What makes us unique? What is our core knowledge?

What is the core knowledge that distinguishes library and information services workers from others in the information sector? How can we best describe what we do in a sector that we share with many other information practitioners? The ALIA Board of Education believes that answering these questions is critical to defining the niche position that library and information services personnel hold. The first step has been to develop a draft statement for comment. This has been distributed widely within the sector, and to allied information industry bodies.

The final document will have several applications. It will assist the Association in promoting a professional image of the sector. It may be adapted for use in marketing activities and policy statements. It will assist members in clearly articulating a role within their organisation. It may assist in formulating curriculum and content for first-award and professional development courses. It will guide the Association in its course recognition and continuing professional development programs.

Have your say. Your comments on the draft are welcome. Comments must be in writing (e-mail jennefer. nicholson@alia.org.au) and must reach the ALIA National Office by 13 November. The draft statement and any comments received by 23 October will be discussed at the ALIA Board of Education meeting with practitioners and educators being held on Sunday, 25 October in Adelaide. You can register using the ALIA Biennial Conference registration form.

The statement will be finalised at an ALIA Board of Education meeting on 18–19 November, and will be forwarded to the ALIA General Council for endorsement.

Draft statement on core knowledge for the library and information services sector

Library and information services (LIS) are concerned with communication across space and time. They make use of both digital and analogue information technologies, to ensure equity of access for all members of the community.

The LIS sector facilitates information access and preservation by the development and implementation of standards and networks, products and services. Library and information services seek to anticipate information needs of individuals and groups. They aim to be both dependable and responsive to a wide diversity of information needs.

The LIS sector promotes knowledge and imagination in individuals and groups. It supports personal fulfilment, improved decision making, innovation and cultural continuity.

People who work in the LIS sector should possess the following core areas of knowledge:

Broad context, demonstrated by the ability to:

- understand the contexts in which information sources (analogue and digital) are originated, stored and disseminated.

Analysis, demonstrated by the ability to:

- identify and investigate clients' information needs;
- identify and evaluate information sources to determine their relevance to clients' information needs.

Strategy, demonstrated by the ability to:

- develop strategic frameworks and alliances for LIS infrastructure and operations, aligned with corporate and social goals.

Infrastructure, demonstrated by the ability to:

- plan and implement appropriate financial management, staffing, accommodation, equipment and information technology for LIS operations.

Information sources, demonstrated by the ability to:

- specify and implement the acquisition, licensing and creation of relevant information sources
- ensure relevance of information sources through updating and discard procedures.

Processing, demonstrated by the ability to:

- facilitate resource discovery through appropriate resource description, categorisation, storage, preservation and retrieval.

Product and service delivery, demonstrated by the ability to:

- design and deliver customised information products;
- provide information access and client services;
- provide guidance, education and training in the use of library and information services;
- provide guidance, education and training in information skills;
- undertake marketing of library and information services.

Evaluation, demonstrated by the ability to:

- assess the effectiveness of LIS facilities, products and services.

Generic knowledge areas
People who work in the library and information services sector should demonstrate:

- adherence to professional ethical standards;
- commitment to professional development through affiliation to appropriate professional associations;
- appropriate personal communication skills;
- appropriate IT and information systems skills;
- effective team relationship skills;
- general management skills;
- critical and creative thinking; and
- evaluation skills.

The level to which individuals hold this core knowledge will depend on their formal qualifications, work experience and professional development. The many programs and activities the Association undertakes offer quality assurance mechanisms through which members may acquire and apply their core knowledge to a high standard.

Endorsed by the ALIA Board of Education 15–16 July 1998 and by ALIA General Council 16–17 July 1998 for circulation to ALIA Divisions and other interested parties for consultation and comment.