

Editor's note:

Dear ALRA colleagues and readers,

Welcome to our Newsletter No. 76 of December 2021. This newsletter is published very late in the year – the disruptions continued, and 2021 was basically a sequel of 2020. We cannot use the term “unprecedented” any more, as it seems to become a new form of normalcy to get in and out of lockdowns or having restrictions of one kind or another imposed on our functions.

In our last newsletter a few of us could already give you some insight about some of the consequences of what working under these circumstances meant. Meanwhile the financial damage to universities has been evaluated¹ showing that an estimated 35 000 jobs got lost in the sector, mostly affecting casual, fixed and short-term personnel. Libraries had their share in reducing costs, as Rheny and I show for the ANU and Monash University libraries. The re-structuring of the latter proves the continuing reduction of specialist positions mostly based on economic reasoning is ongoing – a trend that can be observed not only in Australia. With managements favouring administrative function over subject knowledge the subject specialist is a dying breed.

When students can't come to Australia Australian universities support them locally: Anita reports on the new services established on the Indonesia Campus of Monash University. These services enable students to use most of Monash University's services - both those who are enrolled as Monash Indonesia students and the Australian enrolled ones while they are in Indonesia.

Last but not least: for the first time we include a cartoon to illustrate a modern times “liaison librarian”.

We hoped in vain to not having to report on pandemic related experiences – we were overly confident, it seems. It continued to disrupt a few things heavily, and many of us had their workplace endangered, or completely changed, adding to the already existing anxiety. But we also found positive challenges in doing things differently, and learning new tricks, and discovered the value of seeing colleagues, friends and our clients face to face.

We may stay in a state of flux for quite some time, but we will contribute to provide the best services possible. 2022 may be different or not – I wish you all to have a safe year!

Friederike Schimmelpfennig

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¹ Ian Marshman and Frank Larkins: “ How bad has COVID been for university finances and staff?” University World News, <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20211215052334254> , 15 Dec 2021