

Global links crucial

Jennefer Nicholson, ALIA deputy executive director

The IFLA Conference in Amsterdam in August provided an international forum for discussion on education for the profession. With representatives from so many library associations and education institutions present it was a great opportunity to pursue issues arising from reciprocal recognition, international standards for education, and further co-operation.

The Association currently has reciprocal recognition arrangements in place with the Library Association (LA) and American Library Association (ALA). The foundation for education for librarians in Australia is similar to that in the United Kingdom in content, and in offering courses at undergraduate and graduate levels. ALIA and the LA offer reciprocal recognition for qualifications at both levels. For the United States, again, content is similar. However a Masters-level qualification is regarded as the minimum standard for employment. The ALA is reviewing its procedures for recognition of overseas qualifications and one of the key issues in this review is whether qualifications other than at the Masters level will be recognised. ALIA offers reciprocal recognition to graduates of ALA-recognised courses.

Our discussions at IFLA with representatives from the ALA and LA enabled us all to go beyond the nomenclature of the qualification (such as Bachelor or Masters) to elaborate more on the education systems in each country. That Australian graduates with a Bachelors qualification in library and information studies may not be given recognition in the United States is of concern, particularly in an education policy environ-

ment in Australia which generally offers HECS-funded positions for undergraduates only. Our focus for ongoing discussions with ALA is in two main areas — that reciprocal recognition should be based on the knowledge-base outcomes and that these are substantially similar in undergraduate and graduate courses; and how the structure of undergraduate education differs from that in the United States. The LA has wider reciprocity through the European Union (EU) to accommodate. ALIA reciprocal arrangements are based on LA-recognised courses, however the Association is liaising with the LA on the implications for this of EU developments — one development being anecdotal evidence that Masters is the preferred qualification level of education and for employment.

A workshop on education and training brought together educators and library association representatives from Europe, the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia. Participants discussed the practicalities of participating in EU programs such as the European Credit Transfer System which offers student interchange between EU countries. A major concern was that while agreements may be established between institutions, at the program level there is considerable variation in

the quality of courses and teaching within and between countries. Further, there are no common standards for accrediting courses, or a common accrediting body.

The IFLA Section on Education and Training is working towards developing Standards for library and information services education programs. A working party is collecting information on sources of accreditation and certification for the various countries or regions and analysing similarities and differences, for presentation and discussion at IFLA 1999.

Throughout 1999, the ALIA Board of Education will continue to monitor international and local trends and developments in education, and evaluate how these may affect members. ■



Virginia Walsh, Jennefer Nicholson, and Kate Wood [head of the Library Association's professional qualifications department] at the Association's headquarters in London

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