Guidelines for Professional Library/Information Educational Programs

These guidelines were endorsed by the IFLA Professional Committee at its meeting in August 2012

Executive summary

These guidelines replace the last significant revision in 2000 and incorporate the inclusion of material in library school curricula that reflects the developments in the provision of library and information services in the 21st century. They set the framework for the necessary objectives for library and information educational programmes: the requirements of core and useful curriculum elements to be included in teaching programmes, the faculty, staff and student requirements for these programmes and the need for the programmes to be well supported by information and other resources.

Contents

Introduction

Library/information educational programmes have a long and distinguished history. In the past, they have focused on developing physical collections of books and other materials in library buildings staffed by people who have learned to select, acquire, organise, retrieve and circulate these materials. Today library information educational programmes extend beyond the physical collections and buildings to the virtual world of the Internet. Today the concentration is on information provision to users in a variety of contexts, public, private and third sector; users who may not be necessarily able or willing to enter the library building or environment. Collaboration with partners within the sector - archives, museums and records management - is increasingly evident, so inclusion in programmes of an awareness of common issues is appropriate. Educational programmes are offered at the technical level, at the graduate and professional level, and at the research and doctoral level. The guidelines offered here primarily address the graduate and undergraduate levels, both of which lead to professional qualification.

The last significant revision of these Guidelines was in 2000. Since then many issues have confronted the profession of librarianship, not the least of which has been the embedding of the Internet and other digital technologies and all they bring with them into the daily lives of many of our communities. This has brought a thrust by some library schools to adopt an iSchool philosophy in competition with the more traditional, yet still valid, library educational approaches of colleague schools, often in the same country. Additionally, it has become apparent that many of the instructional and knowledge bases that education in librarianship needs to also cover the boundaries of other kindred professions, for example in archival, museum and records management studies. There was also a need to address the omission of indigenous matters in the knowledge base of educational programmes.

The IFLA Education and Training Standing Committee appointed sub committee to oversee the development of another revision of the document. The members were Professor Gillian Hallam, Professor. S.B. Ghosh and Associate Professor Kerry Smith. That revision is presented below.

Associate Professor Kerry Smith, FALIA
Convenor, IFLA SET Guidelines sub committee, July 2012

Objectives

The aim of these Guidelines is to provide library and information studies/science (LIS) schools around the world with a set of guiding principles of preferred practice to use when establishing and running their educational programmes. The Guidelines provide a framework for review and improvement in these programmes as well as design new programmes, and can be used as a practical tool for comparison. They should also be used when designing new educational programmes for the library and information service sectors.

It is recognised that some countries will have wider educational standards that need to be adhered to, and that professional associations within the discipline areas in different countries will also have educational policy statements that LIS schools need to adhere to, particularly for accreditation purposes. It is expected that the principles in this set of Guidelines will form the basis for such national accreditation requirements.

Guidelines

The Guidelines comprise:

G1   The larger framework

G2   Core elements to be covered in LIS programmes

G3   Curriculum

G4   Faculty and staff

G5   Students

G6   Support

G7   Instructional resources and facilities

G1   The Larger Framework
Objectives

The library/information educational programme's description and status at the organisational level should be comparable to that of other programmes in the country that are engaged in vocational and professional education. For professional level preparation, the library/information educational programme should be part of a degree-granting institution and instruction should be at the tertiary (university) level. Library/information programmes should be eligible to offer doctoral level study on the same basis as other programmes.

Principles

Mission. The library/information educational programme's mission should be clearly stated in a publicly available formal document. The programme's mission should address the purpose of the educational programme in the larger political, social, economic and technical context and should be consistent with the non-discriminatory values of the profession. It should identify the constituencies being served and should be responsive to the needs of the country and, unless it is an independent, free-standing organisation, should be consistent with the values of its parent institution. The LIS programme should demonstrate awareness of related professions and disciplines.

Goals and objectives. The library/information educational programme should state its goals and identify specific objectives, derived from its goals, addressing philosophy, principles and methods of the programme; areas of specialisation; level of preparation provided; teaching, service and research values; and the perceived role of library and information services in society. The goals and objectives should be consistent with published educational policy statements from recognised official bodies. They should also met the relevant student learning outcomes and graduate capabilities of the host institution and country.

Planning and evaluation. The programme should have a clearly developed, regular planning and evaluation process. The process should include an ongoing review of policies and procedures in light of anticipated changes in the library/information field and in the larger society. Faculty, staff, and students should be involved in the planning and evaluation activities. Employers and practitioners should be consulted as well. The programme should meet such educational and/or professional accreditation requirements as are the norm in the country

G2   Curriculum elements
Objectives

It is important that the core curriculum elements as listed below:

- Include methods of the past as pathways to methods in a digitised environment;
- Embed indigenous knowledge and ways in the curriculum.

Principles

The core elements of the LIS curriculum will include:

1. The Information Environment, Societal impacts of the information society, Information Policy and Ethics, the History of the Field.
2. Information Generation, Communication and Use.
3. Assessing Information Needs and Designing Responsive Services.

4. The Information Transfer Process.
5. Information Resource Management to include Organization, Processing, Retrieval, Preservation and Conservation of Information in its various presentations and formats.
6. Research, Analysis and Interpretation of Information.
7. Applications of Information and Communication Technologies to all facets of Library and Information Products and Services.
8. Knowledge Management.
9. Management of Information Agencies.
10. Quantitative and Qualitative Evaluation of Outcomes of Information and Library Use.
11. Awareness of Indigenous Knowledge Paradigms.

It is beyond the scope of this document prescribe the coverage of all of the abovementioned elements. However the following guidance is offered regarding Core element 11: Awareness of Indigenous Knowledge Paradigms, to include:

- Awareness of Indigenous Knowledge Paradigms

  The Scope includes:
    o Understanding the importance, diversity or structure of indigenous knowledge
    o the influence that indigenous processes, philosophies and language is intrinsic in indigenous knowledge frameworks
    o the importance of using indigenous research methodologies when investigating the information resources and services delivery needs of indigenous clients

  These characteristics will be further informed by values. It is important to note that although there are some commonalities between indigenous peoples, there is also a high degree of diversity as well. Therefore, each indigenous community will have its own value and themes (expressed in their own language from their own cultural constructs). However common core values and themes across indigenous peoples include: heritage, guardianship, legitimacy, innovation, respect and language (Lilley, 2012).

G3   Curriculum
Objectives

The curriculum shall consist of a unified series of courses and other educational experiences based on the programme's goals and objectives. It should provide students with a theoretical framework for research and practice in the library/information field. Opportunities to gain and demonstrate professional competencies should be a part of the educational programme. An awareness of professional concerns should permeate the programme.

Principles

Public document. The curriculum should be stated clearly in a publicly available formal document, describing the aims, prerequisites, content, learning outcomes, and assessment methods for each course within the programme.

Breadth of general education. Students should acquire a broad general education (topics from other disciplines) as a significant component of the total educational programme for the library/information professional.

Core library/information coursework. Programmes should refer to educational policy statements issued by government or professional associations that identify important knowledge and skill components.

Practicum, Internship or Fieldwork. The programme should incorporate appropriate means to allow students, in a practical way, to appreciate the interplay between professional theories and their application in professional practice. Depending on the required learning outcomes it can also include applied project research and/or projects that involve authentic practical activities, undertaken in a placement environment.

Transferable skills. Methods of teaching and assessment should be designed to develop or enhance students' interpersonal communication skills, ability to work in teams, and time and task management skills. At the professional level, emphasis should be placed on developing students' analytical and problem-solving skills.

Teaching methods. Where distance and online learning methods are used, the content of the curriculum and quality of the education experience should be comparable to those experiences offered onsite. Documentation regarding such offerings should clearly state the technology requirements of such students.

Continuing education. In order to assist practising librarians and information specialists to maintain competence in a changing society and to keep educators aware of issues and trends in practice, the programme should either conduct suitable workshops and short courses for the benefit of practising librarians and information specialists or partner with other agencies in doing so.

Regular review of curriculum. A process of formal curriculum review should take place on a regular basis and the next review should take place on or before 2017. This review should be informed by input from employers, practitioners and professional associations, as well as students and faculty and will be overseen by the IFLA Standards Committee.

G4　Faculty and Staff

Objectives

The staffing of the programme should have status and authority comparable to similar units in the parent institution. Teaching and research staff should possess both academic and professional qualifications comparable to those required of faculty, and administrative ability and leadership skills.

Principles

Academic staff. The number of academic (teaching) staff should be sufficient to accomplish programme objectives. The qualification of each full-time faculty member should include research-based competence in the designated teaching areas, technological proficiency, effectiveness in teaching, a sustained record of scholarship, and active participation in appropriate professional associations. For teachers of programmes at the professional level, a sustained record of scholarship is expected comparable to that expected of university teachers in other disciplines.

Head of Programme. The head of the programme should have status and authority comparable to heads of similar units in the parent institution. The head of the programme should possess both academic and professional qualifications comparable to those required of faculty, and administrative ability and leadership skills.

Faculty appointment. Review and Promotion Policies. The educational programme should have stated policies and standards for appointment, review and promotion of full-time faculty equivalent to those in comparable units. All full-time faculty should hold degrees in relevant subjects from recognised academic institutions. There should be a clearly stated policy for the continuing education and professional development of the academic teaching staff, and for reviewing the currency and relevance of courses and teaching methods.

Part-time faculty. Part-time faculty should be appropriately qualified and should balance and complement the teaching competencies of full-time faculty. Inputs from part-time faculty should be coordinated with the programme as a whole.

Non-academic staff. Non-academic (clerical, secretarial, technical) staff should have qualifications equivalent to those of persons in comparable units. The number and kind of staff should be adequate to support the faculty in the performance of their responsibilities.

13. Consultancy. The programme's staff should have the opportunity of offering consulting to libraries and information agencies to develop further interplay between the educational institution and practice.

G5   Students
Objectives

Selection of students should be based on clearly stated publicly available criteria where interest, aptitude, intellectual and educational backgrounds and diversity should be addressed.

Principles

Academic policies. Recruitment, admission, financial aid, placement, and other academic and administrative policies for students should be consistent with the mission, goals and objectives of the educational programme and the educational institution as a whole, and should be explicitly non-discriminatory. The policies should reflect the needs and values of the constituencies served by the programme. Policies should be publicly available.

Admission. Selection of students should be based on clearly stated publicly available criteria. Interest, aptitude, intellectual and educational backgrounds and diversity should be addressed in the criteria. Standards for admission should be applied consistently.

Programme of study. Students should have advisory assistance in constructing a coherent programme of study to meet career aspirations consistent with the educational programme's mission, goals and objectives. Evaluation of student achievement should be provided on a consistent and equitable basis. Student and alumni evaluation of the programme should be undertaken on a regular basis.

Completion requirements. A clear statement of the requirements of the educational programme should appear in a formal document that is available to students and prospective students. On completion of requirements, students should be awarded a degree, diploma, or certificate suitable to their level of study.

G6   Support
Objectives

Library educational programmes are often found as part of a larger educational entity within their institution and consequently require assured support and facilities of the highest quality.

Principles

Administration and financial.

The administrators, faculty and staff of the library/information educational programme should be aware of, and in communication with other related professions and disciplines within and outside the educational establishment. In addition, the programme should occupy a distinct position in the administrative organisation plan of the institution. It should have

autonomy sufficient to ensure the intellectual integrity of the programme is consistent with its goals and objectives.

Governance. Decisions should be based on clearly defined and publicly stated policies. Faculty, staff, student, alumni and employer participation in governance should be encouraged. Major decisions and activities should be documented.

Financial support. The educational programme should have adequate financial support to develop and maintain a library and information course of study consistent with the expectations of practice and comparable to similar programmes elsewhere. An annual budget should be administered by the head of the programme. The level of support should relate to the number of students, faculty, administrative and support staff, instructional resources and facilities.

G7   Instructional Resources and Facilities
Objectives

The instructional resources and facilities for LIS educational programmes should be current and of sufficient depth, quantity and accessibility to support the courses offered by the educational programme and the research efforts of the faculty.

Principles

Library resources. Students and faculty should have access to current and relevant library resources that support the teaching and research aspects of the educational programme. These should include publications in print and in electronic formats; a range of bibliographical and online tools to support teaching and research; and other appropriate media. A procedure for access to additional resources from other locations should be in place.

Information technology resources. Computer hardware and software and multimedia resources should be available for students and staff and be sufficient for the level of use required for coursework and faculty research.

Internet resources. Adequate Internet access and availability is required for faculty and students. A policy regarding acceptable uses of the Internet for teaching and research emphasising the librarian's concerns for freedom of information should be formulated and publicised.

Physical facilities. The educational programme's physical facilities should provide adequate space for faculty, staff and students to accomplish its objectives.

References

Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) see:
http://www.alia.org.au/education/courses/accreditation.html and
http://www.alia.org.au/education/courses/criteria.html

Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals (CILIP) (formerly the Library Association (UK)) see: http://www.cilip.org.uk/jobs-careers/qualifications/accreditation/Pages/default.aspx

Lilley, A.S. (2012). *Introducing "Awareness of Indigenous Knowledge Paradigms" IFLA core elements*.   Available from: s.c.lilley@massey.ac.nz

Medical Library Association (US), see: http://www.mlanet.org/education/policy/

Special Libraries Association (US), see:
http://www.sla.org/content/learn/members/competencies/index.cfm