A portrait of Australian new graduate librarians

Results from the Survey undertaken at NLS2006

At the New Librarians Symposium 2006 delegates were provided with a survey, aimed at assessing their needs as new graduates. Of 280 possible respondents, 61 completed the survey; a response rate of 21%.

The results of the survey present a portrait of new graduates in Australia, including information about their current level of professional engagement and the kind of support they desire. These results will be used by the New Generation Advisory Committee (NGAC) and the New Graduates Group (NGG) to design services and tools for this audience.

All respondents had one thing in common – they attended NLS2006, suggesting that they might already be more professionally engaged than the average library worker.

Where are the new grads?

Unsurprisingly, given the location of NLS2006, the majority of respondents were from NSW, with other large groupings coming from Victoria and Queensland. This could reflect the physical proximity to the Sydney venue, the population of those areas, the availability of information management courses and graduate programs in those areas, or most likely, a combination of all three.

The NGG e-list

The majority of respondents were on the NGG e-list. Frustration was voiced about posts that don't follow e-list etiquette. There was a very strong call for more professional issues discussion, including a return of the 'topic of the month' and a request for links to relevant articles and debates. The overall impression recorded is that the e-list had become too personal.

NGG activity

There exists a strong demand for more professional development activities managed by NGG representatives. Devising a forum for asking professional development questions – either formal or informal was a common suggestion.

Social events also generated interest with frustration expressed by those outside of large urban areas. Two thirds of respondents indicated that they would consider serving on the NGG Committee in the future.

Mentoring

30% of respondents were currently involved in a mentoring program. Of those not involved, just over half indicated that they would like to be.

Information on mentoring programs based in various states **http://www.alia.org.au/groups/groups.html**.

Contact details for regional coordinators can be found **http://www.alia.org.au/groups/newgrad/committee.bios.html**

ALIA PD Program

28% of respondents were currently enrolled in the ALIA PD program, a lack of awareness being the main hindrance. Confusion exists about eligibility, with an underlying sense that the program requires significant commitment and effort.

For more information visit **http://alia.org.au/education/pd/scheme/**

NGG initiatives

Respondents were asked to rate nine potential NGG initiatives in order of preference. From most to least popular was:

1. Resume review service on ALIA website
2. ALIA PD Scheme activities for new graduates
3. Access to databases at discounted rates for ALIA members
4. Social events
5. Library tours and site visits
6. Support for new graduate / early career researchers
7. Recognition awards for new graduates
8. Resume review service at ALIA conferences
9. Participation in school / university open days

Challenges faced by new graduates

Asked to list two main challenges, the common themes that emerged were:

- Frustration about the catch-22 of needing experience to get jobs, but not being able to get experience without a job
- A feeling that the profession is hard to break in to
- The sense that older and more experienced colleagues either resent or fail to respect or recognise the skills of new graduates
- Finding ways to develop specific skills

- Translating what was learnt in an academic context into practice
- Apathy amongst other library workers, both new graduates and others
- A lack of opportunity to develop skills in leadership and management
- A sense of not having attractive career paths ahead

Other ways in which ALIA can support new graduates

Feedback on how ALIA can support new graduates was focused on affordable and recognisable professional development and interest in further standardisation. A national mentoring program and relayed social events was taunted as well as the need to bridge the professional gap between library school and employment, including finding ways to encourage LIS faculty members to be more involved in ALIA.

Being involved in an ALIA group is seen as important and there was interest in obtaining information on how new graduates can contribute meaningfully to other ALIA groups. **http://alia.org.au/groups/index.html**

Summary

There is a very strong need for professional development activities aimed at new graduates. Frequent local events seem in high demand, as well as efforts to push the e-list towards more professional discussion. The e-list was identified as a popular and valued tool.

The NGG, like ALIA, is a member driven group. Without the active involvement of members there would be no activities, e-list, or NLS.

Contact the Convenor, Trevor Mackay at **tmackay@bayside.vic.gov.au**

Find out more about the New Generation Advisory Committee at **http://www.alia.org.au/governance/committees/new.generation/**

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