LIBRARY ASSISTANTS

ARE THEY UNDERVALUED?

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Terminology

- IFLA guidelines for Public Libraries
  - Qualified librarians
  - Library assistants
  - Specialist staff
  - Support staff (caretakers, cleaners, drivers, security)
- Encarta article (online)
  - Non professional support staff - used for those doing technician and library assistant level work
- CILIP President 2002
  - Paraprofessionals
  - Support staff
  - Non professionals
  - Unqualified staff
Concerns

- Library Assistants are front line personnel but not given enough ‘Big Picture’ information
- Skills traditionally unacknowledged by any structured, formal and national recognition
- Library profession supports training but seems to do little to promote it
- Some Library Technician level paraprofessionals feel threatened by those below being certified
- Industry based competency training is relatively new and not fully understood by many library professionals; procedures too complicated, cumbersome and jargonistic
Certification: Advantages

• Skills at every level of staffing recognised.

• National certification portable and transferable.

• Current skills can be recognised and areas for further training immediately identifiable.

• Training increases personal self esteem and confidence
Methods of training in Australia

- ‘On the job’ Traineeships using independent contracted assessors
- Training programme taught and assessed by librarians who have Competency Training certificates
- Commercial provider conducting sessions for LA’s working in different types of libraries in Canberra
- Online distance education course
- Adult Community College – classes and work experience
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More Information

- Website www.librarysupportstaff.com
- OnLine Discussion Site www.branching-out.net/talkingshop
- BLOG www.becomealibrarian.org
IFLA’s Three Pillars

- **Society Pillar** - “role and impact of libraries and information services in society”

- **Professional Pillar** - “help libraries and information services to fulfill their purpose and to shape response to the needs of clients in a rapidly changing global environment”

- **Members Pillar** - “work together to make IFLA more vibrant and attractive and beneficial for members throughout the world”
Certification: Disadvantages