

The big opinion poll

What you think about professional development

by Carol Kenchington

The Professional Development Committee of the Board of Education has asked ALIA members their opinions on professional development.

A survey form was distributed to all ALIA members through *inCite* last October. Copies were also distributed at the Perth Conference.

There were 704 replies, representing about 11 per cent of the personal membership, broken down as in Figure 1.

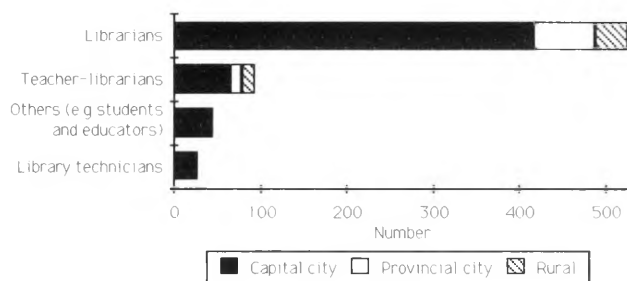


Figure 1: Who replied?

(But what *is* a capital city? Canberra was described variously as THE Capital City, a provincial city and a suburb...)

Question 5 sought information on respondents' areas of interest in professional development, and opinions on the Board of Education's most recent initiatives in this area, 'packages'. ('Packages' are self-instruction kits. Students may receive assistance by correspondence, or eventually perhaps by group study, and if successful in the assessments will receive certification.) The membership's response to each subject area is given in Figure 2.

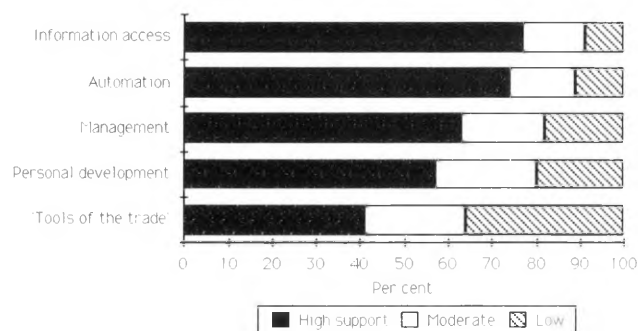


Figure 2: Main areas of interest.

Responses to four of the suggested subject areas, especially the two subjects with a computer bias, were very positive, with most respondents indicating 'high' or 'very high' interest. The response to the fifth category, 'Tools of the Trade' (e.g. cataloguing codes) was ambivalent, with as many indicating low interest as high.

The response to 'packages' was encouraging, varying from 68 per cent to 83 per cent in favour of the five suggested subject areas.

Question 6 invited suggestions for topics to be included in the national PD program. More than half the respondents put forward suggestions, amounting altogether to over 800 separate topics.

It was possible to cluster many of the suggestions into related groups. Management subjects dominated. Management was also the one subject area which attracted a few explicitly negative comments, some respondents believing that this area is adequately covered elsewhere in the community. 'Tools of the Trade', about which the membership were so ambivalent in question 5, now ranks number two. And a few members commented that this was the subject area to concentrate on, as it is unique to the profession.

Subject Category	No. of Suggestions
Information access (e.g. CD-ROM databases)	74
Automation (e.g. networking PCs)	81
Personal Development (e.g. time management)	92
Tools of the Trade (e.g. cataloguing codes)	94
Management (e.g. team-building)	234

The next table lists the specific topics most frequently suggested. Not all comments were amenable to such categorisation.

This analysis is, at best, a blunt instrument providing an indication of trends. It is a matter of personal judgement whether, for example, 'brochure writing' should be scored with 'submission writing', or treated as a separate topic. Librarians will understand this difficulty!

Rank	Topic	No. of Occurrences
1	Marketing/Promotion/PR	51
2	Communication skills — submission writing and presentation; report, business writing	29
3	Financial management/Budgeting/Program Budgeting/cost-benefit analysis	28
4	Databases: online and CD-ROM; searching techniques	27
5	Evaluation — services and/or staff	25
6	Management — general	24
7	Automation — general; planning and management especially in small libraries	23
8	Cataloguing	22
8	Teaching information skills	22
10	Reference skills, materials	21
11	Lobbying	16

Predictably, Question 6, 'Any other comments' was used for all sorts of messages, though the majority were concerned with issues about the delivery of professional development. As with the other open question, various themes emerged. These are ranked by frequency of occurrence in the next table:

Rank	Topic	No. of Occurrences
1	Approval of packages	27
2	Support of ALIA to provide PD	25
3	Concern about the cost of PD to members	19
4	Disapproval of packages — live contact acceptable	14
5	Geographic isolation a problem	11
6	Use of packages with local support group	9
7	Concern about certification being worthwhile	8
8	Refresher courses in single area e.g. cataloguing for reference librarians	7
9	ALIA should not provide PD	6
10	Special librarians — isolated from support networks	5
10	ALIA should not provide PD in management topics — covered by others e.g. employers	5
10	Prefer activities in worktime — 1/2, 1 day	5
10	Constraints with time to fit in PD	5
14	Prefer activities outside worktime	4

Conclusions continued next page...

Conclusions

There was generally strong support for PD, but members agreed to disagree on the subject areas. The most popular topic polled only 51 responses. The number of people in agreement on the next most popular is only 29. The range of suggestions made is very wide indeed, with only a few supporters at best for each. How can a national program hope to satisfy such a diffuse pattern of demand?

The Board of Education's initiatives in the area of package development are endorsed but other approaches are also needed. A program which covers any of the most popular topics would be well received.

Perhaps more training streams are needed at conferences, so that ALIA members can benefit from the inspirational and social aspects of such occasions, while at the same time acquiring basic skills in online searching, or management or whatever.

Greater use of modern technology would overcome some problems; but this is costly. The respondents to this survey are committed to professional development. It is not clear whether the whole membership supports this area and whether it is seen as an area worthy of substantial subsidisation as some suggest. Another survey, using a randomised sample of the membership would help clarify this.

The next steps

All Divisions are invited to comment and work with the Training and Development Committee in producing a national program. A teleconference will be held with PD Officers and with regional groups to discuss the problems and solutions. Discussions will also be held with the library and information schools at the June ELISS conference. The T & D Committee should then be in a good position to form its strategy.

Members who would like to take part in this continuing dialogue are invited to contact the T & D Officer, Carol Kenchington at the ALIA National Office. □

1990 Library Technician of the Year

Faye Gwendoline Pattinson

Cert.App.Soc.Sc. ALIATec



From left: Bev Kirby, Vice-President ALIA; Faye Pattinson, 1990 Library Technician of the Year; Jean Bailey, 1990 President, NSW Branch, Library Technicians Section

The 1990 Library Technician of the Year award was presented to Faye Pattinson at a joint function for the Victorian Branch AGM and the Victorian UCRLS AGM in the Queens Hall at the State Library of Victoria. The citation was read by Jean Bailey, representing the National Library Technicians Section and the citation and award were presented by the Vice President of ALIA, Bev Kirby.

Christine Crocker was the guest speaker after the award presentation. She spoke on challenges facing a new university librarian.

Faye Pattinson's citation is printed below.

(ALIA gratefully acknowledges the sponsorship of AUSLIB Press for the 1990 award).

Faye Pattinson has, over a number of years, made a significant contribution to the advancement and recognition of library technicians within the Australian Library and Information Association and the wider community.

Faye completed the Certificate of Applied Social Science at Whitehorse Technical College in 1976 and began work at the Caulfield Institute of Technology. She later moved to her present position in the Cataloguing Department at the Holmesglen College of TAFE. As part of her work at Holmesglen, Faye's competence was acknowledged when she was requested to implement and put in place procedures for the maintenance of resource libraries for the St Kilda Community Health Centre and the Moorabbin based Southern Community Mental Health Service. She has also served as a member of the Victorian Colleges Staff Association Working Party on Library Salary Scales and on the Staff Development Committee at the Holmesglen College of TAFE.

In 1985 Faye undertook her first program in the international arena with the International Development Program of Australian Universities and Colleges when she was seconded to the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji to assist in the library as a

cataloguer. Greater challenge came with her next two assignments; to the Chiang Mai University and Maejo Agricultural Institute in Chiang Mai, Thailand and to the Universitas Sebelas Maret in Solo, Central Java, Indonesia. Both assignments involved implementing the Bibliofile software package in the respective libraries. The implementation procedure included teaching keyboard skills, basic cataloguing, MARC tags and the Bibliofile package to a number of staff, all of whom had varying levels of expertise and competency in English. Faye's contribution and enthusiasm were rewarded when by the end of her visits, the libraries involved produced their first computerised catalogue cards.

Faye Pattinson has served in many capacities within the Association and in all her positions she has ensured that the views of library technicians have been heard. She has been actively involved with the Victorian Branch from 1979 both as a Branch Councillor, Minutes Secretary and as the Library Technician Representative. From 1979-1983 Faye was President of the Library Technician Section, Victorian Group and has more recently served on the Executive Committee of the TAFE Section, National Group.

In 1987 Faye Pattinson was a guest speaker at the LAA 50th Celebration Conference in Canberra where she spoke on 'Major Achievements of the Library Technician'.

Faye's continuous and enthusiastic involvement with the Association has ensured that library technicians are recognised as an integral part of the library and information industry. By example she has encouraged library technicians to explore new directions and areas of endeavour.

Faye Pattinson is a worthy recipient of the Australian Library and Information Association's Library Technician of the Year Award for 1990, awarded by General Council by a resolution passed at its meeting on 24 November 1990. □

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