

Working Paper for the ALIA Education and Workforce Summit 2008

The Australian Committee on Cataloguing (ACOC) recently published a position statement on the provision of information organisation education in the curricula of courses recognised by ALIA as leading to a first professional qualification. This statement was sent out for public review, endorsed by the National Library of Australia, and finalised at the end of last year. It was also noted at the ACOC seminar last September, at which there was much discussion about education and training holding the key to the future of cataloguing.

The recent neXus census showed that a large percentage of the profession – over half in fact – is still heavily engaged in information organisation activities, including cataloguing and related forms of resource description and providing access to information. These core activities can only be performed effectively following the acquisition of underlying skills and knowledge that are outlined in Annex A of the ACOC position statement. This skill set is part of what defines an information professional and should be a learning outcome of all entry-level LIS programs. It is relevant to *all* information professionals; those who specialise in the area of information organisation should be ready to *build* on these basic skills, and should not have to learn them in piecemeal fashion *after* they have graduated from their entry-level program.

ACOC thus urges ALIA and the Australian information profession at large to respond to the position statement by supporting its implementation. The statement is appended.

Australian Committee on Cataloguing

Position statement regarding the cataloguing skills and knowledge required of entry-level library and information management graduates

The Australian Committee on Cataloguing (ACOC) recognises that the training of librarian and information professionals must provide them with the skills to meet the needs of employers today and the challenges of the future. ACOC notes the policy of the Australian Library and Information Association on *Courses in library and information management* is that the curriculum offered must be one which "... delivers the core knowledge, skills and generic attributes to ensure the highest standard of professional practice".¹ ACOC calls on all courses recognised by ALIA as leading to a first professional qualification, to include in their curricula sufficient treatment of the core knowledge and skills required to create resource descriptions and to understand and evaluate different methods for the provision of intellectual access to information resources.

Specifically, ACOC endorses the *Educational policy statement* of the US Association for Library Collections & Technical Services (ALCTS) and views the knowledge and skill sets pertaining to intellectual access and information organization as outlined in that statement (see Annex A), to be essential attributes of *all* professionally qualified graduates. ACOC holds that ALIA-recognised courses must provide their graduates with a "knowledge of cataloguing tools and sources of bibliographic records and how to use them" so that graduates can indeed *use* key cataloguing tools and *apply* basic bibliographic standards.

¹ Australian Library and Information Association *Courses in library and information management*. <http://www.alia.org.au/policies/courses.html> (viewed 24 May 2007).

Annex A

Extract from the *Educational policy statement* of the Association for Library Collections & Technical Services at <http://www.ala.org/ala/alcts/alctsmanual/conted/cepolicy.htm> (viewed 24 May 2007).

Appendix: Knowledge and Skills

Intellectual Access and Information Organization

All librarians must understand the ways in which information is organized for retrieval and be able to communicate this knowledge of organizational structures to the library user. Librarians and other information professionals must also possess a basic knowledge of how databases are created and indexed, and the factors that affect indexing, retrieval, and display of records. Knowledge and skills required for intellectual access and information organization include:

- knowledge of information-seeking behaviors of user groups;
- knowledge of the activities that must be performed to provide the products and services users need;
- knowledge of the theory of information organization and intellectual access including relevant national and international standards;
- knowledge of the theory and methods for subject analysis, including thesaurus creation, indexing, and classification;
- knowledge of the theory and methods for describing, identifying, and showing relationships among materials;
- ability to develop and apply syndetic structure and controlled vocabulary in information retrieval systems;
- knowledge of the theoretical basis for retrieval and how searching techniques and data structures affect precision and recall;
- knowledge of bibliographic relationships underlying database design;
- knowledge of cataloging tools and sources of bibliographic records and how to use them;
- knowledge of the operations of other parts of the employing organization and how they relate to providing intellectual access to information resources;
- ability to evaluate information-retrieval systems in relation to user needs and information-seeking behaviors;
- knowledge of basic database design and database management concepts;
- knowledge of principles and methods for planning and designing user-driven information retrieval systems; and
- knowledge of state-of-the art research and practice in this area.