

**Australian
Library and
Information
Association**

ALIA's role in Education Discussion Paper

Issue

The leadership role of ALIA in setting the agenda for education for the profession.

Background

In 2006/07 the ALIA Board identified the issue of education for the profession as a key area of interest during its strategic planning process. The closure of two high profile tertiary education programs, one at the University of NSW and the other at the University of Canberra was a catalyst for the Board. In addition the related area of workforce planning was on the agenda.

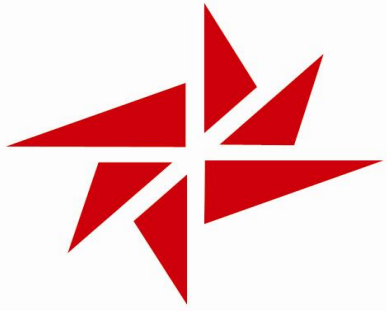
The ALIA Board asked the Education and PD Standing Committee to provide advice on these issues and it was decided to hold an Education and Workforce Summit in March 2008 with a view to exploring the issues and providing recommendations for action.

Recent activities

The background paper provided on the summit website provides an overview of ALIA's recent activities <http://www.alia.org.au/education/summit08/>. Also referenced is a research report commissioned by SLV into workforce planning for public libraries in Victoria.

http://www.libraries.vic.gov.au/downloads/Public_Libraries_Unit/final_workforce_scoping_report_jul_06.pdf

Dr G Hallam began her major piece of research into workforce planning in mid 2006. The preliminary findings were presented at the 2007 ALIA Information Online Conference in Sydney and are available at <http://www.alia.org.au/employment/workforce/>. Since then ALIA and NSLA have agreed to support phase two of this research which is to survey employers. (Phase one surveyed employees). The findings of this research will be of interest to the summit.



Australian Library and Information Association

In addition there have been a number Australian papers published on the need to review and revitalize education/curriculum for professional programs by those teaching in the field. (Hallam 2006 & 2007, Harvey 2001 & 2003, Yu and Davis 2007)

Who is graduating?

The number of students graduating from University programs each year who are eligible for Associate Membership of ALIA is approximately 450.(source - ALIA) The majority of these students undertake their program via online or off campus mode. As an example of one university's student profile I have cited figures from CSU. The average intake of undergraduate students into the CSU library program over the past three years is 136 students per year. The average age of students is 36 years and the undergraduate program averages one school leaver per intake. The gender of students ranges from 8% to 16% males per intake.

Students who complete library technician programs each year is approximately 800. (source ALIA) Library technicians are eligible to join ALIA in the Library Technician category.

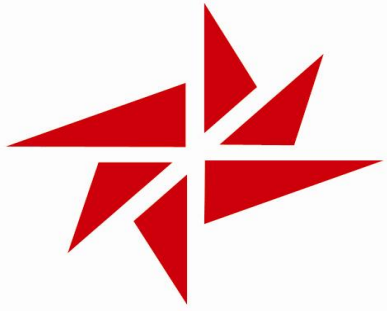
A number of the discussion papers have raised the need to clarify the role of the library technician in relation to that of librarian. It is one of the key issues that impacts on workforce planning, including the definition of professional and technical skills and therefore the development of education programs to meet the needs of the 21st century library and information professional. The summit will provide an opportunity to explore this issue and the paper on Qualifications prepared by Paul Genoni and Damien Lodge is an important one in this debate.

<http://www.alia.org.au/education/summit08/>

Membership of a Profession

Another issue for those working in the field as well as for members of ALIA and the Board is the question of what it means to be a member of a profession. It is raised here because defining, assessing and evaluating standards for professional membership of ALIA is a core role for the organisation.

Over recent years some of those working in the field have raised the question as to whether librarianship is truly a profession. This question can be seen to come through in some of the comments in the report undertaken for the SLV mentioned above.



**Australian
Library and
Information
Association**

It may be worth mentioning that one of the important outcomes in the 'pay equity case' in NSW in 2001/2 was that the judgment, which delivered substantial pay increases, confirmed librarianship as a profession.

Membership of a professional Association should also require ratification of a qualification. Course recognition has been conducted by ALIA since the late 1960's and will continue to be an important core function of the Association.

It will be important for ALIA members to have a clear position on this matter and confirm that Course Recognition is a core function of ALIA.

ALIA's Role

A professional association by definition takes responsibility for defining, implementing and validating standards for the education of its members. This includes first professional qualifications, research into the body of knowledge that is the core of the profession and ongoing professional development.

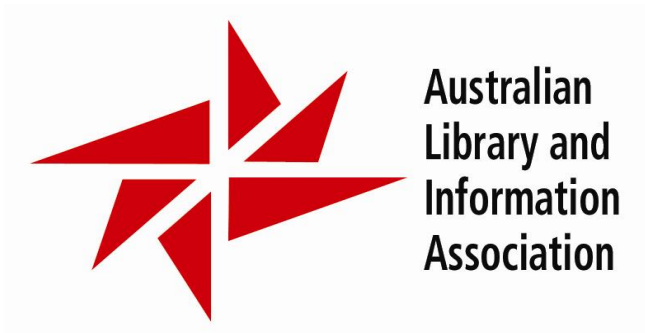
The former Board of Education assumed a leadership role in professional education for ALIA. It was chaired by a senior member of the profession and membership included both academics and practitioners. It also fulfilled the role of accreditation with the support of ALIA staff.

With the change in 2000 from an organisation operating under a Royal Charter to a Company structure, the Board of Education ceased to exist. While the accreditation function continues as a key responsibility of the Manager Education at ALIA, the strategic leadership aspect for education has fallen 'between the cracks'. It is suggested that needs to be remedied.

The ALIA Education and Professional Development Standing Committee now takes on some of the roles of the ERG, however further clarification of the role and powers of this Standing Committee are required as a part of the consultation process for the Education Summit.

The Challenge

If ALIA is to fulfill its leadership role in professional education what needs to change?



Consideration needs to be given to the mechanism and resource implications by which such leadership can be provided on a sustainable basis. While all proposals need to be considered within the framework of the current organisational structure there probably needs to be some additional resources allocated to get the new action plan developed. Options could include the creation of a senior level project position initially for a period of up to 2 years (on a fractional basis) which would be responsible for developing a long term strategy for consideration by the Board

Dagmar Schmidmaier

Education and Professional Development Standing Committee
January 2008