

Galleries, Museums, Libraries & Heritage

FutureNow is the Western Australian Training Council for the creative, leisure and technology industries. The Council is a skills advisory body that represents the voice of industry, advising the State Government on the training and workforce development needs of our industry sectors.

Current Industry Environment

Our galleries, libraries, museums and heritage organisations (GLAHM) are the guardians of our shared stories. The standard of our cultural institutions and their work speaks to our maturity and sophistication, and the vibrancy and liveability of our cities and regions. As well as reflecting our own image back to us, these places project our narrative to the world, helping visitors make sense of and engage with Western Australia.

We know visitors are experiencing our cultural offer. Australia Council research shows that international arts tourism has been growing on average 43% per annum over the three years to 2018¹. Australian museums and galleries revenue was \$1.8B in 2018 with annual growth of 2.2% predicted from 2019-24.² People are engaging with our cultural institutions and, as with all experience based tourism, it is the people they encounter that will, more perhaps than any other factor, colour their impression of Western Australia. Establishing appropriate professional development opportunities for visitor facing workers in WA will ensure visitors have the best experience.

For much of the creative industries, the current economic climate has introduced challenges to sustainability, including: 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 commercial galleries). Although the GLAM sectors are largely government funded, reduced funding has driven a focus on self-generated income through streams such as retail, events and consultancy. Self-generated income has risen and this trend is predicted to continue.³ This global phenomenon is generating exciting new civil spaces and shared conversations. Libraries in particular seek to attract the public through repositioning as learning hubs, maker spaces and galleries. These opportunities generate the need for people with broader occupational skillsets.

Workforce Characteristics

The galleries libraries and museums workforce ranges from the complex structures of our major institutions, to the small teams managing WA's extensive network of local and regional organisations. The true size of the workforce is unlikely to be reflected in available data because workers in this sector often self-report across a diverse set of ANZSCOs. The workforce is not limited to collections managers, archivists, conservators and curators but rather extends to include scientists and subject experts; visitor guides and community engagement staff; programming, outreach and education specialists; installation and special effects teams; membership, media, and content producers; and behind-the-scenes support departments such as facilities management and HR.

Upskilling for existing workers is crucial in the library sector, which is characterised by an ageing workforce and low staff turnover. According to the Internet Vacancy Index, job vacancies in the sector have been in decline in WA, with 21 vacancies advertised in the month of June 2012, versus 11 in June of 2017.⁴

While Job Outlook data suggests Archivists, Curators and Records Managers will face declining employment opportunities in the coming five years, Gallery, Museum and Tour Guides and Art Administrators and Managers should expect very strong growth. This is likely a reflection of a subdued funding environment coupled with a growth in experience-based discretionary spending and tourism visitation.^{5 6 7}

A snapshot of GLAHM

Galleries | Libraries | Archives | Heritage | Museums |



820,000
international tourists experienced
Aboriginal art and culture:

36% of international tourists
engaged with First Nations
arts while in Australia in
2017.*

International arts tourism to Australia
grew 43% year on year between 2015-
2017.*

The GLAHM sector in WA

Western Australia is home to
10.8% of Australia's population
+
11.2% of its museums
and galleries
+
7.7% of its libraries****

The New Museum for WA will feature
6,000 sqm of galleries, learning
studios and a new
\$17.1m research centre.***

The future workforce

**Mixed fortunes for
GLAHM workers:**
Some workers will be affected by
constrained budgets, but a boom
in experience-based spending will
drive a need for more visitor
engagement.



References:

* Australia Council: International Arts Tourism Dashboard: November 2019

** Job Outlook Data: November 2019

*** <http://museum.wa.gov.au/newmuseum/project>

**** IBISWorld: November 2019

Industry Developments

The changing face of libraries

Libraries serve a vital role in our communities, and even as that role evolves, these free shared spaces are greatly valued by the people they serve. Changes in the sector have been driven partly by the growth of digital technologies. A decline in physical borrowing, and the introduction of automated lending technologies in public libraries, is lessening the demand for librarians and library technicians in the public areas of the library. However, libraries still perform vital services to the public and as such, focus has shifted to community engagement strategies that may attract and support the public.

Libraries are changing to house a broader range of community services and may host or provide legal services, career advice or digital skills support, and act as a hub for community groups such as craft or reading groups. They also provide vital support to the national literacy agenda through programs for all ages and skill levels, and offer training in areas including job preparedness, self-publishing and learning new technologies such as 3D printing or laser cutting. Many libraries operate as incubator spaces for small business, and industry report an increased demand for services from homeless populations.

Technology

Technological change is adding to the upskilling needs of the GLAHM sector. On-site digital technologies are enhancing the visitor experience. Museums and galleries are increasingly utilising technology such as visitor tracking to assess dwell-time across galleries and individual artworks, and gain insights into visitor preferences and behaviour. Digitally formatted interpretation (the text accompanying a work), relies on visitor access to a digital device, but allows for different staging of works and installations, as well as allowing the visitor to access the interpretation before and after a visit. Digital access to collections refers to providing a virtual visitor experience via an online, or in the near future, a virtual reality medium. Issues of accessibility are addressed here, giving a much wider audience an insight into the collections, including those with limited mobility, aged, remote and international audiences. Opportunities to monetise collections are also enhanced, providing a potential avenue for increased sector sustainability.

The proliferation of digital content is having a considerable impact on the daily work of the library workforce. The decline of physical borrowing is directly concomitant with this expansion, where a very wide range of materials are available, but also in a broader range of media types. This is driving a need for new and more sophisticated collections practices and digitising and cataloguing skills for the library workforce. Standardised cataloguing principles are required for each type of collection. Bulk cataloguing, where for instance a large number of digital photographs that have been donated to a library will be catalogued as one item, requires a sophisticated understanding of potential future usage to execute appropriately. Good data clean-up and cyber security hygiene practices are essential elements of all work involving digital materials and are therefore of increasing importance to this workforce.

Digitisation of collections is a major professional development stream running across the work of the collections, or GLAM, sector, which encompasses galleries, libraries, archives and museums as well as heritage and recordkeeping activity. A high degree of digital literacy is required of this workforce to manage collections, websites, social media accounts and customer relations management (CRM) software. Considerable resources are dedicated at the state, national and international level towards providing education and support to this workforce around digitisation.

Workforce Opportunities

Reconciliation Action Planning

Reconciliation Action Planning (RAP) is of growing importance across the sector, and brings with it an associated upskilling need. The WA Museum delivered Aboriginal Cultural Awareness training to all staff and has proactively employed more indigenous people since introducing its RAP plan in 2015. There is a broader need for training in this area across the sector, especially in smaller, remote and volunteer-led organisations. In May 2019, AMAGA

published First Peoples: A Roadmap for Enhancing Indigenous Engagement in Museums and Galleries. The roadmap includes a workforce development strategy, advising: "Opportunities to attend university and learn courses on art history and fine arts can provide for a pipeline of Indigenous curators and arts professionals. However, other professional skills are needed in the future museum and gallery environment including technology, management and communications. The creation of scholarships for Indigenous museum professionals should be established. There should also be increased pathways via vocational education and training (VET). VET Courses should also be offered, including at TAFE, with a view to increasing Indigenous museum and gallery workers... there is a need for more relevant VET courses for Indigenous people to enter employment in museums and galleries."^{8 9}

Staffing the New Museum

The new Museum for Western Australia represents a major infrastructure boost for the sector; however, concerns remain about a long-term reduction in staffing levels in real terms, and a lack of clarity around intended investment in people and programs. Workforce size across the sector is largely driven by funding capacity rather than industry need, and the WA Museum, as with the broader sector, has been impacted by reduced funding. The WA Museum's 2016-17 Annual Report notes the impact on a range of areas relating to its performance of 'significant periods of reduced staffing across the organisation'¹⁰ and in the most recent report notes that "as a result of Budget repair the Museum was required to reduce the size of its workforce through a voluntary severance scheme; the Museum lost 14 staff... Representing some 7.4 percent of the workforce, this loss has had an immediate impact on operations."¹¹

Skills and Training Strategies

There are presently no training or higher education qualifications to service this sector in WA and this is of particular concern in the regional context, where the state's distributed collections are housed in institutions which are often staffed exclusively by volunteers. Outside the major institutions, very small teams of workers or volunteers are often responsible for a collection organisation's entire operation, and consequently require a broad skills base. A lack of accessible training and education opportunities for the largely volunteer workforce that maintains, preserves and curates the state's distributed collections in the regions is putting collections at risk. There is also an associated impact on the state's tourism agenda. Regional workers and volunteers require support to develop an extensive set of skills that will enable them to preserve, curate and interpret collections and work safely, in addition to developing professional public engagement programs.

Current projects

Sector peak body AMAGA WA under the auspices of the WA Museum, have begun to deliver a selection of non-accredited 'units' to regional museums and galleries workers, partially funded through the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries. However permanent solutions to the training needs of this sector's workforce continue to be sought.

Two separate VET projects are underway at the national level, which may deliver outcomes to meet broad sector needs. Qualifications addressing the Libraries sector, which can be streamed for outcomes for museums and galleries, are under review. This includes the Certificate III, IV and Diploma of Library and Information Services, and a project reviewing Arts Administration qualifications within the CUA Training Package. FutureNow worked with the sector in 2019 to develop a comprehensive skills matrix, mapping the very diverse skill set which is found across the sector.¹² The matrix will assist in guiding the Skills Service Organisation's work to develop these qualifications in a way that addresses the needs of the museums and galleries workforce.¹³

Please Get in Touch

FutureNow is continually seeking broad input from stakeholders and representatives in the Western Australian GLAHM sector. If you would be interested in providing your perspective on this snapshot or related workforce matters for your sector, our Creative Industries Industry Manager would love to hear from you:

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References

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