

Convenor's Focus | 2026

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It has been a busy and energising period for Health Libraries Australia, with strong momentum across professional development, sector partnerships, and strategic initiatives that continue to strengthen our profession.

We are particularly excited to be partnering with Health Libraries Inc. (HLI) for our annual ALIA HLA conference, to be held in Melbourne in October. This collaboration brings together two organisations with a shared commitment to excellence, collegiality, and innovation in health librarianship. Planning is well underway, and we look forward to welcoming colleagues from across Australia and beyond for what promises to be an engaging and enriching event that showcases the depth, diversity, and impact of our profession.

Professional development remains a core focus for HLA, and the year has already seen a strong program of online PD activities, with excellent participation and feedback from members. These sessions have supported skills development, knowledge sharing, and connection across geographically dispersed services. More online offerings are scheduled, alongside a number of face-to-face PD opportunities, ensuring we continue to meet the varied learning needs of our membership and support both emerging and experienced health librarians.

A significant milestone for HLA will be the release of the updated ALIA HLA Competencies, which will be shared in the near future. This important work has been led by Ann Ritchie, supported by a highly engaged and thoughtful reference group, whose expertise, insight, and generosity have been invaluable. The updated competencies reflect the evolving scope of health librarianship and provide a contemporary framework to support professional identity, workforce development, and advocacy across the health sector.

HLA will also be participating in the Specialist Digital Health Workforce Census, which will take place throughout May. This census is particularly important as it enables health librarian workforce data to be captured and analysed, ensuring our profession is visible within the broader digital health ecosystem. Making health librarians visible in workforce data is critical: it recognises a profession that is central to safe, effective, and evidence-informed digital health systems, and supports stronger planning and decision-making across the sector. We encourage all eligible members to participate and help ensure our contribution is accurately represented.

It is also a moment to acknowledge and celebrate the extraordinary contributions of our colleagues. We extend our warmest congratulations and best wishes to Cheryl Hamill on her retirement. Cheryl has been a leader in health libraries for many decades, and her influence has been profound. Her generosity with her knowledge, her willingness to mentor and share, and her remarkable *can-do* spirit have left a lasting legacy. Cheryl's contributions have shaped services, supported countless colleagues, and strengthened health librarianship as a profession. We are genuinely better because of her work.

Finally, we are pleased to share that two HLA awards will be offered this year, with further information to be released soon. These include the Anne Harrison Award and the Telstra Health Digital Health Innovation Award, both of which recognise excellence, leadership, and innovation within our profession. We look forward to celebrating the achievements of our colleagues and sharing more details in the coming months.

As always, thank you to our members for your engagement, your advocacy, and your ongoing commitment to advancing health librarianship. We look forward to a productive and inspiring year ahead.

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