

**Submission to the Royal Society of Canada Expert Panel on
'The Status and Future of Canada's Libraries and Archives'**

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Following is a joint submission from the Program Managers/Coordinators of Library and Information Technician diploma programs in Ontario:

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We have chosen to respond to two of the Framing Questions as well as the six questions addressed to organizations servicing libraries and archives in Canada.

Questions for organizations servicing libraries and archives in Canada

1) What is the nature and make-up of your organization?

We are not a formal organization, but this joint submission represents the view of education programs for library and information technicians, within community colleges in Ontario.

2) Does your organization provide services: (a) directly to Users? Or, (b) to members who make-up the organization?

We provide education and training for library staff, specifically library and information technicians.

3) In terms of Question 2, describe the services provided directly to Users, and if they are consortial in nature please describe the mechanisms in place to define, refine and measure the impact of the services, particularly as they relate to Canadians.

Our programs graduate students with a two year college diploma as library and information technicians.

4) Would Canadians know of, or understand, the contribution you make to library/archival service in Canada?

Many members of the general public are still under the impression that anyone who is employed by a library or information service is a librarian. Library associations need to continue to educate the public as to the various levels of qualification that are required to provide these services.

Registration in our programs has remained steady or, in some cases, grown. There is an increasing number of students entering library technicians programs with a bachelor's degree. These students have, for various reasons, decided to undertake their training at the level of a library technician rather than as a librarian. This means that many library technician graduates have the analytical and critical thinking skills that have traditionally been associated with professional librarianship. Those responsible for hiring in libraries need to be aware of this trend and, in light of this, should review the educational qualifications that they have set for various categories of staffing within their organizations.

5) What inhibits you from providing services that ultimately would improve library/archive services to Canadians?

Library technician programs serve two masters – the profession and our educational institutions. There are times when the goals or principles of each of these are in conflict with each other. Library technician educators must continue to represent the principles of the profession within their educational institutions, and also convey to the profession and to students in the program, the requirements imposed by their college.

Library technician educators feel that our colleges should continue to enhance the support and resources provided to our programs to allow the necessary growth and development of our programs. This would permit our programs to continue to graduate library technicians with the necessary skills to meet the present and future needs of the library and information services workplace.

6) What do you see as the challenges for libraries and archives in the forthcoming years?

Libraries and archives must continue to reinvent themselves to remain relevant to their user groups. The challenge of raising awareness of libraries' and archives' current contributions to society rests with each individual working in this field, as well as library associations. This responsibility for individual advocacy must be communicated to all persons working in this field.

The challenge in library technician education, which is common to all library and information science programs, is to keep up with the rapid changes in technology in this field of work, to ensure that our programs are current and graduates are well-prepared for the workplace.

Framing Questions (New Directions – Education)

1) What changes, in your judgment, are necessary in the professional education and training of librarians/archivists in the 21st century?

Education and training for librarians must continue to evolve to incorporate new aspects that have become part of the realm of today's information services. Some examples are digitization, community-led library service, provision of electronic resources, development of metadata skills, 21st century fluencies, cataloguing in accordance with RDA guidelines and development of new and enhanced services that allow libraries to remain relevant to their user groups. The challenge is that, while incorporating training in this new skill set, library education should not forego the teaching of more traditional skills which still remain essential in many library and information settings.

In addition, developing strong communication skills is critical for library and information education programs. In addition, employers are seeking graduates who demonstrate skills such as flexibility and adaptability. Successful library staff willingly adopt changes in technology and organizational structure, and have the flexibility to take on different roles within the organization.

One critical aspect that should be added to the training of librarians is greater awareness of the range of human resources that are employed in libraries. Librarians need to be aware that they will likely be working with library technicians, library assistants, library clerks, and other support staff. In fact, there will likely be more staff in these other categories than professional librarians in their workplace. Librarians' education needs to make them aware of the skills that other staff groups bring to the library/information environment, how to work in collaboration with these various groups, and how to develop a positive, cohesive work environment.

The fact that this question is phrased by naming only librarians and archivists is an example of a lack of awareness of the many contributions that are made to libraries and information services by staff who do not fall into one of these categories.

2) What conversations do you think need to take place with library, archival, and information studies programs about professional competency requirements, and have they begun?

Within the library and information technician education community, there have been interesting discussions in the last few years regarding the accreditation proposal put forth by Christina Neigel of the University of the Fraser Valley. Although these discussions seem to have been put on the back burner for now, for various reasons, the goal of ensuring a level of standardization among library technician programs in Canada is an important one. The Canadian Library Association's interest in and support of the discussions regarding library technician program accreditation has been appreciated and sends an important message of recognition to library technicians.