Australian Government

Australian Research Council

Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) Initiative

Making a Submission in Response to the *ERA Consultation Paper*

June 2008

RESPONSE FROM The Australian Library & Information Association (ALIA)

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH FOR AUSTRALIA (ERA) INITIATIVE: CONSULTATION PAPER

How to Make a Submission

This document contains notes to assist organisations prepare a submission, as well as the conditions for making a submission. Additionally it contains a submissions pro-forma that should be used for making a submission to the consultation paper on the ERA initiative.

How do I make a submission?

Submissions can be emailed, faxed and/or posted to the ARC.

Please note that only one submission can be made by each invited organisation.

Please provide your responses to the issues in the relevant spaces on the pro-forma.

If you choose not to respond to some of the issues, please do not delete the issue box, just leave the response area blank or enter 'Nil Response'.

If you have any comments on areas not addressed in this pro-forma please enter them in the space provided at the end of your submission.

Will my submission be published?

A report analysing the submissions may be prepared by the ARC in which case submissions or parts of submissions may be included in the report. Organisations may request not to have their details made public.

You should be aware that the ARC may be required to release the details of any submission (or parts of it) by the operation of law (for example, if required to do so by Parliament). The ARC can, therefore, give no undertakings that your submission (or parts of it) will never be made publicly available. If you have any concerns about this, the ARC suggests that you obtain your own legal advice.

Other conditions of making a submission

The ARC will neither consider nor publish any submission that, in the ARC's opinion, contains material that is or may be defamatory, insulting or otherwise inappropriate.

The ARC may include a statement to the effect that the ARC does not necessarily agree with the submission (or part of the submission) and the views expressed in it are those of the author. A statement of this type may accompany any submission or part thereof that the ARC makes publicly available or includes in any report.

The ARC will not treat any information in any submission as confidential to any person.

Other conditions of making a submission are described elsewhere in these notes and in the pro-forma for making a submission.

The ARC may use, reproduce and adapt any submission in whole or in part for any purpose described in these notes or the pro-forma (the "**ARC's Rights**"). Each individual and organisation making a submission must ensure that the ARC's Rights are not in conflict with (or that all relevant consents have been obtained in relation to) any right of any person,

including copyright, moral rights (as defined in the *Copyright Act 1968*) and any right to control the use or disclosure of information.

Where do I send my response?

Email submissions can be sent to era@arc.gov.au

Fax submissions can be sent to **(02) 6287 6601**.

A signed hard copy of the submission should also be sent to:

The Submissions Officer
Research Excellence Branch
Australian Research Council
GPO Box 2702
CANBERRA ACT 2601

The closing date for all submissions is **30 June 2008.**

If you have any questions regarding the pro-forma or any other aspect of making a submission, please contact the Research Excellence Branch at era@arc.gov.au.
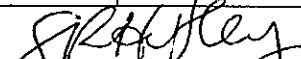
EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH FOR AUSTRALIA (ERA) INITIATIVE: CONSULTATION PAPER

Submission Cover Page

Organisation Name (if applicable)	AUSTRALIAN LIBRARY & INFORMATION ASSOCIATION				
Address	9-11 Napier Street (PO Box 6335, Kingston, ACT 2604)				
City	Deakin	State	ACT	Postcode	2600

Name of Contact Person	Ms Diane Walton-Sonda		
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Does the organisation consent to having its submission identified in a report on the outcomes of this submission process to be prepared by the ARC, which could be made publicly available on the ARC's website? (Y/N)	Y

Name of Authorising Person	Ms Sue Hutley		
Position	Executive Director		
Phone	02 6215 8215	Email	sue.hutley@alia.org.au
Signature	(required for hard copies only)		

Please ensure that all details on this page are completed.

Issues for Response

The ARC is seeking feedback from the sector on the issues raised in the Consultation Paper. These issues are highlighted in the pink boxes throughout the Consultation Paper and listed below.

Measures of Research Activity and Intensity, pages 7 and 8

1. *For the 2008 clusters of ERA, research activity and intensity data will be collected at the two-digit FoR level. Collecting this data at four-digit FoR level over the longer term would provide greater granularity of analysis and reporting. We welcome feedback on any implications that this requirement will have for the span of the reference period in terms of retrospective data collection.*

RESPONSE:
While we can understand that collection of research activity at the two-digit FoR level will make it easier for ARC, it would seem to us that the reporting will be almost meaningless for Library & Information Studies (LIS). LIS occurs in Division 08 in the ANZRC alongside numerous computing, information systems and related hard core disciplines. LIS is at the soft end of the scale and while it might not be a large player in the Division 08 at the moment, its research activity is increasing and is mostly quite different to that of its ANZRC-related discipline areas.

On the matter of classification: LIS has been classified as 0807 in the ANZRC document, but as part of the Humanities and Creative Arts by ARC. Is this a recognition that LIS has a foot in both camps (and even other disciplines if you really think about it)? Or an accident? Or what?

2. *We recognise that non-salaried staff (honorary and adjunct) often contribute to the overall research effort of an institution. Therefore, we are seeking comments on the extent (if any) to which these researchers should be incorporated into staff FTE reporting.*

RESPONSE:

It has long been our view that honorary, adjunct and professional salaried staff (either permanent, contract or sessional) who are working directly on research projects, be included in the overall research effort and reporting.

3.   *Are there other core indicators of research quality that could readily be included?*

RESPONSE: In our field, the quality of LIS research may not be immediate or intended, but it is very often an important aspect of information studies. External recognition of LIS research is important and is often reflected in adoption of new practices. These may be the results of a number of seemingly unrelated indicators: these could be new library services and initiatives emanating from papers at professional conferences, possibly on separate research projects... It can be impossible to relate these indicators to a single research project.

Indicators of Success in Applied Research and Translation of Research Outcomes, page 8

4.   *What other discipline-specific measures of excellence in applied research and translation of research outcomes should be considered by the Indicators Development Group, and how should they be benchmarked?*

RESPONSE:
In the earlier RQF discussions on indicators of research quality we highlighted outputs like e-space repositories and e-access initiatives as mentioned again in Q5 below. These have been the product of often intense research activity. How to "measure them"? They could be benchmarked.

5.   *We would welcome suggestions regarding types of practitioner-focussed outlets that may indicate excellence in applied research or translation.*

RESPONSE:

A recognition of research based e-space and e-access needs to be included. These can be "measured" by their existence and public accessibility.

6. How feasible is it to collect category 2-4 research income data at four-digit FoR? Are there specific issues for each category for retrospective collection? Are there specific issues for future collections in Category 3?

RESPONSE:

It should not be difficult to collect data on research income streams if proper records are kept by the research project team. In the case of LIS we are very pleased to see the inclusion of a variety of research income sources in this data collection.

7. Are all the income categories necessary or appropriate? What additional income streams could be collected under Category 5?

RESPONSE:

If Category 5 includes a wide variety of research granting schemes then this should suit LIS. It can be the case that LIS projects received research grants from various based for projects and that these grants, while non-competitive, do meet with the strict guidelines set by the granting body.

8. What would the most useful research income reference period be for ERA, considering this does not need to be the same as the six-year publications reference period (see page 10)?

RESPONSE:

9.	How practical is it to request numbers of successful grants in addition to research income?

RESPONSE:

This should not be difficult if proper records are kept by the research team.

Research Publications Data, page 10

10.	A list of other possible publications types is provided in Appendix B of the Consultation Paper. We are seeking feedback on whether there is support for these types to be included for individual disciplines and whether these categories are appropriately identified.

RESPONSE: None that we can identify at this stage

Book chapter/s;
Conference abstract (extended) – refereed.

Publication Reference Period(s), page 10

11.	Should all non-publication data be collected over a shorter reference period? If so, what would that period be?

RESPONSE:

12. Please provide comment on the above approaches for attributing publications.

RESPONSE:
It would seem that it is important that both the author at the time the research was being done, and the institution supporting that author during the project, gain attributed recognition. We therefore favour Approach 2. Institutions deserve recognition for their support of the researcher if the project is being undertaken at their premises using their infrastructure. While it might be argued that this support should be costed as a component of the research grant, there are "in kind" and infrastructure items that are taken for granted and not necessarily costed into the lifetime of a project.

13. Which citation data suppliers in your experience result in the most meaningful citation analysis for each of the disciplines?

RESPONSE: None.
It is our preference not to use a citation data supplier since they only rank journal titles of importance to them under their rules of inclusion. In the case of LIS, there are approximately 200 titles listed in the final ERA Tiered list, of which ONLY circa 60 are located in for example, the Web of Science Journal Impact database. While the journal titles in Web of Science reflect worldwide preference of use for those titles, their choice is reliant on the rules and whim of the database supplier. LIS researchers in Australia do of course use these titles, but the ERA list far better reflects the wider journal preference of the Australian LIS community. There will need to be a regular and reasonably frequent process for updating the lists to accommodate the rapid cycle of change in scholarly publishing.

> 14. *Please provide comments regarding research training indicators. Is it possible to provide HDR completions data retrospectively at the four-digit FoR level?*

RESPONSE: it is pleasing to see the inclusion of HDR research in the ERA document. It should be possible to provide HDR completions at the four digit FoR level.

> 15. *Do you see value in tagging research outputs as authored by HDR students and value in the analyses this will produce?*

RESPONSE: Yes. It is the custom of some HDR supervisors to claim authorship of papers of their HDR students, either as a senior or subsequent author, and in such circumstances it would be argued that there could be double dipping in claims. But there are also HDR supervisors who do not practice this way and the HDR student work, having been supported by the author and the institution, should be claimable. It will also give valuable information about publishing patterns of HDR students during their candidature.

16. *Institutions are invited to comment on the ease or otherwise of meeting any of the data requirements outlined in this document in addition to the specific questions addressed under particular headings.*

RESPONSE:

We realise that ARC is under pressure to get ERA underway quickly, however, the period allowed for comment on this document was not long enough. Another month at least would have been most helpful

17. *We propose there is considerable value in having maximum flexibility and utility with respect to reporting, however, we also recognise the workload involved for institutions in assigning reporting codes. We welcome feedback on this issue in respect to both the feasibility and value of such an approach.*

RESPONSE:

18.   *Institutions are invited to comment on the feasibility or otherwise of institutions identifying student authorship in previous HERDC collections.*

RESPONSE: