



Australian
Library and
Information
Association

ALIA NAC Regional Reports 2008

Mackay, Qld, Thursday 24 July 2008, Gordon White Library,
Mt Pleasant

1. Attendance:

Kate Watson (Chair / ALIA Director), Claudia Davies (minutes), Bente McDonald, Shannon Phelan, Helen Page, Aggie Partridge, Donna Priddle, Louise Mackenzie, Leesa Philip

2. Selected representative to attend the national meeting of the NAC (they must be a member)

Name: _____ No one present is going to Alice Springs _____

ALIA membership no. _____

3. Review of Education and Workforce Summit outcomes

See powerpoint slides

4. Discussion topic: *Staying smart in a complicated world - professional development*

1. *What do we need to do to ensure that we have the skills for a future workforce?*

- Make it easier to get the skills and ensure that they are at an appropriate level for the job market e.g. diploma courses run by TAFE - employers may be unwilling to employ level 6 library technicians.
- Increase employers awareness of library qualifications – some employers still employ qualified librarians as library assistants.
- Library technicians are really important in regional areas yet there's few distance courses for library technicians – need to address this.
- Courses need to be stepped more – there are big differences between traineeships and uni courses and work.
- It's not easy to transfer between sectors since courses can't cover all the skills needed for public, academic and special library practice in just 12 subjects. We need to attract the right people to the profession and provide them with the core skills – the rest can be taught on the job and with PD
- Some skills just can't be taught but must be acquired – such as controlling rowdy students.
- Employers need staff who know how local government works.

2. *What is the role of employers and employees in professional development?*

Employers:

- Provide funding for PD every year
- PD must be suitable – evacuation drills are not library PD!
- Build PD into performance appraisals

- Want PD which can be applied immediately, not theoretically in the future some time. Targeted training is more important than general training.
- The council do a lot of internal training. They could look at opening it up to librarians from other sectors.

Employees:

- Must be willing to take up the offer of training.
- Find PD opportunities and find (or create) new ways of achieving professional development for example online courses such as Folioz. It doesn't have to be expensive.
- Maintain enthusiasm
- Short courses are ideal for people who are working and also have families
- The onus is on the employee to demonstrate to their employer how the PD will benefit the library, particularly if travel will be involved. The more evidence of benefits resulting to the library, the greater the chances of being allowed to attend more training.

3. How can the Association's PD Scheme be utilised to support this goal?

It's too hard in a regional area to get enough points each year – unless you're doing university study. There followed some discussion on how members can get points.

The benefits must be obvious – people only do extra study if they need to do it to help them in their job or to get a better job.

4. Can a compulsory PD Scheme benefit the profession?

No support for compulsory PD in the region – there is no incentive and no regulatory requirement

While it is not compulsory, being in the scheme is a demonstration to prospective employees of your commitment to professional development.

Compulsory PD would result in a drop in membership numbers since there is no requirement to be an ALIA member to practice.

5. What do you see is ALIA's role in these areas? How can we engage employers and employees? And other professional bodies and training organisations?

There was some discussion about how ALIA promoted the profession. The meeting thought it was difficult to find the right pitch for a website to promote the profession – do you promote a traditional image for the profession or try to be more cutting edge (with the possibility that this may fall flat)?

Jill Hallam's Nexus survey was also discussed. ALIA needs to address the high attrition rate of students in university courses. Charles Sturt courses are successful because they offer distance learners flexibility.

ALIA needs to (and will) take a holistic approach to outcomes from the Education Summit – including library technicians and assistants as well as librarians.

Local government has no idea of what the initialisations *ALIA* or *CP* stand for – they need to be educated. Even though the State government scales (PO, TO and AO) are based on educational requirements (in part), even they don't seem to understand or acknowledge the different levels of library workers.

Provide "train-on" packages – when a group holds an event, they should also produce a package of training materials so that other groups can run the event. ALIA should support the groups to do this.

Make web resources available for podcasts of events – recordings of sessions from Beyond the Hype would be valuable.

"Bring it to us because we can't afford to go to you"

Provide teleconferencing and wireless internet feeds of PD events etc.

Promote the problems faced by regionals to volunteer groups in the capitals so that they will think of them more when putting on PD events and include them in planning – roadshows or provide "train-on" packages

Give more lead time with PD events to allow regional people to plan travel

Support members better to put on events including providing equipment to digitally record events

Provide better feedback from NACs

6. Celebrating Success – ALIA stories of Achievement

Mackay public library service was voted best Queensland Public Library of the Year

Shannon Phelan and Donna Priddle from Mackay City Council both managed to successfully combine work and study and graduated from their courses.

Librarian Leesa Philip from TAFE also completed her final subject in a graduate certificate as part of her continuing education.

Amalgamation of 3 council library systems has progressed very smoothly to date.

7. Local issues

Prohibitive cost of housing in Mackay means that young people find it difficult to start out here – higher pays and lower rents in Brisbane. This has implications for recruitment. There is a small pool of practitioners in the region.

The expectations of new graduates are too high. They expect better pay than what is realistic. The council has an accelerated promotion scheme to attract new graduates.

Teachers know they have to do country service. Places like Mackay would benefit if librarians had the same expectations.

The challenge is to find suitable PD opportunities – cost and effort involved in getting to capital cities or other regional centres including travel and accommodation too high and local opportunities too few.

There are a lot of library staff in Rockhampton, Mackay and Townsville collectively, but not enough to generate all their own PD, and they're too far apart to allow quick, inexpensive travel – cheaper and quicker to go to Brisbane than to fly or drive between regional centres.

In Mackay, they might explore using COWs (Computers on Wheels) to facilitate PD.

8. Evaluation

No evaluation forms returned

9. Any other comments from the meeting?

It's exciting to get each edition of *inCite* and to read about other libraries. It is a valuable tool for promoting the profession.