

ALIA and education for the library and information services profession

Anne Hazell, Chairperson ALIA Board of Education, looks at recent developments in the Board, and their consequences

DURING THE latter half of 1991, the Board of Education began reviewing its role and functions as the group within ALIA charged with responsibility for the development, implementation and modification of the educational policy of the Association. As a starting point to the review, a series of questions (see *inCite 1*, p10) was posed by a small working party of Board members. After an initial discussion of these questions, the Board decided that members of the profession, as well as the Board itself, needed to re-examine the broad issue of the Association's role in education before consideration of the Board's role and functions could occur. To ensure that wide-spread consultation occurred, the Board agreed that a position paper reflecting its own views should be developed and circulated for comment.

The paper below is a summary of a full day's discussions held by the Board on May 31. The complete version has been circulated to all Divisions and to the schools of library and information studies. Anyone wishing to see the complete version should contact Rose Hockham at the National Office of ALIA. Comments on either the full version or the summary should be forwarded by August 28 to: Anne Hazell, Chairperson, ALIA Board of Education, The Orphanage Teachers Centre, 181 Goodwood Road, Millswood SA 5034, fax (08) 3721888.

Further opportunities for comment will be available at the open meeting between the Board and the profession on Sunday 27 September at the ALIA '92 Conference.

The final version of the paper, with recommendations for action, will be developed at the October meeting of the Board for presentation to General Council in November.

The aim of the paper is to stimulate discussion of the Association's role in educational activities and to present a range of options and strategies for the Association in the future. In reviewing the activities, priorities and strategies of education for members of the profession, the Board did not assume the existing structure, function, role or composition of the Board, nor that its relationship with General Council and the National Office would remain as at present.

For the purpose of the discussion, the Board defines education as the development of skills, knowledge and attitudes for practice in the profession. Such development should be seen to be an ongoing process for the period of a person's involvement in the profession. The opportunities for gaining such development should be offered pre-service as well as in service.

In determining the range of people whom the Association should consider in establishing educational priorities and

strategies, the Board recommends that the focus should be on all who work in the library and information profession in a way which is consistent with the professional and technical skills, knowledge and practices promoted by the Association. The Board recognises that this will include a range of people in positions well beyond the traditional library and information fields. The Board recommends that the Association define the broad range of positions and professions that may be in this category.

Principles

In determining the principles that should underlie the Association's approach to education activities, the Board identified the following:

- the activities need to be based on the body of skills, knowledge and attitudes which underlie professional practice
- the Association's standards need to be applied to ensure the quality of the activities achieves excellence
- the activities must reinforce the ethics of the profession
- access to activities by all members of the profession is encouraged and facilitated
- the Association provides a vision for the future and, through the educational program, can act as a change agent and leader
- individuals are encouraged to assume responsibility for their own professional development
- through the educational program, people gain a sense of progress towards their personal and professional development goals
- educational activities should range from specialist to general issues
- activities are developed in consultation with people in the profession
- ALIA should communicate with the profession to promote and inform about the educational opportunities offered
- the Association's educational program needs to build upon current research in the library and information field
- programs and activities need to be reviewed regularly to ensure their appropriateness to the needs of the profession.

Parties in the education field

The Board identified many groups with an interest or involvement in the education field.

These include:

- clients
- funding bodies
- educators within institutions
- governments
- education providers (non-institutional)
- education institutions

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- employers (also often providers)
- practitioners
- professional associations
- technologists
- networks
- suppliers
- information generators
- students
- researchers
- accrediting bodies
- employer bodies
- other professionals
- trade representatives
- unions

In determining the Association's approach to education, the activities and interests of these parties need to be considered.

Current educational activities

The Board surveyed the range of activities currently provided by ALIA (at various levels) and elsewhere. The activities are:

- conferences
- networks
- research
- workshops
- personal and professional development planning
- mentor programs
- on-the-job training
- exchanges
- formal award courses
- professional literature
- study grants
- awards
- seminars
- exhibitions
- in-service courses
- job rotation
- self-instructional
- packages

Educational activities to be undertaken by ALIA at the national level

In priority order, the Board identified that the following activities should receive the highest priority for *delivery and support* by a group (or groups) responsible for the educational activities of ALIA at the National level:

- Conferences** ALIA should provide conferences but could also support conferences generally by funding, establishing standards, promoting, evaluating, influencing, initiating and coordinating conferences
- Professional Literature** ALIA should provide literature but could also fund, promote, set standards for, evaluate, influence and initiate professional literature
- Networking** ALIA should facilitate networks and further support networks by promoting, funding and initiating them
- Study Grants** ALIA should fund, promote, coordinate, set standards for, initiate and influence study grants
- Research** ALIA should provide research opportunities and support research generally by promoting, evaluating, coordinating, funding, initiating, monitoring and influencing research activities
- Awards** ALIA should provide awards and set standards, promote, initiate and fund awards.

The Board also identified the following activities as being of the highest priority (and of equal priority) for **support** by an educational group (or group) of ALIA at the national level:

- Support for Personal and Professional Development Planning** ALIA should support and promote the concept of

such development but should encourage individuals to manage this aspect of their development

- In-service Courses** ALIA should evaluate, promote, influence and give recognition to in-service courses
- Formal Award Courses**

ALIA should be involved in formal courses by evaluating, recognising, setting standards, monitoring, reviewing, consulting, liaising, influencing and networking with course providers.

Standards

The Board addressed briefly the issue of standards. The following comments are reported for future consideration:

- Accreditation:** this is seen as the province of the educational institutions and ALIA, but there is an increasing involvement of government bodies in the process. Organisations such as Industry Training Councils, the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition and the National Training Board now see they have a role to play.
- Setting Standards:** the setting of standards formally is for the institutions, ALIA and the National Training Board. The setting of standards informally is an ongoing process by employers, unions and clients, where the standards may be the workplace standards they seek or establish.
- Reviewing Standards:** the Board notes that all of the groups listed as being involved in the setting of standards or the accrediting process may see a role in the reviewing of standards and their involvement with the Association is important.

Organisational structures to manage ALIA's educational activities

The following are some of the options for organisational structures which were generated during the discussion. None has been examined in detail but they do give an indication of the diverse range of options that might be finally generated. It is considered essential that, whatever structure is adopted, it should allow for a long term, i.e., five years, view of the profession and the influence of that projected future on the educational priorities of the Association.

- the existing structure: a subcommittee of General Council or
- more than one subcommittee reporting to General Council
 - three groups—one dedicated to the formal award courses activities; one to professional literature, study awards/research; the third to the remaining activities or
 - two groups—one dedicated to standards, evaluation, monitoring and not restricted to educational issues; a second (or more if needed) to manage the remaining educational activities or
 - two groups—one to meet present operational demands and the other responsible for future demands and directions for the Association. ■

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