WHERE TO FROM HERE? CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NEW ZEALAND

Amanda Cossham, Alison Fields and Gillian Oliver
School of Information and Social Sciences,
The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand
Private Bag 31914
Lower Hutt
New Zealand
Amanda.Cossham@openpolytechnic.ac.nz
Alison.Fields@openpolytechnic.ac.nz
Gillian.Oliver@openpolytechnic.ac.nz

Abstract
This paper examines the current situation relating to continuing professional development (CPD) for librarians and other information management professionals in New Zealand. New Zealand has a lack of homogeneity as regards qualifications held by librarians, and consequently professional staff may have widely varying educational backgrounds ranging from undergraduate certificates to postgraduate master’s degrees. There is no formal requirement on the part of New Zealand’s library association for librarians to undertake CPD in order to achieve or maintain professional status. The New Zealand government is currently formulating a national digital strategy, which has implications for the provision of library services. New Zealand librarians need therefore to have access to CPD to ensure that they are able to meet the demands of a digital society. However, given the relatively small population, the lack of a formal requirement for CPD, and a lack of clarity surrounding professional qualification and position status, CPD provision tends to be sporadic and limited to one or two urban centres. This paper is informed by research literature and experiences developing professional information management qualifications including feedback from employers, students and practitioners.

Introduction
This paper examines the current situation relating to continuing professional development (CPD) for information managers in New Zealand. The first part begins with a definition of terms used in this paper, provides background information about the country, and details educational requirements for information managers. The role of professional associations is also considered. The second part describes current government initiatives and strategies that will impact on the role of the information manager. The final part considers the requirements for CPD in New Zealand.

Definition of terms
‘Information manager’ is used as a comprehensive term to include librarians, records managers and archivists.
‘Continuing professional development’ (CPD) is defined as: “The continuing education of persons within a category or type of employment. It may consist in the upgrading of skills or learning through courses or individual learning. Where professions have expanded, professional development may involve doing new courses ...”.

Niemi suggests that professionals seek educational opportunities from four sources: institutions of higher education, professional associations, independent (proprietary) agencies,
and agencies which employ these professionals, but notes that this last source is more likely to be concerned with the needs of the organisation than the needs of the professional. To this list can be added more informally constituted and organic communities of practice. This framework will be used to assist in the evaluation of the CPD available in New Zealand.

Determining what CPD is offered, what information managers undertake, and what they might still need, depends very much on the interpretation of CPD. Where gaps are present between what is thought of as ‘CPD’ by practitioners, employers, education providers, and professional associations, discrepancies and failures to meet needs or expectations can arise. However, there is no doubt about the importance of CPD; "Maintaining competence and learning new skills must be at the top of every professional’s ‘To Do’ list. It is an ethical responsibility ... but also one that is pragmatic and critical for career success".

**Background**

New Zealand is a country with a relatively small population (4 million), with large concentrations of population in five main urban centres, Auckland being the largest with around 1 million. Auckland is about 1 hour’s flying time from other North Island cities, and about 700 km from Wellington, the nation’s capital. The North Island is more heavily populated than the South, leading to a concentration of services in the North and relatively little in the South. New Zealand has a well-developed information infrastructure and has been compared to Finland in terms of its economic growth capabilities. A 2002 survey showed that New Zealand scored relatively poorly in areas relating to innovation, but suggests that "... New Zealand has the potential to advance to an innovation-driven high-income economy over the next decade".

**Education**

Formal education for librarians in New Zealand was first offered in the 1940s and since this time has consisted of two programmes offered in parallel— one at undergraduate level and one at postgraduate level. The qualifications awarded for these two programmes have varied over the years, but currently the postgraduate qualification is a Master’s degree offered by Victoria University of Wellington (VUW). There are several undergraduate qualifications, including two undergraduate diplomas and two bachelor degrees offered by The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand. Unlike Australia, which has established a paraprofessional position of ‘library technician’, a clear and explicit linkage between qualification and professional status has not been established in New Zealand. Consequently, there is no single qualification level clearly associated with the occupation of ‘librarian’, and terms such as ‘librarian’, ‘assistant librarian’ and ‘library assistant’ may refer to different
levels in different library sectors. Therefore, when planning or providing CPD an educational level common to all participants cannot be assumed.

Formal education opportunities for records managers and archivists have been more scattered. Until 2001 there was no records management qualification available beyond a one paper short course which has now ceased, and an archival qualification which has also ceased. New Zealanders wanting a full qualification in records management or archives have had to travel overseas, study by distance from an overseas institution, or qualify in a related field (librarianship, information management) and then gain on-the-job experience. Single papers in archives and records management have been available through the MLIS programme at VUW since the early 1990s. In 2001 The Open Polytechnic established an undergraduate diploma, and VUW established a post-graduate certificate and diploma in Archives and Records Management in 2004.

Because of the absence of a substantial New Zealand records or archives qualification until very recently, continuing professional development opportunities have been hugely important. By default, any course offered in the relevant area was CPD rather than a qualification and archivists and records managers relied on picking up courses from wherever they could in order to meet their learning needs.

Professional associations

The information management professions in New Zealand have many professional associations. The largest professional association for librarians is the Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (LIANZA). There is also a Māori information workers’ association, Te Ropu Whakahau - Māori in Libraries and Information Management (TRW). LIANZA has a partnership with TRW; it also caters to a range of special interest groups such as special libraries, cataloguing librarians, and research. However, there is a separate association for school librarians (SLANZA) and another for law librarians (NZLLG); records managers and archivists have the RMAA (Records Managers Association of Australasia), ARANZ (Archives and Records Association of New Zealand) and the NZSA (New Zealand Society of Archivists).10

Of all these associations, only RMAA has established a framework for recognition of professional membership, with a requirement for ongoing professional development.11 As RMAA is in essence an Australian association this is perhaps not surprising. The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) has had a policy on continuing professional development since 1995, and has recently introduced a compliance scheme which allows for formal acknowledgment of CPD by members.12

None of the other New Zealand associations listed above require their members to achieve and maintain a level of professional membership. There are no requirements for members to have a qualification, a designated level of experience, or to undertake any kind of CPD. Individuals may join LIANZA (for example) without a library qualification, and maintain their membership without undertaking any education or CPD. The lack of formal recognition of CPD disadvantages New Zealand information managers wishing to work overseas.

LIANZA does have two professional categories of membership, associate and fellow, but these do not function in the same way as professional membership does in many other associations. An associate is defined as “a personal member of the Association who has demonstrated the knowledge, skills, judgement, attitude and commitment of a professional librarian and/or information manager”.13 Members need to apply and be interviewed for this award, and meet peer reviewed criteria for involvement and achievement. It is a higher award than the Associate status with ALIA, and only 10-15 awards for Associate are awarded.
annually. It is important to note that once the status of Associate is awarded, there is no further review process to ensure that knowledge and skills are maintained. Fellowships are honorary awards, given for “significant contribution to the advancement of librarianship and/or information management through a sustained record of achievements, or who has demonstrated outstanding qualities of leadership, teaching or research”.14

The absence of a professional level of membership requiring ongoing maintenance has long been acknowledged as an area to be considered. LIANZA council has a portfolio for Continuing Professional Development amongst others, but at the time of writing the issue of a membership status which requires ongoing CPD has not been fully addressed. Part of the equation in requiring information managers to maintain their standing with ongoing CPD is that there needs to be suitable CPD available for members. While there is a wide range of offerings, these can vary from in quality and in frequency and they are not available equally throughout the country. They are very often the result of the enthusiasm of a current committee, whereas another committee may not offer the same – or anything at all. The aspect of what is offered in CPD is looked at in more detail in the final part of this paper.

There are a range of scholarships and awards available to assist with CPD. These are available from many of the professional associations covered in this paper, and include such things as conference sponsorships, LIANZA’s Edith Jessie Carnell travelling scholarship, and HIANZ’s Margaret Gibson-Smith education scholarship.

**Government**

Both central and local government have launched e-government strategies. The goal of the central government strategy was that by 2004 the public sector in New Zealand would be working as a single, integrated operation.15 This has critical implications for management of knowledge and information in this sector. Building on this, in 2004 the National Digital Strategy was written and launched, initially for consultation and feedback from a wide range of sectors (education, government - both central and local -, business, and information and cultural industries). The strategy’s vision is that:

New Zealand will be a world leader at using information and technology to realise our economic, social and cultural goals. All New Zealanders will benefit from the power of information and communications technology (ICT) to harness information for economic and social gain. This will result in changes in government, businesses, communities and society as a whole.16

The key areas of emphasis include:

- improving access to New Zealand content, such as national heritage collections and government information; developing the digital confidence and capability of all New Zealanders,
- ensuring the ICT environment is trusted, secure and reliable,
- supporting grassroots developments to build the ICT capability of communities,
- increasing the potential of ICT to create value for businesses in all sectors,
- using ICT to improve the delivery of government services to citizens, particularly in health and education.17

The digital strategy focuses on three interrelated ‘areas for action’:

1. content – information made available via digital networks,
2. confidence and capability – the necessary skills to use ICT effectively,
3. connection – affordable access to ICT infrastructure such as telecommunications networks, computers and mobile phones.18
The strategy looks at how to connect all New Zealanders through affordable and better ICT infrastructure, with the delivery of such infrastructure directly to individuals, and indirectly through public libraries and citizens’ advice bureaux. It provides for the development of digital content - the digitisation of a wide range of resources, including those held in libraries as well as government publications, and it defines the ‘confidence and capability’ required - with the outcome being “All New Zealanders will have the necessary literacy skills to maximise their opportunities using digital means”.18

While the skills of librarians will be in demand for the development and promotion of digital content, it is ‘confidence and capability’ that has a particular impact on CPD requirements. With challenges presented such as co-ordinated delivery of quality training, appropriate training, training programmes for the disadvantaged and “clear guidance in the skills sets and qualifications required in the new IT trade skills...”,18 there is considerable scope for librarians to offer their professional skills to meet these needs.

The feedback on the strategy from the information industries highlighted the need for sound information literacy and ICT skills, and for ongoing professional development. These were necessary in order to ensure the right people are developing the required skills in order to deliver both the end product to the end user and to produce the digital content and the extensive connection required. Also of key concern is the archiving of digital content, and the impact on the nation’s memory if this is not addressed.19

Although one of the criticisms of the strategy is that it does not take the end user into consideration sufficiently, the feedback identified ways to improve this through the upskilling of individuals and professions as a whole to enable and enhance delivery of the strategy. There is, at this point, an insufficient number of suitably skilled individuals to support such widespread developments, whether it be in the area of how to digitise, or in how to use the end products of digitisation. The LIANZA submission on the digital strategy gave it qualified support, noting at one point that:

LIANZA agrees with the action concerning the role of ‘infomediaries’ helping the community to access content, but questions ‘What skills are required?’. Search for government information – or for general well being information – booking holidays and writing CVs?20

The LIANZA submission also emphasised the importance of literacy, information literacy and ICT generally, and indicated a number of additional key issues that needed to be considered in the strategy. These included:

Recognition of information management skills as crucial i.e. the role of librarians and librarianship in organising digital information; recognition of the role and skills infomediaries have (the human factor) to help those without access to ICT or unable to use ICT to find information online or by other means i.e. the role of librarians and librarianship in dissemination of digital information;... the ICT training of frontline information intermediaries in the ‘community’ as crucial in places such as school libraries, public libraries, citizen advice bureaux.

The specific actions they recommended include:

- development of school librarians to equip them to teach information literacy within schools,
- the training of frontline public library staff in small libraries,
- the increase of government funding for the Diploma in Maori Information Management at Te Wananga O Raukawa at Otaki to help facilitate more trained Maori infomediaries.20
Previous studies

Few studies into the area of CPD for information managers have been undertaken in New Zealand. Two recent studies conducted in the area of information management consultants and contractors as well as records managers are discussed below, together with a consideration of the overall state of CPD for librarians. Other evidence of the need for CPD is also discussed.

A study was conducted in 2001 of consultants and contractors in the information industry in New Zealand, covering librarians, records managers, archivists, information managers and knowledge managers. Although this represents only one sector of information managers, trends may be similar throughout other sectors. The survey undertook to discover how this group operates on a number of levels, and amongst the questions asked were some on professional standards and support.

Topics of professional development and professional support were both addressed and the replies indicate a strong area of overlap. Many sources of professional development simultaneously generated professional support, and vice versa. Without exception, all interviewees said professional development was a necessary and important area of their work and business. For those seeking professional development, the methods outlined in Table 1 show the relative popularity of the available methods.

Table 1 Strategies employed to maintain professional development and support by information management consultants and contractors.21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of activity</th>
<th>Professional development</th>
<th>Professional support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listservs and mailing lists</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional reading</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional associations and organisations</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings, speakers, etc</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A range of professional development avenues is used to cater for the needs of this diverse group. No single item scored above twenty per cent in the ‘professional development’ category, confirming the need for a range of activities rather than a focus on a single aspect. The category of ‘other’ includes regular industry contacts, the Internet, formal study and involvement in the wider profession. It is interesting to note that professional support centres on listservs, networking and a range of professional associations, all of which have people at the core. It appears to be the interaction and sharing that people in these sectors value and seek out. Others noted that there already exist many opportunities for professional development and professional support, and that it was the responsibility of the individual to find and make use of the existing services.

In 2002 records managers were surveyed to find out what sorts of qualifications they had (if any) and what sorts of continuing professional development or substitute for qualification they had undertaken. Participation in continuing education (defined in the survey as short courses, workshops, seminars, conferences, training, etc) varied enormously. The largest group of respondents 31.5% (28/89) attended once a year or less, 11% (10/89) participated in continuing education of all types including overseas conferences more than three times a year, and 13.5% (12/89) do not attend any.22
The results showed that while there had been a dearth of qualifications available in NZ, there was considerable interest in CPD, and that professional associations had provided a great deal of what had been offered. There was a wide range of events listed including all of those in the definition, and in addition courses from tertiary institutions (which had previously been listed as qualifications as well), generic business skills and computer courses. Archives New Zealand training courses for local government records managers were listed by 20 out of the 89 respondents (partly due to the high percentage of local government records managers participating in the survey). ARMA and ARANZ conferences, seminars, meetings and workshops were next most listed - by 17 and 16 respondents respectively. The fourth most listed, and the only other group in double figures, was courses offered by SWIM Ltd, a private consultancy and training firm (11 respondents). Other sources of CPD were queried, and rated as follows: websites (69/89 respondents), professional literature and listservs (61/89 each) and networking (58/89).

In addition, records managers had made good use of what their employer offered in the way of computer application training, business and management skills and HR courses, Te reo Maori (Maori language), biculturalism and Treaty of Waitangi. This seems to bear out Niemi’s assertion that while agencies which employ professionals provide continuing education, it is more likely to be concerned with the needs of the organisation than the needs of the professional, however relevant the courses are to the individual.

The monthly magazine of LIANZA, Library life Te rau ora, focused on professional development in the December 2000 issue. It considered both qualifications and CPD; one article examined the state of CPD in New Zealand, and the establishment and initial work of a Professional Development Standing Committee, but asked more questions than it answered.

Initial recommendations of the Committee included;
- promotion of CPD in regions and by special interest groups within LIANZA,
- an expanded web-based calendar of events,
- an improved structure of representation on tertiary providers’ advisory boards,
- improved communication on CPD throughout the association.

While the first of these recommendations seems to have been successful (as is evidenced by announcements of activities on listservs), it is hard to establish whether the others were undertaken. There does not seem to have been a themed issue on this topic before or since.

Other evidence of the need and use for CPD has been gleaned from such sources as feedback from students in tertiary level courses, many of whom are upgrading their qualifications, perhaps from a perceived need to upskill. Feedback from stakeholders is often solicited when developing new courses and qualifications, such as the Certificate in Cataloguing offered by The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand. There appears to be wide interest in some of the courses being offered, with some students coming in with existing qualifications and employers also interested in the availability of these courses.

**Types of CPD**

A wide range of CPD is available for those who seek it. As Niemi points out, professionals seek educational opportunities from four sources: institutions of higher education, professional associations, independent (proprietary) agencies, and agencies which employ these professionals. There are also more informally constituted and organic communities of practice, of which listservs are a good example.

The needs of a particular group within information management may well differ from other groups, for a variety of reasons including the type of work undertaken, changes to their traditional roles, and advances in technology. The needs of individuals within each group may
also differ due to the background of the individual, their particular tasks and interests, previous training, etc. The matching of CPD to individual people and to groups may sometimes be obvious but seldom results in training that suits all needs.

**CPD offerings**

The CPD currently on offer for information managers in New Zealand includes a wide range of choices that can be categorised using Niemi’s framework. These are outlined below, and while these do not constitute all of the CDP opportunities currently available in New Zealand, they provide an overview of the types on offer.

Institutions of higher learning such as the VUW and The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand offer formal courses contributing towards undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications, as discussed earlier. VUW also offers some of its courses that can be taken singly as Certificates of Proficiency. There are also some tertiary institutions which offer courses in other subjects which have relevance to many in information management, including courses and qualifications in Maori information management, business, management, and communication.

Professional associations also provide a range of CPD opportunities. LIANZA provides, hosts, develops or organises a wide variety of CPD for its members and other librarians. At one stage in the early 1990s the Association had a dedicated CPD position, whereby CPD was organised, advertised and toured, making it available in as many centres as practical. This position lasted only a short time, and the Professional Development portfolio on the LIANZA council has since picked up a portion of this role. Each of the LIANZA regions and special interest groups also develops, organises or hosts some CPD each year, but the amount and quality of this depends greatly on the resources available in each region and the ability of the regional committees to provide support.

CPD is also offered on a similar basis by other professional associations for information managers, including SLANZA, NZLGG, RMAA, ARANZ and NZSA. Each association hosts its own conferences, usually on an annual basis, and this often forms the core of CPD opportunities, with other offerings being made sporadically throughout the year. Several of the LIANZA regions now also hold weekend schools for members in their areas, run as mini-conferences or sets of workshops. The result of this is an uneven spread of CPD opportunities across the country, although it can be argued that concentrations of CPD in the areas where it is most needed may result.

There is a small number of proprietary agencies which also provide CPD opportunities, the largest of these being SWIM, a records consultancy company which regularly delivers short courses and seminars in records and information management topics in Wellington and Auckland.

Agencies that employ information managers also provide training opportunities that can be classed as CPD. These may extend from courses developed and delivered by Archives New Zealand and the National Library of New Zealand with a focus on industry-specific and discipline-related subjects to local government and tertiary education employers who may host courses such as understanding Māoritanga or dealing with customers.

Beyond Niemi’s framework are the communities of practice that may evolve their own CPD offerings as need and opportunity arise. Examples of this include Rose Holley’s presentation on her own CPD to her workplace (a university library), which was then taken up by the Cataloguing Special Interest Group of LIANZA and presented to members as part of their annual cataloguing seminar. Listservs, weblogs and mailing lists come into this category, providing a group forum for the exchange and discussion of ideas and practices. These are widely used through all information management sectors in New Zealand.
Networking and maintaining industry contacts also comes into this category, and along with professional reading, research and writing, and mentoring, is one of the categories where the onus is largely on the individual to organise.

Where to from here?

Despite the absence of a regulated programme of continuing professional development, there is still a lot on offer in New Zealand for the librarian, records manager or archivist. The surveys by both Fields and Cossham indicate that “... there already exist many opportunities for professional development and professional support, and that it was the responsibility of the individual to find and make use of the existing services”.21

Although a wide range of CPD opportunities are available for information managers in New Zealand, many of these are available only in some geographic regions, at some times, or in some delivery modes. The quality and value of these opportunities also varies greatly.

The ability of individuals to participate in the available CPD is dependent on a number of factor, including motivation to seek opportunities and participate in them, the level and currency of their own qualifications (if any), their area of speciality, the timing and location of the CPD opportunities, workplace culture, and support from employers. Cost is still an important factor for many individuals, especially when the employer does not perceive the need for CPD beyond the in-house programmes. It is partly because they are inexpensive that the regional LIANZA CPD programmes and RMAA programmes are well attended.

In some respects, the seeking of CPD from other avenues is also an indication of the breadth of experience and range of types of work which information managers are required to perform. Traditional skills are insufficient, regardless of the sector in which the librarian is employed, while records managers and archivists face significant and complex changes in technology. While fundamental developments in information technology are an obvious variation and perhaps the variation most easily satisfied by courses offered externally to the profession, other changes such as legislative change, developments in access to electronic information, electronic documents, knowledge management, or information literacy can also be satisfied by external sources. The changing roles of information managers within organisations, the evolving nature of publications, the changing expectations of the borrowers/users, and the sheer speed of change of many of these variables mean that CPD must cover both the profession specific developments, and a wider range of external influences.

As well as the obvious task of providing such continuing education, a key role for professional associations is to inform their members of where it can be found and to promote its benefits. Ongoing research and continuing dialogue with key stakeholders will help ensure that CPD opportunities are created and delivered, and that they are relevant, useful, and contribute to the ongoing development of New Zealand’s information managers.

References


10 Information from the NZSA in a letter to members, 10 December 2004, indicates that it is considering dissolving in 2005.

11 RMAA, *Continuing Professional Development Scheme*.


18 New Zealand, *Digital Strategy, 3*

19 Some of this feedback has been made available on the National Library of New Zealand’s website at http://www.natlib.govt.nz/en/digital/1digitalstrategy.html#strategy; the authors understand that more will be made public in time.


22 This would seem to indicate either that respondents were unclear of the exact definition of a qualification (one course is not a qualification), or that they viewed continuing education as anything past their initial qualification which was job related.


24 *Library Life Te rau ora* 2000, 252.
