INTRODUCTION

What does it take to be a librarian? This question has been the subject of a continuing discourse within librarianship since the first school of library science was founded at the turn of the last century. Library educators, employers and, of course, students have all contributed to a dialog surrounding what we have come to call “core competencies.” The American Library Association, as chief advocate for libraries and librarians, is actively involved in helping the library and information professions develop these concepts.

Throughout a long discourse of theory and practice, a range of skills and attributes has emerged that underpins the core of librarianship. The following list of competencies, expressed in terms unrelated to specific points in time, reflects the profession now and can continue to define it for the foreseeable future. It describes what can be expected of a newly graduated student from an accredited program of library and information studies. It is not intended to represent the “state of the art” in library and information studies or to categorize what a seasoned librarian knows about the field. The statements reflect the knowledge and skills of a beginning generalist librarian, not a specialist trained in a particular area. Taken as a whole, this list suggests the development that is basic to a librarian or information professional in contemporary society.

American Library Association
COMPETENCY STATEMENTS

Professional Ethics
Knows the ethics, values and foundational principles of the library and information professions.

Understands the role of library and information professionals in the promotion of democratic principles, intellectual freedom, and diversity of thought.

Resource Building
Knows the basic concepts, terminology, literature and issues related to the creation, evaluation, and selection of specific items or collections of information.

Has a conceptual grasp of the prevailing methods for the acquisition of specific items or collections of information resources.

Has knowledge of the basic principles of storing, preserving and conserving information.

**Knowledge Organization**
Can apply the basic principles involved in the organization and representation of knowledge and information structures.

Understands the system of standards and methods used to control and create information structures.

**Technological Knowledge**
Demonstrates a comprehension of current information and communication technologies, and other related technologies, as they affect the resources and uses of libraries and other types of information providing entities.

Has basic knowledge of the concepts and processes related to the assessment and evaluation of the specifications, economic impact and efficacy of technology-based products and services.

Understands and can apply the principles of techniques used to continuously track and analyze emerging technologies to recognize relevant innovations.

Demonstrates proficiency in the use of standard information and communication technology and tools consistent with prevailing service norms and professional applications.

**Knowledge Dissemination: Service**
Knows and demonstrates service concepts, principles and techniques that facilitate information access, relevance, and accuracy for individuals or groups of users.

Can retrieve, evaluate and synthesize information from diverse sources for use by individuals or groups.

Can interact with individuals or groups of users to provide consultation, mediation or guidance in their use of information resources.

Can recognize and respond to diversity in user needs and preferences for resources and services.
Can relate assessments of emerging or chronic situations, circumstances or conditions to the design and implementation of appropriate service and resource responses.
Appendix A: Draft Core Competencies, July 2005

Knowledge Accumulation: Education and Lifelong Learning
Can interact with individuals or groups of users to provide consultation, mediation or guidance in their use of information resources.

Knows basic learning theories, instructional methods, and achievement measures, and can apply them to learning situations within libraries and other information providing entities.

Understands the principles related to the teaching and learning of information seeking, evaluating and using concepts, processes and skills.

Appreciates the importance of continuing education and lifelong learning as principles of good service, and as personal guidelines for continuous professional development.

Knowledge Inquiry: Research
Understands the nature of research, research methods and research findings within the library and information fields and has an awareness of current literature in these and related areas.

Is familiar with the fundamentals of research, survey and data collection designs of current or potential value to library and information settings.

Institution Management
Knows the fundamental principles of planning, management and the evaluation of libraries or other information providing entities.

Is aware of the currently prevailing types of library and information professions, and information providing settings.

Displays a knowledge of how change occurs, and how institutional and individual change strategies and options are developed.

Demonstrates oral and written communication skills necessary for group work, collaborations, and professional level presentations.

Has a grasp of concepts behind, and methods for, developing partnerships, collaborations, networks and other structures within a community of stakeholders.

Demonstrates the ability to serve a diversity of stakeholders.

Understands the basic principles related to reaching specific audiences and promoting concepts or services.
BACKGROUND

The 1999 (1st) Congress on Professional Education made two recommendations related to the development of a statement of core competencies:

1.2 Identify the core competencies for the profession – a clear statement of competencies should be available to educators, practitioners and the public; while there has been concern expressed about lack of attention to particular core competencies, there is a statement of core competencies and of their importance for accreditation in the current [1992] Standards for Accreditation; these need to be affirmed and profiled, or reconsidered and revised; the resulting statement should be available separately as well; it may be necessary to specify the disciplinary base (e.g. organization of information and knowledge) and its application (e.g. classification, cataloguing).

1.3 Describe the competencies of the generalist of the future – it sometimes appears that each specialist association/division/group has defined the essential professional and personal competencies required to be employed, and effective, in their environment; while these statements are useful both for educators for planning educational programs and professionals for planning continuing education, there needs to be a foundation set for the generalist librarian.

In September 1999, ALA President Sarah Long appointed a Task Force charged to develop a draft statement for review by interested persons in the field. The Core Competencies Task Force developed a draft statement and held hearings at the 2000 and 2001 ALA Midwinter Meetings.

Based on feedback, a revised statement was presented to the ALA Executive Board at the 2002 Midwinter Meeting. The Board’s discussion at the 2002 Midwinter Meeting was not conclusive and discussion continued at the 2002 Annual Conference in Atlanta.

At the 2002 Annual Conference, the ALA Executive Board referred the draft statement of core competencies to the ALA Committee on Accreditation and the ALA Committee on Education, with a request that they “facilitate the discussion” of the January 2002 draft. Robert Wedgeworth, Chair, COA, and Lorna Peterson, Chair, COE, reported to the Board at the 2004 Midwinter Meeting. At that time, COA and COE outlined a process for wider dissemination and discussion. That process involved providing context, editing the draft statement, developing a discussion guide and plan, and gathering and compiling feedback.

In 2004-2005, a consultant was asked by ALA Management to (a) review the draft statement and other relevant competency statements (see www.ala.org/ala/accreditation/edpol/educationalpolicy.htm), (b) do a textual analysis of the draft and other competency statements, (c) prepare an edited draft statement of core competencies for the entry-level, generalist librarian of the [foreseeable] future, (d) prepare a brief statement of context, and (e) prepare a set of discussion questions.
This approach mirrors the ultimately successful work with the statement of core values: (1) begin with a textual analysis of relevant policies and other related documents; (2) build a list of recurring terms and concepts; (3) based on that, build a “streamlined” statement of competencies. Experience with the statement of core values seemed to indicate that avoiding “explanatory” text was preferable. Less language ultimately worked for effectively than more.

In describing audience and context, the following points were made:

- Based on discussion at the [1st] Congress, as well as the wording of the recommendations, the statement of core competencies should be focused on competencies expected of new graduates from ALA-accredited programs in LIS – not seasoned or “master” practitioners.
- Also based on that discussion, the competencies should be those of a “generalist,” not specialist, practitioner.
- The statement of core competencies should provide guidance in development of curriculum as well as help shape the expectations of both graduates and employers.
- The statement of core competencies should reflect the foreseeable future environment.