

**Review of the award of Associateship of the Library
Association of Ireland (ALAI)**

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Dr. John Cullen

M.L.I.S, Ph.D.

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Executive Summary

In mid-2017, the Library Association of Ireland's Education Committee (Professional Standards) drafted terms of reference for a review of the Associateship of the Library Association of Ireland (ALAI) award. In late-2017 and early-2018 research was undertaken to clarify how the award is understood, the value it offers to members and if changes should be adopted and implemented with regard to the ALAI application and awarding process. This research took the form of comparative desk research, stakeholder consultations and a survey of members.

The Library Association of Ireland (LAI) is a unique organisation in that it is not only a professional membership organisation, but also a voluntary organisation that operates in a small national context. As such, the limited resources it has to hand means it cannot deliver the same level of full-time professional services as, for example, CILIP. However, because of this unique context, it has an advantage in that it can lever an existing *community-of-practice* ethos, rather than being an accreditation-led services organisation for professionals. The ALAI award, and subsequent progression awards, has the potential to strengthen this ethos and encourage deeper levels of engagement with the LAI and the profession across sectors.

Like the profession of librarianship, the LAI has always existed in a changing information environment and has played a key role in both ensuring professional standards of librarianship, and protecting the professional status of its members. As the profession changes, so too has the LAI. The recommendations arising from this review are made in the context of the advantages provided by the LAI's status as a voluntary, professional community-of-practice.

The key recommendations from this report are:

1. Maintain the current ALAI award as it is. It is an established and recognised professional 'brand'.
2. **Introduce an award that will exist between the ALAI and FLAI awards. This award should represent a progression from the initial ALAI award. It could be considered a point from which applying for the FLAI award could be prepared for. The process of applying for and receiving this award could act as a *de facto* re-validation of the ALAI. In this document this award is provisionally named as the *Progression Award of the Library Association of Ireland (PLAI)*. It is not suggested that this should remain the title of the award. Alternatives such as *Chartered Member of the LAI* or *Professional Member of the ALAI* might be considered. The PLAI will act as an interim stage between the ALAI and the FLAI awards.**
3. Promote the ALAI award and use 'real-life' recipients as advocates and evangelists for it. Promotional channels for the ALAI should be updated (e.g. video interviews of recipients and presentations on what is realistically involved in preparing for and applying for the award).

4. Consult existing groups who are major sectoral employers to see how they can participate in and engage with the process of introducing the new award. **Large employers of professional librarians, in particular, should be encouraged to take a leadership position in the introduction of the new PLAI award in order to ensure that it is 'owned' and of value to the largest recruitment market segments for professional librarians in Ireland.**
5. Develop a new set of criteria for achieving the award. Support this with communicating transparent guidelines on the application and assessment process. These guidelines must adhere the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which comes into effect on 25th May 2018.

1. Context of the Review

1.1 Introduction

The LAI Education Committee (Professional Standards) is responsible for the accreditation and recognition of LAI awards. Part of the remit of the Committee is to ensure that such awards are reviewed periodically. In 2015, the Committee reviewed the Fellowship of the Library Association Award (FLAI) and recommended that the research-based route to the award cease, but that it continue to be assessed and awarded via a submitted portfolio.

In 2017, the Committee commenced the process of reviewing the Associateship of the Library Association (ALAI) award. In July 2017, the Committee drafted the terms of references for this review¹. These terms stated the purpose of the review as being the provision of assurance to the LAI Council and members 'that the Associateship award is relevant to current and evolving member needs and conforms to the highest governance and ethical standards'.

The key objectives of the review were stated as:

1. Clarifying the purpose of the Associateship award within the overall professional and academic award structure for LAI members.
2. Advise as to whether the awards process is operating efficiently and effectively in accordance with data protection legislation.
3. Recommend enhancements to the review process.

The terms of reference for the review recommended that it be undertaken by a third party, while the LAI Education Committee (Professional Standards) would be responsible for commissioning and overseeing the review. John Cullen met with the LAI Education Committee (Professional Standards) on October 24th 2017 and proposed an outline of how he would approach this review project. The project began in November 2017.

This chapter outlines the context in which the review of the ALAI has emerged and is undertaken. The next chapter will account for how the review approached the research undertaken for the project and how the research process unfolded. Subsequent chapters will report on: a comparative analysis of how other professional and library associations approach professional recognition (Section 3); interviews and meetings with stakeholders (Section 4), and; a survey of current and former LAI members and ALAI award holders (Section 5). Section 6 presents recommendations.

¹ Terms of Reference for the Review of the award of Associateship of the Library Association of Ireland (ALAI) (July 2017).

1.2 The Library Association of Ireland Context

In October 2018, the Library Association of Ireland will celebrate 90 years since its founding. The LAI's stated mission is to promote and develop high standards of librarianship and library and information services in Ireland, to secure co-operation between services and represent the library profession in Ireland.

It is difficult to ascertain the exact number of professionals working in the library sector in Ireland for a number of reasons. Firstly, many qualified librarians work in information related fields that are not necessarily named or identified as such by their employing organisations. Since the growth of personal computing from the late 1970s, the growing 'informationalization' of work has meant that information management has impacted on 'traditional' librarianship. This has led to the development of new 'emerging' information management professions, where the established skills of librarians and library workers are adapted to the requirements of new commercial or organisational concerns.

Secondly, it is difficult to establish how many individuals work in the library field due to changes to the NACE classification². This resulted in library work and information management becoming folded into other categories, which often makes it difficult to ascertain where specific forms of library work are done.

However, it is possible to discern the following facts. The most recent census of Ireland (2016) reports that 4631 adults are employed in the 'Libraries, Archives, Museums and Other Cultural Activities' sector³. The most recent LAI membership register⁴ (2016) reports 570 personal members of the LAI, 67 institutional members, 41 holders of the FLAI award and 74 holders of the ALAI award. Additionally, the LAI-accredited academic qualification providers at University College Dublin and the Dublin Business School report that 20-25 newly qualified librarians graduate from both programmes each year.

A small amount of research on recruitment trends and skills needs was conducted in the Irish context, but this requires significant updating as the last piece of research was undertaken in 2011⁵. Systematic content analyses of LIS recruitment advertisements, job descriptions, person specifications and supporting documentation in Ireland demonstrate that the largest library and information recruiter is the academic library sector, followed by the public library sector. 47% of identified library positions in 1999⁶ required a professional

² This is the European Union standard classification of economic activities.

³ <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/saveselections.asp> Accessed 5.1.18

⁴

<https://www.libraryassociation.ie/sites/default/files/Draft%20membership%20list%20and%20register%202016.pdf> Accessed 15.2.18

⁵ Burns, Jane (2011) 'An Examination of the LIS Jobs Market in Ireland from January 2010- June 2011- What is out there?' An Leabharlann. Vol. 20, Iss 2: 13-17.

⁶ Cullen, J (2000) 'A review of library and information service job advertisements: what do they tell us about work in the Irish library sector?' Journal of Information Science Vol. 26, Iss. 4: 278-281.

library qualification: 32% in 2001-2002⁷; 28% in 2005⁸, and 49%; in 2011⁵ (although this final figure is based on a significantly decreased number of available positions). Only the 1999 data set recorded if membership of a professional organisation was required or desirable in an application for a senior (or any) library position.

All of these pieces of research, however, demonstrate that there are numerous career paths available to library school graduates outside the field of traditional librarianship. The traditional preserve of librarianship has evolved as the field information science influenced the emergence of knowledge management, data science and the commercial application of data analytics. As the post-recession recruitment market continues to improve, there may be a risk that the library sector could lose new graduates to fields that offer alternative paths for career progression. The acquisition of additional opportunities for information work has the potential to lure new graduates to different career paths. The role of the Associateship of the Library Association of Ireland award in this changing field of work is considered below.

1.3 The Associateship of the Library Association of Ireland

This section explores the evolution of the Associateship of the Library Association of Ireland Award. It is written with reference to documents provided by the Education Committee and from interviews with stakeholders.

Among the stated objectives of the LAI are the following:

'To maintain the profession of librarianship in a proper status among the learned and technical professions by requiring the observance of strict rules of personal professional conduct as a condition of membership, and by ensuring that a qualification in librarianship is an essential requirement for all professional posts in libraries.

To promote a high standard of education for librarianship in Ireland by evaluating and giving recognition to degrees, diplomas or other professional qualifications in librarianship, and by conducting courses of study, setting examinations to test the proficiency of candidates, and issuing diplomas⁹.

The LAI plays an important role in the stewarding of librarianship as a profession in Ireland. One of the main ways in which it achieves this is through accrediting professional educational awards. Another important way in which the LAI has secured the professional

⁷ Cullen, J. (2002) 'The employment market for library and information management workers in Ireland' *Library and Information Research News* Vol. 26, Iss. 83: 17-26.

⁸ Cullen, J. (2006) 'Indexing change in LIS work: Implications for recruiting managers' *Library Management* Vol. 27 Iss. 9: 600-605.

⁹ <https://www.libraryassociation.ie/sites/default/files/Draft%20membership%20list%20and%20register%202016.pdf>

status of librarianship in Ireland has been through its Fellowship and Associateship Awards. Although holders of the Associateship are entitled to use the post-nominal ALAI initials, it is important to note that these are an *award*, and not a qualification. The introduction of the Associateship award originally emerged from changes in the manner that library qualifications were accredited by the Library Association of Ireland. In the 1970s and 1980s the Association was challenged as to its own ability to award or accredit qualifications. In the 1980s discussions grew about the nature of the library diploma qualification and the LAI increasingly saw the future of librarianship as a graduate profession.

In a letter dated 18th May 1988, the Dublin City and County Librarian wrote to the Honorary Secretary of the Library Association of Ireland proposing a discussion to create the award of Associate of the Library Association of Ireland. This recommendation was made against a background of change in which the LAI role in professional recognition had been previously “reflected through the conferring of the Associations own Fellowship (F.L.A.I.) following completion of acceptable examination (the Associations or other acceptable examination) and thesis”. This method of professional qualification via F.L.A.I. was in the process of being discontinued and replaced by F.L.A.I. via presentation of major thesis only to those who held a recognised professional qualification. The Librarian reflected, “It is likely that the F.L.A.I. will, as a sole method of qualification, prove rare in the future”.

The letter noted that:

“... it is an opportune time for the Association to consider some alternative means of signifying that it has a continuing role in evaluating and recognising qualifications as having reached professionally acceptable standards “, and recommended that:

“As an alternative to accepting qualifications conferred by recognised academic institutions as fulfilling all requirements leading to candidature for Associate of the Library Association of Ireland (A.L.A.I), “The association might consider it appropriate that candidates for professional Associateship should [also] fulfil requirements regarding satisfactory experience in a professional library post prior to full associateship being conferred. If this were to be the case, a sub-category of Candidate Associate might be created which would be open to those with the professional qualification pending the attainment of experience.” .

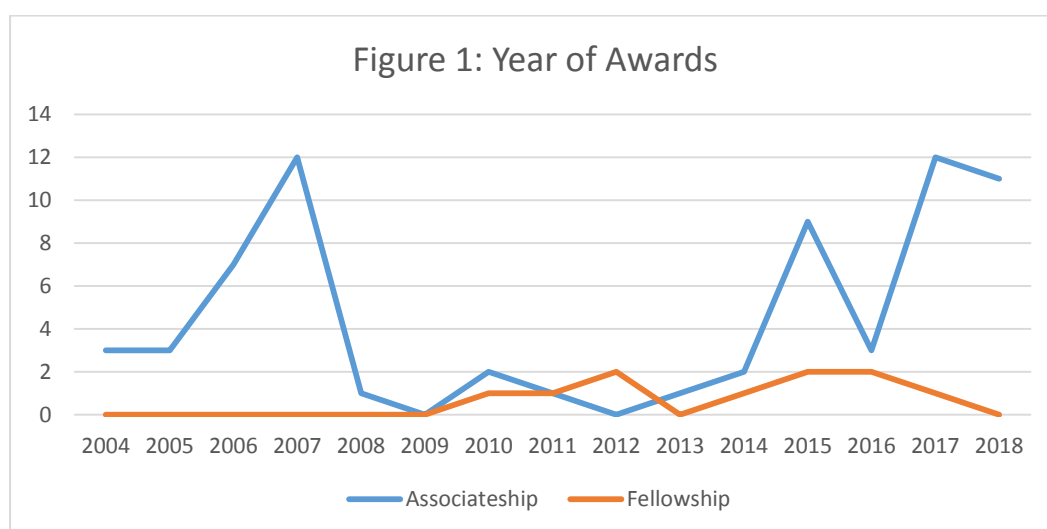
On 14th October 1988, an Extraordinary General Meeting was held where the proposal for the Associateship award was accepted. In February 1989 the LAI published the ‘Scheme of Associateship’ which stated:

‘In recent years, the expansion of library/information work has seen the entry into the profession of people with various other qualifications. The executive, conscious of the Association’s responsibility in establishing and monitoring professional standards, proposed to expand the existing categories of membership to accommodate that of Associate. This new category would be open to personal members of good standing who have been awarded a qualification in librarianship/information which has been recognised by the

Association and who have subsequently satisfied criteria for professional recognition, as laid down by the Association.’¹⁰

Since then the LAI has been the sole arbiter of professional educational qualifications for the entire library sector in Ireland. It fulfils a continuing role in recognising and evaluating qualifications. Initially, candidates applied for the Associateship by submitting an application form with supporting documentation. It was restricted to holders of approved library qualifications who were currently LAI members following the completion of two years post-qualification experience. The regulations and process for applying for Associateship were revised and updated in 2004 and 2013 and minor amendments were made. During the latter review period, awareness grew that there were varied application experiences. Currently, applicants submit an application form, supporting documentation if necessary and a 500-word statement of professional practice. This 500-word statement is referred to variously in LAI documentation. In the June 2013 ALAI regulations it is referred to as ‘a Professional Development Report (not more than 500 words)’, but in the ALAI brochure¹¹ it is referred to as an ‘outline of Continuing Professional Development (not more than 500 words)’. A mentoring scheme has been available for applicants but engagement in this process has not been as extensive as hoped.

However, the mentorship scheme is just one initiative taken by the LAI taken to promote the Associateship award. Half-day seminars have also been arranged where ALAI recipients discuss the benefits of applying. As can be seen from Figure 1, there has been an increase in the number of awards made in recent years. Almost 40% of Associateship awards presented have been, or will be, made during the three most recent years (2016-2018). The number of Associateship awards made in 2015, 2017 and 2018 have far surpassed the average number of awards since 2004. The reason for recent uptake and apparent interest in the award is discussed in Section 4.



¹⁰ ‘Scheme of Associateship’ (Library Association of Ireland: Dublin): 1.

¹¹ <https://libraryassociation.ie/sites/default/files/B22584%20Associateship%20LAI%20Leaflet%20rev3.pdf>

2. Research Approach

The background and context to this report is outlined in Section 1. On October 25th 2017 it was proposed that preliminary planning work be undertaken during November 2017. It was suggested that stakeholders be identified, and a survey of current and former LAI members be drafted and circulated amongst the LAI Education Committee (Professional Standards) for comment. Historical documentation related to the Associateship was supplied by members of the Committee during the initial stages of the project. Stakeholder identification was undertaken in consultation with the Committee in December 2017 and January 2018. Reports on the outputs of each month's work package were delivered at the end of each monthly stage to the Committee for comment.

The overall research approach adopted was both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The reviewer met with the Committee prior to the commencement of the project and with the LAI Education Committee (Continuing Professional Development) on 19th February 2018. Following this meeting, members of the Committee who were not available to attend were emailed for their comments. The stakeholder identification process involved a significant amount of 'snowballing'¹² where identified stakeholders or members of the Committee named other groups or individuals to contact as part of the research process. This process continued right up until the delivery of the first draft review report in March 2018.

In November, a set of related professional awards and application processes offered by the following library and related organisations were identified for review during the desk research stage of the project.

- *CILIP*
- *Australian Library and Information*
- *American Library Association*
- *Academy of Health Information Professionals*
- *Archives & Records Association (UK & Ireland)*

In addition, related professional awards and application processes offered by the non-library organisations (below) were identified for review. The full range of professional membership associations listed in the most recent IPA Directory were analysed and the following organisations were selected based on nearest similarity to the LAI as a voluntary professional association.

¹² Snowballing is a 'sampling procedure in which subsequent respondents are obtained from information provided by initial respondents' Saunders, M., Lewis, P, and Thornhill, A. *Research Methods for Business Students* 6th Edition. (London, Pearson: 682).

- *ACOI*
- *CIPD*
- *Institute of Management Consultants and Advisers*
- *Irish Institute of Legal Executives*
- *Marketing Institute of Ireland*
- *Mediators Institute of Ireland*

3. Comparative Analysis

3.1 Introduction to Comparative Analysis

As outlined in Section 2, the committee advised that examples of similar Associate-level awards with other library associations and related professional groups international and comparative professional bodies be conducted.

The Library Associations and related professional groups internationally identified were as follows:

- *CILIP*
- *Australian Library and Information*
- *American Library Association*
- *Academy of Health Information Professionals*
- *Archives & Records Association (UK & Ireland)*

The comparative professional awards and application processes offered by these organisations are outlined in section 3.2 below.

Related professional awards and application processes offered by the following non-library organisations in the Irish context are outlined in section 3.3 below.

- *ACOI*
- *CIPD*
- *Institute of Management Consultants and Advisers*
- *Irish Institute of Legal Executives*
- *Marketing Institute of Ireland*
- *Mediators Institute of Ireland*

3.2. Comparative Analysis of Awards from Library and Related Organisations

Like the LAI, ***the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP)*** is the main accreditor of degree programmes in librarianship and information management work in the UK. CILIP boasts being 'the only organisation in the world which has a Royal Charter to develop library and information professionals in all sectors. Our job is to help you build a successful career as an information professional'¹³. CILIP, as such, strongly assert a central career development role.

Certification is aimed at those entering the profession. Chartership is for those 'working in the information professions who wish to be recognised for their skills, knowledge, and application of these in the form of reflective practice'. Fellowship is the highest level of

¹³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=20&v=3C-k99pD7uI Accessed February 20th 2018.

professional registration awarded to library and information professionals who have achieved the most senior grades and/or made a significant contribution to the profession.

The process for achieving any of these levels is identical, but involves working towards differing assessment criteria. Most importantly (in terms of this review) candidates for all levels must complete CPD activities that demonstrate how they have developed in relation to three assessment criteria: (1) personal and (2) organisational performance, and (3) knowledge of the wider LIS profession. These activities are then summarised by the applicant in a 1000-word reflective statement that speaks to these three assessment criteria (supporting evidence is required when necessary).¹⁴

The level of award which is most similar to the ALAI is that of *Chartership*. Chartership is a professional registration for library and information workers and is currently open to all members of CILIP and those who have achieved the award can use the post-nominal 'MCLIP' letters. When applying for membership, applicants can access and request mentorship from registered advisors. CILIP's member services team support this process and provide guidance.

All applicants are required to keep a professional development record.¹⁵ CILIP advises members to utilise an online tool known as the Professional Knowledge & Skills Base (PKSB) to draft personal professional development plans. These plans and records are useful to applicants applying for, or re-validating Chartership. Throughout the process applicants are advised to collect as much evidence that they have met assessment criteria as possible. Evaluations of mentors can be considered part of the reflective document. The reflective statement is included with a chartership portfolio (all of which is submitted electronically). CILIP's Professional Registration and Accreditation Board assesses the application over an 8-to-12 week period. Applicants may be asked to supply more information by this committee.

All CILIP members are required to demonstrate commitment to CPD. Chartered members do this through annual revalidation:

¹⁴ <https://archive.cilip.org.uk/cilip/jobs-careers/professional-registration/what-level-right-you> Accessed February 20th 2018

¹⁵ <https://archive.cilip.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Chartership%20Handbook%20070314.pdf>

'In order to demonstrate that you are continuing to work at Chartership level and are committed to CPD, you should revalidate your Chartership each year. In order to revalidate, you will need to record your CPD activities (a minimum of 20 hours per year) and write a 250 word evaluative statement demonstrating how the activities over the past year support the Chartership criteria'¹⁶.

The most recent annual CILIP Report (31st December 2015) states that 419 professional registration enrolments took place that year. Two hundred and twenty eight (228) applications for Chartership were assessed and 423 revalidations were considered.¹⁷

The ***Australian Library and Information Association*** is 'the national professional organisation for the Australian library and information services sector' and has a full-time staff of 25¹⁸. It offers two main forms of personal membership. General personal membership is open to all, but library professionals can join as a 'professional personal member', 'allied field' professionals or library technicians. *Associateship* is available to members who hold undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications accredited by the Association. All personal professional members are supported in professional development through the ALIA PD scheme, which allows Associate, Library Technicians and Allied Field professional members 'to achieve formal recognition for the professional commitment' by upgrading their membership to that of *Certified Professional Membership*. In the case of Associate Members, this means that after one year of engagement with the ALIA Professional Development process that they can use the post-nominal letters AALIA (CP). As with CILIP, an online support platform is available to applicants to record and plan their personal development. A career development kit and skills audit plan is provided to assist applicants plan their personal development. Applicants are expected to complete 30 personal development points each year (a point being worth one hour of personal development) and for these to total 120 points over three years. ALIA randomly audits 10% of online ongoing activity to ensure that compliance is maintained¹⁹.

¹⁶ CILIP *Chartership: A Guide for Members*

(<https://archive.cilip.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Chartership%20Handbook%20070314.pdf>) p. 19.

¹⁷ https://archive.cilip.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/cilip_2015_approved_statutory_accounts.pdf

¹⁸ <https://www.alia.org.au/about-alia>

¹⁹ <https://membership.alia.org.au/pdinfo/alia-pd-scheme>

Recently ALIA have introduced a range of enhancements to its Associateship programme. Following three years compliance with AALIA (CP), a certificate and a listing on the Association's website can be applied for²⁰. It is possible to enhance this award further by demonstrating 'ongoing commitment to professional development through membership of the scheme for at least five years, and satisfy referee-supported additional requirements' and achieving the award of Distinguished Certified Professional AALIA (DCP)²¹. It is also possible to take a subject specialisation that is reflected in more specific post-nominal letters in the fields of: data; government; health; public libraries; research/academic; schools, or; vocational education and training.²²

The **American Library Association** is the oldest library association in the world²³ but an Associate Member means something quite different to a CILIP or ALIA award. An ALA associate member has more in common with the ALIA affiliate member. They are professionals who do not work in the field, but support library and information services. Although the ALA plays a prominent role in accrediting LIS training and education programmes, it does not prioritise a CPD model for individual members. The key value of ALA membership is access to divisional and roundtable membership. There are a variety of ALA membership types, but the traditional route is based on an individual's increasing involvement in library work. First year members have an MLIS or certified position²⁴. The ALA subsidises fees for the first two years of membership and there are incentives for remaining connected to the organisation in a continuous way throughout ones career.

AHIP (The Academy of Health Information Professionals) is the **Medical Library Association's** CPD and accreditation section. Membership of AHIP is based on 'three areas of achievement: academic preparation, professional experience, and professional accomplishment'²⁵. Applicants must have an accredited LIS masters. A non-accredited masters is acceptable if documented coursework in identified professional competencies is provided. Different levels of professional experience is required for various levels of AHIP

²⁰ <https://membership.alia.org.au/pdinfo/professional-development>

²¹ <https://membership.alia.org.au/pdinfo/certified-professionals/certified-professionals>

²² <https://membership.alia.org.au/pdinfo/specialisations/alia-pd-scheme---specialisations>

²³ <http://www.ala.org/aboutala/>

²⁴ <http://www.ala.org/membership/ala-personal-membership#ALA>

²⁵ <http://www.mlanet.org/p/cm/ld/fid=323>

membership. Newly qualified graduates with less than five years professional experience may apply for *provisional membership*. Applicants with more than five, but less than ten years' experience can apply to become *members* or *senior members*. Applicants with more than ten years' experience are eligible to apply for *distinguished membership*. Non-provisional members are allowed to apply for emeritus status on retirement. AHIP uses a points framework system for documenting professional accomplishments during the previous five years. When applying at each level, applicants are requested to provide evidence of professional achievements which 'must be in areas contributing to the effectiveness of the health information profession and include continuing education, teaching, publishing, research, and association participation'²⁶. As such, AHIP facilitates escalating levels of membership depending on the extent of the member's professional experience and the contribution they make to the profession and the Academy's community of practice. Members are entitled to use the 'AHIP' post-nominals, and can differentiate between the level of membership they have achieved with additional letters in parentheses: AHIP (P) for provisional members; AHIP (M) for members; AHIP (D) for distinguished members; AHIP (S) for senior members, and; AHIP (E) for emeritus members. MLA Fellowships are honorary awards for outstanding contributions in leadership, achievement, scholarship or professional recognition.

ARA (UK & Ireland), the Archives and Records Association, is the main representative body for archivists and records managers. It is possible to join as a member of the organisation as a student, affiliate or a full member, but there is also a strong CPD framework with associated post-nominal letters. Unlike CILIP and ALIA's CPD frameworks, individuals do not map out their own personal development plan, but rather, match the requirements of a competency-based framework which 'sets out the key competencies for professionals and volunteers working within the archives, conservation and records management sector'²⁷. This framework sets the standards required to achieve a Foundation (FMARA), Registered (RMARA) or Fellow (FARA) level of membership of the ARA.

²⁶ <http://www.mlanet.org/p/cm/ld/fid=245>

²⁷ <http://www.archives.org.uk/cpd.html>

Foundation members (FMARA) candidates must be an ARA member before engaging in the professional development programme and have a minimum of one years' relevant work experience. Like ALAI applicants RMARA members must have completed an ARA accredited university qualification or provide evidence of significant work experience at a professional level. However, the minimum level of relevant work experience required is five years. Candidates must be mentored a Registered member or Fellow of the ARA.

Candidates then use ARA's competency submission form for each competency included in a portfolio. Candidates are expected to clearly demonstrate how they meet required competency levels. This portfolio must consist of a current CV, a reference from a mentor and eight completed competency submission forms that provide evidence on how each level has been met. These requirements are briefly summarised in the table below.

Organisation	Country	Closest equivalent award to ALAI	Post-nominal letters	Application process	Revalidation required?	Re-validation requirements
CILIP	United Kingdom	Chartership	MCLIP	Submission of reflective statement and chartership portfolio	Annually	250 evaluative statement and minimum of 20 hours CPD per annum.
ALIA	Australia	Associateship	AALIA (CP)	AALIA (CP) can be used following a years engagement with ALIA professional development	120 points (hours) required over three years or 30 per annum.	Minimum of 30 hours CPD per annum.
ALA	USA	None	-	-	-	-
AHIP	USA and International	Provisional Membership	AHIP (P)	Provision of evidence of professional achievement in specified areas	Yes. When five years experience is obtained, it is possible to apply for membership and become a full or senior member.	Re-validation is required every five years. Progressive contribution is required to move to level of full membership. Points system: 50 points for Member, 80 for Senior and 120 for Distinguished level
ARA	UK and Ireland	Foundation Member / Registered Member	FMARA / RMARA	Competency-based framework	-	Submission of portfolio (which must include a CV, a reference from a mentor and eight completed competency submission forms which demonstrate with evidence how each level has been met).

As mentioned in Section 1 of this report, the most recent LAI membership register²⁸ (2016) reports 570 personal members of the LAI. When compared with the 56,286 members of the American Library Association²⁹, 12,400 members of CILIP³⁰, 5,000 members of the Australian Library and Information Association³¹, and the 2,400 members of the ARA³² this number is quite small. This is mentioned here, as many of these organisations have considerable staffing, financial and technical resources which enable the facilitation of CPD frameworks, online supports and assessment systems and procedures.

3.3. Comparative Analysis of Awards from Non-Library Organisations

The ACOI is the Association of Compliance Officers in Ireland. Post-nominal designations are available to members who successfully complete accredited diplomas in compliance.

Following the completion of a professional diploma in compliance members, can chose to become a Licentiate member of ACOI and take the post-nominal designation of the LCOI if they complete the necessary annual CPD requirements of 15 hours related to a set professional development syllabus. At least one of these hours must be related to ethics and all events must be accredited by the Institute of Bankers³³.

CIPD is the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. CIPD membership is the accepted professional requirement for working as a HR professional³⁴. CIPD offers a range of membership options, but the professional award levels are: Associate Membership (which carries the post-nominal letters of Assoc CIPD); Chartered Membership (Chartered CIPD) and Chartered Fellow (Chartered FCIPD). Following two years of work-related experience, Associate Members complete an accredited qualification at foundational, intermediate (degree level) or advanced (postgraduate level). Like many other professional bodies, CPD is not solely linked to academic qualifications, but involves engaging in

²⁸

<https://www.libraryassociation.ie/sites/default/files/Draft%20membership%20list%20and%20register%202016.pdf> Accessed 15.2.18

²⁹ http://www.ala.org/membership/membershipstats_files/annual_memb_stats

³⁰ https://archive.cilip.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/cilip_2015_approved_statutory_accounts.pdf

³¹ <https://www.alia.org.au/about-alia>

³² <http://www.archives.org.uk/about.html>

³³ <https://www.acoi.ie/download/LCOI-Guidelines-and-Regulations-2018.pdf>

³⁴ Cullen, J.G. (2004) 'Identifying sectoral management cultures through recruitment advertising', *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 25(3), 279-291.

community-of-practice related activities such as 'networking at HR or L&D events, online discussions, reading, research and work-based development'³⁵.

Associate membership of the *Institute of Management Consultants and Advisers* is the entry grade for individuals who wish to work towards full membership. To become an Associate (and work towards full membership) applicants need to be in full time practice as a management consultant or business adviser, and hold an accredited degree or professional qualification. The qualification of Certified Management Consultant (CMC) requires at least three years experience working in management consultancy but many become Associates to secure CMC. The CMC-award is a competence-based qualification that requires independent referees to attest to the competence of the applicant. Evidence is required in the form of an assignment study and a record of attendance at professional events. Seminars are provided to explain the application process.

The *Irish Institute of Legal Executives* is the professional body of legal executives in Ireland. As with many professional representative organisations in Ireland, there are a number of levels that members can take. The closest of these to the ALAI award is the level of Legal Executive Member (M.I.I.L.Ex.). This award is the next stage up from the Associate Member level, which is the entry, non-graduate level of qualification. Legal Executive Members require a law degree or diploma from institutions accredited by the Institute. Evidence of three years of employment (and fitness) in the field and an interview with Institute Council members are required. Members are strongly encouraged to update their skills and knowledge continually.³⁶

There are two ways of becoming a member of the *Marketing Institute of Ireland*.³⁷ The first is to acquire an approved marketing or business degree, alongside two years of professional experience in marketing. The second is to demonstrate a minimum of 5 years' professional experience in marketing management.

The *Mediators Institute of Ireland* offer a range of membership routes. The route which appears to be closest to ALAI is that of Member of MII. Members must demonstrate continuing commitment to professional development so they can progress to the next level

³⁵ <https://www.cipd.ie/membership/become-member/professional/associate>

³⁶ <https://www.iilex.ie/index.php/our-members/a-legal-executive>

³⁷ <http://mii.ie/page/PersonalMembership>

of membership (Practitioner Member level). 31 hours of CPD is required each year. Again, this element is not solely concerned with training and development but also has a community service element: 'It is important that members support their practice through participation in Sharing and Learning Groups and they arrange supervision/case consultation'.³⁸

³⁸ <http://www.themii.ie/membership/certified-membership>

4. Stakeholder Consultations

4.1 Introduction

A summary of the activities involved in stakeholder interviews, meetings attended and correspondence received is provided in Appendix 1. Consultations were conducted in a semi-structured manner, which means that three central open-questions were asked, but responses were accepted on related areas offered by the interviewees. The three central areas that questions were asked about were as follows:

1. The purpose of the ALAI award.
2. Perceptions as to whether the award is challenging enough to obtain.
3. The extent to which the award meets the needs of library profession and possible changes that might be introduced.

Assigning stakeholders to specific groups creates a false impression that some hold opinions that are at variance with others. Instead, the responses to these areas, and other ones that emerged through consultation with the stakeholders are arranged according to the themes discussed. These themes are as follows:

- Awareness of the ALAI Award
- Purpose and value of the ALAI Award
- Level of challenge associated with acquiring the Award
- Re-validating the Award
- Clarity of the application and award process
- Relationship with Continuing Professional Development
- Relationship between ALAI and FLAI.

4.2 Awareness of the ALAI award

'It's just one of those things that comes up. You hear of it and you think I must apply for that'.

Although there was a general awareness of the award amongst interviewees, and an understanding that it represented a personal commitment to professional development, awareness of the award application process and its value was mixed. Librarians who currently hold the award are very clear about its value and there is evidence of growing

knowledge about it amongst newly qualified librarians and library school students. However there is still a large cohort of practicing librarians who know 'of' the award, but are not aware of anyone who holds it. The following quote from a practicing library manager underscores this perspective:

'Unfortunately I have very little knowledge of the LAI award having not gone through the process myself or knowing anyone who has done so. It certainly is a very worthwhile award and strengthens the profession and professional abilities of those who undertake the process, but does require commitment and the allocation of time to complete'.

Many of the newer entrants to the profession, on the other hand, stated that much of their personal interest in pursuing the award stemmed from learning that the time commitment was not excessive. More than one respondent stated that they initially had a perception that the ALAI was a mid-career award, rather than an early-career award. In addition, they learned that the ALAI application process did not make excessive demands on their time as newly qualified librarians, which perhaps demonstrates the strong promotional potential of new recipients of the ALAI.

The need to promote the award in tandem with promoting the LAI was regularly stated throughout the interviews. The promotion of the award is clearly linked with the need to clarify the application process for the award and to update brochure material that accompanied it.

'You probably need to overhaul the ALAI brochure in particular: at present it is not very clear what is expected. Perhaps include a template on the website or some anonymised examples of successful submissions? We might also need to look at the word count - 500 words might not be enough to capture someone's experiences. Perhaps make the statements more reflective rather than descriptive?'

Some stakeholders, who were larger recruiters of professional librarians, expressed an interest in the ALAI potentially being used to address outstanding skills needs in their sector. Expertise in social skills (such as outreach, customer service, student engagement, library and information instruction) and technical skills (such as digitisation, data analytics, bibliometrics, research) from candidates who demonstrate 'more value than what could be gained from a CV' was seen as a clear way of demonstrating deeper experience or knowledge.

4.3 Purpose and Value of the ALAI award

There was much support for the review process in general and many stakeholders expressed gratitude to the LAI for undertaking it. Despite the lack of awareness about the award, the vast majority of stakeholders articulated that it was worthwhile and was a boon to the profession *and* the individuals who received it.

More than one respondent stated that they had come to librarianship from another professional background. In their previous occupations, membership of professional organisations was mandatory if one wished to practice in their respective fields, but the networking and personal development opportunities which arose as a result of these were critical to advancing in the field. This previous knowledge of the value of awards like the ALAI encouraged their engagement with it.

‘Other professionals have to constantly update their skills, do CPD and re-validate membership. If librarians don’t have to do this it will not help their own professional identity and credibility’.

A large number of ALAI holders stated that they were interested in the award as it aided their own development as a professional, as well as creating CV-value. Some commented that attempting to change career, or advance in their career, meant that they sought out opportunities to engage with the award process for the ALAI. As the interviews progressed with stakeholders, it became apparent that there was a spectrum of understandings as to the purpose of the award.

‘After a few years working with LAI, I am afraid the purpose of the award is still not very clear to me. If the award is to promote professional identity, I think we might want to consider CPD as an important element, in addition to work experience in the field’ (LAI Member).

More stakeholders demonstrated a range of understandings of about the purpose of the award and saw it as something which variously: creates value for the individual librarian; the employers of the individual librarian; the Library Association of Ireland, and; the library and information sector in general. Library students, new graduates and early career librarians tended to feel that there was a strong professional rationale for obtaining the award. Employers did not see it as such, and generally speaking, did not state that it would be desirable or essential for applicants.

‘From my perspective of sitting on interview boards for professional library posts, and from reviewing applicants’ CVs, the ALAI award is rarely quoted and does not appear to feature prominently among library professionals’.

‘It wouldn’t have a huge visibility, from my own view’.

Similarly, employers³⁹ were divided on the value that the award would provide for them. Some were very clear that although ALAI encouraged the development of specific technical skills, that it did not meet their immediate needs. Others said, that they focus on the qualifications, skills and achievements and experience of newly emerging areas of librarianship of individual applicants rather than the ALAI award. Responses received from the university library sector suggested that there is currently a gap between the LAI and the university library sector. Other organisations such as CONUL, SCONUL and IUA were identified as influencing the library sector to a greater extent than the LAI. However, it was acknowledged that recently there has been more balanced representation of all library sectors in the LAI.

Some employers recognised that that the individuals who sought out the award, in the absence of specific workplace rewards, were actually demonstrating a high level of professional commitment and a ‘self-starter’ orientation. It was noticed amongst one stakeholder group that large library employer had recently made membership of the LAI a mandatory condition for applicants.

‘As an employer I would personally look favourably upon someone who has gone the extra mile and gotten the Associateship’.

4.4 Level of Challenge Associated with Acquiring the Award

There is strong evidence of a gap in the understanding of what applying for (and attaining) the ALAI award involves. Librarians who have recently achieved the award recall expressing surprise that the award was not as daunting as they had imagined. On the other hand, stakeholders who had not considered applying for the award stated that they believed that the award would be too time-consuming and resource dependent to pursue.

³⁹ Most, but not all major employers of professional librarians contacted engaged with the stakeholder consultation process.

Most respondents (but not all) felt that the award was set at an appropriate level of challenge and 'stretch' to achieve. However, many stated that there is a clear need to ensure that the ALAI not be seen as a fixed or 'terminal' award. Many pointed out that the ALAI should be considered a 'base-level' professional award and that there should be another 'step' between the ALAI and the FLAI award. The possibility for exploring the need to publicise the award, encourage greater engagement in LAI and making associateship figure in recruitment campaigns is discussed in the section on 're-validating the award', below.

University library stakeholders had a range of understandings of what was required in applying for the award. Some welcomed the ease of criteria in applying for the award and others felt that a greater level of rigour (and perhaps a portfolio) should be submitted in a more structured process. That said, one group of stakeholders from the academic library sector reported that they felt that CILIP process might be too extensive and that 'middle ground might need to be found'. Academic library stakeholders, in general, felt that the two years post qualification period for applying for ALAI should not be considered an appropriate endpoint for profession awards and 'there possibly needs to be a longer period of post-qualification experience'.

4.5 Re-validating the Award

'I think that re-validation is absolutely essential. It's a bit like getting your driving licence at the age of 21 and who is to say that you are still a good driver if you're 42 of whatever! Re-validation is essential for the Award to retain its credibility and relevance, definitely'.

As mentioned above, the ALAI is considered the primary professional award of the Library Association of Ireland. Once awarded, the recipient can continue to use the post-nominal letters 'ALAI' as long as they continue to be members of LAI without having to do additional work. Unlike other library awards, there is currently no need to demonstrate ongoing CPD on a recurring basis.

Most stakeholders consulted felt that the ALAI should be re-validated every 2-to-5 years with a requirement re-submission of a 500 word (approximately) reflective statement on the activities and experiences one undertook to:

- **develop** oneself as a professional through CPD and or training;
- **provide service** to the library community through: organising training seminars; mentoring new applicants to the Associateship process; promoting the benefits of associateship to non-associates or employers, or;
- **contribute** to the community of professional practitioners through research, writing or editing articles, reviewing applications for membership, etc.

Changing the rules of the Associateship award to incorporate re-validation at this stage might result in the disaffection of holders and LAI members who could potentially feel that this is a rule-change. However, if this re-validation were offered in the guise of a new level (a *Progression Award*) which carried a new set of post-nominal letters, this could potentially be more attractive to existing holders of the Associateship. The logic of this new level of award would be as follows.

1. It would 'flow' from the ALAI award. At any stage following their receipt of the ALAI award, holders could apply for professional membership of the association and commence a process of *reflective practice*.
2. Following a period of 2 to 3 years, ALAI holders could submit a statement that demonstrates how they grew as a professional and contributed to the community. If accompanied by evidence, a new level of award (such as PLAI) could be awarded. The member then moves from being *associated* with the LAI, to being a *full member* (which might also be known as *Chartered* or *Professional Member, etc.*).
3. Associateship should provide one with the opportunity for engaging as a full member.
4. The next stage for the member would then be to demonstrate an exceptional level of commitment to the profession through their application for the fellowship award.

The non-compulsory nature of this pathway might be more suited to the voluntary nature of LAI at present. Many of the current holders of the ALAI (and some non-holders) said that they would be very interested in a post-Associateship award that is not at the same level as Fellowship.

Opportunities for engaging employers (particularly those who do not currently know of the benefits of the award) with the process of reflective practice required for professional membership could potentially promote a larger sense of 'ownership' for the qualification. It could potentially create a space for dedicated professionals to share their passion for librarianship and assist in the development of new professionals for the future. Although

some larger library stakeholders recognized the value that the ALAI award demonstrated in relation to personal commitment to CPD, the LAI and the profession of librarianship, there was a concern that it has limited value to some sectors. Like FLAI, ALAI is not generally considered an essential qualification for recruitment purposes. There was evidence of some reflection amongst larger stakeholders as to why this appears to be the case when professional accreditation and membership is the norm for many other professionals in the other non-library environments (such as health, academia, public service, etc.).

4.6 Clarity of the application and award process

Many of the stakeholders consulted acknowledged the huge amount of work involved in running the application and review process. The coordination of assessors (who themselves are volunteers) was seen as a very onerous task that was much appreciated. It was felt that the pathway to Associateship could be clarified through the provision of templates for applying, sample applications and guidance resources (such as FAQs). It was felt to be especially important that information be provided on exactly what is meant by reflective practice. It must be acknowledged the application process for awards is difficult in most circumstances and in late 2017 CILIP advertised to recruit a Candidate Support Officer to provide support, information and advice to candidates working towards their professional registration qualifications.⁴⁰

There were some concerns about the anonymity of the review process. All stakeholders were at pains to point out that they have no misgivings about the co-ordination of the process or the assessors, but they had a more general concern that given the size of the library community in Ireland that it simply would not be possible to keep one's applications completely anonymous.

It was also felt the process for applying for Associateship should continue to be formative rather than summative. This means that if an applicant does not achieve the standard for Associateship that they are given a period of time to re-write their statement or attain additional experience before re-submitting.

⁴⁰ <http://www.lisjobnet.com/job-ads/4172-cilipnw1912-candidate-support-officer/>

4.7 Relationship with Continuing Professional Development.

One of the main 'purposes' of the ALAI as perceived by stakeholders is that it encourages individuals to commit to ongoing professional and personal development. Because it is currently viewed as either a 'terminal' award or a long-term award until one has achieved the degree of seniority required for the FLAI, it is hampered as a provider of CPD. As outlined earlier in this report, other awarding bodies do not necessarily require all applicants to submit certified evidence of formal CPD, but rather, expect candidates to submit a reflective statement on their personal development and contribution to the community.

This requires a clear statement of what reflective practice actually is in the context of the LAI. It is noticeable that many members of the profession are deeply committed to CPD and are interested in developing themselves as librarians and members of the library community. As one stakeholder put it:

'If you've been active in developing yourself as a professional anyway, then it shouldn't be too onerous to do it'.

Others commented that too often CPD is perceived as solely consisting of formal training courses. CPD can constitute any form of activity that allows the individual librarian to develop as a member of the professional community. This should be placed at the centre of the new proposed *progression award*.

Another interviewee stated:

'Although it is not mentioned, [the reflective statement] is an excellent way of currently demonstrating personal CPD.'

4.8 Relationship between ALAI and LAI

Two of the other main 'purposes' of the ALAI as perceived by stakeholders is that it both encourages individuals to engage with the LAI and demonstrates that the Association is committed and engaged with professional development. Some stakeholders commented that the ALAI award should be seen as the starting point of the development of a relationship between the librarian and the LAI. Indeed more than one stakeholder

interviewed pointed out that when the ALAI was first introduced, it was intended only as an entry-level award. However, they believed that due to the lack of awareness about the nature of the ALAI that this currently is not the case. However, there is some evidence that this may be changing, as there has been an increase in applications and evidence of peer-influence on this process.

Some stakeholders pointed out that this is not the case with the FLAI awards at present, which tend to be awarded to librarians who are quite senior in their organisation and sector. As such, there is a need to 'normalise' the Fellowship award in the same way that the Associateship award is showing potential of changing. A key mechanism for doing this would be to introduce a scaffolding award such as the *progression award* proposed by this review.

Part of the development of the *progression award* level should involve the encouragement of mentoring ALAI applicants. Like some other professional library organisations, the LAI offers a mentorship scheme for applicants to the associateship. There has been a willingness to mentor, but most prefer to do this in an informal manner, rather than being added to a published list of mentors.

Compared to other library associations, the LAI is small. Establishing and sustaining detailed CPD schemes on a voluntary basis is close to impossible. In addition, LAI membership is spread across a number of different sectors. More than one interviewee stated that they would welcome a specific post-nominal qualification that is relevant to their own library sector.

Unlike many of the professional associations outlined in Section 3 of this report the LAI is a professional organisation *which is also voluntary*. This makes the LAI different to mainstream library associations. This is challenging, but it also has an advantage in that it is a *community* organisation as opposed to a member-service organisation. By encouraging more librarians to take part in a series of awards that brings them into this community, CPD can take on a different meaning. More than one stakeholder pointed out that the

Associateship award was originated by the library community as a way of safeguarding its professional status. There is, then, an awareness that the profession of librarianship could be at risk if professional status is not reinforced through a larger range of awards.

Some large library stakeholders felt that if organizations in their sector wished to demonstrate a greater level of commitment to their staff's CPD that they might financially support applying for the Associateship and membership of the LAI. University library stakeholders asked if an 'FLAI track' distinct from ALAI would be possible as it might enhance the value of LAI awards. The recommendation that a new level of award be introduced which is discussed later in this document has the potential to address this concern for larger employers. **It is critical that all of the largest library recruiting sectors are involved at every stage of the introduction of the PLAI award to ensure that it is relevant to their emerging needs.**

4.9 Summary of Main Points from Analysis of Stakeholder Interviews

- There is very strong awareness of the award and there is much support for it. All stakeholders interviewed believe it should be continued.
- Stakeholders who hold the award, or who intend to apply for the award, are clear about its rationale and value; those who do not hold it and are in practice are less clear about the value it can add to their services.
- Newly awarded holders have a huge potential to 'evangelize' the award amongst new entrants to the community of professional librarians.
- The value of ALAI needs to be clearly communicated to practicing library managers who have an input into the recruitment of professional staff. This is a critical area of engagement to ensure that LAI awards retain their value as an arbiter of professionalism.
- There is strong evidence that non-holders engage in CPD (whether in membership of another organisation or in an ad-hoc manner) but this is still not universally understood as something that is relevant to the ALAI.
- The promotion of the award is clearly linked with the need to clarify the application and assessment process for the award, and update accompanying material. As most recent applicants and recipients appear to have learned that the ALAI is not a prohibitive proposition in terms of the amount of work and time involved from colleagues, perhaps a series of short promotional video interviews, where members of the library community speak 'plainly' about their experiences, might provide a

more human face for the process. This point is particularly moot when some stakeholders raised concerns about their identifiability and need for anonymity to be protected.

- A new level of post-ALAI award should be introduced which could effectively serve as a *re-validation* of the award. Based on reflective practice, this award would reward CDP, service to the profession *and* to the community of professional librarians. If Associateship formally acknowledges the entry of librarians into this community of practice, then the next level of members who are recipients of the *progression award* would promote the community, the LAI and its awards as a means for strengthening the profession. This has many similarities with the AHIP system in that it 'bridges' the application process between levels. The contribution which members make to the profession is used a springboard for applying for the next level, and accomplishments can involve contributing to the development of the profession and professionals (through teaching, research and writing) or through sustaining the professional community and Association.
- The largest library sectors must be encouraged to take a leadership position in the introduction of the new PLAI award in order to ensure that it is 'owned' and of value to the largest recruitment market segments for professionally-qualified librarians in Ireland.

5. Survey Results

5.1 *Headline Results*

As mentioned in Section 2 of this report, LAI and non-LAI members were surveyed via the online questionnaire during the month of January 2019. This survey was developed in consultation with the Committee during December 2017 and was circulated via the LAI mailing list and promoted on the Library Association of Ireland website. Direct responses and comments were also solicited and two were received via email which supported the review project. The results of this survey are discussed in Section 5 of this report and a copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix 2.

The majority of the 145 respondents were from academic libraries ($n=43$, 34.4%) or public libraries ($n=40$, 32%). 11 (8.8%) stated that they do not currently work in a library and 8 (6.4%) worked in health libraries. 7 (5.6%) identified as working in special libraries and 4 (3.2%) worked in government or legal libraries, or were students in library schools. 4 worked in other sectors related to LIS work.

5.2 *The ALAI Award*

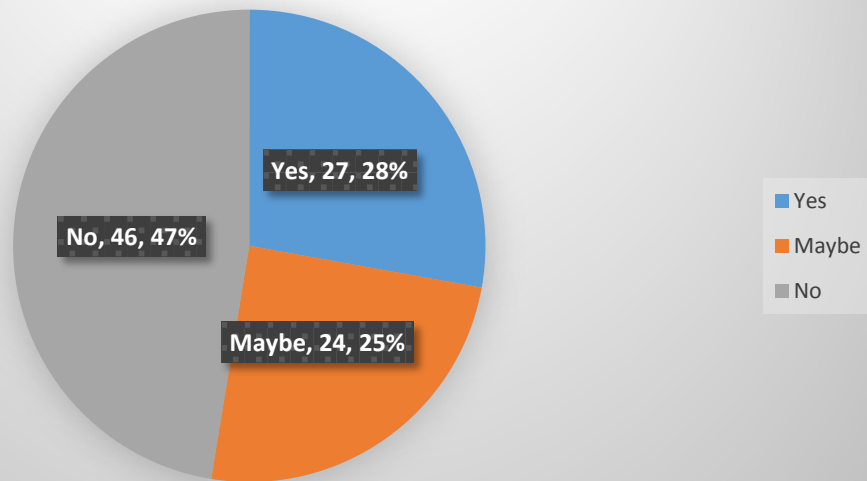
86 (68.8%) of the 125 respondents were currently members of the LAI at the time of the survey. 84 of these respondents shared the amount of time that they had been members of the LAI. The shortest length of membership was 1 year and the longest was 45. The average length of membership of the 84 respondents was just over 12.5 years⁴¹. Of the 38 respondents who identified as non-members 18 (47.7%) stated that they had previously been members of the LAI.

26 (20.8%) of all 125 respondents held the ALAI award. 5 (4%) held the FLAI award and the remaining 75.2% did not have any of the awards. The average length of time that the award was held for is 9 years.

There were 97 responses to the question 'Would you consider applying for the ALAI award?'. The answers to this question are represented in Figure 1 below.

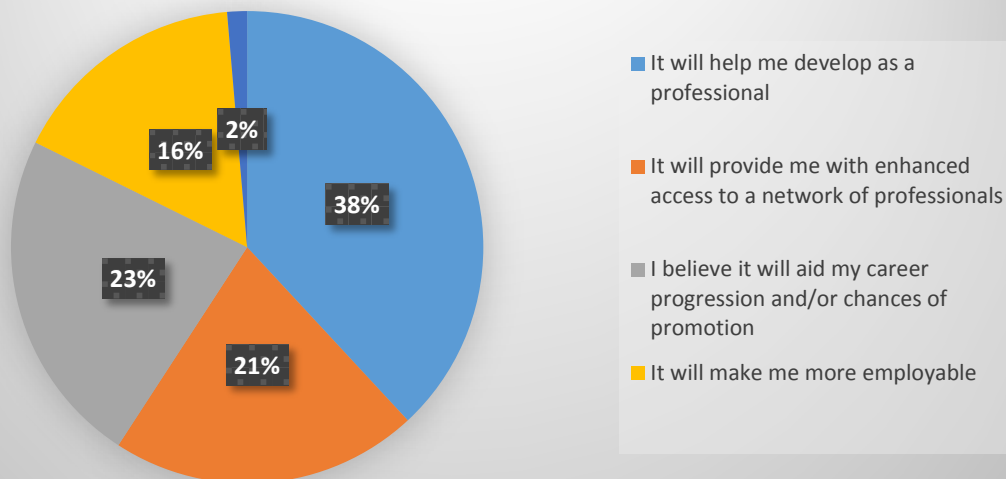
⁴¹ In total, the 84 respondents represented 1059.2 years of LAI membership.

Figure 1: Would you consider applying for the ALAI award?



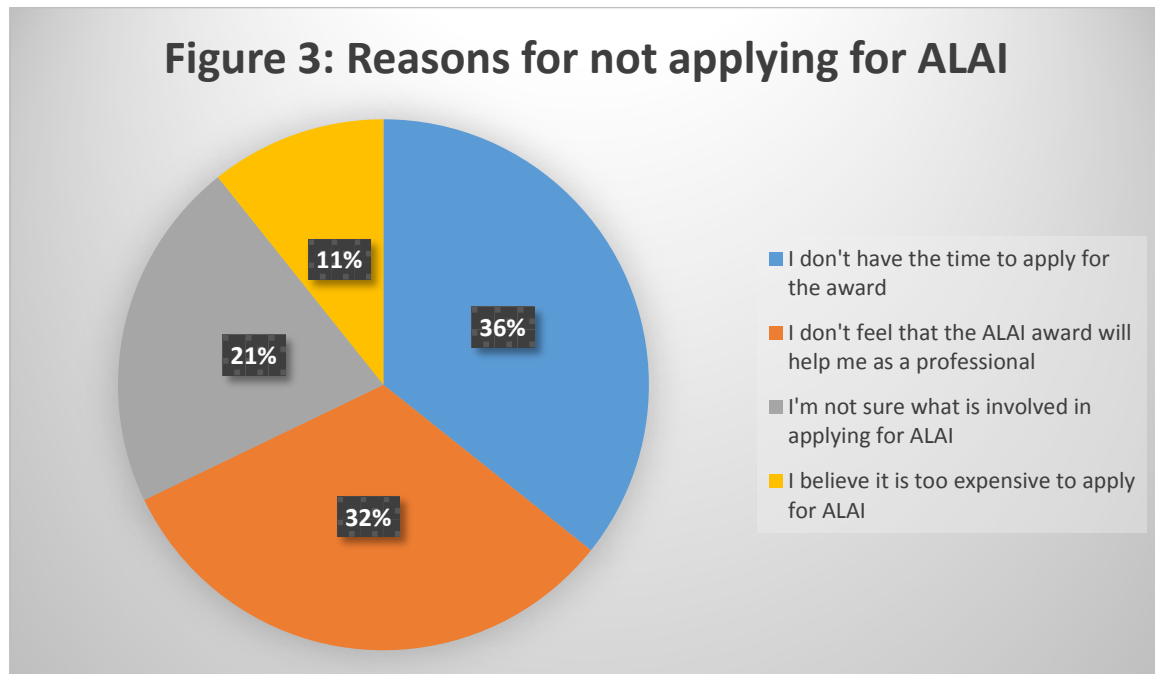
Respondents who answered 'yes' or 'maybe' were asked for their reasons for considering this. Their answers are represented in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Why would you consider applying for the ALAI award?



10 individual responses were also received to this question which did not have a unifying theme.

Respondents who answered 'no' were asked for their reasons for considering this. Their answers are represented in Figure 3 below.



Individual responses to this question included the award not being relevant at this stage of the professionals career, a lack of understanding about the role of the LAI and a concern that the award would not be of value.

29 responses were received to the question: What would you describe as the main benefit of the ALAI award?

A variety of reasons were given (and many gave more than one). The most common category of response is that it is a recognition of professional experience and development (12 respondents). Eight stated that it provided some form of evidence of continuing professional development and three stated that it provided additional status or 'CV-value'. Two respondents said that they could not think of a benefit or that there was not one. One response stated that it was a form of progression to the FLAI and another that it provided evidence that they were a reflective practitioner.

As with many aspects of this review, there appears to be a variety of experiences of the utility of the ALAI. For example, one respondent to this question stated that they were 'not sure. Post nominal? [Having the ALAI] certainly hasn't helped me in my career'. Another

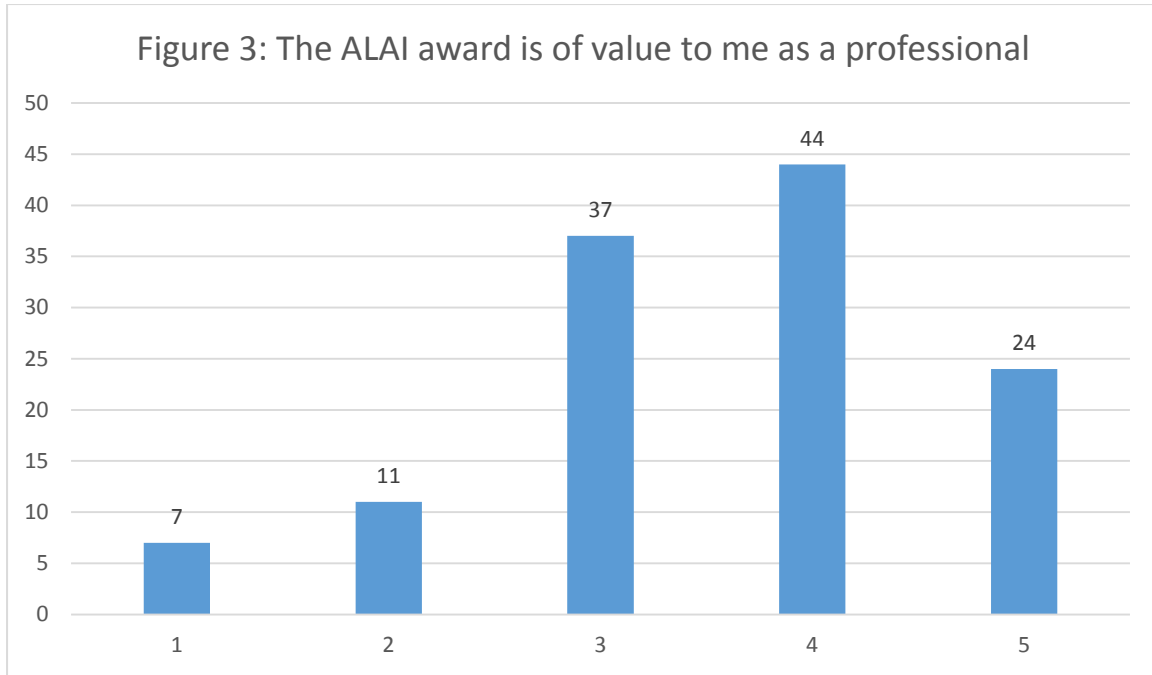
wrote that 'it shows I am serious about my professional development, it often comes up at interviews'.

Thirty one respondents responded to a question about the perceived difficulty of applying for the ALAI award. Of these 54.8% (n=17) commented that they thought the process of applying for the ALAI award was appropriately challenging and 16.1% (n=5) stated that it was too easy. Four indicated that they found the application process cumbersome and complicated. 51.6% of 31 current ALAI holders stated they did not think that ALAI award holder should 're-validate their award occasionally', while six (19.4%) stated that they should and nine (29%) answered this question with 'maybe'.

All survey respondents were asked to share their views on the value of the ALAI award to them as an individual professional (Figure 3) and to employers (Figure 4). They were also asked to share their opinions on the purpose of the award (Figure 5) and the degree to which they felt that the application and award process clear (Figure 6). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statements as follows:

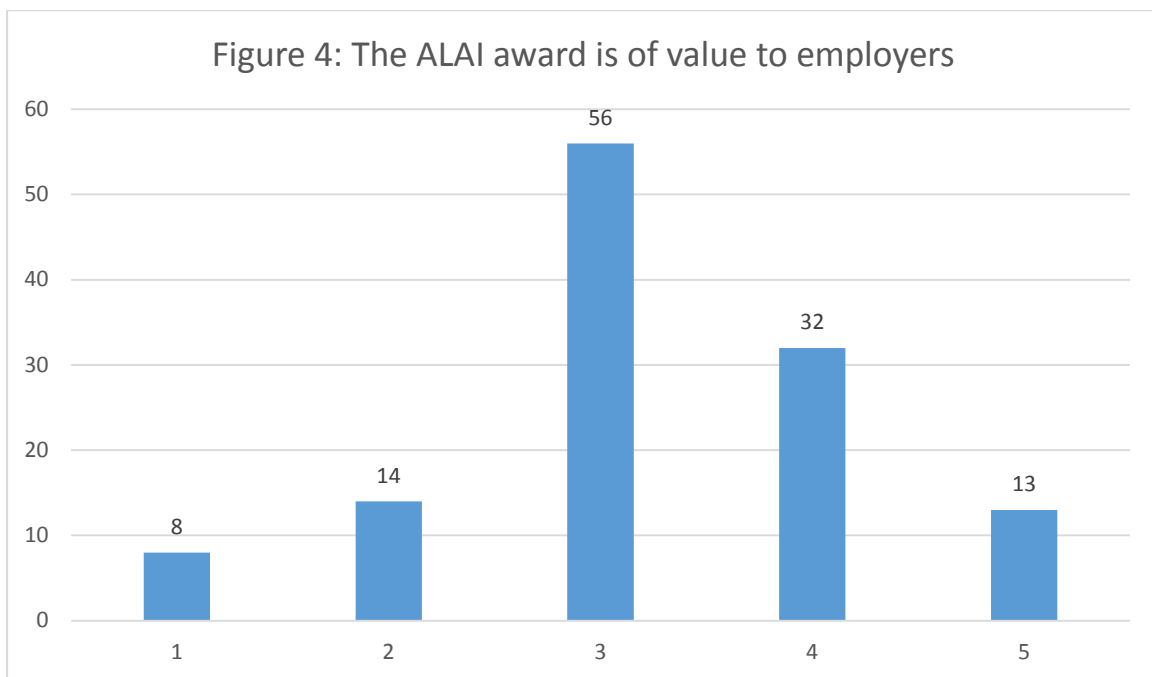
- 1 = Completely Disagree,
- 2 = Disagree,
- 3 = Unsure,
- 4 = Agree,
- 5 = Completely Agree.

As can be seen from the Figures 3 – 6 below, although there were negative responses, in general there was a positive skew to most answers. **This indicates a generally positive attitude to the ALAI.**

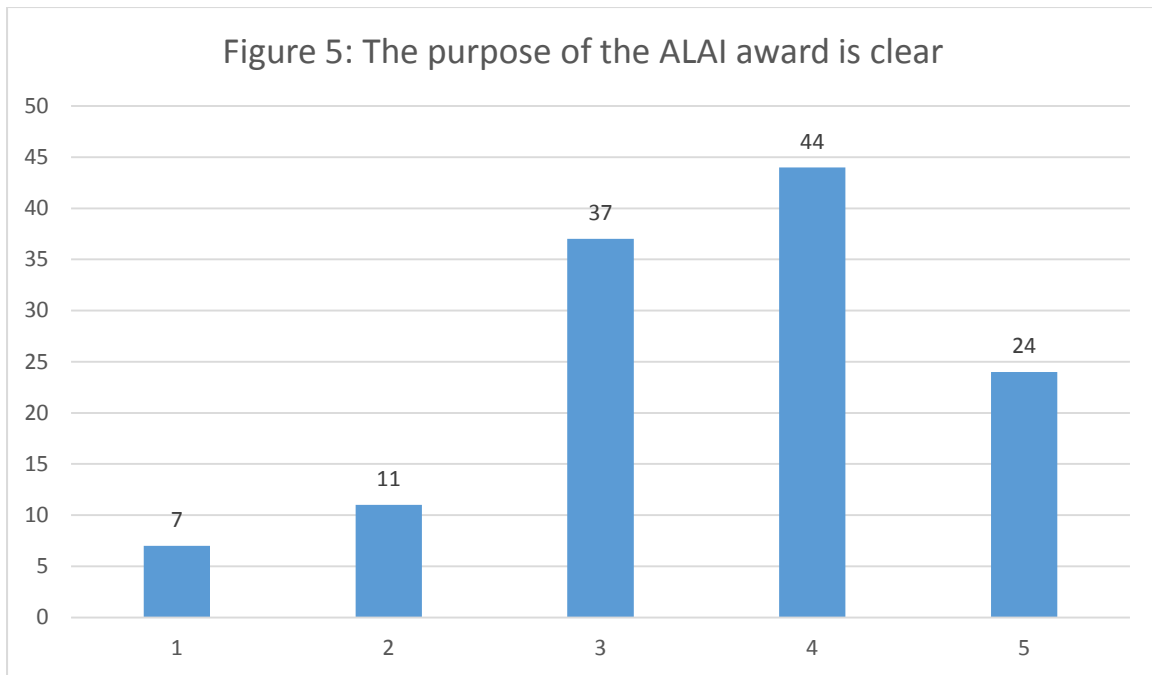


123 responses.

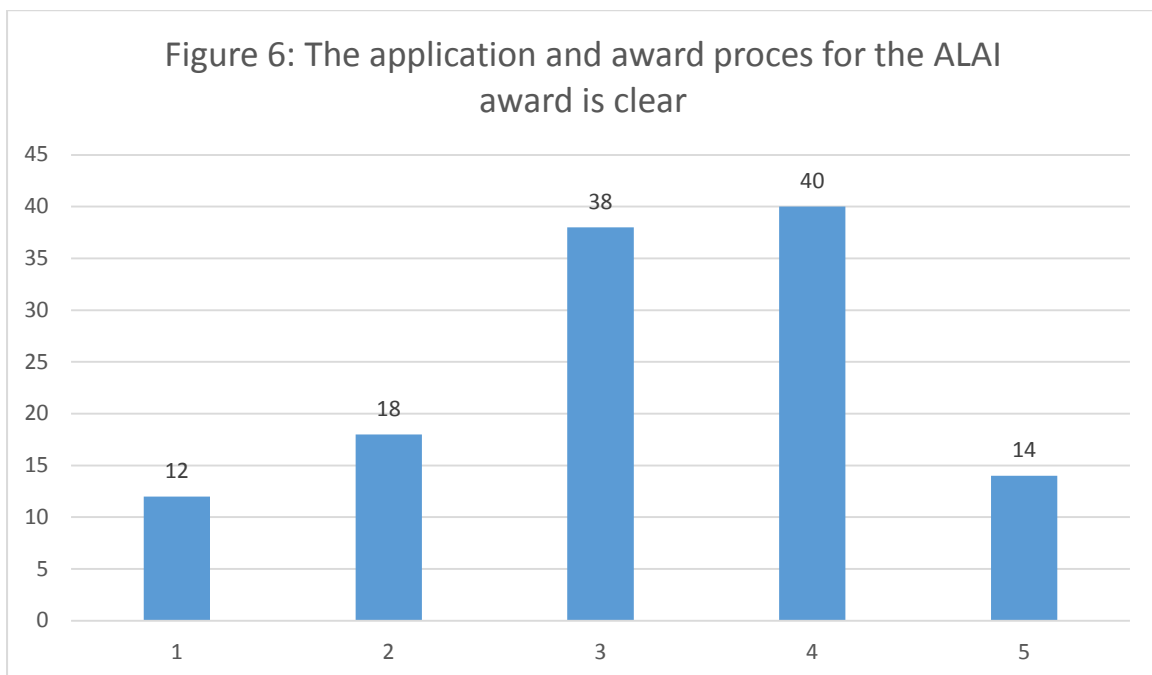
This was the strongest level of agreement for all the Likert questions in this survey.



123 responses.



121 responses.



122 responses.

Respondents were asked to indicate what they could do to make the award more attractive. 51 respondents commented on this question. A range of comments were provided, which are summarised as:

- Provide greater publicity and promotion about the award and communicate the value of the award to librarians and (especially) employers
- Greater clarity about the type of experience required to apply for the ALAI award
- Reduce the fees involved
- Greater relevance of the LAI to academic libraries
- Some comments suggested the development of a skills framework similar to CILIP's PKSB. Others felt this ALAI should not become a copy of the CILIP approach to CPD. As such, a once-off associate award that demonstrated an early stage commitment to the profession was perceived as having value only if situated in a continuum of awards.

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked to offer any additional comments that they would like to be taken into account in the review. Again, in summary, these comments stated:

- The LAI needs to promote the award to members
- The voluntary nature of the LAI should be taken into account
- The award is variously perceived as too difficult, and too easy, to get
- Time is perceived as a significant barrier to applying
- Update and clarify the application procedure to ensure that all applicants are provided with consistent responses in an agreed timeframe.

Some responses were comments on the LAI and not the awards framework. As they are not relevant to the review, they are excluded from this analysis.

5.3 The FLAI Award

Of the 24 respondents who indicated that they do not already have the FLAI award, 16 stated that they would consider applying for it. Seven of the eight who indicated that they would not consider explained their rationale for this in various ways. Two said that it would not be of utility to them at the current stage of their career. Two indicated that they felt that it was pitched at a level that was not intended for them, and two stated that it was too much of a time commitment to apply for at this stage.

6. Conclusions & Recommendations

The table below represents a summary of the personal and institutional factors that drive and restrict engagement with the ALAI. Although there is a variety of opinion on the utility of the ALAI and its relevance to the needs of the library sector in Ireland, there is clear support for continuing the award. The critical issue, however, is that unlike postgraduate qualifications in librarianship, it is not considered essential or desirable by most employers, and many of these appear to be largely unaware of the relevance of the award. A means of addressing this is to lever the communication, managerial and community engagement and promotional opportunities provided by developing a way of deepening commitment with the LAI through a new level of award, which is provisionally named the *Progression Award of the Library Association of Ireland (PLAI)*.

	Personal Factors	Institutional Factors
Driving Forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Applicants are intrinsically motivated to develop as professionals. - Applicants seek validation of their continuing professional development. - The existence of the award enhances the professional status of librarianship and staves off threats to this status - The ALAI post-nominal letters differentiates holders in the recruitment market. - Professionals who have received the ALAI award recently have articulated that it is not unattainable due to lack of time and resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All library and information sectors need high-quality professionals who continually engage in professional development - Organisations require other professional employees to hold similar awards - Some employers <i>informally</i> welcome ALAI post-nominals as an indicator of solid professional development
Restraining Forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A perception persists in some quarters that the award is very <i>time-consuming</i> to apply for and that the assessment process is complicated and difficult - Some past-members have expressed disappointment with lack of engagement from the LAI - There are concerns that the ALAI does not create career value for all applicants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some employers do not appear to be aware of the ALAI and do not encourage staff to apply for it or to engage with LAI - More voluntary action is required to (1) promote, (2) mentor and (3) assess the award and any subsequent awards.

One of the key givens of any organisational change initiative is that if restraining forces are eliminated then driving forces will gather pace. The lack of awareness of the ALAI and its benefits is a critical impediment to individual engagement, and for employers in how they adopt and support the award.

The recent uptake of the individual award may be generating more applications; the more people who experience the application process for the award, the more librarians appear to consider taking it. This energy appears to exist at the level of individual motivation. Additionally, the strongest level of awareness of the value of the ALAI appears to exist at an individual, rather than an organisational, level. It is suggested in the recommendations below that the introduction of a post-Associateship *Progression Award* might serve to address the promotional and awareness-development aspects of LAI's awards and the value of the organisation itself.

The key recommendations from this report are as follows:

- Maintain the current ALAI award as it is. It is an established and recognised professional 'brand'.
- Introduce a post-ALAI and pre-FLAI award. This award should represent a progression from the initial ALAI award. It is provisionally named (in this document as the *Progression Award of the Library Association of Ireland [PLAI]*) as the next step in the re-validation process. It is not suggested that this award should remain the title of the award and alternatives such as *Chartered Member of the LAI* or *Professional Member of the ALAI* might be considered. The PLAI will act as an interim stage between the ALAI and the FLAI award
- Promote the ALAI award and use 'real-life' recipients as advocates and evangelists for the award. Update existing promotional channels (e.g. video interviews of recipients and presentations on what is realistically involved in preparing for and applying for the award).
- Consult major sectoral employers to see how they can participate in and engage with the process of introducing the new award. Large employers of professional librarians should be encouraged to take a leadership position in the introduction of the new PLAI award in order to ensure that it is 'owned' and of value to the largest recruitment market segment for professional librarians in Ireland.
- Develop a new set of criteria for achieving the award and support this with transparent guidelines on assessment for applicants about the award process. These guidelines must adhere the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which comes into effect on 25th May 2018. This is discussed below.

The ALAI award is unusual. In most professional contexts, such awards are applied for in order to assure clients that certain standards of professionalism are met. As such, they are perceived as standards for career progression and are used in recruitment. The ALAI award on the other hand demonstrates the potential commencement of being a contributing member of a professional community. It differs from a post-qualification award in that it is not explicitly concerned with CPD or career advancement.

Perhaps because of this there is not one shared meaning for the award. It is variously considered as a,

- Award for service and demonstration of membership of a professional community of practice
- Generator of personal career value
- Indicator of professional development.

The initial need for the ALAI and FLAI awards did not only emerge from international best practice, but also from a set of political, economic and social changes which required protection for the professional status of librarianship in Ireland. Since they were initially introduced, the library and information sector in Europe has undergone substantial change and the profession has again experienced fundamental transformation. Ongoing research is required on the changing nature of the library profession and related sectors in Ireland. This should not be based solely on the changing occupational needs of recruiting managers and organisations, but should also survey major employers as to how the Associateship, proposed PLAI, and the Fellowship awards of the Library Association of Ireland can ensure ongoing relevance in changing circumstances.

One of the most recent changes which not only influences that day-to-day work of many information professionals, but also will directly impact of the process of applying for the LAI's awards is the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which will come into effect in May 2018. As GDPR seeks to address how personal data is used in the modern digital world, it is important to take into account the implications of asking applicants for personal, reflective statements and documentation. Key responsibilities will include ensuring the application data is kept securely, directed only to individuals who need to see it, and retained only for as long as required.

Under GDPR, the appointment of a Data Protection Officer is mandatory for certain organisations (such as public authorities and organisations who work with data). Although it is not mandatory to appoint a Data Protection Officer, the GDPR recommends that all organisations who deal with personal data do so in order to ensure that the rights of individuals with regard to having their information kept secure and private is acknowledged.

Ireland is a comparatively small country and the library and information sector is not significant. The identifiability of individuals (a concern of the GDPR) is thus a risk when asking individuals to submit personal information and statements. Anonymization of applicant information (rather than pseudonymization) is recommended before distributing it for assessment. Peer-reviewed academic journals often have strict guidelines for ensuring that the work of authors is significantly anonymised before work is sent out for review, and this model might be potentially of use when refining the application system for the LAI awards. In other words, respondents should be asked to remove all references to themselves or sensitive information about themselves or others in documentation that will be reviewed by assessors before applying to the LAI. The information linking the individual and their assessor should then be held by one individual in the LAI who is responsible for ensuring that no data breaches occur and that the identifiability and privacy rights of the individual are upheld.

Collecting information from individuals, even if they have freely decided to engage with a process in a voluntary fashion, constitutes the LAI as a 'data processor' which could result in penalties for the Association if information is mishandled.

These recommendations do not constitute legal advice, but based on the understanding of the review author the following recommendations are made:

- The clarification of the rules and requirements of the application and review process for the ALAI, proposed PLAI and FLAI all be developed in accordance with the GDPR.
- It is recommended that a *Privacy Impact Assessment* be undertaken in line with the clarification of the application process for the ALAI, proposed PLAI and FLAI.
- A Data Protection Officer role be created to ensure that the process is GDPR compliant.

- A clear, accessible Data Protection Statement and/or Privacy Notice be foregrounded in any new drafting of application procedures and/or processes which clearly advises applicants and/or members of their rights with regard to the information they have provided.

Appendix 1: Interviews and meetings

Interviews were completed with 23 individual stakeholders between January 2017 and March 2018. Of these 16 were experienced library professionals who were either working or had worked as professional librarians, many in managerial or professional roles in large libraries. Four were students or recent graduates of library programmes and three were conducted with providers of (or lecturers on) professional library education programmes. Correspondence was received from four library professionals and one from a group of library professionals. John Cullen attended meetings of the LAI Education Committee (Professional Standards) on 24th October 2017 and 8th May 2018, and the LAI Education Committee (Education) on 19th February 2018.

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

This survey was delivered online and the results are discussed in chapter 5 of this report. The following is the text of the questionnaire as circulated.

ALAI Review Survey 2018

This survey is undertaken as part of the Library Association of Ireland's review of the Associateship award. All answers will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

1. Which of the following best describes the library sector you currently work in? Mark only one oval.

- Public Libraries
- Academic Libraries
- Health Libraries
- Special Libraries
- Government Libraries
- Legal Libraries
- I am a student at library school
- I do _____

not currently work in a library Other:

2. Are you currently a member of the Library Association of Ireland? Mark only one oval.

- Yes Skip to question 3.
- No Skip to question 4.

LAI Members

3. For how long have you been a member of Library Association of Ireland?

Skip to question 5.

LAI former / non members

4. Have you previously been a member of the Library Association of Ireland? Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

awards

5 Do you hold any of the following awards ? Mark only one oval.

- ALAI (Associate of the Libarary Association of Ireland) Skip to question 6.
- FLAI (Fellow of the Library Association of Ireland) Skip to question 6.
- ALAI and FLAI Skip to question 6.
- I do not hold any of these awards. Skip to question 12.

ALAI & FLAI

6. How long have you held the award(s)?

7. What would you describe as the main benefit of the ALAI award?

8. Do you think the process of applying for the ALAI award is perceived as... Mark only one oval.

- too difficult?
- too easy?
- _____ appropriately challenging?

Other:

9. If you do not have the FLAI award, would you consider applying for it? Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
-

I have the FLAI award.

10. If you answered 'no' to the previous question, can you explain why you would not consider applying for the FLAI award?

11 Do you think that ALAI award holders should 're-validate' their award occasionally?
Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 Maybe
 No

Skip to question 17.

ALAI (non-holders)

12. Would you consider applying for the ALAI award? Mark only one oval.

- Yes Skip to question 13.
 Maybe Skip to question 13.
 No Skip to question 15.

ALAI (yes)

13. If you answered 'yes' or 'maybe' which of the following best describes your reasons for doing so. You may tick more than one answer if appropriate. Check all that apply.

- I believe it will aid my career progression and/or prospects of promotion
 My employer requires it
 My employer or manager has encouraged (or required) me to pursue the ALAI award
 It will help me develop as a professional
 It _____ provides me with enhanced access to a network of professionals

It will make me more employable Other:

14. If you answered 'other', please describe your reason in this space:

ALAI (no)

15. If you answered 'no', which of the following best describes your reason for doing so. You may tick more than one answer if appropriate. Check all that apply.

- I'm not sure what is involved in applying for ALAI
- I believe it is too expensive to apply for ALAI
- I don't feel that the ALAI award will help me as a professional
- I am an accredited member of another professional body
- I _____

don't have the time to apply for the award Other:

16. If you answered 'other', please describe your reason below:

General questions

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements as follows. 1 = Completely disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Unsure, 4 = Agree, 5 = Completely Agree

17. The ALAI award is of value to me as a professional Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. The ALAI award is of value to employers Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. The purpose of the ALAI award is clear

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20 The application and award process for the ALAI award is clear

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. Please indicate what you think could be done to make the award more attractive in the space below.

22. If there are any other comments that you would like to be taken into account of in this review, please add them in the section below.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY. RESPONSES TO THIS QUESTIONNAIRE ARE ANONYMOUS. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE FURTHER TO THIS DATA GATHERING PROCESS FOR THIS REVIEW, PLEASE EMAIL drjohncullen@gmail.com

Appendix 3: Documents Consulted

Electronic and hardcopy versions of documents which addressed the historical development of the ALAI award were delivered during December 2017 and January 2018. These documents were reviewed and contributed to Section 1 of this review.

These included:

- Correspondence with LAI Education Committee, 1988
- Scheme of Associateship, 1989
- Brochure for Scheme of Associateship, 1989
- Minutes of the LAI AGM, 1991 and 1992
- Agenda and minutes of the Education Committee of the LAI, 1993
- List of qualifications required for professional recognition, 1994
- Recognition of professional qualifications in librarianship / library studies, 2007
- Document outlining the context, background factors and areas of concern over the timeframe of the ALAI award.
- Notes on historical LAI membership

Awards similar to the ALAI, (such as the Continuous Professional Development documentation from the Australian Library & Information Association) were identified in the December 2017 update report and contributed to the comparative analysis in Section 3 of this review.