

Museums, Galleries and Libraries

Industry Coverage: Libraries and Archives, Other Information Services, Heritage Activities, Museum Operation.

Industry Overview

Museums and Galleries

The state government's recent \$428M investment in a new museum for WA is being seen as recognition of the rapidly expanding contribution cultural tourism makes to the economy. There was a 19% growth in arts tourism over the four years to 2015, with 2.4 million international visitors to Australia in 2013–14 engaging in arts tourism. More than one in four international tourists visits galleries and/or museums.

However to improve capacity, infrastructure planning needs to be met with investment in a skilled workforce. A number of qualification offerings for the Museums and Galleries sectors have disappeared in WA in recent years, and there are currently no qualifications in the curatorial area, a situation industry wishes to see rectified. Local students wanting to enter the industry must currently complete their qualifications online or move interstate to study, as a result of which these qualifications are out of reach for many.

Global market conditions have seen budget cuts and efficiency measures hit most international museums and galleries. Ensuing redundancies have left a readily available, highly skilled, international workforce and consequently most high-level roles advertised by the WA Museum and the Art Gallery of WA attract international candidates of a high calibre. As such no labour gap exists, however industry has concerns that a change in market conditions could leave the sector vulnerable in this regard. Recent changes to skilled migration visa rules mean that no permanent migration pathway is on offer and this is seen as making Australia a less attractive option. In addition it is considered important that the workforce continues to include representatives of the local culture, including indigenous representation.

Conversely, many of WA's small, rural and remote museums and galleries are staffed by volunteers where access to appropriate training is inhibited by factors including distance and cost. Such training is vital in the preservation of our state's physical heritage and in maximising the public's access, however industry report evidence that its absence has put some collections at risk.

Libraries

Whilst the Library and Archives sectors have access to appropriate qualifications, they are subject to reduced funding, rapid digital advancement and changes in visitor habits as a result of widespread internet access. This has resulted in a need for a broader skills base, incorporating visitor services, events, curating, marketing, and business expertise. Peak body ALIA (Australian Library and Information Association) predict a small growth in available positions within the sector over the coming five years, however the need for unqualified workers is rapidly diminishing.

As with Museums and Galleries, Libraries are operating under significantly reduced budgets and, as well as resulting in some closures, this is impinging upon the facilities they are able to provide the public during a period of consolidation and repositioning. Whilst there is significant discussion around how libraries can be repurposed in the digital age, the business and marketing skills required to execute change are often missing, as is sufficient capital.

Current and future labour market conditions

- Western Australian museums and galleries account for 10.8% of the national industry which is roughly equivalent to WA's percentage of overall population.
- Australia's creative and cultural industries contribute more than \$86 billion (or 6.9%) to the nation's GDP. Australian Museums and Galleries revenue was \$1.7B in 2016 with annual growth 2011-2016 at an average of 2%, predicted to grow to 3.2% from 2017-22. Whilst government support and corporate sponsorship has fallen in recent years, self-generated income has risen and this trend is predicted to continue.
- Although the GLAM sectors are largely government funded, reduced funding is driving a new focus on self-generated income through streams such as retail and consultancy. Libraries seek to attract the public through repositioning as learning hubs, maker spaces and galleries. These new challenges generate the need for personnel with broader occupational skillsets.
- The WA Museum's New Museum Project is due to open to the public in 2020. The \$428m project will be almost four times bigger than the existing WA Museum - Perth, featuring nearly 7,000 square metres of galleries, including a 1,000 square metre space to stage large scale temporary exhibitions. It will also feature learning studios, spaces to see the behind the scenes work of the WA Museum as well as retail and cafe spaces.

Industry development issues:

- A lack of qualification offerings is limiting the capacity of new entrants to join the museums and galleries sector.
- Significant infrastructure investment has been made to deliver the new WA Museum Perth site, however no accompanying plan is in place to support workforce development.
- Museums and galleries are increasingly competing for audiences with new forms of entertainment.
- Museums, galleries and libraries face increasing pressure to grow self-generated income and are forging new business models to meet this demand.
- Sustainability is a long-term, ongoing issue for the Creative Industries globally, despite growing cognizance of the non-financial benefits brought to communities through the arts.

Workforce challenges and issues:

- Ongoing global economic conditions have seen international museums, galleries and libraries face funding cuts. This has led to recruitment freezes and a surplus of qualified people in the workforce. As a result, most senior and specialist positions in WA currently attract international applicants.
- There is concern that a change in circumstances globally could affect the labour supply chain in occupations where there is a long lead time and no local pathways.
- A number of training and educational offerings have closed in recent years and there is currently no professional training for the museums and galleries sector available in WA. This is an issue of considerable concern to the sector.
- For much of the creative industries, the current economic climate has introduced some challenges to sustainability. These challenges include: reduced financial contribution from business; reduced government funding; reduced disposable income across potential audiences; unaffordable rents, which have not decreased in line with reduced revenue (especially for galleries).

Current Training Council areas of focus:

- Working with FutureNow's GLAM Industry Advisory Group, including senior representatives of Library peak bodies, WA Museum, Art Gallery WA, Museums and Galleries WA and independent gallery owners, to identify critical work to support

workforce development for the sectors.

- With the New Museum project due to launch in 2020, Museums and Galleries WA have initiated an in-depth sector review. FutureNow are working closely with them to identify skills gaps and training needs and will make available a paper on sector issues in the first half of 2017.

Attachments

- [IBISWorld Museums & Galleries Report](#)
- [ALIA LIS Education Skills and Employment Trend Report 2016](#)
- [UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)

NB: Included at request of industry – the agenda includes a commitment to ensure universal access to information, universal literacies development and retention and record of culture and cultural artefacts for all peoples. The risk to some state collections and library services should be viewed through this lens.

References

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4. <https://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/western-australia> Accessed 13.2.17