

Accreditation for Library and Information Technology Programs in Canada

A Proposal

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This document includes an examination of accreditation, its role and function as a quality enhancement process. It examines the benefits and challenges to establishing an accreditation program for Library and Information Technology programs in Canada as well as recommendations for moving such a process forward.

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Introduction: Professional Context

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation can be described as, “the actions of any individual or group to monitor and control its own behavior” (El-Khawas, 1983 p. 57). Aside from the American Library Association’s accreditation for MLS (and MLIS) programs, there is no other mechanism of self-regulation in the library field in North America. The issues around regulatory controls are extremely complex but it is important to understand how accreditation fits within the context of self-regulation. Accreditation is an aspect of self-regulation in that it is, essentially, a process of developing accepted standards related to educational practice that are subsequently reviewed and evaluated. This process provides educational programs a vehicle for addressing problems that may be experienced by multiple agencies and gives programs a collective voice for related issues. However, the scope of accreditation IS limited in that it cannot serve to carry out all of the activities that might be associated with self-regulation including credentialing, development of standards within the profession and the enforcement of such standards.

Traditionally, regulated professions are those that directly involve the safety and security of the public. Examples include programs for nursing, childcare, social work, law, health sciences, engineering, teaching, etc. It is generally understood that only those with specific skills and knowledge can practice within these areas. In step with the growth of new specializations and occupations, however, are increasing concerns over accountability in a much wider range of specialties. As the library field continues to define its relevancy in an era of significant technological change, it is valuable to consider the role self-regulation may play. While accreditation is only a facet of self-regulation and the library field continues to struggle over its position as having parity with other recognized professions, those interested in self-regulation may wish to review Laura Bickerton’s (2009) suggestions that professions seeking recognition should lead in the areas of:

- qualifications and competence, both pre-certification and once in practice
- control of those who may enter or remain in the profession

- definition of the nature of the work
- ethical standards and rules of conduct
- accountability of the profession to the public

While the broader issue of self-regulation must be addressed by the entire library community, there is opportunity for educators to address and lead in the more specific aspects of library technician education and preparation. What little research is available, suggests that the turnover rates for library staff are fairly low (Ingles et al, p. 101). Combined with an increasing emphasis on hiring library technicians to fill gaps once occupied by librarians who are now filling managerial roles, there is a need to pay closer attention to how library technicians are educated (p. 114). Consequently, some matters related to accountability, competencies and the nature of work can be addressed by more program-specific approval processes. Such activity can help better identify the role, competencies, and conduct for this segment of library workers.

For many years in the U.S. and Canada, graduate programs related to information science/studies have been eligible to apply for accreditation with the American Library Association's independent Committee on Accreditation. According to the American Library Association's *Accreditation Policies, Processes and Procedures*:

Accreditation is a voluntary, nongovernmental, and collegial process of self-review and peer review. In higher education, accreditation has two goals: 1) to ensure that post-secondary educational institutions and their units, schools or programs meet appropriate standards of quality and integrity, and 2) to improve the quality of education these institutions offer. (Committee, 2006, p.11)

This perspective is not unique and accreditation has been a widely accepted system of quality assurance in North America since the early 20th century. Beginning in 1956, this process has remained restricted to graduate level programs. There is no recognized system of accreditation for programs delivering library and information studies education at the undergraduate or vocational levels in the United States or Canada.

The MLS project (creating an accredited designation for librarians) led to an attempt to redefine librarianship by making the term 'librarian' the recognized term for these graduates. Developed in the late 1960s, the "library technician" position emerged to manage many of the day-to-day operational duties that occurred within libraries. The role of library technician was seen as predominantly vocational, if not clerical, in nature. However, advancements in technology, its effects on information production and sharing, and increasing emphasis on interpersonal connections has enhanced all roles in libraries. Indeed, the MLS credential is not a requirement for many positions and Keith Swigger, author of the *MLS Project*, asserts, "The economic and status gains of those who have accredited degrees have been accompanied by sharp declines in the status and pay of library technicians. Yet, it is not clear that the work itself is different" (2010, p. 90). It is not unreasonable, then, to question why library technicians working in the same environments, performing similar work, are not expected to attend educational programs that meet quality assurance standards. Indeed, such processes need to be recognized and respected as alternate models for preparing individuals for library work.

It is hard to ignore the statistics collected from the *8Rs: The Future of Human Resources in Canadian Libraries* research report from 2005. Forty-three per cent of library staff were identified as paraprofessional (Ingles et al, p. 38). This is a substantial number of library staff to consider, when anticipating challenges of the future. Further complicating matters is the statistic that 78% of libraries surveyed were noted to have "paraprofessionals" doing the work that was once performed by professional librarians and this was anticipated to steadily continue (p. 11). What is troubling about this transition is not that it is occurring, but that little attention has been focused on the educational requirements of this group. Because most technicians in the 8Rs research indicated that it was structural barriers (including time, money, and distance to an appropriate school) that obstructed them from furthering their education and not their own indecisiveness (p. 53), there is room for further exploration into the way in which programs receive recognition and how different forms of library education may shape future librarians. The research also reveals that there are a substantial number of

working technicians who feel they are simply too old to pursue higher levels of education (pp. 52-53).

In 2008, the Canadian Library Association (CLA) hosted a summit to address the human resource needs of Canadian libraries. While the summit explored a range of considerations and strategies, there was minimal discussion of non-MLIS personnel. The prevailing focus was on MLIS educational options and the growth opportunities for managers. Nevertheless, the summit did highlight key points that apply to non-MLIS library workers. Mentorship, co-operative education, identification of competency standards, and more synchronization between schools and employers were deemed as relevant factors shaping the skills and attitudes of library employees. Review of the report confirms that the library community continues to overlook the important role and influence of non-MLIS staff, mad evident in the absence of representatives at this event. Not only do they occupy a significant place in libraries, they are an obvious pool of the library workforce that could be called upon to address staffing needs of the future through further education, mentorship and/or promotion. There continues to be a lack of agreement and vision as to how library technician education can be integrated with human resource needs in Canadian libraries, even though they represent over 40% of library staffing and already possess an interest in the field. It is a good opportunity for library and information technology (LIT), programs to make some decisions regarding the future of their own graduates, influencing the broader field and providing assistance to deal with the changing expectations, composition, and needs of libraries in the future (The Intersol Group, 2008).

Although it is generally believed that all library technician diploma programs follow the recently updated *CLA Guidelines for the Education of Library Technicians*, there is no way to be certain. More troubling than this, however, is that there has only been limited interest by library associations and their memberships to look at this matter in more depth. The *Guidelines* are, “intended to serve as a national standard to be used both by educational institutions in Canada and by employers who need to determine the capabilities of program graduates” (2011, p. 1). Each program carries out its

interpretations of the *Guidelines* in complete and utter autonomy. It can be assumed that, each institution does its utmost to follow these guidelines but there is no incentive and no evaluative measures to ensure that this is done. More significantly, the *Guidelines* are developed and edited by library technician program heads who simply choose to participate in this undertaking. This is not a criticism of the contents of the *Guidelines*, but of the process and the lack of industry support and attention. For example, if a program falls under financial strain because of a lack of institutional support, that program has no recourse for defending its need to protect its resources because no one outside of that institution has influence over the outgoing competencies of the program's graduates. Informal discussions with LIT heads reveals that, while many programs may have advisory committees, these rarely have significant weight in the operational decisions of an academic institution because they are structured to act in an advising capacity only.

It should also be noted that because there is no body representing the interests of programs delivering library technician diplomas in Canada, participation in discussions around core proficiencies, industry changes, innovation, and educational challenges are limited. This phenomenon is grounded in the history of how library technician programs were established and developed in the 20th century as entry-level vocational programs. The growing pressures and complexities of the work performed in the field and the evolution of educational institutions has the potential to fracture the already highly autonomous activities of library technician education programs. In turn, this would do very little to assisting the field, as a whole, in developing a clearer vision of the future for library professionals. It also limits the examination of opportunities that could assist the field in providing more flexible options for career advancement for those who already are interested in library work. It is somewhat ironic, then, that despite the one third of paraprofessionals surveyed in the *8Rs: The Future of Human Resources in Canadian Libraries* report who wanted to pursue more education but felt they could not (Ingles et al, 2005, p. 14), CLA's 2008 national summit participants failed to address the solid connection between library technician programs and the human resource challenges faced by libraries.

Librarianship is not unique in the sense that its professional guidelines are shifting and evolving. Library workers must accept that the profession is being redefined as some specializations are being taken over by other fields as new prospects, ideas and opportunities emerge. This means that the profession can benefit greatly by focusing on efforts to establish ongoing processes that make redefining and reshaping the field achievable. While not all of these processes occur in the initial educating of new recruits, it is an area that warrants careful attention. Educational programs need the time, money, opportunity and encouragement to investigate and explore the problems and the innovations of the field in order to generate graduates that can, in turn, create, innovate and partake. These new graduates can be better prepared to meet the challenges of a changing global marketplace of ideas, legislation, products and services that shape their competition and their opportunities. To ensure the lasting value of libraries, it is essential for library workers to effectively assess technological change and determine how such change can or cannot provide solutions for the informational needs of our communities. Education cannot always be quickly responsive to industry demands, particularly when small programs (like library technician programs) are often poorly understood by their governing institution. Thus, with the introduction of eBooks, digital rights, and other technological developments, it becomes essential that these programs quickly respond to change. Without a more cohesive and well-informed support network that extends beyond the more “local” advisory committees, such programs struggle to justify their need to rapidly adapt curricula, resources, and service. It is extremely important that the profession, as a whole, can identify proficiencies that ensure that the work that needs to be done *can* be done in the face of enormous change.

Over the last century, post-secondary institutions have been spending a great deal of time and energy fostering a reductionist view on the world by encouraging faculty to specialize in very granular topics. As information expands, so, too, does the need for detailed understanding of subject areas. For example, a cursory look at the University of Toronto’s Computer Science Research Groups shows computer science being broken down into: Applied & Discrete Mathematics, Artificial Intelligence, Computational

Biology, Computer Graphics, Computer Systems & Networks, Database Systems, Human Computer Interaction, Numerical Analysis, Programming Languages & Methodologies, Software Engineering, and Theory of Computation (Computer Science University of Toronto). However, as David Lankes points out, this view of the world does not assist us in dealing with the complex and interrelated nature of our work and our world. Those who work in libraries straddle educational expectations that focus on the specifics of library work and the indefinite nature of the world. Such a dichotomy pulls educational programs in many directions (2011, p. 177). It is critical that the use of accreditation is clearly understood to be a mechanism for guaranteeing that programs meet standardized educational requirements and that it is not a means of licensing or certifying practitioners. It is very important to determine if accreditation is acting as a social utility, providing members that the profession serves with enhanced quality, service and accountability. It may be very beneficial to have an external process of review for library technician programs that can help them to analyze their direction while acknowledging and supporting their strengths. As library personnel move forward and grapple with increasingly complex problems and activities, it is important that the profession can look more holistically at what is done, how it is done, and how to prepare for it.

Ultimately, it must be understood that the people served by librarians and technicians do not care what these professionals choose to call themselves. It is likely a safe assertion to say that ALL library employees must be well educated and well trained if they are to meet the profoundly complex situations that presently challenge libraries. The challenge is in determining what this education and training should encompass and what the desired outcomes should be. While the profession continues to struggle over these issues, there is urgency in solving some of these problems for library technicians because they are a group who have taken a backseat in discussions about the future of libraries and, yet, they have much to offer as part of the discussion and solutions with their unique perspectives. One step to improving this situation is to develop a system of standards, evaluation and feedback that encourages a broader base of professional

involvement from, other educators, librarians, working technicians, and library administrators.

Because there are a small number of programs that have been using *CLA Guidelines* as a foundation to their curricular activities, a specialized accreditation process that is sponsored by an accrediting body of both institutions and individual practitioners may empower such programs and warrants investigation. The following proposal is not intended to limit the educational opportunities or options for those wishing to enter the library field. It is intended to provide existing library technician programs with a means of evaluating the quality of their programs through self-study, external review and discussion. It is also intended to provide these programs with recognition for their contributions to the greater library community by enabling them to document their accomplishments, innovations and partnerships.

Libraries are already staffed with an incredible array of people who possess diverse skills, knowledge, creativity and insight. All of those people deserve the recognition and access to programs and education that enable them to perform their work with confidence and professionalism. It is also important that educators and professionals come together to ensure that appropriate and effective education is occurring in our post-secondary programs so that the profession can effectively meet the demands of our future communities. In the interests of helping library technician programs take responsibility for the role they play in the composition of the library workforce and the potential positive impact these programs can continue to have on the field, this document will examine various aspects of accreditation including its benefits in challenges as well as providing a series of recommendations for further development.

The Framework for Accreditation

Accreditation is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as:

Official certification that a school, course, etc., has met standards laid down by external regulators; a professional endorsement or qualification of this kind. Also: the process of assessment and certification.

Most post secondary educational institutions in Canada are accredited according to standards set through provincial legislation. This includes colleges, university colleges, universities, institutes, community colleges, regional colleges, and applied arts and learning centres. When granted authority through government legislation, these institutions (and some private ones) are considered “recognized” and have the authority to grant recognized degrees, certificates and diplomas. There is no “overall” formal national accreditation system in Canada. There is a voluntary organization that supports accrediting organizations in Canada known as the Association for Accrediting Agencies in Canada (AAAC). The AAAC provides training and advocacy and acts as a support service and is not a regulating body. This means that there is no universal or government endorsed method of quality assurance for specific programs across the country (Morgan, 2006). The result is that quality assurance is determined by field-specific and provincially based accreditation programs. In the case of library and information studies, accreditation is only available for Master’s degree programs.

The United States has a well-evolved, nongovernmental organization that provides a centralized accreditation process for post-secondary institutions known as the U.S. Council for Higher Education Association. Their document on the *Value of Accreditation*, conveniently summarizes the use of accreditation:

Accreditation is both a process and a status. It is the process of reviewing colleges, universities, institutions and programs to judge their educational quality – how well they serve students and society. The result of the process, if successful, is the award of “accredited status...”

... All accrediting organizations create and use specific standards both to assure that institutions and programs meet threshold expectations of quality and to assure that they improve over time. These standards address key areas such as faculty, student support services, finance and facilities, curricula and student learning outcomes (CHEA, 2010) .

The scope of the accreditation has expanded, in step, with changing views of the roles of post-secondary education. While accreditation served very limited professional and regional associations in the past, it has moved from “judging” educational practice to encouraging improvements and innovation (Young, 1983, p. 9). As demonstrated in fields where risks to the public are great, it is evident that accreditation fulfills an important function in modern society. There is, however, a balance between its use as a means of strengthening educational programs and simply acting as a means of “controlling” quality. Used improperly, it has the potential to generate a system of compliance rather than introspection, self-discovery, and advancement.

Benefits of Accreditation

In a review of state uses for accreditation, CHEA reports that some states, like Nebraska, encourage programmatic accreditation because it is, “an essential indicator of program quality and a valid predictor of graduate employment” (Ewell, 2010, p. 16). In addition, there are several other reasons why accreditation can be beneficial to specialized programs like Library and Information Technology:

1. At its most elementary form, the process can encourage compliance with outlined expectations for the professional field to ensure programs are accountable through ongoing external evaluation and self-studies. Measures are needed to ensure, however, that accrediting bodies do not attempt to generate “carbon-copy” programs across the field so that diverse views and innovation can take root.
2. Such a program can assure prospective employers that graduates have met with widely accepted standards for entering the field of practice. While some of this work is done with the *CLA Guidelines*, there is tremendous opportunity to analyze these outcomes in more depth and move away from a simple “shopping” list of proficiencies to a more detailed outline that looks

closely at the interdisciplinary nature of the field and possible specializations.

3. Assisting students who are transferring between institutions as it may clarify that program requirements and that certain levels of quality have been met between accredited programs. With the introduction of distance learning and the increasingly consumer-based behaviours of students, prior learning and attending multiple post-secondary institutions has become more common. Accreditation may assist in streamlining admissions but it is not meant to simply allow for course-to-course transfers. Programs always retain the right of determining transferability.
4. Parity with other applied fields through the use of self-regulation. As observed by one LIT program coordinator, accreditation would put LIT programs, "...in line with the professional accreditation given to the MLIS programs, and will possibly establish a higher level of professionalism to the Library Technician designation." (James, Norene, personal communications, October 15, 2011).
5. By examining the competencies outlined in the *CLA Guidelines* and developing a set of well-analyzed standards for programs, there would emerge an increased awareness in best practices by others in the field. In turn, this may help employers enhance the definitions of roles within their own workplaces as well as create a greater appreciation and understanding of what library technicians are specifically educated to do.
6. Obviously, one of the greatest benefits of accreditation would be to encourage an increase in the quality of services provided. The results of this may be indirect in that it may not be that LIT programs would suddenly become "better" at delivering education because this would suggest that such programs are not already doing a good job. However, the improved

communication of standards and issues that would be examined through the evaluative process would help all library practitioners understand the issues and roles held by library technician graduates. Such heightened understanding and clarity may assist library administrators and managers with their own planning processes.

There are other more specific benefits of accreditation that should also be considered:

7. Accreditation can act as an external mechanism for defending and requesting the use of resources from a program's governing institution. This is done in the interests of maintaining or enhancing quality.
8. Expand or maintain program depth and specialization, if desired, while continuing to clearly present learning outcomes for graduates through the review process. With a clear sense of direction, a program can gain a better sense of what main objectives it must achieve to serve the profession by having more coordinated input from the field in a way that can extend beyond the more local advisory committee levels.
9. Justifiably track activities of graduates and monitor success with the aid of well-articulated guidelines provided by the accreditation process. Although some LIT programs undergo regular program reviews by their institutions, these reviews tend to focus on institutional goals which may not enhance a program's understanding of its role in the broader community. Also the information generated in institutional reviews may be used for purposes that advance the institution's interests and not those of the program.
10. Develop continuing education programs and activities for graduates that correspond with recognized standards of practice defined through accreditation. Without clearly defined expectations and goals, programs may struggle to develop and defend continuing education programs that are

adequately synchronized with the field. A survey of the literature reveals that there is a great deal of concern and confusion around the role of continuing education in the field. With few standards and little coordination, the continuing education landscape is uneven and unclear.

11. Provide students and programs with an increased self awareness regarding industry expectations and needs. This will lead to more satisfied employees that are able to clearly see educational expectations for promotion and professional development.

12. Despite being unaffiliated with library technician programs, Kenneth Young, eloquently articulates one of the most significant benefits of accreditation, “To endeavor to protect institutions against encroachments that might jeopardize their educational effectiveness or academic freedom” (Young, 1983, p. 23). As relatively small programs within much larger academic institutions, LIT programs cannot protect their programs from encroachments as easily as programs that have larger student populations and are better understood by the public (19-35). Accreditation can be a powerful influence on educational institutions by informing these organizations of the external expectations and requirements for their graduates. In turn, this enables those academic institutions to be more responsive to the needs of the professions they support.

Challenges of Accreditation

Introducing any system of self-regulation will have its challenges but anticipating these and preparing to manage them is absolutely necessary for successful implementation. While there will always be the unforeseen, there are some issues that should be carefully considered when considering this path:

1. **Cost** . In order for there to be self-regulation, an accrediting council / committee must be established. Reviews of documentation and site visits are typical activities for an accreditation body. Program personnel must prepare statistics and documents including a self-study. Typically, the cost of accreditation is borne by the programs themselves. Since accreditation committees can vary significantly in size, the costs can vary as well. Institutions that are well established tend to understand and respect the role of accreditation and are more likely to provide support. In some cases, smaller programs are subsidized by larger ones. In other cases, accreditation may be partially funded through the overseeing accreditation agency (not to be confused with the accrediting body that performs the actual work of evaluation).

2. **Acceptance**. Both the industry and programs to be accredited must accept the new system in order for it to have respect and validity. Time is an important factor to consider as implementation would not be an immediate process. This may, in fact, be advantageous as it would allow for significant consultation, discussions, and time for careful development.

3. **Balance**. Ensuring a balance between the interests and needs of a program and that of the accreditation program can prove challenging if tension between academic educators and practitioners is not avoided through careful planning and consultation. Understanding the misconceptions about accreditation can maintain this balance. For example, all stakeholders must respect that accreditation is not a system to force compliance but is, rather, a system to enhance programs.

4. **Flexibility**. Again, accreditation is not about forcing compliance and it must, therefore, remain flexible enough to adapt to changing teaching methods, developments in the field and encouraging innovation. Standards must be specific to the field of practice, but general enough to allow for adaptations that suit the educational pursuits of each program.

5. **Distance Learning.** Distance education, predominantly online, has become increasingly common. However, measures of its effectiveness have lagged and it may be difficult to develop an accreditation program that recognizes the unique characteristics of online and distance programs.

6. **Workload.** Once an accreditation committee / council has been established, there remains a significant amount of work for programs undergoing evaluation. A variety of materials will need to be collected by each program, much of which will remain ongoing. With many LIT programs operating with minimal faculty, this may prove onerous. Creative collaboration on accreditation design and developing procedural expectations that respect the small configurations of programs is essential.

7. **Coordination.** In order to establish any kind of accreditation program, LIT programs will have to coordinate their input and interests in the matter. With only an annual heads/coordinators meeting at the CLA annual conference, there is no regular forum for establishing discussion and collaboration. In order to begin the design and planning process, there will have to be a number of dedicated volunteers to accomplish specific activities. As with any new project, pulling people from their already busy working lives may be a challenge.

There are There are also several questions that need to be addressed when considering accreditation including:

1. How are graduates from non-accredited institutions to be recognized? The question was asked during preliminary consultations with existing technicians. More specifically, the question was regarding how they will be treated by the industry if their diploma predates any accreditation process.

2. What happens if a program does not meet accreditation standards? Firstly, accreditation should be designed to be a supportive process that enables programs to have a clear opportunity to view the standards of assessment. In addition, accreditation should not be used to make all programs look and act alike. Rather, it should be providing opportunity for variations and specializations. There should also be a process to accommodate appeals.
3. Will accreditation have an impact on quality of graduates? While there is much literature to suggest that accreditation is a successful and beneficial process, the proof rests in results and is specific to the field.
4. Can appropriate standards be developed?
5. “Can procedures be designed so that institutions bear the responsibility for reaching standards that they themselves have helped to define? ” (Kinney, 1995, p. 25).

While the answers to these questions are dependent upon the input of stakeholders, it is feasible that many can be effectively addressed through careful and considered discussion. In a literature review of the effectiveness of accreditation, Marcos Cerqueira suggests that there are some important considerations when implementing a new accreditation program that include:

- Limiting accreditation to a *minimum* set of standards
- Subsidizing small organizations
- Separating quality control from quality improving
- Reducing professional control over accreditation (2006)

Introducing any new system of quality assurance and oversight involves balancing the interests of multiple groups and reaching consensus on substantial matters that include standards, procedures, and policies. Nevertheless, there are many benefits to exploring accreditation that deserve examination. Careful study of the few existing systems may

provide insight and assistance in considering the scope of involvement needed for a successful accreditation program.

Examples of Library Education Accreditation

There are many fields of practice where accreditation is deemed a critical component to self-regulation. Such fields include many areas of health science, forestry, law, engineering, social work, accounting, architecture, early childhood education, and real estate. How accreditation occurs varies significantly between them. However, there are some key components shared by all such fields. Examples include self-study reviews, site visits by accreditation panels, and data collection relating to student enrollments, staffing, curriculum content and design.

There are three programs in the English speaking world that use a formalised LIS accreditation/approval process: The United Kingdom's Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), the American Library Association (ALA) and the Australia Library and Information Association (ALIA) programs. All of these use a professional, non-governmental body to review education programs.

ALIA Accreditation – The Australian Library and Information Association actually accredits specific courses, not programs in the field. These accredited courses are not limited to master's programs but, instead, look at a range of courses used in preparing both librarians and technicians. Generally, eligibility for ALIA Membership is required for work in Australia and to become a member, you must meet accreditation review. *“The phrase 'library and information professionals' refers to those members of the profession who have completed an entry-level qualification in library and information management at either Associate or Library Technician level”* (Courses, 2009). The Australian example rises out of 20th century developments where the Library Association of Australia's Board of Education determined that there could be multiple

pathways to achieving a library technician role in a library and it was an evaluation of courses that formed a “national training package” that was deemed important and necessary.

The Australian example is a complex one because ALIA’s efforts coincide with other national quality assurance initiatives including the Australian Quality Training Framework which “is the national set of standards which assures nationally consistent, high-quality training and assessment services for the clients of Australia’s vocational education and training system”. It is a significant departure from the American system of accreditation (Training.com.au.).

The CILIP program in the U.K. shares many similarities with the ALIA accreditation program. This is not surprising since ALIA used the U.K. model in its own design. Individual courses are evaluated for accreditation purposes. Programs, as a whole, are not evaluated. Those applying for to CILIP for certification (recognition of contributions made in library and information work by “para-professionals”) must already be members of CILIP. Taking accredited courses enables members to advance through the “recognition framework” to become chartered members. The philosophy of this approach appears to be rooted in the need to provide flexible options for candidates as well as manage the diverse range of program options for these candidates. In other words, unlike the ALA process which is quite prescriptive in how MLS programs are to be designed, the Australian and U.K. systems must contend with a very diverse range in library education programs and, therefore, graduate designations.

In other areas around the world, library science programs may be accredited by government bodies and, in the case of Kazakhstan, programs may be accredited using a collaboration of government and professional bodies like the American Library Association (Champeny, 2006, pp. 20-24). There are many added complexities to contend with when working with accreditation bodies external to the cultural context of a given region. In the Kazakhstan example, the concepts of knowledge and information use and their accompanying ethics are less ingrained than in North American curricula. In other words, the programs do not look at some of the philosophical components that

are now deemed important and necessary to the examination of contemporary information studies. Although such difficulties can be overcome with effort, it may be argued that a national accrediting agency (if one exists) can address regional interests with less difficulty.

The sole accreditation process for library workers in the United States is overseen by the American Library Association. This program is managed by the Office of Accreditation, carried out by the Committee on Accreditation (COA) and is restricted to accrediting master degree programs, not individual courses. This program bases its goals and measures using the 2008 revision of the *Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library & Information Studies*.

While there are over 50 library technician programs in the United States, there is no single place to easily compare or assess them. According to the Council of Library and Media Technicians (COLT, 2009), there are 53 programs listed, but little analytical data on these programs is published and readily available. The American Library Association has recently made efforts to address the uneven nature of library support staff education within the United States with the Library Support Staff Certification Program. It began accepting applications in 2010 and is a project that is intended to help with the recognition of standard competencies exhibited by non MLIS graduates. The first goal of the LSSC program is, "To improve library service by increasing the number of LSS who achieve certification by demonstrating nationally accepted competencies of library service". The program is intended to:

"resolve role definition and task overlap issues. The LSSC competencies define the duties and responsibilities of LSS. Dr. Rachel Applegate recently compared these competencies and the recently-adopted competencies for MLS librarians, and concluded that the LSS competencies focused on practical aspects of library service, rather than on the theoretical, leadership, and development aspects of the profession"(Recognizing Value, 2007).

It remains unclear how library service will be improved and, in fact, how needs for this certification program were determined. The LSSC narrative indicates that non-MLIS graduates occupy one to two thirds of the public and academic library workforce in the

United States. Swigger suggests that the entire process of trying to define competencies that differ from “librarians” has helped to cement a caste system “through certification of support status and designation of competencies for support staff that are different from librarian’s competencies” (2010, p. 99). Thus, when examining matters of self-regulation and quality control, it is important for stakeholders to consider what their ultimate goals may be. While the ratio of non-MLIS graduates to MLIS graduates is not precisely the same for Canada, it offers a reason to tread carefully in the area of competencies and be absolutely clear on the reasons for their use. In the case of accrediting library technician programs, determining core educational goals would not be for the purpose of role delineations in the field but to assure practitioners and graduates that programs achieve specific outcomes.

Although it might be easy to suggest that all problems of quality control could be solved by adopting the fledgling LSSC program, the program does not address quality control for entire LIT programs. While the LSSC program reviews specific courses and is now reviewing them in “blocks” for specific library support staff education programs, the system does not address quality control concerns at the program level. In addition, the focus of this program is on competencies of graduates, having met very specific learning outcomes. The program does not evaluate the quality of teaching, qualifications of faculty, a self-study (intrinsic to the review process), or facilities.

In Canada, the context for accreditation is, not surprisingly, unique. While there is opportunity to model a program of quality assurance like that of the United Kingdom, Australia, or, even, the United States, there is an opportunity to present something that is both unique and sensitive to the context of Canadian LIT programs. Because there are a small number of such programs in Canada, there is greater room for intimate discussion and exploration of issues that affect these programs. In addition, the geographical separation of LIT programs may have a substantial impact on the needs and expectations of each program. Indeed, it would be valuable to tap into this diversity in an effort to encourage diverse and innovative solutions to library related problems of the future. There are a total of 17 active library technician programs in Canada, 7 of

these exist in the province of Quebec. There is little research and discussion of the differences between these programs. For example, in Quebec, entrance requirements are set by the provincial government, not the educational institution. With the advent of distance learning, the disparities become greater as programs use different approaches and technologies to negotiate the challenges of online and distance learning (*Training Gaps*, 2006, p. 5). Therefore, the entire process of accreditation may initiate the development of new information and understanding between programs that would, in turn, shape any collective movement to seek standardization and quality control measures.

Library technicians enjoy significant recognition in Canada and, as the expectations for information work expand, so does the call for technicians. According to the 8Rs, 38% of all library paraprofessionals surveyed were technicians. Upon closer examination, 51% of paraprofessionals in special libraries are technicians and 41% in academic libraries with numbers significantly lower in public and school libraries (27% and 28%, respectively) (Ingles et al, 2005, p. 40). It would be interesting to see further study in this area as it is quite likely that the workforce composition varies substantially from region to region as well.

It is interesting to note that the *Training Gaps Analysis* performed by the Cultural Human Resources Council in 2006 observed that, “The competencies considered most important and most difficult to fulfill when recruiting library technicians include the ability to respond flexibly to change, information technology skills, and public service skills.” Yet, it was also observed that, “Current LIT students were most likely to suggest that the program could be improved with better course content, while employers were most likely to suggest better technology skills training and more specialized training.”(p. 8). There is a marked disconnect between expectations of LIT administrators, employers and students and, although students were satisfied with their overall education, there remains the concern that there is no agency that is closely observing changes to this aspect of the field and *anticipating* potential methods of preparation for the future. It is important to note that this training gaps analysis also encouraged, “MLIS and LIT

programs [to] have greater contact to discuss the foci of their programs and curricula, and how they are addressing core competencies” (p. 13). Indeed, the report suggests that LIT programs create a formal national venue of interaction in that competency standards can be identified and discussed. While this analysis also recommended that CLA regularly maintain the *Guidelines for the Education of Library Technicians*, there is a false assumption that CLA takes a leadership role on this issue. There exists a disconnect between the Canadian Library Association and LIT programs. Despite the highlighted recommendation, “That MLIS and LIT educators as well as employers and associations come together on a regular and formal basis, under the leadership of a national organization such as the Canadian Library Association, to exchange viewpoints and knowledge on the competencies needed and the education/training capacities to meet these needs” (p. 16), this is currently not done. While this may stem from the need to give education programs their academic freedom, it puts the responsibilities of meeting industry needs solely on the shoulders of individual programs. There is opportunity to design a program that meets the specific needs and interests of Canadian library technician programs.

Current Status of Reviews for Canadian LIT Programs

One measure of quality control for academic institutions is a program review. Typically, such reviews look at a breadth of data about student enrolments, retention, student and faculty observations, and curricular design. There may be external reviewers who work in conjunction with faculty within programs. These reviews are conducted according to policy and procedures of the institution and do not reflect the interests of other professional or public organizations. This is one way in which LIT programs may be evaluated. However, this process does not, typically, address a program’s impact and relationship with its own professional community. It can be an inwardly focused review process that examines program performance from a limited, institutional view.

Because some programs go through a regular review cycle with their governing institution, it may be possible to bridge this activity with an accreditation program so that

there is not a duplication of effort and the results of the processes can be used collectively to further the program's goals. This can be achieved by having the institutional review process timed to be in-step with the accreditation process. Work like data collection (enrolment, graduation, class size statistics, etc.), the development of a self study and interviews can be done to fulfill the information needs of both processes. It is important to reinforce the point that even if an institution undergoes an internal review process, there is no formal (and very few informal) opportunities for programs to share information about their programs and changes they are experiencing from the industry. The rapidly changing context of information work needs to be examined collectively by educators if the profession is to produce graduates that can successfully adapt. Lack of collaboration and discourse does not enable programs to take greater control over change and lead students in a way that prepares them for a turbulent future.

There is a significant range in how and when LIT programs are currently reviewed. Cycles range from 5 to 10 years, with some schools not yet having an opportunity for a review, depending on how the program fits with institutional priorities. The nature of data collection varies greatly in depth, depending on the scope of the review process. This makes it very difficult for programs to analyze data in relation to other programs as well as identify trends that could have an impact on curricular development and industry needs.

Recommendations

Despite the limited resources available for establishing a collective agency to *actively* represent the broader interests of library technician programs in Canada, there is incredible opportunity to set a plan in motion to bring these programs together for the purposes of setting standards, goals, and explorative discussions. For this reason, the following recommendations are based on a 2 step process. Step one involves the introduction of an approval program that will lay the groundwork for a possible accreditation program. The second step involves the establishment of a fully developed accreditation program. Through the process of developing an approval program, many discoveries and conversations will occur. This initial step will function as the foundation in which benefits and challenges to quality assurance will be more fully explored. At this initial stage, a pilot program should be established. Such a program will assist the design team in clarifying standards, processes, policies and procedures. Based on an examination of issues relating to LIT programs in Canada, it is likely that this investigation will begin with a small group of interested parties and will expand as ideas take hold. The following recommendations are intended to provide some ideas and clarity on how LIT programs can proceed.

The U.S. Council on Postsecondary Accreditation sets out some very useful recommendations for establishing an accreditation program:

1. The agency must acknowledge that the institutions in which programs are to be evaluated have the right to be evaluated in a manner that is consistent with the purposes that are recognized by their greater institutions and their educational communities.
2. Must develop and analyze criteria in a manner that encourages program freedom and autonomy.
3. Always consider the evaluative process within the context of the goals and plans of the whole institution and its educational outcomes.
4. Supports, permits and encourages innovation. (1983, p. 416-420)

In creating an accreditation process, the program designers must remain sensitive to avoiding a high degree of *conformity*. While accreditation would outline minimum standards and benchmarks, it is not desirable to create carbon-copy versions of

programs across the country. This is one of the most significant challenges of accreditation – balancing minimum standards with program autonomy. Some ambiguity must be tolerated and viewed as a conduit for innovation.

As indicated in the article, “The Power of Accreditation”, “accreditation is neither neutral nor benign; it is not apolitical” (Harvey, 2004, 207). Consequently, it is *critical* that any system of accreditation that may be implemented respects the academic freedom of higher education. For this reason, the first recommendation for the implementation of accreditation is to ensure that requirements set out in the process remain *minimal*. In other words, accreditation outlines the minimum standards for library technician programs, acknowledging that programs can specialize and expand on these base requirements. These requirements would have to be collectively determined by the accreditation design team and would be part of the initial phase of development. By carefully considering the minimal conditions for accreditation and discussing the impact of these conditions, designers can work to ensure that there is not a power imbalance between practice and education. Such an imbalance impedes the pursuit of research and exploration that is essential to the academic process and can occur if there is not an open and involved discussion of what programs require for their continued development.

There are many potential participants in any modern-day accreditation process and it is very important that inter-agency relationships are fostered. For example, whether the accrediting agency worked under the auspices of the national association (the Canadian Library Association) or it was a new entity, it will require leadership and input from many segments of the library community. The process would NOT occur in isolation of the greater library community as this would greatly limit the program’s effectiveness in coordinating with other agencies. It must also be noted that accreditation would remain a voluntary process (as it is with most accreditation programs) with educational bodies deciding, on their own accord, whether the process would be beneficial to them.

In order to begin either process, certain guidelines and terminology must be established. Once this activity is complete, implementation can be phased in according to the needs determined by the participants. The difference between the two stages would be in the extent of implementation. Approved programs would act as potential pilot projects in which problems and solutions can be identified.

Once a program of accreditation has been established, Marcos Cerqueira advises that the responsible agency must ensure that it conducts research on the impact of accreditation, focusing on qualitative data (2006).

Program Design

The following outline of program design is only a suggested framework and requires further discussion and exploration from stakeholders. It must be observed that the rigour of accreditation should be dependent on many factors, including wide consultation, establishing minimal standards and others that have been previously outlined. All recommendations for design take into account that this process can be introduced in at least two phases, approval and accreditation. The following points highlight the key areas that are necessary to begin the process.

1. Design Task Force

In order to begin the design process, a task force that consists of stakeholders must be formed. The central participants should be heads of library technician programs or their faculty designates. Other possible participants include technician graduates who have demonstrated an interest in this process. Other constituents should include representatives of library technician associations and interest groups. Other members of the library community, including employers, should be consulted for input on factors that include outgoing competencies but they may not, necessarily, have a role on the design team in its initial stages. The community is broad and while representation and input is essential in the final outcome of accreditation, the design process must be limited to a reasonable number of invested and dedicated people who have a deep knowledge of library technician curriculum and the library technician context.. While it is up to the task force to determine the number of participants, it should not exceed 9 members in the interest of efficiency. The task force should be led by a chair and also have a separately appointed secretary. This task force would guide the approval/accreditation process through the following steps:

- a) Establishing major objectives for an Accreditation/Approval Agency. The task force will have to determine the scope of authority and control that such an agency would possess.

- b) Identifying possible representational bodies for overseeing the process. Because the Canadian Library Association is intended to, “build the Canadian library and information community and advance its information professionals” (Canadian Library Association), it would seem logical to have a national force to support this process. Certainly, such a role was identified in the Training Gaps Analysis (2006). However, the task force may be interested in developing an agency that works independently of CLA for the sole purpose of accrediting programs. Such an agency could be comprised of representatives from across Canada, pulled, potentially, from provincial associations. This may be an option if CLA is unable to support the project. It will be up to the task force to identify partners to build an accreditation agency, whether it is with CLA or a newly developed group. Once this is done, a member of the task force should be appointed the role of liaising with these partners while the accreditation agency and process is further developed.
- c) Reviewing CLA Guidelines for the Education of Library Technicians for the purpose of creating a Outcomes Assessment. Using the Outcomes Assessment Model included in this document, the task force can begin to outline program inputs for accreditation review and outcome measures. This activity is essential to clearly identifying what factors will be considered important to the evaluation process and how this process can be clearly mapped. Doing so will ensure that the process and standards are clear to programs when they prepare for the review process.
- d) Begin compiling outgoing proficiencies for library technician graduates. Although standards would, ultimately be defined by whatever accreditation body is established, the groundwork can be done at the Task Force level by a careful review of the CLA Guidelines.

2. Advisory Council / Committee

Once a design task force has established its stakeholders, identified its objectives, and has begun the process of identifying core competencies for the purposes of defining standards, an Advisory Council or Committee should be established to oversee the actual approval process. Unlike the design team, this council would be the authority that manages accreditation and would represent a wide variety of participants from the field. It is important to clearly articulate what the scope of this council or committee would be to ensure that members have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. The American Council for Postsecondary Accreditation offers some useful guidelines for the scope of such committees:

Scope of Council/Committee

- a) It is a non-governmental body.
- b) Demonstrates operational independence for making objective judgments relative to accreditation status, policies, procedures, and criteria.
- c) Possesses sufficient staff to maintain effective evaluation procedures.
- d) Fully discloses and makes public its evaluation policy as well as its decision making processes.
- e) Ensures all professional and academic qualifications of administrative and evaluative members are made publicly available.
- f) Reviews and modifies accordingly its evaluative criteria and procedures regularly.
- g) Clearly defines all terminology associated with accreditation process.
- h) Provides evaluation reports to institutions and programs
- i) Maintains confidentiality, [...] insofar as possible, of those aspects of the accreditation process which, if disclosed, would jeopardize the purposes of accreditation and weaken the process.

- j) Enables faculty, staff, administration and students to have the opportunity to discuss issues during an on-site visit.
 - k) Creates a method for relevant data collection which will, ultimately, provide self-evaluation for the purposes of improvement.
 - l) Provides consultative guidance throughout the process.
- (COPA, 1983, p. 416-419)

Shaping Accreditation Goals

It is important to distinguish between what the library profession wants graduates to have and what they need to have in order for them to be successful and productive in the workplace. Accreditation designers need to identify the core competencies of graduates from library technician programs, in order for the goals of accreditation to be synchronized with industry expectations and educational programs. However, these competencies should not simply be a shopping list of things “technicians can do”.

These competencies need to:

- Focus on the performance of the end-product or goal-state of instruction
- Reflect expectations that are an application of what is learned in the immediate instructional program
- Be expressible in terms of measurable behaviour
- Use a standard of judging competence that is not dependent on the performance of other learners
- Inform learners as well as other stakeholders about what is expected of them (Albanese & Mejicano, 2008, p. 252)

Once a core of competencies is known and agreed upon by the accreditation design team, they will have a clearer understanding of what the goals of accreditation will be. It should be noted that, “...the definition of competence is inextricably bound to local political, social and economic circumstances” (Albanese & Mejicano, 2008, p. 253). Consequently, much time and attention should be given to this exercise, if evaluation criteria are to be clear and measurable.

Definition of Standards used to Evaluate Programs

A definition of standards is integral to developing any form of measurement. Standards outline the scope of factors that will be examined in an approval/accreditation process. Refer to the **Appendix A: Accreditation Outline** in this document as a visual breakdown of standards used by the Association of Technology, Management, and Applied Engineering to assess programs using qualitative and quantitative data. The outline is most helpful in visualizing a process for assessment and is one of the few accreditation flow charts available that is very clearly expressed. Data is collected using two central processes:

1. The development and use of a program self-study. This study encompasses a reflective examination of the program, demonstrating some type of internal audit process (usually involving a variety of reports).
2. A site visit by an accreditation team where interviews, visual inspection and clarification of self study data occur.

The outline in **Appendix A** is a flow chart that illustrates how program inputs influence program operations and, in turn, interact with outcome measures. Together, these three categories allow those reviewing programs to understand the role of various inputs and their impact on final outcomes.

Program Inputs: these encompass the range of activities that influence the program from its core goals and mission to the actual curriculum. Much of the data for this process is collected through existing documentation on policies, standards, and statistics.

Program Operation: whether a program is accredited or not, all of the information amassed through program inputs are ultimately designed for the successful operation of the program. The operation of the program is most effectively measured through a

program self study. Self-study can demonstrate the effectiveness of instruction that includes:

- Motivation and counseling of students
- Scheduling of instruction
- Quality of instruction
- Observance of ethical standards
- Availability of resource materials
- Teaching and measurement of competencies
- Supervision of instruction
- Placement services for work experience (Slavik, 2010, p. 7)

Course syllabi provide clear guidance and should be incorporated into the self-study to articulate details of instruction including texts and other reference resources, evaluation criteria, content, course objectives, and student activities.

Outcome Measures: This area of investigation looks at the final outcomes of programs and their impact and influence on the industry in which graduates are being prepared. While there have been some informal studies done that have examined LIT graduate satisfaction, like annual surveys done for University of the Fraser Valley graduates, it is insufficient to accurately measure the success and relevancy of LIT education. Such surveys do not look beyond local communities and they are not developed in consultation with other programs. Their focus, therefore, is narrow. The outcomes measures include, but are not limited to:

- Determining graduate satisfaction.
- Whether students continue their education with advanced studies (i.e., a degree) as a measure of continued commitment to professional development
- Employer satisfaction with graduates
- Job advancements of graduates
- Advisory committee support and approval of the program

- Faculty participation in the development to the profession

It is possible to use the American Library Association's standards of accreditation as an aid to developing LIT accreditation standards. However, it is critical that the nuances of library technician education be carefully considered. For example, ALA accreditation standards are established for graduate level programs where students will already possess certain competencies that students new to LIT programs are not expected to have.

Process of Review

Without clearly defined goals, the process of evaluation can become unnecessarily complicated. Essentially, the review process should focus on programs:

- Demonstrating clear educational goals and objectives
- Applying evaluation criteria that ensures graduates possess a level of competency in the area that they are being prepared
- Conveying their mission into measurable goals
- Possessing a systematic and predictable means of gathering data
(Andrews, 1983, p. 449-356)

Evaluation should incorporate the use of qualitative and quantitative data if such a process is to be comprehensive and objective. However, it should be noted that while there may be many ways to approach the assessment of a program, focus should be on the measurement of quality, accreditation's key purpose. The use of program self-examination is central to this process because it stimulates the internal process of reviewing policies, procedures, and other records and gives the external review team very useful contextual information about the program's contribution to the field. In addition, the process gives programs a basis for future planning and research. Author H.R. Kells asserts that effective review requires that the self-study needs to be internally motivated and not simply a "response" to the accrediting body. In addition, he suggests that the program leader must be committed to the self-study process and the design must be relevant and meaningful to the program and its context within its institution.

Finally, accreditation must be well led, producing a readable report that acts as an enhancement of the self analysis, with self-improvement as the major product (1983). Following Kells guidelines will help avoid a costly administrative data collection process that may lose focus on quality enhancement. Without careful planning and leadership, review processes can fall prey to becoming procedural busywork. Thus, the self-study remains central to the process of accreditation as it can maintain focus on graduate benefits and encourage diversity (COPA, 1983, pp. 415-433). Ultimately, the self-analysis provides program faculty with an opportunity to articulate the program's philosophies and goals while also identifying ways to enhance their programs in a consultative and thoughtful manner.

Stakeholders

Essentially, the process of quality assurance must be driven by the educational programs seeking it. Thus, the primary stakeholders for an accreditation process would be library technician programs in Canada. Ideally, there should be involvement by the Canadian Library Association as well as provincial associations. Most importantly, however, is input and involvement by existing library technician graduates through their library technician interest groups and associations. While it is helpful to have input from all library sectors, the process of accreditation is intended to only examine the context and quality of library technician programs and not all librarians and administrators will have intimate knowledge of the nuances of these education programs. Library technician program advisory groups can also provide helpful advice and input, but they are also limited in providing guidance without direct authority and control. This is due to the autonomous nature of academe and the university (and college) model where they collaborate with industry but are not *directed by* industry. Those who have experience delivering post-secondary education and have a keen interest and understanding of library technician education are most valuable in assisting in the design of an evaluative process.

This does not negate the important role served by those working in the broader library and information science industry. For this reason, participation in the actual process of accreditation should include members of the library community. Employers would have a vested interest in supporting the process of review because they would be hiring staff who would be impacted by that process. Consultation with employers throughout the development and deployment of accreditation is essential to its success.

It is also absolutely critical to emphasize that the development and, later, composition of an accreditation design team and agency must be done carefully. It is vital to minimize the risk of creating a system where the interests of a limited cause influence the design and implementation process. In other words, the goal of accreditation is to remain focused on *quality improvement* and not become a method of advancing the interests of special groups. The library community must be clear that the process is NOT intended

to certify practitioners, as this can, “result in an effort to use accreditation inappropriately, and ineffectively, as a means for assuring the qualifications of individual practitioners” (Bender, 1983, p. 79). In fact, “accreditation should be used in ways that do not compromise its essential characteristics as a voluntary, self-regulatory, nongovernmental evaluation procedure (p. 75).

After library technician program administrators and faculty have identified the core goals of accreditation, it is logical to have those same individuals participate in the identification of accreditation planners as these “planners” will serve to support these core goals. Those who proceed with the process must remain sensitive to the fact that the process may take on additional stakeholders as time progresses to ensure that goals are broad and flexible. Thus, the accreditation development process, is an exploratory one where flexibility and adaptability are critical – much like libraries themselves.

Priorities for Creating a Successful Accreditation Program

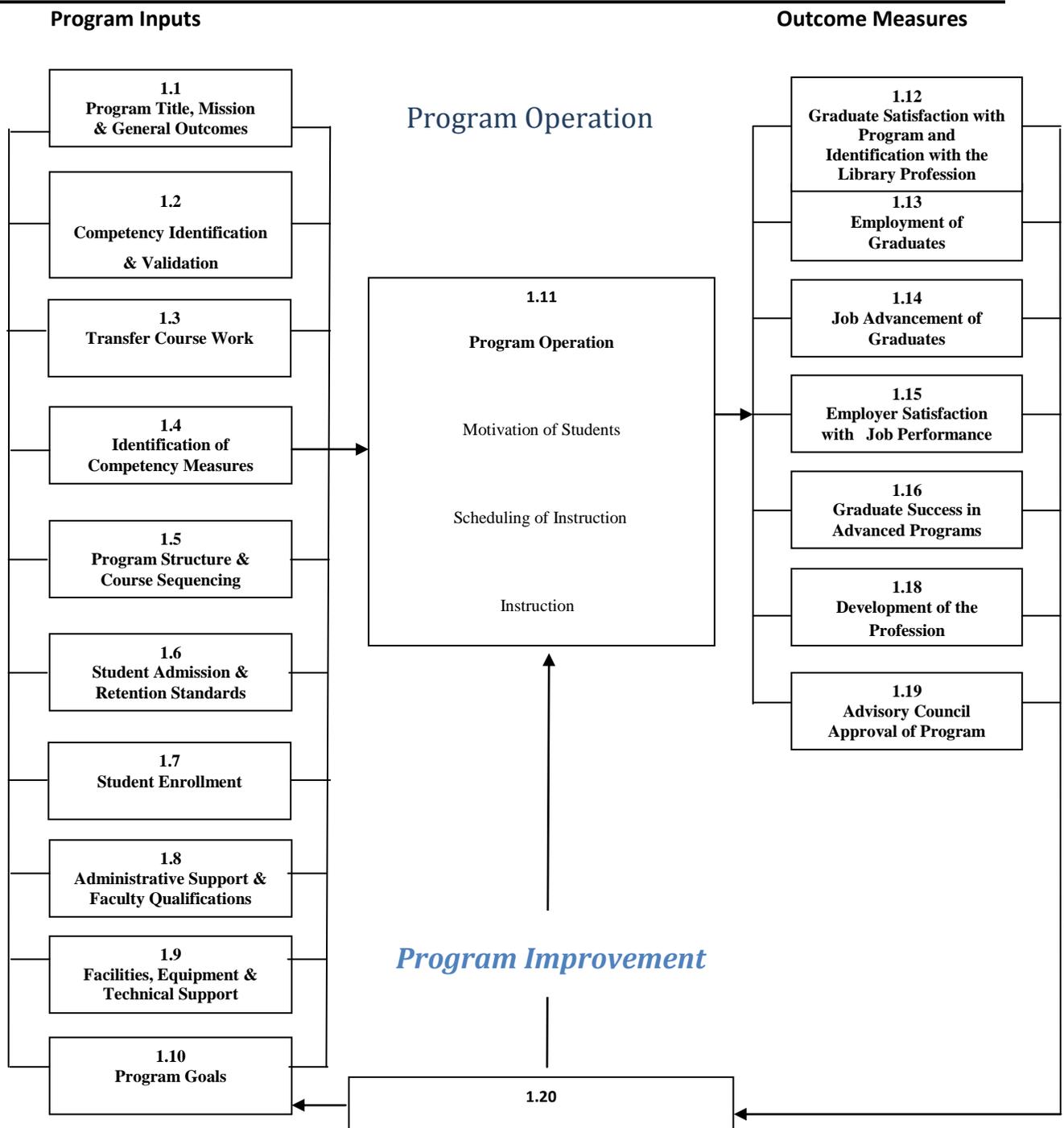
No matter what path is chosen for developing and encouraging quality improvement for library technician programs in Canada, there are some essential elements that are necessary for a healthy future of such programs:

- 1. Leadership.** Those wishing to participate in accreditation development need to provide guidance and leadership to their respective communities in order to garner understanding and support. A process of development needs to be determined including setting agendas, meetings, and on-going discussions.
- 2. Recognition.** Practitioners and their affiliated associations (including the Canadian Library Association, provincial and special interest associations) need to recognize the need for LIT input in discussions around human resource management for the field. In addition, any quality assurance system for LIT programs needs the recognition and respect of those in the field by providing ample opportunities for discussion, collaboration and participation, both in the design and implementation processes.
- 3. Committed Design Team.** Those who choose to participate in the design process of accreditation must demonstrate a strong interest and commitment to the process. The need for consultation and discussion requires individuals prepared to ask difficult questions about the role of LIT graduates and their role in the profession.
- 4. Resources.** Volunteer time to develop a process is an absolute necessity. Volunteers would come from faculty in the programs, association representatives and employers. The process will also necessitate securing other resources and qualified people to carry out the work of design, planning, and implementation. It may be possible to find support from professional organizations and grants.
- 5. Clearly Defined Expectations.** Initial meetings with an accreditation design team require defining the goals and outcomes of the project. It is essential that stakeholders have a clear sense of what the process will encompass and how it will be accomplished. Determining the process, procedures, and policies will provide the outline for the development of standards and, ultimately, the final program.

Appendix A: Accreditation Outline

The *Outcomes Assessment Accreditation Handbook* provides an excellent model in which to base an accreditation model. This is meant to be an illustrative guideline, not specific recommendations.

Outcome Assessment Accreditation Model



(The Association of Technology Management, and Applied Engineering, 2011).

Appendix B: Procedures for Self-Study

An effective self-study process is crucial to evaluation and it is an activity that all programs should be encouraged to develop, regardless of accreditation needs. The following recommendations from H.R. Kells' article, "Improving Institutional Performance Through Self Study" provide an excellent starting point to developing an effective system of self-study.¹

Answer Three Primary Questions:

1. What are the program's intentions or goals? Are they clear and appropriate? Useful?
2. Are the human, fiscal and physical resources used in the operation of the program available? Are there threats to their future availability?
3. Are the program goals being achieved? How can evidence that should be systematically acquired improve the program?

If self-study is used for the purposes of accreditation, one final question must be considered:

4. Are the standards set out by the accreditation body being met?

The following are basic steps to guiding the self-study process.

5 Steps to the Self-Study Process

1. Prepare for and Design the Study Process
 - a. Establish leadership and internal motivation
 - b. Draw up a specific list of local needs or issues
 - c. Identify local circumstances to take into account in designing the study
2. Organize the Study Process
 - a. Define tasks and roles
 - b. Establish a means for guiding the study – a steering structure
 - c. Select, orient, and train people
 - d. Obtain resources
 - e. Define the sequence of events
 - f. Establish coordination and communication mechanisms

¹ Kells, H.R. (1983). Improving institutional performance through self-study. In K.Young et al (eds.) *Understanding Accreditation: Contemporary Perspectives on Issues and Practices in Evaluation of Educational Quality*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pp. 126-130.

3. Pay Attention to the Mechanics of the Study Process
 - a. Work with stated intentions (goals) – clarify them and study them for consensus, completeness, and priority
 - b. Examine input, environment, program, and process
 - c. Review accreditation standards – use useful and valid criterion levels applicable to the institution or program
 - d. Use instruments to assist with gathering facts and opinions
 - e. Undertake goal achievement (outcome) studies
 - f. Discuss results and prepare a useful report
 - g. Use the results – implement changes

4. Use Peers
 - a. Use consultants
 - b. Use the team visit [where applicable]
 - c. Work well with outside organizations

5. Establish Cycles of Study and Planning
 - a. Use self-study as a basis for planning
 - b. Increase ongoing institutional research

Appendix C: Resources for Accreditation Design Team

American Library Association Office for Accreditation

Provides documentation and links to resources associated with the ALA's process of accreditation for master's programs.

<http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/accreditation/index.cfm>

Association of Accrediting Agencies in Canada (AAAC)

A support organization that provides training programs for accreditation teams

<http://aaac.ca/English/WhoWeAre.html>

Association of Technology Management, and Applied Engineering.

Outcomes Assessment Accreditation Model. A clearly expressed outline of accreditation as seen through the eyes of this organization.

http://atmae.org/accred/Outcomes_Assessment_Model%20022210mdsc.pdf

Australian Library and Information Association Accreditation of Courses

Provides information on the process for accreditation of courses.

<http://www.alia.org.au/education/courses/accreditation.html>

Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) Accreditation Instrument

While it is possible to peruse the entire CILIP site, this resource specifically outlines the process of accreditation including expectations from prospective applicants.

[http://www.cilip.org.uk/filedownloadslibrary/qualifications/accreditation%20\(web\)..Pdf](http://www.cilip.org.uk/filedownloadslibrary/qualifications/accreditation%20(web)..Pdf)

CLA Guidelines for the Education of Library Technicians

The revised guidelines for Canadian LIT programs.

http://www.cla.ca/Content/NavigationMenu/CLAAatWork/InterestGroups/LibraryTechnicians/CLA_LTIG_guidelines.pdf

Library Support Staff Certification (ALA)

Although not an example of "accreditation", this site can provide perspective on the direction ALA has chosen to take with addressing library support staff training and education.

<http://ala-apa.org/lssc/>

Young, K. (1983). Accreditation, a complex evaluative tool. In K. Young et al. (eds.)

Understanding Accreditation: Contemporary Perspectives on Issues and Practices in Evaluation Educational Quality. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Despite the date of publication, it is a seminal work, providing tremendous background to the process of accreditation.

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