Australian **Library** and **Information** Association

Guidelines for Australian VET Libraries

These guidelines were developed by ALIA in 2015, with the assistance of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Libraries Advisory Committee.

They were published as draft guidelines for comment in February 2016. After extensive feedback from the sector, they were endorsed by the VET Libraries Advisory Committee on 21 June 2016 and by the ALIA Board on 23 June 2016.

They will be reviewed by the VET Libraries Advisory Committee every two years.

These Guidelines are the latest endorsed by the VET Libraries Advisory Committee and the ALIA Board as at August 2019.

Purpose

These guidelines document core library services and good practice and are intended as operational suggestions for improving library performance. It is expected that library managers will use the guidelines in conjunction with organisational/institutional priorities and objectives, and that they will be applied within the context of local challenges and opportunities.

While the majority of vocational education and training courses are run through the public TAFE system, they are also delivered by private Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and, to a lesser extent, by universities. At the same time, some TAFE institutes have also moved into providing degree courses and higher qualifications.

These ALIA guidelines for Australian VET libraries are appropriate for TAFE institutes and private RTOs, but where higher education courses are being taught, university library guidelines and benchmarks should also be referred to[1].

Introduction

In a global knowledge economy, information skills have never been more important. The role of library and information professionals is to find, share and connect: to connect people with

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[1] CAUL. (2016). *Principles and guidelines for Higher Education libraries*. Retrieved from http://www.caul.edu.au/sites/default/files/documents/best-practice/principles-guidelines2016public.pdf

ideas, information, knowledge, resources and the broader community. Library staff are also educators, helping students build their digital and information literacy skills. Library services enable discovery and innovative thinking, and information professionals are trusted guides.

Vocational education and training (VET) libraries provide essential support for educators and students. They provide physical and print materials; electronic resources; individual and group study spaces; computers, fast internet connection and Wi-Fi; digital and information literacy support, and expert assistance from qualified library and information professionals. VET libraries make a significant contribution to learning outcomes and employability of students.

VET libraries are embracing new technologies, new resources, new services and new programs to deliver the very best student experience, whether on campus or via flexible delivery. Webinars, MOOCs, pop-up libraries, maker spaces, digital repositories, equipment loans, assistive technologies, IT support and copyright management are just a few of the services that VET libraries are already exploring.

VET libraries ensure their institutions comply with the Australian Skills Quality Authority Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015[2].

> *ASQA RTO Standards 2015, clause 1.7*

> *Learner support*
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> *1.7. The RTO determines the support needs of individual learners and provides access to the educational and support services necessary for the individual learner to meet the requirements of the training product as specified in training packages or VET accredited courses.*

Educational and support services *may include, but are not limited to:*

- *a) pre-enrolment materials*
- *b) study support and study skills programs*
- *c) language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) programs or referrals to these programs*
- *d) equipment, resources and/or programs to increase access for learners with disabilities and other learners in accordance with access and equity*
- *e) learning resource centres*
- *f) mediation services or referrals to these services*
- *g) flexible scheduling and delivery of training and assessment*
- *h) counselling services or referrals to these services*
- *i) information and communications technology (ICT) support*
- *j) learning materials in alternative formats, for example, in large print*
- *k) learning and assessment programs contextualised to the workplace*

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[2] ASQA. (2015). *Glossary to the standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015*. Retrieved from https://www.asqa.gov.au/standards/chapter-3

- *l) any other services that the RTO considers necessary to support learners to achieve competency.*

Many of these educational and support services are being provided within VET libraries.

Many course accrediting bodies also recognise the importance of access to library resources and support to the delivery of qualifications.

For libraries to be effective, they have to be well run and well resourced. Adequate funding of the library is essential to ensure its current and future role and associated functions within the organisation. Employing qualified library and information professionals ensures that management and staff have the knowledge, skills and experience to provide a high level of service. Ensuring that the library manager is part of the senior team in the organisation enables them to be part of the decision making, to demonstrate the value and impact of library services, and to make the case for continued investment in the service.

Print collections are increasingly giving way to electronic resources – journals, databases, ebooks and streamed video – and these are often secured from vendors who operate on a global scale. This requires highly developed negotiating skills to navigate the licenses, subscriptions and payment terms offered by publishers, with movements in currency exchange rates providing an additional dynamic to the purchasing process.

Investment in collections and resources is important, but the real value is when organisations employ professionals with the skills to connect students and teaching staff with the materials they need for their studies. The library must be staffed by the level and mix of professionals necessary to enable the service to contribute positively to the educational objectives of the institution.

The library provides educational services and programs which facilitate people's ability to find, evaluate and use information effectively. Library and information professionals share their research abilities and encourage students to develop their own digital and information literacy skills. The library also supports students' broader information requirements around health and wellbeing, job-seeking and other life and career issues.

VET library teams work closely with course teachers. They help teachers maintain their vocational competency, keep up-to-date with the latest advances in their field, and help them identify, source, and utilise the information and materials they need to deliver high quality, current, and relevant courses.

Library and information professionals also work alongside ICT, administrators of the learning management systems, learning support officers, disability support officers, social workers and counsellors to give every VET student – school leavers and mature students, from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds – the best chance of success. They work with other support officers to provide additional help to vulnerable students and those with special needs. They are also a vital point of connection for international students.

VET libraries enable both supported and self-paced, self-directed learning. Students have access to electronic resources and the internet, through library PCs and via Wi-Fi. Often, students find it difficult to study at home – they may not have a dedicated study space; they

may not have the devices nor the internet connection to study online, or there may not be sufficient devices and bandwidth at home. In the library, they have the space to work independently or in collaborative groups and access to the technology that is essential to 21st century learning.

Space, facilities and equipment must be appropriate to support on site and remote learners in flexible approaches to delivery, in a variety of educational settings and for purposeful learning. The move from print to electronic resources, the ubiquitous nature of mobile devices, increases in housing density in the inner city, the emergence of group study, flexible modes of delivery – these are all factors that affect library spaces. Some reduce the need for physical space, others increase it. VET libraries have to be flexible to accommodate the needs of students, teachers and support staff in an ever changing landscape.

1. Library Management and operations

Objectives
To provide library services that:
- are accessible, equitable, cost effective and efficient
- meet the information needs of students, teachers, and support staff
- meet the educational objectives of the organisation
- support lifelong learning

Guidelines

1.1. Role/status
The library is regarded as a management unit within the organisation. The library manager reports directly to the CEO or through a Director who is part of the top management team.

Management of the library is the responsibility of a qualified librarian or information professional with eligibility for ALIA Associate membership. The library manager is consulted on all decisions which have an impact on the library and information service. The library collaborates with other units within and outside the organisation, for example; student administration, student support and welfare services, ICT services, academic support services, and library networks.

1.2. Operations
The management of the library includes the development, implementation and maintenance of policies and procedures achieved through:

- Standardised procedures
- Staff training, development and performance management
- Communication and teamwork
- Management of financial, human, information and communication technology resources
- Resource management
- Strategic planning and continuous innovation based on user feedback
- Marketing and communications
- Risk management

- Disaster preparedness

Policies are consistent with those of the wider organisation.

1.3. Finance

With the guidance of the library manager, the institution allocates sufficient funding to enable the library to meet the standards expected by government agencies (including Australian Skills Quality Authority and Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency) and to support new initiatives.

The library manager is responsible for the financial management of the library, including:
- preparation of budget estimates for the fiscal year, salaries, operating costs, subscriptions, acquisitions, staff training and professional development, capital items
- approval of the budget by the organisation
- management of expenditure.

1.4. Communication

The library manager actively liaises with senior management, key stakeholders, teachers, support staff and students throughout the organisation to ensure the library understands client needs and provides a relevant library service.

1.5. Performance measurement

There is a business plan or performance agreement developed in the context of the institution's goals. Performance indicators are developed, evaluated, reported and revised annually to measure success and identify opportunities to improve the quality of the service provided. Performance indicators may include quantitative and qualitative measures. Measurement can be based on data collection, surveys, interviews or focus groups.

2. Staff

Objectives

To ensure that the number and mix of library staff support the services and programs which meet the needs of students, teachers and support staff.

The library service must have paid qualified staff of one or more persons, including a suitably qualified library manager.

Guidelines

2.1. Duties and qualifications

There must be sufficient staff to cover opening hours and online services and the smaller the size of the library team, the higher the proportion of qualified professionals. Library staff may consist of librarians, library technicians and assistants. Staff numbers may also be influenced by requirements for a minimum number of staff to be on duty for safety and security reasons.

All library staff, including the library manager, have job descriptions and classifications in accordance with ALIA guidelines. Appropriate salaries for library positions are determined using the ALIA salary scales[3] as a minimum.

Staff employed in the library have appropriate library and information science skills, and, where needed, educational qualifications and/or skills gained as a result of professional development programs. It is recommended that at least 80% of library staff are qualified librarians and library technicians, and where only one member of staff is employed they are eligible for Associate membership of ALIA.

2.2. Professional development

Continuing professional development is essential for library staff to ensure the provision and management of an effective information service. The library manager and all eligible library staff are encouraged to participate in the ALIA Professional Development Scheme and are provided with support (which may include time during working hours) to maintain a high level of competency in their education and skills. The institution supports funding for professional development of library staff.

3. Library and Learning spaces

Objectives

To provide library buildings or spaces which:
- are attractive, functional and accessible
- are designed for flexible use, efficiency in operation and sustainability
- accommodate library collections, learning spaces and programs which serve the needs of students, teachers and support staff

To open at times which enable students, teachers and support staff to make the most effective use of the library service and to ensure that the library's resources and services are as widely available as possible.

Guidelines

3.1. Planning of location and access

Initial choice of the site for the library allows for the convenience and ease of access by library staff and users (including after-hours access if required), due consideration is given to the security of both personnel and resources, and reasonable expansion can be accommodated.

3.2. Space requirements

Space allowance considers the library's requirements and creates a safe, pleasant and attractive environment, allowing for the following library functions:

- Customer service points

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[3] http://www.alia.org.au (member area)

- Collection shelving and storage for a wide range of resource formats
- Student individual and group study areas
- Meeting/training rooms
- Computers and Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) support infrastructure
- Informal seating areas
- Staff work-space

The physical library space must accommodate the needs of people living with a disability.

3.3. Work health and safety
The library environment should comply with work health and safety legislation and relevant Australian Standards. For example some environmental factors to be considered are:

- Acoustics - the library should be free from excessive noise and vibration
- Floor loading complies with Australian Standards. Attention is paid to the building's structural allowances with regard to placement and loading of stacks. Storage and shelving are conveniently located.
- Lighting - adequate lighting levels should be provided in accordance with Australian Standards
- Power, communications and computer cabling/wireless networking - special attention should be paid to the appropriate placement of outlets for technology
- Other conditions – adequate ventilation, temperature and humidity control, dust and pest control should be provided for the preservation of library resources, maintenance of technology and comfort of staff and library users.

The library manager contributes to planning and maintenance of library facilities in compliance with the appropriate Australian Standards. Emergency exits are kept clear and regular lockdown and fire drills are conducted.

3.4. Opening hours
Opening hours are consistent with the needs of the learning and teaching community, including part-time and flexible learning students. Library hours should include morning, afternoon, evening and weekend hours. Opening hours are regularly reviewed to take into account changing circumstances.

Remote access to library resources (eg. online library services, catalogue and electronic resources) is available at all times.

The library provides after-hours facilities for the return of library materials.

4. Library collections

Objectives

To provide adequate numbers, range and quality of learning resources, information services, and equipment to meet the educational needs of students, teachers and support staff.

To ensure the organisation, management of and access to learning resources, information services, and equipment supports students and teachers in flexible approaches to course delivery.

To provide a catalogue by which students and teachers are able to search, access and interact with the collections, in all formats, owned or licensed by the library service.

Guidelines

4.1. Collections policy and resource management

The library manager reviews the resource management policy annually, in consultation with key stakeholders, to identify core information resources - both physical and electronic - equipment, and technology platforms to be acquired and managed for the organisation. The library manager provides guidelines for the selection, acquisition and disposal of resources, noting that a high proportion of resources in the collection should have been published within the last five years.

Resources are selected by library staff in cooperation with teaching staff. Resources should be provided in a format (print, AV and electronic) that best meets the needs of students, staff and support staff and provides the greatest access.

To facilitate efficient access resources are catalogued and/or indexed, classified and arranged according to recognised standards using an appropriate online library management system.

Collection range and size should be related to the number of students and teachers and to the breadth and depth of the institution's training profile.

4.2. Resource access

Students studying online or remotely have easy access to the resources they need online.

Where arrangements have been made to use the services of another library (e.g. an RTO negotiating access to a university library service, or a TAFE requesting support for distance students through local public libraries) students have access to the full range of materials they need.

Licensing arrangements for electronic resources should include off-campus use to facilitate flexible modes of study. In negotiating licenses with vendors, consideration is given to the protection of student's privacy and data.

4.3. Resource sharing

The library manager helps develop and participates in co-operative networks to provide document delivery and facilitate resource sharing. Wherever possible, consortia arrangements that provide benefits to the organisation are negotiated.

5. Information Technology

Objectives

To ensure that all library resources and services are accessible to students, teachers and support staff.

To ensure that the digital literacy of students, teachers and support staff is supported by exposure to the latest industry standard or cutting edge applications.

Guidelines

5.1. Library management systems

The library management system (LMS) operates latest or near-to-latest software release. Budget is allocated to upgrading the LMS and other technology platforms on a regular basis. The performance of the LMS is reviewed every five years to ensure its continued suitability for the purpose, in the context of advances in technology.

The library catalogue is available through the library's website. Single search of the library catalogue and electronic databases (such as federated search or discovery layer) is available.

5.2. Website

The library team has direct control over the content of the library web pages and these are used to create an online experience that is as engaging as the real world library visit. A full description of library services, branches and opening hours is on the library's website.

The library supports online reference and information services and online interaction with students, teachers and support staff.

The library website meets W3C standards for accessible web design and disability access.

5.3. Systems infrastructure

The library IT is managed by appropriately qualified and/or experienced staff.

Student and staff workstations are comprised of current hardware and appropriate up-to-date software. Wireless networks are available in the library and bandwidth is sufficient for consistent good quality access to digital resources.

Adaptive technologies are provided for those with a vision or hearing disability.

Single sign on is to be desired to improve student experience and engagement with library resources.

Support is given to BYOD students as well as to those using the library's devices.

6. Information services

Objectives
To offer information and reference services which facilitate people's ability to find, evaluate and use information effectively.

To ensure that all students, teachers and support staff are made aware of, and can effectively use, library services, facilities and programs.

Guidelines

6.1. Marketing
There is a library marketing strategy and its implementation informs students, teachers and support staff of the resources and services offered by the library as well as increasing awareness of the value of the library to the institute community.

6.2. Reference & Information services
Appropriately qualified and trained staff respond to library users' information requests and information services should be accessible to library users on site, online and by phone, email and/or SMS. All service points are staffed during opening hours for customer assistance and inquiries.

Interior layout and furniture facilitate side-by-side options for staff to assist library users, particularly when demonstrating online services.

High quality informational, directional, instructional and promotional material is used. Signage in library buildings is used to facilitate access to information and reference services and clear directions for use are provided for all equipment (for example, self-checkers, photocopiers, scanners, wireless internet access).

7. Learning and Teaching

Objectives
To provide educational services and programs to support digital and information literacy, and effective use of library resources and facilities.

To support teachers in maintaining professional and vocational currency.

To provide resources and services that enhance the quality of course development and course delivery.

To support student success and to enable students to successfully live, learn and work in a digital world.

Guidelines

7.1. Course development

The library team is formally involved in curriculum planning and development to ensure the provision of appropriate learning resources, information services, and equipment which support learning and teaching. The library provides guidance, training and support to teachers to incorporate library resources, particularly online resources, into course delivery. Library staff may work closely with ICT staff and developers of the Learning Management System to ensure library resources and services are integrated seamlessly with online courses.

7.2. Digital and information literacy training

There is a close partnership between the library and the institution's teaching program, which involves the integration of digital and information literacy skills into course delivery.

Appropriately qualified and trained staff provide information literacy and education services. The library team is responsible for evaluating, assessing and providing library learning programs and activities relevant to the requirements of the course, mode of study and learning needs of students. Programs to enhance students' skills:

- Form part of a comprehensive learning support program
- Are integrated with the institution's courses and programs
- Are designed and developed in partnership with teaching staff
- Are not restricted to formal class settings
- Are interactive, model flexible delivery, and are based on adult learning principles.

7.3. Learning and teaching support

Library staff are accessible to students seeking individual assistance with their studies. Appropriately trained library staff may also provide services such as academic skills and study support, IT support, and support for academic integrity.

Library users are informed of their obligations to comply with license agreements, freedom of information, privacy, data and copyright legislation in the various Australian jurisdictions.

The Library develops and provides subject specific information, guides, educational and help services online.

The library may also provide activities and events to enhance the student experience and engagement with the library and wider college community.

The library provides professional development opportunities for teaching staff to develop their digital and information literacies, and to effectively use library resources and facilities.

The library provides up to date resources and search, research and alert services which enable teachers to maintain currency in their vocational competencies and professional teaching.

The library may also provide specialist guidance and support, such as copyright compliance.

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