

Trend Report 2024: Survey Results

4 September 2024

This report shares the results of IFLA's survey on the trends identified in the Trend Report 2024 Literature Review. It highlights perspectives on the impacts of different trends on societies, libraries, and demand for library services, both globally and by region, level of experience and library type. It also highlights where the library field sees the strongest connections between trends being – notably between changing knowledge practices, and technological trends, the renegotiation of trust, and digital equity.

Following the publication of the [Trend Report Literature Review](#), IFLA ran a survey via its mailing lists and social media. This aimed both to launch reflection about the Trends presented – based on a wide-ranging review of other publications related to knowledge and information – and identify the intersections of Trends that our community sees as most likely.

Through this, the survey would help deliver on the next phase of the Report – a set of scenarios, establishing potential futures for knowledge and information, as a basis for thinking about how we can be ready for the future.

The Trends, at a high level, are:

- **Trend 1:** Knowledge practices are changing, and the future holds both opportunities and challenges for equity in knowledge systems.
- **Trend 2:** AI and other technologies are transforming society, and how we create, share and use information.
- **Trend 3:** Trust is being renegotiated, especially in government and media.
- **Trend 4:** Skills and abilities are becoming more complex, but also essential.
- **Trend 5:** Digital technologies and their benefits are unevenly distributed.
- **Trend 6:** Information systems are using more resources, impacting the planet.
- **Trend 7:** People are seeking community connections – spaces to share are key.

The survey was open between 9 and 29 August 2024 and had two key parts. The first focused on gathering views about how positive or negative each of the 7 Trends would be for:

- 1) Society as a whole
- 2) Libraries in general
- 3) The respondent's own library
- 4) The need for libraries

The idea here was to get a sense of how optimistic respondents were about the Trends, each of which has both potential positive and negative aspects. They also aimed to stimulate thinking about the difference between the macro situation (for societies or libraries in general), and the more direct one for the respondent's own library. By asking about the need for libraries, it aimed to understand how respondents anticipated demand for library services evolving.

The second part looked, for each of the Trends that participants said was important, how strong was the relationship of this Trend to each of the others. This would help us identify interesting areas for defining scenarios.

In addition, we collected data about the type of respondent (an individual, an association/institution, or an IFLA unit), the region in which they are based, their years of experience in the library field, and the library type where they worked. This allows us to explore whether priorities are different between these groups.

In most cases, questions were asked using a scale from very positive (5) to very negative (1), or very strongly connected (4) to not connected at all (1). Respondents could decide not to answer, in which case their relevant answers have been discarded in order not to influence the averages used.

1) Who Answered?

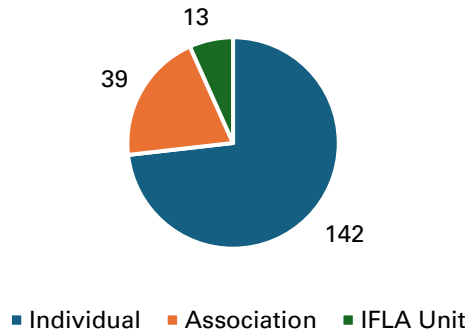
In total, the survey received 194 usable answers. As graph 1a indicates, almost 75% of these described themselves as individuals, with associations counting for around a fifth of the total, and IFLA Units less than 10 %.

Among regions (Graph 1b), Europeans represented a little over 2/5 of the total, with Asia-Oceania coming second with around 20%. North America came third, with Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Sub-Saharan Africa accounting for the rest.

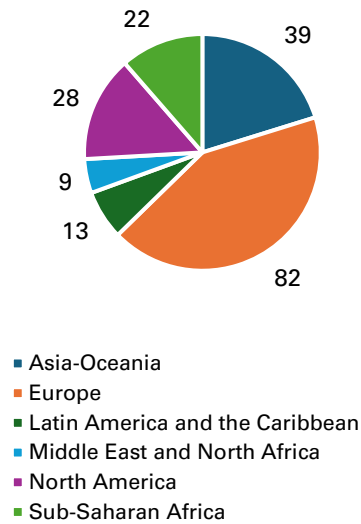
As for levels of experience (Graph 1c), there was a strong representation from more experienced librarians, with almost 2/3 having 20 or more years of experience. Those with 10 or fewer years of experience made up around 1/6 of the total.

Finally, looking at library types represented (Graph 1d), academic librarians were the biggest single group, followed by public libraries (about 20%), and then special and national libraries (each about 1/8 of the total). There were fewer responses from association employees, retired librarians and people from library schools. Very small numbers of school librarians and students responded.

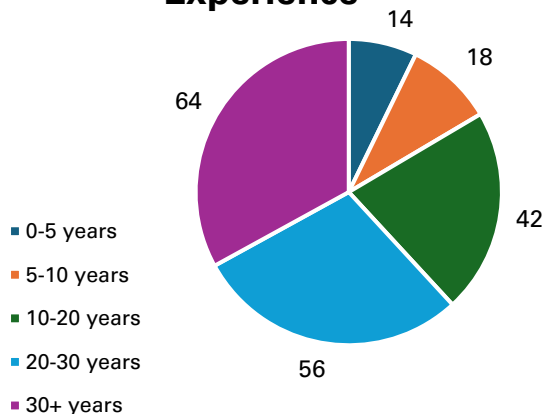
Graph 1a: Respondents by Type



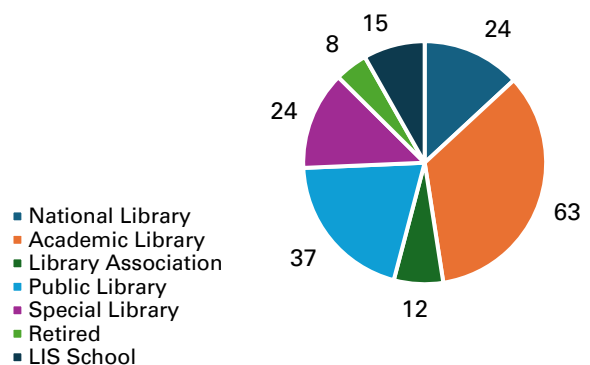
Graph 1b: Respondents by Region



Graph 1c: Respondents by Experience

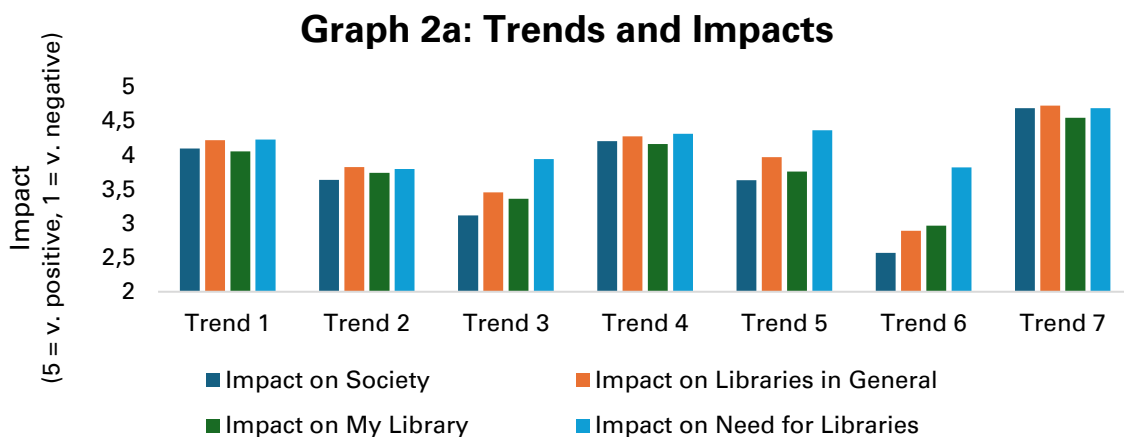


Graph 1d: Respondents by Library Type



2) Overall Responses

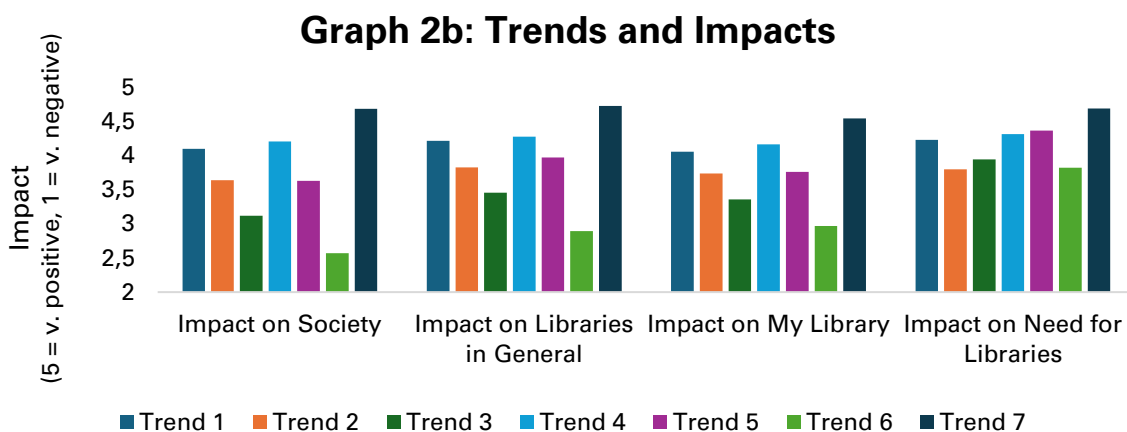
In this section, we look at the data from all of the respondents together, without any disaggregation. This gives us an idea of what the library field as a whole felt about the Trends, within the limits of the response rate received.



Graph 2a provides average scores on each of the four questions about the impact of each of the trends, respectively, on society as a whole, on libraries in general, on the respondent’s own library, and on the need for libraries. Averages were calculated by turning the answers (from very positive to very negative) into numbers from 5 to 1.

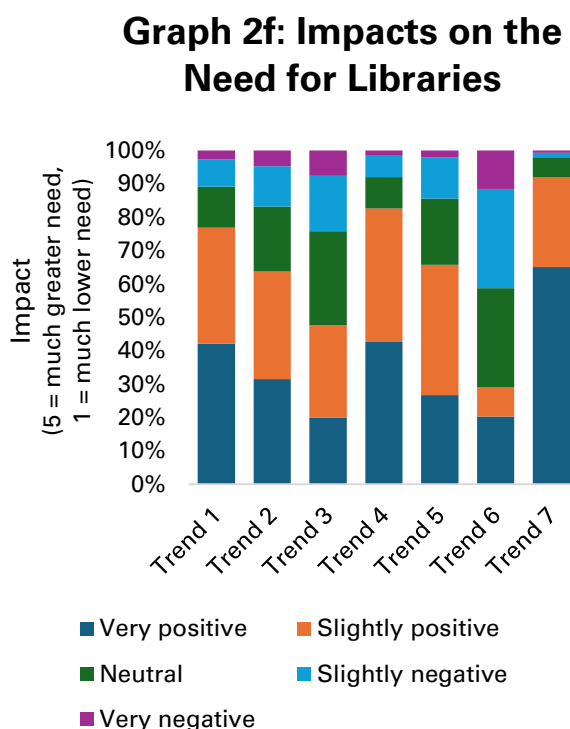
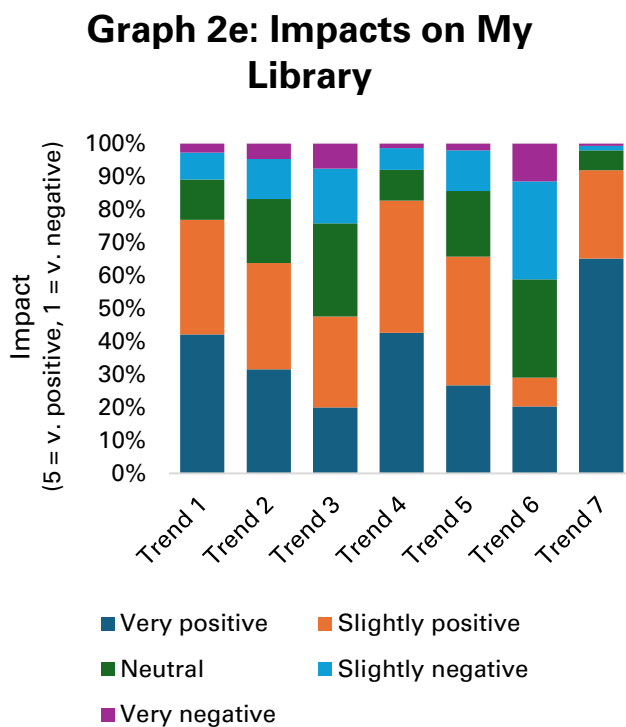
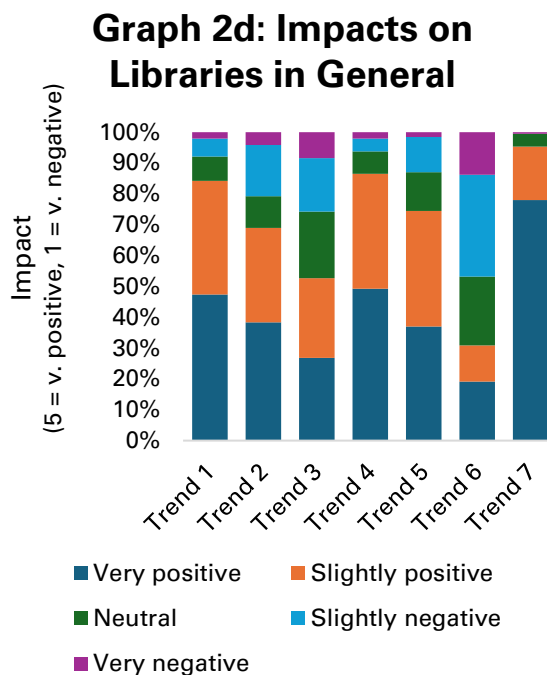
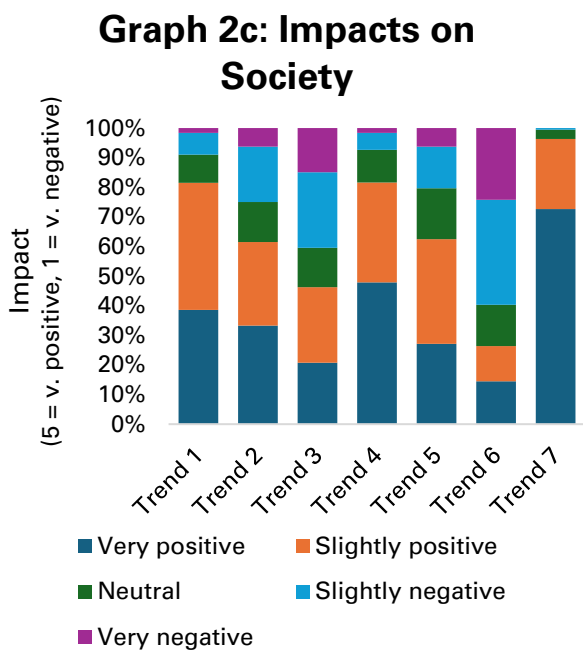
In this, for example, we can see that Trend 7 (a growing need for community) was, in general, seen as most positive, with Trend 1 (changing knowledge practices) and Trend 4 (skills) also leading to quite positive assessments, with Trend 2 (technology) slightly behind.

There is interesting variation in Trends 3 (renegotiating trust), 5 (equity) and 6 (environment), where respondents were relatively pessimistic about societal impacts, while expecting slightly less serious outcomes for libraries (both their own, and libraries in general). However, in each case, they tended to see these trends leading to a growing need for libraries.



Graph 2b shows the same data, but with the different areas of impact on the X axis. This makes it easier to see that respondents are in general quite positive about Trend 7 (community), and least so about the environment (Trend 6). There is a relatively similar pattern of answers across each of the impact areas, except for on impacts on the need for libraries, where again, Trends 3, 5 and 6 stand out as areas where there is an expectation of a relatively positive expectation.

Graphs 2c-f offer a breakdown of the shares of positive and negative votes per area:



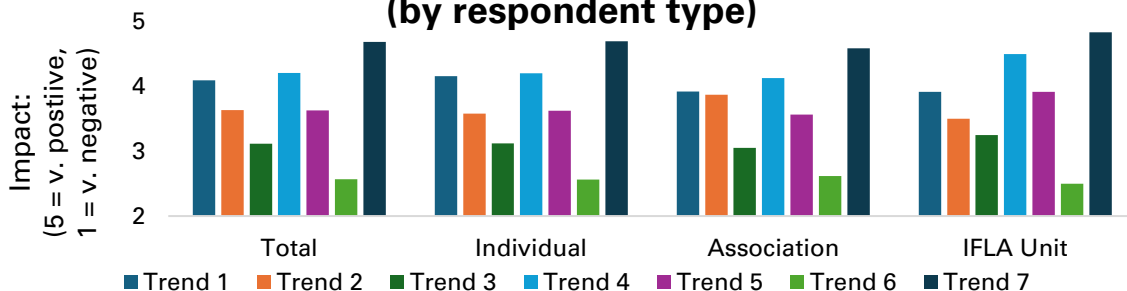
These echo much of what we have seen above, with high shares of respondents very positive about the impact of Trend 7 on society and on libraries in general, although slightly fewer saying the same for the impact on the respondent's own library and on the need for libraries. Meanwhile, only Trends 2, 3 and 6 have any significant number of respondents who are more pessimistic in each case.

As for those Trends where people definitely do have an opinion, Trends 1, 4 and 7 typically only have a very small number of 'neutral' responses, while Trends 3 and 6 have the most of these, implying a mixed impact, or a lack of certainty.

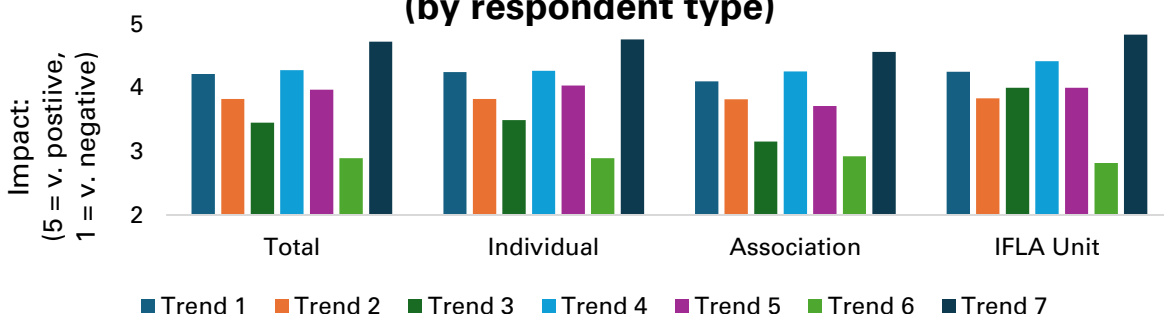
3) Trends by Respondent Type

In the first of the different disaggregations of the data in this report, we look at the type of respondent – individual, association or IFLA unit. The idea here was to understand whether a difference in perspective might make a major difference.

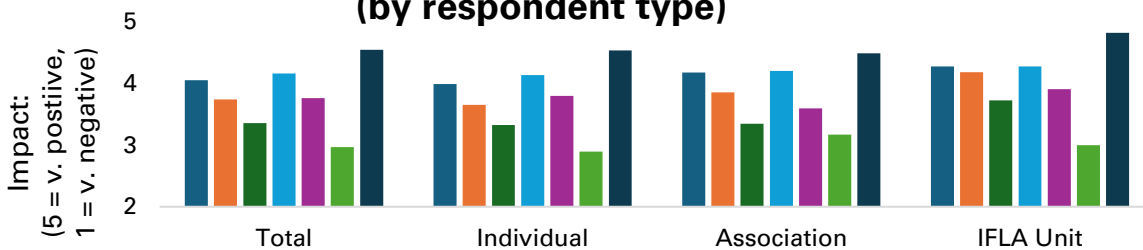
Graph 3a: Impacts on Society (by respondent type)



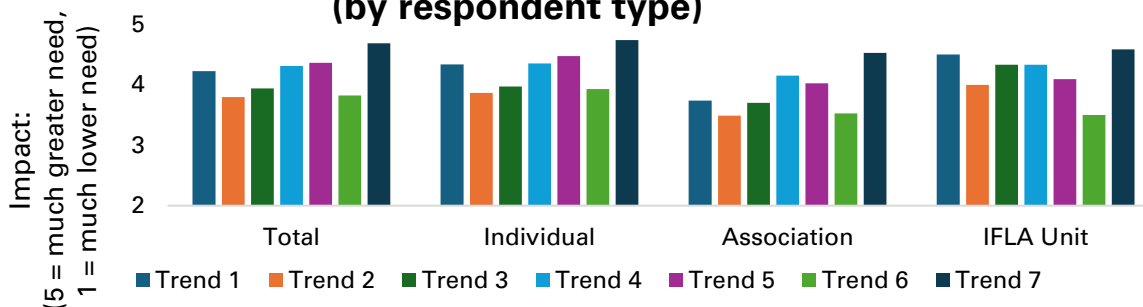
Graph 3b: Impacts on Libraries (by respondent type)



Graph 3c: Impacts on My Library (by respondent type)



Graph 3d: Impacts on Need for Libraries (by respondent type)



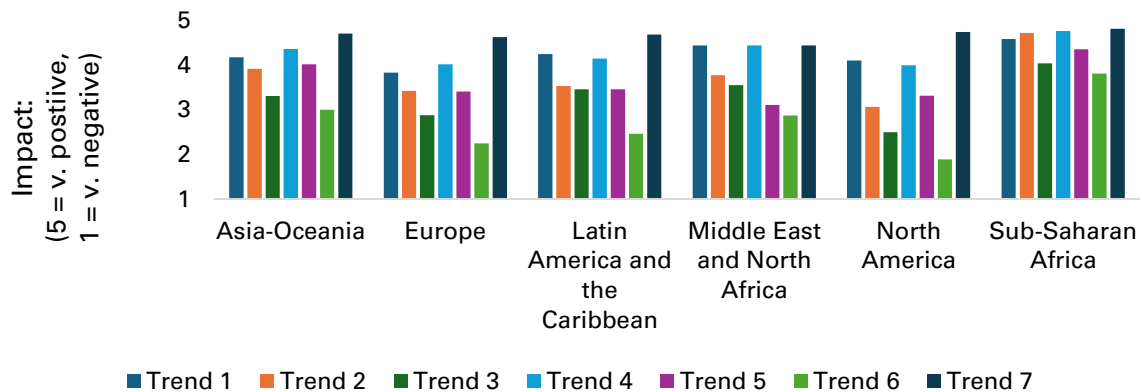
Graphs 3a-3d provide the answers on this, with the total averages also included as a reference. Interesting take-aways from this include the relatively positive outlook among IFLA units on the impact of Trend 3 on libraries in general, while library associations tend to see Trend 2 (technology) as having a more positive impact.

Nonetheless, it appears that in general, the fact of responding on behalf of an association or unit, or individually, does not make a huge difference to the results.

4) Trends by Region

This section looks at differences between different world regions – Asia-Oceania (AO), Europe (EU), Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), North America (NA) and Sub-Saharan Africa (SA).

Graph 4a: Impacts on Society (by region)

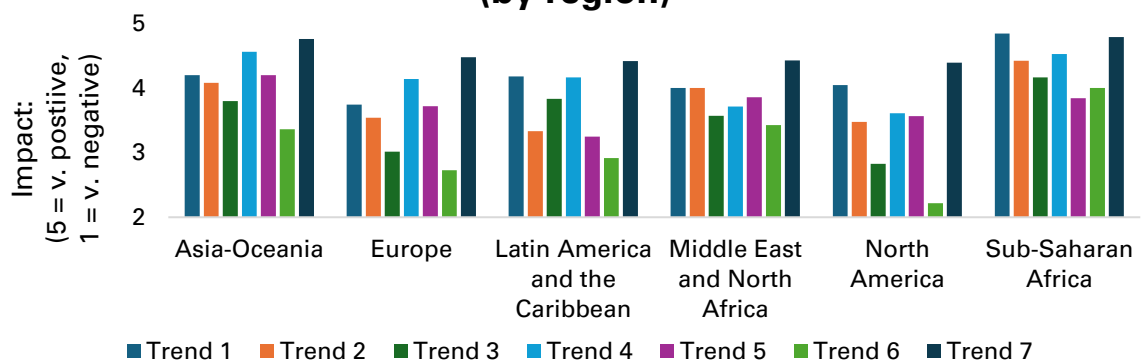


Graph 4a looks at beliefs around impacts on society as a whole. In terms of overall regional differences, SA is generally the most optimistic about the future, while EU and NA tend to be more cautious.

In most regions, Trend 7 is the most positively viewed, although in MENA there are similar levels of optimism about the effects of Trends 1 and 3 on society, while in Africa, it’s Trend 4 that comes up to this level.

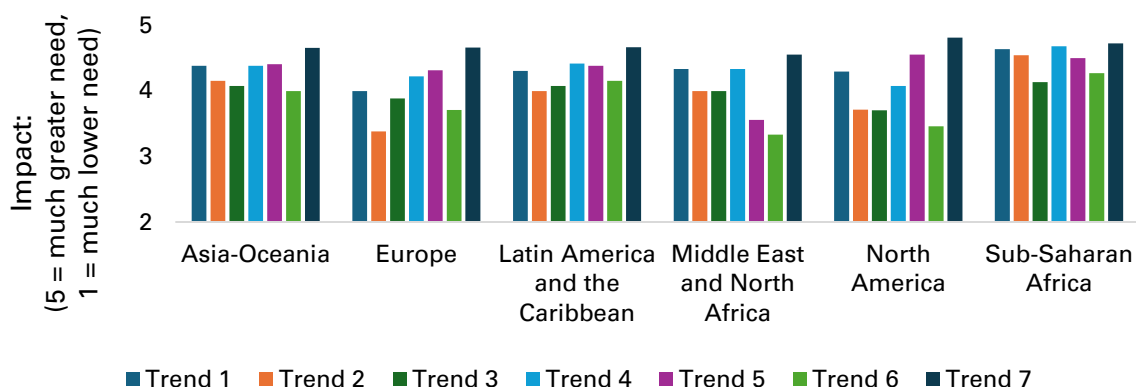
Trend 3 (trust) and 6 (environment) tend to trigger the most negative responses in AO, NA and SA, although in the latter, the results are still relatively positive. LAC respondents are most worried about these also, alongside Trend 5 (equity). MENA respondents are most preoccupied about Trends 5 and 6.

Graph 4c: Impacts on My Library (by region)



Graphs 4b and 4c look at the expectations for libraries, both in general, and in terms of the respondents’ own ones. Interesting points arising include – again – optimism about the impacts of Trend 7 on libraries (top for each region, although in the case of SA, on the same level as Trend 1). Environmental trends are most likely to be seen as harmful to libraries, with North America particularly worried, while AO and SA are less preoccupied. Meanwhile, AO, MENA and SA tend to more positive about Trend 2 (technology), while EU, LAC and NA are less so. In general, changing knowledge practices are expected to be a good thing.

Graph 4d: Impacts on Need for Libraries (by region)



Finally, Graph 4d looks at expected impacts on libraries. As with previous results, one thing that does stand out is that just as libraries are seen as likely to be quite negatively affected by environmental trends, the demand for them is expected to rise.

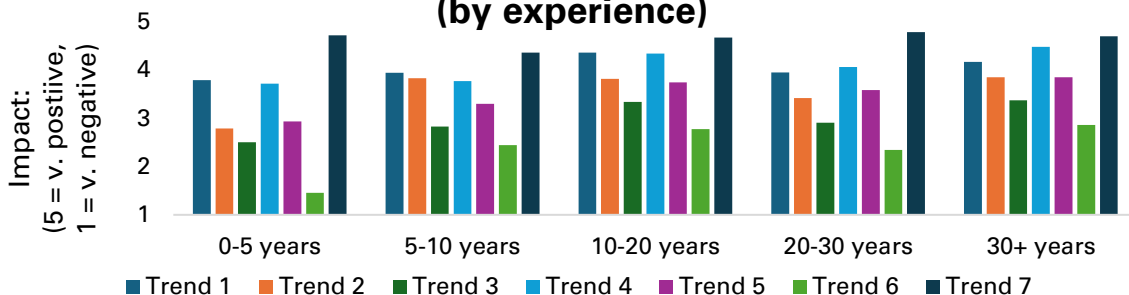
Overall, AO, LAC and SA tend to see all Trends leading to greater demand for libraries, with some small variation. The picture is more mixed in Europe, where responses are more neutral on Trend 2 (i.e. there were as many respondents expecting this to reduce demand for libraries as increase it), while in MENA, it was Trends 5 (equity) and 6 (environment) that got the most equivocal answers. In NA, all of Trends 2 (technology), 3 (trust) and 6 (environment) which were seen as least positive for future demand.

Overall, this suggests that there is a value in differentiating between the focus on trends between regions. This may be because of how each trend is playing out is in each part of the world, or the nature of libraries there, but in both cases, it underlines that efforts to build confidence and readiness to work with trends are likely to look at different things.

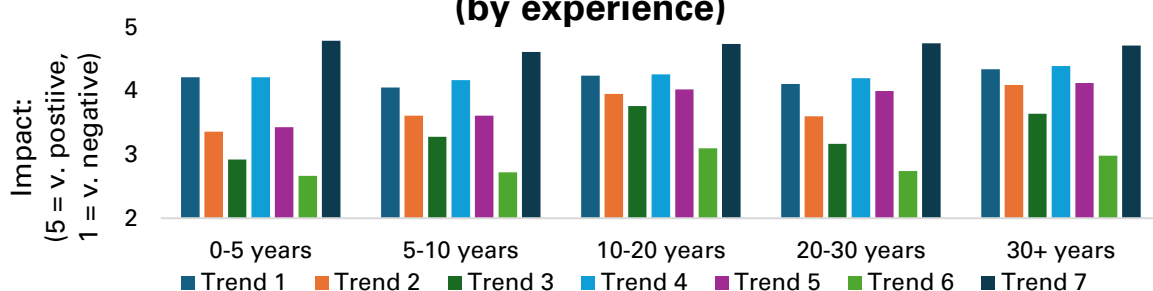
5) Trends by Level of Experience

This section looks to assess whether years of experience in the library field affect views on how positive or negative different trends are likely to be. Graphs 5a-d provide an overview:

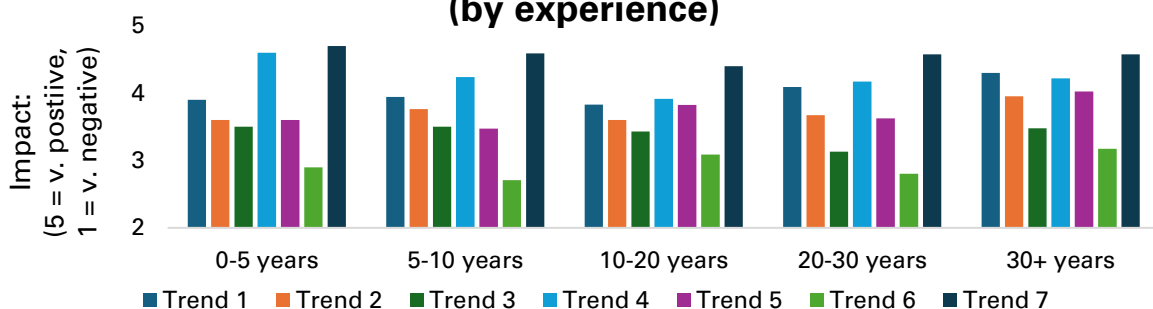
Graph 5a: Impacts on Society (by experience)



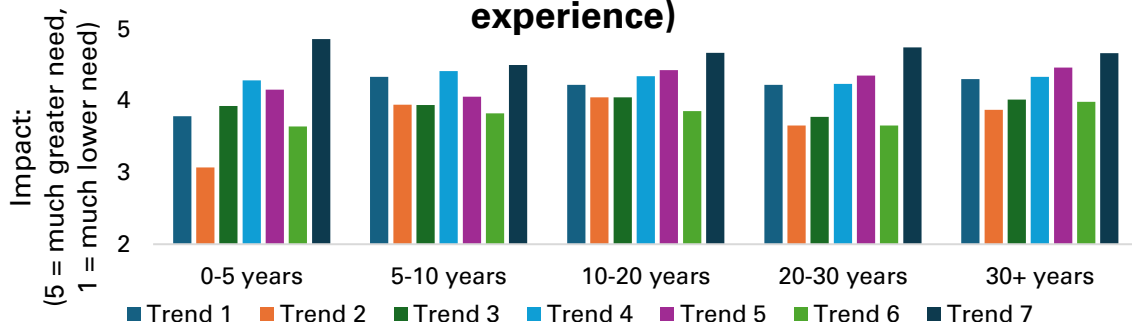
Graph 5b: Impacts on Libraries (by experience)



Graph 5c: Impacts on My Library (by experience)



Graph 5d: Impacts on Need for Libraries (by experience)



What do these tell us? Across all levels of experience, Trends 4 and 7 were generally seen most positively, while Trend 6 was most likely to have negative impacts.

The newest professionals tend to be most sceptical about the consequences of Trend 2 (technology), on society and libraries alike, and in particular on demand for libraries. At the same time, compared to other answers, they were more likely to see Trend 7 as leading to greater demand for libraries.

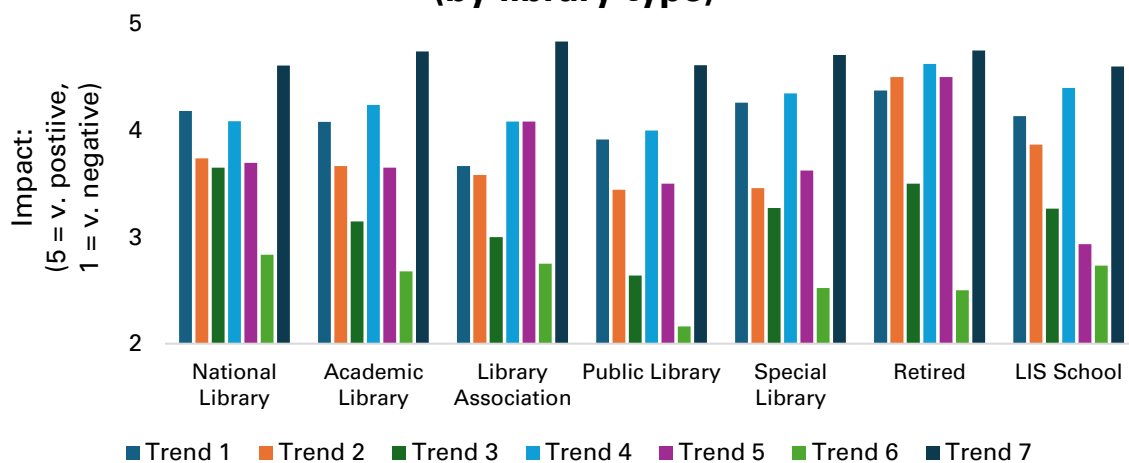
There also seems to be growing positivity about the impacts of Trends 2 (technology), 3 (renegotiating trust) and 5 (equity) on libraries as levels of experience increase. These are of course all hot topics, but ones that have been on the agenda for some time in one way or another. It is possible that respondents who have been working longer in the sector have seen libraries' and societies' ability to overcome challenges, and so are more hopeful now for example.

Overall, this does point to a greater level of concern about the future among newer professionals. This represents a challenge for leaders and associations at all levels in terms of how to build confidence in libraries' ability to respond, while also making the most of more positive developments.

6) Responses by Library Type

The final disaggregation of the data is between types of library. IFLA of course brings together libraries of all sorts, but our field serves many different communities through the different institutions we represent, from national and academic libraries to public and school libraries. The number of responses received only allows us to look at some of these, but already offer some

**Graph 6a: Impacts on Society
(by library type)**



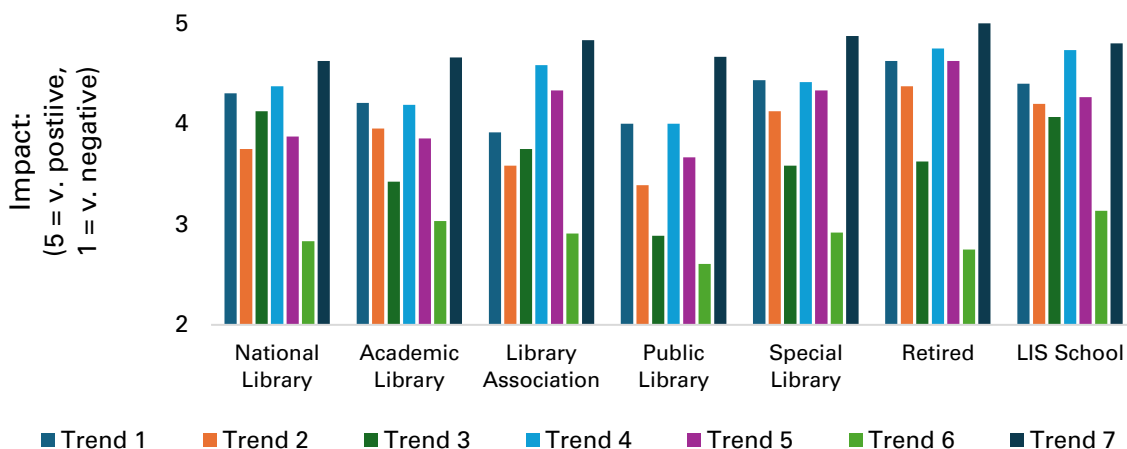
interesting pointers.

Graph 6a provides the data for assessments of the impact of the different trends on society as a whole. We can see that national, academic, and special libraries, as well as LIS school representatives are enthusiastic about changes in knowledge practices, while library associations are less so.

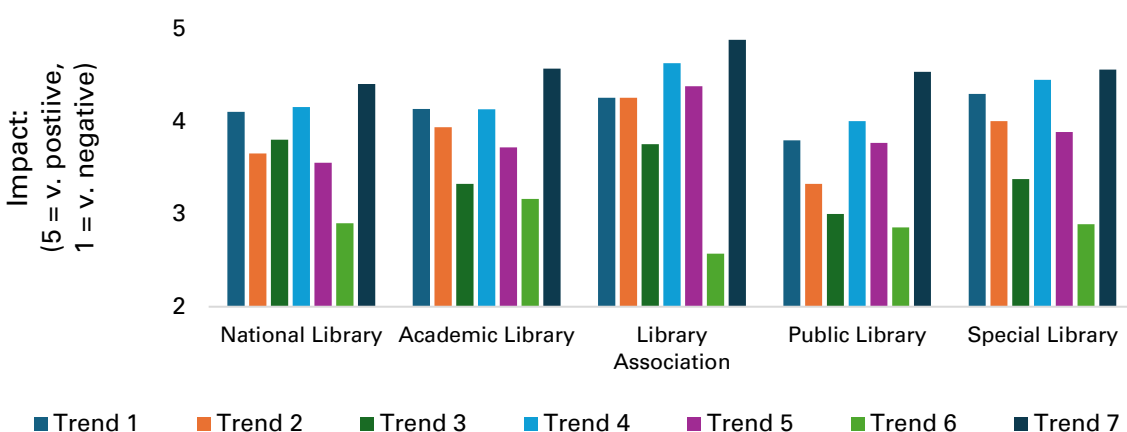
National library respondents also tend to expect more positive things from Trend 3 (renegotiating trust), but library associations and public libraries are much more concerned. No-one, on average, expects positive impacts from environmental trends, but public libraries are particularly concerned. LIS schools are more worried about equity trends than others in terms of their impacts on society.

Graphs 6b and 6c look at expected impacts on libraries – both in general, and the respondents’ own. To note, there were not enough answers from LIS school and retired librarians to calculate averages for Graph 6c. There is little variation between the two Graphs. However, between types, special libraries and LIS schools (as well as retired people) seemed to be most positive about technology, as well as trends in equity for libraries. Public libraries are generally less optimistic, although like others do see hope in Trend 7.

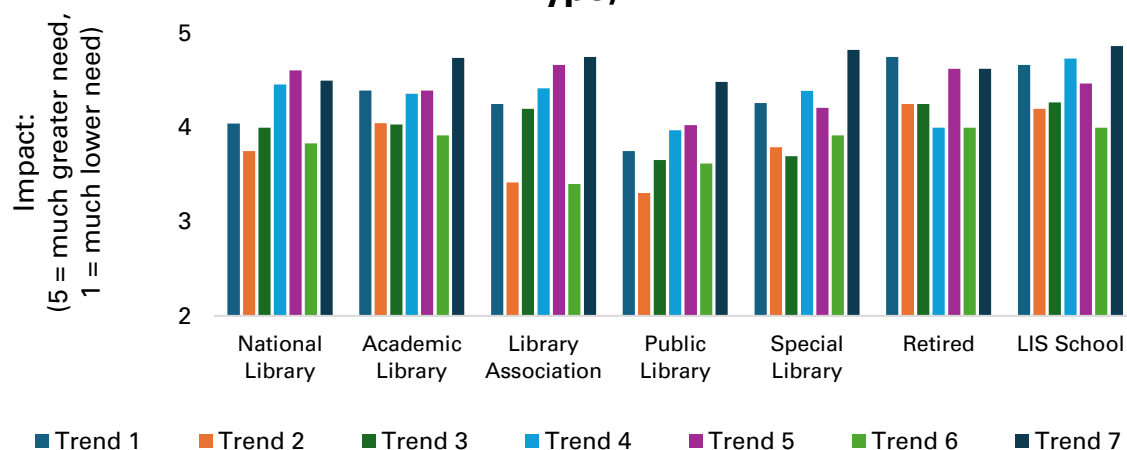
Graph 6b: Impacts on Libraries (by library type)



Graph 6c: Impacts on My Library (by library type)



Graph 6d: Impacts on Need for Libraries (by library type)



Graph 6d provides a summary of views on how far different library types expect to see demand for services rise as a result of each trend. There is, perhaps interestingly, less variation in the responses here. Most library types see Trend 7 as most likely to drive demand for libraries, although among national library respondents it was Trend 5 (equity), while retired respondents suggested Trend 1 would have this effect.

For library associations, public and national libraries, Trend 2 would be more neutral or negative in terms of its impact on communities' need for libraries, while others felt environmental trends would be the least positive (although as with other results, negative overall consequences on society were associated with neutral or positive trends in demand for libraries).

The data in this section helps highlight how different types of library are likely to experience trends differently, with a particular concern for public libraries (which tend to be smaller) around the impacts of Trend 2, and to a lesser extent, Trend 5. Other Trends – notably 7 – are expected to be more positive across the board.

7) Priority Trends and Trend Intersections

This final section addresses how respondents see different trends interacting. This is one of the key areas of focus in this year’s Trend Report, recognising that trends do not exist in isolation, and may complement or clash with each other, or at least complicate the knowledge and information environment in which libraries operate.

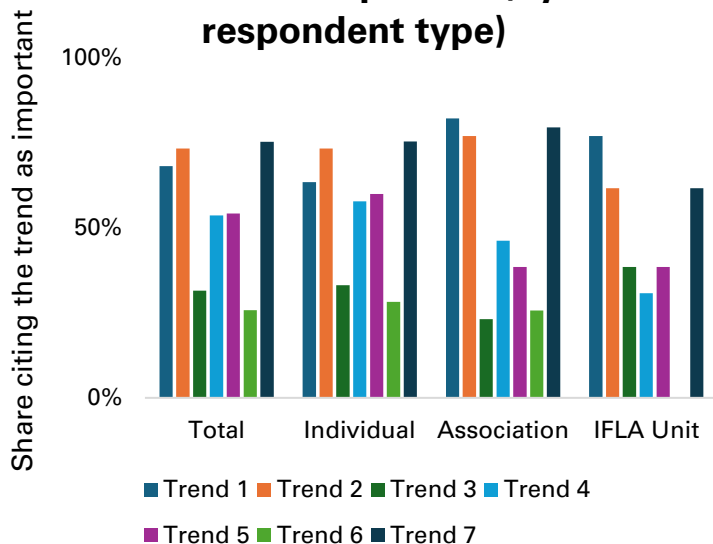
In order to do this, we first asked which Trends respondents felt were most important to look at. Graphs 7a-d do this, in each case setting out what share of the total respondents in any given category selected each trend.

Graph 7a does this for the type of respondent, and includes total figures as well as a comparator.

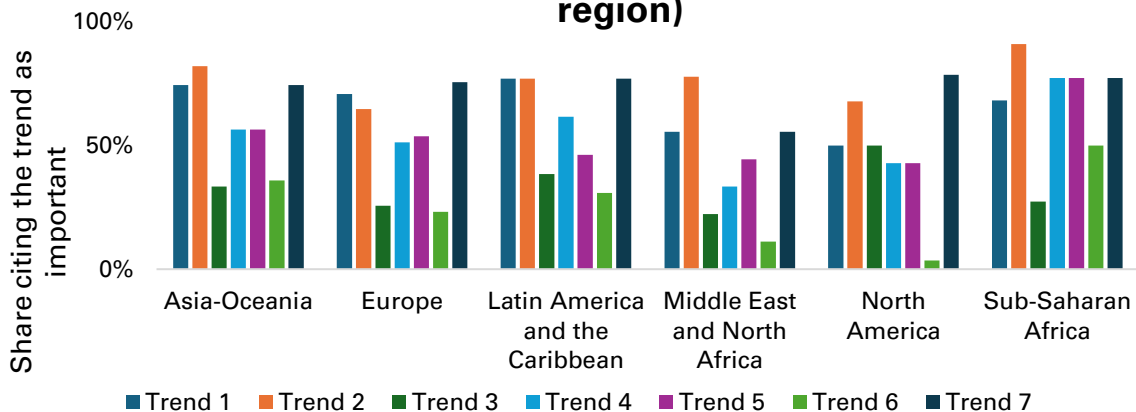
Overall, we can see that more than half of all respondents saw Trends 1, 2, 4, 5 and 7 as being particularly important for libraries. Trends 3 and 6 were less regularly chosen.

Between different types of respondent, associations tended to be readier than others to choose Trends 1, 2 and 7, while individual respondents led the way in selecting trends 4, 5 and 6. Associations were the most likely of the different respondents to select Trend 3, but the least likely to choose Trend 4 or 5.

Graph 7a: Share Citing Each Trend as Important (by respondent type)

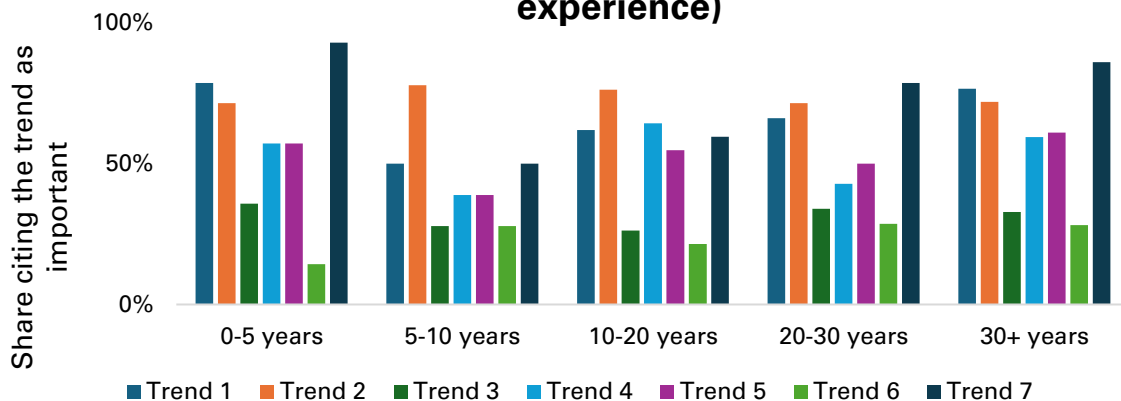


Graph 7b: Share Citing Each Trend as Important (by region)



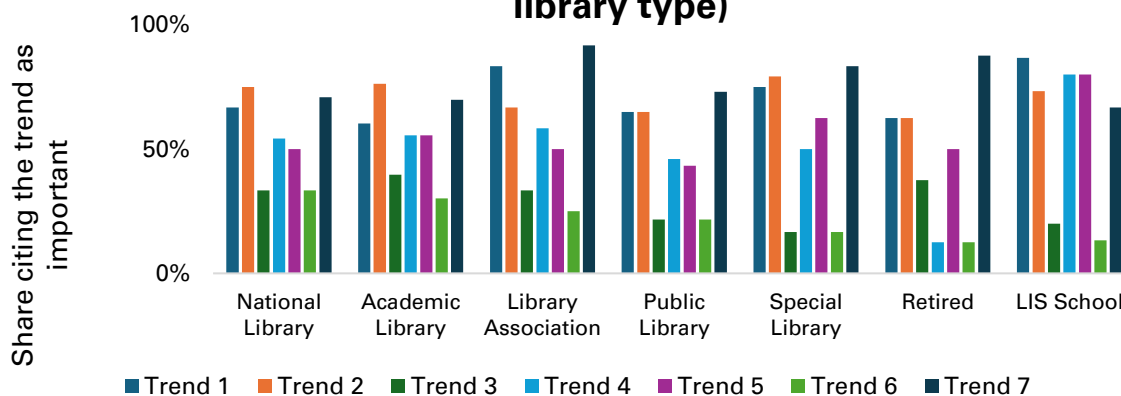
Breaking things down by region (Graph 7b), it is Trend 2 that was most likely to be selected in Asia-Oceania, MENA and Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as in LAC (alongside Trends 1 and 7). North Americans and Europeans were most likely to identify Trend 7 as being important. Trend 6 (environment) was the least regularly chosen Trend in all regions except Asia-Oceania and Sub-Saharan Africa (where it was Trend 3 (renegotiating trust)).

Graph 7c: Share Citing Each Trend as Important (by experience)



Turning to levels of experience (Graph 7c), it is those with the least and longest experience of libraries who tend to place Trend 7 (community) first, while those with between 5- and 30-years experience were most likely to choose Trend 2 (technology). Each group placed Trend 6 last.

Graph 7d: Share Citing Each Trend as Important (by library type)

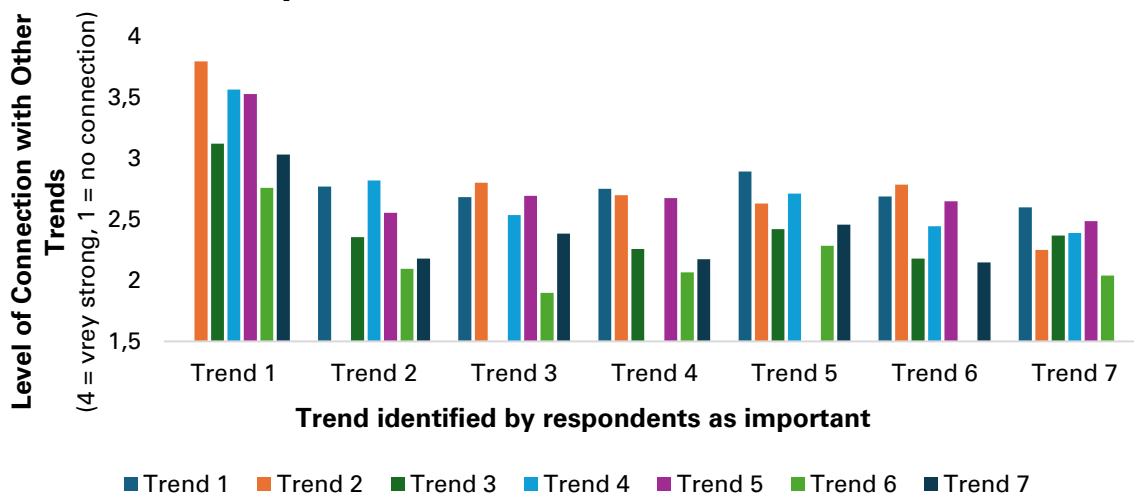


Finally, Graph 7d looks at different library types. Points that stand out include library associations' strong tendency to choose Trends 1 (alongside LIS school respondents) and 7, with over 90% choosing the latter. LIS school respondents were particularly interested in Trends 4 and 5 as well, compared to others.

The next step was to ask how far, for each of the Trends respondents had selected as being important, they saw a connection with each of the other trends. This was carried out by asking respondents to give a score from ‘very strong connection’ to ‘no connection’ for each. Each score was assigned a number (from 4 to 1), allowing us to calculate averages. These are shown in Graph 7e.

To read this, the X axis shows each Trend that respondents believed was important. The length of the bar corresponds to the average score for the strength of the relationship with other trends. For example, we can see that people choosing Trend 1 (knowledge practices) believed that there was quite a strong relationship between this and Trend 2 (technology). However, they perceived that there was a somewhat weaker relationship between Trend 1 and Trend 6.

Graph 7e: Level of Connection Between Trends



In terms of what we can take from this graph, the main one is how far Trend 1 (knowledge practices) is seen as being linked with almost every other Trend, with the strongest links (other than that with Trend 2) being with Trends 4 (skills) and 5 (equity).

Meanwhile, respondents seeing Trend 2 as being important tended to see it as most strongly connected with Trends 1 and 4, and least with 6. Those choosing Trend 3 felt that this was most closely related to Trends 2 and 5. People picking Trend 4 felt that Trends 1, 2 and 5 were most linked. Trend 5 was most interrelated with Trends 1 and 4, Trend 6 with Trends 1, 2 and 5, and Trend 7 with Trends 1 and 5.

To get an idea of which are the closest relationships overall, we can just look at the highest bars here. This gives us the below 'top 10' of connected Trends (right). This points, for example, to a scenario based on what happens when the emergence of new knowledge practices – for example the imperative of ensuring more representation and recognition of different knowledges – combines with wider connectivity, or with the rise of AI. Many combinations indeed involve Trend 1, but this may make sense, given the wide implications of efforts to rethink what we class as information and how we use it.

	Trend #1	Trend #2
1st	1	2
2nd	1	4
3rd	1	5
4th	1	3
5th	1	7
6th	2	4
7th	3	2
8th	6	2
9th	1	6
10th	5	4

We can also identify the 'top 3' combinations of Trends for the different categories we have worked with throughout this report, as below. In each case, the combination is written as [Trend identified as important] + [Trend with which this has a connection]:

Respondent Type (answering on behalf of)

Individuals: 1+2, 1+4, 1+5
 Associations: 1+2, 1+5, 1+4
 IFLA units: 2+1, 3+2, 3+5

Regions

Asia-Oceania: 1+2, 1+4, 1+5
 Europe: 1+2, 1+4, 1+5
 LAC: 1+2, 1+5, 1+4
 MENA: 1+5, 1+2, 1+4
 North America: 1+5, 1+2, 1+4
 Sub-Saharan Africa: 1+2, 1+4, 1+4

Levels of Experience

0-5 Years: 1+2, 1+5, 1+4
 5-10 Years: 1+2, 1+4, 1+5
 10-20 Years: 1+2, 1+3, 2+3
 20-30 Years: 1+2, 1+4, 1+5
 30+ Years: 1+2, 1+4, 1+5

Library Type (where respondent is based)

Public Library: 1+2, 1+5, 1+4

Academic Library: 1+2, 1+4, 1+5

National Library: 1+2, 1+4, 1+5

LIS School: 1+2, 1+4, 1+5

Special Library: 1+2, 1+4, 1+5

Retired: 1+3, 1+4, 1+5

Library Association: 1+2, 1+4, 1+5

Overall, there is relatively little variation – 18 out of the 21 total disaggregations felt that the combination of Trend 1 with Trends 2, 4 and 5 respectively was strongest. The exceptions were IFLA units, those with 10-20 years of experience, and retired librarians.

We also asked for ideas and comments on the connections between these, which are very valuable. We will look to analyse these and share highlights later.

8) Conclusion

Ultimately, as highlighted in the introduction to this report, the goal of this work is both to encourage thinking about the future (or futures!) facing libraries, and to identify intersections of Trends which can form the basis of the scenarios that will appear in the 2024 Trend Report.

Yet this does also help surface a range of interesting and valuable insights into how different groups within our field think about the future, even on a relatively limited number of responses. For example, we see the contrast between concern about what environmental trends will mean for our societies and institutions, but at the same time expect that they are likely to drive up demand.

There is a lot of potential in trends towards a stronger search for community, but mixed views about what technological trends will mean for libraries. There are certainly strong connections, in people's minds, between the way we think in general about what information and knowledge are and will be, and a variety of other developments we will face. But there is also a need to look at those areas where there is less optimism about the ability of libraries to address challenges, and to find ways to build confidence.

These issues will all be on the agenda at the Information Futures Summit in Brisbane on 30 September – 3 October. The Summit will emphasise the importance of turning high-level insights into practical ideas that can help build stronger, more responsive, more effective library services, and so fairer and more sustainable information and knowledge futures for all.