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A Cultural Comparison

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A Cultural Comparison: Similarities and Differences between Studying and Working in Australian and US Universities and University Libraries

By Josette Kubicki
Part-time Reference Librarian at UCF, ADU, & Valencia College Libraries

I feel fortunate to have worked as an academic librarian in two similar, yet different countries. First I worked as a general librarian for the Department of Services at the University of Canberra, then as a contracted Science & Engineering Research Librarian at Macquarie University. I have a Master of Arts in Information and Knowledge Management from the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS), which is equivalent to an ALA-accredited degree in Library and Information Science. Last December, I graduated with a Master of Arts in Library and Information Science from University of South Florida (USF). In my story, I have integrated the similarities and differences between Australian and American university libraries and universities.

When I emigrated from Sydney, Australia to Orlando, United States at the tail end of August, 2014, it was like living in a parallel universe. With both countries sharing an Anglo-Saxon heritage, there are a lot of cultural similarities; furthermore, the US has spread a lot of influence to Australia through pop-culture. It can be all too deceptively easy for an Australian expat to think upon relocating to the United States, and vice-versa, “*I’ve got this...*”

According to the Geert Hofstede Index, Australia and the US rank culturally close to one another according to the cultural dimensions of *power distance*, *individualism*, *masculinity*, *uncertainty avoidance*, *long term orientation*, and *indulgence*. This typically reflects how I feel about the two countries. However, for a few dimensions that are just a point or few apart, it really can feel more like a gulf of cultural difference, leaving one reeling in culture shock for a while, until one adapts.

In Australia, my first academic librarian position was as a Librarian, Higher Education Worker (HEW Level 5) at the University of Canberra, a public university of 10,000 students. In the Department of Services, I undertook Reference & Instruction, and coordinated different services when not on the frontline. I then moved onto a Research Librarian (HEW Level 6) position at Macquarie University, a public university in Sydney, of approximately 40,000 students. My first academic library position in the US was as a part-time Reference Librarian – Faculty, at Valencia College. This leads to the first main difference to working as a librarian in Australia and the US:

Professional Status vs. Faculty Status

In Australia, librarians who work in the profession are also referred to as practitioners. This is to be distinguished from Library and Information Science (LIS) academics (faculty), faculty who research and teach in LIS. They work quite separately. Some practitioners do collaborate with LIS academics on more rigorous research projects.

Academic librarians in Australia are practitioners, and are employed at a professional status. In a higher education provider, a librarian is employed at a rank from Higher Education Worker

(HEW) Level 5 through to Level 10 (University Librarian). A HEW level is assigned to each position description. Unlike the US where salary is often “negotiable”, when a librarian position is advertised in Australia, it is much more definitive. A position advertisement typically has the level, level’s salary range, and additional benefits, see for example this [archived Research Librarian position from Macquarie University](#), ironically, the position that I had originally filled in for before relocating to Orlando. The university needs to offer at least the minimum level set by the award (more on this later). The librarian is offered a salary commensurate to experience. A librarian is promoted to a higher level by applying for a higher HEW level position within or at a different institution. The exception is if an organizational restructure takes place, where position descriptions may significantly change, and the HEW level is adjusted.

In the US, academic librarians are employed either at faculty status or at professional status. The major implication of difference is promotions. Librarians at faculty status are expected to publish to a certain extent in order to be promoted to a higher rank. In Australia, publishing could help get one promoted, but is not necessary. I know of librarians who have been promoted without having published. To obtain a promotion, emphasis is more focused on institutional service, such as serving on library committees, a desire to learn through further professional development or study, and demonstrating the ability to take initiative, manage, and lead effectively.

Many practitioners do occasionally present at conferences and/or write papers, and those that write/present usually do so at an applied rather than theoretical level. There is currently interest in embedding research culture and practice across the LIS profession, driven by the Library and Information Science Research Australia ([LISRA](#)).

In my first academic librarian position at the University of Canberra (UC), much of my work involved reference and instruction services to undergraduates, and citation management workshops in EndNote and RefWorks for all. However, when not in the frontline, instead of having a stable job, I acted in a variety of positions for other librarians who were on leave for several weeks, and even months at a time. In my two years and three months at UC, I had acted as the e-Reserve Coordinator (Librarian), Interlibrary Loan & Document Delivery Coordinator; Information & Loans Desk Coordinator, and Virtual Reference and Reference Assistance Desk Coordinator. This leads to another key difference between working in an Australian and US academic library, and which is applicable to all other types of employment:

Employee Leave Entitlements and Typical Work Hours

According to the [Hofstede Index](#), the US is just a point higher in ‘individualism’ than Australia, and Australia is a few points higher on the ‘indulgency’ scale. Australians work hard, but enjoy recreation and love to travel widely. Many Australians will make the most of any of the *typically* more generous leave entitlements they have, due to federal and state legislation. In the US, apart from some government acts like the Medical and Family Leave Act, the more individualized US culture sees many employees’ entitlements vary from organization to organization.

In Australia, ten minimum leave entitlements come from the National Employment Standards (NES) covering maximum weekly hours, requests for flexible working arrangements, leave entitlements including parental and related, annual, personal carers and compassionate leave, community service, long service, and public holidays, and notice of termination and redundancy (Fair Work Ombudsman [FWO], 2010a, para. 1-5).

Additional leave entitlements may be provided by the ‘Award’ or ‘registered agreement’ that the employee falls under. Awards are legal documents that outline the minimum rates of pay and employment conditions, with currently 122 industry or occupation awards that cover most people who work (FWO, 2010b). A ‘registered agreement’ which includes enterprise agreements set out minimum employment conditions and can apply to one business, a group of business (FWO, 2010b). When a workplace has a registered agreement, the award no longer applies, however, the base pay rate in the registered agreement can’t be less than the rate in the award, the NES still applies, and any terms about outworkers in the award still apply (FWO, 2010c).

Most academic librarians and library staff fall under the *‘Higher Education Industry – General Staff’ Award 2010*. Under this award, librarians and other general staff are typically entitled to:

- **Work 35 hours a week, with time off in lieu:** If one needs to work more than 35 hours (a given in the first few weeks of each semester!) additional hours worked are exchanged for a few hours or a whole day off.
- **Have 20 days paid annual leave; accruable** regardless of which organization.
- **Earn Long Service Leave** after a long period of time working for the same employer or sector. Varies by state, but typically 2 months after 10 years full-time, to take all at once, or blocks.
- **18 weeks Paid Parental Leave, or up to 12 months unpaid Parental Leave**, plus the option to request additional 12 months leave.
- **10 days Sick & Carer’s Leave** per year, with unpaid leave for up to 3 months at no risk of termination.

(Fair Work Commission, 2017, part 6).

An example of the leave entitlements in practice include Australian Catholic University’s (ACU) [Leave Entitlements](#). *Curious about other Australian entitlements? Check out Appendix A.*

Australian organizations tend to have more flexible working arrangements eg. Job sharing (part time work), and hours of start / finish to cater for child care needs etc., and work-life balance policies, and university libraries are no exception (V. Bourbous, personal communication, March 29, 2017), see for example, [ACU Hours of Work / Working Arrangements](#). In public universities, typically a full-time librarian who goes onto Parental Leave has the right to return to the same position at a part-time rate. If the same position cannot be given due to the nature of the role, he or she must be offered a different part-time library position at the same HEW level.

From an Australian expat’s eyes, the American working culture seems to operate largely on an incentives-based culture, where an organization may entice an employee to work at their place with more generous fringe benefits over another. In Australia, the working culture is very much as an ‘employee rights-based’ one, with Australia having a strong work union culture compared to the US. An employee can expect the same base entitlements regardless where they work.

Implication for Academic Library Differences – Staffing Levels

Consequentially, fewer working hours and greater leave entitlements is a contributing factor toward a greater number of librarians being employed at a university, whether permanently or on a contract basis. For example, at Macquarie University which serves a population of 40,000 students, there are more librarians compared to UCF’s Research & Information Services Department.

At Macquarie University Library, there is a team of 129 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff ([Macquarie University Library, 2016a](#)) working in either in one of the following departments: Information Access & Advisory Services, Collections & Discovery Services, Library Technology Services, and Library Planning & Administrative Services. One Associate University Librarian leads Information Access & Advisory Services, and the other Associate Librarian leads the Collections & Discovery Services. Within the Advisory Services division of the Information Access & Advisory Services Department, there are five teams which serve a faculty (college). Each team is overseen by one of the Research Librarians (Subject Librarian). Employed as a Discipline Group Leader (HEW Level 7), they serve on faculty committees, and think of strategic direction for outreach and service ([Macquarie University Library, 2016b](#)). Research Librarians (HEW Level 6) are either allocated disciplines to be a Subject/Liaison Librarian for, or cover the same disciplines and divide the responsibilities between them:

- **Faculty (College) of Arts**
 - 5 Research Librarians (2 part-time)
 - 1 Services Librarian (Level 5), equivalent to a general Reference & Instruction Librarian
- **Faculty of Business & Economics**
 - 2 Research Librarians
 - 1 Services Librarian
- **Faculty of Human Sciences**
 - 3 Research Librarians; 1 Clinical & Research Librarian (1 part-time)
 - 1 Services Librarian
- **Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences**
 - Same Research Librarians as above + 1 additional Clinical & Research Librarian
- **Faculty of Science & Engineering**
 - 2 Research Librarians
 - 1 Services Librarian

In addition, there are a team of casual (adjunct) librarians who undertake reference shifts in weekends.

At Macquarie University, having at least two Research Librarians for the same college can imply a more collaborative approach to brainstorming and implementing ways to serve the needs of the faculty and students. Other contributing factors toward librarian and other library staff staffing levels include how much university funding is allocated toward the Library. Universities which obtain more funds, are likely to have more funding channeled toward the library, but it also depends on the proportion of funds that the university allocates their funding to the library.

Australian university libraries typically have an open-plan office space for most of their librarians. UCF, Adventist University of Health Sciences, Rollins College, and probably many other universities, there tends to be one subject librarian only serving each college, each with their own office. The difference here is likely to be partially because of limited, expensive land space. In Australia, greater metropolitan areas are sprawled out from the major cities of Sydney, Hobart, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Darwin, and Brisbane, with only a sprinkling of mid-sized and small cities in between. In the US, cities of various sizes are all over the country. Another reason is likely also because of professional status vs. faculty status. As publication is by no means required for promotion, ample room for storage is not as necessary. A benefit of having an open-plan office space is greater collaboration between librarians on a serendipitous level. At the University of Canberra Library, I shared so many ideas easily with my Access Services and Academic Services team leaders and colleagues, as I was just sitting across from them. However, it also depends on the culture of the workplace.

Acting and Temporary Librarian Positions

To help fill gaps in longer periods of leave, university libraries either promote their own staff for interim positions, hire a temporary librarian via a national job search, hire a temporary librarian via a job agency, employ a pool of casual (adjunct) librarians and offer them a block of work or additional hours over their current job, or a combination of these. There are two job agencies that service the LIS sector in Australia for short-term and long-term contract or casual work.

As I knew I would soon be moving to the US, I had applied for a contract at Science & Engineering Research Librarian position at Macquarie University, one of Australia's top young universities located in Sydney's north-west. The contract was via one of the job agencies, and I applied for the position as I would any other. I attended an interview sitting for a panel of three. I obtained the contract, filling in for one of the Science & Engineering Research Librarians on secondment. He was acting in a higher position, and that person was acting in someone else's role who was on a substantial entitled leave period.

All of the varied entitled leave periods can sometimes leave an Australian university library, and any organization (especially in the public sector, where entitlements tend to be more generous than the NES standards) feel like it is going through a round of musical chairs, especially when by circumstance, a few happen to go on leave all at once. But it is interesting to see the different styles librarians approach when acting in certain positions, and that in itself can be a beneficial way for the wider library team and the original librarian in the role to gather new ideas for reviving their position when they return from leave.

Implication for Australian vs. US Academic Librarians

Contract work can be a really helpful way for a new graduate or other librarians wanting to gain new experiences to build their CV. If a temporary librarian from a job agency later applies for and obtains a permanent position at the university, the library will often need to pay a 'finder's fee'. The disadvantage is unless it is a special long-term contract, there are no paid leave entitlements. However, one still does get paid Superannuation (equivalent to a 401K) as that is Federal Government mandated, at the minimum rate. Contractors and casuals are paid more per hour than a full-time librarian to make up for the various entitlements' gap. Because Australia has a national health care system with similarities to Canada and the United Kingdom, health insurance is not an issue.

Library Structure – Organization of Staff

Like in the US, Australian university libraries vary in their organizational structure from institution to institution. Typically, substantially-sized university libraries have a hierarchical structure. They are headed by a University Librarian (Director), who has at least one Associate University Librarian who oversees a large department. Each department is split into divisions, managed by librarians (titles vary from institution to institution; 'manager' is popular). Depending on the staffing level and structure, the divisions may be further divided into smaller teams led by librarian team leaders, who oversee a team of librarians, or library officers and assistants, student assistants, or a combination. Some libraries are moving to a flatter structure like the University of Wollongong. A few examples of Australian university library

organizational structures include [University of Wollongong](#), [UTS Library](#), and [LaTrobe University Library](#).

Every now and again, university libraries will undergo a restructure for various reasons. Australian Catholic University (ACU) Library Client Services restructured to align to the strategic initiatives of ACU, where research intensification is now in focus. First year students are referred to an orientation online program (Leap into Learning) that provides basic information literacy and academic skills. They can seek further assistance at the library information desk with an Information Services Librarian or Senior Library Technician, who also provide initial database training to students. Another mode of communication is chat and email, as mentioned in this article. Academic Skills staff provide a daily drop in hour in the library for quick consultations without appointment. It is therefore a holistic service at one point. The position description involves undertaking basic database training too (the position description has been totally changed for the senior library technician who is also a HEW 5 but with an Advanced Diploma from TAFE – equivalent to an Associate of the Sciences degree). Having the Library and Research Services team headed by a Senior Library Coordinator focuses more on outreach and project based work to support researchers and teaching faculty staff (V. Bourbous, personal communication, March 29, 2017).

To foster across-team collaboration, different committees are established either for a temporary basis for a project, or an ongoing basis for continual improvement. While at Macquarie University, I served on the ‘EndNote Pilot Group’. Led by the then-Services Coordinator for Information Literacy (IL) Support and Development, I worked with Research and Services Librarians from different teams to trial EndNote library instruction sessions to higher degree research students, and create comprehensive Library Guides. I also served on the ‘Library Guides (LibGuides) Working Group, again working with Research and Services Librarians from different teams, Service Coordinators who worked on website, social media, on how to develop consistency of, and better promote the Library Guides.

Days before I received the news that my contract was ending, my Green Card had been approved. It was impeccable timing, and I felt as if I was travelling in the right direction the universe wanted me to be. I was nervous, sad to leave home, but most of all, excited as to what new adventures in travel and in my career, living in the US would bring.

Upon settling in my new home in Central Florida, I noted the various universities and colleges nearby so I could subscribe to their job boards. I noticed that there were a quite a few independent universities and colleges in Florida, including for-profit, non-profit religious, and liberal arts colleges, which led to another key difference:

Public vs. Private Universities

The vast majority of Australian accredited universities are public, and are members of the publicly-funded national system of Australian universities. As of 2014, there are 43 accredited universities, including 40 public universities, two international universities with one of these being private, and one national private university, Bond University in Queensland ([StudyinAustralia.gov](#), [2014]). For a listing of accredited universities as of 2014, see the [Australian Universities Map](#).

Included as a publicly-funded university, is the Australian Catholic University (ACU), which has six campuses. Whereas the United States has a more distinct separation of church from state, the Australian culture is more about provision of a “fair go in choice”. (All Catholic K-12 schools are however, in the nongovernment sector, receiving government subsidies). Liberal Arts and specialized universities are rather uncommon, with most universities being multidisciplinary.

After settling in my new home, I joined the American Library Association (ALA) and began subscribing to the ALA JobLIST, as well as looking for other job boards. In my search, I came across FloridaLibraryJobs.org. I realized that that belonged to the Florida Library Association. I was already a part of the American Library Association (ALA) as I had heard of that association when working in Australia. Australian libraries follow a lot of trends and practices propelled by the ALA. But I did not realize there was a state-based association, which leads to my next difference:

Library Associations

In Australia, there is just the one national library association, the [Australian Library and Information Association \(ALIA\)](#). In the US, there is a library association for every state! This makes sense, given that Australia’s entire population is approximately 24.5 million, less than the population of California! As there is just the one association, each State and Territory has a manager and its own groups and Elists. Like the ALA, there are various committees one can join to provide service, national groups, and special interest groups one can join.

I perused a book on how to apply for librarian positions in the US, and read various blogs by librarians who found positions, or those who served on hiring committees. This research guided me in the differences between the job application processes for librarians in the US:

Job Seeking Process: Types of positions; applying for positions; interviewing for positions

Composing a Job Application for Librarian positions:

I knew I would need to Americanize my CV and cover letters with the grammar and spelling. But I did not realize just how much terminology I would need to substitute also! What American universities call a *college*, e.g. a College of Business, Australians call a *faculty of*. American librarians say *library instruction*, and Australian librarians typically say *information literacy training*. What a *graduate student* is to an American, is a *postgraduate student* to an Australian. A *doctoral student* is typically known as a *PhD Candidate* or *PhD student*. In Australia, Masters of Research and PhD candidates are grouped together as *Higher Degree Research (HDR) students*. Curious for more terminology differences in academic lexicon? I have included my translation table in Appendix B.

I also adapted my cover letter style. Librarians in Australian academic, public, and school libraries are asked to write an *Address to the Selection Criteria* on a separate document to the cover letter. For years, I was used to writing three or four pages to show how I meet the required and preferred criteria, and now I needed to somehow condense it all in a cover letter? It was a significant adjustment!

In May 2015, I was invited for one job interview, a Medical Instructor librarian position at UCF College of Medicine. Undergoing an ‘American style’ interview for a librarian position at a university was a daunting adjustment, which segues into my next key difference:

The Job Interview Process for Librarians

In Australia, a job interview for an Associate Librarian is typically a conventional job interview, i.e. a face-to-face or Skype interview with a panel from the library for half an hour or so. One is given a brief tour of the library, if you are lucky. Higher ranked librarians may need to prepare a presentation for a group, but I was never required to. Needless to say, it was a jolt of culture shock when I read my “Itinerary” for my interview at the College of Medicine: Interview with the Public Services Librarian; Presentation to faculty; Interview with the Library Director; Interview with the Library panel; Lunch; Library Tour; and to cap it all off, an interview with the Dean of Academic Affairs. What a day!

Most likely the reason for such diverse job interview experiences is because academic librarians in Australia is often due to the professional status vs. faculty status difference.

I did not obtain the librarian position at College of Medicine, but was told I interviewed and presented well, which was heartening to hear – given it was my first ever one like it! I had my CV reviewed by a librarian at ‘Career 911’ session, at the Florida Library Association (FLA) Conference in May, 2015. I found out my biggest roadblock was that I didn’t have an ALA-accredited Master of Library and Information Science degree. Although the ALA recognizes my degree as ‘equivalent’, that is not sufficient for UCF Libraries (with the exception of UCF College of Medicine), and apparently at many other state university libraries across the country. I would need to obtain a purely ALA-accredited MLIS if I wanted to work at most state university libraries. Receiving that news was a deep cut of a culture shock, which leads to my next key difference:

The required credentials, and attitude toward

Australian libraries are more expansive in regards to librarian credentials. A standard core requirement of librarian position descriptions is to show that one is “eligible for ‘Professional Membership’ of ALIA”. ALIA is the Australian Library and Information Association. In the US, the only ALA-accredited degree is a master’s qualification. To be eligible for “professional membership”, one needs one of the following:

ALIA-accredited degree	Either a: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor’s degree • Graduate Diploma (1 year FTE study) • Masters in Library and Information Studies from a list of accredited institutions.
Or	
‘Equivalent’ degree	ALIA has reciprocal recognition agreements with the national library associations of the UK (CILIP), the United States (ALA), and New Zealand (RLIANZA).
Or	

“Equivalent Experience”	Substantial para-professional experience who regularly undertake continuing education, and/or who has studies and experience in another beneficial area.
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(ALIA, n.d.)

Australian university libraries are typically more open to employing librarians with foreign credentials, because if one can demonstrate eligibility of professional membership to ALIA, then that is typically sufficient to meet qualification requirements. If one’s foreign library science degree is not recognized by ALA, CILIP, or RLIANZA, one can apply for professional membership of ALIA by having their overseas qualifications assessed by ALIA, against their accredited course standards, for currently a \$360 fee. This measure of quality control seems to reassure most employers that the foreign-qualified candidate has reliable credentials. Employers do have the discretion to not accept foreign credentials, but in my (albeit, limited) experience, I have only seen this happen to one librarian who studied in a country not on the reciprocal recognition list.

My Australian credentials were recognized by Valencia College, and I began work as a part-time Reference Librarian at East Campus in Fall, 2015. I had brief training on how to use *Ask a Librarian* email, which was only a refresher, as I also utilized LibAnswers for chat and email at the University of Canberra Library. However, I was told to bypass the state-wide emails and filter to Valencia College inquiries. State-wide emails? I was fascinated to learn that Valencia College, like many other Florida colleges and universities, opt into the state-wide *Ask a Librarian* program managed by the Tampa Bay Library Consortium (TBLC). In Florida, universities and colleges which participate in the state-wide program manage their ‘local desk’ and participate in a “collaborative academic desk” for a minimum number of hours per week. For students, this means that even though their local ‘Ask a Librarians’ are closed for the day, they can still access a librarian from another university or college through till midnight. I was interested to learn about the Florida Academic Library Services (FALSC), a division of the Florida Virtual Campus (FLVC), a service of the State University System of Florida and Florida College System. The FALSC “operates the automated library system used by all public college and university libraries statewide – 40 institutions and 156 campus libraries – along with a shared catalog and a statewide collection of online journals, e-books, and other valuable e-resources” (FLVC, 2015, para. 2). Learning about these types of consortia in Florida leads to my next difference:

Cooperatives and other Consortium

Australian University Librarians have the option to be a member of the Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL). CAUL is an association for university libraries in Australia, which increases access by the staff and students of Australian universities to the information resources that are vital to the advancement of teaching, learning, and research (CAUL, 2009a). CAUL’s strategic directions emphasize collaborative programs and activities which contribute to the fulfillment of key objectives including improving student learning outcomes; enhancing university libraries’ potential to contribute to graduate attributes; enhancing the information resources available to researchers, and the facilitation of their access; promoting ongoing improvement in university libraries; and advocating effective policies and a suitable legal and regulatory environment (CAUL, 2009b, para. 5-6). Such programs and activities are grouped in the areas of research, publishing in university libraries, information literacy, collection sharing,

University Libraries of Australia and New Zealand (ULANZ) reciprocal borrowing cooperative arrangement, quality and assessment, CEIRC (CAUL Electronic Information Resources Consortium), CAUL Statistics, and CAUL Survey Register (CAUL, 2009b).

There is no state-based formally structured and funded cooperative like in Florida. Each institution generally manages their own integrated library system (ILS) and discovery service layer, builds their own database, book and eBook collection, and *Ask a Librarian* chat, email and/or text program if they have one (typically all accredited universities would). The closest equivalent to Florida's cooperatives and consortium seem to be in state of South Australia (SA), UniLibraries SA (ULSA). ULSA is a voluntary cooperation founded by the three public universities of SA, to enhance the processes of scholarship in their universities, by broadening the access to library resources and by improving the efficiency to access of these resources (ULSA, n.d.a). There are a variety of cooperative programs similar to FALSC, like resource sharing, library courier and paging service, computing cooperation where each library uses the same ILS (Voyager), and in addition, a joint research repository (ULSA), n.d.b).

For Fall, 2015, I enrolled into USF's Master of Arts in Library and Information Science (MLIS), due to the promise of two courses waived. When researching for and applying for graduate school, I noticed there were slightly different degree types, which segues into my next key difference:

Typical Types of Degree Programs

Australia and the United States have similar degree programs on a broad level, however some degree types vary in their structure and emphasis:

<i>Degree Type</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Type</i>
Associate Degree	2 years	“Newly introduced as an official degree type in 2004. A short-cycle degree program, which may serve as a pathway to a Bachelor Degree or prepare one for an Advanced Diploma in specialist industry training. An Associate Degree covers the basics or foundations of a particular field. It will cover the broad theory and enable you to develop the basic employment-related skills.”
Bachelor Degree	3 years	“Provides a systematic body of knowledge, the underlying principles and the problem-solving techniques you'll need to work in the discipline.” Australian Bachelor degrees are more concentrated to the discipline than in the US. Whereas in US universities, students undertake several general education subjects and are often required to take electives outside their discipline, in Australia the vast majority of subjects are within the discipline.
Bachelor Degree (Honours)	4 years	If one performs well in their Bachelor Degree, the institution might grant entry to an additional year of study to enable a student to graduate with honours.
Graduate Certificate	6 months	Similar to the US equivalent. Individual skills you already have from an undergraduate program, or develop your knowledge in a new area.
Graduate Diploma	1 year	Coursework which applies a body of knowledge in a range of contexts for one to undertake professional or highly skilled work and as a pathway for further learning.

Master Degree by • Coursework • Research	1 - 2 years	A course of independent research, traditional coursework, a combination of the two, or coursework culminating in a major project.
Bachelor of Philosophy / Master of Research		Macquarie University is currently the only university to offer a “Bachelor of Philosophy/Masters of Research” (BPhil/Mres) program. It is a unique combination of advanced coursework and research training, which fully aligns with European, North American and Asian research training qualifications. (Macquarie University, 2013)
Doctoral Degree	3 years	Research program. May have some coursework, but often does not. Three components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A review of literature, experimentation or other methodical approach to a body of knowledge. • An original research project which makes a contribution to understanding and knowledge in the field. • A substantial, well-ordered thesis that shows a relationship between the research and the field of study.”

Closely adapted from (StudyInAustralia.gov.au, para. 1-7)

Implication for Australian University Libraries and Differences

Australian academic librarians follow a very similar model of provision of research and information services to support students, academic staff (faculty) and professional staff, in their academic studies, teaching, and research. The main research and support services in university libraries are the same as they are in the US, with some variations.

Collection Development Services: Subject/Liaison librarians generally contribute to collection development for their allocated discipline/s. In larger university libraries, there is typically a separate collection/resources department to the research and information services department. How collection development operates may vary from university to university. Commonalities tend to include increasing trends in patron or demand driven acquisition (PDA or DDA) models, suggestion for purchases form, donations form, and a ‘Reading Lists’ form to place textbooks on reserve, and use of CAUL Electronic Resources Consortium (CEIRC).

The CAUL Electronic Resources Consortium (CEIRC), the main channel for relationships with vendors and publishers (CAUL, 2009c). CEIRC currently has agreements for 239 database products with a range of 89 Australian and international publishers and information providers, many from the US (CAUL). When investigating database products for collection development, a subject librarian typically would visit the current offers to CAUL/CEIRC as part of the selection process, to see which products are currently under a special offer, for example, today one would visit the [2016 offers to CAUL/CEIRC for 2017](#).

The involvement of faculty and students may vary from university library to library. For example, at Macquarie University, faculty, students, and staff can play quite a significant involvement in collection development. As of 2016, Patron Driven Acquisition (PDA) functionality is used for the YBP (EBL – eBook Library) titles, and PDA for Kanopy e-videos (Kousek & Burton, 2016). Faculty, students, and staff can also fill a [book request form](#) which is submitted directly to the Collections and Development department. If the requested book fits within the collection development policy, it will be purchased. For new serials subscriptions, they need to contact their Research Librarian, who would evaluate the request and write a proposal for acquisition if he or she believes it would fit the scope of the collection for the

discipline. Donations are also referred to the Research Librarian. At other university libraries, all suggestions for materials first may be channeled to the subject/liaison librarian first for evaluation.

Research Support:

- **In-Person Research Assistance Service:** At a traditional research assistance desk set-up, mobile librarians, or a combination of the two.
- **Online Ask a Librarian Service:** Librarians undertake virtual reference service shifts where they manage online chat, phone, and email.
- **In-Depth Research Consultations:** Like UCF, where individual students or a pair of students make an appointment to see a Subject Librarian for an hour or two. Due to the MRes/MPhil and PhD more independent, research intensive program, some university libraries have Research/Liaison Librarians provide Research Consultations to graduate students only, for example University of Canberra and Macquarie University. However other university libraries offer consultations for both, or will provide consultations to undergraduate students with discretion.

Library Instruction, “Information Literacy Training”: Traditional face-to-face library instruction to tutorials (classes) and lectures, as well as through blended/online instructional support (further detailed below).

- **Research Output Management:** Similar to what a Scholarly Communications and Digital Initiatives Team manages, including research repository, digital theses program, Open Access, research data management, copyright and IP advice, and more.
- **Interlibrary Loan/Document Delivery:** Similar to the US. Further detail later.
- **Print and E-Reserve:** Textbooks and electronic readings on reserve semester-to-semester basis. Textbooks are not placed on Reserve at UCF, but some other American colleges and universities, like Valencia College and the Adventist University of Health Sciences, do.

Research assistance at a Research Assistance Desk, in-depth Research Consultations, online *Ask a Librarian* chat and email, and library instruction are from a range of subject areas as they are in the US. The theory and practice to the reference interview are the same. However one-on-one inquiries and requests for library instruction, typically come from students and professors undertaking and teaching subject-specific courses, rather than general education courses like Speech and English Composition 1 & 2. Recently at Macquarie University, they have been thinking of the support provided in terms of two distinct areas – support for Learning & Teaching, and support for Research. The [Research Support](#) webpage, which is what the librarians are calling their Research Support Services Catalogue, outline the research support services the university library provides through its different departments and teams. In addition, the library is receiving more and more requests from either departments within the university or the Higher Degree Research Office for support in sourcing large amounts of data about publications, metrics, and collaborators. The library is very focused on supporting the university’s [Research Framework](#).

In support of Learning & Teaching, the library is trying to align to the university’s [Learning and Teaching Strategic framework](#) (F. Jones, personal communication, Mar 29, 2017).

For library instruction, like the US, there has been a strong move toward blended instruction combined with face-to-face instruction with online offerings. More and more university libraries

are creating digital learning objects, so that they can be reused across many different units (courses) and that they can be embedded directly into the learning management system. While I was working at Macquarie University, the Information Literacy Support team had created many short online video tutorials, several of which I had embedded into the library guides I had created. This initiative has since expanded into *InfoWise*, an online information literacy course (not for credit), which all incoming undergraduate students are enrolled in. Many undergraduate unit (course) convenors either link to sections of InfoWise or embed some of the individual activities directly into their coursework. Additionally, bespoke objects have been created that are tailored to the needs of particular units (F. Jones, personal communication, Mar 29, 2017).

Applying for Graduate “Postgraduate” Studies

Higher Degree Research (HDR) Degrees (MPhil, MRes, and PhD)

In Australia, a PhD program may be a combination of some coursework and mainly research, or just solely research. A PhD candidate liaises with an academic supervisor, and undertakes their own independent research or work as part of a research team, meeting with their academic supervisor every so often to inform and seek feedback on the progress of their research. For example, my sister is a PhD candidate who is part of the [Clinical Management Group in the field of Respiratory Mediations](#), at the University of Sydney, within the discipline of Pharmacology.

To apply for PhD candidacy, one needs to establish contact with a potential academic supervisor and receive provisional approval for a research proposal. A research proposal does not need to be complete, but needs to be informative enough in order to allow the university to ascertain whether or not one’s proposed research is something they have the resources to supervise and interest in hosting ([Study Options, n.d.](#)). Admissions requirements vary from university to university.

Coursework Degrees (Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Masters by Coursework)

In the US, a prospective student needs to put together a more substantive application packet. When applying to Library School at Florida State University (FSU) and USF, I needed to submit a letter of application, writing samples, GRE score (FSU only), references (FSU), proof that I qualify for in-state tuition, immunization records, and more. The immunization records requirement was a culture shock – I never needed to do this in Australia even as an internal (on campus) student, and I was overseas on vacation in another country when I realized I needed to submit the records to enroll for the Fall!

For my Australian postgraduate application, I just needed to complete a simple online form and upload my Bachelor’s transcripts. Some Australian postgraduate applications do require additional criteria, for instance, an entrance exam like the MCAT, CV or portfolio, or interview, especially for competitive courses, like Masters of Clinical Psychology. But for many postgraduate courses, it is a simple process.

I chose to study at USF because USF would transfer two of my courses from UTS. In my second semester, Spring 2016, I undertook a Field Experience course at the Curriculum Materials Center (CMC). I talked to the student assistants there and learned more about undergraduate study differences.

Applying for Undergraduate Studies

I knew students apply directly to US universities, submitting a substantial application packet. I knew that most US university admissions offices review applications holistically, taking into consideration student's grades, test scores like SAT or ACT, essays, letters of recommendation, extracurricular activities, and volunteer work. I didn't realize that students could enroll in an American university without declaring a major, and don't need to declare it until they have completed a certain number of credits.

In Australia, an applicant needs to declare a major, by selecting at least one course, as part of their application process. At the end of high school senior year, or after completing high school equivalent studies at TAFE (a combination of a community college and technical school), students sit for a state standardized test for each subject they took in grades 11-12. These exam results is combined with each subject's assessment result in senior year, which is converted into a national university entrance rank out of 100, known as the Australia Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR).

Each university sets a minimum ATAR for each course, and the cut-off is the ATAR of the person with the lowest ATAR admitted to the course that year (University of Sydney (USYD), 2016). High school student applicants apply to Australian universities by submit an online application to a centralized place depending on which state or territory they live, for e.g. In NSW and ACT, it is to the Universities Admission Center (UAC). Students fill a form of up to 10 courses and universities from a list of participating institutions in order of their preference. The system automatically makes an applicant an offer for the highest preference he or she qualifies for (USYD, 2016). The applicant receives an offer in preference to someone with a lower ATAR who put the same choice higher on their form (USYD, 2016).

For the majority of courses, students are selected predominantly on their academic qualifications, i.e. the basis of their ATAR or equivalent. Some courses also select applicants on the grounds of additional criteria, such as a personal statement, questionnaire, portfolio, audition, interview, or test.

More and more universities are offering alternative schemes, so that applicants can enter into a course based on other criteria than their ATAR alone. Approximately 30% of students who have an ATAR less than 60 are admitted based on other criteria (The Conversation, 2016). Some universities offer flexible entry schemes whereby they grant admission to an applicant into a course for a number of points less than ATAR cut-off. Schemes are either automatically included via UAC, or applicants submit an application directly to the university to be considered. Other universities automatically add bonus points if the applicant falls under "disadvantaged" criteria, for example, indigenous or from a low socio-economic area. Increasingly, universities are offering a combination of flexible entry, like Macquarie University's range of [bonus points schemes](#).

Competition for University Acceptance

In the US, typically the more prestigious the university, the higher the minimum SAT score, and expectation of other supplemental evidence for an applicant to qualify for acceptance. In Australia, naturally the most in-demand courses from one of the prestigious "[Group of Eight](#)" universities typically have the highest minimum ATAR requirements. However, because ATAR cut-offs typically reflect supply and demand more than the intellectual capacity required to study the course (USYD, 2016), a course at a prestigious university could have a considerably lower ATAR cut-off than a popular course at another university. Because of the Australian

society cultural preference to grow up in the same area close to family/friends and commute, applicants aren't driven to compete nation-wide to obtain a place in the top universities in the country – high achievers typically aim for one of the premier universities in their local state/territory, unless they are planning to relocate interstate for personal reasons. Universities expanding their programs, trending degrees, and new universities established are just a few impact factors. Some examples of the ATAR (then called UAI) requirements, that my classmates and I needed when applying for university, compared to what is needed today, include:

Course	University	ATAR (then UAI) Cut-Off 2003*	ATAR Cut-Off for 2017^
Bachelor of Combined Law	University of Sydney (USYD)	99.6	99.5
Bachelor of Science (Advanced)	USYD	96 / 100	95
B Commerce / B Advanced Science (Honors)	University of New South Wales (UNSW)	96	96.5
B Pharmacy	USYD	95	90
B Arts / B Laws	Western Sydney University (WSU)	95	95
B Medial Science	Australian National University (ANU)	90	90
B Science	USYD	85	83
B Education (Primary) i.e. Elementary	Australian Catholic University (ACU)	88.10	60
B Business (Commerce)	WSU	85	Course no longer available.
B Education (Primary)	USYD	83	85
B Arts / B Education (Secondary)	UNSW	82.90	81
B Applied Science (Occupational Therapy)	WSU	78	83
B Information & Communication Systems Technology	WSU	74	75
B Teaching / B Arts (Secondary – Humanities)	ACU	74	60
B Science	WSU, 3 campuses	64.10	73 - 76.3

*Data is approximate

^Data from <http://www.uac.edu.au/undergraduate/>

Critics of the ATAR system argue that although it is efficient, as it is too “simplistic” and “meaningless”, and is in need of reform ([The Conversation, para. 1, 2016](#)). They argue for a more holistic approach that US universities take, and the simpler process of following the application directions of the university rather than navigating through various flexible entry schemes. Supporters of the ATAR system argue that the ATAR has historically proven to be a reliable predictor of academic success ([The Conversation](#)), and although it is not perfect, it is impartial ([Crossley, 2014](#)). Whether one is “a prince or a pauper, you cannot really talk your way into a top university if you have not achieved an appropriate mark” ([Crossley, para. 7](#)), as some US elite colleges and Ivy League Schools have been criticized for doing.

Alternative Pathways

In Australia, if an applicant misses out on their first preference for a course and university, after completion of a number of credits in another course, then attempt to transfer into the same course at a different university, or a different course at the same university if they have the minimum GPA requirement and there is a Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP) available. If a

student completely misses out on a desired CSP, there are alternative pathways, the main ones being:

- **Pathway courses:** Most universities offer pathway options for domestic students both international and domestic students, typically non-degree courses including foundation studies, preparatory courses and Certificate, Diploma or Associate Degree courses. Examples include [UTS INSEARCH](#), [University of Canberra College](#), [The College Western Sydney University](#), and [Next Step](#) at Macquarie University. Upon successful completion of the course, the university may guarantee a domestic student entry into a CSP in a particular degree course, or students can use the studies to apply and compete for admission into other courses. Students may be credited for some subjects undertaken in the pathway course (UAC, 2016, para. 1-2). These programs or different ones are also available for international students, however, international students can only transfer to a full-fee paying place.
- **Full-fee Payment:** Many universities offer their most popular courses to students prepared to pay full-fees for a lower ATAR cut-off, e.g. 5 points below. If they achieve a certain GPA, they can attempt to transfer into a Commonwealth Supported Placement in their second year.
- **Transfer from TAFE/Institute or other college:** Students enroll in a TAFE or Institute, which is a combination of a community college and a trade school. They attain a qualification, e.g. Advanced Diploma in Enrolled Nursing, and then apply to transfer into a similar course at a university, e.g. Bachelor of Nursing, with some credits being transferred.
- **Other pathways:** Universities outline their pathways on their website, for e.g. Macquarie University's [Other Entry Pathways](#).

I have friends that successfully transferred into a CSP, going onto achieve their Bachelor degrees and beyond, via each of the above methods.

Partnerships with State Colleges

Florida universities have a tight partnership with the state colleges, having direct transfer programs, like Direct-to-UCF. Associate of the Arts and Associate of the Sciences graduates transfer all of their credits to UCF.

Australian universities and TAFEs/Institutes do not have all-inclusive direct transfer programs like this. TAFEs or Institutes typically do not offer Associate of the Arts degrees. Their focus is on para-professional and trade programs. Many TAFES and Institutes also offer Bachelor degrees in vocational areas. However, these are not Commonwealth Supported places, so most students prefer to study at a university. Some universities do have a direct transfer program for certain TAFE/Institute Advanced Diplomas (Associate of the Sciences Degrees), for example Macquarie University's [direct entry pathways](#) for certain TAFE graduates.

Implication for American University Libraries

US university libraries partner more with community and state colleges, at least in Florida. Like other Florida state universities, many UCF students need to take courses at one of the state college campuses. To meet this need, UCF Libraries have established 'regional libraries' at each of these state college campuses, whereby a UCF librarian serves the UCF students studying at the college campus, for e.g. UCF/Valencia West Joint Use Library. Because in Australia, universities and TAFEs/Institutes have considerably less of an overlap in their education, there is not currently this deep level of partnership.

Partnerships with High Schools

An increasing amount of Australian universities do have partnerships with high schools from a partial to a full level. Some universities establish partnerships by the provision of early entry to readied senior year high school students. For example, ACU also has Step-Up programs for senior high school students. For example, they undertake first year units (courses) during high school toward a Bachelor of Education or Teaching / Arts (Secondary Education) degree. If students are accepted into the course and enroll post-high school, they receive credit for these courses. (V. Bourbous, personal communication, March 29, 2017).

The University of Canberra (UC) has a thorough partnership with two government high schools, called UC Schools. All of these students and staff have benefits such as access to full resources of UC Library, discounted tickets to all Brumbies games, and advanced students can do particular courses at UC that count toward their Grade 12 Certificate, their ATAR score, and transfer in credit toward an undergraduate degree (University of Canberra, 2015, para. 4).

Implication for Australian University Libraries

University libraries involved in such partnerships broaden their collection development to include material suitable for senior high school students, and extend some or all services to high school students involved. While I was working at the University of Canberra, the librarians provided library instruction workshops to grades 11-12 high school students, which meant a considerable adaptation to cater for their educational level. This can also imply further training for librarians on classroom management. Teaching a library instruction session to grade 11 students taking 'Psychology 101' was an interesting experience to say the least.

Government Funding for Undergraduate Students

Applicants compete for a particular course within a university, rather than to a university, is due to different funding models. The majority of Australian university funding is administered under the *Federal Government Higher Education Support Act (HESA)*, 2003 (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, (AGDET), 2016, para. 2).

The Australian Federal Government provides an allocated number of Commonwealth Supported Places for each course. In a *Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP)*, the Federal Government pays for a significant percentage of the course, and the student pays for the rest, a student contribution fee. Students can either up-front each semester, or enroll in HECS-HELP: the Higher Education Contribution Scheme, a loan scheme for eligible students to pay their student contribution amounts. As student demand for a particular course increases, the minimum ATAR cut-off is driven to a higher level.

Implication for Australian University Libraries

Australian university libraries often see the alternative pathway programs as opportunities to partner with, to help ready students' information literacy skills for undergraduate study. For example, the University of Canberra Library partnered with the University of Canberra College – the university's pathway program. I taught library instruction several times to University of Canberra College students. As part of the strategic plan, the ACU Library had an Indigenous trainee program. The successful applicant enrolled in TAFE diploma and also gained experience working at a campus library in those two years. Community engagement and Equity Pathways is huge at ACU. (V. Bourbous, personal communication, March 29, 2017).

University Funding

In the US, state universities are founded and operated by state government entities, and therefore receive most public funding from the state government. In Australia, most funding for universities is from the federal government. Each year, determinations are made to confirm the grant amounts or advance amounts paid to each higher education provider in respect of grants made under Federal Government Higher Education Support Act (HESA) HESA (AGDET, para. 5). Higher education funding is indexed on an annual basis using an indexation factor, for the relevant year, in accordance with part 5-6 of HESA (AGDET, para. 6).

Australian universities are traditionally rewarded for their research outputs (Australian Government National Innovation & Science Agenda (AGNIS), 2017, para. 1). Australian universities originally competed for six research block grants from the Australian Federal Government. Student HDR completions, and publication track record are significant measure in working out Research Training funding amounts. From January 2017, however, the federal government is introducing new research funding arrangements for universities which generally balance industry success with end-user engagement with research quality.

A significant draw card for my husband's choice to study at UCF, and my choice of USF, was that these are both state universities in which we have access to "In State tuition", which leads to another difference:

Student Costs, Loans and Payment

Australia has a significantly more socialist culture than the US – tax rates are higher, for greater subsidies in many areas, including for higher education. With the majority of universities being public, students are not limited to university preference based on affordability. An undergraduate student pays around the same tuition at one of the elite "Group of Eight" as they would at a much less prestigious institution. Because universities are federally funded, the tuition rates are nation-wide.

Student contribution fees for Commonwealth supported places are grouped into three main 'Student Contribution Bands' nation-wide. The federal government categorizes different areas of study into 'Bands', and it designates a minimum and maximum range that can be charged on a full-time study load, for units that fall into the different Bands ([StudyAssist, n.d., para. 3](#)). Higher education providers establish the student contribution amount for each unit of study offered, however they are not permitted to surpass the maximum rate set by the Government ([StudyAssist, para. 3](#)). Most providers opt to charge the maximum rate ([StudyAssist, para. 3](#)). Qualifications where there are shortages in the workforce, such as teaching and nursing, are typically placed in the lowest Band. To see the student contribution bands and ranges for 2016, check out [Table 1: 2016 Student Contribution Bands and Ranges](#).

Implications for Australian University Libraries

Undergraduate university education may be more affordable than US state universities, and markedly more affordable than elite and Ivy League schools, but it is still expensive. A lot of students work part-time, and some full-time, to afford a university education. Libraries try to support students in reducing their financial burden by offering the following services:

- **Textbooks on Reserve Service:** Libraries offer to faculty to request their textbook to be placed on Reserve for the semester. Faculty members typically fill a form, or email a list to their Subject/Liaison Librarian. The library orders a number of copies of the textbook, in proportion to the student cohort, and place on reserve. Many university libraries have different reserve loan levels, for e.g. Short Loan of 3 hours, 3 days, or 7 day loans. When the semester is over, the textbooks are integrated into the regular collection.
- **Electronic Reserve Service:** Most libraries have an ‘e-Reserve Service’, where they scan book chapters or hardcopy journal articles to place on e-Reserve, so students can access online readings. The team will link to e-journal article readings as well, to save students the time to search for them. Libraries will scan as much as Australian Copyright Law – the Education provision will allow.
- **Interlibrary Loan / Document Delivery Service, for free or low fee:** Australian universities offer the same ILLIAD service as American universities do. However, in Australia, there is a traditional interlibrary loan system which participating libraries have a set agreement on the cost of core requests (5 days), express requests (24 hour fulfillment), and rush requests (2 hours). Some Australian university libraries elect to offer a three tier level of service, where students can choose to pay a fee for the expedited level of service. For example, at the University of Canberra, undergraduate students would have a free core request, but can pay an additional \$33 for a Rush request. Postgraduate Rush and Express requests are covered by the faculty (college). The level of ILLIAD service does vary from university to university. For example, Macquarie University only offers the service to postgraduate students, whereas University of Canberra used to cap the number of free requests, but now offers unlimited requests for all.

Most Australian university libraries are not part of a state-wide, inter-lending consortia like Florida state universities and colleges have, i.e. the UBorrow system. There has, however, been an increase in the use of inter-lending between consortium-like groups in Australia, between many of the more innovative university libraries. For example, UniLibraries SA has a library courier service and resource sharing as part of their programs. Initiatives like this bypasses the traditional interlibrary loan system and has had the positive impact of lower overheads for participating libraries because they do not charge each other anything for loans. These are more popular with net borrowers than with net lenders (K. Cobcroft, personal communication, October 7, 2016).

- **Reciprocal Borrowing Program:** Much like how a Valencia College student can borrow a book from UCF and vice-versa, however, in Australia it is a nationwide reciprocal recognition program between accredited universities. Students from another university show their student ID, fill out a form, and once approved, they can visit the library in-person to borrow books, which is much more immediate than waiting for an interlibrary loan. Fees vary from university to university library. The University of Canberra charges no fees, however other universities charge an annual fee.

Scholarships to University

Like the US, a variety of scholarships are offered to students from before they start university, for example, high achievers or those at a low socio-economic status and/or minority group, or throughout their study. Some athletic scholarships offered in Australia, but not to the same extent as to the US, which leads to another key difference:

Sport Culture in Universities, and lack thereof

“College sport” in the US big business, with American universities gaining substantial revenue from college sport attendance, and all the merchandise that comes with it. Australian substantially-sized universities do have at least one team and compete nationally in the University Games, and internationally. However, Australian sport culture is far more ingrained in the Australian Football League (AFL), National Rugby League (NRL), and A-League (soccer). You are far more likely seeing Australian students don their supporting AFL team jersey, not their university sport team mascot. Needless to say, substantially less funding is typically acquired from, and channeled into university sports in comparison to the US universities.

The University of Canberra is an exception to the rule, starting to make movements towards the North American model. While I was working there, then-Vice Chancellor Stephen Parker initiated a partnership between the ACT’s Brumbies team, to imitate the close links between universities and sport in the sport American college system, with “the vision for UC is a North American-style relationship with the Brumbies” (Smith, 2012, para. 5-6). This is a slowly growing trend with other Australian universities (Smith). This was in order for the university to gain international exposure throughout the Super Rugby season. Parker spoke of being highly attracted to the North American model in the long term, hoping for the university and the sports team to grow closer together, where students and fans are keen to go to the games, and graduates desire to be closer to the team (The Canberra Times, 2012). But with the deep Australian culture for the AFL, NRL and A-League, and most commuter students continually supporting their local league (Go Parramatta Eels!), I have been curious how these initiatives would result.

Implication for Australian University Libraries

You won’t see Australian university libraries reducing their library hours, becoming empty on college sport gamedays. The vast majority of students probably won’t have any idea the university football team is playing a special game. You will probably see a lot of students get all color coded and enthused on the day of the AFL Grand Final (the Australian version of Super Bowl), and most of the library deserted the evening of the game. In all seriousness, it is helpful for an expat academic librarian to have awareness on the level of funding that college sports is bringing to the American university, and how that may impact library funding and services.

Out-of-city and Out-of-State Students Student Selection of “College” and Graduate Schools

A cornerstone of American culture is that “moving away from home to college” feels like a rite of passage for many, their first real step of independence, with students making the big move across state or country to live on campus at a university they feel drawn to. Most Australian universities are metropolitan universities. Typically, a major factor of choice is commuting convenience. It is uncommon for a student to relocate and live on campus, unless they did not make it into the course of choice at any of their metropolitan universities. Students who live on campus are far more likely to be international students or from a rural town.

Implication for Australian University Libraries

With the majority of students commuting, the university grounds are typically deserted by evening. There would be some evening classes and evening seminars occurring, but generally majority of students would have headed home for the day. The library, or sections of the library,

remain open till late, however reference librarian support hours on average, shut down earlier than American universities.

After hours facilities are becoming common, typically using an I.D. card. For example, at a couple of campuses at ACU, when the library is closed and no staff, a section of the library is still open with swipe card access. Security patrol the library and the campus for safety. The decision to implement after-hours access depends on various factors like uptake, security, council restrictions, location, and so forth. (V. Bourbous, personal communication, March 29, 2017).

Ask a Librarian Service

Like the US, most Australian university libraries have an online *Ask a Librarian Service*. Some university libraries like Australian Catholic University extend their chat service way beyond the reference desk hours. However, as mentioned earlier, the Ask a Librarian service is institutionally based only.

Multiple Australian state universities within region vs. American state universities

In the US, there tends to be one state university per region, for example, UCF for Central Florida region, UNF for the north, UWF for the west & FGCU for the coast. Instead, in each substantially-sized Australian city, there are multiple smaller state universities, distinct in its culture, and variant in research focus. For example, in Sydney there are six state universities, Canberra there are three, Melbourne: eight.

Implication for Australian University Libraries

With multiple university libraries within reasonable commute time from each other, many students register for the *Reciprocal Borrower Agreement program*. For an example, see ACU's approach to the [Reciprocal Borrower Agreement](#). There is the ULANZ cooperative arrangement which most accredited universities are a part of, but there are also some other regional borrowing cooperative programs.

Separate branches of universities

In the US, many major universities are split into different branches with emphases in different programs. For example, UCF has a separate College of Medicine, a substantial commute from the original campus. Several Australian universities also have multiple campuses (branches), for example, Western Sydney University and Australian Catholic University, however most campuses are multidisciplinary.

Implication for Australian University Libraries

Many Australian universities have just one or two main libraries per campus, which are substantially sized, although some like USYD have more. Many Subject Librarians and other librarians are all under the same roof, which make for a different dynamic in communication and sharing of ideas and expertise, than universities like UCF and USF, which has the one main library, and then much smaller, regional libraries which specialize in a particular area like Medicine and Health Sciences.

Teaching style in University – Lecture and Class Sizes

I was interested to learn from UCF student library assistants that students in the general education courses only attend large lectures, and that would be the case in most large state universities. The cohort then starts to be split into smaller class sizes for more specialized courses in the later years of undergraduate courses.

Undergraduate; Postgraduate by Coursework:

In Australia, the teaching mode for studies for each unit (course), is typically a 1-2 hour lecture for the entire cohort per week, and one *tutorial* (class) per week usually about 2-3 hours. Tutorial class sizes are usually 10-30 students, to allow for more intimate discussion, and more active and collaborative learning. Attendance is typically taken in tutorials, with policies similar from university to university on the minimum attendance required. MPhil and MRes students undertake coursework and meet in tutorials. Most PhD students either research independently or are part of a research team. They meet with their supervisor on a one-on-one basis.

Implication for Australian University Libraries

Academic librarians typically teach library instruction through to the MPhil or MRes level. At Macquarie University, most of my instruction was to MPhil/MRes students and to the occasional undergraduate tutorial. As most PhD students do not undertake coursework, Subject/Liaison Librarians undertake in-depth Research Consultations.

Many academic librarians teach library instruction to each tutorial group of the cohort, so they can have a more student-centered library instruction session, with discussion and hands-on practice. As a Science & Engineering Librarian at Macquarie University, and at the University of Canberra, I was fortunate to teach tutorial groups of first year through to fourth year undergraduate students, rather than a lecture-style instruction. The tutorial groups were very similar to the class sizes I currently provide library instruction to at Valencia College. At ACU, instruction to tutorials tends to be for later years in undergrad program onwards, for example, the Action Research unit in fourth year Education – individual topics and literature review support – which is definitely a hands on tutorial with time to ask questions and retrieve empirical articles (V. Bourbous, personal communication, March 29, 2017).

However, library instruction is also presented in lectures also. At Macquarie University, I knew the Business Librarians were occasionally undertaking library instruction in lectures. At ACU, undergraduates receive an orientation in lecture by the librarians, as there are too many students for them to manage with the staffing they have, so they need to be efficient in delivery of service, training, and information (V. Bourbous, personal communication, March 29, 2017).

When I began studying at USF, I was surprised at how different the assessment style varied from my Australian university experience. At USF I studied to a points-based system. Each assignment was worth a certain number of points, and the number of points you received was translated into a letter grade at the end of the semester, like A+ , A, B, C, etc. This leads to my next difference:

Assessment style in University

Australian university units (courses) tend to have 3 or 4 quite involved, complex pieces of assessment at quite substantial weightings, for e.g. 30%, 45%, 25%, and project-based Master's courses tend to have 1 or 2 major assignments per semester. Australian universities typically are aligned with the British grading style system, which include High Distinction (HD), Distinction (D), Credit (C), Pass (P), and Fail (N). Some universities like UTS and ACU have in-between grades, like HD +. Interestingly, Australian high schools are typically aligned with the American grading system of letter grades, A – F, so it can be a little confusing for the first year undergrad receiving their first assignments back, first thinking they almost failed, gradually realizing they achieved a distinction.

For my Master of Arts in Information and Knowledge Management (IKM) at UTS in Australia, I had a choice of Master's by coursework (project-based) or by research (thesis). I chose the project pathway as it was recommended by my professors. As mentioned earlier, Australian working librarians are practitioners so to present a completed project to a prospective academic library employer is typically preferred to research which could lead to publication. For my IKM Project Part A course, I needed to discover an information proposal, propose ways to solve it, and write a major proposal detailing my choice to solve it and how. In my IKM Project Part B I implemented the proposal, presented it to my cohort, and submitted the project to my professor. Back then, I originally wanted to work in public libraries, and developed a digital library prototype utilizing Greenstone open access software for Auburn City Council Libraries local history newspaper collection and paraphernalia, for the libraries' Local Studies department.

At USF, I had several mini assignments at tiny weightings, a few small assignments, and one or two moderately sized ones. It was quite an adjustment, as I was so used to having several weeks between major assignments. But after a while, I preferred this “Pacman style” approach, as it was less pressure – more frequent, with less intensity.

➤ Implications for Australian University Libraries

When a professor at an Australian university arranges library instruction for their tutorial session or lecture, it is usually to prepare their students for research for their first major assignment. The research question for the essay or project can be quite complex, due to its larger weighting. This can affect the range and emphasis of information literacy skills taught in the library instruction session. When I observed a Library Instruction session last year at UCF for a Master of Education (School Counseling) class the assignment the students had to complete was a mini assignment. Many of the students were able to complete the assignment in the hands-on portion of the library instruction session and submit it.

Conclusion

You may have sensed that I have spent a much greater length in explaining the differences between Australian and American universities than the university libraries. The main reason is because there is hardly any differences in comparison within the job itself. Research/Subject Librarians in Australia undertake typically the same responsibilities as those in US universities. However, there are quite a few substantial differences between the university systems and wider American and Australian culture, which have an implication on some of the work involved.

Yes, there are differences in academic librarianship between the two countries – faculty status; different types of consortia; tighter partnerships between state colleges and universities, like

State College/University Joint-Use libraries; greater unification between state colleges in some services, such as the Florida Interlibrary Lending program ‘UBorrow’, and the state-wide *Ask a Librarian* program; have all been interesting and impressive to learn about. And, as I journey into my career into the United States, I am sure I will gather more differences along the way. But such differences are aspects that an Australian expat librarian could learn easily through a decent induction program, on-the-job training, and professional development. These differences I learned on the job at Valencia College, attending the Florida Library Association (FLA) Conferences, and serving on FLA committees. The theories and implications for academic librarianship are the same. I did not learn anything fundamentally different or new in USF than I did at UTS and from my on-the-job training and professional development in Australia.

I am glad to have undertaken the MLIS at USF, because the internships I undertook there have led to the adjunct Reference Librarian position I enjoy today at UCF Libraries. However, I do have a desire for all state universities accept qualifications from accredited institutions in countries that have been deemed “equivalent”, like Florida’s state colleges and many private universities such as Rollins College. I would have found it far more beneficial to have instead undertaken a second masters in a different program. In doing so, I could have gained knowledge of the American university system and culture, discovering how the wider cultural differences implicate academic librarianship, while specializing in a different subject or practice area which would have helped me in a Subject Librarian role or in another specific role. That would be further added value for the American university library team also. Nevertheless, I respect the cultural differences between the two countries regarding credentials acknowledgement, which is why I undertook the MLIS program. I certainly feel enriched by the experiences I have had to date in observing the differences between Australian and US universities and their libraries.

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Appendix A

Permanent (tenured) full-time employees for Australian organizations receive the following entitlements, with permanent part-timers on a pro-rata rate. Those who are under the Higher Education – General Staff Award receive additional entitlements for some types of leave.

Leave Entitlement	Amount
Annual Leave	20 days paid annual leave; accruable. However once the accrued annual leave entitlement is or over 30 days, they may be directed in writing to take up to 20 days of their accrued annual leave.
Long Service Leave	An additional paid leave period after a long period of time working for the same employer. It varies by state, but it is typically 2 months or more. E.g. In my home state, NSW, an employee who has been working for the same employer for 10 years, you are entitled to 2 months (8.67 weeks) paid at your ordinary gross weekly wage under the NSW Long Service Leave Act 1955 (the Act). (NSW Industrial Relations, 2014, para. 1).
Personal/ Compassionate / Bereavement Leave	NES: 2 days per each permissible occasion Higher Ed. Award: 3 days
Sick & Carer's Leave	NES: 10 days per year; accumulative Higher Ed. Award: When paid sick/ carer's leave runs out, they can take unpaid leave for up to 3 months of no risk of termination.
Maternity & Parental Leave Paternity & Partner (including same-sex partners)	NES: 12 months unpaid parental leave + option to request an additional 12 months of leave <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid parental leave of up to 18 weeks at the national minimum wage 2 weeks paid leave at national minimum wage Higher Ed. Award: As set out by the NES.
Community Service Leave: Voluntary emergency management; Jury Duty	NES: Paid for Jury Duty, unpaid for voluntary emergency management. While being engaged in activity and for reasonable travel and rest time.

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Penalty Rates Entitlements

Type of Shift	Penalty Rate Percentage (Higher Education Industry – General Staff Award)
Late Afternoon / Night	Ordinary time rate of pay + a penalty of 15%
Saturday	Ordinary time rate of pay + a penalty of 50%
Sundays + Public Holidays	Ordinary time rate of pay + a penalty of 100%

http://awardviewer.fwo.gov.au/award/show/MA000007#P674_56665

Appendix B: Academic Lexicon Translation Table

Academic Terms: *The forward slash indicates an interchangeable term:*

American English	Australian English
High school / Academy / Prep School	High school / College
Community College; State College; Technical College	Varies by state: TAFE (Technical and Further Education) / Institute
Associate of the Arts Degree	<i>No equivalent</i> The closest is a Bachelor of Arts Degree, or an Associate Degree within a university pathway course.
Associate of the Sciences Degree	Associate Degree; Advanced Diploma
“College” (Colloquial for university)	“Uni”
“College of x” e.g. College of Business	“Faculty of x” e.g. Faculty of Business
Branch of a university	Campus
Program, e.g. Master of Arts in Library and Information Science	Course
Course	Unit / Subject
Freshman / Freshmen	First year student / First-year students
Sophomore	Second year
Junior	Third year
Senior	Fourth Year
Graduate Student	Postgraduate Student
Graduate School	Postgraduate Study
Graduate Students of Master of Research and Doctoral studies	Higher Degree Research (HDR) Students
Doctoral students / PhD candidates	HDR Student / PhD candidate
Faculty	Academic staff / Faculty member
President	Vice Chancellor
Provost	Deputy Vice Chancellor

Academic Library Related Terms:

American English	Australian English
Library Director	University Librarian
Associate Director	Associate Librarian
Department Head	Team Leader / Manager
Associate Librarian	Librarian / Coordinator
Public Services Librarian	<i>No equivalent.</i> The closest would be a librarian employed at a generalist position. Examples include: “Services Librarian” “Librarian - Department of Services”
Librarian, Faculty	Librarian, Staff In Australia, university and TAFE librarians are employed at the ‘staff level’ only.
Library Technical Assistant	Library Officer / Library Technician
Tenured	Permanent
Library Instruction	Information Literacy training