

Name: Senior Librarian

Feedback provided from:
An individual

Organisation Name (if providing on behalf of an organisation):

1. Do you think the conceptual design of the Draft Framework works? What would you change?

I believe there is not enough clarity about which professions this framework is meant to be applied to. I initially thought it was just qualified librarians (those currently eligible for Associate Membership of ALIA) but about half way through an online consultation I realised it was meant to be for the ENTIRE library workforce at every level. I really think this is too much to attempt to cover in one framework.

The existing pathways and requirements are very clear, so I don't understand why the waters would be muddled. As it is, you can work as a qualified librarian, a qualified library technician or in another library role with other qualifications, so I am struggling to see why this needs changing.

My overall feeling is that this pathway is trying to achieve and explain too much, and in the process it is losing clarity. For example, does it EASILY answer the following types of questions:

- How do I become a library technician?
- How do I become a library manager?
- How do I become a qualified librarian (or whatever you want to call that role)?

Visually, perhaps the layout needs to look more like multiple project timelines or Gantt charts rather than a pie chart sitting on a foundation.

A well designed diagram should be self explanatory. If you need to read many pages of explanation then it isn't working.

2. Are there any elements that you would add, amend, or remove?

Included elsewhere

3. Would a Framework along the lines of the draft Framework be useful to you in your career or workplace? How could you see it being used?

Sadly I don't see how it could be useful in my own career or workplace. I don't think it is clear enough for an employer to work around, and it doesn't advocate at all for librarians as professionals.

I don't see this being any help with respect to my personal career. I think my existing qualifications and experience are enough, and I don't see what the framework could add. However I do see a potential dumbing down of my existing position if LIS university qualifications were no longer required or recognised. After fighting for so many years to be seen as a university educated professional with specialised research expertise, my career could easily be downgraded in the eyes of employers.

I also see the draft framework as a potential problem with respect to new employees who may start work in a library with no basic information management skills, and without the bigger picture of what a library does. For example I have taught plenty of experienced, published researchers who have previously had no idea how to carry out a replicable search of a bibliographic database or how to manage their references. You don't know what you don't know, of course. But under the draft framework these same researchers might take librarian roles without needing to learn how to educate clients or manage information.

With respect to my employer organisation, a large public hospital, I think a draft framework that promotes multiple pathways including for those with no LIS university qualification, opens doors to our employer shifting people from any other role to the library, and to generally downgrading our reputation and specialised expertise. I could easily imagine them seeing it as a perfect spot to put people who they are obliged to re-employ in other roles due to redundancies, regardless of qualification. We have constantly had to fight for recognition and rights under our enterprise agreement, so in our organisation we are in no doubt about where we would sit if our professional role was downgraded by ALIA.

In Victorian hospitals library staff are included in the Allied Health Professionals Enterprise Agreement, and our pay grades reflect similar roles across university qualified allied health practitioners. Removing LIS university qualifications would completely change this situation, and we could reasonably expect to be relegated to a non professional Award, which in the medical context generally refers to those without university qualifications. We could very quickly find ourselves once again considered admin assistants, and this wouldn't help any health librarian's career.

4. Is LIS professional recognition valuable to you? What changes would you like to see to professional recognition?

Yes, professional LIS recognition is essential to me in my role. I am fine with the existing ALIA qualification criteria, plus the extra descriptions included in the Victorian Allied Health Professional Award which goes on to describe different gradings that relate across a number of disciplines, including medical librarians. For example it clearly defines medical librarians who are educating others as being at grade 3 or above. This has been very important.

The requirement for a university qualification has been very important in my own career. Working in a health library for over 15 years, we have worked very hard to emphasise that librarians are university qualified professionals, equal to other allied health professionals but just with a different type of expertise. It has been very difficult to shift people's assumption that librarians are "just" admin staff who check out books, and instead demonstrate how we use our high level information management expertise to contribute to research. That shift has been crucial with respect to our inclusion as published co-authors and co-researchers on equal standing with other health professionals.

I am extremely concerned at a proposal that suggests people can become librarians without any LIS qualifications, or with just the promise of micro credentials to be (perhaps) completed sometime after employment. I can think of many situations where something that is not an advance requirement for employment just never happens, and this completely devalues the profession.

5. Any other comments?

Do you believe that the 10 core values remain relevant for the LIS sector today? Please explain your reasons.

I think we need to be careful to define “free flow of information and ideas”. Although it sounds good initially, there have been a lot of issues in recent years around the extent of “free speech” and how far this can reasonably go, especially if it is racist, discriminatory, hate speech etc. Does this have any boundaries? It is a really good topic to discuss with respect to ethics, and it may depend on your point of view and culture. Is there a particular stand that ALIA can take here about what is or isn’t okay? For example where does ALIA stand on censorship? Is there a situation where censorship is okay? For example, what if someone wanted material promoting the use of violence, pornography or racial supremacy to a public library. Would that be okay? What about books promoting abortion in the library of a religious school. Would it be against the core values for librarians to accept the values of their organisation?

I think core value 5 should really be two separate values. Adding the recognition of rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to the end of a sentence about diversity tends to water both aspects down.

--

Do you agree with the range and scope of the proposed Foundation Knowledge domains? Please explain the reasons for your responses.

I don’t think the Foundation Knowledge domains go anywhere near far enough. I believe ALL librarians should have a high level of knowledge about, at least, Information Management and Information Services, regardless of their speciality or workplace. These are key areas that set us apart from every other profession. They should not be optional.

The proposed Foundation Knowledge domains do not a librarian make.

How could the draft Framework support LIS courses at the higher education and/or the VET level, for example in course development or ALIA accreditation?

The death of university/higher education library qualifications starts with the suggestion of micro credentials being enough. As soon as you take away any need to have a specific qualification in information management, and substitute it for micro qualifications or experience in other sectors, no-one will elect to study information management (because it won’t be recognised), and universities will no longer offer those courses (because there will not be enough enrolments). In fact people may never bother to get higher education qualifications at all if ALIA no longer requires any.

What opportunities for micro-credentials do you see in the LIS sector?

I only see micro-credentials as an “add on” form of ongoing professional development. They should not in any way substitute for higher education qualifications or basic librarianship qualifications. I am also concerned about what seems to be an ALIA-centric control over micro-credentials, or a requirement that librarians pay ALIA to study these specific micro credentials. There will often be other types of professional development not offered by ALIA that could be equally relevant to a speciality librarian

--

Would you support a system where those working in the LIS sector can demonstrate their career progression? Please explain the reason for your choice.

I don't see how the proposed framework would demonstrate career progression even as well as a curriculum vitae where you list all of your relevant educational and work experience, including any publications, presentations, awards etc. You would surely already do this if you are applying for a job. Why do you need something else? I do feel strongly about not creating work just for the sake of it. I would also be concerned about any sort of "system" which might potentially disadvantage librarians or information specialists who chose not to be ALIA members.

Are there ways for the draft Framework to provide a new structure for the ALIA CPD scheme? Please explain the reasons for your responses.

As one of many non ALIA members, I have concerns about a CPD scheme being tied to one organisation that charges high membership fees. There are other ways to undertake ongoing professional development, particularly in speciality roles.

I think it is important not to unintentionally limit the sort of professional development that could be undertaken. For example, staff from a library using a particular type of software to create a library website might do an online course developed by the software provider. Another example might be a database provider providing in house training on advanced search methods and recent updates to the database. These should surely be considered types of professional development, regardless of not being provided by ALIA

Any other comments or feedback

I have real concerns around the suggested pathways which show people being employed as librarians regardless of having LIS qualifications, with only a promise that they will study micro credentials and have a mentor.

In reality many smaller organisations (and many larger ones) will not be able to provide a librarian mentor. It's a nice idea, but we need to consider whether this is practical. Who can be a mentor? What type of mentorship can they provide? How can they be supported? How will they be recompensed for their time? Is this just another job for an already overloaded librarian to take on? Will a librarian be expected to take on a teaching role for another employee in lieu of a university education? How big a role or responsibility would this be?

Re promising to take micro credentials after getting a job, how many people are likely to forget this once they have the job? How could this undertaking be followed through, and what would happen if they didn't do it? How long would they be given to complete credentials.

In reality I can see that people get a job and then that is it. Immediately the role has been downgraded.