

The Nimble Information Adventurer

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Abstract:

The year is 2016. The workplace has evolved into the “dynamic and wise workplace”. This has demanded that business and information professionals manage information from a myriad of sources in a myriad of formats, and consolidate it into a tapestry of intelligence.

In 2005, the Canadian library sector completed a major human resource management study (the 8Rs: recruitment, retirement, retention, rejuvenation, repatriation, re-accreditation, remuneration and restructuring) that identified leadership, management and business skills, as well as technical skills, as paramount for future library and information professionals.

In 2016 in developed economies such as Australia and New Zealand, Generation X and Y now make up the majority of the workforce. Even ten years beforehand in 2006, these two generations represented nearly two-thirds of the workforce. In 2016, Generation Xers have become the most powerful generation, occupying senior positions in government and business. They think and act differently from baby boomers. They are smart, more financially literate, and comfortable with technology and complex problem solving.

Baby boomers still work on a part-time basis and use their life-time experiences and expertise to enrich an organisation and its client services.

This paper reflects on the ten year period 2006-2016, and the changes and initiatives that have occurred with libraries, business and information professionals, and with their development and understanding and application of strategy, business management, flexible working models, stakeholder relationships, and global and regional partnering. The relevance, value and rearrangement of information industry and professional associations in this ten-year period are traced.

1. Introduction

We have arrived! It is 11 October 2016. I am approaching 65 years of age and still working full time. Nimble information adventurers (NIAs) are prolific in the global economy. They have:

- Technology savvyness
- The agility, strength and care of mountain climbers
- The strategic approach of grand master chess players, and
- The speed of cheetahs.

They are of many age groups and are found in schools, homes, universities, businesses, government departments and community organisations, and are seekers/users of information and providers of information services.

Over the past ten years since 2006, Australia and New Zealand have become more closely aligned economically. They are still strongly dependent on international export trade and in particular, agriculture, mining, education and tourism.

Both countries have grown in population with Australia at just over 22 million and New Zealand at 4.9 million. Skills shortages have been challenging and immigration has continued to be a key social and economic factor for both. And the rest of the world - 99.7% of its population - continues to live outside these two countries.

Many generations exist within the workforce: Veterans, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Y and Z. The age of the generalist manager came to an end during the past 10 years with what has been a very changing workplace.

For senior managers, deep industry and/or functional expertise have been vital, as well as understanding cultures, wide stakeholder interest management, communication and team building skills.

In the workplace, outputs became more important than inputs. Talent teams flourish with a flexible mix of full time, part-time and contract staff. Work and life balance has been a major priority of the past ten years.

Since 2006, industry and professional associations globally, and in Australia and New Zealand, still exist but have declined in numbers. LIANZA and ALIA became closer and created the *Information Network Pacific – InP*: a connector; government, industry and sector focussed, and globally engaged.

2. The Economies

Globalisation has continued to be a major factor for both Australia and New Zealand during the 2006-2016 timeframe. Globalisation has included a plethora of global systems such as international trade, sea and air transportation, news services, electronic and physical distribution systems, and stock market trading. Two well established global systems in 2006 were the GPS system and the Internet.

In 2006, it was stated that *“a little understood feature of developed economies was their increasing focus on finance and a reduced focus on primary and secondary industry”*. However, from 2006 to 2016, both Australia and New Zealand continued to have strong primary industry export focussed sectors.

Exports for both Australia and New Zealand grew as a percentage of GDP in the 10-year period, with primary industry products, tourism and education being the main contributors to this growth.

As developed economies depended more on knowledge-intensive industries for their economic prosperity, fostering education in areas such as the life sciences and finance became increasingly important. Biotechnology developed in three areas: health, food and energy. Changing practices and focus on agriculture and energy management were critical to the maintenance of our national standards of living.

Growth in the off-shoring of services to low cost economies continued. The knowledge and practice of global supply chain management was enhanced during this 2006-2016 period.

China and India continued to become economic powerhouses and have influenced business priorities for both Australia and New Zealand.

In the 16 years since the beginning of the 21st century, China's economy grew at an average annual rate of 8%, and now contributes around 8% of world GDP (up from 5% in 2006).

The value of Australia and New Zealand agricultural exports to China nearly doubled to US\$4bn in the 2006-2016 timeframe. China has consumed enormous volumes of Australia's iron ore since the turn of the century and continued to be a dominant global steel maker.

In 2016, Australia's major trading partners are the countries of the greater Asian region including China, Japan and the ASEAN countries, and the USA. Australia has continued to be New Zealand's largest trading partner, along with the European Union, the USA and Japan.

Collaboration with both peer and rival organisations became critical, enabling organisations to both operate and compete. Those organisations that have “connected” effectively have thrived.

Organisations, executives and managers during 2006-2016 period took both languages and inter-cultural skills more seriously. The progress of women into senior management roles in the wider workplace continued to develop at a slow pace.

There was a move away for organisations (particularly in the corporate sector) from dominant shareholder value to a wider stakeholder view. Organisations and senior managers moved to a “*community of stakeholder*” view of their organisation’s performance.

Organisation structures changed. In 2006 IBM had about 12,000 suppliers wired to its system. The hierarchical organisation structures that dominated the 20th century have long gone and have been continually replaced by organisations that resemble nodes at the centres of networks.

Personal technologies including virtual computers have become more and more human-like, with their own personalities and other characteristics that give us the sense of being in *the space of others*.

The *library and information services sub-sectors* of the:

- Community sector (eg Community centres and public libraries)
- Skills, research and innovation sectors (eg Universities, TAFE/Polytechnics, Schools)
- Government and business sectors
- Culture and heritage sectors,

in 2006 in Australia and New Zealand, had collective annual operating budgets of over A\$2 billion and NZ\$450 million respectively¹. The sectors that were the major contributors to these budgets, in order, were the public and university library sectors.

In 2006, the Australia Public Libraries had collective operating budgets of around A\$600m and in New Zealand, NZ\$200m. The University libraries had collective operating budgets of A\$500m and NZ\$100m respectively in Australia and New Zealand².

3. Population and Talent Team Demographics

Australia's population in 2016 was just over 22m and New Zealand's population around 4.9m. However, 99.7% of the world's population lives outside the two countries.

In most areas of New Zealand, the Māori and Pacific populations are generally younger than the Asian population, which is generally younger than the European population.

In 2016, the median age of New Zealanders was:

Group	Median Age
European population	43 years (66% of total population)
Asian population	34 years (11% of total population)
Māori population	25 years (15% of total population)
Pacific population	23 years (8% of total population) ³ .

New Zealand has continued to have a highly urbanised population with over 75% of the resident population living in urban centres. Australia's population continues to dominate the coast lines with over 85% of the population living in cities and major coastal-urban centres.

Over 50% of all New Zealanders live in the five main urban areas of Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin.

The population is still heavily concentrated in the northern half of the North Island (over 50%), with the remaining population is evenly spread between the southern half of the North Island and the South Island.

In 2016, Manukau City has 9% of New Zealand's Māori population and 33% of New Zealand's Pacific population. In Auckland City, 36% of the residents are of Asian ethnicity.

Australia and New Zealand have experienced long periods of skills shortages since 2006. As the world has changed, so has the workplace and mindsets.

Since 2006, we have witnessed at least four different generations in the workplace at the same time: Veterans, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y. Generation Z has recently entered the workplace.

Some characteristics of the different generations are presented below.

Characteristics of the Different Generations 2006-2016

	Z	Y	X	Baby Boomers (BBs)	Veterans (Vs)
Born	After 1997	1981-1997	1961-1981	1945-1961	Before 1945
Age in 2006	Under 10	Under 25, older than 10	25 - 45	45 - 61	Over 61
Age in 2016	Under 20	Under 35, older than 20	35 - 55	55 - 71	Over 71
Some Characteristics - 2016	Young IT fluent – a native language Teenagers work casually and study part time	IT savvy - multimedia experienced More traditional, optimistic, confident and ambitious Self managed careers and lifestyles; stay with an employer for between 2-4 years Creative problem solvers Socially aware, strong social conscience and values Value honesty and respect	IT literate Expect to change jobs for career development Inclusive management styles Have begun moving into senior management roles Disillusioned, rebellious, pessimistic Late to marry and have children	Hard workers Health focus Are retiring but not in the traditional sense Still work including part time Still in Executive and Board roles	Hard workers Health focus Some still working Some still in Board roles

Both Generation X and Y have played a large role in the workplace over the past 10 years. Managers have been expected to manage a multi-generational workforce and acquire generation specific leadership and management skills including managing a generation of older workers who have not retired in what was a traditional manner.

Flexibility between work and lifestyle commenced over 20 years ago in the latter part of the 20th century. Flexible working alternatives are particularly important where lifestyle opportunities lure employees.

A parent may have spent time with children after school, or a Generation X or Yer may have gone to the surf on a cloudless summer's afternoon. The reality for organisations has been the same: no matter what the demographic, everyone has wanted the flexibility to work from home and/or to dictate their own schedules.

By 2016, Generation Xers became the most powerful generation, occupying senior positions in government and business. They think and act differently from the Baby Boomers. They are very smart, very financially literate, and very comfortable with technology and complex problem solving.

The workplace has witnessed an increasing focus on the performance of people as a core organisation asset. Models of flexible working evolved in response to the changing needs of Baby Boomers and Generation Y.

Greater attention has been given to measuring the performance of people, and developing new techniques for improving performance. Problem solving and creativity have become increasingly important to organisations.

The use of casual and part-time labor services increased over the 2006-2016 period. Teenagers work casually both for money and for entertainment. The Generation Z and Generation Y IT *savvyness* has been used extensively by organisations on a project by project basis.

Back in 2006, numerous alternative terms were then given to Generation Y. These included the Net Generation, Millennials, Echo Boomers, iGeneration, Second Baby Boom, Google generation, Myspace Generation, MyPod Generation (from the fusion of "Myspace" and "iPod"), and Generation Next.

Generation Z came along in the latter part of the 1990s. They are still teenagers at best.

The Baby Boomers that have "retired" are also working on a part-time or casual basis. There are many Australians and New Zealanders in this category.

Even in 2006, new arrangements had been made for retirees. In the USA at that time for example, the Aerospace Corp had implemented a "*retiree casual*" program where employees that retired at age 55 could work up to 1000 hours per year on a project basis at their retirement level base salaries.

It was well known in 2006 that the population of library managers and professionals in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the UK and USA was ageing. A looming crisis in succession management was identified. At that time, 25% of Canadian Librarians and 20% of library paraprofessionals were 55 years or older. Earlier, in 2005, it was estimated that by 2010, there would be a shortage of nearly 11,000 public library staff in the UK⁴, and the USA had identified that 58% of library professionals will have retired by 2019.

4. Information and Library Services

So what has happened with information and library services over the past 10 years in Australian and New Zealand?

In 2006 we had Google, and *non* “Goo” search engines such as Yahoo, Zibb, Kosmix, Scirus, Sensis, Exalead.com, Gigablast.com – some of these still prevail today in 2016.

There has been a rapid focus on virtual services including websites and cataloguing. Collaboration between information service providers and the outsourcing of library and information services nationally and internationally has strengthened in areas such as acquisition, storage and other shared services such as training and development.

The National (and State in Australia) libraries have continued to be integral to the heritage, culture and information economies of Australia and New Zealand. They aggressively continued with the digitisation of information. Print copy still exists in its original format.

The Australian academic environment shifted dramatically in the 2006-2010 period with a focus on enhanced performance associated with new research directions and evidence.

This increased focus on research was through the *Research Quality Framework* with an associated increased role of libraries and information professionals in research activity. With the ongoing emergence of *e-research*, vast quantities of data have been supported by high powered computers for both preservation and access.

The integration of information management and research skills with academics and undergraduates and post-graduate courses continued through proactive relationships with faculties, and with greater integration of libraries within universities.

Integrating *information skills* into courses continued to gain prominence with which library and information centre staff have provided and taught *information management and research* courses across faculties.

University libraries and information services changed rapidly to a *user centric space* focus (they moved right away from being *collection centric*). University information commons-like approaches were refined - learning hubs and the flexible use of spaces for individuals and groups and electronic information access became the norm. Print copy and on-line information are still part of the university mix.

The next generation of flexibly purchased university library management systems unfolded midway during the 2006-2016 period via fewer global and local vendors.

More and more public libraries and Departments of Education entered into *joint use libraries* with communities and schools for education and leisure services.

Public libraries became an increasing component of community centres - they have become *creativity centres* that offer a wide range of activities for an array of different age groups and multi-ethnic background users:

- Band practice rooms
- Podcasting plus stations
- Blogger plus stations
- Art studios
- Recording studios
- Video studios
- Imagination rooms
- Theater and drama⁵.

For many years now their staff has included social and youth workers, nurses, teachers and actors.

Information services in the government and business sectors continued their research and electronic focus, through collaborative, outsourced and industry sector focussed models.

Hubs of specialist information services have been established in central government, even *Trans-Tasman*, servicing the national and international needs of specific government and industry sectors such as the resources, tourism and education sectors⁶.

5. Information Connectivity Skills and Knowledge

Eleven years ago (2005), the Canadian study known as the 8Rs (*recruitment, retirement, retention, rejuvenation, repatriation, re-accreditation, remuneration and restructuring*) of human resource management in Canadian libraries, revealed three key skills to be pursued in librarians' education:

- *Management*
- *Leadership*, and
- *Business Skills*.

And these were pursued, along with the enhancement of information professionals' and managers':

- Cross cultural knowledge
- Several languages speaking capability, and
- Cross generational management.

Since the early part of the 21st century, people from diverse life and professional experiences and qualifications have entered the *library and information service delivery* space.

Library and information services now employ on a full-time, part-time and contract basis, people from a range of disciplines, backgrounds and qualifications with key attributes such as *confidence, extroversion, very sound communication and interpersonal skills, IT skills, strategic thinking skills, analytical skills and business skills*.

Employers provide training on specific functional aspects of the library/information services environment as required.

In 2016, there are almost no people entering the library and information services sector with specific library oriented qualifications, but rather people with a broad interest in knowledge and information from a vast array of backgrounds.

Experienced managers out of many industry sectors run library and information services.

6. Industry and Professional Associations

What ever happened to LIANZA and ALIA? They became the *Information Network Pacific – inP*.

Eleven years ago in 2005, and according to authorities in the sector, there were around 700,000 *not-for-profit* organisations in Australia and 40,000 in New Zealand.

Of the 700,000 organisations in Australia, 380,000 of these were incorporated in some way. 35,000 of these *not-for-profit* organisations employed staff and generated A\$33.5bn in revenue. The main not-for-profits were:

- Social Services groups eg day care, social clubs, hobby clubs, hospitals, nursing homes
- Education and Research groups eg universities, TAFEs
- Culture and Recreational Groups eg zoos, museums, sporting clubs.

There was then and still is no definitive list of all these organisations. *Business and professional associations* are one example of member based and revenue generating *not-for-profit* organisations and represent around 2% of all Australian *not-for-profit* organisations.

Ten years ago, business and professional associations were in a life cycle decline phase, growing at a slower pace than the economy. Most Australian business and professional associations were then and still are located on Australia's east coast.

The new connector organisation, *Information Network Pacific – inP*, was created for regional information professionals, information service providers and their business partners. It is accessed by wide ranging NIAs including the Veteran, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Y and Z. It provides collaborative services to the different sectors of organisations and professionals in the library and information services space that includes the:

- Community sector – community services including recreational and educational information services
- Research, learning and innovation sectors
- Business and government sectors
- Culture and heritage sectors
- Technology sectors.

inP's value lies in *connectivity, information and enrichment*. Its relevance is to all information users. It has free membership.

7. In Summary

The world has become smaller even though its population has grown. Technologies have continued to bring nations and people closer together at a faster pace. Although 99.7% of the world's population lives outside Australia and New Zealand – we continue to be in close touch both economically and socially with the rest of the world. We are still strongly dependent on international export trade with products and services from agriculture, mining, education and tourism.

Changing practices and a focus on agriculture and energy management were critical to the maintenance of our national standards of living.

Information overload ten years ago in 2006 has been replaced of information “overwhelming”. All generations are coping with the need to acquire meaningful recreational and educational information in quick time.

From seven years olds (Gen Z) to seventy seven year olds (Veterans), we have become *nimble information adventurers*. We are connected – we read hard copy and online. We research through a plethora of search engines.

A wide range of generations are still in the workforce; the age of the generalist manager came to an end for senior managers, and deep industry and/or functional expertise have been vital, as well as the understanding of cultures. Skills shortages have been a challenge.

Australian and New Zealand have become increasingly multicultural, with the continued influx of Asian and other community groups. Over one third of Auckland's population today is of Asian descent.

Collaboration and “connecting” have been critical business practices for success. Off-shoring and outsourcing have continued to be important.

In the workplace, outputs became more important than inputs. Talent teams flourish with a flexible mix of full time, part-time and contract staff. People from diverse life and professional experiences and qualifications have entered the *library and information service delivery* space. There are almost no people entering the library and information services sector with specific library oriented qualifications.

Globally, and since 2006, industry and professional associations declined in numbers. LIANZA and ALIA created the *Information Network Pacific – InP*: a connector; government, industry and sector focussed, and globally engaged. Its patrons are disparate ranging from all-age information professionals to information services organisations and their business partners.

The next ten years - to 2026 – will be interesting.

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Endnotes

¹ Robert McEntyre estimate based on facts (ie Public library, University, National and State Library operating budgets) and guesstimates

² CAUL On Line Statistics, from <http://www.caul.edu.au/stats/>

³ Population Projections tables, 2006, *Statistics New Zealand Tatauranga Aotearoa*, from <http://www.stats.govt.nz/products-and-services/table-builder/pop-projections.htm#national>

⁴ Hallam, G, 2005, A worldwide shortage of librarians, <http://alia.org.au/media.room/2005.10.18.html>

⁵ Frey, T, 2006, The Future of Libraries - Beginning the Great Transformation, *DaVinci Institute*

⁶ Discussion with Ms Nerida Hart, Canberra, Australia