

Educating the Teachers

Member input sought about task force recommendations

by Jim Rettig

In recent years, the American Library Association has repeatedly looked at library education. Most recently, a Task Force on Library Education, appointed by former ALA president Leslie Burger in 2006 and chaired by former ALA president Carla Hayden, carried the discussion further with a final report (tinyurl.com/cthc2z) submitted during January's Midwinter Meeting in Denver. The most visible product of the task force's work is a set of eight competences that define "the basic knowledge to be possessed by all persons graduating from an ALA-accredited master's program." The competences were approved by the governing Council at Midwinter. I urge every ALA member to read the report.

The task force also submitted recommendations to the Executive Board that address accreditation standards. The board referred the recommendations to ALA's Committee on Accreditation (COA), whose charge is to formulate standards of education for library and information studies.

The recommendations state:

1. That the Association incorporate the core competences and ALA's Core Values of Librarianship into its Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies . . . together with specific recommendations on those standards as listed below.

2. That the standards be revised using imperatives and in the active voice—stressing that adherence to them is required for accreditation.

3. That the standards be stated to be prescriptive, not indicative—mandates, not suggestions.

4. That the standards use the terms "program" and "school" with exactitude to make it crystal clear that they are concerned only with programs and not with schools, except in areas in which the activities and policies of the program are inextricable from those of the school.

5. That it is made clear to programs seeking accreditation that the Association is not interested in prescribing a "core curriculum" (though it should be clear that the core competences are the bedrock of the curricula of accredited programs). Accordingly, the standards should be written to concentrate on the outcomes of the education received in accredited LIS programs and that these outcomes not only be achieved, but documented in the accreditation process.

6. That the standards prescribe that a majority of the permanent full-time faculty teaching in the program are grounded in librarianship by virtue of their educational background, professional experience, and/or record of research and publication.

7. That the standards prescribe that the full-time faculty of ALA-accredited programs are sufficient in number and diversity of specialties



I have asked the Committee on Accreditation to engage members in conversation about the Library Education Task Force recommendations.

to carry out the major share of the teaching, research, and service activities required for accreditation.

8. That the standards prescribe that temporary and part-time faculty

of ALA-accredited programs are appointed to balance and complement the teaching competences of the full-time faculty, not to replace them in their teaching activity.

9. That the standards make it inescapably clear that assessment processes must be such as to show that the outcomes dictated by the standards are achieved demonstrably—that is, with sufficient objective evidence to show that those outcomes are achieved by all graduates of the program.

COA has well-defined responsibility and authority; however, as part of a member organization that values participation, it welcomes member comments on the recommendations. I have asked COA to engage members in conversation.

Send your thoughts to ALA Office for Accreditation Director Karen O'Brien at kobrien@ala.org; type "TF Recommendations" in the subject line.

Let the discussion begin! ■

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