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The draft national competency standards for the library sector, being prepared by Arts Training Australia (ATA), will be discussed in June with the National Taskforce. ALIA's Taskforce member, Anne Hazell, will then consult with Branches and a working party of the General Council and the Board of Education.

This will be the second round of consultations in which ALIA members have participated. The first was through meetings with ATA to collect information on work activities in libraries, and the knowledge, skills and attitudes (attributes) required to perform these activities correctly. From this information, the ATA Project Officer has formulated draft

competency standards, comprising competency fields and the possible units of competence within each field.

We can now comment on how valid we, as practitioners, educators and trainers, believe the draft competency standards to be. The final standards should be submitted to the National Training Board (NTB) for endorsement and registration by the end of this year, and will probably have a life span of 3–5 years.

Any individual member is welcome to comment on the draft competencies. Send your comments to the ALIA National Office for collation for Anne Hazell, who will report back to ATA through the Taskforce.

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cies and their role in training and workplace reform is complex and understandably members have many questions about competencies. Generally they can be categorised as 'why are we involved in developing competency standards?', 'what do they look like?', and 'how will they be used?'.

Why are competency standards being developed?

The Fourth Annual Report (1992/93) of the NTB gives an overview of why standards are being developed and progress to date. NTB distributed a press release on 22 December 1993 advising that 50% of the Australian workforce, in 24 industries, is now covered by endorsed competency standards. This is well on the way to meeting the Government's target of 90% of the workforce covered by the end of 1995.

The move to the development of competency standards started in 1989 with the release by John Dawkins, then Commonwealth Minister for Employment, Education and Training, of the statement *Improving Australia's Training System*. Later in the same year there followed a Special Ministerial Meeting of Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers responsible for Vocational Education and Training. The meeting agreed to introduce a competency-based training system. It also recognised the linkage between competency standards and the then award restructuring process. This linkage was a significant shift which is still very much evident in government policy.

The national competency standards currently being developed will provide the library industry with a national benchmark for the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required in the workplace and allow an assessment of the re-

Get into UNI and TAFE

If you are thinking of enrolling in one of the library school courses, second semester starts mid July-August and the enrolment deadline is approaching rapidly. Units are offered as non-award units, i.e., the student is not formally enrolled in a full program leading to an award, although most institutions will give credit for subjects completed should you decide to enrol in an award course at some time in the future. Acceptance to a unit is subject to any quotas and pre-requisite courses required. Most universities are charging for services and you can expect to pay between \$400–\$700 per unit.

For more detailed information on courses for library professionals, contact the ALIA National Office.

Help!!!

Do you occasionally wish that there was one place you could look for information to help you arrange training activities? The *ALIA Training and Development Event Support Kit* is designed to act as a guide and memory jogger for aspects of putting together an event; it complements the information given in the *1994 ALIA Division Office Bearers Guide*. The *Kit* includes *inCite* deadlines, guidelines on how to evaluate courses and events, ALIA Certificate of Participation information and ALIA membership information which should be displayed at ALIA events, etc. The *Kit* is designed to allow information to be regularly updated.

The *Kits* were distributed late last year to all Branch and Regional Office Bearers representing training and development—note that Sections have not received copies. If you are an Office Bearer for ALIA and would like a copy of this kit, please contact the ALIA National Office.

quired performance level. They will also assist in identifying the overall skill and training needs for the library industry.

What do they look like?

We won't know until the competency standards are endorsed by NTB exactly what the library industry competency standards will be. The NTB has developed a format for standards. It is based on units of competency, and each unit comprises elements of competency, with performance criteria, and may include a range of variables statement and an evidence guide. The NTB *National Competency Standards Policy and Guidelines* (2nd Edition) is a good source for obtaining an overview of competency standards.

How will they be used?

Competency standards are used in the workplace to describe the knowledge and skills required to perform tasks. It is likely that the library industry standards will replace the current ALIA *Worklevel Guidelines*: the levels of Librarian 1-5 and Library Technician 1-3

will be replaced by the national Australian Standards Framework (ASF). The ASF has eight levels, each with a description of the work and competency. In our terms, Levels 1-3 would encompass work currently performed by clerical and library assistants, Levels 4-6 the work of library technicians and Levels 7-8, of librarians. These boundaries are not rigidly defined by job title as the competencies are aligned to the ASF levels.

The ASF is described in the NTB *Policy and Guidelines* document. There is a distinct advantage in aligning our industry work value to the ASF. It is a national standard to which most of the Australian workforce will be

Rethinking Australia

Ann Lipow will be back in Australia in October. Those who have already seen Anne in action last year presenting *Rethinking Reference* and *Neutral Questioning* workshops will tell you that this event is not be missed. Karen Williams for the University of Arizona Library will again join Anne for *Rethinking Reference*.

A new addition this year will be workshops on *Teaching Online Resources*, to be presented by Anne and John Ober, Network Resources Librarian at the University of California, Berkeley and the co-author of *Crossing the Internet Threshold*. Anne will also be attending the ALIA/NZLIA Conference in Wellington and her tour will start with *Rethinking Reference* directly after the Conference.

aligned. This will be of great benefit in comparing our industry to other industries or professions in our claims for work of equal value.

Competency standards have two other important roles. As they are based on outcomes they form a basis for assessment in the workplace and in training. More on that in the next *inCite*.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of competencies please contact me, or Phil Teece. ■

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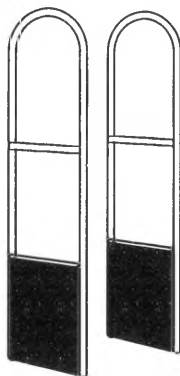
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