

Writing for the profession: The experience of new professionals

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Purpose – The purpose of this article is to explore barriers and motivators for new professionals who write and present for the professional literature

Design/Methodology/Approach - Authors from the ALIA New Librarians' Symposium held in December 2006 in Sydney, Australia were surveyed about their experiences of writing and presenting early in their career. The author of this paper was the symposium's programme coordinator.

Findings - The majority of authors were working in Australia, and few were required to write or present as part of their work role. In the absence of this requirement, factors that motivate new professionals to write can be difficult to define. Barriers to writing include time, skills, and responsibilities outside work.

Originality/Value – The paper discusses a publishing opportunity aimed at new professionals and other strategies to reduce barriers to writing and presenting.

Keywords – New professionals, research, writing, mentoring, publishing

Paper type – Research paper

1. Introduction

Practitioners have many reasons to write, including reporting work projects, developing a portfolio or to explore a topic of interest. They can write to improve their understanding of the literature, share their practice, and improve decision-making in practice (Haddow and Klobas, 2004). Research also helps to improve and strengthen library services (Smith and Harvey, 2006). The need for practitioners to connect with, and contribute to, research is widely acknowledged by researchers globally in librarianship and information science (LIS) and other disciplines (Dyer and Stern, 1990, Haddow and Klobas, 2004, Joint, 2005, Nicholson, 2006). However there are many barriers to writing. Haddow and Klobas (2004) identified 11 gaps in the dissemination of research to practitioners which are explored further in this paper. Other professions such as social work have also studied author motivation to understand what enables or prevents practitioners from writing (Staudt *et al.*, 2003). There have been few studies of the impact of conferences in LIS and only a small number of those have studied conference authorship (Fennewald, 2007).

This paper explores conference authorship by new professionals who presented at the ALIA New Librarians' Symposium 2006 held in Sydney, Australia. A questionnaire completed by

the authors considers four of the dissemination gaps identified by Haddow and Klobas (2004); Motivation, Education, Activity, and Temporal.

2. The New Librarians' Symposium

The ALIA New Librarians' Symposium (NLS) is a biennial two-day conference aimed at new library and information professionals with up to 10 years of experience. The conference is supported by the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA). It was envisaged as a way to, "encourage the participation of new graduates; to start networking processes among new graduates and experienced industry professionals; and an opportunity to exchange ideas and knowledge." (Blanchard, 2002). NLS was established in 2002. More than 280 delegates attended the third New Librarians' Symposium in 2006.

NLS is a professional development opportunity for early-career practitioners who wish to pursue writing, presenting and research. First-timers were encouraged in the call for abstracts, and the programme itself was focused on practical topics and new graduate issues to attract new writers (NLS2006, 2006). The call for abstracts was publicised widely on a variety of email lists, websites and blogs, but particularly where new graduates were most likely to read it. These include the ALIA New Graduates email list (ALIAnewgrad), ALA New Members Round Table List (NMRT-L), and the Library Writers' Blog (<http://librarywriting.blogspot.com/>).

The papers contributed by practitioners were called peer papers, to emphasise the practitioner-led, peer-to-peer nature of the programme. The peer papers were accepted subject to selection and comments from at least two reviewers. The process was modelled on those used by other Australian LIS conferences, and a process originally designed for Computer Science conferences, *Identify the Champion* (Nierstrasz, 2000). *Identify the Champion* focuses on identifying the strongest papers to select, as opposed to identifying papers to reject (Nierstrasz, 2000). The selection of this method again emphasised a focus on a supportive experience for authors.

This is not, however, to confuse peer papers with peer-reviewed papers. Formal peer review was offered on an optional basis, following guidelines established by the Department of Education Science and Training (DEST). Peer review was offered to encourage practitioners to aim for a more scholarly approach to their writing. Peer review for NLS was intended support new writers by offering guidance and suggesting where authors could improve their work, rather than focusing overtly on omissions or problems.

Support materials were made available to guide authors through the process of writing their abstract, paper and presentation. A formal mentoring programme was not established, but authors were encouraged to contact the programme coordinator about any aspect of their paper or presentation. Following the symposium, papers and presentation materials (including Microsoft PowerPoint files and handouts) were made available online via ALIA's Open Access ePrints repository. Selected sessions were recorded and the audio was podcast via the NLS2006 website.

The majority of papers presented at NLS2006 were reports on professional practice. Most of these reported on the author's direct experience with a project, technology or work role. A small number of papers were more research-based in nature, and these tended to be authored by those that selected the peer review option. These topics were often more outward looking,

and covered topics such as leadership, evidence-based library and information practice, and access to information.

NLS2006 provided the opportunity for first-timers to participate in all stages of the writing and publishing process. Practitioners were able to take part in the peer review process as reviewers. The call for reviewers was distributed to several of ALIA's email lists and invited applications from new professionals and experienced reviewers alike. 74 applications to review papers were received. Of these, only 19 applicants had previously reviewed papers for a conference or journal. Applicants ranged from new professionals to library directors, from all library sectors. Each paper was assigned three reviewers, of which at least one was a first-time reviewer. Reviewers were provided with extensive guidelines to assist in completing reviews.

3. Methodology and Questionnaire

Following NLS2006, a questionnaire was sent to all authors of the peer papers in January 2007. Invited and keynote speakers, panellists and debaters were not included in this study. Other surveys of conference authorship have also followed this practice (Fennewald, 2007). The questionnaire was in part based on a similar study of social work practitioners (Staudt *et al.*, 2003). The questionnaire was made available online through SurveyMonkey.com and sent to 36 recipients. 31 responses were received for a response rate of 86.1%.

As the sample size is small and limited to the authors of one event, the results can not be generalised, however they may be of interest to others who are planning events or publishing opportunities for new professionals.

A sample of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

4. Author Affiliation and Programme Structure

Of the 36 authors and co-authors of 25 peer papers at NLS2006 (some papers had more than one author), nearly half, 44.4%, worked in an academic library.

Table 1. Author affiliation by sector

| Type of Library | Total | % of Total |
|-----------------|-----------|-------------|
| Academic | 16 | 44.4% |
| Public | 8 | 22.2% |
| Government | 5 | 13.9% |
| National | 4 | 11.1% |
| Other | 2 | 5.6% |
| Special | 1 | 2.8% |
| Total | 36 | 100% |

NLS2, held in 2004, recognised the interest of new professionals in writing and added space in their programme for 6 peer papers (NLS1 did not invite contributed papers). They received 33 abstracts for the 6 peer paper sessions (New Librarians' Symposium 2 Conference Organising Committee, 2005). The NLS2006 committee anticipated that demand would continue to increase, and structured the programme to provide space for 25 peer paper sessions. The committee received 59 abstracts in response to the call for papers for 25 sessions, representing a 42% acceptance rate.

The programme coordinator aimed to increase the long-term sustainability of the symposium by extending the call for abstracts internationally to attract a wider range of authors. While the number of potential authors is high, the number of delegates at both NLS2 and NLS2006 was around 280, the majority from Australia and a small number from New Zealand. Promoting the opportunity to participate overseas widens awareness and brings a broader perspective to the event. Increasing internationalisation was successful, with four papers being presented by international speakers. International authors came from the United States (3), New Zealand (1) and Qatar (1).

51.6% of respondents indicated that NLS2006 was their first experience writing and presenting outside their workplace. NLS2006 encourages, but is not exclusive to, first-time authors and presenters. Those who indicated that they had prior experience tended to have extensive experience both in writing for journals and presenting at conferences, and the topics of their papers at NLS2006 reflected this.

67.7% of respondents to the questionnaire self-identify as new graduates (an alternate term to new professional used widely in Australia). The definition of “new graduate” in the Australian LIS context varies widely between individuals and associations. In Australia, the term includes librarians, information professionals, and library technicians. There are a variety of paths to qualification, experiences and age amongst these groups. Respondents elaborated on their self-identification, most considering themselves to be new graduates only if they have graduated from a LIS qualification in the last 5 years or have fewer than 5 years industry experience. Affiliation with the term, and the population, varied amongst respondents.

“As the term seems to be defined (less than five years since graduation) I fit. However, I don't identify myself strongly as a new graduate. It is more an acknowledgment than an identity.”

Another mentioned confidence in their chosen profession as a factor –

“I've been working in the industry for 7 years, as a qualified librarians for 5 so don't feel that I am as "new" and unsure as I was 2 years ago.”

Others expressed that their status had a role in whether they considered themselves new to the profession –

“Although I have been in libraries for a long time, I am still starting out on my career path”

The lack of clarity around the meaning of new graduate or new professional makes identifying needs and targeting services and events to this population complex.

Table 2. How did you hear about the NLS2006 call for abstracts/papers?

| | Count | Percent % |
|------------------------|-------|-----------|
| ALIANewgrad email list | 16 | 51.6 |
| NMRT-L email list* | 2 | 6.4 |
| NDPG-L email list+ | 0 | 0 |
| Other email list | 7 | 22.5 |
| NLS2006 website | 6 | 16.3 |
| NLS2006 postcard | 3 | 9.7 |
| Colleague | 14 | 45.1 |
| Other | 5 | 16.3 |

n=31

Note: more than one response permitted

* American Library Association New Members Round Table email list

+ IFLA New Professionals Discussion Group email list

The importance of promoting the call for abstracts in outlets that new graduates read is highlighted by the result that 51% of authors heard about the call on the ALIA New Graduates email list (ALIANewgrad). The ALIANewgrad list is a free email list with more than 900 subscribers, available to members and non-members of the Australian Library and Information Association. Word of mouth is also important, with 45% of respondents reporting that they heard about the call for abstracts from a colleague.

71% of respondents indicated that NLS2006 was the only publishing opportunity they considered for their paper, suggesting that the event itself may be a stimulus for new topics and authors. Journals were also considered by several of the remaining 29% respondents, indicating that authors were flexible about how they published and presented the results of their work.

Table 3. Is writing for publication a job requirement in your current position?

| | Count | Percent % |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-----------|
| Yes, it is in my position description | 2 | 6.4 |
| No, but is strongly encouraged | 10 | 32.2 |
| No | 17 | 54.8 |
| Other | 2 | 6.4 |

n=31

For the majority of respondents, writing is additional work, even if encouraged by their employers. As many of the authors worked in an academic library, this also reflects the lack of a tenure system in Australia. Few librarians are required to publish for advancement.

Respondents commented about their motivation for presenting at NLS2006. This included a desire to network with peers, professional development, furthering an interest in public speaking, and interest in the suggested topics. Several commented that presenting to peers is a challenge, but one that provides the opportunity for growth –

“I wanted to push myself to do something that I had admired other people for doing. I think it is a brave move to present a paper at a conference.”

Another noted –

“Personally I felt that it would be a challenge to present a paper at a conference, and I wanted to stretch my wings a little.”

Additionally, several respondents commented that they perceived that the audience would be enthusiastic and encouraging of new speakers -

“Connect with enthusiastic and early career Australian staff.”

“...less pressure to present your first paper at NLS than somewhere else”

“... I also felt that presenting to new graduates wouldn't be as daunting as presenting to people who had been in the field much longer.”

Encouragement by supervisors and managers was cited by several respondents as their primary motivation –

“...our professional development budget has been diminished but my managers and council encourage those who want to give presentations as it represents the library service.”

“I was actually encouraged by my Division Head to submit an abstract.”

As 45% of respondents heard about the call from papers from a colleague, it is suggested that the encouragement and support of work colleagues and peers has an impact on motivation to submit an abstract and begin the writing process. That writing is largely a voluntary activity means that it is imperative to understand the motivations, barriers and enablers to new graduates beginning, and continuing, to write for the profession.

Table 4. What outcomes do you expect from your experience presenting at NLS2006?

| | Count | Percent % |
|---|-------|-----------|
| Invitation to speak at another event | 7 | 22.6 |
| Addition to my portfolio | 28 | 90.3 |
| New work contacts | 18 | 58 |
| Recognition in my workplace | 21 | 67.7 |
| Contribution to the professional literature | 15 | 48.4 |
| Other | 6 | 19.3 |

n=31

Note: more than one response permitted

For most respondents, the outcomes of writing and presenting their paper are personal and not necessarily immediate, such as developing a professional portfolio and gaining recognition for their efforts in the workplace.

48.4% of respondents also indicated that they wanted to make a contribution to the professional literature, demonstrating a desire to make a wider impact in the profession.

5. Peer Review

Of the 6 papers (or 24% of all papers) that selected the peer review option, several noted that the availability of the option itself was a motivator -

“To take advantage of the opportunity to improve my paper.”

“We wanted the feedback from more experienced members of the industry. We wanted to know that our paper was good enough to present at the conference, and to publish if we ever decided to do that. We thought we should make the most of the opportunity.”

“So it would be the best it could be before being published.”

Others commented on the value added by the peer review process –

“As a PD [professional development] exercise, writing a peer reviewed paper has more value.”

“My understanding of evidence-based practice. It encourages you to have your work peer reviewed - making your work credible and valid.”

In a further question, respondents were asked if they found the peer review process to be a positive experience. All agreed that it was positive, with respondents noting that it helped them to improve their paper, even if the reviewers’ comments were not themselves always positive –

“I think you take a deep breath, take a step back and see it from where they are coming from. It’s worth seeing if they come up with the same remarks. It makes you then look at your work in a different light and you can then add, change or justify what you have done. So overall it is a positive experience.”

6. Intentions to write and present in the future

77.4%, or 24 respondents, indicated that they plan to publish or present again in the future. Only one respondent indicated that they did not intend to write in the future.

For many, a positive experience was cited as the reason why they are motivated to publish or present in the future –

“NLS2006 was a very supportive environment which has contributed to my confidence as a presenter. It was a great learning

experience and I see it as a stepping stone to future presentations/publishing.”

Another noted –

“I enjoyed the experience of presenting the paper at NLS2006, despite my initial nerves. It wasn't as hard as I thought it would be. The encouragement and support I received from other librarians meant that it was a positive and rewarding experience. So I want to do it again, and get that same feeling. And I think it will help make me a more "professional" librarian.”

Table 5. What writing and presenting opportunities are you considering?

| | Count | Percent % |
|--------------------------------|-------|-----------|
| National conferences | 19 | 63.3 |
| International conferences | 8 | 26.7 |
| Journal article | 21 | 70 |
| Peer-reviewed/research writing | 13 | 43.3 |
| Newsletter/magazine articles | 13 | 43.4 |
| Other | 7 | 23.3 |

n=31

Note: more than one response permitted

Respondents are interested in writing for conferences and journals, yet peer reviewed writing received fewer responses in comparison. These results suggest that there is a gap between practitioner-based opportunities and research-based publishing and writing. There is a need for further research to determine how and why practitioners transition amongst writing for practical journals and conferences, and other more research-based forums.

In a further question 96.8% of respondents indicated that they would like to further develop their research, writing and presentation skills.

Table 6. Which of these activities would best develop your research, writing and presenting skills?

| | Count | Percent % |
|--|-------|-----------|
| Mentoring | 23 | 82.1 |
| Journal club | 8 | 28.6 |
| Online guides to writing | 10 | 35.7 |
| More emphasis on how to write for the literature in library school | 13 | 46.4 |
| Other | 10 | 35.7 |
| No answer | 3 | 9.6 |

n=31

Note: more than one response permitted

There is strong interest in mentoring, with 82.1% of respondents indicating that it would help to improve their skills. This interest may be due to there currently being few formal mentoring programs offered in LIS in Australia. Mentoring models and current programs are discussed further in this article. 46.4% of respondents thought that there should be more instruction about writing for the literature in library schools, and 35.7% were interested in online guides and materials to assist them with writing.

Table 7. What factors supported your writing and presenting experiences?

| | Count | Percent % |
|--|-------|-----------|
| Support and help of others: colleagues, family and friends, supervisors (current and former) | 26 | 86.7 |
| Resources for publication: access to databases, software | 18 | 60 |
| My own motivation | 29 | 96.7 |
| Other | 5 | 16.7 |
| No answer | 1 | 3.1 |

n=31

Note: more than one response permitted

Intrinsic motivation is a major factor in writing, with 96.7% of respondents agreeing that their own motivation was important. The support and help of others, cited by 86.7% of respondents, closely followed. It is important to understand these motivations, and how they can be maintained in the face of barriers to writing and presenting.

Table 8. What barriers and obstacles have you faced in writing and presenting?

| | Count | Percent % |
|---|-------|-----------|
| None | 3 | 9.7 |
| Lack of time | 26 | 83.9 |
| Lack of support from employer | 5 | 16.3 |
| Lack of resources | 5 | 16.3 |
| Review and publication process | 3 | 9.6 |
| Time lag between submission to publication | 8 | 25.8 |
| Personal responsibilities | 21 | 67.7 |
| Other | 7 | 22.6 |

n=31

Note: more than one response permitted

Time pressures, cited by 83.9% of respondents, are likely to remain a barrier as writing is often in addition to a practitioner's job, even if they have the support of their peers and colleagues. The ways employers can provide additional support for writing during work hours should be explored further. Providing more support for authors might encourage them to write about their workplace projects and successes more often.

Personal responsibilities, mentioned by 67.7% of respondents, were not further defined, but include familial responsibilities and other activities outside of work.

7. Exploring the Factors that Affect Writing and Presenting by New Professionals

To further understand the barriers and motivations affecting new professionals and writing, issues in communicating research to practitioners are considered. In the absence of literature specifically examining the gaps in reporting on practice, research communication and dissemination gaps are considered. There is a need for both research and practice-based writing, amongst other forms of writing, and indeed the majority of the papers authored at NLS2006 fall into the category of practice-based writing. There are many types of non-research writing that practitioners may engage in as indicated in the responses at Table 5, including book reviews, professional newsletters and magazines, journal articles, and book chapters (Flatley and Michael, 2004).

Haddow and Klobas (2004) identified 11 gaps in communicating research to practice, and strategies to overcome them. Of these, this article focuses on four; Motivation, Education, Activity, Temporal. These four gaps were selected as they provided fit with the scope and results of the questionnaire and the other studies considered, such as Staudt (2003). As many of the authors were writing about their experiences of professional practice, other gaps such as Culture and Reading were perceived to be less relevant for this study. Considering the results of the questionnaire, respondents are motivated, and many have published previously (activity), however they lack the time for research (temporal) and are in need of mentoring rather than statistical or solid research skills (education). These are further discussed below.

7.1 Motivation

In the absence of a requirement in Australia to publish as part of their job to achieve advancement, motivation for many of the respondents was primarily intrinsic. Haddow and Klobas (2004) note that many of the gaps they identified have an impact on each other. Where motivation is intrinsic, the temporal gap becomes more critical as practitioners need to make time, often outside of work hours, to write. Those who are supported by their workplace or external peers are more likely to write and research (Powell *et al.*, 2002).

In the context of conferences, librarians have several motivations for submitting a paper and speaking. These include developing a reputation, and becoming part of a group (Crawford, 2007, Fennewald, 2007). However, presenting at conferences can involve financial cost, which can be a barrier to writing. An employer's financial support can be crucial to participating in conferences (Crawford, 2007).

A way to increase practitioner involvement in research and writing is to create a culture of research (Haddow and Klobas, 2004). Proposed strategies include removing time barriers in the workplace, creating opportunities for research, and encouraging authors to collaborate to decrease isolation (Rochester, 1997, Haddow and Klobas, 2004). ALIA has focused on a research culture in its plan (ALIA, 2008), including informal mentoring for research award participants and encouraging more librarians to undertake research degrees. Smith and Harvey (2006) analysed the promotion and support of research in several library associations including the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP, United Kingdom), American Library Association (ALA), American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). Support varied widely ranging from inconclusive statements of support to well-developed advocacy and publishing programmes (Smith and Harvey, 2006). According

to Smith and Harvey (2006), associations need to do more to engage new professionals in research.

7.2 Education

96.8% of respondents would like to improve their research, writing and presenting skills. Such training could be formal or informal, ranging from workshops, online guides to writing, to formal education. There are several paths to improving research skills in a formal setting. Some LIS courses now include a final project that asks students to write their essays as if for a journal article (University of Technology Sydney: Humanities and Social Sciences, 2006) giving them valuable experience in formatting arguments and conducting research. Most LIS schools in Australia include optional research methods courses (Smith and Harvey, 2006), but the number of students selecting these courses is unknown. Not all recent LIS graduates will have research skills or know how to write for the scholarly literature, leading to a continuing skills gap (Koufogiannakis and Crumley, 2006).

It is perceived that an increase in the number of doctoral students could increase the quality of research and writing (Maccauley, 2004). However, this is not necessarily an attractive option for new professionals due to the time commitment and expense. The promotion of pursuing a PhD to increase research and writing quality is likely to have a limited impact amongst practitioners.

Like motivation, an increase in research and writing skills does not remove other barriers to research, including time and motivation (Haddow and Klobas, 2004). All four of the gaps studied in this article are interlinked and must be considered together if a program to increase practitioner involvement in research is to be successful.

7.3 Activity

A study of dissemination of knowledge in social work by practitioners argues that activities such as writing for publication should be considered part of professional practice (Staudt *et al.*, 2003). In LIS, various professional associations have encouraged writing, and some academic librarians, especially in the United States, do have tenure as a motivator to publish. New professionals in Australia are unlikely to be required to publish as part of their work role, though it is often encouraged according to 32.2% of respondents to the survey. ALIA allows writing activity to be counted towards its professional development scheme, which recognises participation in a variety of activities (ALIA, 2007).

There is a small, but growing, number of publications aimed at new writers and a new practitioner audience, including the *Library Student Journal*, and an annual print issue of *Footnotes* coordinated by the ALA New Members Round Table's Scholarship Research and Writing Committee. Like NLS, these publications aim to support new writers and bring together peers who are interested in issues affecting new professionals. Several authors at NLS2006 have gone on to publish or present since the symposium, thus using NLS as their entry point to writing and presenting.

7.4 Temporal

Temporal gaps are a long-standing barrier to research and writing for professionals (Staudt *et al.*, 2003). Practitioners may be more sensitive than researchers to time pressures because writing is often additional to their day to day duties (Staudt *et al.*, 2003, Haddow and Klobas, 2004). Time to write at work, especially if writing about work projects, may assist some of these pressures. A study by Powell, Baker and Mika (2002) found that practitioners who are

given time to write at work have a higher level of writing and research output than those who do not. Time is likely to always be a barrier, and this means that motivation and skills have to be strong to prioritise writing over other work, or pressures and activities outside of work.

8. Mentoring for new professionals

A way to increase practitioner, including new professional, involvement in writing would be to establish a general research and writing mentoring program. This would be open to those who have received research funding for a specific project, as well as those who are writing and presenting for publications and conferences.

There are few formal research and writing mentoring schemes in LIS, though there are examples in other professions, such as psychiatry (Lambert and Garver, 1998). One example is the Association of College and Research Libraries' Your Research Coach (ACRL College Libraries Section, 2006a). This extensive program pairs academic librarians with experienced writers, to work on everything from choosing a topic, to working with statistics, and submitting calls for papers to conferences. Coaches are also expected to advise on methodology, research methods and proofreading (ACRL College Libraries Section, 2006b). Another program aimed at academic librarians in the US is The University at Buffalo Libraries' Academic Writing Group. This program includes retreats, critiques, and discussions of barriers that impact writing. The goals of the group included creating a forum to discuss writing and making the process less intimidating (Tysick and Babb, 2006). Both of these programs have strong organisational or association support, and draw from existing resources.

The structure of a more general mentoring program for writing for all librarians, not just academic librarians, would not necessarily need to be greatly different to career mentoring programs. In Australia, informal mentoring is available for recipients of ALIA's research awards and scholarships. This programme pairs award recipients with members of ALIA's research committee or other experienced researchers to guide their methodology and writing. All of ALIA's formal mentoring programs are locality, rather than interest based (ALIA Mentoring NSW, 2005b). Most programs cover the full range of professional development topics, of which writing is one development activity that could be examined in more detail.

It may be advisable for a prospective mentoring program for writing to be run within the framework of an existing mentoring program initially, to take advantage of resources and committee support. A number of mentoring programs currently exist in library association and organisations (ALIA Mentoring NSW, 2005b). The ALIA mentoring program in New South Wales is an example of a program structure that may be suitable to either extend or replicate as a mentoring for writing program. The program was re-established in 2005 as a one-on-one program that matches mentors and protégés based on mutual interest and skills. The program is run by a small committee of volunteers who match the pairs based on their perceived compatibility. Pairs then work independently, determining the topics and goals they will work on for the year. Some pairs have included conference presentations and writing in their discussions. The program requires that participants agree to their understanding of mentoring and their commitment to the program by signing an agreement (ALIA Mentoring NSW, 2005a). New mentors and protégés are invited every year to renew the program. Like all volunteer-led professional development activities, the strength of the program depends on the commitment and enthusiasm of those involved. Support from associations and other organisations can assist by providing resources and support.

Tysick and Babb (2006) describe mentoring as a form of collegial support that can help reduce the stress of writing for new academic librarians. Mentoring can assist to familiarise new librarians with their writing responsibilities, and they may also participate in more practical support activities such as workshops. There is a need for writers to participate in group discussions and activities to exchange ideas, and to reduce feelings of isolation (Tysick and Babb, 2006).

There are several issues that can arise in designing a mentoring program for writing. Previous mentoring programs have determined that protégés should be prepared to work on a particular research topic or paper, rather than general research and writing skills (Lambert and Garver, 1998, ACRL College Libraries Section, 2006b, Tysick and Babb, 2006). Lambert and Garver (1998) found that mentors had to be closely involved in all stages of a writing project, and needed to be paired with highly motivated protégés to ensure that both parties benefited from the experience. Mentoring may not always be the appropriate solution, depending on the time commitment involved and the nature of the project (Lambert and Garver, 1998, Parker-Gibson, 2007).

Given the high number of experienced practitioners who responded to the call for reviewers for NLS2006, and the large number of abstracts submitted, there is interest in both writing and supporting writing in Australia. The key is to find a model of mentoring that suits practitioners and recognises that writing is one of many professional development activities that they may be pursuing at any one time.

9. Conclusion

There is a strong interest amongst new professionals to write and publish, as found with NLS2006. They are motivated to make an impact on the profession and to develop their own careers. However there remain many varied barriers, and a lack of support structures to develop skills after graduating from library and information qualifications.

Intrinsic motivation and the encouragement and support of other professionals go some way to counter the barriers faced, but without additional support motivation can easily change and the pressures of work, or life outside work, can significantly impact time and ability to write. Mentoring and publishing outlets designed for new professionals assist to build a support structure to develop skills and provide guidance through the writing and presenting process. The ALIA New Librarians' Symposium 2006 provided a supportive environment for new professionals and experienced authors alike, and several have published or presented subsequently. Supporting professionals early in their career helps to build a culture of research by ensuring that writing and presenting is supported, recognised and embedded in their professional practice.

New librarians are passionate and interested in the profession and their place in it. Encouraging them to report on their professional practice and providing the support for them to do so will be to the benefit of their peers who will have greater access to knowledge about activities and innovations in other libraries. Writers will also benefit from reflecting on their achievements and practice, developing their portfolios, and making an impact on librarianship's professional body of knowledge.

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Appendix A. NLS2006 author questionnaire

Survey hosted on surveymonkey.com between January 17 and February 2 2007.

About this survey

The objective of this study is to explore what motivates new graduates to publish, support needed, and any barriers experienced.

All speakers who presented a paper at NLS2006 may respond to this survey. All responses are completely confidential.

The findings of this study may also be published in journal articles or presented at a conference. There is an option in the questionnaire to receive the results of the study.

This survey is completely confidential, and you will not be identifiable in the published results. If you are uncertain about any aspect of this study, then you may decline to participate at any time. Your participation in this study is voluntary.

The questionnaire should take around 10 minutes to complete. Please answer each question as directed.

If you have any difficulty completing the questionnaire, please email Fiona Bradley.

1. How did you hear about the NLS2006 call for abstracts/papers? (Please select all that apply)

- ALIANewgrad email list
 - NMRT-L email list
 - NDPG-L email list
 - Other email list
 - NLS2006 website
 - NLS2006 postcard
 - Colleague
 - Other (please specify)
- _____

2. What experiences or factors motivated you to submit an abstract for NLS2006?

3. What publishing opportunities (eg conferences, journals, newsletters) did you consider for this paper?

- Only NLS2006
 - Other (please specify)
- _____

4. Do you consider yourself to be a "new graduate"?

- Yes
- No

5. Why do you consider, or not consider, yourself to be a new graduate?

6. Is writing for publication a job requirement in your current position?

- Yes, it is in my position description
- No, but is strongly encouraged
- No
- Other (please specify)

7. Was NLS2006 your first experience presenting and writing for publication outside of your workplace?

- Yes
- No

8. Where have you presented or published outside your workplace?

9. Was your NLS2006 paper peer reviewed?

- Yes (go to question 12)
- No

10. What experiences or factors motivated you to select the peer review option for your NLS2006 paper?

11. Do you find the peer review process, including comments from reviewers, to be a positive experience?

12. What outcomes do you expect from your experience presenting at NLS2006? (Please select all that apply)

- Invitation to speak at another event
- Addition to my portfolio
- New work contacts
- Recognition in my workplace
- Contribution to the professional literature
- Other (please specify)

13. Do you plan to publish or present again in the near future?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

14. What experiences or factors motivate you to publish or present again in the future?

15. What writing and presenting opportunities are you considering? (Please select all that apply)

- National conferences
- International conferences
- Journal article
- Peer-reviewed/research writing
- Newsletter/magazine articles
- Other (please specify)

16. What experiences or factors may discourage you from publishing or presenting again in the future?

17. Would you like to further develop your research, writing, and presenting skills?

- Yes
- No

18. Which of these activities would best develop your research, writing and presenting skills? (Please select all that apply)

- Mentoring
- Journal club
- Online guides to writing
- More emphasis on how to write for the literature in library school
- Other (please specify)

19. What factors supported your writing and presenting experiences? (Please select all that apply)

- Support and help of others: colleagues, family and friends, supervisors (current and former)
- Resources for publication: access to databases, software
- My own motivation
- Other (please describe)

20. What barriers and obstacles have you faced in writing and presenting? (Please select all that apply)

- None
- Lack of time

- Lack of support from employer
 - Lack of resources
 - Review and publication process
 - Time lag between submission to publication
 - Personal responsibilities
 - Other (please specify)
-

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