Foundation knowledge for entry-level library and information professionals

The phrase 'library and information professional' refers to those members of the profession who have completed an entry-level qualification in Library and Information Science at either Associate or Library Technician level.

The phrase 'library and information agencies' includes libraries, archives, records and cultural heritage information agencies.

Purpose

To describe and promote the distinctive areas of knowledge which are required for effective professional practice in the library and information sector.

Audiences for this policy include:

- library and information professionals employed in all types of library and information agencies
- employers of library and information professionals
- managers of library and information agencies
- educators and trainers of library and information professionals
- those studying to become library and information professionals
- those interested in a career in this field.

ALIA Constitution Objects addressed

- To promote the free flow of information and ideas in the interests of all Australians and a thriving culture, economy, environment and democracy.
- To promote and improve the services provided by all kinds of library and information agencies.
- To ensure the high standard of personnel engaged in information provision and foster their professional interests and aspirations.
- To encourage people to contribute to the improvement of library and information services through support and membership of the association.
- To endorse the principles of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 19 and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals in response to the many challenges faced by the world today and not the future.

Principles

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) sets and maintains education standards for entry into the library and information profession in Australia. The education of library and information professionals is key to the development of excellence in services provided by library and information agencies. Graduates must be able to understand and apply theoretical and practical library and information science (LIS) knowledge, as well as employment-related skills, and be prepared for a dynamic and challenging future in many diverse information environments. They must also be able to demonstrate professionalism in their career and a commitment to lifelong learning.

Statement

The library and information sector in Australia strives to meet the information and community needs of a democratic, progressive, technologically innovative and culturally diverse society. A key focus of the sector is enabling people to connect with the world of information,

interact with and use such information in all aspects of their lives. The sector also champions lifelong learning, personal fulfilment, critical thinking, improved decision making, knowledge development, imagination, innovation, creativity and cultural continuity.

As the professional association for library and information professionals, the focus of ALIA is on library and information science. We are however part of a larger industry that encompasses galleries, libraries, archives, museum and records (GLAMR), where there are shared values and interplay within the sectors.

This document outlines the foundation knowledge required by an entry-level graduate employed in the library and information sector. As ALIA accredits LIS courses at the Diploma, Bachelor, Postgraduate Diploma and Master degree levels, the specific levels of knowledge and understanding of a graduate upon completion of a program of formal study should be interpreted in line with the language and descriptors pertaining to the relative levels of the Australian Qualifications Framework.[1]

In presenting the broad areas of professional understanding, it is assumed that other documents such as program curricula will describe the details under each broad area, recognising the need to accommodate innovation and change in practice over time. This policy does not presume that, upon graduation, a library and information science student will have practical skills and expertise in all the listed domains. It does, however, expect that during their studies, students will be introduced to the full range of concepts.

To meet the needs of the sector, the library and information professional requires a high standard of knowledge and skills in LIS acquired through education and training. Professionals also need to have a commitment to ongoing professional learning to ensure continuous improvement in performance. It is acknowledged that the specific context of practice will determine the range and scope of knowledge required as the library and information professional's career progresses.

To meet the need for ongoing professional learning, the ALIA PD Scheme provides a framework designed to support the individual library and information professional's ongoing development with formal recognition for professional development activities. The ALIA PD Scheme offers a range of specialisations to enable library and information professionals to contextualise their professional learning and development. ALIA endorses the individual's commitment and achievements through the award of the post-nominals Certified Professional and Distinguished Certified Professional.

The Australian library and information sector is characterised by a diverse workforce that meets the challenges of the changing nature of work. The library and information workforce operates within and across the physical and digital worlds to:
- promote and uphold the core values[2] of the library and information profession
- understand, respond to and anticipate cultural, recreational, social, information and learning needs of clients, organisations and society
- acknowledge and respect the significance and diversity of the histories, cultures and heritage of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

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[1] Australian Qualifications Framework (2nd edition). Available: https://www.aqf.edu.au
[2] ALIA Core Values Policy statement. Available: https://www.alia.org.au/about-alia/policies-standards-and-guidelines/alia-core-values-statement

- undertake the effective curation of data, information and knowledge through the processes of description, storage, organisation, retrieval, dissemination and preservation, in order to ensure that it can be freely accessed and used by clients
- develop, deliver and evaluate information and recreational facilities, services, programs, sources and products to meet client needs
- envision and plan future directions for the sector
- advance library and information science in its adaptability, flexibility and autonomous application to information and recreational services
- engage with clients, community, other professions and industries.

The domains of foundation knowledge for entry-level library and information professionals

	Topics
The information environment	A graduate library and information professional has current knowledge and understanding of the library and information environment, including: • historical background and changing nature of the library, information and knowledge environments • contexts in which information is originated, described, stored, organised, preserved, retrieved, modified and used • principles of human rights, inclusion and equality • wider political, economic, social, cultural, educational, technological and environmental factors and events which may impact on the profession • legal and regulatory frameworks which may apply to professional practice • policies and standards of relevant government, corporate and professional bodies • ethical issues associated with working with a wide range of client groups, third parties and the requirement to practice with integrity and fairness.
Information services	A graduate library and information professional has current knowledge and understanding of the delivery of data, information and knowledge services that connect users with the resources they need at the right time and place, and in the right format, including: • client engagement • information needs analysis • information seeking behaviour, user experience and accessibility • retrieval, evaluation and synthesis of information • reference and research consultation services • customised delivery of resources tailored to target client groups.
Information management	A graduate library and information professional has current knowledge and understanding of the acquisition and management of the multiple information formats used by individuals and organisations, including: • information architecture to determine the structure, design and flows of data and information

	Topics
	- storage, curation, protection, preservation of collections, data, records and knowledge - migration, restructure, manipulation, transformation and presentation of data and records - cataloguing, classification, metadata, interoperability and other information standards and schema - thesauri and subject indexing - collection analysis and management - acquisition, negotiating with publishers and providers of resources, licensing and monitoring publishing trends - digitisation and digital repository management - research data management - intellectual property rights, copyright and creative commons.
Literacies and learning	A graduate library and information professional has current knowledge and understanding of the importance of literacies and learning to connect individuals and communities to ideas and knowledge creation, including: - advocacy for reading, literacy and digital literacy - programs to meet the literacy, educational, information literacy and digital literacy needs of individuals and communities - cultural events, exhibitions and displays, and activities that foster discovery, creativity and collaboration - training needs assessment - community-focused training programs and learning activities - instructional methodologies, including technology-enhanced learning.
Digital technologies	A graduate library and information professional has current knowledge and understanding of information and communications technologies, including: - library business systems and platforms - content, learning, research data, repository and database management systems - web and network management services - industry standards relating to eResource management - identity management and authentication systems - principles of information privacy and cybersecurity - mobile technologies and applications, including systems interoperability - Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning - social media and collaborative tools - assistive and related technologies - data analytics and the value of data as evidence in decision making, policy and research contexts - the potential of emerging technologies for future library and information practice.
Community engagement	A graduate library and information professional has current knowledge and understanding of the strategies and practices that contribute to the development of strong communities, including:

	Topics
	• ethical issues associated with working with a wide range of client groups and third parties • Indigenous Australian cultures, histories and contemporary realities and awareness of Indigenous protocols, combined with the proficiency to engage and work effectively in Indigenous contexts • community information and recreation needs • information resources, programs and services designed to support community engagement and social inclusion • principles of community development and evaluation strategies for community engagement • relationships and alliances achieved through consultation, liaison and partnering with other groups and organisations.
Leadership and management	A graduate library and information professional has current knowledge and understanding of the principles of leadership and management, including: • governance and accountability • the value of organisational policies and procedures • people management and development, including equity, multicultural, diversity and cultural issues • workplace health and safety • leading and inspiring individuals and teams • strategic, business and workforce planning • budgets, financial management and fiscal accountability • business continuity and disaster management • risk management • program and project management • space, facilities and technology management • communications, marketing, public relations, advocacy and influencing key stakeholders • development and application of policies and procedures • service improvement • horizon scanning to identify innovative service and practice improvements.
Research	A graduate library and information professional has current knowledge and understanding of research activities, including: • the importance of evidence-based information practice to support decision making • quantitative and qualitative research methods • conducting research, quality improvement and innovation projects • critical appraisal and synthesis of research literature from different disciplines • interpretation and presentation of data and statistical analyses • scholarly communications • research support services • the value of open access, open science and open data.

	Topics
Behavioural skills	A graduate library and information professional is aware of and applies strong behavioural skills to successfully interact with others in the workplace and to contribute to a positive and productive work environment, through: • self-awareness and management • communication skills • interpersonal skills • relationship building • collaboration • empathy • conflict resolution • intellectual curiosity, flexibility and adaptability • creative and positive thinking • critical thinking and problem solving • resilience • critical reflective practice • enthusiasm for lifelong learning and new roles.
Professionalism	A graduate library and information professional maintains currency of professional knowledge and practice and upholds professional standards and values, through: • the understanding and application of moral, cultural, ethical principles and legal responsibilities involved in the provision of library and information services to individuals and communities • advocacy for the library and information profession • active contribution to society by sharing specialist knowledge and expertise as a library and information professional • membership of and participation in ALIA as well as other professional associations, as appropriate to the individual's specialisation • commitment to undertaking formal and informal continuing professional development activities to build knowledge and skills • professional certification through the relevant ALIA PD specialisation • mentoring and coaching activities • research and publishing in the professional literature.

Related policies:

• ALIA's role in the education of library and information professionals
• Courses in library and information science
• Professional development for library and information professionals
• Employer roles and responsibilities in education and professional development.

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