

# Standards of Professionalism

A few simple ways to maintain professionalism and the profession.

## Education

The factors for choosing to continue your education or upgrade your qualifications can be overwhelming: location, flexibility, style of teaching. One factor that can't be overlooked is the quality of the content of the education you choose.

ALIA works with all current and potential LIS education providers to ensure that courses are not only maintaining a high quality standard but that they are also relevant to current and emerging library and information practice. The ALIA Education team reviews courses at intervals no greater than seven years, and in some cases less than this. Completing an ALIA certified course not only ensures your membership with ALIA, but should give you peace of mind that you are participating in the best educational options to prepare you for work in the Australian Library and Information sector.

It would be foolish to believe that you can be an effective LIS professional by simply relying on your initial education to carry you through your career, especially considering the impact of digital information and online accessibility. While you will no doubt learn a considerable amount through the wisdom of your colleagues and your own experience, continuing formal education and attendance at industry conferences and workshops are crucial to maintaining and expanding your professional abilities and credibility.

## Workplace

Though many of these seem to be common sense, they nonetheless can help you maintain a positive professional edge:

**Professional dress:** what you wear *does* count. Scuffed shoes, crumpled shirts, too revealing, too tight, too casual: none give the impression of an organised Library and Information professional. And don't forget personal hygiene. Heavy perfume, lack of deodorant, smokers' smell and bad breath can leave an unpleasant impression. Take a good look at yourself and imagine how others perceive you – what messages are you sending without saying a word?

**Customer service:** Computer says noooooo. How often have you brushed aside a customer with minimum effort or courtesy? They notice – and apply it to both you and your organisation. A core competency of many LIS roles is helping people, all people with all attitudes and shortcomings. Do you need to work on your enthusiasm and resilience levels?

**Dealing with other staff members:** Are you the office gossip, grump, or goddess? How much of your day is spent complaining to others, running late for meetings, or pursuing your own agenda? Do you happily volunteer to help out, give credit where credit is due, and take time to chat with everyone? Just like customers, your colleagues will come in all types and varieties. Think about how you appear to others and what sort of impression your interactions leave.

**Use of company assets. Don't overdo it:** Most organisations don't begrudge you making a few personal phone calls, using the internet, or printing something out for personal use. Check out your workplace's policy on acceptable use of these assets. Again, it will be noticed and won't reflect on you well – professionally or personally.

## Outside of work

In a talk to school students last year US President Barack Obama warned them, "Be careful what you post on Facebook". Sage advice for our times. The choices you make outside the workplace shouldn't factor into your workplace impression – but they do, and they will, from potential employers checking out Flickr sites, to posting the real reason you were in late on Monday morning on Facebook. The boundary between work and our personal life has been blurred by the internet and

the explosion in social networking sites. Learn to use privacy settings, and remember, once it's out there you can never get it back; there will be a record of it somewhere. While it was cool at 18, at 38 it could be the death knell for that next promotion or job interview.

You do not become invisible when you are in a convention centre in another state. Your colleagues, present and future, *will* remember your pole dancing routine at the ALIA Access 2010 conference and in ten years time when you are applying for a position on the board or executive team, your impressive lithesome ability may become a heavy liability. Conferences are work too, just in a different location and in a different style. Relax, enjoy yourself, but don't let yourself go.

We are the best advertisement for our profession. Our individual attitudes, behaviours, and actions all go to building the impression the wider community and government has of the LIS sector's worth and contribution to society. Be an active and effective advocate for your profession. Join an ALIA group, volunteer for 'careers nights', step up within larger organisations and represent the interests of the Library and Information section, be seen to be active and positive within complementary organisations. And make sure everyone knows just how clever and important librarians and library technicians are!

## Janetta Mascilongo

ALIA Director: Professional Services

janetta.mascilongo@alia.org.au

## Kirrin Sampson

ALIA PD Officer

kirrin.sampson@alia.org.au

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