CISPIN REPORT NO. 1

Committee on Information Studies Programmes and Industry Needs

Submitted to Council of Chief Librarians and Library Association of Singapore. 1 Feb 2012. Revised 1 Apr 2012

I.   INTRODUCTION

This is the first report of CISPIN (Committee on Information Studies Programmes and Industry Needs) which addresses the desired competencies of new entrants to the library and information profession as seen by representatives of institutions employing professional librarians. Though the recommendations are specifically addressed to the Division of Information Studies (DIS) at Wee Kim Wee School of Communication at NTU, we welcome feedback and further discussion with members of the library profession and other interested parties.

1.   CISPIN

The Committee on Information Studies Programme and Industry Needs (CISPIN) was formed in Jan 2011 by the Council of Chief Librarian (CCL) and endorsed by the Library Association of Singapore (LAS). The impetus for the formation of the Committee came from feedback by chief librarians over the years that there should be better alignment between the skills and knowledge acquired by graduates of the information studies programme with the current and future needs of libraries. In addition, there is a noticeable change in job and experience profile of new entrants and potential entrants to the profession which require us to review other alternative ways for them to obtain professional qualifications without incurring high opportunity costs. Finally, members of CCL agreed that there should be a formal accreditation process for library and information science (LIS) professional qualifications to facilitate continuous feedback to professional schools or other educational bodies to achieve long term goals for creating and sustaining a vibrant pool of library and information professionals.

2.   TERMS OF REFERENCE

The above goals can be summarised in the 3 terms of reference of CISPIN :

a.   Provide library education institutions with industry views of desired competencies and professional knowledge of graduates.

b.   Explore alternative routes to obtaining professional library qualifications that meet with the requirements and expectations of libraries in Singapore

c.   Recommend and set up an accreditation process and body for the endorsement of professional library qualifications.

3.   MEMBERS OF CISPIN

Committee members of CISPIN are drawn from all the major sectors of the library industry to ensure good representation of various interests.

Sector		Members	Institution
Universities	1.	Choy Fatt Cheong, University Librarian (Chair)	NTU
	2.	Lee Cheng Ean, Associate University Librarian	NUS
	3.	Rajendra Munoo, Head, Instructional Services	SMU
	4.	Wan-Yeoh Seok Kwan, Head	NIE
Polytechnics	5.	Caroline Loh, Director	NP
	6.	Esther Ong, Director	TP
National Library	7.	Judy Ng, Director	NLB
Public libraries	8.	Veronica Boudville, Deputy Director	NLB
Special libraries	9.	Susan Song-Lim, Head	MAS

4.   TIME FRAME FOR ACTION

The Committee plans to work on each of the terms of reference in the sequence stated and issue at least 3 reports related to each matter. This report focuses on knowledge and skills that library employers considered to be essential for new entrants to the profession. It is submitted to the Council of Chief Librarian Council and the Library Association of Singapore in Jan 2012. The second and third reports are scheduled to be issued in Aug 2012 and Jan 2013 respectively.

The Committee is grateful to the Division of Information Studies (DIS) at WKW School of Communication in NTU for their presentation, papers and discussion at our meetings which were valuable in our deliberations. We are also appreciative of some members of the profession, particularly alumni of DIS who also submitted their views on the topic.

II.   DESIRED ATTRIBUTES OF LIS GRADUATES

1.   INTRODUCTION

Libraries in all sectors have to respond effectively and quickly to the profound changes taking place in the information environment today. Changes in information seeking, learning modes, information use behaviour and attitudes of people living in the Internet Age have greatly affected their expectation of and demand for library services.

2.   RESPONDING TO DISRUPTIVE CHANGES

As critical changes are likely to be disruptive and therefore unpredictable, it is difficult to plan for change in library services, management and strategies to respond effectively to future environments. The more feasible approach is to ensure that we have well-trained and dedicated librarians who are able to respond well to whatever circumstances that future

change might bring about. It is therefore important to focus on developing our staff, particularly new entrants to the profession to meet with new challenges.

3.   DESIRED ATTRIBUTES OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS

All employers desire their new employees to be effective and productive as quickly as possible in an increasingly demanding work place. They expect new entrants to the profession to be adequately prepared, not only for the job they are recruited for but also to be able to continually develop their professional knowledge and expertise independently to meet challenges in the future. We believe that a firm foundation of the knowledge and practice of current library and information work will help novice librarians build confidence and provide the springboard to move up to advanced work quickly.

We identified 3 main areas that library employers would like to see in their new recruits. These are:

3.1   Dedication and belief in the ideals of the library and information profession

The key to a vibrant profession is a strong sense of purpose and the dedicated pursuit of its goals by members. The Division of Information Studies (DIS) can play an important role in shaping the attitude of their students towards the profession. Very often, DIS is the student's first extended encounter with the ideals and purpose of the profession. A curriculum that emphasizes the key roles of libraries in society and the lives of individuals will help to inspire students in their future professional goals.

Another critical component that helps students build their sense of purpose is the close involvement of DIS with industry and the professional community. For example, more joint projects and investigations on current work issues between libraries of all types and DIS will provide students with a clearer picture and understanding of the practical concerns and aspirations of the profession.

We believe that DIS plays a critical role as a sparking point that ignites the students' life-long interest and commitment to the profession. The intellectual environment of DIS helps nurture inspiring leaders and thoughtful professionals of the future.

3.2   Strong social and personal management skills

The Committee believe strongly that successful professionals in today's environment must have effective social and communication skills. Libraries are essentially organizations that help to transmit cumulated knowledge of mankind to individuals. As our society becomes more connected, networked and media dependent, librarians need to have strong social and communication skills to perform their roles fully.

In our preliminary discussions on the competencies of librarians, members listed social and communication skills as among the highest in the list of desirables. This includes oral and written communication, report writing, facilitation, networking,

negotiation, promotion and marketing, teambuilding, etc. Also deemed as important are personal management and effectiveness skills such as project management, financial management, IT literacy, problem solving, leadership, etc.

We recognize that these desirable attributes are essential not just in library and information work but in a wide span of other professions and occupations as well. We agree that it is not the core function of DIS to teach or equip LIS students with these essential skills. However we would like to recommend that these skills be emphasized as part of the learning and assessment regime in the teaching of core and functional subjects. Students should be able to express their mastery of their professional subjects in terms of social and communication skills and not just in traditional examination formats.

3.3 Competencies in basic library and information management knowledge and skills.

Competencies required for professional work change over time depending on changes in the work place and the information industry and environment. We expect desired competencies to change relatively fast for librarians and information professionals due to the seismic changes taking place in our industry.

We understand that there is a wide range of knowledge, skills and expertise that should be taught to LIS students from the viewpoint of LIS educators. In part this is due to the diverse range of work in libraries which serves many sectors of society. There is also a constant angst and examination of the role of libraries in the future which fuel an urgency to teach state-of-the-art, mostly technologically oriented topics in an attempt to anticipate the future. LIS schools also need to attract good students and there could be pressure to design courses that excite and catch the attention of prospective students but which may not be high on the priority list of libraries.

We recognize the difficulties in designing a curriculum that meet the needs of all libraries and at the same time dovetail with the goals and operational constraints of DIS. Nevertheless the Committee would recommend that DIS incorporate the six areas of competencies described in the following section in the curriculum for the LIS programme.

We believe that new library staff members who have attained an adequate level of knowledge and skills described would be able to contribute quickly and effectively to our libraries. Furthermore, with a firm grounding in the basics of library and information work, they will be able to continue their professional development through practice and continuous training to become valuable members of the profession.

The list of desired competencies is deliberately kept to six areas to provide better focus on the essentials. A list of suggested learning outcomes for each competency area is provided as an aid for us to assess the achievement of the graduate after completing his professional qualifications.

We expect libraries and library services to undergo rapid changes and transformation and the competencies listed are likely to be revised constantly. However, we believe that the six areas form the core that roughly defines what libraries and information services do today and in the short term future.

III. DESIRED COMPETENCIES

There are 6 areas of competencies which the Committee considered as basic and essential requirements for new graduates of LIS programmes in their first job as a professional librarian. The description of each competency is followed by 4 to 5 suggested learning outcomes which employers could use in assessing the achievement of the competencies.

1. UNDERSTANDING KNOWLEDGE & INFORMATION CYCLE

Competency 1: Ability to pursue and guide users in building up domain knowledge in specific subject areas or disciplines.

Librarians often serve users who are in pursuit of knowledge in their own or outside of their domain and expertise areas. A librarian is able to support and guide such users because of his understanding of the information cycle and structure of various disciplines, giving him the ability to point users to relevant resources and sources. Graduates should therefore have basic understanding of how knowledge in various disciplines is created, cumulated and transmitted. This will provide the foundation for them to continue to acquire experience to pursue or guide users in building up domain knowledge in specific subject areas or disciplines. They should understand the role of primary, secondary and tertiary literature in the systematic acquisition of knowledge from scholarly to popular environments.

Suggested learning outcomes:

1.1   Identify and compare the major stages in the development of the body of knowledge and their dissemination in major disciplines.

1.2   Explain the roles of tertiary, secondary and primary literature in the process of learning and acquisition of knowledge.

1.3   Demonstrate a good general knowledge of the nature and characteristics of major fields of study.

1.4   Compile a basic systematic bibliography on any subject area on demand.

2. INFORMATION USE & DELIVERY

Competency 2: Ability to teach information skills and provide information services as expert information seekers with strong skills in discerning reliable, accurate and authentic information.

As budding information professionals, graduates should be trained as expert information seekers whose skills are superior to the average user. They should be familiar with the different types, systems and classes of information finding tools for solving different information seeking problems. In an era with a deluge of information sources, it is also very important that they should be trained to have good information selection skills, i.e. the ability to discern reliable, accurate and authentic information. In practice, they must be able to express these skills in terms of information services to users, such as information packaging, competitive intelligence, information analysis and reader's advisory. They should be mindful of users' convenience and provide the information in the most seamless manner.

Suggested learning outcomes:

2.1   Conduct effective reference interview to identify user's information needs.

2.2   Formulate and use search strategy to locate relevant information.

2.3   Identify, select, evaluate and recommend relevant information sources to users in a timely manner.

2.4   Develop and deliver relevant and timely information literacy and instructional programmes and services.

3.   **ORGANIZATION OF INFORMATION**

Competency 3: Ability to bring order and structure to a range of information objects and documents so that they can be retrieved, found, gathered and used systematically by users.

Graduates should be equipped with basic to advanced skills in bringing order and structure to a range of information objects and documents so that they can be retrieved, found, gathered and used systematically by users. They should understand the need for different approaches to solve information organization problems depending on the volume of objects involved, purposes and intended use of information and other variables. They should be well schooled on the principles of information organization as practised in cataloguing and classification of library materials, including electronic resources and other digital records. On a practical level, they must be able to interpret and construct MARC records for describing library materials and be familiar with common meta-data schemes.

Suggested learning outcomes:

3.1   Describe how all forms and media of information resources are organised for access and retrieval.

3.2 Describe how indexing and metadata schemes are applied to enable effective and efficient information discovery.

3.3 Apply cataloguing standards, subject analysis and classification systems to create bibliographic and metadata records.

3.4 Create taxonomy schemes to organise information resources.

4. INFORMATION RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Competency 4: Ability to source for all types of information resources through a good understanding of the information industry and publishing trade.

Graduates should have a clear understanding of the complexity of managing various types of information resources in today's library. They need to be familiar with the characteristics of the variety of resource types within print, non-print and electronic materials. As practicing librarians they will have to know how collections are built up, the various methods of acquisitions and issues in managing them for use. In today's Internet dependent environment, they must know how networked resources are set up and organized for access by users and how usage is monitored and accessed. They should also be familiar with producers and publishers of these materials and understand the inter-relationships between libraries, publishers, vendors and other major players in the information landscape.

Suggested learning outcomes:

4.1 Describe how information resources are acquired by libraries from publishers and content providers.

4.2 Evaluate print, non-print and electronic resources for collection development.

4.3 Describe how electronic resources are managed for access and use.

4.4 Describe how copyright law and licensing agreements affect the use of print, non-print and electronic resources.

5. USER SERVICES

Competency 1: Ability to tailor library and information services that are effective in meeting different information and learning needs of users.

Users are critical to the success of libraries. They are the main reasons why libraries exist. Therefore graduates should have a good understanding of the psychology, behaviour and disposition of users in accessing and utilizing information and acquisitions of knowledge. This understanding will help them to interact successfully with users and tailor library and information services that are effective in meeting different information and learning needs.

Graduates should be able to design effective outreach and marketing strategies and programmes for establishing and maintaining strong user-library relationship.

Suggested learning outcomes:

5.1   Identify the expectation of users in different types of libraries.

5.2   Discuss behaviours that might affect the library's interaction with users.

5.3   Use appropriate tools to identify needs of users in different segments of society and work areas.

5.4   Design outreach programmes and marketing strategies to create awareness of library and information services.

6.   KNOWLEDGE OF IT APPLICATIONS FOR LIBRARIES

Competency 6: Ability to apply information technology effectively to build solutions to improve library services.

Information and communication technology underpins many services provided by libraries not only today but increasingly in the future. Graduates need to have a good grasp of the principles and concepts of information technology, particularly those relating to networking, Internet, digital libraries and document storage, organization and retrieval. They must be familiar with hardware, devices and systems that are commonly used in libraries and information services organizations. Their level of knowledge should provide them with a strong foundation to acquire more specialized knowledge to support future IT applications in libraries and digital librarianship

Suggested learning outcomes:

6.1   Explain how ICT is applied in library services and processes.

6.2   Match emerging technologies to possible applications in providing library services.

6.3   Describe the purposes and functions of integrated library systems.

6.4   Plan and set up web and mobile applications for library services.

IV.   CONCLUSION

The 6 areas of competencies described in this report in section III are core competencies that we expect graduates of DIS to have achieved when they start work in libraries. Though we are certain that the current DIS curriculum already cover some of these areas, the list would serve as a useful checklist to identify other desired areas that are not covered or not covered as core curriculum for LIS tracks. We welcome further discussion with DIS and

others in the community to reach a wider consensus which is likely to form the basis for accreditation of professional qualifications subsequently.

We recommend that the desired attributes of LIS graduates described in Section II be taken into account as part of reviews in the approach to LIS education at DIS. Again, it is likely that DIS have similar views and the Committee would be happy to work with DIS to further flesh out the brief proposals.

Libraries in Singapore today face tremendous challenges in responding to unpredictable changes in technological and information environment as well as social and behavioural changes in information users. The best strategy to respond to the changing landscape is to attract and develop highly competent and dedicated librarians to work in our libraries. DIS plays an important role in training our librarians for their current and future roles. Libraries want to recruit well trained graduates that match their needs relatively well. They also want their new recruits to be able to perform their jobs quickly with minimum in-house training. A good foundation from LIS training at DIS will also help them to advance quickly to meet with the uncertain challenges of the future.

Submitted 1 Feb 2012 by
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