

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

NEW GRADUATE OPPORTUNITIES AT HOME AND ABROAD

ALIA offers two avenues for support and engagement with students and new graduates: the New Generation Advisory Committee (NGAC) and the Student and New Graduate Group (SNGG). As a new graduate information professional who is engaged with her professional association, I was curious to see how these opportunities compare with those in the USA and UK.

NGAC provides an opportunity for new graduates to engage formally with ALIA. This committee advises the ALIA Board on issues that are relevant to students and new graduates. The SNGG provides opportunities for students and new graduates to attend events, network and socialise with other students and new graduates. This group has representatives in each state who organise events, workshops and social activities.

NGAC and SNGG often work together to help engage new graduates with their profession and professional association. Both groups are active in social media, using this medium to engage with new professionals across the country.

How do these opportunities shape up in comparison to the United States and United Kingdom?

To become a qualified librarian in the US, you need to complete a Masters of Library Science, preferably from an American Library Association (ALA) accredited school. Although some undergraduate programs offer library science majors, they are not sufficient on their own to gain professional status.

The ALA has student chapters in most states to support students in the transition to their careers and foster engagement with the association. For new graduates, there is the New Members Round table (NMRT). NMRT provides opportunities to get involved with committees, undertake leadership training, and network with other early career professionals.

NMRT offer mentoring programs, a resume review service, a newsletter and a blog. Beyond the ALA, some of the more specialised groups such as the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) have specific new graduate programs including a 'newbie dispatches' podcast and support for entering residency and fellowship programs. An online discussion list for New Librarians (NEWLIB-L) is also used by new graduates in the USA.

The UK is similar, in that most library courses are postgraduate, although there are some undergraduate courses. Part time and distance learning options are available. Graduate traineeships of 10–12 months are available at many academic and government libraries for graduates to gain experience and insight before undertaking postgraduate study.

The professional association in the UK is the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP). CILIP hosts an annual conference called New Professionals Day, though in my research I could not find reference to any official committee for new professionals. However some of the regional committees have New Professionals Support Officers who provide advice and encouragement to new professionals in their region.

Overall, I think that the opportunities for New Graduates in Australia are some of the best. We have a professional organisation that actively seeks to engage with us and seek our input through the NGAC. We have access to a range of professional development and networking opportunities through the SNGG. We have an active and supportive online community, meaning that rural and isolated new graduates don't miss out on engaging with their profession. These opportunities ensure that new graduates have access to the necessary resources and support to build their library career. Thanks ALIA!

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