



Brief notes from Summit as at 17 April 2008

Introduction

The ALIA Education and Workforce Summit was held on Friday 28 March 2008 at the State Library of Victoria. The Summit was a great opportunity to bring together over fifty participants including library and information employers, representatives of library associations, sectors and groups, educators, researchers and ALIA members. The delegates considered several major issues in library and information education and the library workforce to agree on an action plan to address these.

Background

The Education and Professional Development Standing Committee (SC) developed the idea for an Education and Workforce Summit to provide an overview of LIS education and workforce issues that have come to the fore as a result of the ageing workforce population and the perception that there is a crisis in both education and recruitment to the profession. The National Advisory Congress (NAC) in 2007 focused on education and workforce planning and NAC sessions around Australia highlighted these issues, and provided input to the Summit.

The Summit attracted a wide range of contributions from ALIA members and other library interest groups, and these are set out on the Summit website at <http://www.alia.edu.au/education/summit>.

The SC structured an agenda for the Summit around six major issues which had been identified in planning by the Standing Committee, and the submissions made to the Summit by key educators, SC members, employers, and members.

Six Major Issues

The six issues identified were:

1. What areas of skill shortage are there in libraries today and in libraries in 5-10 years time, and how should we address them?
2. ALIA course recognition processes for professional and paraprofessional course – what changes do we need to make to the current processes? How will we support them?
3. The binary qualifications structure: what can we do to integrate the two pathways to library qualifications more effectively into a single framework? What should be the qualification to become a librarian?
4. Recruitment to the profession: what strategies should we be adopting and who responsibilities are they?
5. Role of employers in workforce planning and development – what can employers most usefully do? How will this come about?
6. Admission to the profession through widened eligibility, including provision of “clear and feasible pathways for future non-professional participants in the LIS workforce who seek to attain professional status”.

Brief summary from each session:

1. **Managing skill shortages:** ALIA to initially coordinate the stakeholders who nominated at the summit and identify the 'skill gaps' and actively seek their support for involvement in gathering evidence to identify, skill shortage areas, competencies and job ready graduates. Target school leavers and later entrants to develop case studies, eg. ALIA Promote LIS Career committee, <http://destinationlibrary.pbwiki.com/>.

Develop collaborative relationships with RMAA and other information organisations. A working party has been developed with a deadline of 2009 and ongoing.

2. **Course recognition and tertiary qualifications for ALIA should continue to be recognised:** ALIA to collect feedback from employers as to the job readiness of new graduates, noting that many employers must deliver training for their specific situations, and that many graduates have also been working in libraries for some years. ALIA to set up a mechanism for employers and educators to determine the path forward in addressing any gaps identified which could include course redesign, professional development (PD) activities or recommendations to employers. ALIA to continue to ensure quality of professionals and paraprofessionals through education, PD and work with employers. There was a recommendation of a 12 month timeline for completing the task of collecting data from employers about needs and from universities.
3. **Binary qualifications structure:** This question evoked a wide-ranging discussion, but no clear consensus of opinion as to the extent of any 'problem' or how the issue should be addressed. Several delegates expressed the view that these issues were of considerable importance and with far-reaching implications for the profession and therefore specific 'actions' could not be recommended on the basis of this discussion. It was also considered that these issues could not be isolated from those other topics that had been the focus of discussion in previous sessions. It was resolved that the way forward was to explore major funding. This would be a two stage process: a scoping study (approx. 6-12 months duration) for this review. This process could be managed by the Education and Professional Development SC under the supervision of the Board. The second stage could be to use the results of this study as the basis for application to possible funding agencies.

It was emphasised that this should be an inclusive process, involving participation from non-ALIA affiliated library groupings, and other information related professional groups such as the RMAA and the ASA. Such a review could not be conducted in a thorough and timely manner with ALIA's current resources.

4. **Recruitment to the profession.** Recommendations included: the development of work experience guidelines for all librarians (to make the experience better), enlist marketing students (film and sound graduates) to develop a campaign for the libraries and library staff, Travelling Road Show of Career fairs and articles for career counsellor journals, develop further trainee programs and

define what core competencies are.

5. **Role of employers in workforce planning and development – what can employers most usefully do?** Suggestions included: employers to provide input into qualifications, support for professional development (PD), involvement in LIS course advisory committees, contribution to development of TAFE training packages. It was emphasised that this should be an inclusive process, involving participation from non-ALIA affiliated library groupings, and other information related professional groups such as the RMAA and the ASA. A group of educators or a body (like the CILIP group of accredited institutions), and of an employer-educator consultative body, was raised. This could deal with recruitment among other issues. Mandatory professional development requirements for professional recognition should be considered by ALIA eg. LIANZA and CILIP. The topic of PD will be the major focus for all NAC meetings to be held in July 2008. ALIA's policy on PD, <http://www.alia.org.au/policies/professional.development.html>
6. **Admissions to the profession through widened eligibility.** This session raised recurring themes from the previous sessions, including promoting the status of the profession. One issue that was raised was the rigorous and time consuming recognition process that LIM/LIS educators go through to have their courses recognised for a period of seven years may be worthless if graduates from programs such as Knowledge Management can be granted membership. Another issue was how can ALIA's widen eligibility criteria for membership not impact or 'cheapen' the recognition process.

Where to from here

Across the sessions there were recurring themes; these included:

- the need to define what we mean by the library and information profession
- the need for a mechanism for further dialogue between educators and employers
- and between members of the higher education sector
- methods of enhancing recruitment to the profession and a program for doing this
- definition of the core competencies required by employers
- enhancing ALIA course recognition processes, and
- the need to develop stronger relationships with other information associations such as RMAA and IIM.

The ALIA Education and Professional Development Standing Committee (SC) will develop these initial suggestions into developed recommendations, actions and timelines.

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