

# Still “Nobody’s Baby”?

## Seeking a Global Home and High Standards for Continuing Professional Development

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**A**t the 2008 World Library and Information Congress held by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) in Quebec, delegates from Asia and Africa asked for IFLA accreditation of library education and certification of individual professionals. This desire is a corollary of the need for demonstrating equivalency of qualifications for library positions across borders as individuals seek careers outside their own countries. More importantly, it is a sign of interest in raising worldwide standards for library and information science (LIS) education. Preservice education is gradually becoming more uniform, especially in the European Union. This is thanks in part to the Bologna Accord, which seeks to make higher education degrees comparable.<sup>1</sup> IFLA is very concerned about improving LIS education across the world, but it cannot afford to undertake accreditation like the American Library Association’s (ALA) program does for North America. It does, however, have a division on education and research, and has published guidelines for professional education.<sup>2</sup>

The propensity to issue guidelines, standards, and manifestos that codify policies, principles, member qualifications and behaviors, and so on, is one of the characteristics that mark an occupation as a “profession.” Library and information professional associations are prolific generators of such statements, laying claim to ideals of public service, ethics, and expertise. As the world becomes increasingly smaller, and librarianship more international, there is a greater push toward promulgating guidelines and declarations that apply globally. IFLA is at the forefront of this movement.

Given the global interest in educational standards, increased competencies, and leadership development, it is a good time to ask that continuing education also be held to higher, universal norms. The IFLA section Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning (CPDWL) has taken it upon itself to be the international home for issues related to continuing learning for library/information staff; has produced satellite conferences, workshops, and publications; and has promulgated the author’s “Continuing Professional Development: Principles and Best Practices” (see appendix). On a global scale, there is no other organization with a similar agenda of advocating for continuing professional development for library/

information center staff. The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which once played a significant role in library development, is now more of a cheerleader from the sidelines than a leader. While there is a UNESCO libraries portal that includes a training category, it is not up-to-date and does not seem to have a significant leadership role to play. As part of IFLA, which speaks for librarianship internationally, CPDWL at least can claim a platform from which to address the profession. Unfortunately, there is no paid staff or other resources to ensure an ongoing, strong, and stable program. The section is only one of more than forty IFLA units and depends on the commitment of a changing roster of volunteers, making acceptance as an influence and as the standard-bearer for continuing professional development for the library/information sector difficult to maintain.

### Continuing Education as Stepchild

Preservice education has always received greater attention than continuing education within the structures of professional associations. Guidelines promoting high-quality continuing professional development are valuable, but can they be a substitute for licensure or certification or even achieve widespread acceptance without the support of a sound international infrastructure? Some lessons can be learned from the fate of continuing education in the United States library/information professional arena. More than forty years ago, Samuel Rothstein’s *Library Journal* article entitled “Nobody’s Baby: A Brief Sermon on Continuing Professional Education” faulted ALA for not adopting the “baby” and failing to house a structured, coordinated continuing education program with its own office.<sup>3</sup> The article generated a great deal of discussion and some action but, as Elizabeth Stone wrote nearly twenty years later in 1983, “ALA did not accept the invitation then, nor has it yet.”<sup>4</sup> Another quarter century later, ALA has yet to follow Rothstein’s suggestion for a central office. On the other hand, many of its units now are active continuing

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education providers, and there is a round table devoted to staff development. In 1988, ALA's Council approved guidelines for continuing education.<sup>5</sup> In 2000, ALA brought together representatives of the major LIS associations for a Congress on Professional Education to focus on continuing education.<sup>6</sup> In 2003, the Allied Professional Association was established as a partner of ALA for the purpose of creating certification processes.

Thus it cannot be said that ALA has left the baby on the doorstep, but the baby is passed from hand to hand so much that it still feels like an orphan or stepchild, at best. Having a parent in charge to exercise some tough love could result in more effective follow-up of initiatives, promotion of guidelines and publications, and coordinated planning and evaluation. Because efforts are so dispersed, at times it does not appear that continuing education is a priority anywhere within ALA, despite all the activity. In IFLA, however, the baby *does* have the central home that it lacks in ALA, but not the financial and staff resources that the various ALA divisions can devote to continuing education according to their individual means and interests.

When ALA's document, *Guidelines for Quality in Continuing Education for Information, Library and Media Personnel*, was approved in 1988, the hope was that all the units producing conference programs and workshops would use the guidelines, as they were designed to apply broadly to professional associations as well as to employers and individuals. After their initial publication, however, the guidelines languished within ALA's decentralized structure and have not even been updated since 1988, nor digitized. Will the same fate befall "Continuing Professional Development: Principles and Best Practices?" The advantage that this document has is translations into French, German, Chinese, Spanish, Korean, Russian, Italian, Dutch, and Romanian—with more to come—and its ready availability on the section's website.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to promoting "Principles and Best Practices" in the literature and through electronic discussion lists, it might be feasible to ask professional associations that belong to IFLA—among them ALA—to endorse them and disseminate them to their memberships. Further, to prevent the neglect visited upon the 1988 ALA guidelines, CPDWL could plan regular revisions, republications, and surveys to ascertain the degree to which "Principles and Best Practices" is known and implemented. As already noted, however, a small section within IFLA is not the sturdy global home that can guarantee survival as volunteers come and go in office.

## **"Principles and Best Practices"— Background**

The idea of creating an IFLA pronouncement on continuing education and professional development came to the section during an open meeting at the World Library and

Information Congress in Berlin in 2003. Visitors were invited to make suggestions for activities that the section should undertake. They called on IFLA to exert influence on library administrators and association leaders to provide opportunities and support for librarians to continue to learn and to develop as professionals. Most of those who spoke, especially those from developing countries, made it clear that in many parts of the library world there was little recognition of the importance of staff development and minimal effort to provide good continuing learning programs. As a result of this input, the section set out to develop a document that IFLA could use to advocate for library workers' learning opportunities and to promote quality continuing education across the world. As far as was known, there was no such statement in existence that was appropriate for international use.

The CPDWL webpage explains that originally the project's purpose was

to produce evidence based guidelines for assessing the quality and effectiveness of CPD activities, programs and events. The guidelines will be able to be used by individuals and organisations providing CPD activities, as well as individuals and institutions undertaking or purchasing CPD activities, programs and events—either for themselves or their staff. The guidelines will address variations in terms of the needs of, professional practitioners in a range of countries and cultures.<sup>8</sup>

Topics to be included in the guidelines were

- content—the means for assessing the content of continuing professional (CPD) activities;
- delivery—assessment of different modes of delivery;
- format and instructional strategies—assessing the appropriateness and effectiveness of format and instructional strategies; and
- impact/outcomes assessment techniques—how success and quality is measured.<sup>9</sup>

The first step was to conduct an extensive literature review aimed at finding research on continuing education, workplace learning, and staff development that could provide evidence for making good choices in selecting content, delivery, format, assessment, etc. The goal of producing evidence-based guidelines was predicated on the understanding that evidence-based practice is a way to improve performance, and performance improvement is, of course, the goal of continuing education.

There turned out to be very little research on continuing professional development published in the literature, and even less that could meet the criteria used in evaluating research according to evidence-based procedures.<sup>10</sup> There was, however, a reasonable body of literature on first-person

reporting, “how we do it good,” and recommended practices. Some substantial studies of training and development were found in the literature of other professions, however, and the objective of relying solely on solid research in the library and information field was jettisoned. It was decided to analyze descriptions of successful continuing education activities, suggestions for implementing effective staff development programs, and general recommendations for training and development. Program characteristics that were repeatedly noted as important to quality were identified, and those that seemed to be the most indicative of and essential to quality were selected for formulating the basic principles. In essence, the guidelines became a summary of recommendations derived from identification of best practices.<sup>11</sup>

While the list of ten basic principles and best practices was founded more on judgment than the kind of measurement needed for benchmarking, each of the ten was backed by several references to the literature (a lengthy paper on this background is in preparation). Feedback on the draft of the quality document was solicited from the members of the section and subscribers to the section’s electronic discussion list. Comments were also sought from attendees at conference programs and meetings. The version that is included in the appendix here can therefore be said to be adequately vetted. It is also available at [www.ifla.org/VII/s43/pub/cpdwl-qual-guide.pdf](http://www.ifla.org/VII/s43/pub/cpdwl-qual-guide.pdf).

## Global Applicability

Because the idea was to have the principles apply at all levels of staff and across different types of libraries and information organizations globally, the guidelines are somewhat general. The hope is that they can be adapted to a range of situations and cultural contexts. Some international and cross-disciplinary resources were included in the literature review, although it would have been good to have more perspectives from a wider range of countries. Nevertheless, IFLA conference programs and meetings, international electronic discussion lists, and conversations with librarians from across the world confirm that continuing education issues and concerns are very similar regardless of geography and even stage of library development.

In the document, no special attention is paid to educational technology and the latest delivery methods. Formats and technology are in constant flux so that a focus on specific types would risk making the guidelines quickly out-of-date. The same argument applies to the omission of particular kinds of educational offerings. Virtual learning environments, games, interactive webinars, and other kinds of innovations that are being used in continuing education today hardly existed a few years ago and are still not readily available in parts of the world where Internet access is limited and expensive. Still, more and more LIS education programs are offering both basic and post-master’s courses entirely through the Internet

without residential requirements. Vendors and an increasing number of international professional associations, such as the Special Libraries Association, The Association for Information Management, and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, also regularly offer online seminars. Training through podcasts and social networking software is catching on, and new technologies will create further opportunities for continuing learning applications as they emerge.

Considering these caveats, the ten principles are quite basic and generic. But it is precisely because these principles are so fundamental that they provide a framework for changing practices and new ways of learning, will resist obsolescence, and will be adaptable to different settings in the global library/information sector.

## Future Directions

As stated above, it is not enough to have the guidelines translated and published on the IFLA website. The question is how to familiarize the profession worldwide with their existence, promote implementation, and keep continuing education from becoming “nobody’s baby” internationally. One of the next steps is to have IFLA put its imprimatur on the guidelines and urge its member associations, including ALA, to endorse them. Publication in the *IFLA Journal* and other publications such as this one will draw more attention than links on CPDWL’s webpage. In addition, there should be links to the guidelines from portals such as WebJunction ([www.webjunction.org](http://www.webjunction.org)) and the UNESCO Libraries Portal ([www.unesco.org/cgi-bin/webworld/portal\\_bib2/cgi/page.cgi?d=1](http://www.unesco.org/cgi-bin/webworld/portal_bib2/cgi/page.cgi?d=1)).

Every few years, the section should make an effort to find out who is making what kind of use of the guidelines. An excellent result would be the documentation of best practices and the development of regular benchmarking. Every ten years the guidelines should be thoroughly reviewed and updated and then be disseminated and promoted anew. Admittedly, carrying out these proposals is a daunting task for a small IFLA section that has no secretariat. If sights are not set high, however, and if there is neither clear vision nor a reasonable plan for working toward the goal, the desired effect will not be achieved. It might be possible to create a consortium of organizations and individuals with a special commitment to continuing professional development who could shoulder the ongoing tasks by distributing the work to its members. Some professional organizations have staff devoted to continuing education, and others have committees or roundtables. This also is true of some of the largest libraries, as for example Bibliothèque Nationale de France, which has a staff development department. Ideally, CPDWL can continue to be the home base for human resources professionals, trainers, and others experienced in this field who wish to work toward achieving high standards.

The point is to have the ten principles kept alive and in circulation, accepted as a working guide by employers, professional associations, and individual practitioners. Associations can play an important role not only as providers of conferences, workshops, and other learning opportunities, but they also can model best practices by following the guidelines' recommendations in their programming. Employers are the essential force behind a strong staff development program because they are responsible for making continuing learning a priority and providing the necessary resources. But ultimately it is every individual who works in a library or other information organization who has to take charge of his or her own continuing learning and growth in fulfillment of professional ethics and social responsibility. Not everyone needs regular reminders of that responsibility, but many would benefit from some prompting. Awareness of "Continuing Professional Development: Principles and Best Practices" can serve as that reminder and can also inform individuals about what is good policy for their employing institution to adopt. The responsibility of CPDWL is to play the role of advocate as best as it can, making sure that continuing education and professional development have a permanent, international home in IFLA.

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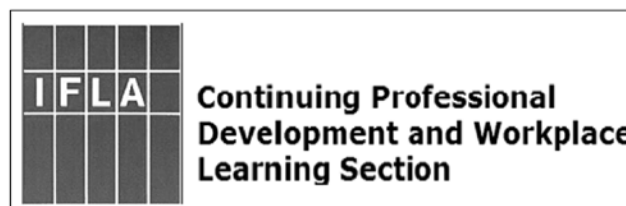
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3. Samuel Rothstein, "Nobody's Baby: A Brief Sermon on Continuing Professional Education," *Library Journal* 90, no. 10 (May 15, 1965): 2226-27.
4. Elizabeth W. Stone, "Some Historical Antecedents of Continuing Library Education," in *Continuing Education for the Library Information Profession* (Hamden, Conn.: Library Professional Publications, Shoe String, 1985): 23.
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8. IFLA, "Projects," Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning. Accessed September 14, 2008, [www.ifla.org/VII/s43/indem.htm](http://www.ifla.org/VII/s43/indem.htm) (accessed Mar. 13, 2009).
9. Ibid.
10. University of Newcastle, Australia, "Evidence Based Library Practice—[www.eblip.net.au](http://www.eblip.net.au)," [www.newcastle.edu.au/service/library/gosford/ebl](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/library/gosford/ebl) (accessed Mar. 13, 2009).
11. For an introduction to the concept of best practice and the associated technique of benchmarking, see Keith Russell et al., "Organizational Development, Best Practices, and Employee Development," *Library Administration & Management* 17, no. 4 (Fall 2003): 189-95, on the implementation of an organizational development program in an academic library.

## Appendix. Continuing Professional Development: Principles and Best Practices

### Introduction

The quality of service provided to the public by library and information science institutions depends on the expertise of their staff. Constant flux in the needs of societies, changing technologies, and growth in professional knowledge demand that information workers must expand their understanding and update their skills on an ongoing basis. As stated in the IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 1994 <[www.ifla.org/VII/s8/unesco/eng.htm](http://www.ifla.org/VII/s8/unesco/eng.htm)>:

The librarian is an active intermediary between users and resources. Professional and continuing education of the librarian is indispensable to ensure adequate services.



Because adequate service depends on staff who are well prepared and continuously learning, the quality of ongoing educational opportunities is of vital concern. This document sets forth principles that should assure high quality continuing professional development for library staff. It has been developed on behalf of IFLA's Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning Section (CPDWL), with input from its members and small project funding from IFLA.

## The basic principles

The responsibility for continuing education and professional development is shared by individuals, their employing institutions, professional associations, and library/information science education programs. Human resources and professional ethics statements should recognize the obligation to ensure that library/information service staff have access to and take advantage of continuous learning opportunities.

Best practice requires that there be:

1. Regular learning needs assessment
2. Broad range of learning opportunities, both formal and informal; formal offerings in a choice of formats, designed to meet identified needs, in modules structured to cover topics from introductory through advanced.
3. Organizational commitment and leadership from staff development and continuing education administrators with expertise in adult continuing education
4. Widely disseminated information about continuing education and resources, accurately described
5. CE activities design that includes learning objectives aligned with identified needs; follows principles of instructional design and learning theory; selects course instructors on the basis of both subject knowledge and teaching ability; attends to transfer of training and feedback
6. Consistent documentation of individuals' participation in learning and recognition of continuing learning in hiring and promotion decisions
7. A minimum of 0.5 to 1.0 % of institutional budget earmarked for staff development, as stated in *The public library service: IFLA/UNESCO guidelines for development* [www.ifla.org/VII/s8/proj/publ97.pdf](http://www.ifla.org/VII/s8/proj/publ97.pdf)
8. About 10 % of work hours provided for attendance at workshops, conferences, in-service training, and other educational activities, and for informal learning projects
9. Evaluation of continuing education and staff development offerings and programs
10. Research that assesses the state of CPD and examines the efficacy and outcomes of continuing education and staff development programs

Below are the summary statements following the literature review and discussions in the full paper of each of the principles

1. Best practice . . . calls for regular, performance-related learning needs assessment that involves individual employees and management, in concert with organizational goals and objectives. Professional development also has to be enabled for both personal and profession-wide growth and improvement, if the field is to achieve its potential for service to society. Therefore, individuals, institutions, and professional

associations all bear responsibility for periodic assessment of learning needs.

2. Best practice requires that those responsible for providing CE programs or in-service training and development create and/or make available a wide range of activities and products designed to meet identified learning needs. Formats and levels of sophistication must be varied enough to suit various learning styles and beginner to advanced needs. Cultural and linguistic differences and time-place constraints must be taken into account. Learning resources—such as professional collections, mentoring, and coaching—should be available in the workplace, and individuals should have access to guidance for planning and implementing personal professional development agendas.
3. Best practice requires administrative commitment; formal policies that spell out what is expected of both staff and the organization in regard to CPDWL; staff development coordinators who have the support of the administration and the expertise to plan and implement programs
4. Best practice requires that there be guides to learning portals, CE clearinghouses, electronic discussion lists, and other sources of information about courses, educational products, conferences, and other learning opportunities that can be easily and widely disseminated, using a variety of channels. Learners and appropriate resources should be able to connect through an international network of clearinghouse and advisory functions. Educational activities must be accurately described in terms of pre-requisite knowledge required; access to information and communication technology, if applicable; expected outcomes; costs; etc.
5. Best practice requires that formal CE offerings be presented by experts in the topic who are also good instructors. Systems of CPD should provide train-the-trainer opportunities. Employers should strive to create a supportive environment in which staff are encouraged to apply what they have learned.
6. Best practice assures consumers of formal CE that their participation will be verified and recorded (using the IACET's Continuing Education Units, for example). Individuals should be encouraged to create portfolios to document their pursuit of learning, both formal and informal. Employers should take employees' efforts to develop skills and knowledge into account when making personnel decisions.
7. Best practice requires that an adequate percentage of an institution's personnel budget be allocated to staff development. How "adequate" is defined will vary depending on the extent of needs and circumstances in a given situation. Two percent of the personnel budget seems a reasonable goal in cases where staff development expenditure has not been consistently itemized.

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porary and historical research, particularly with respect to youth services, is a largely overlooked resource for library scholarship. For another good example of using institutional records for youth services scholarship, see Melanie Kimball, "From Refuge to Risk: Public Libraries and Children in World War I," *Library Trends* 55, no. 3 (Winter 2007): 454-563.

10. Although there is no scholarly treatment of gendered YA volunteer experience in libraries, scholarship is beginning to examine the gendered nature of YA library experience in general, see Denise E. Agosto, Kimberly L. Paone, and Gretchen S. Ipock, "The Female-Friendly Public Library: Gender Differences in Adolescents' Uses and Perceptions of U.S. Public Libraries," *Library Trends* 56, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 387-401. On the other hand, the lack of volunteer opportunities accessible to youth from low-income backgrounds does suggest that libraries, located in cities all over the country, could play a powerful role in developing their offerings. For recent research on the lack of volunteer opportunities accessible to low-income youth, see Kimberly Spring, Nathan Dietz, and Robert T. Grimm, *Leveling the Path to Participation: Volunteering and Civic Engagement among Youth from Disadvantaged Circumstances* (March 2007), [www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07\\_0406\\_disad\\_youth.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07_0406_disad_youth.pdf) (accessed Jan. 29, 2009). For the disproportionate effects and prosocial outcomes of volunteering on youth from poor environments, see Daniel T. Lichter, Michael J. Shanahan, and Erica L. Gardner, "Helping Others? The Effects of Childhood Poverty and Family Instability on Prosocial Behavior," *Youth and Society* 34, no. 1 (Sept. 2002): 89-119.
11. The Oakland Public Library does recognize and thank its YA volunteers, but that expression did not appear in the branch manager monthly report narratives.
12. Kay Bishop and Pat Bauer, "Attracting Young Adults to Public Libraries," *Journal of Youth Services* 15, no. 2 (Winter 2002): 36-44.
13. Eliza T. Dresang, Melissa Gross, and Leslie E. Holt, *Dynamic Youth Services through Outcome-Based Planning and Evaluation* (Chicago: ALA, 2006).
14. Even without the benefit of scholarly research, the professional literature has identified YA volunteer tasks for decades. For examples of this literature, see Amy J. Alessio and Kimberly A. Patton, *A Year of Programs for Teens* (Chicago: ALA, 2007); Susan Asis, "Types of Youth Participation Programs in Public Libraries," *Young Adult Library Services* 4, no. 1 (Summer 2006): 26-30. Kellie M. Gillespie, *Teen Volunteer Services in Libraries* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow, 2004); Patrick Jones, Michele Gorman, and Tricia Suellentrop, *Connecting Young Adults and Libraries: A How-to-Do-It Manual for Librarians*, 3rd ed. (New York: Neal-Schuman, 2004); RoseMary Honnold, *101+ Teen Programs That Work* (New York: Neal-Schuman, 2003); Carla C. Lehn, "Volunteer Involvement in California Libraries: 'Best Practices'" (Sacramento: California State Library, 1999); Leila J. Sprince, "For Young Adults Only: From Teen Volunteering to Young Adult Library Advisory Boards: North Regional/Broward Community College Library," in *VOYA Reader Two*, ed. Mary K. Chelton and Dorothy M. Broderick, 241-250 (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow, 1998); Audrey J. Gorman, ed., *YA Program Ideas* (Trenton: New Jersey State Library, 1992); Wisconsin Library Association, *Young Adult Program Idea Booklet* (Madison: Wisconsin YA Task Force, 1991); Young Adult Program Guide Committee, *The Second Young Adult Program Guidebook* (New York: New York Library Association, 1987).
15. Most all practitioner and scholarly literature defines volunteer efforts as the labor donated to assist the library and staff. The present model, applied to YAs, inverts this formulation. For the most recent scholarly treatment of library volunteer concepts, see Erica A. Nicol and Corey M. Johnson, "Volunteers in Libraries: Program Structure, Evaluation, and Theoretical Analysis," *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (2008): 154-63.
16. For an excellent discussion of essential components of successful after-school programs, see The After-School Corporation and Urban Alliance, *Strategies for Success: A Plan to Align Out-of-School Time Initiatives with High School Reform* (Oct. 2008), [www.tascorp.org/content/document/detail/2231](http://www.tascorp.org/content/document/detail/2231) (accessed Jan. 29, 2009).
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18. Asian branch manager's report, August 2006.
19. Heidi Julien, "Adolescent Career Decision Making and Potential Role of the Public Library," *Public Libraries* 36, no. 6 (Nov./Dec. 1998): 376-71.
20. William Damon, *The Path to Purpose: Helping Our Children Find Their Calling in Life* (New York: Free Press, 2008).

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8. Best practice requires that employers give staff paid time off to attend conferences and workshops relevant to their jobs, and also allow for part of their work time to be spent on learning. Ten percent of working hours may need to be allocated as a minimum.
9. Best practice requires that CE providers gather feedback from their learners not only at the conclusion of CE events, but also conduct at least periodic follow-up evaluations to determine what effect the CE has had on practice. The results of evaluation should be used to improve future CE offerings and should also be factored into needs assessments. CPD programs within institutions and organizations also require periodic evaluation of their administration and effectiveness.
10. Best practice requires that there be regular benchmarking studies of best practices in staff development, matched with quality assessment of the participating institutions. Such studies should advance understanding of and implementation of effective CPD and would justify resources expended on it. The conduct of such studies must have cooperation and support from a cross-section of international institutions, and the results have to be broadly shared.