LIBRARY ASSISTANTS

ARE THEY UNDERVALUED?

Judith Field, Australia

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