



The LIBRARY ASSOCIATION of IRELAND

Cumann Leabharlann na hÉireann

REPRESENTING LIBRARIANS AND LIBRARIES IN IRELAND

## Report on CPD (Continuing Professional Development) Needs of Librarians and Information Professionals in Ireland

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## Executive Summary

Library and Information Studies (LIS) professional bodies internationally endorse and recognise the need for life long professional learning, in the form of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). The Library Association of Ireland (LAI) has the commitment to continuing professional development as a core value of professionalism within the Code of Professional Practice. Given the increasing importance being placed on professional development within the profession, the Library Association of Ireland (hereafter “LAI”) has commissioned research into librarians’ CPD needs in the Republic of Ireland. The goals of this study are to explore the CPD needs of librarians in different sectors, the challenges of accessing CPD, the current CPD framework and the future role of the LAI in CPD. The study aims to understand the needs regarding CPD of professional librarians in Ireland. The objectives of the study include: (a) to understand the general and specific CPD needs of working librarians, (b) to understand the resources used and preferred for CPD, and (c) to understand the role of LAI in supporting CPD. The study involves semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire.

Our recommendations are as follows:

- (1) A CPD framework designed to target specific needs in different types of library and information organisation, taking into account the locations of organisations and availability of resources and support for staff. Strategies should include developing online courses and resources, with event planning more sensitive to those who have restrictions on leave requirements and with little or no funding from employers.
- (2) A register of accredited of CPD courses developed to engage practitioners, particularly those who are not able to attend conferences and meetings due to limitations of budget and leave. The online platform should provide links to resources made available publicly (e.g., via SlideShare, figshare)
- (3) Promotion of CPD events, workshops, and seminars via email, LAI website, Twitter, and other social media platforms.
- (4) CPD requirements to be aligned with professional development such as promotion guidelines in member institutions, ALAI and FLAI.
- (5) PKSB (Professional Knowledge and Skills Base) should be promoted broadly in the profession. The audience should include para-professionals who seek qualifications and upskilling in their positions. Training and demonstration of PKSB are needed, as well as support and recognition by management in organisations and institutions.
- (6) CPD should be highlighted as a core activity in the profession that requires sufficient funding and staffing to provide up-to-date and professional services in all kinds of library and information organisation.

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## Introduction

Library and Information Studies (LIS) professional bodies internationally endorse and recognise the need for life long professional learning, in the form of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). The American Library Association (ALA) lists ‘Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning’ as one of the Core Competencies of Librarianship. The Library Association of Ireland (LAI) has the commitment to continuing professional development as a core value of professionalism within the Code of Professional Practice. The importance of CPD to practitioners has been emphasised by many researchers, notably, Corcoran & McGuinness (2014) contend that it is crucial to prevent the extinction of the profession: ‘Ultimately the survival of the profession and indeed the professional depend on it [CPD]’.

The advent of digital information, Librarian 2.0, modernisation and new work communication practices have brought changes to the field of LIS. Horava (2010) refers to the view of many researchers (e.g., Fewer, 2005; Litman 2001, Vaver 2006) that LIS professionals now find themselves in the midst of a ‘third revolution of cultural communication’. In Partridge et al. (2010), the researchers found that Australian librarians felt that Web 2.0, Library 2.0, and librarian 2.0 are “a watershed” for our profession.... They are seeing and experiencing a cultural change in the profession.” Such profound changes sweeping the LIS profession have also led to organisational change and with it demands on information professionals to have a broad range of professional skills and competencies (Corrall, 2010):

“the complexity of both the information landscape and the organisational arena demand both breadth and depth in skills and knowledge for jobs that require cross-functional and highly specialised competencies”

Rapidly changing technology and its effects on the profession are cited by many authors as driving the necessity for librarians to turn to and use CPD to upskill and stay abreast of changes (Broady-Preston, 2009; Broady-Preston & Cossham, 2011; Bury, 2009; Corcoran & McGuinness, 2014; Hornung, 2013; Partridge et al., 2010; Quatab et al., 2016). In her article ‘Professional education, development and training in a Web 2.0 environment’, Broady-Preston (2009) emphasises the need for LIS professionals to upskill through CPD and training to embrace the changes brought by the advent of Web 2.0, which she believes has led to transformation in libraries, something she refers to as ‘Library 2.0’ which is ‘The application of Web 2.0 technologies and philosophy to library collections and service provision has been categorized as “Library 2.0”, also referred to by Partridge et al. (2010). Another driver of change is the concept of the ‘blended professional’ wherein a LIS profession has also to take on other roles, an example of which is when the academic library department is merged with IT departments and hence “[A]cademic librarians today face both opportunities and challenges as a result of the convergence of information services, heavier teaching responsibilities, and hybrid roles” (Corcoran & McGuinness, 2014).

Given the increasing importance being placed on professional development within the profession, the Library Association of Ireland (hereafter “LAI”) has commissioned research into librarians’ CPD needs in the Republic of Ireland. The goals of this study are to explore the CPD needs of librarians in different sectors, the challenges of accessing CPD, the current CPD framework and the future role of the LAI in CPD. The study is important for professional bodies and the profession in general, those in management positions and those providing CPD offerings, to ascertain the views of librarians to CPD and also to compare the views and needs across different sectors regarding CPD. The study aims to understand the needs regarding CPD of professional librarians in Ireland. The objectives of the study include:

- To understand the general and specific CPD needs of working librarians
- To understand the resources used and preferred for CPD

- To understand the role of the Library Association of Ireland (LAI) in supporting CPD

The study was conducted in two phases:

(1) Semi-structured interviews were conducted with librarians in senior positions in the Academic and Public sectors in the Spring of 2017, to understand the needs and challenges of continuing professional development. A questionnaire was also circulated to school librarians to canvass their needs and views;

(2) The preliminary results of the research undertaken in phase one informed the design of the survey instrument. A pilot study was conducted to test the online survey system and to refine questions. The questionnaire was then sent to all members of the Library Association Ireland, as well as professional staff in academic, public, special, and school libraries in Ireland in September-November 2017.

This report documents the major findings of the questionnaire and recommendations for future planning and support for CPD for librarians and information professionals. Chapter 1 describes the demographics of participants in the study and their knowledge and use of PKSB (Professional Knowledge and Skills Base). Chapter 2 demonstrates the CPD topics in areas including teaching and learning, research support, public libraries, management and administration, and information technology, and preferred frameworks. Chapter 3 identifies major motivation for CPD and the support needed, and participants' feedback for LAI improvements. In chapter 4, recommendations are made for the future planning and implementation of CPD in Ireland.

## 1.0 Demographics

### 1.1 Types of Library

The questionnaire received a total of 195 responses over a three-month period. The typical time spent on the questionnaire was 11 minutes. The most common library type associated with a respondent was the academic library, making up almost half of the total number of responses. There were significantly fewer responses received from librarians of other library types.

Library Type	Academic	Public	Special	Government	Corporate	School	Health	Other
<b>No. of Respondents</b>	83	35	15	11	6	6	27	12
<b>Percentage (%)</b>	42.56%	17.95%	7.69%	5.64%	3.08%	3.08%	13.85%	6.15%

Table 1 Participants by Types of Library

### 1.2 LIS Qualification

192 participants submitted a response relating to when they acquired their first formal LIS qualification. The timeframe during which respondents received their formal qualifications in LIS was also diverse and balanced. The most common answer here was the '11-19 years ago' category.

Timeframe	Less than 5 years	6-10 years	11-19 years	Over 20 years
<b>No. of Respondents</b>	35	44	63	50
<b>Percentage (%)</b>	18.23%	22.92%	32.81%	26.04%

Table 2 Participants' LIS Qualification

### 1.3 LAI and CILIP membership

122 (62.89%) participants are personal members of the LAI, while 22 (11.28%) participants hold CILIP chartership.

### 1.4 PKSB (Professional Knowledge and Skills Base)

159 participants answered the question whether they knew what PKSB was and also whether they used it or not. 16 (10.06%) stated that they knew what it was and used it, 53 (33.33%) said they had heard of it, 21 (13.21%) stated that they have access but don't use it, and 69 (43.40%) stated that they had never heard of it.

Library Type	Know & Use It	Heard of It	Have Access	Never Heard
Academic	3	24	6	32
Public	3	9	5	12
Special Collections	2	1	2	4
Government	1	5	0	4
Corporate	0	3	1	2
School	1	1	0	3
Health	4	8	5	8
Other	2	2	2	4
<b>Total</b>	16	53	21	69

Table 3 Participants' Knowledge and Use of PKSB

## 2.0 CPD Needs

The CPD needs of the participant cohort were grouped under various headings as summarized in this section. Courses on reflective learning (Rudai23), technical writing, legal knowledge (provided by ARK Group) and discussions on recent technological developments were frequently mentioned.

Despite the low preference rank for online resources in various sections of the questionnaire, CPD activities online were commonly cited by some participants due to the ability to learn at one's own pace, reduced cost and more convenience. MOOC (massive open online courses) were frequently mentioned as sources for online CPD activities. Online courses were found to be particularly useful for more specific subjects such as special collections cataloguing and paleography courses.

### 2.1 Topics

Below is a summary of the topics which participants were asked if they wanted to see more of in each category in order of preference.

#### 2.1.1 Teaching and Learning

Topic	Number of Votes	Percentage of Participants
Content design using VLEs	58	47.54%
Presentation skills	55	45.08%
Information Literacy: pedagogies & learning styles	53	43.44%
Information Literacy: Techniques for assessing the effectiveness of your teachings	53	43.44%

Table 4 CPD Topics in Teaching and Learning

#### 2.1.2 Research Support

Topic	Number of Votes	Percentage of Participants
Open Access & digital repositories	72	65.45%
Bibliometrics	62	56.36%
Writing for publication	42	38.18%

Table 5 CPD Topics in Research Support

#### 2.1.3 Public Libraries

Topic	Number of Votes	Percentage of Participants
Customer satisfactory/service	45	49.45%
Information needs of the elderly	38	41.76%
Conducting the reference interview	33	36.26%
Reader's advisory services	30	32.97%

Table 6 CPD Topics in Public Libraries

Other suggestions under this heading were:

- Methods for gathering user experience and feedback
- Working with those with disabilities

## 2.1.4 Management and Administration

Topic	Number of Votes	Percentage of Participants
Assessing the effectiveness of library services	83	56.08%
Grant/Proposal writing and implementation	76	51.35%
Project management	76	51.35%
Strategic planning	76	51.35%
Financial planning	74	50.00%
Advocacy	62	41.89%
Building/spatial design & use	53	35.81%
Marketing	48	32.43%

Table 7 CPD Topics in Management and Administration

Other suggestions under this heading include:

- Print resources
- Self-management
- Ethics
- Management of staff
- Supervision of staff
- Leadership
- Research data management
- Web content management
- Working as a solo librarian as part of a larger organization

## 2.1.5 Information Technology

Topic	Number of Votes	Percentage of Participants
Assessing the success of your website (usability testing, analysis, etc.)	78	63.93%
Website publishing & design for libraries	71	58.20%
Photoshop (and other design-related programs)	71	58.20%
Writing for the web	52	42.62%
Web 2.0 (wikis, blogs, RSS, Delicious etc.)	39	31.97%

Table 8 CPD Topics in Information Technology

Other suggestions under this heading were:

- Database searching
- Digital repositories
- Literature searching

## 2.2 Framework & Preferences

Participants were asked to rank eight CPD activities in order of preference. In a follow up question, participants were asked to suggest different activities they preferred. These included one-to-one demonstrations on new technology with hard copy training manuals, reading journal articles, job swaps and job shadowing. Interestingly, many participants mentioned the use of online resources for CPD such as Tumblr blogs and discussion forums despite a relatively low preference for online resources in the previous question. The most preferred activity for CPD was a combination of presentation by experts and exchange of experience via group work or discussion. Online CPD in isolation wouldn't appear to fulfill the preferred methods of CPD. However, it does appear that online activities are used and are engaging library staff.



Perceptions of the current CPD framework:

- 70% of participants do not believe that there is an over-proliferation of information and courses relating to CPD;
- The participants were almost equally divided in opinion when asked if they encountered much difficulty when trying to find CPD activities relevant to them;
- 65% stated that they rarely felt overwhelmed by the sheer amount of content to search through;
- 61% believed to varying degrees that the current CPD framework was not sufficiently clear enough to its LAI members;
- Opinions of Web 2.0's active or inactive role in the delivery of CPD courses and activities were much more varied, with 47% having no opinion on the matter, and all other participants' responses clustered into the 'mildly agree' or 'mildly disagree' opinion.

These responses make clear that the current CPD framework requires significant improvement. There was a general consensus across all library types that:

- The LAI needs to organize more CPD activities
- Participation in the management of the LAI itself should be turned into a form of CPD
- The LAI needs to improve how it markets itself to librarians across all type of workplaces within the library and information industry

## 3.0 Motivation & Support

### 3.1 Motivation

The responses from the questionnaire show that there is a professional need for CPD within the library profession, with a total of 43.51% of participants responded that CPD should be mandatory. The motivation of CPD include: increasing their professional knowledge, updating existing qualifications, meeting with industry peers, and building up a network of contacts.

Library Type	Yes	No	Not sure
Academic	37.70%	40.98%	21.31%
Public	37.93%	27.59%	34.48%
Special	70.00%	20.00%	10.00%
Government	70.00%	10.00%	20.00%
Corporate	33.33%	0.00%	66.67%
School	20.00%	60.00%	20.00%
Health	54.17%	20.83%	25.00%
Other	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%

Table 9 Opinions about Mandatory CPD by Library Type

### 3.2 Support Needed

In relation to workplace support, 89% of participants stated that their workplaces support CPD activities. However, when Government and corporate librarians were excluded, this number decreased to 68.6%. Generally, participants felt that there were restrictions placed on them with respect to participating in CPD. The most common reasons cited were budget and lack of additional staff to cover leave. Other reasons cited were: limited number of places available, inability to properly justify to management, not enough leave for long-distance courses, and inability to take leave during school terms for school librarians.

### 3.3 Feedback for LAI Improvements by Participants

- Examine a framework that captures the learning that is “out there” rather than focusing on individual needs, growth and future development patterns of the profession
- Improve LAI’s official website, including the navigation, UI (user interface) design, and information about past, present, and future CPD events
- Implement an award system for CPD where one can view their own and others’ digital badges and CPD awards
- Increase marketing of CPD events; more information and promotion events at branch library levels
- Offer training courses in different locations and online
- Provide practical courses and mentoring for staff without professional qualifications

## 4.0 Recommendations

(1) A CPD framework designed to target specific needs in different types of library and information organisation, taking into account the locations of organisations and availability of resources and support for staff. Strategies should include developing online courses and resources, with event planning more sensitive to those who have restrictions on leave requirements and with little or no funding from employers.

(2) A register of accredited CPD courses developed to engage practitioners, particularly those who are not able to attend conferences and meetings due to limitations of budget and leave. The online platform should provide links to resources made available publicly (e.g., via SlideShare, figshare, etc.)

(3) Promotion of CPD events, workshops, and seminars via email, LAI website, Twitter, and other social media platforms.

(4) CPD requirements to be aligned with professional development such as promotion guidelines in member institutions, ALAI and FLAI.

(5) PKSB (Professional Knowledge and Skills Base) should be promoted broadly in the profession. The audience should include para-professionals who seek qualifications and upskilling in their positions. Training and demonstration of PKSB are needed, as well as support and recognition by management in organisations and institutions.

(6) CPD should be highlighted as a core activity in the profession that requires sufficient funding and staffing to provide up-to-date and professional services in all kinds of library and information organisation.

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