

LLAMA Library Leadership and Management Competencies Task Force

Final Report

May 1, 2012

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Charge to the Task Force

The assignment for the Task Force is to recommend a framework within which LLAMA can design and manage professional competency lists. LLAMA has published a list of competencies.¹ The Task Force presents a framework for maintaining competency lists and for use in any proposed revision of the list or creation of a new list.

Summary of Task Force Recommendations

- 1 Adopt the following definition of competencies:
“Professional competencies comprise the knowledge, skills, and abilities which are teachable, measurable, and objective and which define and contribute to performance in librarianship.”
- 2 Create a standing Competencies Committee charged with periodic review of LLAMA’s competency statements
- 3 Adopt an evidence-based, stakeholder inclusive process for competency statement review by the Competencies Committee.

Activities of the Task Force

The Library Leadership and Management Competencies Task Force was appointed in March 2011. The formal charge to the Task Force is to “develop a model for reviewing, validating, and presenting a statement of competencies that will give coherence to the education and practice of library leadership and management.”

The Task Force met at ALA Annual Meeting in June 2011 and subsequently conducted its work through email exchanges and telephone conferences, through a work session at ALA Midwinter Meeting on January 21, 2012, and ongoing communication through spring 2012. A draft was posted for comment by all LLAMA members on ALA Connect in the month of March 2012 and the president of ALISE and the chair of the ALISE Council of Deans and Directors were advised of the work and invited to comment. The Task Force appreciates the comments received.

The Task Force identified a set of actions to be accomplished in compiling or reviewing professional competency lists. The set of actions was based on a review of literature relevant to

¹Shorlette Ammons-Stephens, Holly J. Cole, Keisha Jenkins-Gibbs, Catherine Fraser Riehle, and William H. Weare Jr., “Developing Core Leadership Competencies for the Library Profession,” *Library Leadership and Management* 23, 2 (Spring 2009): 63-74.

creation of professional competency statements by a variety of professional associations. This report states the Task Force's recommendations for ways LLAMA can address the required actions, recognizing that, in the broad view, the task of identifying professional competencies is a continual responsibility for the association and that the task is recurrent.

A Discussion of Professional Association Competency Statements

Definition

The question of definition is crucial. A formal definition understood by all who work on the task of identifying competencies will answer such questions as, What is the difference between professional competencies and personal or social qualities? Is a list of competencies a list of skills to be mastered in professional school or does the definition apply to some level of mastery of practice among working professionals? What is the difference between a professional competency and a standard of practice?² What is the difference between a competency and a belief? How does a competency differ from a personality trait?

The Task Force recommends the following definition:

“Professional competencies comprise the knowledge, skills, and abilities which are teachable, measurable, and objective and which define and contribute to performance in librarianship.”

In its focus on defining knowledge, skills, and abilities, the definition above is consistent with definitions used by other professional associations and by sociologists who have studied professions. The phrase “knowledge, skills, and abilities” is present in most association definitions. For example, the Federal Library and Information Center Committee's (FLICC) definition of competencies is “the knowledge, skills, and abilities that define and contribute to performance in a particular profession.”³

The Task Force extends the definition by adding that competencies also must be teachable, measurable, and objective. The addition incorporates the notion of formal knowledge, a component of the definition of professionalism. As sociologist Eliot Friedson wrote, ““A

² see the ACRL Cultural Competencies for confusion of these terms, http://connect.ala.org/files/REDC%20Diversity%20Standards%202011_0.pdf.

³ Federal Library and Information Center Committees' Competencies for Federal Librarians, 2011. Pages 4-12. http://www.loc.gov/flicc/publications/Lib_Compt/2011/2011Competencies.pdf. Accessed November 5, 2011.

professional is one who makes a living as an agent of formal knowledge, whether pure or applied."⁴

Competency statements are useful in training and education of professionals. They describe the abilities required to perform the work that professionals do but they are neither performance standards nor position descriptions, nor do they describe personal qualities and values. Assessment of degree of mastery of a competence is a matter that relates to individual performance in a particular position and should not be confused with a statement of competencies that define a profession.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are persons and organizations who are involved in a project or who are affected by the activities of a project. John Bryson, one of the early proponents of strategic planning, described a stakeholder as “any person, group or organization that can place a claim on an organization’s attention, resources or output, or is affected by that output.”⁵ That definition casts a broad net in this context.

There is a chain of consequences that ultimately makes the number of persons and groups that could be identified as stakeholders in declaration of competencies for library managers so large that their inclusion in a planning process is unmanageable. Every library patron, for example, is affected by the actions of library managers, and every person who interacts with a library patron is conceivably affected by something that patron did as a consequence of a library-related experience. Practically, a list of stakeholders to be consulted must be limited. The following list is classified in terms of the relationship each stakeholder has to LLAMA competencies.

Those expected to acquire or maintain competencies:

- library staff
- library managers
- library school students

⁴ Eliot Freidson, *Professional Powers: A Study of the Institutionalization of Formal Knowledge*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

⁵ John A. Bryson. A strategic planning process for public and non-profit organizations. *Long Range Planning*, 21,1 (1988): 73-81.

Those who provide education and training that leads to acquisition of competencies:

- library school educators
- continuing education providers
- human resources professionals

Those who depend on the performance of library managers

- institutional boards and officers to whom librarians report (e.g. public library boards, city managers, academic provosts, K12 school principals)
- library patrons

Those expected to acquire or maintain competencies clearly need to know what competencies are under consideration because they need to know what they are expected to learn. They have a stake in competency statement development for several reasons. First, competency lists may become their learning objectives, in whatever form of professional education they are involved. Second, knowing what is expected can help them as they consider whether they do in fact want to do work that is based on such competencies. Third, those involved in professional work, particularly those who are already managers, should have opportunities to comment on the validity of any proposed competency statement in terms of their perception of its real applicability to the work they are doing, or aspire to do.

Those who provide education and training that leads to acquisition of competencies have a vital stake because the competency statements prescribe a major portion of their work by declaring what their curricula, pedagogy, and teaching objectives should be. These stakeholders should have opportunities to comment on the feasibility of teaching proposed competencies. They should also have opportunities to comment on one association's proposed competencies in the context of other professional competencies for which they are responsible as teachers. Human resources professionals have at least a dual interest: 1, as those responsible for professional development they can comment on whether they can address proposed competencies through their programs; 2, they can comment on whether proposed competencies are suitable for inclusion in position descriptions, in terms of appropriateness to their workplaces, adherence to laws and regulations, and realism in the market for potential employees.

Those who depend on the performance of library managers must be represented in development of statements of professional competencies because librarians are almost always involved in a principal/agent relationship with their employment and patron constituencies. Competencies that are not based on the roles that managers play as agents of the entities that employ them are not likely to contribute to accomplishment of the purposes the employers have in mind. Likewise, competencies that are unrelated to the service outcomes that patrons have in mind are unlikely to lead to accomplishment of patrons' goals.

Validity and Reliability

Criteria for competency statements such as measurable, objective, relevant, and attainable are asserted in various association competency statements. These criteria make the competency statements valid. In order to be valid there must be a direct link between the statement and its correspondence to the practical work of the library profession.

A valid investigative procedure leads to outcomes that correspond to the way things actually are. A valid procedure for discovering competencies is one that leads to identification of competencies that are of actual importance in the world of professional practice. The keys to validity are examination of appropriate factual data and inclusion of appropriate stakeholders as reviewers.

A reliable investigative procedure leads to outcomes that are consistent from one application to the next. A reliable procedure for discovering competencies is one that can be used for studying a variety of professional settings without requiring that it be tailored for each situation. The key to reliability is design of a simple, explicit and readily manageable process.

The tools commonly used to validate competency lists are surveys, focus groups, and panels of experts or notables. A feasible process for a volunteer organization must rely on such tools. Consistent use of tested survey tools can be combined with reviews of research to produce satisfactory competency lists, with the caveat that these must be periodically reviewed.

Competency Statement Design and Review Process

A problem with many professional association competency documents is that they are the products of ad hoc efforts rather than the products of systematic, ongoing processes. LLAMA can distinguish itself by adopting a design and review process that specifies responsibilities and actions necessary to conduct periodic reviews in a way that is feasible for a volunteer organization and that uses tools which assure validity and reliability. LLAMA can establish

procedures and guidelines for the development and maintenance of leadership/management competencies.

The identification of professional competencies can be considered a component of a professional association's strategic planning processes. The responsibility of overseeing the process of developing and/or revising competencies lies with the LLAMA Leadership Coordinating Group, a division level group which coordinates the various strands of leadership development/programming/initiatives that already exist or that are proposed.

Members of the Leadership Coordinating Group include chairs of the Leadership Development Committee, the Mentoring Committee, the LLAMA/NMRT Joint Committee on Collaboration, the Task Force on Leadership Education, the Diversity Leadership Committee, and, the Task Force suggests, the chair of a new Competencies Committee. The Coordinating Group meets annually during the regular all-division committee meeting time to exchange information on leadership projects, goals, programming, etc.

The Task Force recommends the following charge for the Competencies Committee:

"To identify, develop, evaluate, and review library leadership and management competencies on a periodic, recurring basis; to submit recommendations concerning competency documents to the Leadership Coordinating Group."

The Competencies Committee periodic work plan would include the following responsibilities:

- Conduct a review of existing competency statements for coverage related to needs of stakeholders
- Collect and analyze field experiences and evaluations of existing competencies, including ones from other organizations
- Review research relating to competency documents, including ones from other organizations.
- Identify the need for revision of competency documents related to changed services or stakeholder requirements.
- Make the case for the need for new or strengthened competencies (evidence, product results, need, outcomes).
- Develop a narrative defining the competency, identifying the stakeholders, and focusing on the competency through the lens of reliability and validity relative to the stakeholder group.

- Distribute the narrative for comment by stakeholders.
- Review comments to identify any needed revisions.
- Compile the data and produce draft of competency development and resulting recommendations.
- Submit draft to Leadership Coordinating Group for comments and approval.
- Solicit final approval by LLAMA Board and Executive Committee.

Conclusion

Competency statements serve professional associations and their stakeholders as guides to what professionals do and as resources for planning professional development. Deep analyses of professional competencies would include research into real situations such as analysis of position descriptions and direct study of managers' activities. The Task Force recommends that LLAMA encourage more research by scholars on what library managers actually do and what really works in library management.

The Task Force also recommends that the new Competencies Committee, and LLAMA as an organization, should address the distinction between "leadership" and "management" for the purpose of developing competency statements. The distinction is important in terms of locating educational programs in the spectrum that goes from basic introductory courses to participation in advanced fellowships and institutes.

The new Competencies Committee will be formed according to LLAMA regulations, and member terms will follow the bylaws. The tasks described here will be carried out on a yearly basis, commencing at Annual conference. This Task Force makes these recommendations on the conviction that establishing competency development as an ongoing activity, conducted by a designated agency, according to specified processes, will lead to efficiency and effectiveness. Through this work, LLAMA will distinguish itself by ensuring the development and maintenance of leadership and management competencies to contribute to the education, practice, and professional development of library leadership and management.

Appendix a

Summary of Procedures for Competency Review

If, after review of existing competency documents, the LLAMA Competencies Committee decides to revise the list, the Task Force recommends the Committee use methods devised by the OPM and O*NET to revise the LLAMA Management Competencies. The process has three steps.¹

1, Make a draft list of competencies

OPM recommends that this step should include collecting information about the job “by reviewing existing materials that describe the work that is performed on the job. Such materials include: Position descriptions, Classification standards, Subject matter expert (SME) input, Performance standards, and Occupational studies.”² The Competencies Committee should be of appropriate size to assure that such work can be done collaboratively in a timely way.

2, Submit the draft list to stakeholders and constituencies for review using an online survey and ALA Connect

O*NET, an organization operating under contract to the US Department of Labor, provides model survey instruments which the LLAMA Competencies Committee could use.³ An example of the kind of questions about knowledge needed as posed by O*NET surveys is appended. In a volunteer organization such as LLAMA, it is important to use tools already developed and tested by agencies such as O*NET in order to facilitate the work and to make it comparable to work done by human resources professionals.

¹ The steps are based on Appendix G of U.S. Office of Personnel Management. *Delegated Examining Operations Handbook: A Guide for Federal Agency Examining Offices, May 2007*. http://www.opm.gov/deu/Handbook_2007/DEO_Handbook.pdf, accessed March 27, 2012. A more complete approach would also include a detailed job analysis, and while LLAMA might encourage researchers to conduct such analyses, performing job analyses on a regular cycle is not a feasible task for a volunteer association. “A job analysis identifies the competencies/KSAs directly related to performance on the job. It is a systematic procedure for gathering, documenting, and analyzing information about the content, context, and requirements of the job. It demonstrates that there is a clear relationship between the tasks performed on the job and the competencies/KSAs required to perform the tasks. For more details on job analysis, why job analysis is important, how to conduct job analysis, and legal requirements, visit: http://www.opm.gov/deu/Handbook_2007/DEO_Handbook.pdf#page=12 “

² *Ibid.*, 276.

³ O*NET Resource Center. O*NET Questionnaires. <http://www.onetcenter.org/questionnaires.html>, accessed March 27, 2012.

3, Analyze the survey data and ALA comments and revise the draft list based on consideration of data collected

The O*NET questionnaires use 5-point Likert-type scales. Five point scales, as used by O*NET in the sample appended to this report, are well established as most useful. Seven point scales can be used, but the refinements are of questionable value and may be collapsed into 5 point scales. Likert scales produce ordinal data, which can be ordered or ranked, but no measure of distance between rankings is possible. Any data analysis should use nonparametric statistical techniques appropriate for ordinal data.⁴

⁴ Allen, I. Elaine and Christopher A. Seaman. Likert Scales and Data Analyses. Statistics Roundtable, *Quality Progress*, July 2007.
<http://asq.org/quality-progress/2007/07/statistics/likert-scales-and-data-analyses.html>, accessed March 27, 2012.

Appendix b

Sample question from
O*NET Knowledge Questionnaire
Instructions for Making Knowledge Ratings

These questions are about work-related areas of knowledge. **Knowledge areas** are sets of facts and principles needed to address problems and issues that are part of a job. You will be asked about a series of different areas of knowledge and how they relate to *your current job* - that is, the job you hold now.

Each knowledge area in this questionnaire is named and defined. For example:

Economics and Accounting	Knowledge of economic and accounting principles and practices, the financial markets, banking, and the analysis and reporting of financial data.
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You are then asked two questions about each knowledge area:

A How important is the knowledge area to the performance of your current job?

For example:

How important is **ECONOMICS AND ACCOUNTING** knowledge to the performance of *your current job*?

Not Important* Somewhat Important Important Very Important Extremely Important

① ————— ② ————— ③ ————— ④ ————— ⑤

Note: An 'X' is marked through the number 4 in the original image.

Mark your answer by putting an **X** through the number that represents your answer. Do not mark on the line between the numbers.

***If you rate the knowledge area as Not Important to the performance of your job, mark the one [X] then skip over question B and proceed to the next knowledge area.**

B What level of the knowledge is needed to perform your current job?

To help you understand what we mean by level, we provide you with examples of job-related activities at different levels. For example:

What level of **ECONOMICS AND ACCOUNTING** knowledge is needed to perform *your current job*?

Answer billing questions from credit card customers Develop financial investment programs for individual clients Keep a major corporation's financial records

① ————— ② ————— ③ ————— ④ ————— ⑤ ————— ⑥ ————— ⑦

Note: An 'X' is marked through the number 5 in the original image.

Highest Level