

A LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR STUDENTS – AND TEACHERS



The ALIA Training service draws on the experience and expertise of leading universities, TAFEs and adult educators to deliver professional development courses focused on meeting the diverse needs and interests of the library and information management industry. In 2010, ALIA commenced a partnership with TAFE NSW, Sydney Institute, to provide a number of Library and Information Studies (LIS) units via ALIA Training. The first three units have now been presented and the teachers at Ultimo TAFE were keen to share the experience, so ALIA's Kirrin Sampson and TAFE NSW educator Julie Barkman have prepared this report.

The units in this course were drawn from the Diploma or Advanced Diploma courses and were offered via online distance-based learning over six weeks (condensed from the usual 17 week delivery). Each unit provides a useful, stand-alone training opportunity or can be credited towards future formal study. Both ALIA and TAFE NSW staff consider the program to be a success, with teachers reporting they themselves have developed improved skills in online distance-based learning facilitation, contributing to their own professional growth and inspiring them to continue along this pathway.

All content and assessments are delivered online, using the Moodle learning management system. Unit content is organised in topics which are opened progressively throughout the duration of the unit. Resources include professional readings and practical applications, and learning tasks are incorporated to link theory to library experiences. Online forums enable participants to share their library experiences with others and discuss current issues and trends, exposing participants to a range of library and information services issues and the challenges facing those services in different geographic regions across Australia, New Zealand and beyond.

Some participants found peers who were in similar situations to themselves and were therefore able to discuss issues and share ideas specific to their needs. The discussion also helped teachers gain an insight into the 'big picture', adding to their working knowledge of the library industry of today.

The first unit, *Promote Client Access to Literature*, covered reader advisory skills, arrangement of literature in libraries and genre specific issues, and the promotion of literature and reading. The forum on genres prompted some interesting comments on 'chick lit' and speculation about the existence of a male equivalent: 'lad lit'? This unit will be offered again at the beginning of 2012 to coincide with the National Year of Reading 2012.

The second unit offered was *Manage a Budget* and focused on budgeting methods, types of budgets, funding costs, monitoring budgets and financial reporting, current issues in library funding alternatives such as outsourcing and privatisation of library services, sponsorship, volunteers, networks, and consortia. Once again the online forum discussions provided an avenue for participants and teachers alike to discuss in depth the issues of funding cuts, outsourcing and privatisation making this a truly holistic learning experience for all actively involved.

Web 2.0: Why? What? How? was the third unit and this focused on Web 2.0 applications across a broad range of library services – reference and reader's advisory, access to collection, training, promotion and marketing, local history, special libraries. The participants were very proactive in forums, often creating their own discussion topics. A fourth unit is currently running and this focuses on collection development and acquisitions for libraries. There are 43 enthusiastic participants completing this unit.

Overall, feedback from students and teachers alike has been very positive, with students enjoying the flexibility of the online learning format and both teachers and participants alike gaining new knowledge and developing their personal networks through the online forums.

Information about the 2012 course calendar will be published from

next month, check the ALIA website, e-Lists, newsletters and *INCITE* for more information on TAFE NSW, Sydney Institute and other ALIA Training courses.

Kirrin Sampson

ALIA Training
training@alia.org.au
1300 020 071

Julie Barkman, Teacher

Library and Information Studies, Ultimo
Sydney Institute, TAFE NSW
julie.barkman@tafnsw.edu.au

ALIA Training presents courses designed to refresh and update skills and knowledge or to learn something new to broaden your professional scope. Course fees contribute to the education services provided by the Association, including supporting further professional development opportunities, assisting national advocacy campaigns and the development and dissemination of professional education standards.