



PD: NOT JUST ABOUT THE EMPLOYEES

Judy Brooker is your PD and Careers Manager at ALIA National Office, a role that includes monitoring how other countries and professions handle these challenges. So what's the big issue in Australian LIS PD for Judy?

ALIA supports those who undertake Professional Development (PD) by providing a mechanism to plan and track activities and structure members' learning pathways - this is the *ALIA PD Scheme*. Through this scheme, ALIA Associate and Library Technician members can work their way towards a widely recognised and valued measure of knowledge attainment - Certified Practitioner status. This status is maintained through an ongoing, evidence-based commitment to professional development and membership of the Scheme.

From my experience of the audit process, most ALIA PD scheme participants clearly take their PD seriously and earnestly. Not only do they commit themselves in both paid and unpaid time, they also commit their own money to invest in their PD.

The challenge though, is great. We have all seen just how many professional positions have been downgraded across all sectors of library and information services; where library qualifications are considered "desirable but not essential" or where relevant experience is simply "preferred". The Association is contacted regularly by concerned members, indignant at the devaluing of our professional knowledge and skills.

So, what is the number one issue that makes me lie awake at night? It's quite simple really. What is it that employers really want?

Do they want a range of professional staff with accredited qualifications, and skills and knowledge that are continuously developed and grown to ensure currency, capability, adaptability, innovative thinking and relevant professional networks? And can we, as a profession, expect employers to value a mechanism that has been created by the professional association?

The ALIA PD scheme has been established for a decade. I believe the scheme offers a worthwhile and credible tool for employers to assess the suitability of potential employees and differentiating between candidates. In an ideal world, Certified Practitioners are employees of choice and, on the flipside, employers who invest in their workforce are employers of choice. In an industry where graduate numbers are falling and more of us are moving on to other careers or retirement, employers must focus more on succession planning, recruitment and retention of the best and brightest for their workforce.

I believe that employers who value continuous learning will choose employees who make the personal effort. Those employers will invest in their staff's professional development through allocating both budget and time for staff to participate in relevant PD activities. If not, we risk losing the battle to keep committed professionals in our workplaces and attract quality future LIS candidates to the profession. Is this a risk that we as a profession can afford to take? Whether you are an employer or an employee, what do you choose to do?

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