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TO: Board of Directors
FROM: SLA Core Competencies Revision Task Force
DATE: 28 May 2014
RE: 2014 Revised Competencies

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the Board of Directors accept the revised draft competencies (attached), and consider taking the following steps as part of the implementation and embedding of the competencies into SLA and wider professional activities:
 - a) Further testing of the competencies (content, structure and format) with SLA membership;
 - b) A review and consideration of alternative or additional formats for presentation of the document (for instance, as an information graphic, as a Wikipedia-type living document, etc.);
 - c) Collaboration with the Professional Development Advisory Council and the Student and Academic Affairs Advisory Council to create an ongoing process for integrating the Competencies into activities undertaken by both Councils and SLA conferences and training; and
 - d) Establishment of and commitment to a process for regularly updating the Competencies, for example, every three years.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT: As the 2003 Special Committee on Competencies for Special Librarians noted, "...it is critical for a professional association to invest in the competency development of its membership. Although this 'return' cannot be financially measured, the qualitative return on this investment is priceless." In addition, as the profession continues to broaden and diversify, an updated and regularly revised Competencies statement will reflect the vibrancy of both the profession and the Special Libraries Association to potential members.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: The initial iteration of the SLA Competencies was published in 1997, and updated in 2003. The 2014 SLA Core Competencies Revision Task Force was charged with revising and updating the 2003 Revised Competencies document.

To accomplish that goal, the Task Force:

- a) reviewed Competency statements from multiple information- and library-related professional associations from multiple countries as well as the United States;
- b) sought and incorporated feedback from individual practitioners and special library communities;

- c) drafted an initial document that reflected changes the Task Force felt were appropriate both conceptually and in terms of language;
- d) based on time constraints, circulated the initial draft document informally to multiple channels such as regional chapter lists for review and feedback;
- e) incorporated feedback from that review into the final draft, which is presented here.

As an additional outcome of these activities, the Task Force suggests these potential questions for the Board to consider:

- a) How does the association ensure that it has gotten feedback/input from all members who would like to provide that feedback?
- b) How does the association present the document in formats that are usable, easily added to or updated, and actionable?
- c) How does the association ensure that the competencies are widely used by the PDAC, SAAAC, Click U, and for unit sessions for conferences?
- d) What other steps could the association take to support and/or promote efforts to incorporate the competencies into the professional life, growth, and opportunities of its members?

FINANCIAL IMPACT STATEMENT: Not applicable at this time; however, it is possible that the recommended process of soliciting feedback throughout the additional revision phases from multiple constituencies might require modest financial support.

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Reviewed by: 2014 SLA Core Competencies Revision Task Force Members

Submitted by: 2014 SLA Core Competencies Revision Task Force

COMPETENCIES FOR INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS OF THE 21ST CENTURY (2014)

WHAT ARE *INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS*?

Information Professionals are individuals who use information strategically in their work to help their organizations and/or clients meet key goals. Information professionals accomplish this through various means, including gathering, developing, deploying, and managing information resources and services. Information professionals harness a variety of existing and emerging information tools, such as collaborative technologies and social media, to accomplish goals. Information professionals include, but are not limited to, librarians, knowledge managers, chief information officers, information analysts, taxonomists, web developers, information brokers, and consultants.

WITHIN WHAT TYPES OF ENVIRONMENTS DO INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS WORK?

Information professionals work in many different types of environments. Some may be part of, and located within, an organization's centralized library or information center. Others may be part of the library's team and perform their work "embedded" in other departments as a key contributor to that department's goals and deliverables. Still others may work as embedded information professionals for organizations that have no centralized library or information center. An independent information professional may be found contributing information management skills across a very broad, diverse spectrum of clients, including special libraries.

In the information and knowledge age, information professionals play a unique role in gathering, organizing, creating, analyzing, synthesizing and coordinating access to the best available information sources for the organization as a whole. They are leaders in devising and implementing standards for the ethical and legal use of information.

They provide the competitive edge for the knowledge-based organization by responding with a sense of urgency to critical information needs. Information, both internally- and externally-produced, is the lifeblood of the knowledge-based organization and essential for innovation and continuous learning. Information sharing is also essential for any organization that is attempting to understand and manage its intellectual capital, often in a global context.

The 2014 Competencies revision provides a set of tools for professional growth, recruitment, and assessment. Specific jobs will require specific sets of competencies at various skill levels. The goal of the 2014 Competencies statement is to create a roadmap of growth and development for you, your colleagues and your organizations.

VALUES AND COMPETENCIES

Two core values anchor the information professional. As educated professionals, information professionals understand the value of developing and sharing their knowledge; this is accomplished through association networks and by conducting and sharing research at conferences, in publications and in collaborative arrangements of all kinds.

Information Professionals' Core Values

- I. Information professionals contribute to the knowledge base of the profession by sharing best practices and experiences, and continue to learn about information products, services, and management practices throughout the life of their career.
- II. Information professionals commit to professional excellence and ethics, and to the values and competencies of the profession.

In addition, information professionals embrace and model the values of:

- Accountability
- Competency
- Confidentiality
- Dependability
- Ethical behavior
- Fairness
- Honesty
- Integrity
- Perseverance
- Responsibility
- Trustworthiness

In order to fulfill their purpose, information professionals require both personal and professional competencies:

Professional Competencies relate to the practitioner's knowledge of information resources, access, technology and management, and the ability to use this knowledge as a basis for providing the highest quality information services. There are three major competencies, each augmented with specific skills:

- A. Creating and Maintaining Collaborative Relationships
- B. Managing Information Resources and Information Services
- C. Understanding and Applying Information Tools and Technologies

In order to translate these Professional Competencies into actionable guidelines, Applied Scenarios illustrate many of the myriad roles and responsibilities that information professionals perform in organizations of all types.

Personal Competencies represent a set of attitudes, skills and values that enable practitioners to work effectively and contribute positively to their organizations, clients and profession. These competencies range from being strong communicators, to demonstrating the value-add of their contributions, to remaining flexible and positive in an ever-changing environment.

PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES

A. *CREATING AND MAINTAINING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS*

In order to effectively contribute their expertise, information professionals must be skilled at building and maintaining positive, trust-based, collaborative relationships with key stakeholders. Depending on the information professionals' work environments, key stakeholders may include Information Center users, organization management, fellow team/department members, or clients, among others. (The term "organization" is used broadly here, encompassing corporate, education, public, government, non-profit, and other entities.) Information professionals excel at identifying, contributing, and managing high-value information assets for organizations and clients whose markets are constantly changing and in which both high-tech and high-touch are vitally important to achieving organizational success.

A.1 Aligns information skills and resources with, and is supportive of, the strategic directions of the parent organization or of key client groups through partnerships with key stakeholders and suppliers.

A.2 If managing a centralized information department or library, assesses and communicates the value of that organizational asset, including information services, products and policies to senior management, key stakeholders and client groups.

A.3 Establishes effective management, operational and financial management processes and exercises sound business and financial judgments in making decisions that balance operational and strategic organizational considerations.

A.4 Contributes effectively to senior management strategies and decisions regarding information applications, tools and technologies, and policies for the organization.

A.5 If managing a centralized information department or library, builds and leads an effective information services team and champions the professional and personal development of team members.

A.6 Actively seeks out opportunities to demonstrate and contribute professional expertise to advance the organization's or clients' strategic goals.

A.7 Gathers the best available evidence to support decisions about the development of new services and products, the modification of current services, or the elimination of services to continually improve the strategic value of information services provided.

A.8 Advises the organization and/or client on copyright and intellectual property issues and compliance.

Applied Scenarios

- Develops and/or contributes to strategic and business plans that support the organization's goals, whether as a team member of a centralized information center or an information professional working within an operational team. Leads or participates in the establishment of long-term stretch targets and near-term priorities for the information center, the operational team, or the broader organization.
- Contributes to a shared vision and helps create a compelling mission for the organization (and its Information Center/Library, as appropriate) that energizes colleagues to work towards achieving its goals. As an organizational librarian or embedded information professional, collaborates with key stakeholders to meet and exceed expectations.
- Explores the information-using behaviors and anticipates the needs of current and potential client groups or team members to identify concepts for new or enhanced information solutions. Develops these concepts into tailored information products and services that align with strategic business goals.
- Negotiates clear performance expectations for the Information Center/Library staff or for his/her own performance linked to organizational or team strategies and priorities.
- Identifies professional development needs for staff members and/or self and pursues the requisite knowledge.
- Calculates a return on investment for acquiring potential information services and products to determine the value of their acquisition within the budget constraints and strategic goals of the organization or department.
- Clearly demonstrates the value-add of the centralized Information Center/Library (and staff) or other information professionals to team members and key stakeholders through communications with senior management.
- Develops or implements information policies and strategies to ensure access to organizational assets including intellectual property and business records.

B. MANAGING INFORMATION SERVICES AND RESOURCES

Information professionals work with leadership of the organizations in which they are employed to thoroughly understand business objectives. With that knowledge, they continuously assess information-seeking behaviors and needs of colleagues to implement a strategy for procuring and providing access to a portfolio of services and resources that are designed to enhance learning, productivity, and competitive advantage. Responsibilities may include some or all of the following activities, depending on business priorities established by the parent organization.

B.1 Communicates regularly with organization's leadership and stakeholders to understand and address information needs and gaps, devices and workflow tools being used, and business priorities.

- B.2** Develops policies for externally-published and internally-created information and knowledge assets under management; advises on the implementation of these policies, including copyright compliance, privacy, and intellectual property protection.
- B.3** Actively monitors the continuously-expanding universe of information resources, including publications, databases, data sets, and social media, and tools for text-mining, data mining, or data visualization, and then matches resources to client groups within the organization.
- B.4** Prepares budget for and manages a dynamic portfolio of information resources and services aligned with the strategic goals of the organization and designed to facilitate learning, decision-making and mitigation of risks.
- B.5** Assesses how the organization creates, acquires, shares, and archives information resources. Audits and maps information and knowledge assets available within the organization in order to advise clients about resources relevant to various business activities.
- B.6** Delivers custom services, including consulting, training, curation, in-depth research, data analysis, briefings and alerts, database design, and metadata and taxonomy development.
- B.7** Researches, analyzes and synthesizes information into actionable steps or accurate answers to efficiently and effectively deliver on client assignments.
- B.8** Proactively introduces to the organization tools and technology that offer productivity gains in terms of access, sharing, and integration of information and knowledge.
- B.9** Critically evaluates and negotiates fees and licensing terms for subscription-based information products and services.
- B.10** Identifies and provides pointers to high-quality, business-relevant, open source and Internet resources.
- B.11** Designs consistent repeatable data and analytics reporting and also collects anecdotal evidence to measure the quality, impact, and value of information offerings, and to take appropriate action to ensure the relevancy of all offerings within the portfolio.

Applied Scenarios

Communication and Relationship-building

- Convenes focus groups and small-group discussions to keep abreast of information needs and knowledge management challenges.
- Participates on project teams with the goal of contributing information that will speed decisions and enhance the quality of outcomes.
- Works as an embedded information professional within strategically-important departments or business units to understand and actively support business objectives with timely, actionable information.
- Employs social media to inform and solicit feedback from clients and potential clients in the organization.
- Coordinates vendor training for user groups.

Policy

- Communicates content license terms and conditions and checks for compliance.
- Establishes document retention schedules and access procedures to meet regulatory requirements.
- Works with content owners to establish permission and access levels for internal knowledge collections.

Content

- Critically examines content, features and functionality of resources available from multiple vendors and negotiates cost-effective contracts.
- Acquires information resources that are appropriate in terms of format, language, content, and coverage to meet needs of specific user groups.
- Compares free versus fee resources to determine if value-added features warrant the cost.
- Classifies, preserves, and makes accessible technical reports, standards, best practices guidelines and other internal documents for ongoing use.

Deliverables

- Tailors information services to meet the specific needs and usage patterns of clients.
- Curates new client-specific information collections and sources from externally-published and internally-created resources.
- Analyzes large volumes of information or data and provides syntheses or summaries that are accurate and actionable.
- Delivers output in format most usable to client, including in charts, graphs, slide decks, spreadsheets, databases, and custom report templates.
- Develops alerts and briefing services such as competitive intelligence, business intelligence, industry monitors, topic or issue indicators.
- Educates users on content, policy, and technical topics in-person or via e-learning modules.

Metrics

- Monitors usage of information and knowledge resources as a measure of value and return on investment.
- Surveys clients to assess overall satisfaction with information resources and services.
- Collects and quantifies feedback from product trials for use in expanding portfolio of services and resources.
- Collects anecdotes and stories from clients that describe impact of information resources and services on business activities to establish value of those resources and services.

C. UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING INFORMATION TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGIES

Information professionals harness the current and appropriate technologies and systems to deliver the best services; provide the most relevant and accessible resources; develop and deliver teaching in information literacy to maximize clients' use of information and capitalize on the library and information environment of the 21st century.

C.1 Maintains awareness of emerging technologies and their implications for service provision; advises and champions, where necessary, introduction of such technologies in their organization.

C.2 Keeps up to date and applies expertise in searching as well as database development, indexing, metadata, and information analysis and synthesis to improve retrieval and use of internal and external information.

C.3 Assesses, selects and applies current and emerging information technologies and services (e.g., databases, catalogs, search engines, websites and social media) and uses these to create information access and delivery solutions.

C.4 Protects the information privacy/data of clients as well as intellectual property rights and maintains awareness of, and responses to, new challenges to privacy/data protection or intellectual property rights.

C.5 Teaches and advises on the use of information technologies and services throughout their organization. Provides direct, clear and actionable feedback to peers and partners.

Applied Scenarios

- Actively partners with technology vendors, championing the users' perspective by providing feedback, suggesting improvements, and keeping the needs of the clients in the forefront.
- Maintains awareness of emerging technologies through horizon scanning, experimenting with new technologies, reading professional and popular blogs, feeds and literature, participating in peer dialogs, and attending courses, workshops, and conferences.
- Actively participates in advising all levels of the organization on how technology trends will affect the organization and the clients.
- Leads organizational technology initiatives by forming partnerships, obtaining buy-in of upper management, overseeing the project management life-cycle, and communicating to all critical levels of the organization.
- Actively participates in exploring, testing, selecting and using new technology tools as they are developed.
- Maintains awareness of the latest policy and legislative initiatives that will impact privacy, accessibility, and openness of information use and transfer, intellectual property and technology deployment.
- Educates others in the use of information tools and technologies in a variety of ways, from training people in finding the information they want on the Internet or in proprietary databases to integrating information tools into their clients' workflow or curriculum.
- Institutes processes and practices that ensure internal online content is recorded and captured for future use and organizational memory/history purposes.
- Researches, plans and designs technology systems for storing, retrieving and manipulating data and information.

PERSONAL COMPETENCIES

Personal competencies both underlie and drive the value provided by an information professional, who:

- Plans, prioritizes and focuses on what is critical, based on the strategic goals of the parent organization.
- Is entrepreneurial and innovative in applying information services, solutions, and skills.
- Is adaptable, flexible, able to transition into new roles and responsibilities to meet the changing needs of the organization.
- Seeks out challenges, prepares for, and capitalizes on new opportunities.
- Actively listens, problem solves, and communicates effectively.
- Negotiates confidently and persuasively.
- Develops active partnerships and alliances.
- Builds an environment of mutual respect and trust; respects and values diversity.
- Develops interpersonal skills to influence and employs a team approach; recognizes the balance of collaborating, leading and supporting.
- Takes calculated risks; shows courage and tenacity when faced with opposition or competition.

- Embraces lifelong learning, demonstrates personal career planning and professional development and networking.
- Balances work, family, and community responsibilities.
- Celebrates achievements for self and others, acting as a mentor to nurture discovery.

Applied Scenarios

Plans, prioritizes and focuses on what is critical....

- Seeks out, interprets, and supports the strategic mission and goals of the organization and/or department to apply appropriate information skills, services, and resources.
- Allocates and aligns key assets (including staff, information resources, capital, and time) with the stated goals of the organization and/or department.
- Continually evaluates activities and time commitments within the framework of “critical path to goal,” distinguishing nice-to-have from need-to-have.
- Frames individual goals and objectives as well as those of direct reports to ensure alignment with both short- and long-term organizational objectives.

Is entrepreneurial and innovative....

- Actively seeks opportunities, asserts an ambitious spirit and drive backed up by an ability to get things done.
- Regularly monitors the external and internal environments to identify problems or challenges for which an information product or service could be the preferred solution.
- Understands and is able to execute the strategy and steps necessary to move an innovative or creative idea into an entrepreneurial solution.
- Encourages and supports new ideas and untried approaches from self and others.

Is adaptable, flexible....

- Understands and accepts that change drives growth and opportunities, and takes a positive attitude toward assuming new roles and responsibilities for self and team.
- Models flexibility and helps colleagues accept change with enthusiasm and optimism, whenever possible.
- Focuses on the professional opportunity inherent in change, even extreme change, rather than fearing or resisting it.
- Able to deal with complexity and multiple shades of "gray."

Seeks out challenges....

- Pushes beyond comfort zone to take on new challenges, propose and support initiatives, and work with others to create new solutions or opportunities.
- Actively pursues new roles in the organization that require an information leader.
- Regularly scans for new ideas both within and beyond the library and information science field to anticipate future trends and changes, to suggest potential implications (both negative and positive), and to help the organization position for both.
- Watches for organizational problems that would respond to knowledge sharing.
- Seeks out key stakeholders within other departments to better understand their roles and information needs and identify where information could become a strategic asset.

- Strives to learn new skills, master new knowledge, and try new solutions as a regular part of professional growth, whether or not prescribed in the job.

Actively listens, problem solves....

- Presents ideas clearly, succinctly and confidently in the format preferred by the decision-maker and in the "language" of the recipient or audience.
- Demonstrates a professional, receptive presentation style appropriate to the needs of the audience.
- Utilizes stories when appropriate to illustrate the message.
- Seeks clarification of questions if necessary before responding.
- Provides actionable feedback to clients and partners.
- Focuses on moving toward solutions rather than assigning blame or fault.
- Studies and learns from those who demonstrate communication and/or problem-solving skills.

Negotiates confidently....

- Learns and uses effective negotiating strategies to meet the organization's information needs, while building positive relations with key providers.
- Understands, prioritizes, and balances issues of cost, quality, comprehensiveness, and reliability when negotiating for information products and services.
- Balances the interests of the organization and one's own interests (e.g., raise, promotion, expanded responsibilities) when negotiating one's career.

Develops active partnerships....

- Seeks alliances with other departments, such as information technology, product development, development, communication, marketing, to optimize complementary knowledge and skills.
- Collaborates with other information professionals and services inside and outside the organization to optimize resource and knowledge sharing, while not jeopardizing proprietary information.
- Seeks alliances and shares observations with content and technology suppliers and other information providers to improve products, services and operations.
- Seeks alliances with researchers in university faculties of library and information studies, iSchools and in management programs to conduct research, if beneficial to the organization.

Builds an environment of mutual respect and trust....

- Treats others with respect and values diversity.
- Creates a problem-solving environment in which everyone's contribution is valued and acknowledged, and helps others optimize their contribution to strengthening the team.
- Exhibits autonomy and responsibility in alignment with teamwork and partnership.
- Advocates for a work environment that encourages and supports ongoing knowledge development and that values individuals' contributions.
- Maintains a positive solution-oriented attitude and inspires others to do the same.

Develops interpersonal skills to influence....

- Strives to become a knowledge asset in her/his department and seeks them out elsewhere in the organization to facilitate knowledge sharing.

- Knows own strengths and recognizes others' complementary skills and knowledge needed to build an effective team, whether in one's department or across the organization.
- Actively participates and contributes (research, note taking, networking, questions) to teams or groups one is involved with--doesn't simply observe.
- Sets clear goals. Delivers on time and on target and expects the same from others.
- Works as part of the team regardless of one's position or level.
- Develops and uses leadership and collaboration skills.
- Keeps abreast of trends in leadership skills and styles, using this knowledge to help self and others develop the most effective and appropriate approaches to varying challenges.
- Willing to share leadership or to follow when in the best interests of the group.

Takes calculated risks....

- Works closely with those in power who may say "no" in order to clearly understand what's required to arrive at "yes."
- Pays attention to timing and other environmental indicators to ensure there's a reasonable chance of success.
- Makes convincing case for resources and staffing, submitted in the medium in which management best receives information (verbally, in writing, individually, in a group).
- Pursues positions or projects outside the information service department or library to gain a better understanding of how other functions apply information in their work; uses this understanding to create innovative services and programs that facilitate the roles of management and clients.
- Learns to work in the "white space" of an organizational chart, to anticipate providing what is next needed, while sustaining essential assigned responsibilities.
- Asks "what's the worst that can happen?" and, if one can live with the answer, pursues it.

Embraces lifelong learning....

- Is committed to a career that involves ongoing learning and personal growth. Takes responsibility for finding opportunities for learning and enrichment as well as for long-term career planning.
- Maintains a strong sense of self-worth based on a balanced set of evolving personal and professional goals.
- Seeks out performance feedback from management, clients and/or mentors and uses it for continuous improvement.
- Regularly scans for new ideas both within and beyond the library field to anticipate the future, "guesstimate" its implications, and carves out new opportunities.
- Envisions his/her individual "preferred" future and maps a path for arriving there.
- Anticipates a coming need that is now no one's responsibility, and develops skills for coping.
- Actively participates in and contributes to SLA and other professional associations, sharing insight, knowledge and skills; benchmarks against other information service providers and to form partnerships.
- Recognizes the need for a forum where information professionals can communicate and speak with one voice on important information policy issues, such as copyright and the global information infrastructure.

- Contributes towards the building and maintenance of a strong profession, thereby enhancing its value in the eyes of colleagues, clients and the broader community.

Balances work, family, community responsibilities....

- Supports self and others in the continual search for a balanced lifestyle.
- Optimizes opportunities for all to lead healthy and satisfying professional and personal lives.
- Remains flexible and positive in a time of continuous change and willingly assumes evolving responsibilities.
- Develops a personal cohort within or outside one's professional field, with which to resolve challenges/share victories.

Celebrates achievement for self and others....

- Nominates deserving employees and colleagues for awards in the organization, association, or community.
- Creates and contributes towards an environment where achievements, large and small, are acknowledged, celebrated, and rewarded.
- Looks for learning and leadership opportunities for staff, and mentors team members in becoming their best.
- Leads by example, shouldering more than one's share of the thankless tasks.
- Encourages collaboration and knowledge sharing in the organization and within the profession.
- Celebrates own success and that of others, taking pride in jobs well done.