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# LIS Job Advertisements: Seeking Inclusion and Diversity

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**Abstract.** A growing body of literature is drawing our attention to on diversity in librarianship, arguing for improved diversity through better recruitment, retention, and career advancement of minority professionals. While much of the discussion about diversity in libraries is taking place in United States, this article attempts to extend the discussion, bringing attention to diversity in Australian librarianship through analysis of Australian library job ads. This article uses content analysis of 96 Australian job ads posted from 22 January to 3 February 2018 in key Australian library job search engines. The analysis focuses on how diversity is reflected in these ads, with a content analysis of wording focused on inviting diversity in terms of ability/disability, ethnicity and language, and gender and sexuality.

**Keywords:** Social inclusion · Workplace disability · Library hiring · Diversity

## 1 Introduction

Australia's population is incredibly diverse. During 2016–2017, a total of 137,750 people from over 190 different countries became Australian citizens. More than 300 languages are spoken in Australian homes, and more than 100 religions are represented nationwide [1]. In the 2015 Census one in five Australians (18.3%) reported having a disability, and almost 650,000 Australians (2.8% of the population) identified as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Yet as Australia becomes increasingly diverse, there is little or no publicly available data about diversity in Library and Information Science (LIS) education or in the Australian library workforce. Are library staff presenting a face that reflects the diversity we serve? We simply do not have the data. However, by examining librarian job advertisements, we can explore whether libraries and archives are recruiting for the diversity in their community.

Traditionally, Australian definitions of diversity have focused on race/ethnicity, gender, and physical ability/disability. Australia's Equal Employment Opportunity Act (EEO) of 1987, the Fair Work Act of 2009, the Australian Human Rights Commission, along with other laws and government agencies, provide clear guidelines of what steps can be taken to ensure equitable hiring practices to prevent discrimination in recruitment. While it is not legally mandated to include EEO statements and other national requirements for fair recruitment, it is not uncommon for LIS job advertisements (particularly government-funded) to include EEO wording. This study examines whether, and how

these job advertisements meet the IFLA/UNESCO Multicultural Library Manifesto core principle of “employing staff to reflect the diversity of the community, who are trained to work with and serve diverse communities” [2]. We approached this study with the research questions of: In what way is diversity reflected in Australian LIS job advertisements? Is there any wording that might discourage applicants from minority or underrepresented groups? Is there explicit or implicit openness in terms of ability/disability, ethnicity and language, and gender and sexuality?

## 2 Literature Review

We are not the first to explore diversity in the field of LIS. For example, during the 1980s Grover [3], Randall [4], and the American Library Association [5] researched issues related to minority recruitment and library services to minority groups. In the 1990s researchers such as McCook and Lippincott [6] found that while there were some gains in minority graduates from LIS fields during the 1980s and 1990s, and while the growth rate was encouraging, “it still reflects a small percentage of the total graduates for those years.” Recent United States studies [7–9] have reflected on inclusive recruitment practices in various contexts, particularly around student recruitment, job placement and retention, and inclusion in the workplace, as well as how effectively LIS education programs are preparing students for a diverse workplace [10]. Jaeger and Franklin [11] argue that diversity needs to begin with the hiring of more diverse faculties. This idea that more diverse faculty will attract more diverse students (who then become a more diverse workforce) parallels the social and psychology research that describes how we, as social beings, look for connections with others who are similar to ourselves [12]. In locations such as libraries, mosques, the gym, and so forth, we find access to others with similar beliefs (e.g., religious beliefs), values (e.g., fitness values), and needs (e.g., economic need). Seeing others who physically look similar to us can also impact our levels of social inclusion; for example, in a recent study in the United States, researchers found that Black school children who had at least one Black teacher in their time in primary school were 30% less likely to drop out than the students who had never had a teacher of their same race [13]. Seeing “ourselves” in the social world around us helps us construct a sense of self by offering social comparison, feedback, and identity [14, 15, 17]. Sharing values leads to trust [17], which then leads to cooperation, and provides the basis of successful social relations [18, 19].

Research has shown that the language of job ads (as with any advertising and marketing) can be exclusive and discriminatory, discouraging minority populations from even applying [e.g., 20, 21], or it can be inclusive and welcoming to diverse applicants [e.g., 22]. In previous LIS job ad studies by North American [23–26] and Australian [27, 28] researchers, job ad content analyses have resulted in lists of attributes and skills employers are recruiting for. Many of these of attributes (e.g., foreign language skills, good communication) lend themselves to more inclusive and diverse workplaces and a wider range of inclusive services in and of themselves. However, this pilot study aims to take a different approach, looking at the wording in job ads

themselves to explore how the wording represents, or does not represent, the inclusivity in the profession that we desire to have in the field.

### 3 Methodology

Job ads were collected over a fortnight (22 January to 3 February 2018). We chose this period as it is the time of year when Australian school and academic libraries are preparing to hire for the start of the academic year (February and March); public, government, and special libraries are likely to hire year-round. Job ads were collected only if they were posted between these specific dates. Three Australian job sites were searched: Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) Jobs (<https://www.alia.org.au/jobs>), SEEK (<https://www.seek.com.au/>), and Adzuna (<https://www.adzuna.com.au/>). These three databases cover national job listings and either specialize in library jobs (ALIA), or are searchable for library job posts (SEEK and Adzuna). All relevant job ads posted in the ALIA database were collected during the noted time period, whereas on the SEEK and Adzuna sites, the search terms used were “librarian,” and “library” with the filter “any classification.” The keyword “libraries” retrieved the same results, so was not used after the first day of collection. We tried the keyword “librar\*” to cover words like librarian(s), libraries, library, etc. but this search returned non-library focused, ambiguous results, or no results at all, and so was not used. ALIA and SEEK sites search jobs in Australia by default, so no location filter was used. For Adzuna, we used the keyword “Australia” to filter results.

The collected job listings were collated and skimmed to ensure the ad included potential involvement with patrons or the public, as we were interested in the diverse “face” of librarianship. Casual, part-time, and full-time position ads were collected, and duplicate listings removed. In total, 96 job listings were retained for content analysis for this project. While a small number in comparison with United States job ads, these 96 ads are well representative of the eight Australian states and territories, and the overall smaller Australian population. For example, while there were an estimated 9,057 public libraries in the United States in 2016 and 3,094 academic libraries [29], in 2015 there were only 1,631 public libraries [30] and a total of 39 university libraries [31] in Australia.

We used a combination of quantitative and qualitative content analysis techniques to analyze our data. According to Pickard, a diverse nature of analysis can happen where the researcher may (1) let the concepts emerge from the content in a qualitative sense, or (2) look at the frequency counts of key occurrences in the data for a more quantitative approach, or (3) use a mix of both quantitative and qualitative elements [32]. The last approach was used in this project. The identification and highlighting of key terms and phrases (diverse/diversity, disabled/disability/ability/accommodation, indigenous/aboriginal descent, ethnic/ethnicity, language, women, gender, inclusive/inclusion, etc.) in the dataset was done independently by the three primary researchers and a Graduate Assistant. Following this initial review, we compared our findings to maintain consistency, then sorted and compiled them into a single repository. The review of previous literature was also used to identify meaningful themes. Finally, key terms or themes were identified, discussed, and agreed upon by the team members in joint meetings. Keywords were analyzed in context of the text where they appeared, to

preserve the connection with the originating data. We also coded the data in terms of whether the job ad included specific wording about diversity (e.g., disability, ethnicity, gender), or whether there was generic wording about hiring and supporting diversity in staffing (e.g., "...is an equal opportunity employer and encourages applications from all sectors of the community").

The research team analyzed the job listings and created categories based on definitions of diversity from the literature related to disability, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and language diversity, and mapped these categories into a smaller set of key themes as connections were discovered. Race, a common discussion point in U.S. diversity studies, was considered in our analyses, but we found it was not as relevant to Australian demographic discussions, as the Australian Bureau of Statistics uses the term "ethnicity" rather than "race" to distinguish between Australians of different cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds [33]. We use this race-inclusive definition to discuss ethnicity in our Findings and Analyses.

## 4 Findings and Analyses

Each of the eight states and territories of Australia posted at least one job ad during the time period of our data collection (see Table 1). New South Wales—the Australian state with the largest population—had the most jobs posted, with Victoria and Queensland coming second and third. Parliament, national government institutions, and the National Library of Australia are based in the Australian Capital Territory, and so this territory has a higher number of LIS jobs for its size. The dataset includes job ads posted for academic libraries, school libraries, public libraries, state libraries, the National Library, government records and libraries, law libraries, and other special libraries.

**Table 1.** Job postings by state and territory.

State or territory	Total population in 2017 [34]	Percentage of total Australian population	Number of job ads in dataset (n = 96)	Percentage of total job ads in dataset (n = 96)
New South Wales	7,915,100	32%	32	33%
Victoria	6,385,800	26%	27	28%
Queensland	4,965,000	20%	14	14%
Western Australia	2,584,800	10%	7	7%
South Australia	1,728,100	7%	6	6%
Tasmania	524,700	2%	2	2%
Australian Capital Territory	415,900	2%	7	7%
Northern Territory	246,700	1%	1	1%

23 of the 96 job ads described the employer as being dedicated to diversity. 17 described the community they serve as “diverse” or “vibrant.” Seven connected a statement of the diversity of their community to a statement of the diversity in their workplace, such as “providing an inclusive workplace that respects the values of a diverse workplace,” and/or “encouraging a diverse workforce that is reflective of the community.” These diversity statements could potentially be interpreted as including the flexibility to support diversity, such as to provide disability accommodation in the workplace; however, this was not clearly specified in the individual job ads. We considered exploring how diversity was reflected in terms of whether the positions were “entry” or “upper level” jobs, but we found there was no consistency in the level of detail of the job posting to be able to know how senior or entry-level the position was.

The job ads varied greatly. Some were very brief and provided only cursory information about the position and the attributes and skills required or desired in an applicant. Other positions were very detailed, listing duties, qualifications and experience needed, and additional experience, skills, and/or attributes that were desirable in an applicant. This included wording such as “strong communication skills,” “experience in document delivery,” or “a health science degree required.” Some of the ads included the overall values of the hiring institution, such as “We value: respect for people; integrity and excellent performance; professional, quality service; and open, accountable communication.” As has been noted in previous studies of Australian LIS job ads, this wide variety of detail is not new [27, 28]. We will discuss our findings in terms of the diversity areas of ability/disability, ethnicity and language, and gender and sexuality.

#### 4.1 Ability/Disability

Seven of the job ads specifically named disability as one of the values of diversity and inclusion of the institution, however only four of the 96 job ads stated that their organization was committed to providing support to apply or interview for the position, such as an additional assessment activity for the vacancy where the applicant met the minimum requirements for the job and declared they had a disability. It is notable that of these four ads, three were for government library services (state or national).

Three ads in our dataset specified that a medical assessment may, or would, be required prior to employment. One ad specified that this examination would be required of shortlisted candidates; the remaining two ads did not outline when the assessment would be required, aside from pre-employment. One of the three ads stated that drug and alcohol testing would be conducted as part of the medical assessment, although it was not clear why this was a component of the hiring process, and no other job ads from this state contained this wording. One ad noted that the medical assessment would be used in order to determine the applicant’s fitness to carry out duties, yet none of the skills and attributes listed as required for the position related to medical fitness or a specific physical ability (i.e., leadership, the ability to work in a busy organization, strong previous experience, communication and problem solving skills, and research skills). The criteria all related to the applicant demonstrating sufficient experience and skills to complete the role successfully, rather than related to medical fitness or ability.

## 4.2 Ethnicity and Language

Indigenous Australians (nearly 3% of the nation's population) are a group of great importance. In 2008 the Australian government set targets aimed at eliminating the significant gaps in education and employment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, with targeted recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people outlined by the Australian Human Rights Commission in 2015 as one measure to help bridge some of these gaps [35]. We would expect to see specific wording inviting people of Indigenous descent to apply for library jobs, particularly in the Northern Territory, where 25.5% of the population identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander [36]. 17 of the 96 job ads contained specific invitations for applicants of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or Indigenous descent, with all job ads from South Australia (SA) and the Northern Territory (NT) specifically inviting applicants from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Also related to ethnicity and language diversity, in recent years, new overseas migration has increased in Australia, as it has in many parts of the world, reflecting an annual gain of 262,500 persons in 2016–2017, 27.3% more than in 2015–2016 [37]. Wording such as “At \_\_\_\_, we embrace difference in... ethnicity, race, cultural background...” was found in 18 of the 96 job ads collected. Four of these ads specifically invited speakers of non-English languages to apply.

## 4.3 Gender and Sexuality

Eight of the job advertisements specified that women are encouraged to apply (NSW, VIC, SA), with four of these ads inviting women having specific management and supervisory responsibilities. Two (NSW) job ads invited LGBTIQ+ applicants, although neither of these were for management or supervisory roles. As Australian Government labor statistics note that 88.7% of Australian librarians are women [38], we also looked for gendered wording that might either specifically invite or exclude men from applying, besides the specific EEO wording inviting applications from women. No such wording was found in any of the collected job advertisements.

## 5 Conclusion

This pilot study provides a review of how diversity is currently invited in library job ads in Australia through an analysis of wording that invites a diverse workforce. With a prediction that 2,600 new librarian jobs are expected to be created each year for the next five years in Australia, now is an excellent time to start building the diversity we hope to see in the future [38]. That the majority of the job ads were relatively neutral and not overtly discriminatory was encouraging, as was the finding that some libraries are taking the next step and providing inclusive wording specifically inviting minority applicants. Our findings also show that there is definitely room for improvement.

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