

# LIBRARY TECHNICIANS



When circumstances allow, accept any work available, even if it means commuting or involves tasks you dislike, as it demonstrates you are pro-active and career motivated.

Engage a mentor if possible as this facilitates the induction process and increases organisational knowledge.

Good advice? That depends what you do with it...

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## Training library technicians

Library and Information Studies courses have been delivered at TAFE NSW – Sydney Institute, Ultimo College since the early 1970s. We are now the largest training provider of para-professional courses in Australia. Currently both the Diploma of Library and Information Services and the Certificate III in Library and Information Services are offered.

### New facilities

In October 2008 the Library and Information Studies section relocated to new premises in Building G of the Sydney Institute. These were showcased in our recent ALIA course accreditation visit.



*Library and Information students in one of our classrooms*

There are more classrooms available for teaching, each with 16 computers and access to a wide range of other learning technologies. All student workstations have access to an extensive range of library software applications and internet resources from all discipline areas in Library Science. These applications are an integral part of our library technician training.

All subjects taught are continually reviewed and updated with a mentoring program. Each unit is monitored by a subject expert who ensures consistency across the unit for content and assessment. Most units in both courses offered include a workbook. This is provided to students as a CD-ROM from which they can then print.

Students also have online access through an e-learning portal called Moodle, providing access to subject topic outlines, assessment guidelines, class notes and exercises, links to websites, and other resources. It is also possible to access recognition of prior learning documentation through this portal.

Students are also able to view timetables and undertake their enrolment class selections electronically.

### New simulated library for training future library technicians

As part of the new resources available, a simulated library has been developed. This has provided a great environment for students to undertake circulation activities, reference queries, and interviews and presentations to clients in a 'real' library. The simulated library has a customised circulation desk area built by Raeco and extra library shelving has just been installed to house a wide range of books and other resources for students to access.

### Industry Placement Program

Another strength of our course is our Industry Placement Program where students are placed and assessed in libraries and

information agencies for a set period of time for work experience. We have a database of over 270 libraries willing to host students for placement within their organisations. These include a wide range of libraries including public libraries, special libraries, school libraries, and academic libraries, and the State Library of NSW: An excellent liaison with the library industry ensures that all students receive a quality work-based experience.

### Conclusion

Never before have libraries been faced with the challenge of providing services and resources to such a diverse community.

While it is important to provide traditional services, libraries, and therefore library workers, need to be able to comfortably and competently move between formats and embrace the ever-changing technologies both in the provision of resources and information and as a way to market and promote access.

The structure of the Certificate III and the Diploma at Ultimo College reflects this and prepares our students for working in 21st century libraries and information services.

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## Around the TAFEs in 80 days

As the principal education standards body for the library and information services (LIS) sector, one of ALIA's key roles is to monitor the quality of the education programs offered at both the professional (librarian) and paraprofessional (library technician) levels. In the vocational education and training (VET) sector, major changes in library technician education were made when the Museums and Library and Information Services training package was introduced nationally about ten years ago, with considerable industry input into its development. While quality assurance of VET programs is achieved through the *Australian Quality Teaching Framework* (AQTF), the ALIA Education and Professional Development Standing Committee has remained concerned that there should still be appropriate professional scrutiny of the programs. In 2009, a course recognition panel is undertaking a review of the various library technician courses across Australia.

The course recognition process has two goals: to ensure that the programs offered by providers, ie colleges of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and registered training organisations (RTOs), meet the appropriate standards of quality and integrity, and to maintain the quality of education these institutions offer to ensure that students and graduates meet the workforce needs of the sector. Over the past four years, the Education and Professional Development Standing Committee, represented by Paul Genoni and Gill Hallam, has convened an annual professional development workshop for library technician educators to collaborate on the course recognition process.

Each institution is required to provide documentation about the course by completing a detailed questionnaire and provide supporting evidence in the form of teaching and learning resources and sample student work. A site visit is then arranged for the course recognition panel to meet with the teaching staff, institution management, students and graduates, and employers and workplace supervisors, in order to develop a full picture of the program as it is delivered.

The course recognition panel is visiting 16 different institutions, encompassing 14 TAFEs, one polytechnic, and one RTO. The programs are located in all capital cities, as well as in a number of regional centres. To ensure consistency in the national review, the Chair of the panel, Gill Hallam, and ALIA's Education Manager, Dianne Walton-Sonda, are central to all 16 site visits, supported at the local level by a leading library technician who is able to contextualise the program through their valuable understanding of the immediate employment market. Each institution receives a report presenting the findings and recommendations from the review; there will also be a 'state of the nation' report which will discuss the different perspectives on library technician education in 2009, with the opportunity to work more closely with the industry skills council, IBSA, to encourage ongoing improvements to the training package. The national report will provide the focus for the next Library Technician Educators workshop event to be held in Canberra in late October.

The site visit program commenced in mid-February and concluded in mid-June, resulting in the affectionate nickname for the venture, *Around the TAFEs in 80 days*. ALIA wishes to extend appreciation to the literally hundreds of stakeholders who have contributed to the process as teachers, managers, students, and employers, enabling a very rich picture of contemporary library technician education to be developed. The generous commitment and support of the local panel members is also acknowledged. Dianne Walton-Sonda will present a paper on the course recognition program at the ALIA National Library and Information Technicians Conference in September 2009, and an article on the process to date will appear in the next issue of the *Australian Library Journal*.

**Gill Hallam**  
Course recognition panel, Chair  
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## TIME FOR A CHANGE...?



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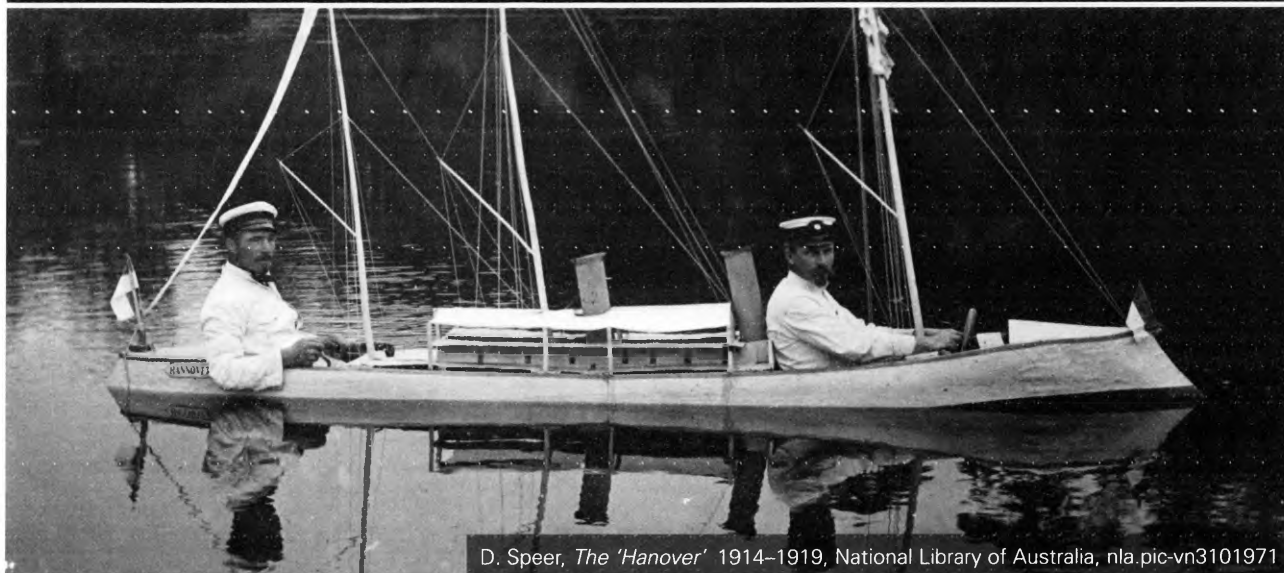
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