

## Your voice

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### Qualification – by any other name?

Many of you will be aware of recent discussions regarding the divisions between librarians and library technicians. This is now an artificial one which has created many problems over the last fifteen years or so, causing artificial barriers and differing expectations.

Library and information work is a continuum with all participants contributing different knowledge and skills. Library technicians bring wide expertise from many different fields (even if they are practically-based ones). These practitioners can contribute just as effectively as those with academic qualifications to the development of library skills, and the use of a professional approach to handling and working with information.

A change in terminology could bring about changes in attitudes. If qualifications were identified as academic and practitioner (or something similar), rather than professional or para-professional/non-professional, it would help to clarify the situation.

Academically-trained librarians need practical

skills (often acquired either on-the-job or through a TAFE course), just as library technicians need the underpinning theory to complement their practical applications.

It appears that the terms 'para-professional' or 'non-professional' are a great source of concern, and consideration should be given to finding a more suitable title that more adequately reflects our qualifications. Personnel should be operating in a professional manner and accordingly recognised as such by ALIA. The terms 'librarian' and 'library technician' are now outdated as the industry is so diverse that these terms are misleading and continue to present library and information personnel as minders rather than distributors, packagers and re-assemblers of information.

With the merger of ALIA and ACLIS, this is an issue that might be considered by the new and rejuvenated organisation of ALIA, General Council and even the Board of Education.

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*National president, Library Technicians Section*

### Your voice

**Your letters on any issue of relevance to the library and information sector are welcomed.**

All letters should be addressed to the *inCite* editor and may be e-mailed to [incite@alia.org.au](mailto:incite@alia.org.au), or faxed to 02 6282 2249, or posted to: *Your voice*, ALIA, PO Box E441, Kingston ACT 2604. Please include your name and postal address with your letter or e-mail.

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