

Direct Line



Sue Kosse
ALIA Executive Director

Competency standards have moved from being a means of classifying the competencies in the workplace, to being the outcome required by the education and training system

AS WELL AS attempting to come to grips with its own strategic direction in recent months, the Association has also been trying to keep abreast of the many reports emanating from the Federal Government, especially those related to education and training.

From the innocent beginnings of the late 1980's when the Senate Committee on Employment, Education and Training proposed a wide ranging inquiry into higher education, and award re-structuring focussed upon structural efficiency principles, little did we expect that these initiatives would eventually challenge not only the work base for library and information science personnel, but also their educational base and the whole structure of the educational system.

Competency standards have moved from being a means of classifying the competencies in the workplace, to being the outcome required by the education and training system. The Federal Government has strongly promoted the concept of competency based training as being an outcome of education and training, and has moved to put in place mechanisms to ensure that this objective is achieved. Progress towards this objective is well under way in the workplace and in vocational education and training. Discussions are also under way in the schools sector.

Many Universities and professions are refusing to accept that competency based training is the only outcome sought from education at the tertiary level. The present discussions on quality of higher education and the balance of growth may well lead to the development of a compromise position, and the establishment of enabling mechanisms.

These discussions are part of the wider policy agenda of maximising the benefits of improving the skill level of the workforce and creating an attitudinal change to acceptance of life-long learning.

The concepts of quality, diversity and partnership are being pursued in many education and training reports and inquiry initiatives, with the desire to produce a 'seamless web' across education and training. The Finn, Mayer and Carmichael reports have each addressed the convergence of work and education and training, and made recommendations which have promoted the 'seamless web' concept.

Considerations of quality and maximum output, together with diversity and partnership appear to be important elements in the emerging implementation strategies.

The challenges for the library sector in this wide agenda are twofold:

- in relation to competency standards, who will describe and classify the profession in the workplace? And who will determine the formal and post-formal educational requirements to practise as a library technician or a librarian?
- and in the creation of the 'seamless web', how do we resolve issues such as articulation, information literacy, co-operation and rationalisation, resourcing, electronic distribution and delivery of courses and information resources, and intellectual property?

The Association has been actively involved in the lengthy discussions on the development of competency standards for library and information science personnel. Currently it has a project proposal with the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition and Arts Training, Australia for the development of competency standards.

Likewise, the Association's submissions to the inquiries into *The Quality of Higher Education*, *The Balance of Growth* and the *National Research Strategy for Vocational Education and Training* have emphasised the above issues inherent in the creation of the 'seamless web' across the education sector.

The Higher Education Council's recent draft advice on *The Quality of Higher Education* appears to address some of these issues and recommends on strategies and structures for quality assurance in higher education. The Association is presently considering this draft advice and its response. ■

**WHO CARES
ABOUT SERVICE?**



Your Link with the World of Serials

Ph: (07) 371 7500 STD free (008) 777 134
or free from NZ 0800 44 6133
and free from PNG 05 08 61 055
Fax: (07) 371 5206

*Library
Locums*

Sydney, Canberra, Brisbane
Tel. (02) 699 1855
Fax. (02) 698 4534
Free Call 008 244 337

Using temps is much easier now.

Library Locums has been awarded a Department of Administrative Services Period Contract to supply library staff.

This means you can receive immediate approval with less paperwork to handle.

At the same time you can be confident that you are dealing with the library professionals. No one else can offer you the same depth of expertise so make us your first choice for contract library staff.