

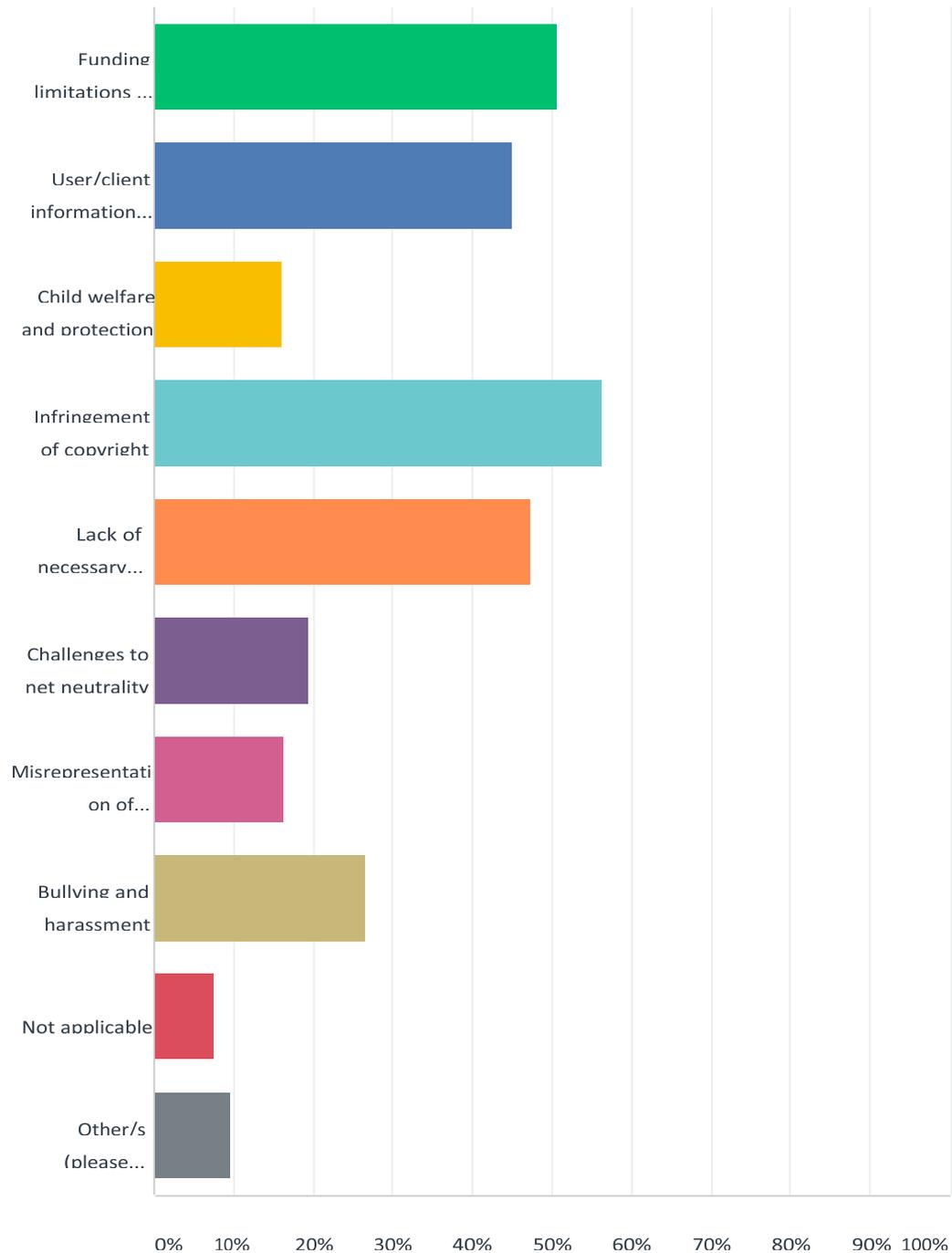
# ETHICS REVIEW: LANDSCAPE OF PROFESSIONAL ISSUES

Guy Daines

# General Landscape

An important part of the preparatory work in developing a new Ethical Framework for the information profession is the development of a professional issues landscape.

**Table 1: Preset Issues in the Ethics Survey (1290 Respondents)**



This is seen as an important reality test ensuring that any ethical provision addresses the needs as experienced by information professionals in the field. The two key evidence sources used in setting out the issues submitted by members are the Ethics Review Survey carried out during the summer of 2017, and a series of 12 workshops carried out in late 2017 and early 2018. The social media record has yet to be added.

The survey attracted 1,554 respondents and 1,290 respondents answered the question – *Have you ever felt concerned by a work-based ethical issue related to any of the following* – and then selected from a pre-set list of issues. Table 1 sets these issues out and it can be seen that infringement of copyright (726 responses), funding limitations and their impact (652 responses), lack of necessary skills in staff to do job to a good standard (610 responses), and user/client information privacy (579 responses) were the ones attracting most support. However 97 respondents had not felt such concerns regarding work-based ethical issues.

The issues identified in the multiple choice question have to a large extent been echoed in the qualitative evidence we have collected. This has included free text commentary in the survey – respondents were invited to suggest other issues not mentioned in the picklist and 123 respondents took advantage of this provision. In addition, the 11 workshops all included table discussions that asked participants to identify the professional issues they faced in their workplace and/or they felt were of importance to the information profession generally. The workshops attracted 174 participants and at least one workshop took place in all the devolved nations of the UK, and one workshop focused on BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) information professionals.

This has produced a rich seam of evidence with 553 comments from both these sources. Those from the survey are often more complex as the workshop evidence consists of the more concise comments marked up on flipcharts. The comments have been sorted into 9 groups and Table 2 records the allocation

Within the 9 groupings a number of individual issues stand out. These are set out in Table 3, You will note the marked similarities to those identified in the multiple choice question in the survey (table 1). Privacy, copyright and funding issues are common to both. Volunteering and censorship were not specified as set answers in the survey and, although deprofessionalisation and the skills of staff, figured in the qualitative evidence it was spread over a number of issues and not expressed as staff not having the necessary skills to do a good job.

Table 2 (594 comments)

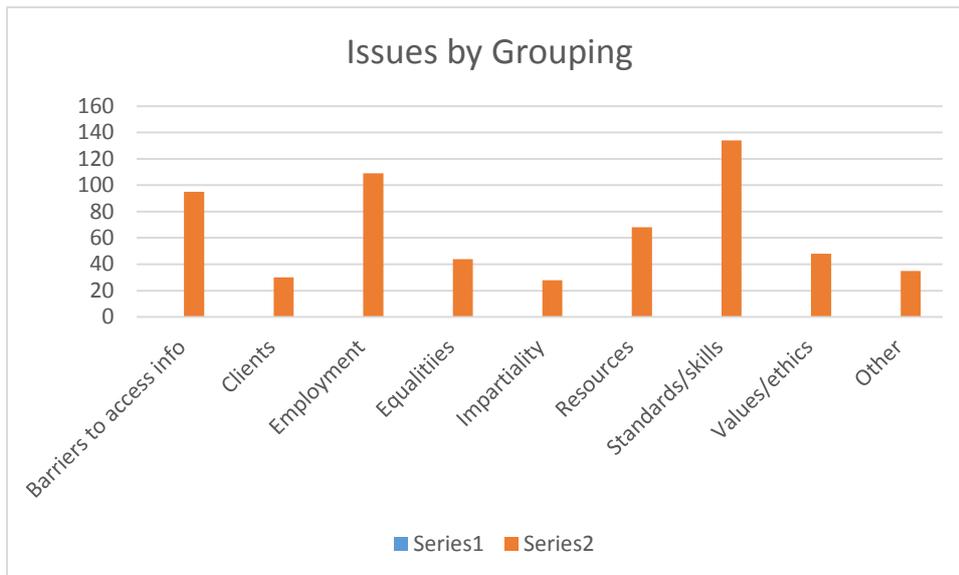
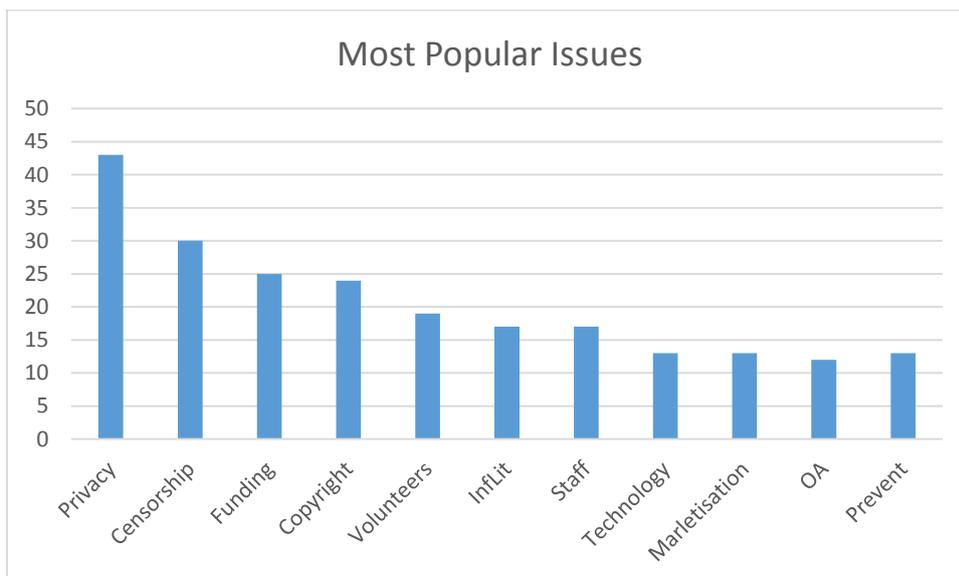


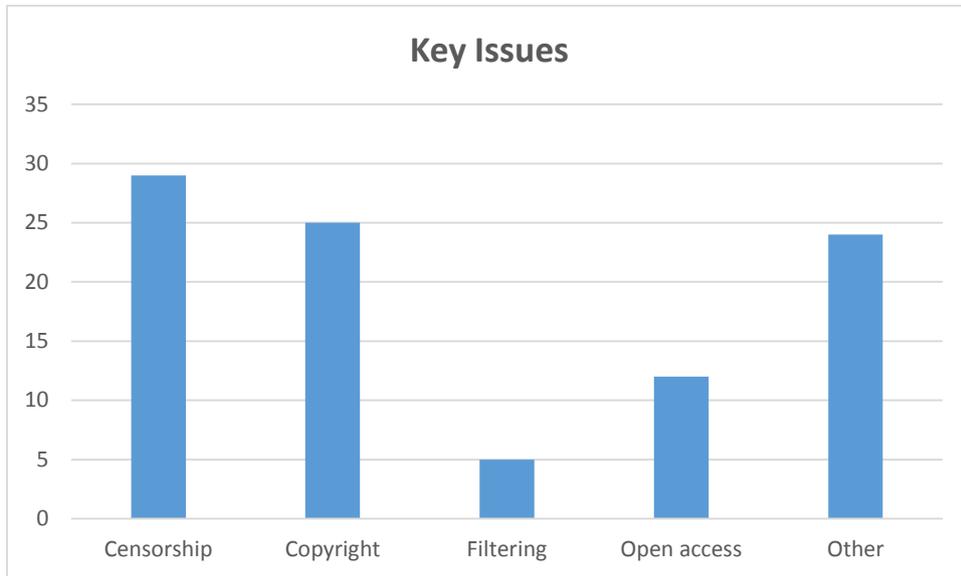
Table 3



The rest of this report explores more fully the responses received against the various groupings. It is supplemented by a compendium listing all the comments by group and then by each issue within a Group, A separate report has been produced on privacy (utilising evidence from the Ethics Survey and workshops as well as evidence separately collected) by Jacqueline May on behalf of the Privacy Project.

# Barriers to Information Access

**Table 4**



(95 Comments)

This grouping clusters together issues that limit the access of users to information. It also includes comments that do the reverse and so includes comments on Open Access.

Censorship and filtering are obvious inhibitors of freedom to access information and a number of examples are given:

“Censorship – employer blocked access to payday loan sites ”

“Possible cancellation of a publication that portrayed my employer negatively”

“Software companies – FILTERING – internet access”

Copyright and licensing are widely perceived as a limitation to access -

“We’re here to facilitate access but put up COPYRIGHT walls”

Although there is also recognition of creator rights and the need to balance this with user rights

“Copyright/Intellectual Property – creator rights – user/access rights”

Many of the comments on Open Access describe the challenges that often face it

“Open access – unethical deals from publishers”

As well as noting the overall purpose

“Openness – data, research, science – access to publicly funded research”

The “other” category contains a wide variety of topic matters with one or two entries:

Age Restrictions

Equalities

Banned People

Parent institutions

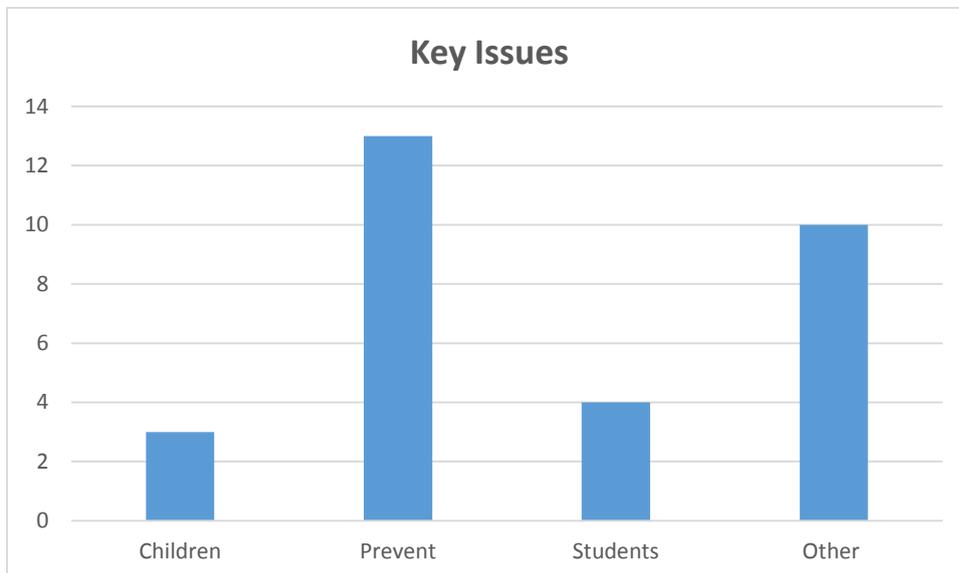
Restricted clientele

Sponsorship

Freedom of information/speech

# Clients

**Table 5**



(30 comments)

Prevent dominates the issues covered in this grouping, It is included as in theory Prevent is seen as a part of safeguarding policy, protecting potentially vulnerable people from extremist and hatred propaganda. A few see this or simply record it as an issue

“Prevent presents ethical issues around safeguarding children and young people (and students in general) against discrimination biased on ethnicity or perceived behaviours ...”

“Home Office Prevent Strategy”

However for many it is seen as an invasion on privacy rather than a welfare issue

“Prevent – reporting people who search for certain things”

“Prevent duty/Privacy”

“.... Information could be used to discriminate against members and passed onto racial profiling schemes such as PREVENT ....”

If added to the Privacy comments, then this further emphasizes the dominance given to this issue

The students section focuses on students as funders of FE/HE and behavioural issues. The children's section is about safeguarding.

The "Other" category contains a number of issues with just one or two entries

Encouraging library use

Perception of Service

Footfall

Safeguarding

Managing Expectations

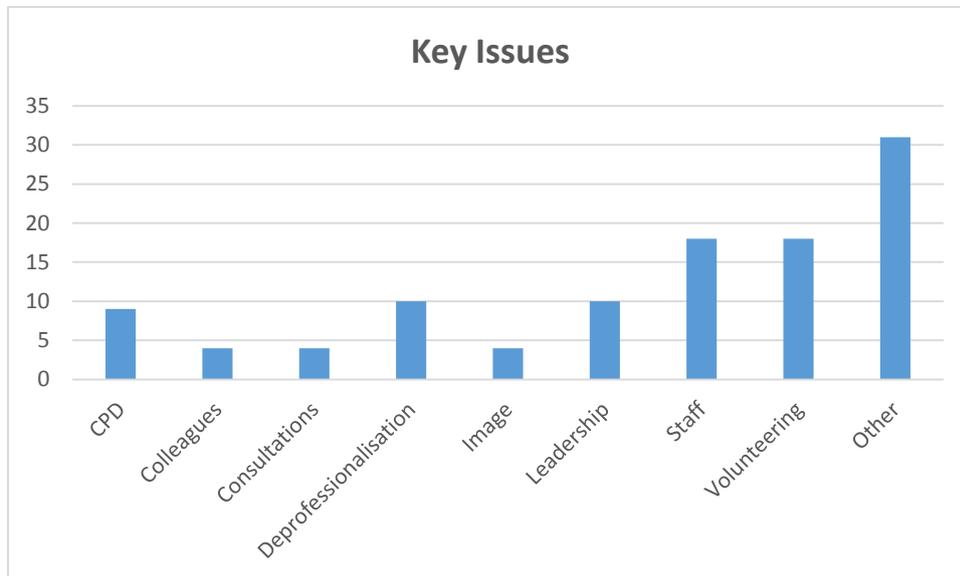
User behaviour

Misrepresentation of service

User expectations

# Employment Practice

**Table 6**



(108 comments)

This covers a wide range of employment and HR issues. Of note is the focus on deprofessionalisation and volunteers, reflecting the anger and the persistence of this issue within CILIP

“Deskilling of the profession”

“Undermining of professional skills at all levels (e.g. school librarians)”

“I’m really alarmed by the move towards volunteers running libraries”

“Use of volunteers when paid staff have been axed”

“Volunteers – deprofessionalisation – respect for sector”

Similar points are made in section on professionalism in “Values/ethics Grouping” which for many is about the lack of recognition of the profession.

The staff section covers most areas of HR roles, workload, talent management, recruitment. In leadership it is more about its lack:

“Management without experience”

“Lack of professional expertise and support from managers/feeling isolated”

“Mismatch between what an organisation says and how it acts”

The "Other" category contains a number of issues with just one or two entries

BAME staff

Bullying

CILIP membership

Employer understanding

Evasion of issues

Fear of Transparency

Job titles

Knowledge transfer

Lone working

Nepotism

New entrants

Pace of change

Professionalism

Recruitment

Non-professional work

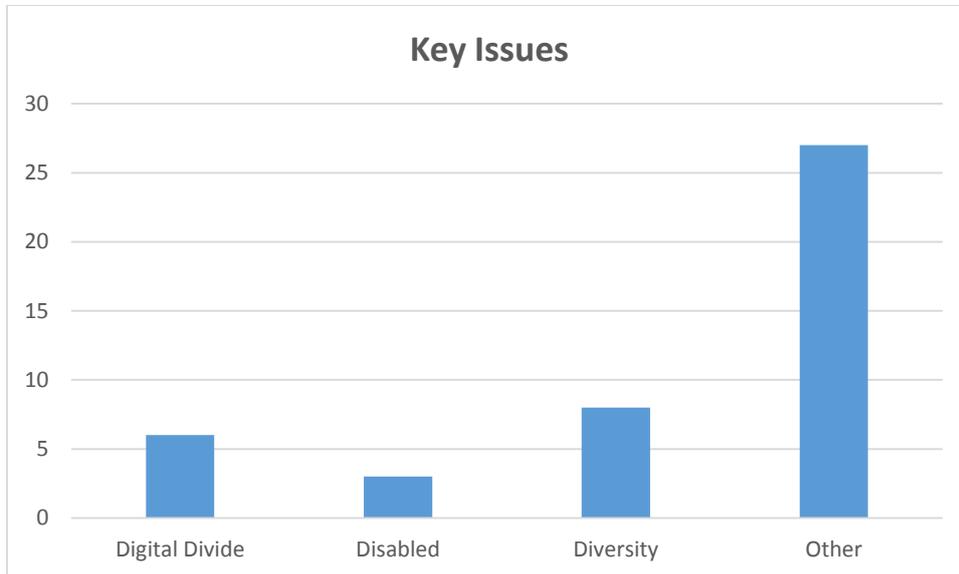
Restructuring

Strategic Planning

Whistleblowing

# Equalities

**Table 7**



(44 comments)

Once again comments on equalities covered a wide variety of issues. Many were strongly felt:

“Vulnerability of BAME staff – Bringing up issues – Being the issue – Carrying an extra load because you are BAME – lack of understanding by management of equality issues – BAME professionals don’t want to be associated only with such issues – can be isolating experience – Difficulty in dealing with it”

“My workplace received an accusation of institutional racism based on texts held in the library (which were held for legitimate academic reasons). I looked on CILIP’s website for guidance but did not find much”

“Diversity of staff needed to ensure diverse collections”

“Concerns from students about the content of the books on our shelves – outmoded and potentially offensive”

“The integrity of data within a particular library resource. The representation of women in brochures. Doing business with countries that do not celebrate diversity”

Accessibility of buildings and information (e.g. disabled access”

As well as the specific topics identified in Table 7, the “Other” category contains the following topics with one or two entries:

Accessibility

Ageism

BAME

BAME staff

Curriculum

Declining Issue

Digital by Default

Equity

Human rights

Income level

Literacy

Minorities

Outreach

Quality Assurance

Sexism

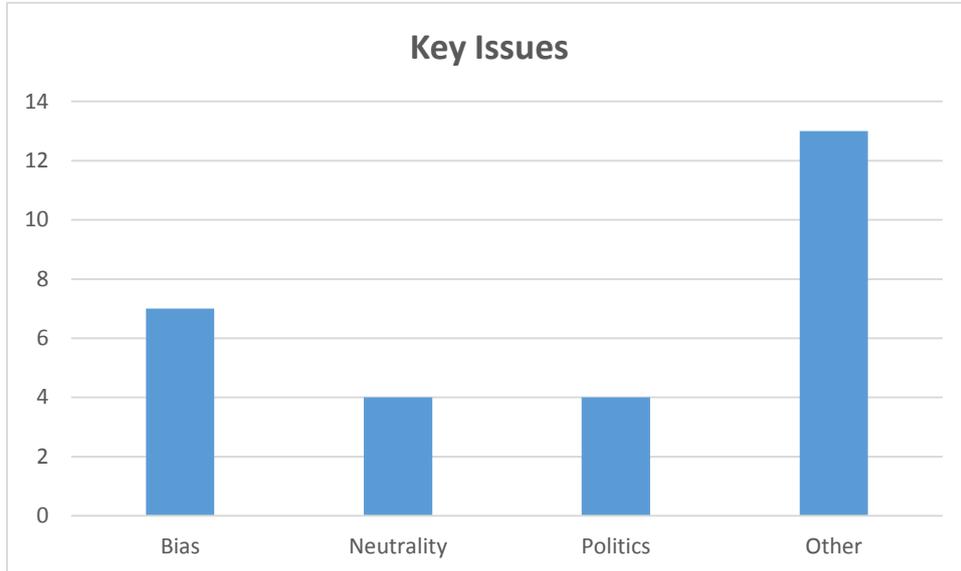
Usage metrics

Widening participation

Workforce

# Impartiality

**Table 8**



(37 comments)

The smallest of the Groupings. There is a sense where, rightly or wrongly, the concepts of impartiality, neutrality and bias are closely associated. More provocatively are those identifying politics as a key agency introducing unacceptable bias.

“As I see it the constraints placed on library services by being part of, or owned/funded by a political institution. Particularly thinking of public libraries and their relationship with local government. ...”

“Commerciality. Loss of neutrality within local government/politics”

More generally there is:

“Giving into pressure from noisy groups imposing their moral values on other groups”

“Holding material which some might consider to be “extreme views””

“Unconscious bias”

““Neutrality” vs “impartiality” vs “transparency” “

“Provision of information which has been selectively chosen to show a bias towards a certain procedure in healthcare delivery”

As well as the specific topics identified in Table 8, the “Other” category contains the following topics with one or two entries:

Guidance

Morals of clients

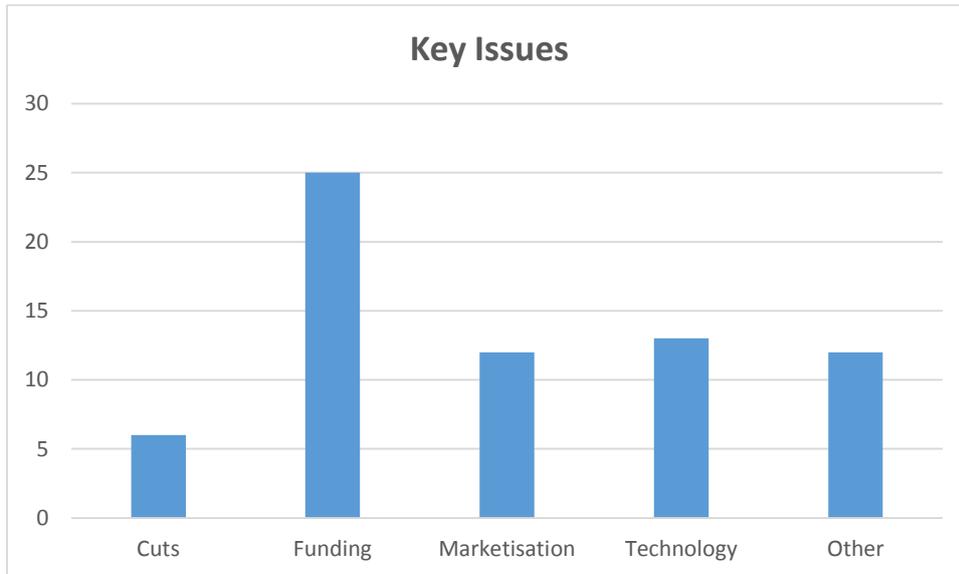
Preservation

Trust

Upholding customer care

## Resources

Table 9



(68 comments)

Funding issues, especially when combined with cuts, are a major issue surfaced in the evidence gathering, although a few query whether they are an ethical issue:

“I have severe funding issues at present but have never considered these to be an ethical issue”

“easy target for savings”

“Funding and a lack of resources”

“Services being cut – impact on morale”

“Loss of service points – increased demand”

The “Marketisation” section is also about resources and the adoption of a more commercial approach to service provision. Most were suspicious of its introduction to public services:

“Commercialisation & privatisation & invasion of public library space by private interests (Barclays, Halifax, Google, Tesco Bank etc)”

“the perception and use of concepts derived from the private sector, commerce and free market thinking is ideology masquerading as pragmatism. Concepts such as students are customers, competitor institutions, “customer satisfaction”, the “bottom line” etc etc”

Technology is seen as a major driver of change, but mixed in terms of impact and benefit.

“Technology – advancing – changing ways of accessing information”

“Pros and cons of social media”

“Advances in IT, Google – are information professionals’ skills needed?”

“Restrictions in technology – e.g. security access for pupils”

The “Other” category contains a number of issues with just one or two entries

Accountability

Supplier relations

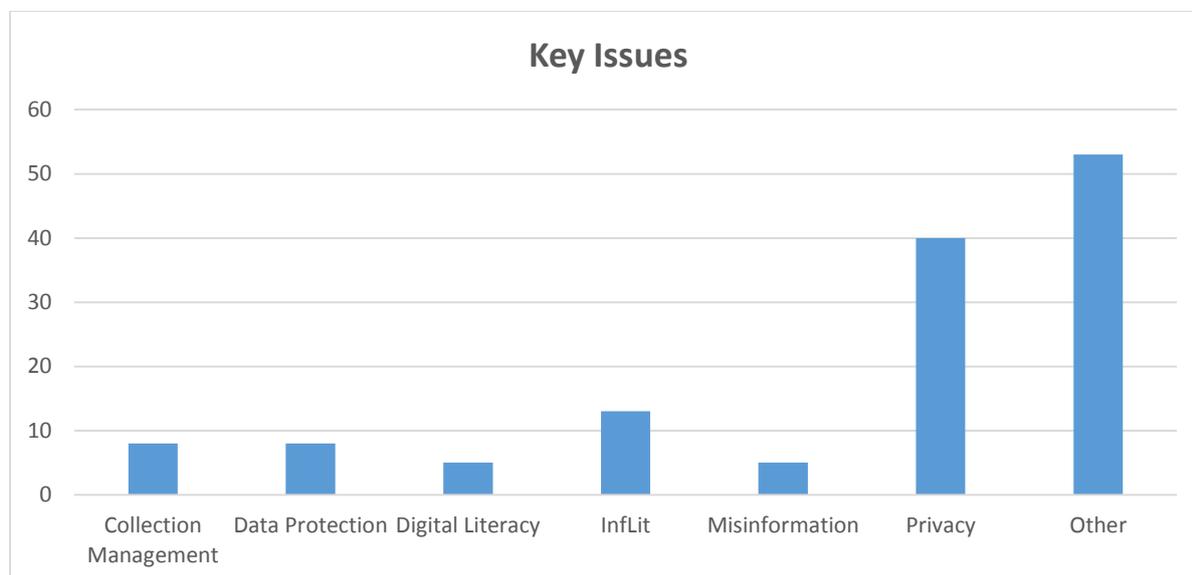
Automation

Time

Integrity of donors

# Standards/Skills

Table 10



(132 comments)

Privacy, especially when combined with data protection dominates this section with a combined entry of 48 comments. As previously discussed (under the Clients section) many saw the Prevent agenda as raising privacy concerns and if these were added to the privacy total there would be 61 comments. The Privacy Project led by Martyn Wade and with Jacqueline May as Project Manager has provided a separate report for the Ethics Committee with some recommendations as to how privacy should be dealt with a new Ethical Framework. Their report includes the evidence gathered during the Ethics Project as well as evidence unique to their project. Therefore no further comment is made in this report.

Digital and information literacy and Misinformation combined (some 23 comments) covers an area where information professionals have a particular contribution to make to the overall knowledge and skillsets of the nation. In terms of an Ethical Framework:

"...I think librarians have a real duty to use their abilities to improve information literacy and knowledge of public records and means of access ..."

"Inability of users to "Assess" info they access/user education"

"Digital – divide – user skills – staff skills – Fake News"

"Fake news/Info Literacy"

## “Digital literacy, E-safety”

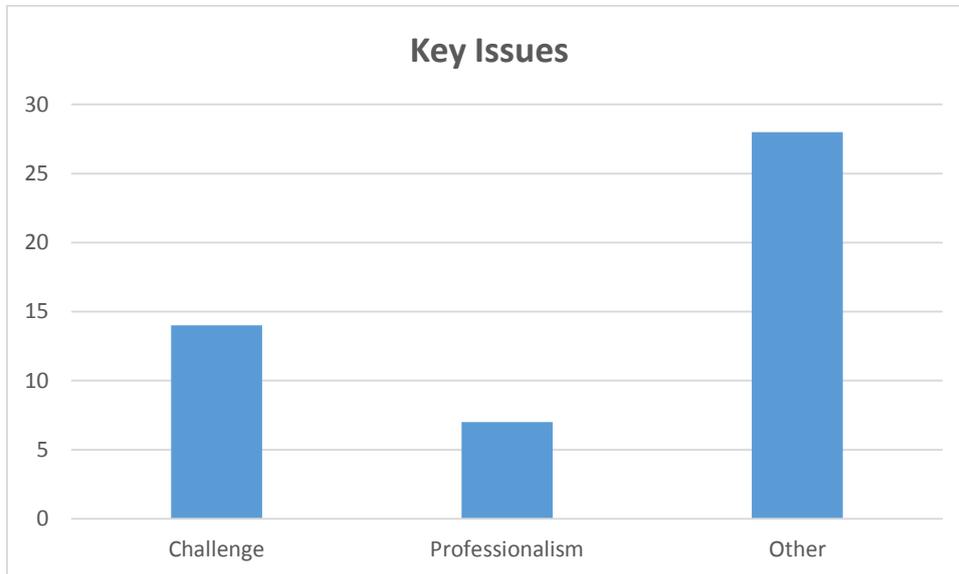
Those commenting on collection management raised issues relating to ownership vs access to content, selection processes and the accessibility of collections.

The “Other” category contains a number of issues with just one or two entries:

Advocacy	Literacy
Business Skills	Marketing
Critical Thinking	Meet user needs
Data	Popularity
Data Management	Preservation
Data Security	Research
Data Sharing	Safe space
E-resources	Security
Evidence-base	Service Standards
Health Literacy	Shared Services
Human Rights	Space Management
KIM	Teaching Excellence Framework
Languages	User Expectations
Legislation	
Literacies	

# Values/Ethics

Table 11



(49 comments)

This grouping brings together a series of questions posed by survey respondents and workshop participants. It also looks more closely at some of the values that need advocating, notably professionalism.

Amongst the challenges are:

“Who determines what is ethical?”

“Are we (also) responsible for use of the information?”

“How much will CILIP influence other institutions ethics?”

“Ethics: professional vs institutional vs personal”

As previously discussed in the Employment Practice section professionalism is the flipside of the concerns at deprofessionalisation. However many of the comments relating to professionalism in the information sector is about the lack of respect it is shown by others.

“Lack of respect for professionalism – courage to challenge”

“Proving the value of the profession”

“Value of profession not recognised”

The "Other" category contains a number of issues with just one or two entries:

CILIP's role

Conflict of interest

Ethics

Health/wellbeing

Old CILIP

Positivity

Professional Demarcation

Public Libraries

Rare books provenance

Research Ethics

Respect

Rights

USP

Whole sector

# Other

As might be expected this is a miscellany of issues that could not be categorised elsewhere. Issues include:

Awareness

Brexit (5 entries)

Collaboration

Competitor Intelligence

Google

Governance

Government education policies

Learning

Million Decisions Campaign

Neuro-diversity

Politics

Profession

Shared terminology

Silo libraries

Social media

Staff/user overlap

Statutory service

Types of sector

User requests

Wellbeing

Wide reach