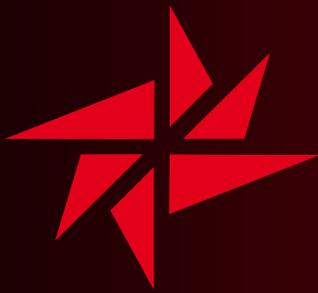


April 2010

Australian Library and Information Association



**LIBRARY
TECHNICIAN
EDUCATION
IN AUSTRALIA:**

**STATE OF
THE
NATION
REPORT**



Australian
Library and
Information
Association



Australian
Library and
Information
Association

ISBN 978-0-86804-553-5

Published by the Australian Library
and Information Association
9-11 Napier Close
Deakin ACT 2600
Australia

enquiry@alia.org.au
www.alia.org.au

© Australian Library and
Information Association 2010

CONTENTS

Executive summary	2
Recommendations	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Library technician education in Australia	6
2.1 National Training Package	6
2.2 Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA)	8
2.3 Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF)	8
2.4 ALIA recognition of courses	9
2.5 ALIA course recognition program 2009	9
3. ALIA course recognition criteria	11
3.1 Course design	12
3.1.1 ALIA policy	12
3.1.2 Course aims and objectives	12
3.1.3 Costs of study	12
3.1.4 Entry requirements and enrolments	13
3.1.5 Student support	13
3.2 Curriculum content	14
3.2.1 ALIA policy	14
3.2.2 Course delivery	14
3.2.3 Subjects, learning activities and resources	15
3.3 Assessment	17
3.3.1 ALIA policy	18
3.3.2 Assessment of assignment work	18
3.3.3 Work placements	19
3.3.4 Recognition of prior learning	19
3.4 Staffing	20
3.4.1 ALIA policy	21
3.4.2 Staffing issues	21
3.5 Resourcing	22
3.5.1 ALIA policy	22
3.5.2 Facilities and equipment	22
3.5.3 Information and communication technologies	22
3.5.4 Access to library and information services	23

3.6	Quality assurance mechanisms	23
3.6.1	ALIA policy	23
3.6.2	Course Advisory Committee	24
3.6.3	Course evaluation	24
3.7	Infrastructure	25
3.7.1	ALIA policy	25
3.7.2	Alignment with strategic priorities of the parent institution	25
3.7.3	Industry consultation	25
3.7.4	Support for research	25
3.8	Summary	25
4.	Future issues	26
4.1	Core knowledge skills and attributes for the LIS sector	26
4.2	Development of the national training package	27
4.3	Education and training	27
4.4	Widened participation	27
4.5	Contestability	27
4.6	eLearning and online delivery	28
4.7	ALIA course recognition	28
4.8	Summary	29
5.	Evaluation of the ALIA course recognition program 2009	30
5.1	Course coordinators	30
5.2	Local panel members	36
6.	Conclusion and recommendations	38
	Recommendations	39
	References	40
	Appendix 1	41

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) acts as the national standards body for the library and information services (LIS) industry, with responsibility for monitoring the quality of LIS courses offered at the professional (librarian) and paraprofessional (library technician) levels.

The survey of ALIA members in 2008 reported that the recognition of qualifications and courses was ranked as the most important activity undertaken by ALIA and that it performed well in this area. The ALIA course recognition process is directly aligned with the Association's membership categories, with graduates from ALIA-recognised courses eligible to become, respectively, an Associate member or a Library Technician member.

In 1999, the Museum, Library/Information Services Training Package was introduced, encompassing the education and training of library technicians (Diploma) and library assistants (Certificates II, III and IV). As there was considerable input into the development from the professional association and industry representatives, it was felt that the training package was appropriately aligned with the workforce needs of the LIS sector. As a result, there has been no formal evaluation of library technician courses for more than a decade.

For several years, members of ALIA's Education and Professional Development Standing Committee have worked with library technician educators offering courses through colleges of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and private Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to plan and prepare for a national program of course recognition. In 2009, following the submission of the required documentation, an ALIA course recognition panel conducted site visits to all 17 institutions offering the Diploma of Library/Information Services. Each institution received a report documenting the panel's findings, highlighting areas of good practice and providing a series of recommendations for enhancements to the course.

This report represents a 'state of the nation' summary of contemporary library technician education in Australia. It provides an overview of the context of vocational education and training (VET) through a discussion on the national training package, the role of industry skills council and the framework for quality assurance. The course recognition activities undertaken by ALIA in 2009 are presented in detail, documenting the criteria for evaluation and examining the variations in current practice identified through the course evaluations. The criteria include course design, curriculum content, assessment, staffing, resourcing, quality assurance mechanisms and infrastructure. Recommendations for best practice are provided to encourage improvements in the delivery of library technician courses.

The report also highlights a number of critical issues that are likely to impact on library technician courses. It is argued that there are a number of developments in the structure and funding of education in Australia, as well as changes within the LIS sector as a whole, that should be considered in the context of library technician education and training. It is acknowledged that some aspects of the course recognition process are a legacy of the past and need to be updated or revised. The findings from the panel's own quality assurance review will help inform future strategies and processes and the Association plans to work closely with library technician educators to ensure ongoing improvements are achieved.

It is hoped that, by providing a comprehensive review of contemporary library technician education in Australia, the report will reach a wide audience through the many different stakeholder groups who are involved in LIS education and who have a vested interest in ensuring the high standard of personnel engaged in information provision, including students, educators, institutional managers, employers, skills councils, and members of the Association.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that ALIA works with library technician educators, employers and Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA) to review and revise the national training package to ensure it meets current and future workforce requirements in the LIS sector.
2. It is recommended that library technician educators and employers are fully aware of the value of and contribute to the Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA) Escan program in order to ensure a clear understanding of the skill needs in the LIS sector and the changes in the external environment that will impact on the paraprofessional workforce.
3. It is recommended that ALIA and library technician educators monitor developments in the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) to minimise any duplication in course evaluation and to strengthen the industry focus in ALIA course accreditation.
4. It is recommended that ALIA and library technician educators monitor developments in the area of funding and study fees in the vocational education and training sector to ensure that students have affordable and equitable access to library technician courses.
5. It is recommended that ALIA works with the LIS sector to have the Diploma of Library/Information Services included in the Productivity Placements Program (PPP).
6. It is recommended that the change of terminology from 'course recognition' to 'course accreditation' is adopted for the evaluation of library technician courses.
7. It is recommended that ALIA works with library technician educators to review, revise and improve the strategies and processes for library technician course accreditation.
8. It is recommended that ALIA monitors the research project entitled 'Re-conceptualising and re-positioning Australian library and information science education for the twenty-first century' funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) to consider the impact of its findings on library technician education and training.
9. It is recommended that library technician educators commit to and participate in an active community of practice to inform and guide best practice in library technician education.
10. It is recommended that ALIA supports the library technician educators' community of practice through hosting regular teleconferences, a wiki and annual professional development meetings.
11. It is recommended that library technician educators note the examples of best practice relating to the ALIA criteria for course accreditation, as presented in the present report, with the goal of striving for continuous improvement in the Diploma of Library/ Information Services courses they offer.
12. It is recommended that ALIA and library technician educators work together to increase the involvement of employers in library technician education, for example through communication with institutional members of the Association, national and regional industry forums, course advisory committees, work placements, site visits, guest speakers and institutional/ industry partnerships.
13. It is recommended that library technician courses encourage students to become committed to lifelong learning, with the opportunity to develop appropriate career pathways in the LIS sector including articulation into professional courses offered by universities.
14. It is recommended that RTOs provide teaching staff with the opportunities for professional development that will ensure continuous improvement to the quality of library technician courses.
15. It is recommended that library technician educators work with their institutions to develop strategies to ensure effective succession planning for teaching staff to ensure the future viability of courses.

1

INTRODUCTION

In their international study which examined the standards for library and information services (LIS) education, Dalton and Levinson (2000) identified three distinct models: governmental monitoring, formalised LIS accreditation/ approval processes and individual/departmental standards.

Along with the United Kingdom, through the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), and the United States, through the American Library Association (ALA), the Australian approach to course recognition reflects the second model, i.e. formalised course accreditation/recognition processes (Hallam, Partridge & McAllister, 2004).

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) acts as the standards body for the library and information industry, which includes responsibility for the recognition of courses leading to LIS qualifications at both the professional (librarian) and paraprofessional (library technician) levels. The course recognition process is directly linked to the membership categories of ALIA: acceptance into Associate membership requires an ALIA-recognised LIS qualification at the undergraduate or graduate level, while Library Technician membership requires an ALIA-recognised Diploma qualification.

The course recognition process is primarily concerned with ensuring the quality of LIS courses and their relevance to current and emerging library and information practice. Formal recognition of library technician courses by the Library Association of Australia (LAA), as the forerunner of ALIA, commenced in 1978 in order to seek to achieve consistent standards of technician graduates. The pattern established for the management and recognition of library technician courses continued, largely unchanged, for two decades. The recognition process was managed by the LAA Board of Education, guided by the Association's education policy statements. Site visits were a key aspect of the course recognition program, enabling the assessment panel to view at first hand the conditions under which courses were delivered and to discuss the courses with relevant teaching staff and educational managers (Hallam & Genoni, 2009). The visits were undertaken every seven years, with any changes to the curriculum, resourcing or staffing presented in annual reports submitted to the Association.

In 1999, a new national training package encompassing education for library technicians and library assistants was developed under the auspices of CREATE (Cultural Research Education and Training Enterprises) Australia. Since 2004, the training package has been managed by Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA) as the relevant industry skills council. The Museum, Library/Information Services Training Package was reviewed in 2007 and released as Version 2 (IBSA, 2007). As there was considerable input from ALIA and representatives of the LIS sector, it was generally felt that the training package was appropriately aligned with industry needs. Accordingly the seven year cycle of course recognition activities was interrupted for a period of time. Over the past three years, however, ALIA has worked with library technician educators through a series of annual meetings to plan and prepare for a national program of site visits in 2009. A course recognition panel comprising the Chair of the ALIA Education and Professional Development Standing Committee and the ALIA Education Manager, along with a local library technician, visited 17 institutions offering the Diploma qualification between February and June 2009. Each institution received a report detailing the panel's findings, highlighting the areas of good educational practice and presenting a number of recommendations for future improvements. The preliminary findings from the course recognition program were discussed at the annual meeting of library technician educators hosted by ALIA in October 2009.

The current report represents a 'state of the nation' summary of contemporary library technician education in Australia. Section 2 presents an overview of the context of contemporary vocational education and training in Australia to document the concept of the national training package for the library and information services sector, the role of IBSA and the quality assurance processes driven by the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF). The course recognition activities undertaken by ALIA in 2009 are also outlined. The discussion in Section 3 considers the ALIA criteria for course recognition and examines the variations in current practice in Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) across Australia and, drawing on the findings of the study, offers some recommendations for best practice to drive ongoing educational improvements. In meeting with key stakeholders, including teaching staff, education managers, employers, industry representatives, students and recent graduates, Panel members identified a number of critical issues that are likely to have a significant impact on LIS education in the future: these are discussed in Section 4 of the report. As part of its own quality assurance processes, ALIA conducted an evaluation of the course recognition activities; this is discussed in Section 5.

It is hoped that the report, which documents contemporary practice in vocational education and training (VET) for the Australian library sector and highlights future issues and challenges, will reach a range of audiences to help establish shared understandings between teachers and students, educators and managers, employers and employees, as well as the professional association and its members.

2

LIBRARY TECHNICIAN EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

The career of library technician requires a person to attain the qualification of the Diploma of Library/Information Services, which forms part of the Museum, Library/Information Services Training Package.

This section outlines the key elements of the framework for library technician education, to explain the nature of the national training package and the responsibilities of the Industry Skills Council and Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA). Quality assurance mechanisms for the training package are undertaken through the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF), as well as through the ALIA course recognition process. A discussion of these concepts and frameworks provides the background to the library technician course recognition program undertaken in 2009.

2.1 National Training Package

A training package is defined as including “nationally endorsed and recognised sets of integrated components for training and assessment for a specific industry, industry sector or enterprise that can be used for developing and recognising people’s competencies” (IBSA, 2008). Training and assessment that draws on national training packages must be undertaken by a Registered Training Organisation (RTO). Individual RTOs may be private organisations, part of a college of Technical and Further Education (TAFE), or part of a university.

The endorsed components of a training package comprise:

- *Competency standards*, providing the units of competency that describe discrete workplace outcomes
- *Assessment guidelines*, describing the industry requirements for assessment
- *Qualifications framework*, detailing how the units of competency are ‘packaged’ into nationally recognised qualifications.

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) aims to establish a nationally consistent set of qualifications for all post-compulsory education and training in Australia. The qualifications available in the Museum, Library/Information Services Training Package (CUL04) include:

- Certificate II
- Certificate III
- Certificate IV
- Diploma
- Advanced Diploma.

When the national training package was originally implemented, Certificates II, III and IV were nested in the Diploma; it was not common to exit with a Certificate or, indeed to enrol into a program at the Certificate level. The demand from local industry has, however, changed this pattern for library assistant/library technician employment.

It should be noted that ALIA recognises the Diploma in Library/Information Services (CUL50104), the qualification that is required to become a library technician. The Diploma equates to Level 5 of the AQF. Characteristics of competencies or learning outcomes at Level 5 of the AQF (AQTF, 2007, p.39) include:

- the self-directed application of knowledge and skills, with substantial depth in some areas where judgement is required in planning and selecting appropriate equipment, services and techniques for self and others
- breadth, depth and complexity covering planning and initiation of alternative approaches to skills or knowledge applications across a broad range of technical and/or management requirements, evaluation and coordination

- applications involve participation in development of strategic initiatives, as well as personal responsibility and autonomy in performing complex technical operations or organising others. It may include participation in teams including teams concerned with planning and evaluation functions. Group or team coordination may be involved.

It is noted that the degree of emphasis on breadth as against depth of knowledge and skills may vary between the diverse industry qualifications granted at this level.

In the Museum, Library/Information Services Training Package, it is stated that:

This qualification is designed to reflect the role of individuals, who use a range of specialised, technical or managerial competencies to plan, carry out and evaluate the work of self and/or team.

The whole museum and library training package includes 222 units of competency (172 units being imported from other training packages); the Diploma of Library/Information Services encompasses 77 units of competency. To achieve a Diploma qualification, students are required to satisfactorily complete 18 units of competency, with 10 core units and 8 other units.

The core units for the Diploma encompass:

- BSBFLM503 Manage effective workplace relationships
- CUEOHS01B Implement workplace health, safety and security procedures
- CULLB002B Obtain information from external and networked sources to meet customer needs
- CULLB003B Research and analyse information to meet customer needs
- CULLB412C Undertake cataloguing activities
- CULLB506C Catalogue and classify material
- CULLB508C Monitor and enhance information access
- CULLB509C Select and acquire information materials
- CULLB602C Use, evaluate and extend own information literacy skills
- TAADEL402B Facilitate group-based learning.

Elective units of competency are grouped into various areas of activity:

- Information and Computer Technology
- Information Organisation and Management
- Library Customer Service
- Library Practice
- Multimedia
- Preventive Conservation
- Public Programs
- Recordkeeping.

When it was initially developed, the industry training package sought to accommodate the diverse workplace contexts, with different groupings of elective units to be selected for particular jobs:

- Library Technician (with IT focus)
- Public Library Technician
- Corporate Library Technician
- School Library Technician.

This multi-focus approach represents perhaps the ideal, rather than the reality of course delivery as currently offered by institutions across Australia. The range of elective options for students will inevitably vary at each individual institution and depend on the availability of resources and teaching staff.

The training package also includes the Advanced Diploma of Library/Information Services, which is described as follows:

This qualification is designed to reflect the role of individuals who analyse, diagnose, design and execute judgements across a broad range of technical or management functions and who have a wide range of specialised, creative or conceptual skills. They are also responsible for group outcomes.

To attain the Advanced Diploma qualification, students need to satisfactorily complete 21 units of competency, with 13 core units and 8 other units. The Advanced Diploma encompasses 109 units of competency, with the electives grouped into the following areas:

- Business Administration and Management
- Finance
- Human Resources
- Information and Computer Technology
- Information Organisation and Management
- Library Customer Service
- Multimedia
- Preventive Customer Service
- Recordkeeping.

It is anticipated that a graduate from the Advanced Diploma program will be employed as a library technician with supervisory responsibilities.

Since 2006, employability skills have been included in the units of competency. Employability skills are defined as “skills that apply across a variety of job and life contexts” (IBSA, 2008) to assist individuals with obtaining employment, as well as growing and progressing within their job. The following range of employability skills is included in training packages (training.com.au, 2009):

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Problem solving
- Initiative and enterprise
- Planning and organizing
- Self-management
- Learning
- Technology.

Resources have been developed to support RTOs in embedding employability skills in the training package, to take into consideration program delivery and assessment (DEST, 2006; IBSA, 2007a).

2.2 Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA)

Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA) is one of 11 Industry Skills Councils, with responsibility for skills and training for industries underpinning the ‘innovation economy’. IBSA is responsible for developing the national industry competency standards to drive education and training in the VET sector, as well as engaging with government to influence policy and funding decisions. The six skill areas included in IBSA’s portfolio are:

- Education
- Financial Services
- Business Services
- Printing and Graphic Arts
- Cultural and Related Industries
- Information and Communication Technologies.

The Museum, Library/Information Services Training Package sits within the Cultural and Related Industries area. Since 2008, IBSA has conducted an environment scan, known as Escan (IBSA, 2009), in order to gain a deeper understanding of the skill needs in the six skill areas, to review the external environment and to identify developments in the immediate sector. The Escan includes a survey of key stakeholders to identify the expected demand for priority occupations and job roles over the short term (the next 1-2 years) and the medium term (around 5 years). The initial draft report is subject to validation through a number of stakeholder forums. To date, there has been little awareness about the IBSA

Escan process within the LIS sector, so that minimal data has been collected about the workforce needs and associated demand for education and training for library assistants and library technicians.

2.3 Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF)

In recent years, the VET sector has been focusing on issues of quality assurance. In 2007, the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) released a revised version of the Australian Quality Training Framework, known as AQTF 2007, as a national set of standards to assure “nationally consistent, high quality training and assessment services for clients of Australia’s vocational education and training system” (AQTF, 2007, p.1). The AQTF comprises three components:

- The Essential Standards for Registration
- Standards for State and Territory Registering Bodies
- Excellence Criteria.

AQTF documentation states that the beneficiaries of AQTF 2007 will include both individual learners and, in the wider sense, industry stakeholders, as well as the RTOs themselves and the State-based registering bodies. It is argued that learners will “have equitable access to quality training and assessment services tailored to their needs and the learning outcomes they seek”, while industry, which would include ALIA and employers, will “have confidence that RTOs are delivering training and assessment services that achieve the skill requirements of nationally recognised qualifications developed by industry” (AQTF, 2007, p.2). Further advice was received in early 2008 indicating that further quality assurance processes were to be introduced in the vocational education

arena, through the National Quality Indicators, with the goal of measuring the quality of:

- Learner engagement
- Employer satisfaction
- Competency completion.

All RTOs will be required to implement three quality indicator processes each year: a Learner Questionnaire, an Employer Questionnaire and a Competency Questionnaire. In addition, a voluntary process is currently being trialled by 15 RTOs, which seeks to encourage and recognise high performance. The proposed Excellence Criteria seek evidence of strategic approaches to quality and continuous improvement in a number of areas, including learning and assessment, client focus and engagement with industry and communities (AQTF, 2008).

The course content for the Diploma of Library/Information Studies is ostensibly determined by the competency standards of the National Training Package, while the quality assurance processes currently being developed within the AQTF 2007 framework seek to monitor the issues of staffing, resourcing, infrastructure and quality assurance mechanisms. Theoretically, the Quality Indicators aim to scrutinise the relevancy and quality of the training being delivered, while the Excellence Criteria support high quality practice and continuous improvement. It will be important to ascertain more about the process to determine the extent to which the emergent AQTF processes measure the performance of the RTO as an entity, or the quality of the learning and teaching in individual programs delivered by the RTOs.

ALIA strives to work closely with library technician educators to better understand the processes and activities that are mandatory

for them as part of the AQTF 2007 framework. The AQTF processes have been described as having aspects of a 'compliance culture' and consequently "often focus on inputs and processes rather than outcomes" (Learning Australia, 2008, p.7). In undertaking the course recognition process, ALIA seeks to avoid duplication of effort in terms of the audit and monitoring processes of the RTOs and strives to focus on the outcomes, in order to legitimately meet the Association's goal "to foster excellence in the provision of education for the Australian library and information services sector and to ensure that all students undertaking a course experience a quality program, with an appropriate curriculum delivered effectively and supported by the required resources" (ALIA, 2008).

2.4 ALIA recognition of courses

The course recognition process is informed and guided by a series of education policy statements:

- *ALIA's role in education of library and information professionals*
<http://www.alia.org.au/policies/education.role.html>
- *Courses in library and information management*
<http://www.alia.org.au/policies/courses.html>
- *Library and information sector: core knowledge, skills and attributes*
<http://www.alia.org.au/policies/core.knowledge.html>
- *Employer roles and responsibilities in education and professional development*
<http://www.alia.org.au/policies/information.centres.html>

ALIA undertakes the recognition of a course at the invitation of the institution offering the course. The conceptual framework for

the desired learning outcomes is provided by the policy statement on core knowledge, skills and attributes, with the expectation that students will graduate with the necessary knowledge and skills to begin practice at an appropriate level, with ongoing professional development supporting progression and growth.

The criteria for the recognition of first award courses in library and information management focus on seven key areas:

- Course design
- Curriculum content
- Assessment
- Staffing
- Resourcing
- Quality assurance mechanisms
- Infrastructure.

In addition, course recognition considers modes of delivery and the opportunities for articulation to university-level courses.

2.5 ALIA course recognition program 2009

Through a program of professional development days hosted by ALIA over the past few years, members of the education policy committee have had the opportunity to meet with library technician educators from all states and territories of Australia. The aims of the annual meetings have been to collaboratively explore the concepts of quality teaching and learning, to discuss issues of mutual concern and to share ideas and expertise. The 2008 meeting specifically enabled participants to review the criteria for ALIA course recognition, to ratify the content and format of the questionnaire to be completed by all institutions and to consider the logistics for the program of site visits in 2009.

The following institutions invited ALIA to assess their library technician courses:

- Tasmanian Polytechnic, Hobart and Launceston campuses, Tasmania
- Canberra Institute of Technology, ACT
- Central TAFE, Perth, WA
- TAFE SA, Adelaide, SA
- Southbank Institute of Technology, Brisbane, Qld
- Capra Ryan Online Learning Pty Ltd, Brisbane, Qld
- Victoria University – TAFE Division, Melbourne, Victoria
- Box Hill Institute, Melbourne, Victoria
- Swinburne University of Technology, Prahran Campus, Melbourne, Victoria
- University of Ballarat, Victoria
- TAFE NSW Hunter Institute, Newcastle, NSW
- TAFE NSW Riverina Institute, Albury, NSW
- TAFE NSW Sydney Institute, NSW
- TAFE NSW Western Sydney Institute, Kingswood, NSW
- TAFE NSW Illawarra Institute, Wollongong, NSW
- Charles Darwin University, Darwin, NT.

The course offered by the Sunshine Coast Institute of TAFE in Nambour, Queensland, was reviewed separately in October 2008. One Diploma program offered by a university was not included in the 2009 course recognition program.

Each institution was required to complete a questionnaire to provide information and evidence in response to the course recognition criteria. It is acknowledged that the collection and collation of the required documentation is a major task for the teaching and administrative staff at all institutions. A wiki was developed by ALIA to support the communication process. A key part of the process was the site visit which was arranged for all institutions, conducted from February to June 2009, to provide the opportunity for representatives of ALIA to meet with key stakeholders in the library technician courses, including teachers, managers, employers, workplace supervisors, students and graduates.

The site visit involved a panel of three members: Associate Professor Gillian Hallam (panel chair), a local library technician practitioner (panel member) and the ALIA Education Manager, Dianne Walton-Sonda (executive support). The panel chair, who serves as chair of the ALIA Education and Professional Development Standing Committee, was responsible for presiding over the panel to ensure that the course content, staffing, resources and infrastructure were assessed according to the ALIA policy on the core knowledge, skills and attributes (ALIA, 2005a). The role of the library technician practitioner panel member was to provide local knowledge as a practitioner, with direct knowledge and experience of the immediate library technician community. Where possible, the same library technician panel member attended a number of site visits in the regional area (Appendix 1). The ALIA Education Manager was able to provide valuable executive support, as well as ensuring alignment between educational policy and practice.

Each panel met several times by teleconference to discuss the materials received in the lead up to the specific site visits, with a face-to-face meeting on the day prior to the scheduled visit to review documents and student assignments. The program for the site visit involved a series of meetings with the various stakeholder groups, i.e. teaching staff, institutional managers, employers, students and graduates. Further teleconferences were then held between the panel members to discuss the findings from the course recognition process. A draft report presenting the program evaluation and key recommendations was prepared for each institution, which was reviewed by the institution and subsequently refined to a final report. The recommendation to grant full or provisional recognition of the course, or to defer recognition subject to substantial changes to the program, was presented to the ALIA Education and Professional Development Standing Committee for review, and ultimately to the ALIA Board of Directors for formal ratification.

While it is acknowledged that the course recognition process requires a high level of commitment in terms of time and resourcing for the RTO, the direct costs of administration, telecommunications, travel and accommodation are borne in full by the Association. ALIA's gratitude is extended to more than 350 people who have been directly involved in the course recognition activities undertaken in 2009. As the panel members volunteer their time, their employers are acknowledged for their indirect involvement, enabling their staff to participate in the course recognition program.

3

ALIA COURSE RECOGNITION CRITERIA

The preamble to the ALIA course recognition criteria (2008) indicates that:

Courses at library technician level aim to produce graduates with sound practical information knowledge and skills which enable them to effectively support the delivery of library and information services that meet client information needs and help them become information literate. Library technicians achieve this by using the skills and knowledge gained through their education to encourage their clients to develop the necessary skills to effectively seek, locate and use information they need.

The overarching principles of course recognition are outlined in the ALIA policy statement on courses in library and information management (2005b), which declare that the Association seeks assurance that courses:

- Consist of a curriculum that delivers the core knowledge, skills and generic attributes to ensure the highest standard of professional practice
- Are offered in a number of delivery modes and through flexible delivery options across the institutions providing library and information management courses
- Are appropriately resourced by the providing institution in the number and levels of staff qualified to teach and administer the course and in the infrastructure available to support the course
- Have appropriate quality-assurance mechanisms set in place by the providing institution
- Are advised and supported by industry through mechanisms which enable consultation between course providers and practitioners
- Encourage and facilitate teaching staff exchanges into industry and practitioner exchanges to the teaching environment
- Provide workplace experience as an integrated component to link theory to the practice of the profession
- Offer opportunities for students to engage in authentic learning activities [for example, fieldwork, project work and access to resources in libraries and information agencies].

While the AQTF and internal audit mechanisms involve an evaluation of institutional processes and teaching quality, ALIA's mission is to ensure that the courses offered to students will develop the desired knowledge and skills required in the LIS workplace at the current time and into the future. It is important that library technician courses not only provide graduates with a sound foundation in traditional library skills, but also develop their readiness to meet the challenges of an evolving work environment that is characterised by changing client needs and expectations. Course recognition requires institutions that offer the Diploma in Library/ Information Studies to demonstrate their ability to deliver a program that ensures good practice to meet LIS industry needs across the criteria of:

- Course design
- Curriculum content
- Assessment
- Staffing
- Resourcing
- Quality assurance mechanisms
- Infrastructure.

Each criterion encompasses a number of subcriteria, which will be examined in the following discussion from the perspectives of the variations in current practice and recommended best practice, based on the information gathered during the 2009 course recognition program. Emerging issues that are likely to impact on library technician education in the future are explored in greater detail in Section 4 of the report.

3.1 Course design

One of the critical issues examined under the broad concept of course design was the applicability of the programs to current and emerging workforce needs. In this context, the panel examined the aims and objectives of the course, the costs of study, entry requirements and student support.

3.1.1 ALIA policy

ALIA's document on course recognition (2008) states:

The course provider is responsible for the course design. Courses recognised at library technician level must equate to Level 5 (diploma) of the Australian Qualifications Framework as a minimum and may include those developed using the endorsed Museum, Library/Information Services National Training Package or equivalent.

3.1.2 Course aims and objectives

As noted in Section 2.1 of this report, the Diploma of Library/Information Services equates to Level 5 of the Australian Qualifications Framework. Through the course recognition process, ALIA seeks to ensure that, conceptually, the Association's education policy is appropriately embedded in the program objectives. In the course recognition questionnaire, all institutions listed the units of competency as the key objectives of the Diploma program. In a review of assessment practices in the VET sector, concerns were expressed that, all too often, "the unit of competence focuses on workplace performance and does not provide an adequate mechanism for describing the *knowledge requirements* of some occupations, especially those at the higher AQF qualifications" (*italics added*) (Learning Australia, 2008, p.3). The tensions resulting

from the different levels of performance across the institutions offering the Diploma in Library/Information Services was noted by the Panel.

Variations in current practice

- Some institutions had an 'education' focus, stressing that the course of study led to the qualification of Diploma, with the progress milestone of Certificate IV celebrated by staff and students. This reflected a philosophy of developing the students' confidence in goal setting, goal achievement and a culture of lifelong learning.
- Some institutions had a 'training' focus, highlighting the direct attainment of the unit of competency, often based on the immediate workplace skill requirements.

As the LIS sector is keen to see opportunities for career growth through the achievement of higher qualifications, i.e. for library technicians to have the potential to progress through university studies to become librarians, the level of student performance is important. Diploma graduates are eligible to articulate to undergraduate university courses, receiving one year's credit for their completed studies (one and a half year's credit for Advanced Diploma qualifications). The student's readiness for academic studies is therefore critical and can be influenced by the learning experiences in the Diploma program.

3.1.3 Costs of study

There were different models for study fees across the country, with some course fees reflecting State-based funding requirements and some private providers setting commercial rates for their programs. Study fees are determined by the RTO offering the program, with private RTOs and universities tending to charge more than TAFEs. Fees for

international students are considerably higher (up to \$10,000 per program) than for domestic students.

Variations in current practice

- In some institutions, the fees related directly to the number of contact hours, while in other institutions, the fees are levied as a semester charge.
- As a guide, it was found that private RTO fees could be as high as \$4,500 per semester, while TAFE fees ranged from \$495-\$1,500 per semester (full-time study).
- The fee structure was often determined by the course structure:
 - Some institutions encouraged students to enrol in a certificate (e.g. Certificate III or Certificate IV) and then progress through the levels of qualification to the Diploma.
 - Other institutions required students to enrol in a Diploma or even Advanced Diploma program, offering them the opportunity to exit with Certificate III or Certificate IV if they found the course too challenging.
- It was noted that the fees were often higher for units of competency offered under the Diploma and Advanced Diploma programs, compared with those offered under the Certificate programs.
- Concessional fees were generally available for disadvantaged students. Concessional fees varied across the different institutions and in some instances, fee waivers were allowed for individual students after consideration of extreme circumstances.

At the present time, there is a push to develop a national competitive market for vocational education and training (see Section 4.5 of this report).

3.1.4 Entry requirements and enrolments

The Panel sought to gain a clear understanding of the admission processes and how these impacted on the quality of the students entering the course. At most institutions, it was noted that students sat along a continuum of aptitude, ability and potential, with some students requiring considerable learning support, while other students already had an undergraduate or postgraduate degree. A topic raised almost unanimously by employers was the need for staff with high levels of literacy and numeracy, as well as good interpersonal skills. Concerns were expressed that not all students and graduates met these desired standards. It was felt that students of lesser ability may be attracted to a library course due to an inaccurate understanding in the wider community about the reality of the contemporary library workplace.

It was found that institutions set their own entry requirements, although these were usually common across different campuses of a state-based TAFE. Generally, admission to the library technician program was reported to be the Year 12 Certificate of Education or equivalent, although in most cases there were allowances for mature age entry, with consideration of work and life experience.

The national training package framework has been developed to accommodate mutual recognition, i.e. an institution should recognise and accept Statements of Attainment issued by another RTO, in order to facilitate the transfer of students between one partially completed program and a new program.

Patterns of enrolment varied across the institutions, with 'study progression' models seeing students enter at the certificate level and move towards the Diploma level, as well as enrolments in higher level programs

(Diploma or Advanced Diploma) with students exiting from the program with lower qualifications if required. It was noted, however, that not all institutions offered exit points at Certificate III or Certificate IV levels. Arguments were made that the practice of inviting enrolments at the higher level (Diploma or Advanced Diploma) tended to attract a better calibre of applicant. Institutions admitting students directly into the Diploma program tended to require students to have already gained Certificate IV, although it was noted that some institutions permitted entry directly into the Diploma program with library experience only.

Variations in current practice

- A number of institutions held interviews to ascertain the applicants' suitability for entering the course and/or for an LIS career.
- Some institutions required the submission of a piece of handwritten work and the completion of a touch typing test to demonstrate their literacy skills.
- Some institutions required students to sit tests to determine the levels of literacy and numeracy.
- Special entry opportunities were often available for students with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) or Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background, students with a disability, disadvantaged students or students referred by Centrelink.
- The practice of 'clustering' competencies, while of relevance and value to students at a specific institution, were found to potentially represent a barrier to students seeking to transfer between programs, as they were unable to directly align their past achievements with the new program.

- Some programs had a rolling enrolment process, where students could enter the course at any time and complete their studies at their own pace.
- The majority of programs had a schedule for dates of application and enrolment into the course.

Recommended best practice

- Entry requirements: align with trends within education and training which indicate that there is a need for a flexible model of entry requirements, taking into account satisfactory completion of secondary education, the attainment of Certificates in LIS, possibly as part of secondary education, as well as equivalent work experience.
- Enrolment processes: encourage the use of literacy and numeracy tests and/or interviews in order to assist staff with the identification of individual students' suitability for the course, as well as students who may be at risk and require learning support.
- Cross-institutional enrolments: facilitate the enrolment of students into elective subjects of interest that may not be available at the 'home institution'.

3.1.5 Student support

It was generally acknowledged that a proportion of the student cohort required learning support to successfully complete the study program, particularly in, but not limited to, socio-economically disadvantaged communities. Teaching staff reported that pastoral care was an important part of their interaction with students and that the institutions provided academic support and counselling services to assist students. Students universally respected the high level of support available to them, indicating that

individual teachers had played an enormous role in ensuring they reached their goals as students. The staff:student ratio inevitably impacted on the capacity of staff to manage the given student cohort. All institutions reported that they would counsel individual students to exit the course if the support mechanisms proved inadequate.

3.2 Curriculum content

While the national training package includes the units of competency to be attained by students, they should not be regarded as curriculum documents. It is acknowledged that “teachers and trainers decide on the delivery methods and resources they use” (ANTA, 2004, p.7). Accordingly, the learning activities, delivery methods and resources used are determined by the teaching staff at the different institutions. Originally, the Curriculum Centre in New South Wales was responsible for coordinating the development of learning resources for the NSW Institutes of TAFE that offered the Diploma of Library/ Information Services, but the institutes now have greater autonomy in this area.

It was found that there was considerable diversity in terms of both curriculum content and course delivery across the 17 RTOs visited in 2009. Within the national training package, there are acknowledged issues about the “variations in the quality, content and format of units of competence” (Learning Australia, 2008, p.3).

During the course recognition program, the Panel considered issues associated with course delivery and with the subjects taught, learning activities, and resources.

3.2.1 ALIA policy

ALIA’s education policy includes the principle that library technician courses “consist of a curriculum that delivers the core knowledge, skills and generic attributes to ensure the highest standard of professional practice” (ALIA, 2005b). It is acknowledged that training packages do not reflect curriculum per se, but rather the units of competency leading to the required learning outcomes. The term ‘curriculum’ is therefore used in the sense of the combination of competencies taught and assessed in the library technician program.

ALIA’s document on course recognition (2008) states:

Courses leading to a first award library and information management at library technician level must:

- Deliver the core knowledge, skills and generic attributes at the level appropriate to ensure the highest standard of library technician practice.
- Integrate practical experiences and work-based projects as part of the learning strategies.
- Engender a commitment to lifelong learning and ongoing professional development.

The Association’s education policy seeks to ensure that courses “are offered in a variety of delivery modes and through flexible delivery options across the institutions” (ALIA, 2005b).

In addition, it is stated:

Courses may be offered in a variety of delivery modes but it is expected that all students would have the opportunity to attain the same learning and development outcomes from the course regardless of delivery mode. (ALIA, 2008)

3.2.2 Course delivery

It was found that there was a very wide range of delivery modes, ranging from traditional classroom contact through to online courses. While opportunities for students to study online were increasing, which could potentially impact on the market for student enrolments and increase competition amongst the RTOs, there was no real evidence of cross-institutional coordination of eLearning strategies.

Students reported positively on the flexibility offered by online learning, although many appreciated the value of face-to-face contact with the teachers and with fellow students. Employers were keen to see students with direct experience of eLearning, as it was felt that the skills and aptitudes gained through this mode of learning could be well utilised in the workplace, as more and more aspects of library services were delivered to clients online.

Concerns were expressed at many institutions, however, that there was a need to extend the teaching staff’s understanding of the potential of eLearning and to ensure they had the chance to gain experience in developing appropriate learning activities in a new medium. For such initiatives, the management of staff workload was raised as a common issue across the RTOs visited. There were some excellent examples of innovative practice, with the LIS teaching staff leading the way within their institutions. This in turn could lead to the LIS staff being recognised as eLearning champions in the department, school or faculty and accordingly be seconded to new roles beyond their teaching.

Variations in current practice

- Some courses were only offered in face-to-face mode with a weekly program of classes.
- Some courses were fully online, with self-paced learning activities and no face-to-face classes.
- Some courses were hybrid, combining face-to-face with online learning.
- Some courses were offered in multiple modes at the same institution; it could not be guaranteed, however, that students studying in the different modes would have common learning experiences.
- Courses were offered in full-time, part-time and block modes. An example of block mode saw teaching activities taking place in face-to-face classes scheduled over a weekend, with the learning activities completed for assessment purposes off-campus in the student's own time.
- There was a wide range of resources used in teaching, from heavily text-based resources to predominantly web-based resources. This often reflected the currency of the resources available to students.
- There were significant differences in the speed of development of online courses, as well as in the quality of the online offerings, which was often directly associated with staffing and resourcing issues.
- There were a number of different learning management systems (LMS) in use across the different RTOs (e.g. Blackboard, WebCT, Moodle). It was noted that Moodle was being introduced into an increasing number of institutions.
- There was considerable variation in the level of interaction with online learning activities, discussion forums etc, on the part of both the students and the staff.

- Some institutions were planning to introduce online meeting systems such as Elluminate Live to facilitate communication with students.
- Some institutions had established effective state-wide collaborations to strengthen program delivery (face-to-face and online) on multiple campuses.

Recommended best practice

- Strategic approach to course development: take advantage of the opportunities (e.g. staff development, pilot funding for eLearning) within the institution.
- Institutional support: ensure that management is aware of ICT applications within the library sector, to stress the competencies required by students and graduates in the workplace.
- Departmental relationships: work more closely with ICT teaching staff to develop a mutual understanding of current practice and emerging trends in the LIS sector.
- Practical experience: in addition to the industry placements, tailor site visits to a range of library and information agencies to help develop the students' understanding and knowledge of the diversity of practice in the LIS industry, as well as to highlight the relevance of specific employability skills.
- eLearning champion: explore the opportunities offered by eLearning; provide advice, guidance and peer support to other staff; and, encourage consistency across the electronic resources provided to students.
- Staff development: identify the training required for teaching staff in the area of eLearning.

- Community of practice: work collaboratively with other institutions using the same eLearning system to foster shared learning. The web-based community options available through edna.edu.au should be considered as a central resource for library technician educators.

3.2.3 Subjects, learning activities and resources

It was interesting to observe the different interpretation of the national training package.

The Training Package allows training organisations to decide what they will teach, when and how. It describes the outcomes of training but leaves the detailed decision-making and implementation to Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). (ANTA, 2004, p.8)

As noted, the Diploma of Library/Information Services encompasses 10 core competencies and a wide range of elective subjects. In practice, it was found that most institutions offered students the core subjects plus a narrow choice of electives. In some cases, the electives could be described as 'mandatory electives', as the students could only study the specific subjects on offer in the given year. On occasion, two units of competency were combined as a 'cluster subject'.

In a recent study of issues associated with quality assessment, the need for clustering was linked to the fact that "individual units of competency may not adequately describe a complete work task and this means that assessors must cluster units to ensure that assessment is focused on realistic workplace activities" (Learning Australia, 2008, p.3). Clustering was found to be interesting, and often more relevant, to students (and staff), but could also hinder learner mobility

between institutions, especially when core and elective subjects were clustered in different ways. It was notable that the 'flavour' of the library technician qualification inevitably varied around the country, depending on the local course offerings.

As the Diploma of Library/Information Services draws on units of competency from other training packages, teachers must be aware of changes that may impact on their program. There was a clear need for learning activities to encompass current developments in library work, particularly in terms of the increasing requirement for employability skills such as customer service skills, work ethics, oral and written communication skills and conflict management. Employers also stressed the importance of ensuring that students had a good understanding of contemporary issues such as copyright and digital rights management, electronic licensing and e-journal management. It was noted, however, that there were often budgetary constraints in terms of arranging access to library systems or subscription services that would be of value to students.

The ALIA education policy stresses the need for courses to "offer opportunities for students to engage in authentic learning activities (for example fieldwork, project work and access to resources in libraries and information agencies" (ALIA, 2005b). The national training package does not, however, specifically require students to complete a work placement. Nevertheless, most RTOs have a sound program for fieldwork, adopting a range of approaches to include placements in the course. At some institutions, specific subjects have been created for Industry Placement I and Industry Placement II. In other programs, units of competency are 'delivered' in the workplace, with an industry

supervisor to support the student. For further discussion on work placements, see Section 3.3.3.

Variations in current practice

- It was found that a total of 65 different electives were offered across all courses nationally.
- No RTO was offering the groupings of elective units for specific workplace contexts (Library Technician (with IT focus); Public Library Technician; Corporate Library Technician; School Library Technician) as proposed in the national training package.
- Some of the programs did not provide students with a clear overview of or defined structure for the individual subjects to be studied.
- A lack of clear definition of concepts resulted in wide-ranging interpretation of topics in different courses, e.g. 'customer service', 'multimedia', 'presentation skills'.
- Some courses were structured with the Certificate level subjects being completed before the Diploma level subjects, which allowed for the incremental development of knowledge and skills. This was generally the case when students initially enrolled in the Certificate program and then advanced to the Diploma.
- Some courses did not scaffold knowledge development through incremental steps of units taught, so that there is no clear sequence of 'easy' to 'difficult' subjects.
- There were marked differences in the 'pitch' of the courses, ranging from a rudimentary level through to a complex level of understanding.
- The IT competencies in some courses were taught by IT teachers who were not familiar with the LIS context. Students consequently found that some IT subjects

lacked direct relevance to their library studies.

- While some institutions 'cluster' the competencies, there was no common practice in terms of the combination of units across the different RTOs.
- A number of institutions did not 'cluster' the competencies, following the principle that each competency has its own focus.
- Some institutions focused primarily on theoretical knowledge, with little opportunity for students to gain practical experience that was applicable to the workplace.
- Few institutions were effectively embedding employability skills into the subjects, from the perspectives of teaching and assessment.

Recommended best practice

- Course portal: provide students with a central resource with links to course information, individual subjects, learning support, industry information, professional events and a discussion forum.
- Course outline: ensure that students understand the stated learning outcomes, the sequencing of subjects and the relationship between units in order to develop a clear picture of how the course will be relevant to their employment.
- Sequencing of subjects: provide students with a scaffolded, developmental pathway through the course, as well as a preferred pattern of combining different subjects to support the progressive development of knowledge and technical skills.
- Subject outlines: present students with a clear plan for the teaching and learning activities in each subject.
- Collaborative learning: develop teaching and learning strategies that encourage

collaboration amongst the students, e.g. through an interactive discussion board where students can discuss their learning at the course and/or subject level.

- Currency of subjects: ensure that students are able to develop the knowledge and skills that reflect current trends in technology and service delivery.
- Technology subjects: ensure that technology subjects are taught with a clear focus on the contemporary context for library systems and software in order to achieve a high level of relevancy to employment as a library technician
- Digital media and Web 2.0 developments: ensure that students are able to work confidently with a range of formats of digital information resources, to use different audio visual equipment, and to actively use Web 2.0 technologies.
- Employability skills: ensure these are embedded in the learning and assessment activities, with linkages to the industry work placement in order to help students prepare for job applications.
- Authentic learning activities: offer students regular opportunities to relate the theoretical knowledge to workplace. Teaching staff are encouraged to work with industry practitioners through the Course Advisory Committee to identify opportunities for authentic learning and workplace projects.
- Site visits: organise visits to help students understand the application of classroom theory to industry practice and to be aware of the range of LIS contexts.
- Guest speakers: provide opportunities for students to learn about the diversity of practice in the LIS sector. While the guest presentations may be scheduled as a face-to-face meeting, teachers are encouraged

to record and podcast the sessions so that they are available to distance students and any students who had missed the class.

- Support at point of need: encourage institutions offering the program in distance education mode to establish relationships with students' local libraries to enable them to gain hands-on experience with library systems.

3.3 Assessment

The Model Assessment Guidelines (DEST, 2007) stress the scope of assessment:

When conducting assessments, assessors must ensure that they are familiar with the full text of the Unit(s) of Competency being assessed. In particular, they must ensure that the assessment arrangements:

- Cover all elements of the Unit of Competency being assessed;
- Address the four dimensions of competency: task skills, task management skills, contingency management skills and job/role environment skills;
- Are consistent with the Evidence Guide for each relevant Unit of Competency, as this specifies the context of assessment, the critical aspects of competency, the required underpinning knowledge and skills, and the identification of Key Competencies and their performance level. In some cases there will be reference to having access to real workplace conditions and infrastructure.

The national training package provides considerable guidance to RTOs about assessment practices through the Assessment Guidelines (IBSA, 2007, p.112-133) and it was found that most institutions had been involved in a review of assessment as part of internal or AQTF audit procedures.

There has also been a study sponsored by the VET Workforce Standing Committee of the National Quality Council (NQC) to examine the issues associated with "quality assessment" in vocational education and training (Learning Australia, 2008). The key issues identified related to:

- Building assessor capability
- Ensuring that AQTF auditing and monitoring processes foster good assessment practices
- Providing high quality, nationally consistent assessment materials
- Enhancing industry confidence in assessment practices and outcomes
- Building assessment expertise within the VET sector
- Strengthening assessment quality assurance
- Moving from 'assessment of learning' to 'assessment for learning'.

While the course recognition process was not directly related to the study into quality assessment, many of the findings from the institutional visits resonated with the issues outlined in the study. It was found that the quality of the assessment materials varied considerably, often lacking the currency required in the fast changing library context. The Panel noted the principles presented in the options paper on quality assessment practices which highlighted the value of all Training Packages being supported by a set of exemplar assessment materials that can:

- Provide a model that assessors can use in developing their own assessment materials
- Illustrate a range of different assessment techniques
- Illustrate the use of flexible assessment options such as self-assessment, peer-

assessment, collaborative assessment and negotiated assessment.

(*Learning Australia, 2008, p.8*)

It has been noted that, within the VET sector, there is currently a shift in focus from 'assessment of learning' to 'assessment for learning'.

While summative or 'assessment of learning' is important, there is increasing interest in Australia and overseas in the role that 'assessment for learning' or formative assessment can play in promoting learner achievement. Assessment for learning involves using evidence and feedback to identify where learners are in their learning, what they need to do and how best to achieve this. (*Learning Australia, 2008, p.13*)

The majority of RTOs were including formative assessment in their programs, which avoided the situation where assessment decisions are based on a single assessment event. Students noted that most teaching staff were generous in providing formative feedback and allowing more than one attempt at assessment if required.

In the context of assessment, the Panel focused on the assessment of assignment work, work placements and the recognition of prior learning (RPL).

3.3.1 ALIA policy

ALIA's document on course recognition (2008) states:

Courses must demonstrate a standard and level of assessment appropriate to that recommended in the National Industry Training Package. Course providers must ensure that:

- Assessment processes, including recognition of current skills and knowledge, are consistent with a Level 5 qualification, as a minimum, as specified in the National Industry Training Package
- Assessment instruments are valid, reliable, fair and practicable
- Learners play an active role in their own assessment
- Appropriate supervision of work-based learning components of the course is provided
- A variety of approaches to assessment is used
- Feedback to students is provided on a regular and timely basis.

3.3.2 Assessment of assignment work

The national training package encourages RTOs to utilise different forms of assessment activities. Many of the RTOs reported in the course recognition questionnaire that they were committed to providing students with a variety of assessment activities, e.g. presentations, role plays, team work, displays, case studies, report writing and on the job evaluations. While most institutions had two assessment activities in each subject, focusing primarily on practical skills, it was found that in a small number of cases a very narrow range of assessment activities was offered, generally written work and on occasion completed under examination conditions.

Interviews with teaching staff and students highlighted a frequent lack of consistency in marking across the different staff in a teaching team, which was often related to a lack of transparency of the assessment processes within a program. Some students also raised concerns about the timeliness and quality of the feedback they received on the work they had completed, although this was

balanced by some teaching staff providing excellent feedback on student work.

The greatest consternation amongst staff, students and employers, was associated with policies around the status of Competent/ Not yet competent. It was commonly felt that, despite the thrust of competency based training, the status of 'Competent' did not adequately reflect the merit of the work submitted by students, especially when significant differences in commitment to learning and in the amount of effort put into the assessment activity resulted in the same outcome of 'Competent'. Employers indicated that it was difficult to determine the quality of job applicants when there was commonality across all students who completed the Diploma. It was noted, however, that some institutions had their own policies which allowed staff to mark to a graded schema.

Variations in current practice

- Some institutions assessed students as 'Competent' or 'Not yet competent'.
- Some institutions used merit-based assessment (Pass, Merit, Distinction).
- Some institutions used granular levels of marking to a graded system (e.g. C++).
- Pass rates varied across institutions and across subjects, with some pass rates being 50% and others 70%.
- The number of opportunities to submit an assignment ranged from one to three times.

Recommended best practice

- Assessment activities: offer a range of assessment tasks to provide variety, stimulate student interest and suit different learning styles. Employers have indicated that they look for evidence of capabilities across a spectrum of practical skills.

Teachers are encouraged to consider the creative design of assessment tasks that are contextualised to reflect real workplace conditions.

- Criterion referenced assessment: ensure transparency and consistency of marking practice through an understanding of the principles of criterion referenced assessment, including the development of marking rubrics.
- Merit-based graded assessment: reward learners for commitment and effort, as well as offer some degree of consistency of practice (e.g. pass marks, number of assessment attempts) which is relevant to employers.
- Formative assessment: provide learners with the opportunity to benefit from constructive guidance about how to improve, which includes understanding their strengths and weaknesses in the context of the workplace competencies.
- Self-, peer- and collaborative assessment: encourage students to think critically and constructively about the knowledge and skills they are acquiring in order to become reflective and self-managed learners.
- Team-based assessment: encourage employability skills, build them into the learning activities and make them assessable in order to meet the need for strong teamwork skills in the workplace.
- Student awards: inform students about the merit awards available to recognise excellence.
- ePortfolios: use ePortfolios to provide a stronger, broader collection of evidence of learning for assessment purposes, to demonstrate the learning outcomes over an extended period of time, and to enable students to reflect on the employability skills required in the workplace.

3.3.3 Work placements

ALIA's education policy stresses the importance of practical work experience, to ensure that courses "provide workplace experience as an integrated component to link theory to the practice of the profession" (ALIA, 2005b). It was found that the teaching staff across the different institutions encouraged and supported work placements.

Variations in current practice

- Some RTOs had incorporated specific Industry Placement subjects into the course.
- A number of institutions 'clustered' certain competencies, which were scheduled to be completed during industry placements.
- Some institutions had dedicated staff to make arrangements for student work placements.
- Some institutions required students to make their own arrangements for placements.
- Some students who were working are able to complete the placement as part of their employment.
- Some RTOs scaffolded the placements, e.g. all students completing a placement in a school library for the first placement, with a wider choice of library for the second placement.
- A small number of RTOs issued an information kit and/or guidelines for workplace supervisors.
- Some institutions ensured that all students on work placement are visited by a member of the teaching staff.
- The adequacy of supervision varied considerably across different host libraries.

Recommended best practice

- Preparation for work placements: encourage students to research the options for their industry placement and to prepare their own application.
- Guidelines for employers: ensure that all students are offered an organised program so that they receive a consistently valuable and relevant industry experience. This may be achieved through an information kit, a resource manual, a website and/or an annual meeting of industry supervisors.
- Feedback on performance: encourage workplace supervisors to provide meaningful feedback on the student's performance during the placement, which could be reviewed with the teaching staff to determine the appropriate career direction.
- Broadening the workplace experience: encourage students already working in one specific industry sector to undertake a placement in a different sector and so gain a more comprehensive understanding of the career opportunities available to them.

3.3.4 Recognition of prior learning

All institutions supported students' applications for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Guidance about the RPL processes is available through the Assessment Guidelines (IBSA, 2007) and through the policies and procedures of the RTOs. In addition, an examination of the key drivers for and principal barriers to RPL was published in 2003 (Bowman et al, 2003).

During the course recognition visits, a number of students commented that while they initially hoped to apply for RPL, they found the actual requirements to be daunting, with the result that they found it simpler to complete the unit of study.

Employers indicated that they felt there was scope for institutions to work more closely with the library sector to develop pathways to qualifications for experienced staff.

Variations in current practice

- Some institutions charged the full cost of the subject that related to the RPL application, while at other institutions, the process attracted no fees.
- In some situations, a single staff member had full responsibility for all student RPL applications, while in other situations, RPL applications were reviewed by the teaching staff for the specific subject.
- It was found that there was a significant range of practice in terms of the standard of evidence to be submitted by students to attain RPL.
- In some institutions, RPL was managed through the student sitting a challenge test, while others required students to effectively complete the assessment tasks for the unit of competency.
- In some cases, the Course Advisory Committee played an advisory role to guide how a unit of competency might be demonstrated in the contemporary workplace.

Recommended best practice

- Collaborative strategies: ensure that more than one teacher reviews applications for RPL, particularly where it involves more than 20-25% of the program.
- Credit for subjects: provide students with the opportunity to undertake electives at another institution, especially when there is a limited choice of elective subjects at the home institution, and to receive credit for the subjects as part of the Diploma.

- Course Advisory Committee: encourage teaching staff to draw on the experience of industry practitioners to guide the RPL process.
- Pathways to learning: enable RTOs to work with major LIS employers in the region to consider ways of utilising RPL as a stepping stone in order to encourage employees to gain formal qualifications.
- Community of practice: help library technician educators share knowledge and experience about standards of evidence for RPL.
- ePortfolios: inform institutions with access to ePortfolio software about the potential of ePortfolios as a tool to support RPL applications.

3.4 Staffing

In 2004, the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) released the report on a major study into the VET workforce, which encompassed a national study of the TAFE workforce and a further project to look at the staff in public and private RTOs (Dickie et al, 2004). The ageing of the VET workforce, particularly in the TAFE sector received particular attention. A more recent report is the OECD study, *Learning for jobs* (2008), in which vocational education and training was compared across a number of countries. In the Australian study, it was reported:

In Australia as in many other OECD countries, attracting and retaining good VET trainers and teachers is a challenge. The issues are similar to those affecting schoolteachers more generally, such as the proportion of staff over 50 years of age, but there is also the VET-specific problem that providers compete with industry for the practical skills of VET

teachers and trainers. In Australia, while a strong economy encourages provision of apprenticeship places, it also makes it particularly difficult for providers to compete for teachers with industry, which offers much higher salaries. Maintaining the skills of VET teachers is also an issue. For many types of VET, technology is changing rapidly and teachers in VET providers need to remain familiar with the modern workplace. (OECD, 2008, p.40)

The key issues, including the ageing of the workforce, the difficulty in attracting teaching staff and the ability to maintain the desired level of skills amongst teachers, resonate with the findings of a meta-analysis of the VET workforce (ANTA, 2003) which reported concerns about:

- The ageing of the workforce
- Down-sizing of the workforce, with a decrease in full-time permanent staff and an increase in female staff numbers leading to employment of part-time, contract and casual staff
- Roles changing from being teachers to being facilitators of learning who are part of a wider team.

It was noted that VET practitioners were working in challenging conditions: "Many love their job, but heavy and increased workloads, change weariness, uncertainty, isolation and higher non-teaching and administrative loads are sapping morale" (ANTA, 2003, p.1). At the same time, some VET professionals, especially in dual-sector institutions, have reported on the additional challenges they face through the requirement to adopt a more 'academic' role, to undertake research and to develop a record in publishing.

3.4.1 ALIA policy

Through its education policy, ALIA seeks to ensure that library technician courses “are appropriately resourced by the providing institution in the number and levels of staff qualified to teach and administer the course” (ALIA, 2005b).

ALIA’s document on course recognition (2008) states:

The institution responsible for delivery of the course must ensure that:

- The number and levels of staff qualified to teach and administer the course are adequate and appropriate.
- Teaching staff hold appropriate academic and professional qualifications, have teaching and research experience and demonstrate a sound contribution and commitment to the library and information profession.
- Through professional involvement and commitment of the teaching team, the course remains relevant to the current and emerging needs for practice at the library technician level.
- A mechanism for course coordination exists through which at least one full-time member of staff is available to plan the teaching and learning activity of the course and advise and assist the students.

3.4.2 Staffing issues

The issues presented in the literature frequently emerged in the discussions with the teaching staff at the different institutions, with concerns articulated about workload, succession planning and the difficulties in attracting new staff. Nevertheless, in all institutions, students and graduates praised the staff for their commitment and dedication to their work.

Variations in current practice

- The range of challenges faced by teaching staff was to a certain extent dependent on the parent body, the location and the socio-economic factors of the region.
- A number of institutions reported that the role of ‘course coordinator’ was no longer to be offered.
- It was reported that the non-degree workplace trainer qualification (Certificate IV) was becoming the required qualification for teaching staff, with university qualifications in education no longer being acknowledged.
- Many institutions had to contend with a reduction in teaching hours, with limits imposed on the number of hours for delivering a subject.
- A number of institutions reported having a highly casualised workforce, with some teaching staff employed for as little as three hours per week.
- The potential for a strong teaching team was often limited, as there was little opportunity for meetings to be scheduled at a time to suit all staff. However, some institutions reported a well coordinated approach with regular face-to-face team meetings.
- Some institutions had introduced effective strategies for staff communication, mentoring and resource sharing to support casual and new staff and to reduce the isolation they might feel.
- Succession planning was a critical issue at some institutions, due to the age of current staff and the difficulties in attracting new staff.
- There was less support (indeed often no support) for training and professional development for part-time, casual and sessional employees.

- In some situations, the focus of training and development was on organisational priorities (e.g. workplace health and safety, institutional policies) rather than on topics relevant to the teaching of library and information services.
- Staff employed in dual sector institutions had better opportunities for development in areas of education, teaching and learning topics, eLearning and pedagogy.

Recommended best practice

- Communication strategies: ensure that there is regular and open communication with casual and part-time teachers, as well as between these teachers and the students.
- Team meetings: maximise opportunities for knowledge sharing and collaboration at both the institutional and the regional levels.
- Team teaching: encourage and nurture novice teachers, and assist with the transfer of knowledge and experience from more seasoned teachers.
- Industry exchanges: enhance industry relevance of the subjects through teaching staff exchanges into industry and practitioner exchanges to the teaching environment.
- Community of practice: encourage partnering between similar institutions to compare practice across the different programs and to establish collaborative approaches to teaching. Communities may be based on regional or state connections, or on similarity of programs.
- Succession planning: ensure that there will be adequate levels of qualified staff to ensure the sustainability of the course.

3.5 Resourcing

There is much discussion in the literature about the structure and resourcing of the VET sector: “Tangled state and Commonwealth responsibilities linked to complex funding arrangements require unravelling and the establishment of clearer principles and a simpler architecture” (OECD, 2008, p.15).

The level of resourcing applicable to individual institutions and beyond this to the specific courses in library and information services depends on a number of factors, including the State or Territory body responsible for vocational education and training, and whether it is a TAFE, a dual sector institution or a private RTO. Aspects of resourcing considered by the Panel included facilities and equipment, information and communication technologies (ICT) and access to library and information services.

3.5.1 ALIA policy

The overarching principle in ALIA’s education policy requires library technician courses to be “appropriately resourced by the providing institution in the number and levels of staff qualified to teach and administer the course and in the infrastructure available to support the course” (ALIA, 2005b).

ALIA’s document on course recognition (2008) states:

The institution offering the course should ensure that it has:

- Teaching and learning materials available which will support the course in all its delivery modes, suit different learning styles, reflect standards and quality of pedagogy appropriate to vocational education and training and assist students to take responsibility for their own learning.

- Adequate accommodation, equipment and funding to support the course in whatever delivery mode it is offered.
- Adequate administrative and clerical support.
- The cooperation and active involvement of the institution’s library staff to ensure that the students have access to the information resources to support their studies.
- Appropriate access to library and information services, ICT resources and other teaching and learning resources which adequately support the course and contribute positively to student learning.
- Access to library and information agencies of various types for student visits, projects and placements.
- Mechanisms in place which encourage consultation between course providers and industry practitioners.

3.5.2 Facilities and equipment

In terms of facilities and equipment to support the courses, it was found that there was a considerable range of levels of resourcing across the different programs.

Variations in current practice

- While some programs had their own dedicated classrooms, others had access to shared spaces, with some negotiation required for timetabling for room allocations.
- The quality of the staff work areas varied greatly, with some institutions providing teaching staff with generous space, office equipment and administrative staff, while others institutions had arrangements in place for the teaching staff to use ‘hot desks’ when they were on campus.
- A small number of programs had a practice or training library where students could gain hands-on experience with library equipment, as well as having the opportunity to use role play to practice

skills they would need in the workplace (e.g. check-out systems, reference interviews etc).

Recommended best practice

- Space requirements: openly discuss inadequate space issues with institution management to ensure improvements in the student learning environment.
- Practice or training libraries: provide students with the resources and equipment to develop hands-on skills in workplace activities.
- Staff work areas: ensure that all teaching staff have adequate and appropriate work areas.

3.5.3 Information and communication technologies

The library and information sector is facing dynamic changes in work practices and in service delivery due to advancements in information and communication technologies (ICT). Very few areas of library work remain unaffected by technological change, which in turn influences the expectations of users for the services available to them. This means that these days practically all competencies in the Diploma of Library/Information Services have an ICT dimension. Employers have expressed concern that, to be adequately prepared for the contemporary workplace, students and graduates not only need to demonstrate high levels of ICT literacies, but also to have developed practical skills with a range of digital resources and web-based technologies. This inevitably puts pressure on institutions to provide access to student computer laboratories, as well as the relevant software programs commonly used in libraries. It also puts pressure on teaching staff to have the appropriate knowledge and skills to develop and assess the learning activities.

Variations in current practice

- A small number of the dedicated classrooms for some of the courses were equipped with PCs. Staff were sensitive, however, to the growing numbers of students, which would impact on the level of ICT access needed by the student cohort.
- At some institutions, staff had to compete for computer laboratory space to run the classes that utilised digital resources, while some learners reported that they had to undertake online learning activities at home.
- Distance or online courses required students to have computer and Internet access at home.

Recommended best practice

- Computer access: ensure that adequate and appropriate ICT facilities are available for all units of study that require computer and/or internet access.

3.5.4 Access to library and information services

As reported in Section 1.1 of this report, characteristics of competencies or learning outcomes of the Diploma qualification, which is at Level 5 of the AQF (AQTF, 2007), include the self-directed application of knowledge and skills, with substantial depth in some areas where judgement is required in the workplace. To achieve the desired breadth and depth of knowledge needed for the autonomous application of skills, it is anticipated that students will move beyond a 'spoon fed' approach to learning and take personal responsibility for examining the topics of study more broadly. ALIA's education policy highlights the value of student access to resources in library and information agencies (ALIA, 2005b).

The resources available to students through the institute's library, in both print and digital formats, should be a valuable area of learning support for their studies as well as helping them develop their own understanding of library services that will inform their own practice as a library technician.

Variations in current practice

- Strong relationships between the teaching staff and the library staff were noted in some institutions, with library staff teaching into the course on a casual or part-time basis, students having the opportunity to undertake learning and assessment activities in the library and to gain experience in shelving tasks.
- In some other institutions it was felt that there was a degree of tension between the different areas of the institution, so that there was limited scope for interaction between the library staff and the teaching staff.
- Some libraries allowed Diploma students to make use of the practice files or sandpit areas of the library management system and online cataloguing tools.
- While most library collections were adequately resourced to support library technician students, a small number were found to be under-resourced and out-of-date.

Recommended best practice

- Independent learning: encourage students to move beyond recommended readings provided by the teaching staff and to source materials that are relevant to their studies and to share these with their peers.
- Library training: encourage the library staff to adapt regular student training courses to suit the Diploma students, e.g. OPAC and database training.

- Sponsorship from industry: provide opportunities for students to have access to a good range of library systems and software programs used by library and information agencies. This may be achieved through licensing arrangements or permission to use practice areas of the systems.

3.6 Quality assurance mechanisms

Section 1.3 of this report provides a brief outline of the quality assurance processes implemented through the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF). ALIA's focus in course recognition is not to duplicate the work undertaken by teaching and administrative staff in individual RTOs to meet the requirements of AQTF, but to ensure that the quality assurance mechanisms result in positive outcomes in terms of the quality of graduates entering the library and information services sector. It is hoped that the rigour stimulated by the AQTF audit process and the ALIA course recognition process is mutually beneficial. Specific attention is paid to Course Advisory Committee (CAC) and course evaluation strategies.

3.6.1 ALIA policy

The overarching principle presented in ALIA's education policy seeks to ensure that library technician courses "have appropriate quality assurance mechanisms set in place by the providing institution" (ALIA, 2005b).

ALIA's document on course recognition (2008) states:

Course providers must be able to demonstrate that they have in place appropriate quality assurance mechanisms that support the course. These may include but are not limited to:

- Processes and procedures for course development.
- Consultation mechanisms between course providers and practitioners.
- Established methods that regularly used for evaluating course content and delivery.

3.6.2 Course Advisory Committee

In the context of quality assurance of library technician courses, ALIA sees immense value in the role of a Course Advisory Committee (CAC). Research has indicated that in recent times, there has been little interaction between educators and practitioners. A Course Advisory Committee can serve a critical role of involving industry representatives in library technician education, by contributing their ideas and experience to the structure and content of the course. ALIA's principles of library and information education include the belief that courses "are advised and supported by industry through mechanisms which enable consultation between course providers and practitioners" (ALIA, 2005b).

The ALIA course recognition criteria (2008) seek to ensure that each institution has a local CAC that participates in reviewing and evaluating the course material and provides input into current trends in the industry. It was found, however, that very few institutions currently had formal CAC arrangements in place.

Variations in current practice

- The understanding of the purpose and the composition of the CAC varied in different institutions, so that where there was some form of consultation, different models being used, with variations as to how frequently the committee met and the level of seniority of the committee members.
- Some institutes had two separate groups that provided feedback, with one high level committee providing a consultative role from an institutional perspective, e.g. program budgets, recruitment, commercial contracts and ICT developments. A second group consisted of key stakeholders in the local LIS community to provide feedback and support on subjects taught and to inform the teaching staff about industry developments.

Recommended best practice

- High level advisory committees: ensure that there is an influential representative from the LIS sector on a faculty or school advisory committee.
- Establishment of the CAC: ensure the involvement of key stakeholders, with broad representation from the different sectors of the LIS industry, with a formal structure, agreed terms of reference and a scheduled program of meetings each year.
- Communication with industry: ensure strategies are in place for regular two-way communication with LIS employers.
- Course development: provide advice on local industry needs to inform the range of electives required. Members of the CAC may be able to offer industry practitioners as a teaching resource.
- Industry forums: hold an annual event where students can showcase their work and for employers to provide feedback on work placements completed during the year.

- Professional engagement: ensure that teaching staff actively participate in professional activities to inform the content of the course and their teaching practice.

3.6.3 Course evaluation

Generally speaking, course evaluation activities were driven by institutional requirements. There was a sense that the evaluation practices were found to be inconsistent, with only a few institutions arranging regular student evaluation of subjects or courses. Where evaluation was taking place, there was no real evidence of the results feeding into continuous improvement strategies.

Variations in current practice

- Some institutions had established a very effective moderation program, with a progressive review of subjects in the Diploma.
- A number of institutions had centrally coordinated evaluation strategies.
- Student evaluations of subjects and courses were sporadic.

Recommended best practice

- Moderation: develop strategies to collaborate with other RTOs to review and evaluate the learning and assessment activities with a goal to collectively enhance the relevancy, currency, consistency and quality of the different courses.
- Student feedback: conduct at the end of the subject, with processes in place to ensure feedback is built into course enhancements. Feedback may be gathered through surveys, focus groups or interviews.

- Continuous improvement: ensure that the evaluation data is fed back into course development, with the introduced changes further evaluated to determine the level of improvement achieved.
- Communication strategies: share the results of positive evaluations with students and staff, as well as inform them about the institution's response to areas of concern.

3.7 Infrastructure

The success of library technician education programs is closely related to the infrastructure of the institution offering the course. In the current economic climate, with a focus on sustainable business models for programs, it is essential that the course is acknowledged to contribute to the success of the institution as a whole.

3.7.1 ALIA policy

ALIA's document on course recognition (2008) states:

The unit offering the course must:

- Ensure that the course reflects the strategic direction of the parent institution.
- Establish and convene appropriate mechanisms for industry consultation.
- Foster support for research and similar activities.

3.7.2 Alignment with strategic priorities of the parent institution

Teaching staff in the institution should be able to engage with colleagues, peers and managers across the institution and contribute to the achievement of the strategic goals of the business unit, school or faculty.

Variations in current practice

- Some courses operate in a vacuum, with the teaching staff working in relative isolation.
- Some teaching staff work closely with institutional colleagues, for example serving on relevant committees and contributing to the learning and teaching agendas in their organisations.

3.7.3 Industry consultation

Each institution will have differing arrangements in place to ensure effective consultation with industry, often dependent on the way in which the schools, faculties or business units are organised. At this level it is important for senior, influential members of the LIS sector to be included in the representation of such advisory groups. At the program level, a Course Advisory Committee can play a critical role (see Section 3.6.2 of this report).

3.7.4 Support for research

In the course questionnaire, most institutions interpreted the concept of 'research' as the teaching of reference skills. At the site visits, teaching staff highlighted the fact that, until recently, little attention was paid to the need for teachers in the VET sector to engage in any research activities. The changing education environment, however, has meant that there are now drivers for change: in dual sector institutions with TAFE and university divisions, there are increasing expectations for teaching staff to become researchers and to develop track record in scholarly publishing. The Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA) has recently released a report that discusses the take-up and use of research in VET (Dymock & Billett, 2009).

Some institutions are putting pressure on their staff to attract research funding or to collaborate with academic or industry partners to undertake research projects. Strategies are needed to encourage more library technician educators to enrol in higher degree programs. Library technician educators are encouraged to monitor the research priorities of their institution to determine the contribution they might make.

3.8 Summary

This section has discussed the findings of the ALIA course recognition program of activities undertaken in 2009, through the questionnaires completed by the course coordinators for each of the Diploma courses and through the meetings with stakeholders, including teaching staff, students and graduates, institutional management, employers and workplace supervisors. The course recognition criteria have been reviewed from the perspectives of the variations in current practice, with recommendations for best practice presented to stimulate debate about contemporary library technician education. The situation in Australia is arguably complex, with many factors impacting on the interpretation of the national training package, the delivery of programs and the quality of graduates joining the LIS workforce.

Beyond this, a number of emerging issues were identified during the program of site visits, which are very likely to impact on library technician education in the future. These issues were discussed by the participants attending the educators' meeting hosted by ALIA in October 2009 and are explored in the following section.

4

FUTURE ISSUES

There is pressure for VET providers and their staff to adopt new, more business-like, customized, innovative, collaborative, flexible and client-focussed approaches to teaching and learning in an increasingly broad range of delivery locations, and online. (ANTA, 2003, p.1)

Almost a decade later, the approaches to teaching and learning outlined by ANTA have to a great extent crystallised, with increasing pressure to adapt to new challenges in education and training. There are a number of issues in the external environments of post-compulsory education in general and vocational education and training in particular which should be noted by key stakeholders in the domain of library technician education. These issues are presented in this report to raise awareness amongst and to encourage dialogue between the different stakeholder groups with the goal of ensuring that there is a strong future for the development of paraprofessionals who will meet LIS industry requirements.

4.1 Core knowledge skills and attributes for the LIS sector

There is much discussion in the literature within Australia, as well as internationally, about the relevant skill set required by library and information professionals in the 21st century. Rapid changes in technology and in information behaviour across society inevitably has a direct impact on libraries, the services libraries provide and the skills required by staff to deliver those skills. The national training package was developed over a decade ago, albeit with some minor changes in the interim. The discussion in Section 3 of this report highlighted the fact that there was little consistency in the range of units of competency from training package, as offered across Australia, especially in terms of the elective units available to students. It was noted that there was no strategic coordination of delivery to prepare graduates for specialist roles as Library Technicians (with IT focus), Public Library Technicians, Corporate Library Technicians or School Library Technicians.

The challenges of ensuring the right focus and scope of the training package are reflected in the higher education sector, with debate about the appropriate curriculum to develop professional librarians. There is currently a national research project underway, funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC), which aims to examine the education requirements for the contemporary LIS sector. All universities that offer a program in library and information science are collaborating in the project. Three sub-projects will explore LIS education from the perspectives of students and graduates, LIS educators and employers. The project, entitled 'Re-conceptualising and re-positioning Australian library and information science education for the twenty-first century' is supported by a website (<http://www.liseducation.org.au>). A conference session to report on the project will also be held at the ALIA Access 2010 Conference in Brisbane from 1-3 September 2010.

It is anticipated that research findings from this higher education project will impact on paraprofessional education. With the 2010 Library Technician Educators' meeting to be hosted by ALIA in Brisbane, immediately prior to the ALIA Access 2010 Conference, there will be an opportunity for teaching staff to develop a clearer understanding of the potential impact of the research. The ALIA Education and Professional Development Standing Committee, which advises the Board of Directors on issues associated with LIS education, has determined that a review of the core knowledge, skills and attributes policy (ALIA, 2005a) will be deferred until the conclusion of the ALTC study. The review of the core knowledge and skills to be undertaken in 2011 will flow into a review of the course recognition processes undertaken by the Association.

4.2 Development of the national training package

Library technician educators in Victoria have taken a proactive approach to the need to review the national training package on an ongoing basis. At their collaborative moderation meetings, the group has agreed on a program of rolling review of the subjects offered. The process involves identifying the need for revision, developing recommendations and communicating with IBSA.

4.3 Education and training

One of the more challenging issues to be considered by stakeholders in the field of library technician education is the focus of the courses offered. While the majority of courses are offered by colleges of TAFE, there is a growing interest from RTOs as providers. While it is not possible to generalise, the colleges of TAFE, especially those operating in the dual TAFE/university environment, arguably subscribe to a philosophy of 'education' which may develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes for a broad range of employment contexts. Some providers have indicated that their key role is in the area of 'training', where the knowledge and skills are acquired for one specific workplace role. While both situations are equally legitimate, the distinctions evident in the learning outcomes need to be noted and better understood by students and by employers.

4.4 Widened participation

A key element of the Bradley Review of higher education (DEEWR, 2009), which has encouraged a more integrated tertiary education sector, is the need for widened participation in education and training. There is a particular interest in increasing the participation of Indigenous people, people from low socio-economic backgrounds and those from regional and remote areas. There will also be increased pressure for RTOs to provide on-the-job training that is directly aligned with organisational workforce development plans. The inclusion of a more diverse cohort of students in the library technician programs will naturally impact on the need for adequate staffing and resourcing.

Closely linked to the issue of widening access to the courses is the role of the Productivity Placements Program. This program is funded by the Federal Government as part of the Skilling Australia for the Future initiative, with the goal of providing subsidised places both to job seekers and to current workers wishing to gain a qualification or to upgrade their skills. As the PPP program is directly linked to areas of 'skills shortages', it is important for the LIS sector to strategically consider its future workforce requirements and to work to ensure that the Diploma of Library/Information Studies is included in the PPP program.

4.5 Contestability

The issue of funding to the VET sector is high on the Federal Government agenda. A comprehensive overview of funding issues was prepared by the TAFE sector interest group of the Australian Education Union (AEU) (Forward, 2008). One of the main initiatives is to reduce the level of guaranteed funding to TAFE, with an associated increase in competition for funding to the VET sector. "There is a proposal in South

Australian to consider a funding model that contains of 50% contestability by 2012. The Victorian proposal is to plan to move to full competition and full contestability of all VET funds in the next three years" (Forward, 2008, p.2). A fully market driven sector, where funding is directly related to student numbers, will potentially have an impact on low-enrolment courses, especially in non-metropolitan areas. The new model for VET funding also sees significant changes in the level of fees charged to students and their eligibility for subsidies or loans. It has been noted that the Diploma and Advanced Diploma courses are likely to be affected significantly in the short term.

One particular issue is the availability of loans to students who have already attained a university degree, but are seeking a vocational qualification. It is understood that these students may not be eligible for a loan through VET FEE-HELP as the course is at a lower AQF level than their current qualifications. As a number of people choose to study to become a library technician rather than becoming a librarian through a postgraduate university course, the increase in fees for the Diploma course and the opportunity for support through higher education FEE-HELP arrangements may well result in different study choices, with fewer people with university degrees opting for the VET qualification.

4.6 eLearning and online delivery

It was noted that a number of courses currently offered in face-to-face mode were planning to move to online delivery. This will certainly increase the opportunity for competition between providers, especially if government policy results in national, rather than state-based, opportunities for competition.

A successful move to eLearning to support local and remote students requires specific knowledge and skills on the part of teaching staff and different strategies for engaging students. The resource implications need to be considered, not only in terms of the eLearning infrastructure needed, but also in terms of staff development and workload management. At the same time, it is believed that there is greater potential for collaboration between the RTOs, notwithstanding the move to greater contestability within the market. The LIS sector would benefit from partnerships that encourage innovative practice that can be shared, through learning resources and reusable learning objects, as well as student interaction across the different programs.

As the various institutions begin to introduce new learning management systems (LMS) to support their online learning strategies, there is scope for the development of a community of practice that will foster greater sharing of knowledge and experiences and provide opportunities for mentoring.

4.7 ALIA course recognition

The survey of ALIA members in 2008 reported that the recognition of qualifications and courses was ranked as the most important work undertaken by ALIA and that it performed well in this area (ALIA, 2009). However, the cost to the Association is high: the library technician course recognition program in 2009 encompassed 17 site visits, with the need to fund the travel and accommodation costs for the panel members. The program was the main work priority for the ALIA Education Manager, with an estimated six months of full-time work allocated to the course recognition activities of receiving and managing documentation, communication with educators, participating in the site visits and drafting, reviewing and editing the 17 course recognition reports.

Each local panel member was supported by their employer, giving at least one week of work time to teleconferences, meetings, the review of documentation and the site visit. Some local panel members were involved with the review of three or four institutions. The Chair of the panel served in a volunteer capacity for more than four months. The cost of the program was in excess of \$100,000 with an equivalent amount provided through the pro bono contribution of employers.

The current model of course recognition sees the costs of the process covered by the Association. As a membership organisation, it is argued that it is imperative that the members' investment in course recognition sees a strong return through membership growth. At present, despite the interest in Diploma students enrolling in ALIA recognised courses, library technician membership represents only a very small proportion of the total ALIA membership. The ALIA Board of Directors needs to consider strategies to develop the membership (both professional and paraprofessional) to reflect the high level of interest in and support for the maintenance of professional standards for the LIS sector.

The course recognition program undertaken by ALIA in 2009 has resulted in institutions being recognised for a five year term, or gaining provisional recognition that will require the RTOs to work towards improving specific aspects of the course over a two year period. This means that ALIA will be required to re-assess the provisionally recognised programs in 2011, and the fully recognised programs in 2014. ALIA has also been advised that some new library technician courses plan to seek recognition during the course of 2010-2011. The issue of appropriate resourcing of the course recognition process for both the institution and the Association is of critical importance, especially in respect of the cost of the site visits.

On 21 January 2010, a meeting of academic staff was convened by ALIA to discuss the course recognition requirements for the professional courses offered by Australian universities. The higher education sector, as with the VET sector, is subject to other forms of quality assurance, for example through faculty and school reviews, as well as the audits conducted by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). The focus of the meeting was a preliminary review of the course recognition process for librarianship courses. It was agreed at the meeting that:

- The term 'course recognition' should be replaced by the term 'course accreditation'. The recommendation to change the terminology will be presented to the ALIA Board of Directors by the ALIA Education and Professional Development Standing Committee.
- The cycle for course accreditation will be reduced from seven years to five years. The ALIA Education and Professional Development Standing Committee will present the ALIA Board of Directors with an outline of the budget implications of the change.

A number of aspects of the higher education documentation were examined and discussed in detail. It is anticipated that the revisions, to be refined in the coming months, will stimulate further changes to the documentation used by library technician educators. The panel's own quality assurance processes, discussed in Section 5 of this report, provided constructive feedback on the documentation and the process. Strategies for continuous improvement will be discussed at the next meeting of library technician educators to be hosted by ALIA in late August 2010.

4.8 Summary

The issues discussed in this section relate to the complexity of the vocational education and training environment in Australia at the current time. There is every likelihood that new issues that will impact on library technician education will continue to emerge. As the Association responsible for maintaining educational and professional standards in the LIS sector, ALIA will monitor emerging developments and work in collaboration with library technician educators to strive to meet the challenges at the local and national levels.

By encouraging the community of library technician educators and hosting an annual professional development meeting, ALIA hopes to encourage open communication and to invite other stakeholders, such as VET managers and LIS employers, to work together to ensure that paraprofessional education remains relevant and viable.

5

EVALUATION OF THE ALIA COURSE RECOGNITION PROGRAM 2009

As the approach taken by ALIA for course recognition in 2009, to review all Diploma courses across Australia in a short space of time, was a new model, it was important to undertake a process of quality assurance to evaluate the program of activities.

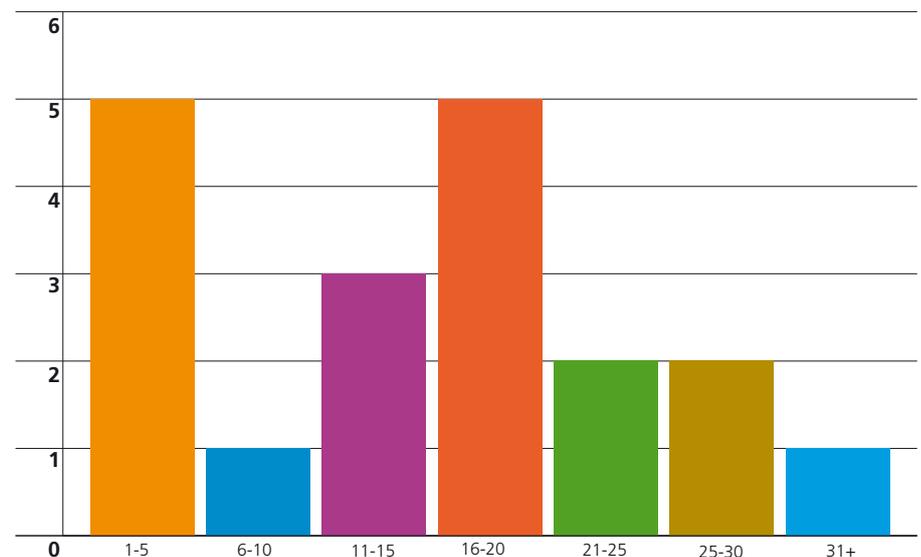
The panel specifically sought to obtain feedback on the effectiveness and relevancy of the course recognition process. Two questionnaires were developed using the online tool Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com), one for the course coordinators and one for the local panel members. It was stressed in the introduction to the survey that the responses would be completely anonymous and confidential. The response rate was excellent, with all course coordinators and panel members responding to the survey; the course coordinator response rate was in fact 112%, with 19 responses received from the 17 target respondents. However, given the anonymity of the responses, it was not possible to identify and remove the duplicated data. There were 9 valid responses for the panel member survey.

5.1 Course coordinators

One objective of the survey was to capture demographic data about the course coordinators themselves. Almost all respondents were employed in a full time capacity with the title of course coordinator or equivalent (n=17). As the annual library technician educator meetings hosted by ALIA had provided anecdotal evidence about the considerable experience of course coordinators, the survey allowed the collection of accurate data. The majority of respondents reported (n=14) having more than 10 years experience in the vocational education and training sector, with around a quarter (n=5) having more than 20 years experience (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 Years of experience in the VET sector: Course coordinators

How many years have you worked in the vocational education sector?



During the site visits, many institutional managers reported that they were impressed by the high levels of academic qualifications of the teaching staff in the library technician programs. While it is a requirement that teachers should have, at the minimum, the level of qualification of the course they are teaching, i.e. the Diploma in Library/ Information Services, the survey revealed that the majority of the teachers had university degrees, many with both undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications (Figure 5.2).

It was noted that it was common for library technician educators to hold an academic qualification in education. However, a number of course coordinators expressed concern that there was a trend in many institutions to require teachers to attain a vocational teaching qualification (e.g. Certificate IV in Training and Assessment), with their academic qualifications in education disregarded in terms of appointments and remuneration.

The survey asked a series of questions about the documentation process of ALIA course recognition. There were some concerns expressed by the course coordinator respondents about the timeliness of the information and materials sent to them, as a result of being scheduled as one of the earlier site visits or due to staffing changes within the institution. It was also found that the format of the documentation presented challenges, particularly with the requirement to enter data in a PDF document. Generally, the documentation was found to be relevant (n=11), although 5 respondents reported concerns about it. It was suggested that a checklist could help course coordinators collate the required documents as there was some confusion when interpreting ALIA's requirements.

There were 87% of respondents who agreed or agreed strongly that the course recognition questionnaire was relevant to the process (Figure 5.3). At the library technician educators meeting hosted by ALIA in 2008, the focus of the workshop was to collaboratively revise the course recognition questionnaire, so that the Panel found it encouraging to find this work had had a positive impact. There was a positive response (63% agree or strongly agree) to the question about the value of the Educators Professional Development Day as part of the process.

Figure 5.2 Educational background: Course coordinators

What is your educational background? Tick as many as apply.

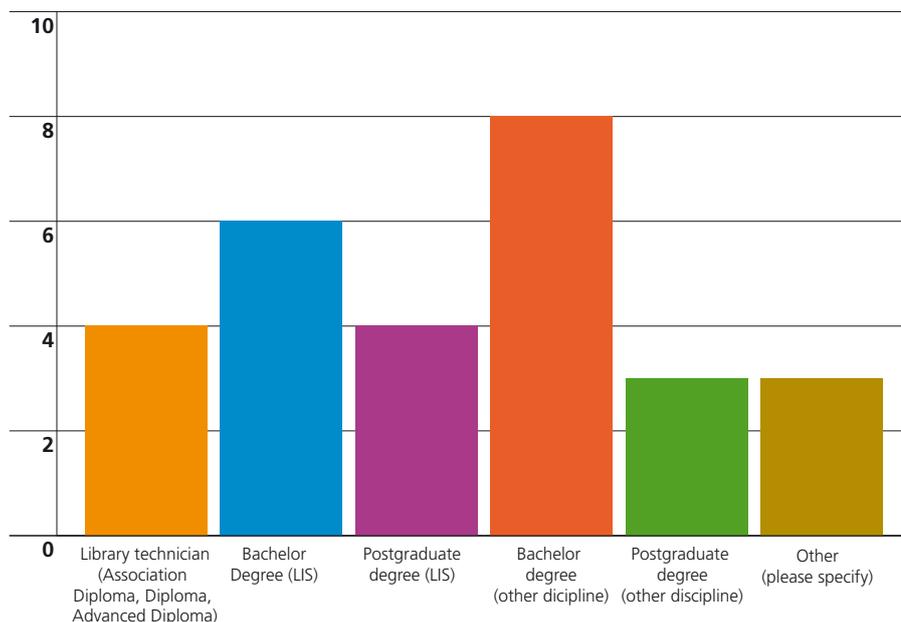


Figure 5.3 Relevancy of the course recognition questionnaire: Course coordinators

The course recognition questionnaire I had to complete prior to the site visit was relevant to the course recognition process

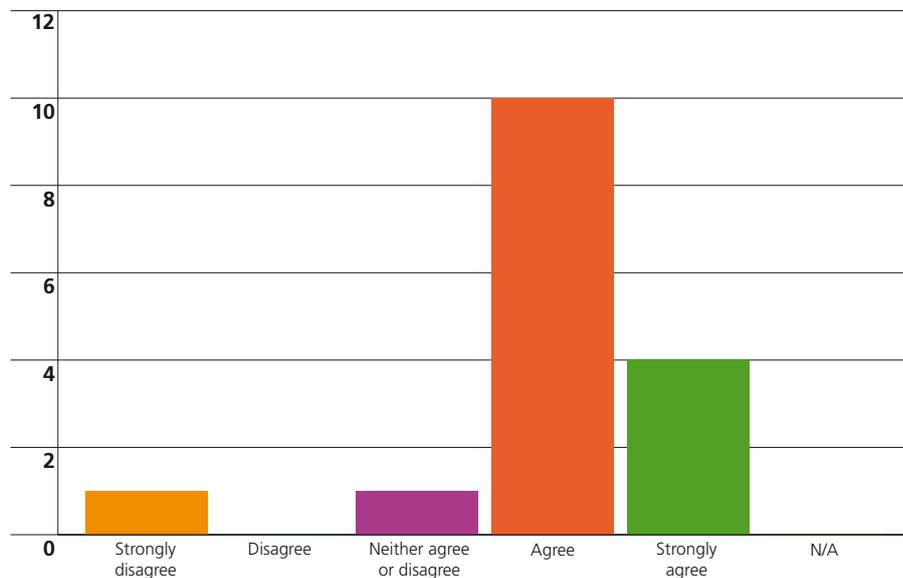
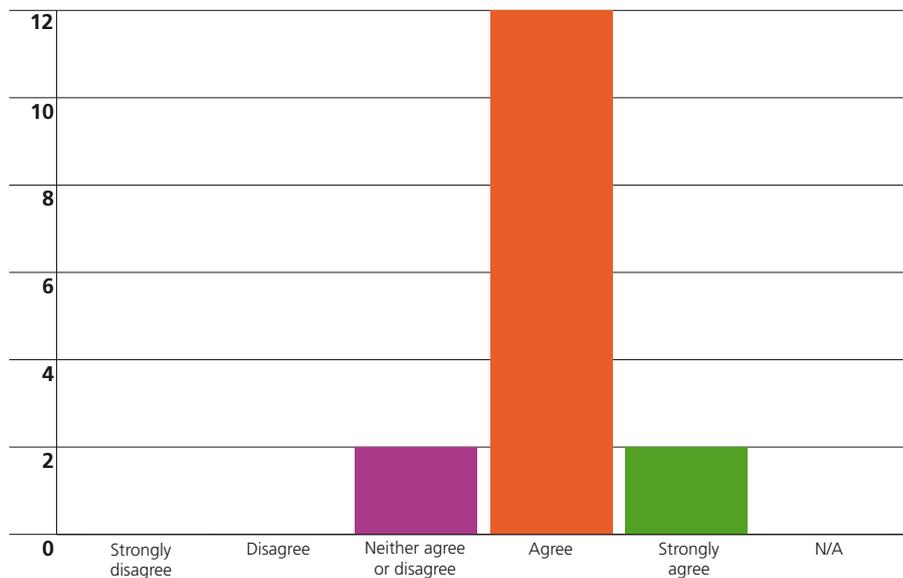


Figure 5.4 Ability to collect the evidence required by ALIA: Course coordinators

I was able to provide the ALIA Course Recognition Panel with the evidence required to complete the course recognition process



Respondents reported that there were no significant challenges in providing the evidence required by ALIA (Figure 5.4).

In terms of communication channels, the library technician educators' teleconferences were regarded highly, with 68% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that they were helpful. There was less support for the library technician educator bulletins, with half the respondents responding positively (50%) and the remainder neutral (38%) or negative (12%).

Diverging views were expressed about the value of the wiki as a forum to support the process, with 44% agreeing it was helpful, 44% disagreeing and 6% neutral. However, respondents overwhelmingly found that staff in ALIA were able to provide answers promptly to any queries they had.

A series of questions were asked about the extent to which the site visit meetings with different stakeholders were found to be valuable. Specific questions were asked about the meetings with teaching staff, students and graduates, employers, faculty or centre management, and the director of CEO. Respondents reported positively on the value of these meetings (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Value of the meetings with stakeholder groups: Course coordinators

Meeting	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree/disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Teaching Staff	0%	0%	6%	44%	50%
Students/graduates	0%	0%	6%	50%	38%
Employers	0%	0%	6%	44%	44%
Faculty/centre management		6%	6%	31%	44%
Director/CEO		6%	6%	63%	19%

Comments provided by the course coordinators emphasised the value to the teaching team for the meetings with the institution's management:

This was very good for the status of our team

Aside from the value to ALIA it was a chance to bring a small section within the college to the attention of management.

This was true in terms of highlighting both our strengths and problems.

Some course coordinators expressed concern about their ability to effectively invite students and graduates to participate in the meetings, requesting that ALIA prepare a set of guidelines to help them in future.

It was found that the course recognition process conducted by the ALIA Panel was an effective approach to the review of programs (Figure 5.5) and they were carried out by the Panel in a professional manner (Figure 5.6).

Figure 5.5 Effective approach to course recognition: Course coordinators

I believe that the Course Recognition process undertaken by the ALIA Panel is the most effective way of evaluating the Library Technician course

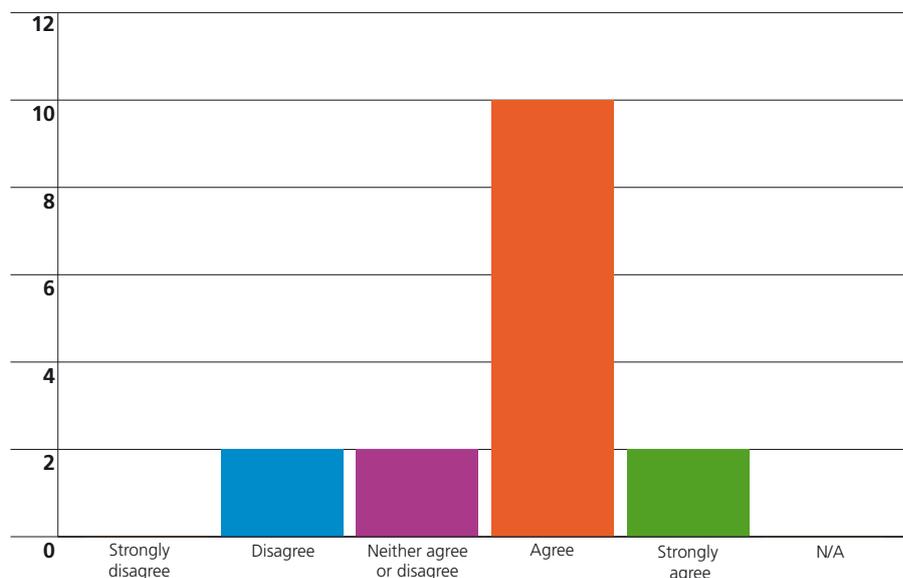
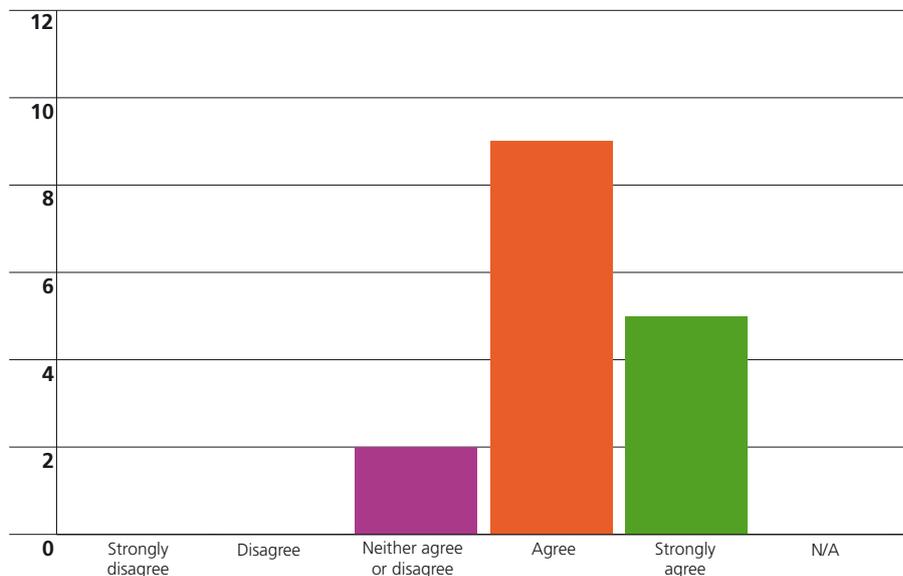


Figure 5.6 Professional approach of the ALIA Course Recognition Panel: Course Coordinators

I believe that the Course Recognition process undertaken by the ALIA Panel was managed in a professional way



Respondents noted:

[The Panel was] professional and courteous, and sensitive to local issues. TAFE management was impressed by the panel's approach to the recognition process. I found the panel to be polite but clear as to their needs. Questions were perceptive and probing but non adversarial.

Comments from respondents provided some personal viewpoints with ideas for informing future practice:

Having been through the previous process as well (quite some time ago) I think this process has the robustness to give us the necessary data for AQTF and internal audits as well as strengthen our position within our Faculty, having shown off our professionalism.

Given that there has been a considerable gap between recognition visits and the requirements may have changed I feel this round of visits was an opportunity to learn from the process and put in place guidelines for the recognition process that will be available via the ALIA website for all library technician educators, particularly those who are newly appointed to positions and would value such guidelines. There would be value in having a long term understanding of the recognition process and putting in place strategies and procedures at the local level that would contribute to the preparation for preparation of evidence and site visits.

The recent site visits will provide an excellent benchmark. I am not sure one could say that the methods used in 2009 were the most effective way of evaluating the LT courses, but they certainly will provide data for analysis.

In response to the question about the preferred frequency of visits, two thirds of course coordinators (n=10) felt a five year period would be useful, one quarter (n=4) indicated a seven year period and one respondent suggested a 10 year period. Interestingly this could be contrasted with the local Panel members' views, with half the respondents preferring a five year period (n=4) and half a three year period (n=4).

Specific feedback was provided about strategies to improve the course recognition process. The main focus was the fact that collecting and collating the required information was onerous, so that consideration could be given to sampling different aspects of the course. Overall, there was an interest in having "Less paper – more electronic provision of documentation".

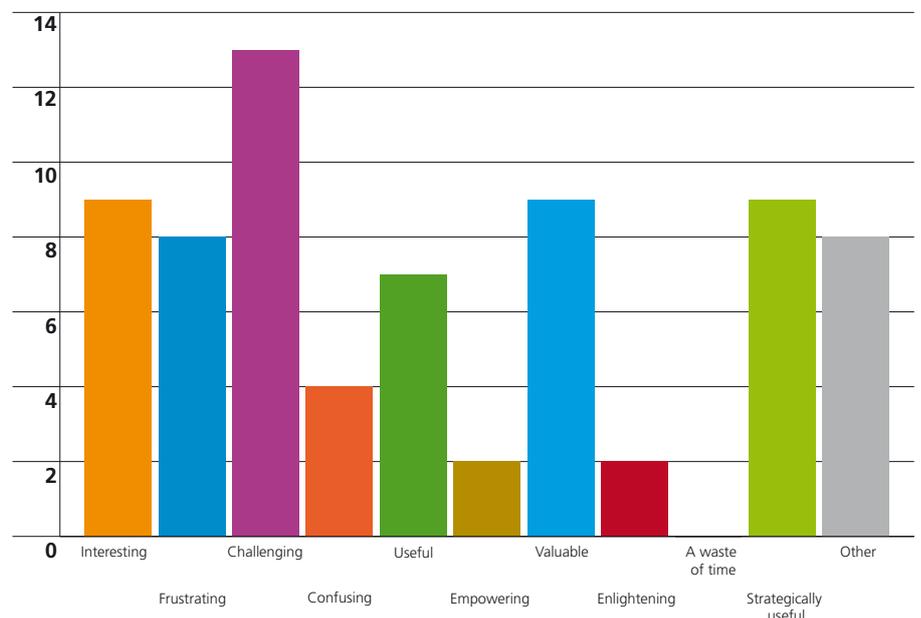
However, it was acknowledged that the experience had led to a strong level of preparedness for future internal and AQTF audits. One respondent noted that there was a sense of the site visit being a marketing/promotion activity for ALIA, although it was also acknowledged that stakeholders had gained a deeper understanding of the role and responsibilities of the Association in monitoring professional standards of industry practice.

To conclude the survey, a question was posed about how respondents had felt about the course recognition process (Figure 5.7).

The strongest emotions recorded were that it was "challenging", "interesting", "valuable" and "strategically useful". Importantly, no one felt the process was a waste of time.

Figure 5.7 Feelings about involvement in the course recognition process: Course coordinators

Overall, I found my involvement in the ALIA course recognition process: (tick as many as apply)



5.2 Local panel members

The local panel members were selected through their role and experience as an established library technician with a strong understanding of the local market for paraprofessional staff. Almost 80% also had a university degree in addition to the library technician qualification they held. One third of the respondents (n=3) had worked in the LIS sector for between six and ten years, while five people had over 20 years experience in the sector. Local panel members were drawn from academic libraries (4), National/State Libraries (3) and public libraries (1) and school libraries (1). All were employed in a full-time capacity.

Local panel members confirmed that they had a clear understanding of the role (56% strongly agree, 33% agree), receiving prompt replies to any questions they had. The teleconferences were found to be very valuable (78% strongly agree, 11% agree) and the wiki was helpful (44% strongly agree, 44% agree). It was felt that there was clear communication between the panel members, with a sense that there should be an opportunity to build on the knowledge and skills gained as a panel member:

I was well briefed before and during the process and felt completely comfortable in understanding my role.

[Initially] I was hesitant in my role and felt better after speaking with other local panel members. I would like the local panel member to be given the opportunity to participate in the next recognition process also as I would feel more comfortable with my role and I feel I would be able to contribute more appropriately.

Panel members indicated that they found the review of the documentation to be challenging and indicated they would like to see a more streamlined approach to the collection and collation of materials.

All panel members found the meetings held at the site visits to be valuable, especially the meetings with teaching staff (67% strongly agree, 22% agree):

This was a critical part of the process. This was important as it helped to get a feel for the people involved – watching their mannerisms and hearing them discuss their work, all give a strong indication of their commitment and enthusiasm for their work (or lack thereof). Absolutely. Wow, the power of body language and team dynamics. Would also like to meet with them individually but realise the time constraints.

While there were concerns about the meetings with students and graduates in terms of how the participants were selected, the value of the meetings was recognised (45% strongly agree, 45% agree):

This was very useful especially as no staff were present. The students found it a “safe” environment to express their views. Students’ enthusiasm for the course was helpful in determining the value of the course. The meeting provided us with the opportunity to conduct candid discussions with the students to gauge their opinions on the relevancy and appropriateness of the courses studied and their mode of delivery.

It was felt there should be greater objectivity in the selection of participants for the student/graduate meetings, with scope to develop some guidelines for future events. The local panel members stressed that it was important to seek employer representation from all LIS sectors; again it was perceived that the meetings could benefit from a more objective approach to inviting employers from the region.

The panel needs more control over selection of student/graduates and employer representatives so the TAFE/RTO does not select only those guaranteed to provide glowing recommendations. It was blatantly obvious this was the case.

It was suggested that there should be more regular communication between educators and employers on an ongoing basis, as proposed through the course advisory committee concept or through ALIA channels.

In my opinion, regular moderation meetings, or opportunities to exchange ideas and workshop issues in a facilitated environment would be beneficial for the educators.

There was interest in the impact that the ALIA course recognition process may have had on employers:

I would be interested to know if employers involved in the 2009 visit have subsequently recognised the training and therefore value to their organisation and actively sought to employ library techs as a result. i.e. the profile of library techs was immediately raised? I suspect this might have happened locally?

There was strong support for the strategic value of the meetings with the faculty/centre management (45% strongly agree, 45% agree) and the Director/CEO (63% strongly agree, 25% agree).

The local panel members reported positively on the opportunity to be involved in the ALIA course recognition process. They found that the industry perspective was an important aspect of monitoring the quality of library technician education programs (50% strongly agree, 50% agree):

This focus has impressed me greatly and I really feel it is important for technicians to know that this was done.

How else would a course be evaluated except by practitioners who know what is required?

ALIA's activities were seen to be conducted in a professional manner (strongly agree 75%, agree 25%):

The process employed for the course recognition was rigorous, but fairly and impartially employed and implemented.

This was a very well thought out and actioned process - the professionalism was apparent from the very beginning

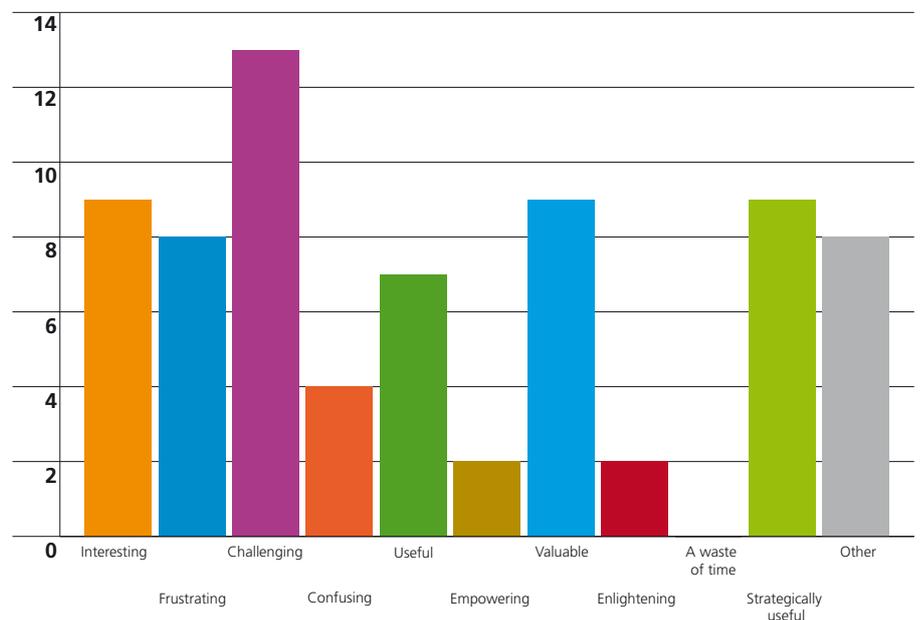
In conclusion, the local Panel members echoed the course coordinators' responses that the process was, for them, "interesting", "challenging" and "valuable". They also found it "enlightening" (Figure 5.8).

All course coordinators and local panel members are thanked for their contribution to the quality assurance processes through their survey responses.

The challenge for the ALIA Education and Professional Development Standing Committee is to consider the strengths of the model for course recognition undertaken in 2009 and to work towards finding ways to maximise the benefits to all stakeholders. The value of the process to the maintenance of professional standards in the LIS sector must be clearly communicated. Additionally, options should be investigated to reduce the administrative load for institutions and the Association.

Figure 5.8 Feelings about involvement in the course recognition process: Local Panel members

Overall, I found my involvement in the ALIA course recognition process: (tick as many as apply)



6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2009, ALIA undertook an ambitious program of course recognition activities by undertaking the review and evaluation of 17 institutions that offer the Diploma of Library/Information Services.

The program of site visits took more than 13 months to complete, with a demanding schedule of report writing that ensued. Each institution received a draft report to which they responded; it was then refined for the final report which presented tailored recommendations for enhancing the course. The course coordinators came together in October 2009 to share their knowledge and experience and to consider how they might work together for the benefit not only of their own course, but for the benefit of the future of library technician education in Australia.

This report has presented a 'state of the nation' picture of library technician education in Australia in 2009. The details of the national Museum, Library/Information Services Training Package opened the discussion on vocational education and training in the LIS sector, with a brief report on the role of IBSA as the responsible Industry Skills Council and an introduction to the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF). The background to the ALIA course recognition process provided the context for the 2009 program itself.

The framework for course recognition encompasses the assessment of courses against the key criteria of course design, curriculum content, assessment, staffing, resourcing, quality assurance mechanisms and infrastructure. The body of the report discussed each of these criteria from the perspectives of ALIA policy and the key dimensions of each criterion delineated according to variations in current practice and, wherever possible, examples of best practice. The report highlights that, despite the philosophy and principles of the national training package, there is considerable diversity of practice across the 17 different library technician courses in this country.

Significantly, the meetings conducted during the site visits revealed a number of critical issues that were likely to impact on library technician education in the future. These issues, including the focus of core knowledge and skills for the LIS sector, the development of the national training package, the tensions between 'education' and 'training', the policy imperative of widened participation in education and training, changes to models of funding, eLearning initiatives, and changes to ALIA course recognition policy and practice have been outlined. There are arguably no quick and easy solutions to these issues: some lie beyond ALIA's immediate sphere of influence, while others arguably relate to the Association's core business and require informed debate at many levels.

The ALIA panel undertook its own quality assurance review as part of the 2009 program. The findings from the review will inform future course recognition activities, including:

- Ongoing review of the course recognition questionnaire
- Timelines for the preparation and submission of the documentation
- Strategies for the progressive collection of documents and evidence
- Succession planning for teaching staff involved in the course recognition process at each institution
- Recruitment of and succession planning for panel members.

In summary, the course recognition program undertaken by ALIA was multifaceted, multilayered and extremely demanding. The commitment to planning, data collection, participation in the site visits, and the preparation of reports has taken over a year, with more than 350 people involved in the

whole process. It is hoped that this 'state of the nation' report will contribute to a wider understanding of the importance of professional standards in the LIS sector and that aggregated findings from the program will help guide future practice.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that ALIA works with library technician educators, employers and Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA) to review and revise the national training package to ensure it meets current and future workforce requirements in the LIS sector.
2. It is recommended that library technician educators and employers are fully aware of the value of and contribute to the Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA) Escan program in order to ensure a clear understanding of the skill needs in the LIS sector and the changes in the external environment that will impact on the paraprofessional workforce.
3. It is recommended that ALIA and library technician educators monitor developments in the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) to minimise any duplication in course evaluation and to strengthen the industry focus in ALIA course accreditation.
4. It is recommended that ALIA and library technician educators monitor developments in the area of funding and study fees in the vocational education and training sector to ensure that students have affordable and equitable access to library technician courses.
5. It is recommended that the ALIA works with the LIS sector seeks to have the Diploma of Library/Information Services included in the Productivity Placements Program (PPP).
6. It is recommended that the change of terminology from 'course recognition' to 'course accreditation' is adopted for the evaluation of library technician courses.
7. It is recommended that ALIA works with library technician educators to review, revise and improve the strategies and processes for library technician course accreditation.
8. It is recommended that ALIA monitors the research project entitled 'Re-conceptualising and re-positioning Australian library and information science education for the twenty-first century' funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) to consider the impact of its findings on library technician education and training.
9. It is recommended that library technician educators commit to and participate in an active community of practice to inform and guide best practice in library technician education.
10. It is recommended that ALIA supports the library technician educators' community of practice through hosting regular teleconferences, wiki and annual professional development meetings.
11. It is recommended that library technician educators note the examples of best practice relating to the ALIA criteria for course accreditation, as presented in the present report, with the goal of striving for continuous improvement in the Diploma of Library/ Information Services courses they offer.
12. It is recommended that ALIA and library technician educators work together to increase the involvement of employers in library technician education, for example through communication with institutional members of the Association, national and regional industry forums, course advisory committees, work placements, site visits, guest speakers and institutional/industry partnerships.
13. It is recommended that library technician courses encourage students to become committed to lifelong learning, with the opportunity to develop appropriate career pathways in the LIS sector, including articulation into professional courses offered by universities.
14. It is recommended that RTOs provide teaching staff with the opportunities for professional development that will ensure continuous improvement to the quality of library technician courses.
15. It is recommended that library technician educators work with their institutions to develop strategies to ensure effective succession planning for teaching staff to ensure the future viability of courses.

REFERENCES

- Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) (2005a). *Library and information sector: core knowledge, skills and attributes*. Retrieved December 30, 2009, from <http://www.alia.org.au/policies/core.knowledge.html>
- Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) (2005b). *Courses in library and information management*. Retrieved December 30, 2009, from <http://www.alia.org.au/policies/courses.html>
- Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) (2008). *ALIA recognition of courses: criteria for the recognition of first award course in library and information management at librarian and library technician level*. Retrieved December 30, 2009, from <http://www.alia.org.au/education/courses/criteria.html>
- Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) (2009). *ALIA member survey 2008*. Retrieved December 30, 2009, from <http://www.alia.org.au/membersurvey2008>.
- Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) (2003). *Meta-analysis: VET workforce*. Retrieved December 30, 2009, from http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/publications_resources/profiles/anta/profile/meta_analysis_vet_workforce.htm
- Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) (2004). *CUL04 Museum and Library/Information Services Training Package. CD rendition booklet*. Retrieved December 30, 2009, from http://www.atpl.net.au/sample/pdf/atpsample_9292.pdf
- Australian Qualifications Framework Council (2007). *Diploma guideline*. In: *AQF Handbook*. 4th ed. Retrieved December 30, 2009, from http://www.aqf.edu.au/Portals/0/Documents/Handbook/AQF_Handbook_37-50.pdf
- Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) (2007). *AQTF 2007: Essential standards for registration*. Retrieved on December 30, 2009, from http://www.training.com.au/documents/aqtf2k7_ess-std-reg_final2.pdf
- Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) (2008). *AQTF 2007: Excellence criteria for RTOs*. Retrieved on December 30, 2009, from http://www.training.com.au/documents/aqtf2k7Excellence_Criteria_RTO.pdf
- Bowman, L., Clayton, B., Bateman, A., Knight B. et al (2003). *Recognition of prior learning in the vocational education and training sector. Adelaide: NCVER, 2003*. Retrieved December 30, 2009, from <http://www.ncver.edu.au/research/commercial/op287.pdf>
- Dalton, P. & Levinson, K. (2000). An investigation of LIS qualifications throughout the world, *66th IFLA Council and General Conference, Jerusalem, Israel, 13-18 August 2000*. Retrieved on December 30, 2009, from <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla66/papers/061-161e.htm>
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) (2009). *Transforming Australia's higher education system [Bradley Review]*. Retrieved on December 30, 2009, from <http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Pages/TransformingAustraliasHESystem.aspx>
- Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) (2006). *Employability skills: from framework to practice. An introductory guide for trainers and assessors*. Retrieved December 30, 2009, from www.training.com.au/documents/Employability%20Skills_From%20Framework%20to%20Practices.pdf
- Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) (2007). *Training Package Development Handbook. Part 2, section 3: Model assessment guidelines*. Retrieved December 30, 2009, from http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/publications_resources/profiles/anta/documents/a/assessment_guidelines_pdf.htm
- Dickie, M. et al. (2004). *Enhancing the capability of VET professionals: final report*. Brisbane: ANTA.
- Dymock, D. & Billett, S. (2009). *Aligning VET research, policy and practice*. Retrieved December 30, 2009, from <http://avetra.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/Ray-Barker-Report-final-version.pdf>
- Forward, P. (2008). *Competition, contestability and TAFE: discussion paper*. Retrieved December 30, 2009, from http://www.qtu.asn.au/paper_contdisc2008.pdf
- Hallam, G. & Genoni, P. (2009). Library technician course recognition: meeting the challenge of a distributed national education program. *Australian Library Journal*, 58(3), 233-249.
- Hallam, G., Partridge, H. & McAllister, L. (2004). LIS education in changing times. *Australian Law Librarian*, 12(2), 11-32.
- Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA) (2007). *Museum, Library/Information Services Training Package (CUL04)*. Retrieved December 30, 2009, from <http://www.ibsa.org.au/training-packages/by-name/museum-and-library-information-services-cul04.aspx>
- Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA) (2007a). *Employability skills and the CUL04 Museum and Library/Information Services Training Package*. Retrieved December 30, 2009, from <http://www.ibsa.org.au/Portals/>

ibsa.org.au/docs/Resources/Employability%20Skills /cul04/cul04%20em%20skills/CUL04_Employability_Skills_Booklet.pdf

Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA) (2008). *General information on training packages: frequently asked questions (FAQs)*. Retrieved December 30, 2009, from <http://www.ibsa.org.au/training-packages/by-name/museum-and-library-information-services-cul04.aspx>

Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA) (2009). *Environment scan*. Retrieved December 30, 2009, from <http://www.ibsa.org.au/news-and-projects/environment-scan.aspx>

Learning Australia (2008). *Issues and options paper on the quality of assessment practices*. Retrieved December 30, 2009, from http://www.serviceskills.com.au/dmdocuments/issues_and_options_paper_for_consultation.pdf

National Centre for Vocational Education and Training (NCVER) (2004). *Profiling the vocational education and training workforce*. Adelaide: ANTA. Retrieved December 30, 2009, from <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1522.html>

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2008). *Learning for jobs: OECD reviews of vocational education and training. Australia*. Retrieved on December 30, 2009, from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/27/11/41631383.pdf>

training.com.au (2009). *Employability skills*. Retrieved December 30, 2009, from <http://www.training.com.au/portal/site/public/menuitem.bb3c2351a68fdbff49be0a1c17a62dbc>

APPENDIX 1

List of panel members (with employment and professional roles)

Dr Gillian Hallam AFALIA

Adjunct Professor
Faculty of Science and Technology
Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane QLD

Dianne Walton-Sonda AALIA

Education Manager
Australian Library and Information
Association
Deakin ACT

Alison Carter AALIA

Assistant Director
Business Intelligence Unit
Department of Human Services
Canberra ACT

Trish D'Arcy ALIATec

Library Technician
Lending Services Document Delivery
Australian Catholic University
Brisbane QLD

Lynette Frazer AALIA(CP)

Acquisitions Officer
Avondale College
Corranbong NSW

Marilyn Horne ALIATec

Serials Manager
Scotch College
Perth WA

Diane Mathieson AALIA

Cultural Customer Service Officer
for Cultural Programs
Albury Library Museum
Albury NSW

Jane McGregor AALIA

Senior Librarian
Hobart Lending Library
State Library of Tasmania
Hobart TAS

Shauna Miller ALIATec

Multicultural Co-operative Coordinator
Public Libraries Services
State Library of New South Wales
Sydney NSW

Robyn Nagel AALIA

Acting Waite Library Services Supervisor
University of Adelaide
Adelaide SA

Gail Schmidt ALIATec

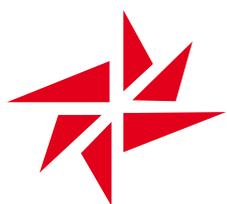
Projects and Systems Development Team
Leader
State Library of Victoria
Melbourne VIC

Patricia Whalan AALIA

Serials Manager
Northern Territory Library
Darwin NT

Sandi Wooton ALIATec

Cataloguer
Access Services Team
University of Wollongong
Wollongong NSW



Australian
Library and
Information
Association