

# Standards of professional excellence for teacher-librarians

Anne Girolami, Convenor, ALIA-ASLA Policy Advisory Group

The Australian Library and Information Association [ALIA] and the Australian School Library Association [ASLA] have acknowledged the importance of working together by forming joint committees. Two groups were established in 2002, the ALIA-ASLA Policy Advisory Group [PAG] and the ALIA-ASLA Issues Taskforce Group. In 2004 the Taskforce Group was absorbed into the Policy Advisory Group. The Policy Advisory Group provides advice to the ALIA Board of Directors and the ASLA National Council.

One of the major pieces of work completed by the ALIA/ASLA Policy Advisory Group has been the formulation of *Standards of professional excellence for teacher-librarians*. The ALIA/ASLA Joint Issues Taskforce began the process of developing professional standards in 2002 and the work was continued by the ALIA/ASLA Policy Advisory Group, following its formation, in 2004. The standards document was ratified by both Associations during August and September 2004.

The document has undergone a long and extensive process of planning, consulting, writing and refining. Input came from both Associations, through workshops held in NSW, SA, WA and Victoria and at the ASLA Biennial Conference in Hobart in 2003. Many key stakeholders, including principals, academics, unions and sector administrators, were involved in the workshops or provided individual comment. Collegiality was evident throughout this process and the end product is testament to that fact. After a short period of review and refinement the standards document was ratified by ASLA in August 2004 and by ALIA in September 2004.

The main aim of the standards was always to produce a set of benchmarks that were achievable for those who aspired to excellence within the profession. It was also essential that these standards for teacher-librarians complemented the generic teacher standards that were being developed at both national and state level.

The *Standards of professional excellence for teacher-librarians* outline twelve standards, divided into three areas: 'Professional knowledge', 'Professional practice' and 'Professional commitment'. Within each standard there are a number of indicators. These indicators are designed to help practitioners identify and reflect on where they are at in their role as teacher-librarians. In turn, this reflection will enable teacher-librarians to develop a framework for ongoing professional learning.

Structural consistency with existing professional standards documents was a priority, and brevity was a deliberate preference for this document, as an expanded narrative discussion of the work of the teacher-librarian is available in *Learning for the future: developing information services in schools*. The succinct nature of the document by no means undermines or undersells the role of the teacher-librarian. These are deliberately challenging standards.

Workshops were conducted in 2005 that allowed participants to unpack the *Standards of professional excellence for teacher-librarians*. In these workshops, participants were able to identify ways they could utilise the document in their workplace. The document supports teacher-librarians who advocate for and effect change within their school communities and influence the development of authentic learning communities.

The *Standards of professional excellence for teacher-librarians* were officially launched by Fran Hinton, from Teaching Australia, at the ASLA XIX Biennial Conference, in Canberra in April 2005. It was an apt time and place!

The members of ALIA/ASLA Policy Advisory Group are Di Ballantyne [ASLA], Jill Ball [ASLA], Anne Girolami [ALIA], Kris Johnstone [ALIA], Pru Mitchell [ASLA] and Sandra Ryan [ALIA]. This dedicated group of women have worked tirelessly, not only on this project but also on the other initiatives and projects. Work on committees is mostly voluntary. Each of these women also serve at the local and national level of their respective associations, in a voluntary capacity. They are to be commended and thanked for their efforts, their support and their vision in always looking at ways to advocate for and promote the role of the teacher-librarian.

ALIA and ASLA are pleased to endorse these *Standards for professional excellence in teacher-librarians* and commend them to all Australian teacher-librarians and schools. \*

## Do you know your 'An' from your 'Na'?

If you're doing any Celtic cataloguing, you should know the difference. See Webb's Web on 'Lost books' in this issue for the full story. The editor of the *Annals of Improbable Research* (<http://www.improbable.com>) would like to hear from cataloguers and librarians to get an estimate of the scale of the problem of 'invisible' or lost titles. \*

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