme amongst respondents. The Special Libraries surveyed are making use of both online and face-to-face tools to market the services and resources they provide to their end users.

Respondents were asked to describe if and how they were actively promoting their library services and collection.

“When new items come in to the collection, we tag them in Liberty’s interest lists and then I will send out a list of all the new items every two months. My colleague produces a newsletter on Sustainability issues reviews. He also reviews all the journals that come in to the library to create a current awareness newsletter which he sends out via email to interested parties.”

Suzanne Lester, BRANZ (NZ)

“Every month we add about 100 new items to our collection. They are formatted into a “What’s New” list and we have a mailing list which advises people about them. We also highlight about 5% of those new items on our website, this information rotates across the website over the course of the month.”

Moira Bryant, Camden Theological (AU)

“We publish a “New Material’s List” in the organizations monthly magazine and on our website. We also feature some of our new materials in our organisations eNewsletter and post about them on our social media sites. We see a surge of information requests for the materials we promote so sharing information across various mediums simultaneously is key to keeping our usage statistics up.”

Mary Odom, International Association of Assessing Officers (USA)

“We have a great Learning and Development Coordinator who coordinates library training courses for staff which helps promote our services. The library also uses advertising in the lunchroom and the firm’s fortnightly staff newsletter to educate and update staff on library services.”

Maxine Mojarrabi, Thynne & Macartney (AU)



Shared Challenges

Today's Special Libraries share an increased responsibility for meeting information-on-demand expectations in an often leaner environment. The digitisation of information and information sharing has provided exciting opportunities for Libraries and Information Centres, but it has also produced challenges. Change management, navigating varied digital publishing platform rights and attracting organisational understanding and investment are some of the challenges being faced by Special Libraries.

Respondents were asked to describe what they felt was the greatest challenge their library has recently faced.



Our users are very independent so it's a challenge to get them to engage us more in undertaking research for them. We also want them to get used to using the library catalogue, and understand the difference in the quality of the information the library has made available to them, but we are competing with the Google search.

Suzanne Lester, BRANZ (NZ)



Our subject area is specialised, making selection of e resources difficult because they are not provided by any single eBook or digital resources platform. From a financial perspective we are limited and it's difficult to choose from multiple providers.

Stroma Mauritzen, Alzheimer's Australia Victoria (AU)

One of our challenges is making the attorneys aware of all the research services we provide. Our physical location in the office contributes to a lower visibility. We are working on attorney and staff buy-in to self-directed catalogue research.

Amy Noll, McNees Wallace and Nurick LLC (USA)

eBooks and accessibility are a challenge for us. People with disabilities have different needs – our users with vision impairments prefer to hear things, our hearing impaired users prefer to see things. We need to budget for, and provide access to, many different formats.

Melanie Stassen, CCS Disability Action (NZ)



External challenges include the changing expectations of users that want everything delivered electronically.

Mary Odom, International Association of Assessing Officers (USA)



Vision for the future

Special Libraries are looking at ways they can adapt and explore new opportunities to enhance their services and report on the important information management and research role they play within their organisations.

Marketing of services, stronger internal relationships, centralisation of services not traditionally associated with the library such as education and training, educating users about information quality, adaptation of information dissemination processes, ongoing digitisation of resources and investment in technology infrastructure and general adaptability were some of the common themes from respondents when asked to describe what will make your library successful in the future.



Engaging the partners and staff in both the development of resources and the on-going improvements in service delivery will enhance innovation and provide a sense of ownership of the library function within the firm. This requires a strong relationship between the library and the staff. They are the reason the library exists.

Maxine Mojarrabi, Thynne & Macartney (AU)

We encourage strong advocacy from our library staff to communicate the library's return on investment to users and the Association's leadership. We will also continue to move to digital offerings and mobile interfaces.

Mary Odom, International Association of Assessing Officers (USA)

To maintain our success in the future, we need to keep up to date with the latest trends and the needs of the people that we serve here in the library.

Lorraine Pearce, Kott Gunning (AU)



Acknowledging that people want to receive information in different ways. We try to value add to the information, so we give narrative around the different resources we recommend. We want to show that the information we're providing has been reviewed and that we think it is quality information.

Stroma Mauritzen, Alzheimer's Australia Victoria (AU)

We will continue to be successful as long as we remain relevant. We will remain relevant as long as we continue to work on projects that sustain our visibility, showcase our value to the company, and have an impact that can be readily measured, or at least understood, by senior management.

Jim Smallwood, Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories (USA)



How can Softlink help your Special Library?



Efficient management of research and customer information requests

With research and reference services a core focus for Special Libraries, it is crucial that they are equipped with the right tools to both meet and exceed user expectations.

illumin is a cloud based knowledge and request management solution that automatically takes incoming requests for information and provides the tools for knowledge managers and content specialists to track, manage, and publish queries and solutions.

Streamlining access to resources

Softlink's Liberty is a web-based library management system, accessible from any Internet-enabled device and backed up by an iOS or Android app for 24/7 on-the-go access to information.

Liberty offers deep digital integration with electronic resources which helps special libraries to deliver an enriched user experience and better selection capability with access to eResource borrow and download within the public Search interface.

Additionally Special Libraries can use Liberty to manage every type of resource - including physical and virtual - which provides flexibility for libraries dealing with unique library collections.

Raising the profile of the special library

Liberty and illumin offer comprehensive reporting on all aspects of library, research and resource centre management. Special libraries can use these reports to promote their activities and subsequent return on investment to senior management.

A number of Liberty's features are also aimed at helping Special Libraries to promote their collection and services to library users. Interest lists can be used to email alerts to library users when new resources matching their interests are catalogued and the highly customisable homepage can also be used to promote a range of resources.

Flexibility to meet specific service requirements

Both Liberty and illumin are highly flexible tools, with features, functionality and reporting which can be customised to suit your specific needs.

