Guidelines For the Education of Library Technicians

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Revision of the CLA "Guidelines for the Education of Library Technicians" 1991.

Revised by: The Library Technician Program Chairs/Coordinators Group and LTIG Convenor.

CLA Guidelines for the Education of Library Technicians

Introduction

The Canadian Library Association (CLA) has established these guidelines in order to promote excellence in the training and education of library technicians. The guidelines are intended to serve as a national standard to be used both by educational institutions in Canada and by employers who need to determine the capabilities of program graduates. The CLA Library Technicians Interest Group, under the guidance of the LTIG convenor, was responsible for producing this revision to the Guidelines. The document was produced in consultation with the Program Chairs/Coordinators of Canadian institutions offering Library Technician Programs.

The Canadian Library Association has established these guidelines in order to describe library technician programs of high quality, the basic components of which are qualified instructors, adequate support systems within the educational institution, opportunities for supervised field placement and most important, a program of instruction which meets the needs of employers.

Recognizing that the names of programs differ from institution to institution and from province to province, in the interests of simplicity standard terminology is used throughout the guidelines. The phrase "library technician program" refers to such programs as library studies, library arts and documentation technology, library and information technology, techniques de la documentation. The term "library technician" refers also to library technical assistant, documentation technicians, etc. The term "library" includes learning resources centre, instructional media centre, information resource centre and other phrases in current use to describe libraries. The term "program director" denotes the coordinator, chairperson, or the individual(s) responsible for overseeing the program.

The Role of a Library Technician

The library technician plays an important role on a library staff, occupying a position with a level of responsibility between that of a clerk and a librarian. Technicians support and assist librarians in the many services offered by libraries. They may direct the work of clerical staff, student assistants, other library technicians, and, under the direction of a librarian, may be responsible for a section or department in a library. Technicians may also be in charge of a small library.

Library technicians are employed in all types of libraries: academic (college and university), public, school, and special (government, business, industry, the professions, etc.). They also work at library related jobs such as records management.

Admission Requirements

A secondary school diploma or its equivalent is the minimum required for the admission to the program; special provisions may be made for the admission of qualified mature students. A demonstrated competence in oral and written English or French (as appropriate) is required. Admission requirements may vary from institution to institution. For some programs admission may be based on a recommendation by the director of the library technician program who may employ a variety of mechanisms, such as personal interviews and standard tests to assess the candidate's academic qualifications, language and communication skills, motivation and attitude; for other programs admission is based on meeting the institution's admission requirements.

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Program of Instruction

a) Length

Most programs are completed over two academic years. Programs in Quebec are three years with one year devoted to general education. Because of rapidly changing technology, the course should normally be completed within five (5) years for part-time students. A diploma is awarded upon completion of the program.

b) Curriculum

The program of instruction combines technical and academic courses with the majority of the courses being technical. Academic courses are directed towards broadening students' general knowledge and enhancing career development. With this in mind, students should select academic courses that will enhance their career development. All academic studies should stress written and oral communication skills.

Technical Courses

The graduate library technician possesses the general technical skills needed to work effectively in a library environment. The library technician is trained to handle all formats currently used for storing information. It is understood that graduates may also have developed additional skills appropriate to particular libraries or library functions: e.g., children's programming or specialized retrieval skills related to a discipline.

Library technicians have a general knowledge of the various types of libraries, the needs of library users and the organizational structures and services in libraries which are designed to meet users' needs. They are familiar with the history of books and printing, the modern publishing and production industry, relevant copyright legislation, the impact of censorship on society, and other current issues.

Graduates understand the role of library technicians in relation to librarians and clerical staff, and possess the human relations skills needed to participate as team members and to assume supervisory responsibilities as well as to interact effectively with library users.

A graduate library technician should possess the following minimum competencies. It should be borne in mind that the library technician may be called upon either to perform or to supervise these functions.

Acquisitions:
1. Verify requests in appropriate bibliographic tools.
2. Check requests against holdings and order files.
3. Determine appropriate sources for purchase of materials.
4. Prepare purchase orders.
5. Maintain acquisitions files.
6. Receive materials and claim when required.
7. Maintain bookkeeping records.
8. Prepare exchange lists.
9. Maintain serials records.

10. Maintain bindery records.
11. Prepare materials for bindery.
12. Maintain records for license.

Cataloguing and Indexing:
1. Apply rules for subject analysis and the choice of subject headings and descriptors from various subject heading lists and other controlled vocabularies.
2. Apply rules for subject analysis and the choice of classification numbers from the Library of Congress schedules and the Dewey Decimal Classification schedules.
3. Establish and maintain authority files and cross references.
4. Maintain library catalogues and shelf list according to recognized filing rules.
5. Apply Cutter tables and other book number systems.
6. Code cataloguing records according to MARC.
7. Apply basic internationally accepted cataloguing rules for description and access.
8. Input catalogue records.
9. Perform derived cataloguing.
10. Search for derived cataloguing copy, verify cataloguing information and edit records.
11. Perform original cataloguing.
12. Apply metadata schemas.
13. Index special collections.
14. Be aware of the various types of filing rules used in print and electronic resources.
15. Maintain thesauri and use them in the indexing of various types of materials.

Selection:
1. Contribute to collections development policies.
2. Assist with selection of materials for collections.
3. Assist with weeding the collection.

Circulation:
1. Administer the circulation desk, supervising charging systems, statistics, files, etc.
2. Supervise collections maintenance.
3. Administer a reserve collection.

Reference:
1. Conduct reference interviews in order to ascertain user needs.
2. Respond to various types of reference requests.
3. Use standard reference tools to answer basic reference questions.
4. Search library catalogues, research databases, and the Web to find information.
5. Use specialized resources for finding information in selected areas, such as health.
6. Recognize and refer any reference questions requiring further expertise.
7. Instruct library patrons in the use of resources.
8. Locate materials resulting from reference requests.
9. Compile bibliographies on defined subjects.
10. Prepare instructional materials on the use of library resources.
11. Assist in the provision of current awareness services.

Interlibrary Loans:
1. Verify requests in appropriate bibliographic tools.

2. Check requests against local holdings.
3. Identify and select appropriate location(s).
4. Send/respond to ILL requests.

Library Programs
1. Organize library programs.
2. Conduct informational, instructional, outreach, recreational programs and special events.
3. Create accompanying materials for library programs.

Library Promotion
1. Create library promotional materials.
2. Organize local library promotional campaigns or events.

Technology Skills
1. Use general application software for databases, documents, presentations and spreadsheets.
2. Design rudimentary databases and use the software to manage them.
3. Use and evaluate library management software.
4. Create and maintain web applications.
5. Use web tools, such as blogs for library communications and services.
6. Use various commercial research search systems.
7. Design searches for finding information in library catalogues, research databases and the Web.
8. Create various types of audiovisual materials such as PowerPoint presentations and overheads.
9. Proficient keyboarding skills.

Workplace Skills
Graduates of library technician programs should enjoy helping people find information, taking a methodical approach to their work, and being creative as well as paying careful attention to detail. They should display excellent abilities in the following areas.
1. Analytics.
2. Communications.
3. Computer literacy.
4. Customer Services.
5. Detailed work.
6. Flexibility.
7. Following instructions.
8. Independent and team work.
9. Interpersonal interactions.
10. Organization.
11. Time management.
12. Good analytical skills.

c) *Field Practice*

The length of field practice is generally 30 days. The field practice length may vary between institutions but should be no less than 20 days. Field practice should be carefully planned by the

program director in consultation with the appropriate supervisor at the local library or libraries in which the practice work is arranged. A wide variety of field experiences in different types of libraries is desirable for each student. Progress reports to the program director from both the field supervisor and the student are recommended.

A follow-up or accompanying seminar is also recommended to discuss the field experience and to relate it more closely to the course work in the program. Each field placement should constitute a new library learning experience. Ordinarily this necessitates avoiding a library in which a student has already worked, as well as the library of the educational institution where the program is located.

d) *Part-time Programs*

In order to make library technician education available to part-time or off-campus students, a library technician program may be offered through continuing education, extension, evening, or online through the educational institution. Before such a program is introduced by the institution, the Advisory Committee for the Library Technician Program must be consulted. (See page 6 for further information on advisory committees.)

Where such a program is available, it must meet the standards of the training of library technicians established in these guidelines as well as conform to the requirements of the library technician program offered by the institution. Admission and curriculum requirements must be identical for both part-time and full-time programs. Complete transferability between full-time and part-time programs and vice-versa should be possible.

Continuing Education

Library technician programs must ensure that graduating students are aware of the need to continue their education. Where possible, programs should work with partner organizations, such as library associations and local libraries to provide continuing education opportunities.

In this way, the standards of education recommended by these guidelines may be extended beyond the library technician program itself, and the standard of performance of graduate technicians can be maintained at an optimum level of quality.

Program Director and Staff

Administration of the educational institution should strive to hire a director and instructors with experience in different types of libraries and library services. A librarian with an accredited graduate library degree and at least five years diverse previous professional experience should direct the program. In addition to a director, it is recommended that the library technician program should have one assistant (instructor or educational assistant) who is a qualified and experienced librarian or library technician.

Other instructors, visiting lecturers and technical or clerical staff may also be required. Instructors should have a graduate degree in the subject area they are teaching. The director should have sufficiently reduced teaching load to allow for administrative duties. Time and budget should be

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available for professional development of all staff. In addition, faculty should be encouraged to be involved in professional activities.

Supporting Facilities

a) Teaching Facilities

There must be adequate space, equipment and library resources for the number of students enrolled in the program. These include laboratory space for the preparation of projects and for the demonstration and use of all types of equipment, resources, and software currently used in libraries. The program must be supplied with any necessary resources or bibliographic tools needed to complement the library collection of the institution; particularly those tools used by library staff which may not be available on a regular basis or in sufficient quantity to students. It is important that the program have access to sufficient computer services and facilities to provide hands-on training and experience in state-of-the-art technology and software.

b) Library Services

A library meeting the recommended minimum standards of *Standards for Canadian College Libraries* is required to support a successful library technician program. Students in library technician programs should have reasonable access to all library facilities. Full cooperation and communication between the instructional staff and library staff is essential to the program. Laboratory exercises in the library may be arranged for students but the library must not serve as a base for all field practice nor must the library use the technician program as a source of unpaid labour.

c) Administration and Budget

The library technician program is an academic program, which must find its administrative place in the appropriate division of the educational institution. Its administration must be entirely separate from that of the library. Similarly, its budget must be separate and sufficient to allow for the autonomous development of the program. The program budget must provide for both onsite and online delivery (where applicable), the continuing upkeep of equipment, supplies, professional tools, etc., as well as provide for appropriate staff as needed and for their continuing education. The budget should provide the assurance of continuity and growth from year to year.

Advisory Committee

An Advisory Committee comprising representatives from libraries and other employers in the region should be established, both for the purpose of instituting a new library technician program, and in order to advise and monitor any existing program.

a) Role

Before a library technician program is established, the administration of the educational institution should appoint an Advisory Committee. Upon appointment, the committee, in co-operation with the administration, must carry out a thorough survey of the potential regional market for graduate library technicians. No program should be offered without a positive recommendation from the committee based on such a survey. As the program proceeds, the committee should continue to assess the ability of the market to absorb the graduates of the program and advise the director

accordingly. Graduates' mobility beyond the local region is also considered by the Advisory Committees in their assessment of the employment market. Within the limits of these guidelines, the committee should advise the director of the library technician program on the development of a program of instruction appropriate to the needs of the libraries of the region.

The Advisory Committee provides a focal point for information sharing and liaison between the program director representing the educational institution and employers of graduates.

b) Membership

As well as the program director, faculty, and selected administrators who are ex-officio members of the committee, the Advisory Committee should be composed of representatives from the principal libraries of the area. In addition, representatives from library associations in the province (including provincial library technician associations), graduate library schools or university programs for school librarians and the provincial library *or* public library service may be asked to join the committee. Care should be taken to ensure that all major library and employer interests are represented. After the program is established, a graduate of the program should be asked to join the committee. In addition, a student representative may also be appointed to join the committee.

Advisory Committee members should be appointed in consultation with the Director by the administration of the educational institution. Their terms of office should be defined and staggered and the committee should be consulted concerning new appointments or replacements. The chair should be elected from those members representing library and employer interests, rather than staff from the educational institution who sit on the committee.

c) Meetings

Meetings should be held at least once a year or as appropriate.

Location of Programs

Library technician programs should be offered only in centres within reasonable travelling distance of several types of libraries housing adequate collections for student use and field work. Institutions offering online programs need to work closely with the library community on a national level to ensure that their students have access to field work in their region. Programs should be instituted only after a survey study has indicated sufficient regional job opportunities for graduates.

National Library Technician Program Chairs/Convenors Meeting

In order to coordinate library technician education across Canada and ensure that overall standards are met by each program, while recognizing the particular local needs of each community, library technician program chairs/convenors are encouraged to attend the National Library Technician Program Chairs/Convenors Annual Meeting (held in conjunction with the CLA conference).