

Chapter 18

LIS Undergraduate Education in New Zealand: Development and Contemporary Issues

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ABSTRACT

This chapter reviews and discusses Library and Information Science (LIS) undergraduate education in New Zealand over the past 30 years, and identifies issues and research needs. It examines contemporary issues facing LIS education in a rapidly changing information environment, affected by a particular historical and social context and changes to the higher education sector nationally and internationally. Issues include professionalization, the tension between education and continuing professional development, the difficulty of keeping programmes up to date and reflective of industry needs in times of fiscal restraint, and the complexities of the particular student body, as well as changes in the LIS sector more generally. It highlights research needs and shows how professional associations and LIS educators are addressing these issues through a range of solutions designed to strengthen the library, records, and archives professions.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a critical review of Library and Information Science (LIS) education in New Zealand, focusing on the undergraduate level. It outlines the background to the development of

LIS undergraduate programmes, discusses what is offered currently, and evaluates some of the issues faced by LIS educators and the profession more broadly, in a small country, in a rapidly changing information environment. This period change is occurring within a context of increasing fiscal

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restraint and misconceptions about the value of libraries, records and archives by many policy makers and educational administrators leading to a “They can just Google it instead” approach to funding decisions.

New Zealand has a wide range of libraries, archives and information repositories, with the National Library of New Zealand and Archives New Zealand foremost amongst them. There is also a strong public library sector, eight universities with a variety of libraries embedded within them to meet the needs of faculty and students, libraries within the polytechnic education sector, and school, corporate, government and special libraries of various sizes. There is an even wider range of agencies involved in the management of government and community records and of heritage and archival materials, ranging from local authorities to *Iwi* (Māori tribal groups). There is also an increasing number of private individuals collecting, preserving, and storing the history of New Zealand as it relates to their community or family history.

New Zealand requires people with a wide range of skills at management, professional and paraprofessional levels to meet this wide range of information needs within the community. There are a variety of programmes offered at post-graduate, undergraduate, and diploma level to fulfil this demand. This chapter discusses the development of and issues faced by library and recordkeeping (archives and records) undergraduate education in New Zealand over the past 30 years, with primary focus on undergraduate distance library education as this has the largest number of students. These issues included here are:

- The move towards professionalization
- Diversity of the student body.
- Student demographics impact currency and completion of qualifications
- Balancing cost with currency in programme development.

- The tension between ‘education’ and ‘continuing professional development’
- Competing programmes and LIANZA’s ‘bodies of knowledge’

Postgraduate library and recordkeeping education has been discussed by Chawner and Oliver (2012) who also include a more general historical perspective on LIS education in New Zealand since the early 1900s, and interested readers should consult their work. A detailed discussion of LIS education in New Zealand and the Pacific can be found in Ronnie (1996).

The chapter presents a historical background of New Zealand and an outline of the library and recordkeeping environment in New Zealand, including professional registration. It then outlines the background to and development of LIS undergraduate education, and the current programmes and students. Major issues are identified, and some solutions and directions for future research presented. The authors draw on their experiences as lecturers in the main LIS undergraduate programme.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

New Zealand is group of islands in the South Pacific with a population of almost 4.5 million people; one third of whom live in the city of Auckland in the north of the North Island. The geography and topography of New Zealand together with the disparity of population density between Auckland and the other urban and regional centres, and a strong rural constituency, has lead to particular challenges for the delivery of community services, not least libraries, archives and other information services.

New Zealand is a bicultural country: 67.6 percent of the people have European heritage, 14.6 percent belong to the indigenous Māori. New Zealand is also a country of migrants: 22.9 percent

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