



Librarians in the information revolution

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Library and information professionals – librarians and library technicians – are in the business of connecting their clients with the information they need and want, whether it is for work, study, or leisure. To ensure that they continue to meet the needs of their clients, library and information professionals must update and develop their knowledge and skills in the face of workplace and technological change.

Just think about some of the changes that have happened in libraries over the last years. In the past, a visit to the library was to consult mainly print-based materials – look up an encyclopedia or atlas, check the catalogue to learn what materials the library held on a particular topic, and so on. Asking the librarian for help we were often amazed at the speed with which we were directed to the most appropriate sources of information available – books, newspaper articles, journals and occasionally perhaps a sound or video cassette.

Your local library is now a vastly different place. The technological developments that enable us to store and access information electronically have impacted on libraries and the way their staff work. In a library that offers access to online resources as well as physical resources, clients expect the library and information professionals to have the skills and knowledge to connect them with the information that best meets their needs in whatever form it is available.

In an environment where new technologies are changing the ways we access information, how do library and information professionals ensure they can provide the best service to clients? As in other professions, 21st-century library and information professionals need to commit to lifelong learning so they can adapt to the changes occurring in their profession, and continue to hone their skills and develop their knowledge to meet client expectations.

What encouragement do library and information professionals receive to remain lifelong learners? The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) has always recognised that library and information professionals have a responsibility to continue to grow and develop in their profession. It has encouraged members to

undertake a program of continuing professional development (CPD) to demonstrate their commitment to lifelong learning. At local levels in particular, ALIA divisions have been supported in offering developmental activities to meet the continuing education needs of members.

But members of ALIA have increasingly sought recognition for CPD from the Association. This, they say, will provide evidence for employers, beyond initial qualifications and work experience, that they are committed to lifelong learning and development.

In January 2000 ALIA introduced a new CPD subcategory of membership for librarians and library technicians. Members that choose to participate in the scheme need to provide records indicating a total of 80 weighted hours of CPD completed over a three-year reporting period. Activities that count include a range of generic and library- and information-specific activities including professional reading, formal education and training, conference presentations, publications and the like. To maintain the credibility of the scheme, ALIA has developed a system to effectively monitor how members observe the guidelines on CPD.

An advantage of offering a formal CPD scheme is that library and information professionals know they can gain a document to show employers evidence of their learning. They are therefore more likely to want to identify and plan their professional development. In other words they will want to make their CPD count. ALIA's *Career Development Kit* is a planning document that has been designed to do just this. Available to members of the Association it enables them to set career objectives and to systematically plan and review their professional development priorities to enhance career opportunities.

But just signing up for a CPD scheme or filling in a planning document does not make a lifelong learner. Rather, these are tools that the Association has developed to assist library and information professionals to commit to lifelong learning. Systems of accessing information may change, but these professionals will maintain the skills and knowledge to connect their clients to the information they need.