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Aligning policy with practice: An evaluation of vocational education and training in the library and information services sector

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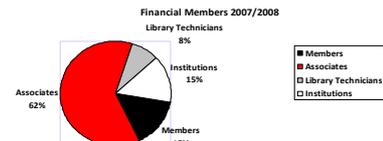Australian Library and Information Association, Canberra

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The LIS Sector

Total workforce of 29,100 (ABS 2008)

  12,300 librarians
  8,800 library technicians
  8,000 library assistants

ALIA Membership (2008)

Financial Members 2007/2008

- Library Technicians 8%
- Institutions 15%
- Associates 62%
- Members 15%

Legend:
- Members
- Associates
- Library Technicians
- Institutions

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Recognition of library technician courses

- 1970 First paraprofessional course introduced in Melbourne

- By mid 1970s, need for consistent standards across States/Territories

- 1976 Library Association of Australia (LAA) published *Guidelines for the Education of Library Technicians*

- 1977 *Statement on the Recognition of Library Technician Courses*

- 1978 Formal course recognition commenced New membership category for library technicians

- 2008 19 paraprofessional courses in Australia
    - 15 TAFE institutions
    - 1 online 'private' course
    - 1 undergraduate course (higher education)

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Background to the industry training package

- Museums and Library/Information Services Training Package
    - Competency standards: learning/workplace outcomes
    - Qualifications framework : Certificate/Diploma/Advanced Diploma
    - Version 1: 1999; Version 2: 2007

- ALIA had significant input into the development of the training package

- ALIA's education policies underpin the philosophies and values of LIS education (revised in 2005):
    - *Library and information sector: Core knowledge, skills and attributes*
    - *Courses in library and information management*
    - *ALIA's role in education of library and information professionals* http://www.alia.org.au/policies/

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Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF)

- Vocational education and training: Federal & State/Territory based
- AQTF: set of standards to assure 'nationally consistent, high quality training and assessment services for clients' for vocational education in Australia
    - 'Clients' : including employers and industry groups, eg ALIA
    - Beneficiaries of AQTF 2007
- Components of AQTF (2007)
    - Essential standards for registration (as RTO)
    - Standards for State and Territory Registering Bodies
    - Excellence criteria
- National Quality Indicators (2008)
    - Learner engagement
    - Employer satisfaction
    - Competency completion
- Excellence criteria
    - High quality practice and continuous improvement

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Criteria for ALIA course recognition

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

- Site visit by Course Recognition Panel
- Discussions with:
    - Teaching staff
    - Students and graduates
    - Employers
    - Institution managers

- Attendance at the ALIA Annual LT Educators' meeting

- Annual course return to collect statistical data and to monitor changes and developments at the institutions

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Library Technician Educator Workshops

- To collaboratively review concepts for teaching excellence
- To determine relevance of teaching excellence framework to their vocational education sector and their own institutions
- To consider how they could utilise the model for peer review
- 2008 Workshop
  - The ALIA criteria for course recognition
  - The content and structure of the course recognition questionnaire
  - The program for site visits, to determine mutual expectations for the visit (educators and the visiting panel).
- 2009 Workshop
  - State of the Nation – whole of industry report
  - Opportunity to discuss continuous improvement in the sector
  - Showcase examples of best practice

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ALIA Course Recognition process…

To streamline the course recognition process the following activities and events were organised:

- A series of teleconferences
- A library technician educators' wiki
- A monthly library technician educators' bulletin

Quality assurance processes: online surveys
- Library Technician Educator course coordinators
- Local panel members

Telephone interviews
- Institutional managers

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Challenges for the sector…

- How can ALIA ensure LT educator engagement with and commitment to the peer review process?
- How to build and sustain a meaningful community of practice?
- Very strong interest in site visits
- Need for positive, not negative experiences
  - Opportunity for showcasing and benchmarking
  - Consistency for evaluation purposes
  - Importance of resourcing eg
  - People: Full time positions Sessional staff, Support staff, Staff Development
  - Space: Teaching spaces, Work spaces, Online space
  - Return on investment?,
- The costs to the association versus the perceived value to the LIS sector
- 8% of ALIA membership are library technician members
- This means ca 6% of all qualified library technicians are members of ALIA (cf 33% of LIS professionals)

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Conclusions

- ALIA seeks to work collaboratively with educators and training providers, employers and practitioners to promote the development and continuous improvement of courses in library and information management

- ALIA can play role as facilitator of communication between educators

- To guide interaction through partnerships, regular forums and meetings

- The Australian LIS community needs to consider the future

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