

ALIA Education and Workforce Summit

Background Paper

The library workforce and library education are perennial matters of concern and interest to librarians, and have been dealt with in various ways over the past 20 years. However, there are some recurring themes. Although the focus has been mainly on education, rather than workforce issues, the latter have increasingly come to the fore as a result of the ageing of the workforce, and the perception that there is at the same time a crisis in both education and recruitment to the profession.

Before the ALIA Restructure

The ALIA Board of Education had existed from 1974, when the then LAA Board of Examiners was restructured. This was the time when courses in library and information science were being developed in Australian universities and TAFE's.

This brief survey starts with a paper developed in 1991 and dealing with national education priorities, and a copy can be accessed [here](#) **Link to scanned paper**. During the 1990s ALIA considered new forms of library coordination and representation, and initiated a Strategic Review in March 1997, followed by a Charter of Renewal in 1998. In December 1999 the industry body, the Australian Council of Libraries and Information Services (ACLIS) closed, and its functions effectively merged with those of ALIA.

ALIA adopted the current Board structure in March 2000, and former Board of Education ceased to operate in May 2001. Since then, although ALIA has not established a structure to formally manage education and workforce issues, there have been several initiatives, and the Summit is the most recent.

LISEKA Stage 1

LISEKA **Link to** <http://www.alia.org.au/governance/nac/2001/liseka.html>

(Library and Information Science Education for the Knowledge Age) was about education, and was conducted in two stages from 2001-2002 and 2002-2003. It was followed by the ALIA Education Forum in April 2005, and of course by this summit process in 2007.

The goal of LISEKA was

“achievement of an agreed national framework and approach to provision of effective career-long education and professional development opportunities for information workers.”

At an early stage of LISEKA an Ideas Forum was held in Melbourne (16 November 2001) ahead of the National Policy Congress (NPC). There was a wide range of papers prepared for the forum. The forum highlighted a number of issues, and a discussion paper was circulated to a limited number of people, and then to ALIA members via Incite, in May 2002. The responses (65 of them) were analysed in July 2002 and three possible models were proposed.

- Model 1 (the status quo)

- Model 2 (career-long learning, no entry requirement)
- Model 3 (practising professional program. i.e. lifelong learning through a structured program)

There was a strong preference (22-14) for option 1, but a strong belief that there should be an effective CPD (continuing professional development) program.

In the document which rounded off Stage 1, these were seen as the outcomes of this stage. I have summarised the outcomes.

- Retain a recognised entry level qualification.
- Retain the role of ALIA as a standards body for professional education.
- Develop an effective CPD program urgently.
- Re-integrate the binary technician and professional paths to practice into a single framework.
- Develop a new definition of professional.
- ALIA work with educational institutions, qualifications authorities and employers to provide “clear and feasible pathways for future non-professional participants in the LIS workforce who seek to attain professional status.”

Stage 1 of LISEKA also led to development of a statement, [Library and information sector: core knowledge, skills and attributes](#) which was based on a 1998 statement, and was last revised in 2005.

Further, it led to the development of the current ALIA CPD program – see <http://www.alia.org.au/education/pd/> for the current program, which came out of this process.

LISEKA Stage 2

The plan for Stage 2 was to

- set up a CPD scheme
- continue work on the core knowledge statement
- review course recognition processes
- revise ALIA education statements, and
- examine mechanisms for admission through widened eligibility

There was progress in most of these areas, with a focus on

- the CPD Handbook
- a course recognition model
- the LISEKA framework, with a goal of having it adopted by the end of 2004

ALIA Education Reference Group

This was established by the ALIA Board in May 2004, the members being Gill Hallam, Nikki Kallenberger and Paul Genoni. A key goal of this group was to review ALIA policy statements on education. The group held a forum at the State Library of NSW on 11 April, 2005, based on five identified stakeholder groups

- university educators
- TAFE educators
- Employers
- Other library and allied associations (i.e. other than ALIA)
- Specific ALIA groups

The Forum was a “summit” style – invited people, over 40 of them. The main outcome seems to have been the validation of the new statements, so that by now, ALIA has created revised policy statements as follows:

[ALIA's role in education of library and information professionals](#)

Adopted 2005.

[Courses in library and information management](#)

Replaces Education policy statement n^o1. Adopted 2005.

[Employer roles and responsibilities in education and professional development](#)

Adopted 1986. Amended 1996, 2006.

[Library and information sector: core knowledge, skills and attributes](#)

Adopted 1998. Amended 2005.

[Professional development for library and information professionals](#)

Replaces Education policy statement n^o2. Adopted 2005.

Library Education and Workforce Summit

The processes followed during this decade have focussed very strongly on library and information science education, and much less so on workforce issues more widely. Examples of issues which are being discussed but which do not relate to education directly include

- Image
- Recruitment
- Graduate destinations
- The nature of the library workforce, its evolution and future, including demographic issues.
- Values and professionalism – more important than education?

The LISEKA process concluded with several positive achievements which continue, notably the developing CPD (Continuing Professional Development) program and the existence of current and agreed policies across a number of professional and educational issues. There were several issues which were felt to have not been advanced, and remain on the agenda. They include the following

- Review the course recognition processes for professional and paraprofessional courses - *review of course recognition processes for vocational level courses based on the National Training Package is already in progress with input from Library Technician educators*
- Examine mechanisms for admission to professional membership of ALIA through widened eligibility
- Re-integrate the binary technician and professional paths to practice into a single framework.
- Work with educational institutions, qualifications authorities and employers to provide “clear and feasible pathways for future non-professional participants in the LIS workforce who seek to attain professional status.”

At the same time, there have been a number of other recent approaches to education and workforce issues.

- Annual meetings of library technician educators were held in 2006 and 2007.
- The LATN workforce project – see the presentation by Fides Datu Lawton in Sept 2005 at [* LATN Workforce planning Staffing for the future](#) – and other

library workforce projects such as that of the University of Tasmania – see the presentation by Linda Luther and Deborah Wright in Sept 2006 at [Library Workforce Plan 2006 to 2008](#)

- The State Library of Victoria workforce sustainability and leadership project, focussed on public libraries, at http://www.libraries.vic.gov.au/downloads/Public_Libraries_Unit/final_workforce_scoping_report_jul_06.pdf
- The NeXus project, which is looking at demographics, education, employment and employment practices (Survey 1, Individuals) and see Gill's presentation at www.caval.edu.au/about/CAVAL_WeCanWorkItOut.ppt
- The Australian School Libraries Research Project, which is conducting a comprehensive online survey.

The Education and Workforce Summit now has a website at <http://www.alia.org.au/education/summit08/> and is seeking input to the process. ALIA plans an open general meeting on the evening of 27 March, and the summit will be held, with an invited group, on Friday 28 March. The Summit website will be used to post contributed papers from interested people, and contributions are invited now.

At the same time, a great deal of work is going on in the UK, Canada and the US which can inform our own thinking.

The Summit is part of a long history of dealing with education and workforce issues, and little will be new. Looking back enables us to learn from things we and others have done in the past, and build on them ideally without repeating them.

Derek Whitehead

President, ACLIS, 1998-1999

President-elect, ALIA, 2008-2009