Library Technician Program Accreditation: A Program Manager's View

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To begin

- Thanks to Christina Neigel, University of the Fraser Valley, B.C. for her initiative in raising this issue, researching it, and preparing the proposal document

- Thanks to Michael David Reansbury and the OALT/ABO conference planners for bringing this topic for discussion at the conference

What is accreditation?

- A process of developing accepted standards related to educational practice that are subsequently reviewed and evaluated

- An aspect of self-regulation, which is "the actions of any individual or group to monitor and control its own behaviour"

- It provides educational programs with a vehicle for addressing problems that may be experienced by multiple agencies, and gives programs a collective voice for related issues

Library Technician Programs in Canada

Eighteen in total:

- British Columbia – Langara, U Fraser Valley

- Alberta – Grant MacEwan, SAIT

- Saskatchewan – SIAST

- Manitoba – Red River

- Ontario – Algonquin, Durham, Mohawk, Seneca

Library Technician Programs in Canada cnt'd

- Quebec – John Abbott, CEGEP Trois-Rivieres, CEGEP Jonquiere, College de L'Outaouasis, College de Maisonneuve, College de Francois-Xavier-Garneau, College Lionel-Groulx

- Nova Scotia – N.S. Community College

- Source - http://www.cla.ca/infonation/libtech.htm
- Note: Memorial University has a certificate program in library studies

Current collaboration between programs

- Program Managers of library technician programs across Canada have met annually for a brief meeting at CLA for 8 years, but in general, communication links are not strong
- Program Managers worked together (under CLA's LTAN Network) to revise CLA's *Guidelines for the Education of Library Technicians* in 2011 (available on CLA's web site); but there is no mandatory enforcement

Accountability of library technician programs

- Each program can be considered to have three masters:

  - 1) their own academic institution
  - 2) the provincial ministry of colleges and universities
  - 3) the profession

Academic institutions (colleges)

- Academic institutions have constraints (e.g. human and financial resources)

- Academic institutions have limited understanding of the profession

- Most library technician programs have a Program Advisory Committee (PAC), made up of representatives of employers from different library/information sectors, library associations, grads and a student rep to advise on directions for the program

Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

- Education is a provincial responsibility so there are different standards for college level LIT programs in each province

- Vocational standards for "Library and Information Technician" in Ontario are in need of updating

Important points

- Accreditation is for programs, NOT for individuals
- Programs have different strengths: this accreditation proposal recognizes different strengths and focus of each program, should not force each program to be identical to the others
- In future, grads' resumes could say "graduated from accredited library technician program"
- In future, job notices may say "must be a grad of an accredited library technician program"

Accreditation of MLIS Programs

- Master of Library and Information Science programs are accredited by the American Library Association

- Most job ads for librarians say that applicants must be a graduate of an "ALA-accredited" masters program

- If librarian programs are accredited, should library technician programs be as well?

Concerns and Questions

- How much work will be involved for program managers, faculty and administration?

- Who will fund the accreditation process? Will each academic institution be willing?

- Grandfathering – what about previous grads of programs that become accredited later?

- Will accreditation of programs be recognized internationally?

Concerns and Questions cnt'd

- Will accreditation of programs assist in evaluating previous education of people who have studied internationally?

- Will there be a divide between accredited and non-accredited programs?

- Will this lead to a reduction in the number of library technician programs in Canada?

- Will accreditation process take into account variations in delivery methods (e.g. online) and organization of program administration (e.g. Con. Ed.)?

Concerns and Questions cnt'd

- Not all library technician program managers are convinced of the need for accreditation

- Programs need flexibility to exercise freedom to develop their programs. Will accreditation standards reduce this flexibility?

- More research needed into skills that ALL library workers need for the future.

Possible benefits of accreditation

- Encourages compliance and accountability of program
- Assures employers that grads have met standards
- Assists students in transferring between institutions
- Puts library technician programs in line with other programs that self-regulate (e.g. MLIS)

Possible benefits of accreditation cnt'd

- Increases awareness of best practices in field
- Encourages increase in program quality
- Can help programs defend or request resources from their institutions
- Can expand or maintain program depth and specialization

Possible benefits of accreditation cnt'd

- Justification for tracking grad success stats
- Encourages CE programs that correspond with standards for LIT grads
- Provides students and programs with increased awareness of industry expectations and needs
- Protects LIT programs from encroachments within their institutions

Thoughts re the road ahead – what is needed?

- Further research by Christina Neigel and others
- More detailed consideration, analysis and critical evaluation of the ramifications of accreditation by the various stakeholders involved

- This is a complex undertaking that should not be entered into lightly!