National Vocational Qualifications and paraprofessional education in the information and library services

PLEASE CITE THE PUBLISHED VERSION

PUBLISHER

Loughborough University

LICENCE

REPOSITORY RECORD

Coker, Gillian. 2021. "National Vocational Qualifications and Paraprofessional Education in the Information and Library Services". Loughborough University. https://doi.org/10.26174/thesis.lboro.14610186.v1.

National Vocational Qualifications and paraprofessional education
in the information and library services

by

Gillian Coker, B.A. (Hons)

A Master's Dissertation, submitted in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
Master of Arts degree of the
Loughborough University.

September 1996

Supervisor: Dr. Anne Goulding, B.A., M.A., Ph. D.
                Department of Information and Library Studies

G.Coker, 1996

LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND LIBRARY STUDIES

DISSERTATION ACCESS FORM

copy no _____   location_____

Author *Coker, G.*

Title *National Vocational Qualifications*
and Paraprofessional Education in the Information
and Library Services.

STATUS OF ACCESS (delete as needed):   OPEN / ~~RESTRICTED~~ / ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

MORATORIUM PERIOD: _____ years, ending _____ / _____19____

CONDITIONS OF ACCESS APPROVED BY (capitals): _____

SUPERVISOR: __*DR. A. Goulding*_____

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION: I AGREE THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:

OPEN access work shall be made available (in the University and externally) and reproduced as necessary at the discretion of the University Librarian or Head of Department. It may also be copied by the British Library in microfilm or other form for supply to requesting libraries or individuals, subject to an indication of intended use for non-publishing purposes in the following form, placed on the copy and on any covering document or label. The statement itself shall apply to ALL copies:

> THIS COPY HAS BEEN SUPPLIED FOR NON-PUBLISHING PURPOSES ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT IT IS COPYRIGHT MATERIAL AND THAT NO QUOTATION NOR ANY INFORMATION DERIVED FROM THE DISSERTATION MAY APPEAR IN PUBLISHED FORM WITHOUT PRIOR WRITTEN CONSENT BY OR VIA THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN

RESTRICTED/CONFIDENTIAL work: All access and any photocopying shall be strictly subject to written permission from the University Head of Department and external sponsor if any.

Author's signature _____   Date __*3. 9. 96*__.

USER'S DECLARATION FOR SIGNATURE DURING ANY MORATORIUM PERIOD (NOT OPEN WORK):

I UNDERTAKE TO UPHOLD THE ABOVE CONDITIONS:

Name (capitals) _____

Address _____

_____

_____

Signature _____

Date _____

(continue overleaf if necessary)

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine how the new Library and Information Services National Vocational Qualifications (ILS NVQs) fit in with existing paraprofessional education.

This research highlights and answers some of the questions being raised relating to the difference between ILS NVQs and other paraprofessional qualifications, and analyses whether there is a future for existing qualifications and, if so, how these qualifications will adapt. This study assesses whether ILS NVQs bridges the gap between non-professionals and professionals, what employers and trainers think about the NVQ initiative and most importantly, what paraprofessionals themselves think about their educational prospects.

The study begins with a review of the literature and focuses particularly on the need for education and training, existing qualifications such as the City and Guilds and BTEC Awards, ILS NVQs and the future relationship between the City and Guilds Library and Information Assistants Certificate and ILS NVQs.

Evidence of what paraprofessionals and their trainers think about paraprofessional education and training is gathered from a questionnaire and interviews. The results suggest that there is a demand for the ILS NVQs and they fill a gap in the market for paraprofessional education.

Acknowledgements

Contents

List of tables

Chapter 1
Introduction

Aims and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to examine how the new Library and Information Services National Vocational Qualifications relate to existing paraprofessional education. Its objectives are to highlight and answer some of the questions that are now being raised, such as:

* what exactly is the difference between ILS NVQs and other paraprofessional qualifications?

* is there a future for existing qualifications?

* can existing qualifications be adapted to provide the 'underpinning knowledge' required by NVQs, or will in-house training be more effective?

* will NVQs again 'muddy the waters' between professionals and 'non-professionals'? Level 3 NVQ is aimed at the senior library assistant, level 4 the professional, is there a progression or a cut-off point?

* what do employers and trainers think about the NVQ initiative? Did they recognise the other qualifications?

* do para-professionals think that NVQs will advance their careers and get their skills recognised? What is in it for them?

Background

Para-professional education has always posed problems for senior management in information and library services. Often it has been ignored or seen as irrelevant. This neglect can be seen as being closely linked with the lack of a coherent training strategy for para-professionals. Indeed, it has only recently become recognised that 'non-professionals' such as library and information assistants and senior library assistants have training and education needs different, yet equally important to those of professionals. There are some formal qualifications available to para-professional staff such as the City and Guilds Library and Information Assistants Certificate and BTEC National Certificate. Access to them is patchy, however. Most organisations also offer some sort of in-service training.

This work reflects the author's own interest in para-professional education and training, having worked as a library assistant and senior library assistant for many years.

Terminology

At this point it is well to clarify some of the terminology. 'Para-professional' is used in preference to 'non-professional', 'sub-professional', 'support' or 'clerical' staff. The term 'non-professional' is particularly insulting to a highly motivated and experienced sector of the library and information services who usually bring a high level of 'professionalism' to their posts. The term 'para-professional' is used by the Library Association to include administrative, secretarial and other staff supporting library and information services, as well as library assistants and senior library assistants. This dissertation concentrates on the last two occupations. The term 'library and information assistant' more accurately describes the broad range of services that are now provided, however this will be abbreviated to the less cumbersome 'library assistant'. Library and Information Services also cover a wide spectrum, from public libraries to information offices, and will be abbreviated to 'LIS'.

There is an element of jargon attached to Scottish and National Qualifications (S/NVQs), some of which is explained in the glossary. Because this dissertation concentrates on para-professional education in England, the term National Vocational Qualifications will be used, abbreviated to NVQs throughout the text.

Outline of the Dissertation

Chapter two describes the methods used to carry out this study including the gathering of secondary and primary material. The literature review was the main source of secondary material and the reasons why it was undertaken are discussed. Seminars organised by various professional bodies were also used as a source information and were particularly important for monitoring developments. A paraprofessional questionnaire and interviews with employers/trainers formed the main body of primary material.

Chapter three gives details of the literature reviewed and is divided into several parts to give some order to the work available and to link in with the questionnaire.

Chapter four examines the results of the questionnaire and interviews and provides comment and analysis of the answers.

Chapter five provides discussion and analysis of comments made by paraprofessionals and employers/trainers in comparison with the literature review. Conclusions are drawn as a result of this.

Chapter 2
Methodology

Literature Review

A literature review was the starting point for this investigation into para-professional education. There was a need to identify existing qualifications and understand their history and at the same time investigate the development of Information and Library Services NVQs. Research and comment on the comparison between NVQs and other information and library service qualifications was of particular interest as this is the focus of this study.

The literature review was carried out in two stages. The first aimed to gain a general awareness of the main issues surrounding paraprofessional education and to indicate the amount of literature available. The second to obtain up-to-date references (information on NVQs was appearing very frequently) and to obtain related information on education and training. Library and Information Services Abstracts (LISA) on CD-ROM were used on each occasion. After the first search, it was felt that there was enough literature available on LISA and that a more extensive search on other databases would broaden the study unnecessarily. The references given at the end of articles obtained from LISA also indicated that different authors were using many of the same sources and the amount of literature was limited. References and bibliographies appeared to be an adequate supplement to check on the completeness of the literature review.

The preliminary search of Library and Information Services Abstracts indicated that there was little available on para-professional education from the point of view of the employee and employer. It was therefore decided to supplement the literature review by questioning trainers and para-professionals either by questionnaire, interview or both.

The Questionnaire

Rationale

There was a need to gather a cross-section of opinion from different levels of personnel from different information and library services. As NVQs were so new it was felt that there needed to be a geographical spread of respondents. Furthermore, the literature review had indicated that not all organisations had adopted the concept. A questionnaire approach seemed most viable in terms of time and administration but especially cost, as the project was almost entirely financed by the author. Making contact with a range of people was facilitated by attending the 'S/NVQs and You' Seminar conducted by the Information and Library Services (ILS) Lead Body in Manchester in October 1995. This seminar was one of several, all similar, conducted in London and the regions to inform interested para-professionals about the NVQ concept, its relevance to them and how it worked in practice.

The Sample

The sample was initially drawn from the thirty-nine delegates at the seminar. They came mainly from the north Midlands and north of England, ranging from Lincolnshire to Merseyside and Cleveland (although at least one travelled from London). As can be seen from Table 1, there was a fair representation of library and information services, including research/business institutions, public libraries, university and medical/nursing libraries, school and college libraries and voluntary organisations. Delegates were in posts ranging from trainee library assistants to acting 'librarians'. This cross section appeared adequate to gauge opinion on ILS S/NVQ's following the seminar. After a brief formal presentation of the purpose of this dissertation, delegates appeared willing to help by answering a short questionnaire at a later date. A few delegates came forward after the seminar to give their first impressions. These are discussed in the findings. It was felt that the delegates would still be aware of ILS S/NVQs six months after the seminar, and might even be at the stage of registering to commence the qualification.

Table 1
Organisations represented at the seminar.

Organisation	*Number of delegates*
Business	1
College of Further Education	10
Health Authority	4
Local Authority	9
Personal Address	2
Secondary School	6
University	5
Voluntary Organisation	2
Total	39

It was decided to supplement the delegate list with ILS para-professionals from a Nottinghamshire University (four employees), Local Authority (four) and College of Further Education (three) as it was clear from informal contacts that paraprofessionals and their trainers in these organisations had interesting things to say about paraprofessional education and training.

It was hoped that a 'specialist' research or business library would be willing to accept the questionnaire, however, none of the four information units approached were interested, although their comments over the telephone will be discussed later.

The aim of the questionnaire was to canvass qualitative opinion, rather than quantitative data, and it was felt that there was an adequate mix of institution and personnel to indicate the extent to which ILS NVQ's have been adopted as a new qualification. The questionnaire was to be deliberately aimed at those who had an awareness of NVQs and so the sample was inevitably biased. It was obvious from the seminar that the sample would have a heavy female bias. A number of male delegates attended the seminar, but research indicated that women form the majority of the paraprofessional workforce (approx. 80%) and therefore the sample would reflect this (1). It was a concern was that resources did not allow for a wider survey and that Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were excluded. It may be suggested that a more extensive canvassing of opinion would be worthwhile.

Type of research instruments

Two types of research instrument were developed. The main one was a structured questionnaire for paraprofessionals. Trainers were to be interviewed using an interview schedule: a loosely structured set of questions to guide them through the main points of interest (Appendices 1 and 2).

The primary aim of the questionnaire and interview schedule was to gather personal opinion on paraprofessional education and training. Open questions were used as it was felt that respondents would be able to express themselves better in their own words.

Pilot of the paraprofessional questionnaire

The questionnaire was piloted in draft form by two para-professionals and their trainer at one of Nottingham's university libraries. The aim of the pilot was to test the relevance of the questions to NVQ and non-NVQ candidates (one para-professional represented each category). The mechanics of the questionnaire were also examined. The questionnaire was also scrutinised by the Marketing and Development Co-ordinator of the ILS Lead Body.

The questions were acceptable, with minor adjustments and the format was re-worked to allow for less comment and more tick boxes. Where discrete data was required, for example, age and sex, tick boxes were included. Some questions were so open ended that is seemed appropriate to limit answers with tick boxes to guide respondents through the options. The term 'NVQ' was preferred to 'S/NVQ' as none of the respondents were based in Scotland.

The aim was to restrict the questionnaire to two sides of A4 paper and the completion time to approximately ten minutes. This inevitably set limitations on its scope, but it was felt that the response rate would be enhanced by a less daunting list of questions. Fifty questionnaires were sent out in total. with prepaid envelopes for their return. Respondents were given four weeks in which to reply.

The response

There was a sixty per-cent response to the questionnaire (31 returned). Twenty out of the thirty-nine delegates at the seminar responded (62%) . All eleven questionnaires were returned by the Nottinghamshire organisations. The comments were valuable and will be discussed later. With hindsight some of the questions could have been improved. This is discussed overleaf.

Questions asked in the paraprofessional questionnaire

An example of the questionnaire is given in Appendix 1.

Question

1   Name

Respondents were assured that their actual identity would not be given in the dissertation, but it was necessary in case there was a need to contact them again.

2   Age

These were set out in ranges after respondents at the pilot stage felt uncomfortable giving their exact age.

3   Sex

Despite the knowledge that the sample reflected the female bias in the paraprofessional workforce it was hoped that there would be male respondents to the questionnaire and it seemed incorrect to assume a one hundred per-cent female response.

4   Job Title

It was evident from the seminar that this would be an important question to respondents. Several delegates had expressed their strength of feeling about their perceived role in their organisations which is discussed later.

5   Department and/or Organisation

Although this was not to be identified in the dissertation it would identify the type of organisation for whom the respondent worked.

6 **What post-16 qualifications do you have, or, are in the process of obtaining?**

The aim of this question was to identify the range of educational qualifications respondents were bringing into their present job. The hypothesis was that paraprofessionals have a broad educational background and may have more qualifications than the job title recognises. Tick boxes were used to indicate the main qualifications such as G.C.E.s and G.C.S.E.s through to degree level as well as an option to specify less common ones. After the pilot this question was reduced in content.

7 **If you have a library and information service qualification (e.g. City and Guilds, BTEC) why did you choose it?**

The purpose of this question was to identify the main reasons why respondents went on to gain an ILS qualification, e.g. promotion, better pay.

8 **How relevant do you feel your information or library qualification is to your present job?**

There seemed to be divided opinion in the literature whether the qualifications available continued to be relevant once obtained, or appropriate for certain sorts of information work. Paraprofessionals were hopefully going to give their own opinion.

9 **If you do not have an information or library qualification what is the reason?**

Respondents were told to include domestic as well as employment reasons as the indications were that employers were increasingly reluctant to finance day release and that family commitments often prevented respondents from taking on extra work or study.

10   What in-house training have you attended in the last two years?

There may be a connection between the amount of in-house training provided by employers and their willingness to adopt vocational qualifications. Often the training support necessary is closely related. At the pilot stage it was felt that two years would be too long a time span for those to whom in-house training was a regular occurrence. However, responses showed that not everyone was in such a privileged position.

Questions 7, 8, 9 and 10 were all open and invited comment in the respondents own words. This worked well.

11   Have you entered, or are you considering entering for the Information and Library Services NVQ?

Three tick box options were given : yes, no and don't know. Instructions were to continue if the answer was 'yes', or to go to the last question, 16, if 'no', or 'don't know'. This was a mistake as many respondents might still have been able to answer question 15 on the comparison of NVQs with other paraprofessional qualifications. Indeed, some respondents answering 'no' or 'don't know' completed question 15 anyway.

12   What level of NVQ are you considering?

It would be interesting to see for which level paraprofessionals were aiming. This question could have used tick boxes.

13   What are the main reasons you chose NVQs?

An open question, again to invite personal comment. Many respondents had a lot to say.

14   How do you think NVQs will enhance your present employment?

Another open question to gauge hopes and aspirations.

15   How do you think ILS NVQs will compare with other information and
library service qualifications e.g. City and Guilds, BTEC, in terms of
the following?

A range of options were listed with tick boxes for 'better than the others', 'same' and 'not as good'. Although the structure of the question was improved at the pilot, it was probably still too lengthy. The questions on time spent on the qualifications could have been reduced. Question 15 was perhaps the most important question of the survey and it asked the respondent to think hard about the different qualifications. A few people evidently gave up on this one.

16   What support for training have you had, or are getting, from your
employer/trainer?

A list of possible options were provided and tick boxes were used for this question. It was hoped that this would indicate the extent to which respondents felt that training and education was valued in their organisation. At the pilot it was interesting to note that paraprofessionals and trainers had different ideas about this.

Permission to contact respondents for a short follow-up telephone interview was sought at the end of the questionnaire in order to clarify comments if necessary.

Employer/Trainer interviews

The interviews were to be conducted in person or over the telephone. An informal approach was taken, with a loose structure to the questions. However, it was necessary to introduce some sort of order to the questioning to enable all the points to be covered. An example of the interview schedule is given in Appendix 2.

Because time and money were limited it was decided to select trainers from the local area and to obtain opinion from a cross section of organisations. One training co-ordinator was therefore identified and interviewed from the University of Nottingham, Nottinghamshire County Council's public library service and South Notts. College of F.E. Each person was responsible for co-ordinating and implementing paraprofessional education and training programmes for staff in their organisation's libraries. In terms of paraprofessional staff represented, the organisations ranged from large (local authority) to medium (academic) to small (college of F.E.) In addition, the training co-ordinator in the college of F.E. was responsible for offering taught programmes to students. All three trainers were chartered librarians.

An attempt was made to contact special and commercial libraries, however, they were not willing to participate but did offer comments which shall be discussed later. This aspect of the study might be taken further with more resources and time.

Paraprofessional education: interview questions

1   About you

Personal details of name, organisation and position within organisation.

2   About education

2.1   What ILS-related courses does your organisation already recognise [for paraprofessionals] ?

2.2   How is it involved in supporting these?

The aim was to discover whether the organisation provided time off for education and training, finance, etc.

2.3   How far have you got in implementing ILS NVQs?

Included here were a range of steps e.g. registering as an assessment centre, registering candidates etc.

2.3.2 What levels are you covering?

2.4   Has the organisation experience in implementing NVQs in other areas?

The aim was to discover if the organisation was new to the NVQ concept or already had an understanding that would assist in the ILS NVQ implementation. Previous experience might even be the deciding factor in adopting the ILS NVQ.

3   ILS NVQs and other qualifications

3.1   How do you think ILS NVQs will compare with other qualifications e.g. City and Guilds LIAC, BTEC?

A range of prompts were given.

3.2 Do you think that the emphasis on assessing work-based competence rather than theoretical knowledge is more appropriate to paraprofessional education? What about levels 4 and 5?

This seemed to be the 'essence' of the debate on paraprofessional education and training, especially the professions 'fear' of a cross-over between professional and non-professional.

3.3 What relevance will City and Guilds/BTEC have now that ILS NVQs are available?

The aim of this question was to discover whether the organisation would be offering a range of paraprofessional qualifications or just one.

Problems with the interview schedule

Three training co-ordinators were contacted. Only one trainer was able to be interviewed in person, the others were interviewed over the telephone. As there was a time lapse between the interviews and the writing-up of the study, trainers were again contacted to ensure certain points were still accurate.

The interview schedule generally worked well. Interviewees enthusiastically shared their views on paraprofessional training and education. Indeed some had so much to contribute that it was difficult to keep them to the point and to write down their comments. A recording of the interviews might have been helpful, however, the telephone interviews had more structure to them and it was easier to keep to the point than the personal interview.

The trainer at South Notts College of F.E. was favoured because he had been responsible for teaching the City and Guilds LIAC, however it was found on interviewing that he had discontinued this and was concentrating on alternative programmes. It seemed appropriate to contact South East Derbyshire College which had inherited the City and Guilds course as it was the centre serving the employers/trainers in this study.

References
1   **Bray, F and Turner, C.** *Monitoring the library and information workforce.* London: BLR&DD, 1989.

Chapter 3
Literature Review

This chapter examines the literature on paraprofessional education with a particular focus on the qualifications available.

1 Recognising the need for paraprofessional education and training

An informal survey by Bob Hellen into who makes up the paraprofessional workforce found that ages ranged from 16 to 65. Educational standards extend from no qualifications at all to PhD (1). The vast majority of assistants are women. In the 1987 Library Association Census, 84% of library assistants in public libraries were female (2).

There is a valid argument that education and training at this level has been ignored in the past because the 'junior' workforce was predominantly female whereas senior management was usually male. Negative organisational (male) attitudes to female workers were slow to die. A set of assumptions about female workers effectively ensured the perpetuation of a male dominated management team. These assumptions included assertions that women were not the main wage earners in a household, they were less mobile, they got pregnant and took more time off than men, they wanted only part-time work, they could only handle routine tasks and were not assertive. Implicit in this is the belief that library and information work at this (low paid) level is not a career (3).

Since the 1980s there has been a continuing and often passionate debate in the literature about the role and status of the paraprofessional. Davinson (4) and Baker (5) have been particularly vocal in this area and have perhaps done more than anyone to highlight the issues surrounding paraprofessional education and training in Britain. Research by Mugnier on paraprofessionals in America (6) helped researchers over here focus on the changes occurring in information and library services. Defining who is a paraprofessional can cause confusion. In North America and Australia, where a technician grade of library and information staff is already established, there are clear guide-lines as to duties, responsibilities and level of qualifications (7).

In the United Kingdom, whilst there are demarcation lines between professional and non-professional (8), reality indicates that employers and the public do not easily recognise the difference. 'Professional' duties are often adequately performed by trained non-professionals, especially if there are not enough professionals available to do the work. The library assistant is usually the first point of contact with users (9). In small library and information units, for example, in law firms or school libraries, there is perhaps only one member of staff providing a full range of services (10).

Originally, the literature concentrated on the appropriate level of education and training required for 'non-professionals' to perform their jobs adequately. Implicit in this was the recognition that this level of staff would not encroach on 'professional' duties:

> 'The term 'non-professional'...does not automatically limit such a category of staff to a particular group of routines...it is not the type of work which non-professionals do but the *level* at which they undertake tasks which separates them from professional staff. Professional responsibilities emphasize planning and policy, while non-professional duties revolve around routine and practice. (11)

20

Indeed, many in management believed education was inappropriate for non-professionals:

'...you educate only professionals - you *train* non-professionals'. (12)

This dissertation is not going to enter the sensitive area of why insecure professionals feel the need to protect their spheres of work and thus limit the scope of paraprofessional employment. There is a fear (often from public librarians) :

'that an explicit system of qualification and training for non-professionals would result in a diminution of the opportunities available for professionals'. (13)

The profession's attitudes to 'non-professional' staff has coloured the way in which paraprofessional training and education has developed. Davinson argues that it was neglected for so long because the commonality of purpose in all levels of staff, fostered by the old part-time Library Association External Examinations, was lost. A 'them and us' situation emerged between professionals, with access to a career structure and qualifications, and the rest of the library workforce with few career opportunities and little chance to gain qualifications (14).

Davinson (15) and Baker (16) recognised that paraprofessional staff wanted to learn more about their library and information services and the 'why's' of the job. They were enthusiastic, had a commitment to customer service, and felt they did a better job if they knew the reasons why they did things (17). 'Professionalism' was not the sole prerogative of 'Professionals'.

21

Paraprofessional staff have indicated a high level of personal job satisfaction although they are in what they perceive as 'dead-end' jobs (18). Thousands of library and information assistants have taken qualifications despite the lack of a recognised career structure. As Davinson states:

'The way in which many library assistants have undertaken studies leading to the City and Guilds 737 Library Assistants' Certificate, despite knowing that it leads nowhere in particular for them in terms of advancement, is further evidence of the high motivation many of them have for improving their skills.' (19)

In many library and information services there is now a limited career structure for paraprofessionals that stops at the senior library assistant level. The attainment of a qualification (internal or external) is often necessary for promotion to this grade (20).

In the midst of the debate about professional and non-professional job descriptions there was a wider acknowledgement of the need to introduce a coherent training policy into information and library services that embraced all levels of staff (21). The Library and Information Services Council stated that:

> "Training is economically important because expenditure on manpower represents a significant and growing proportion of the budget of all library and information services....In our view, the belief that 'people matter' is not just a vague humanitarian concept; investment in people is adequately rewarded, and well trained staff will yield a rich dividend in the quality of service to users. For the foreseeable future, library and information practice will remain largely in the hands of people already recruited, ie people who have completed their basic education. Only continuing education and training can help them improve their performance. Both continuing education and training are having to be provided in a period of widespread change - with significant developments in the role and scope of library and information services..... These developments call for adaptation of thinking, attitudes and skills among library and information staff." (22)

The efficient use of human resources to meet changing social and economic needs has become a necessity, not an option.

Recently, the role of the paraprofessional has been re-defined to broaden its scope. It is not so much the *level* of work which defines the para-professional, but the *nature* of that work. The role of the paraprofessional is increasingly that of the 'library manager'. Restructuring and reorganisation of all types of library and information service, but particularly public libraries, has removed a tier of professional management.

The number of professionals employed has declined through the introduction of team librarianship which has removed professionals from small branch libraries and 'de-layering', often as a response to professional staff shortages and local authority cuts. This has led to an increase in the number of para-professionals employed in supervisory and management roles, effectively running service points. Wallace argues that opportunities will be occurring for career progression for paraprofessionals, providing they can demonstrate they have the skills and abilities to carry out the duties of the posts (23).

Here is a cogent argument for developmental staff training and education which equips paraprofessionals for a recognisable career, parallel to, and different from, that of the professional, which at the same time, may inter-connect at certain levels and might even be transferable. Wallace states:

'...there needs to be an organisational commitment to training and development and a structure providing career progression to senior management for library staff and librarians'. (24)

Despite the' brick wall' that professionals place in the way of a paraprofessional career ladder parallel to that of the profession, some authorities such as the London Borough of Hounslow have implemented one (25) and others are considering it (26).

The following sections of the literature review look at existing paraprofessional qualifications and bring their progress up-to-date. The literature is supplemented by recent seminars on the subject which the author attended.

2 Paraprofessional qualifications: the City and Guilds Library and Information Assistant's Certificate (LIAC) and the BTEC National Award.

Introduction

This section of the literature review examines the two main paraprofessional qualifications that existed before National Vocational Qualifications came into being. The literature searches revealed that most of what has been written has concentrated on the historical aspects of their development. David Baker has thoroughly covered this ground (27) (28) (29) and it is not necessary to reproduce it here.

Many articles and monographs on paraprofessional qualifications and training were written in the 1980s when the City and Guilds Library Assistant's qualification was under review and the BTEC (formerly BEC) National award was being introduced (30). Some of this literature is itself now only of historical interest. However, the best critique of the two qualifications as they were then is Davinson's (31).

In the past year, the introduction of the ILS NVQ has again led to a radical overhaul of LIAC and BTEC National. The changes are still taking place therefore the literature is limited in quantity and still emerging. Much of the literature focuses on the development of NVQs, which is why it is felt that there is a need to examine the relationships emerging between the various qualifications. Past literature will be referred to, where criticisms remain valid, but the emphasis will be on current developments.

City and Guilds Library and Information Assistants Certificate (LIAC)

The LIAC was devised as a one year, part-time course, with examinations for assistants with at least two year's experience in library and information services. It covered a range of topics which were aimed at consolidating practical skills learnt 'on the job' whilst providing a broader perspective of information and library services. The scheme consisted of five subject areas, each with an assessed coursework component or written examination, or both. Appendix 3 gives a brief outline of the syllabus. Baker (32) examines this in greater detail. From 1997, it will again change and will be more closely allied to specific units at ILS NVQ levels 2 and 3. These are to be discussed later (33) (34).

One of the main criticisms of the City and Guilds course was that the Library Association's ambivalence towards it inevitably influenced employers' attitudes. Few employers recognised the need for paraprofessional education in the early years and were not encouraged to change their minds after the Library Association had ceased to be an examining body. The Library Association's Entrance/Elementary/ First Professional Examination had been partially fulfilling the need for a paraprofessional 'qualification'. The City and Guilds qualification was devised to fill this gap when the Library Association's examination was abandoned but because it was never intended as being anything other than an award for non-professionals, its value was undermined (35).

Closely allied to this problem is that the LIAC course leads nowhere in particular. The qualification stands alone and does not 'link-in' with other LIS qualifications. It has been only partially accepted by employers as meriting a pay increment (36). Indeed, some have not recognised it as a useful qualification at all, preferring to train their own staff (37). One aspect of the 1996 review of the City and Guilds course is to link it more closely to ILS NVQs. Somerset College of Art and Technology is already offering the LIAC in tandem with ILS NVQ level 2 (38). The relationship will be examined in more detail later.

The City and Guilds qualification has suffered in particular from being considered biased in favour of a particular sector. The majority of students came from public libraries (39), although evidence suggests that this was a result of the response to local markets rather than being an inherent fault of the syllabus (40). The current review of the LIAC certificate is to examine this perception (41). It is in the interests of City and Guilds to offer a syllabus appropriate to all its potential markets in the library and information services as it will be facing direct competition from ILS NVQs.

The geographical 'take-up' remains patchy (42). Many assistants are unable to easily access the course, although some centres, such as Telford College, Edinburgh, West Bromwich (Sandwell) College of Commerce and Technology (43) and Somerset College of Arts and Technology (44) have met this problem by offering distance learning packages.

Once the City and Guilds LIAC had been running for several years, it began to be criticised as being at too low a level for many paraprofessionals, although the literature suggests its advocates thought the balance 'just about right' for generalist assistants (45). At the same time, the LIAC did not satisfy many, often highly educated paraprofessionals, who wanted a route into the profession without having to return to full time education. It was the Library Association's decision to cease acting as an awarding body, the loss of access to a part-time route to professional status, and the development of an all-graduate profession, that left paraprofessionals isolated in terms of career development (46).

It was partly as a recognition of the lack of a progressive paraprofessional qualification that the BTEC National Award was introduced.

BTEC National

The impetus to introduce a BTEC (formerly BEC) award for information and library services in England and Wales was partly driven by changes in Scottish paraprofessional education in the early 1980s. The SCOTEC Certificate in Library and Information Science was introduced with the full backing of the Scottish Library Association. At the same time Scotland dropped the City and Guilds Certificate (47). The BEC course was pushed through in England and Wales with the support of the Library Association. However, the City and Guilds course continued to run.

A characteristic of the BTEC awards is their progressive nature. There are three levels: General, National and Higher National. There are two routes to qualification, full-time (Diploma) or part-time (Certificate), the two have equal worth.

The syllabus had a set of core modules which were followed by all students irrespective of the type of employment they were in. Additional, or optional, modules were added to allow candidates to specialise in their chosen subject (48). The library and information Double Option modules made up 25% of the total. The LIS modules were developed at National level and were offered part-time over two years (49). There was also talk of offering LIS modules at Higher National level if there was sufficient demand (50).

There was some unease amongst professional librarians about the appropriate level of qualification for paraprofessionals. If the City and Guilds LIAC was set too low (below the BTEC National award, the Higher National was too uncomfortably close to a professional qualification, being the equivalent of an unclassified degree (51). The National did however allow a way in to professional education and was recognised by some library schools as equivalent to A level passes.

Despite support from the Library Association, the BTEC National never established itself in the same way as the City and Guilds LIAC. This was partly due to the insufficient time devoted to library and information studies in the BTEC syllabus. It was argued that employers would not support a course with such little emphasis on library work (the Library Association's Industrial Group was particularly vocal on this) (52) (53). Furthermore the two year commitment of staff and money came at a time of economic recession and financial cutbacks. Employers were less willing to release staff at a time of reduced staffing levels unless the course could be seen as directly relevant to the job moreover, training and development budgets tended to be diverted into other areas (54). The continuing City and Guilds course offered direct competition. The take-up of BTEC was therefore low and many colleges were unable to find sufficient numbers to offer the course on a regular basis. Furthermore, colleges tended to be more inflexible about timetabling the BTEC course (55).

Baker argued as long ago as 1986 that the Library Association should 'cut its losses' on the BTEC certificates and fully recognise the City and Guilds LIAC (56). The BTEC National Certificate with Information and Library Studies was discontinued this year (1996) (57).

It may be argued that the BTEC National was a truly paraprofessional qualification. It offered a broad administrative, managerial and financial grounding, with modules on communications, office organisation and human resource management. These are just the sort of skills required by paraprofessionals in supervisory roles. Furthermore, they were transferable, being common to many occupations at this level. Davinson argued forcefully for the library profession to take a far-sighted view of paraprofessional qualifications (58). The library and information modules were at a level which may have impinged on professional work as it was then perceived but it has already been shown that this has changed and many 'professional' duties have been downgraded to paraprofessional level.

Without the BTEC qualification, the route into professional education has again been closed to paraprofessionals. Librarians may feel able to breathe more easily and not feel quite so threatened by the ranks below. It may be argued that the BTEC was never successfully used in the first place, probably because it was not widely available.

3   National Vocational Qualifications in the Information and Library Services

The literature available on NVQs in general and ILS NVQs in particular has 'mushroomed' over the past year or so. There is now so much that there is a need not only to be very selective but to give some order to the topic. Much of what has been written concentrates on explaining what the NVQ concept is and how it fits into the information and library sector. Particular emphasis has been given to the experiences of organisations implementing ILS NVQs. Very little has yet been written on how NVQs affect existing qualifications, what library workers and their employers think of NVQs or how they will affect the professional/non-professional divide.

Background: the NVQ ethos

NVQs developed from a government initiative to raise vocational standards. The 1986 White Paper 'Working Together - education and training' (cmnd 9823) established the National Council for Voluntary Qualifications (NCVQ). Its remit was to create a national framework of vocational qualifications which would be comprehensive, accessible, and easily understood by employers and employees alike. They were to be employment-led and based firmly on standards of performance defined by employers. They now exist for virtually every sector in industry and commerce (59).

Juliet Herzog described the NVQ concept thus:

> 'Vocational training and qualifications have been undergoing a fundamental
> revolution for a number of years. The single most important foundation
> stone for this revolution is the concept of competence. The word has a very
> strong and specific meaning: the ability to perform to the standards required
> in employment. It is in recognition of this ability, and this alone, that
> National and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (NVQs/SVQs) are awarded'.
> (60)

Herzog summarised the key points of NVQs:

* they are modular in structure, with each 'module' known as a Unit of
  Competence;

* units which make up an NVQ can be taken in any order, and at a pace to suit
  individual needs;

* the Units contain precise descriptions of what should achieved to be called
  'competent'; these are known as standards;

* the content of an NVQ is the criteria to which a candidate for that NVQ will
  be assessed; it is not a job description or a course syllabus;

* assessment of an individual's competence for an NVQ is not tied to
  attendance/enrolment on any particular training programmes;

* assessment is practical rather than theoretical, but it is open to all, including
  those who are not in employment;

* assessment is by people who are experts in the field in which the NVQ is
  being taken;

* the Units are designed to be transferable from one occupation to another
  wherever possible, to help career changes as well as career progression;

* the standards cover creative, organisational, thinking and communication
  skills as well as technical and manual ones.

NVQs may also be assessed in the workplace removing the necessity for day-release
to college.

NVQs in Information and Library Services

Each employment sector sets its own standards through its own Lead Body these are co-ordinated into a national framework by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications. NVQs for the Information and Library Services are developed by the ILS Lead Body. The work of actually administering the NVQs and awarding the qualifications has gone to the Royal Society of Arts (RSA).

The qualification

There are five levels to NVQs which are meant to be progressive, although candidates can enter at any level. The ILS Lead Body outlined the levels and suggested which occupational level would be appropriate for each. These are shown overleaf in Table 2.

It must be noted that the ILS Lead Body did not consider it necessary to develop level one (assessing competence in routine and predictable activities) This was covered by another Lead Body and very few assistants would enter the information and library services at this level.

Table 2

NVQ levels and related ILS occupations

On levels...

The following is a very preliminary guide - "at this moment in time" as the phrase goes - of job titles and possible S/NVQ levels. It is published here not as a hostage to fortune as it would be if it were not clearly signposted as tentative, but as a helpful guide to the way levels might work out. The final arbiter on levels will be NCVQ.

NVQ Level	Possible ILS job title
2	
Range of activities, variety of contexts, some complex and non-routine, some teamwork.	Library Assistant, Counter Assistant, Clerical Assistant, Loans/Issues Clerk.
3	
Broad range of varied work activities, mostly complex and non-routine. Working mostly autonomously, often controlling or guiding others.	Supervisor, Library Manager, Senior Records Manager, Assistant, Senior Library Assistant, Technical Indexer.
4	
Broad range of complex, technical or professional work activities, using fundamental principles and complex techniques in often unpredictable contexts. Personal autonomy with responsibility for work of others and resource allocation.	Librarian, ILS Manager, Information Scientist, Technical Information Manager, Archivist, TIC Manager, Systems Librarian.
5	
Use of a significant range of fundamental principles and complex techniques across wide and often unpredictable contexts. Very great personal autonomy, significant responsibility for others and for resources and for strategic planning.	Director, Chief Librarian, County Librarian.

Source: ILS Lead Body Newsletter, Sept. 1994

The level is attached to the full qualification but individual Units of Competence can appear at any level and also 'stand alone' as a 'mini qualification' (61). Appendix 4 gives the levels of qualification and the units from which they are made.

Units are made up of 'Elements of Competence' which cannot stand alone as a qualification. The revised functional map of Feb. 1994 illustrates how Key functions are broken down into elements (Appendix 5). Appendix 6 is a sample element specifying the types of evidence required to achieve competency in that element. Evidence for each element is collected for a range of situations, using a range of materials appropriate to the task being assessed. The evidence is assessed by qualified assessors against the performance criteria laid down as key indicators of competence and collated in a portfolio consisting of all the evidence required to complete each unit and ultimately the final qualification. A system of internal and external verification ensures national standards are met (62). Because NVQs are proof of current competence in the workplace, they have a 'shelf life' of three years after which they need to be re-assessed.

Historical development

This study is not going to examine the historical development of ILS NVQs as this has been covered in great detail by many experts in the field, for example Herzog (63), Dakers (64), Jespersen (65). On-going information on the development of the five levels can be obtained from the ILS Lead Body. Updates are produced in their newsletters (66).

Selling the product

Much effort has been concentrated in 'selling' NVQs to employers and employees of the various ILS sectors, including a description of how they work (67) (68). Information and advice is given on getting started (69) (70). Seminars and workshops have been held (and are still being held) all over the country to introduce ILS NVQs to as wide an audience as possible (71). There is even a straightforward guide available for prospective candidates (72), although employers are still awaiting theirs (73).

The ILS sector's response to NVQs

Here is where the literature becomes very interesting. There is a wide divergence of views on NVQs. At times the debate as to their relevance to the information and library services has become heated (74) (75) (76). NVQs are a radically new way of looking at qualifications and therefore the concept requires some thought and understanding.

Many bodies representing the information and library services, including the Library Association and BAILER (British Association for Information and Library Education and Research) acknowledge the value of NVQs to paraprofessionals in enhancing their work-based competence and improving their career progression (77). NVQs have been specifically targeted at paraprofessionals and levels two and three are the first to be implemented.

Surrey County Libraries publicised their success with other NVQs, including Customer Services and Business and Administration (78). Demand initially came from employees, although management took them on board after initial scepticism. Area Manager, John Hobson stated:

> 'It soon became clear... that the very nature of a work-based qualification gave something to the staff, and potentially the service, which hadn't existed before. A modular approach to staff development, which was flexible, cost effective, accessible and relevant to all, had been an aspiration for a long time'.(79)

Surrey has readily accepted ILS NVQs and is piloting levels 2, 3 and 4. It appears that there is no shortage of candidates at levels 2 and 3. The relevance of level 4 to 'professional' staff is being tested (80). Indeed, NVQs appear to have employer support across industry sectors. A review of 100 well-established NVQs and SVQs (81), found that there was widespread support for the NVQ concept amongst employers. Two-thirds of employers responding to the Review indicated that NVQs have increased workforce flexibility and 80% felt that NVQs had prepared employees for future demands (82).

Colleges of further and higher education are also involved in implementing ILS NVQs at levels 2 and 3. Somerset College of Arts and Technology has become the first accredited assessment centre and states that the demand for ILS NVQs has been greater than expected (83).

There is no doubt that ILS NVQs have generated a vast amount of interest from paraprofessionals who have been denied a progressive qualification and clear career path for so long. In fact, interest has been so great, Arundale questioned whether the organising bodies had set up a system which could cope with the expected rush (84).

Problems with the ILS NVQ

As mentioned above, there is already evidence that demand is exceeding supply at this early stage of implementation. The system requires that verification and assessment procedures are sufficiently well developed before NVQ candidates can begin. The need to have sufficient numbers of trained assessors means that many are being trained in tandem with 'guinea pig' NVQ candidates. The average time needed to train an assessor is 18 months, so the process is inevitably slow (85).

Somerset College of Arts and Technology has already perceived significant differences between levels two and three. Level two is too easy for experienced library assistants and ought to be aimed at the assistant with a maximum of two years' experience. Level three is too difficult for assistants not yet working at a more senior level. Level two is therefore seen as proving competency in what is already done at work, level three is seen as a more developmental, broadening exercise (86).

Much time is needed to interpret NVQs. Some of this is due to the jargon used, a criticism taken up by the Review of 100 NVQs (87), although the ILS NVQs have actually been complemented on their clarity. Somerset found that interpretation of level three was still not clear, especially with the Customer Care and Information Technology Units (88).

The need to revive the NVQ qualification after three years has not been fully addressed by the ILS sector who are concentrating on getting the scheme up and running. However, holders of the qualification will very soon be at this stage (89).

The profession again feels threatened. NVQs are another challenge to the professional status of librarians. There is already conflict with some library professionals at level three. They are refusing to assess the cataloguing and classification elements, arguing that this is 'professional' work (90).

38

The employer-led focus of NVQs has attracted criticism from the ILS sector. Wilson in particular has highlighted the possible conflicts between employer demands and professional development (91).

There is concern that levels 4 and 5 should not replace the academic route to professional qualifications. BAILER currently shares this worry (92). Wilson argues that they represent a short-term, 'watered-down' training as opposed to an education that offers a long-term professional grounding (93). Related to this fear is that NVQs do not sufficiently emphasise the importance of knowledge and understanding. Although the Review of 100 NVQs stated that NCVQ/SCOTEC believed knowledge and understanding to be of great importance (94), there is no prescribed way to deliver it; some employers prefer to provide it entirely 'in-house', for example Surrey (95), others are using existing qualifications, e.g. Somerset (96). However, the provision of underpinning knowledge and understanding for levels four and five is still under debate (97).

The second aspect to this professional scepticism is that librarians may feel that once they are qualified, they have no need for another qualification (98).
Irving argues that NVQs complement professional education and are the necessary proof of competence, not provided by academic qualifications (99). Professionals are already going down this route with the Professional Development Report.

Although the professional debate does not directly affect paraprofessionals working in paraprofessional posts, it does revive the old insecurities. Some paraprofessionals may hope to make the transition into professional employment. ILS NVQ level four appears to be the 'cross over' between paraprofessional and professional. The literature remains vague as to whom level four is intended, but it is promoted as being within the scope of paraprofessionals (100).

Paraprofessionals, however, would have to be doing the work at level four to be able to prove competency in the qualification. This may provide hope for those who are already employed in professional posts who do not have professional qualifications. There may be the possibility that the Library Association will accept NVQs as a basis for Associateship as Wilson fears (101).

Alternatives to NVQs

If some paraprofessionals are looking for a career progression which includes entry into the profession, or are employed in 'professional' posts and are looking to 'legitimise' their position, there are now many different academic routes available which include part-time and distance learning options. For example, the Department of Information and Library Studies at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth has an Open Learning Unit offering modular undergraduate and postgraduate programmes (102).

At the same time the City and Guilds 7370 Library and Information Assistant's Certificate has adapted to complement the ILS NVQ . Somerset College of Arts and Technology has also developed post-City and Guilds courses including School Library and Learning Resource Centre Management and Supervisory Management for Senior Library Assistants. It is this relationship that is now examined.

4   ILS NVQs and the City and Guilds 7370 Library and Information Assistants Certificate (LIAC)

Roger Bone of City and Guilds recognised that the demise of the BTEC National Certificate in Library Work has opened up a gap in the market for paraprofessional qualifications that a newly revised 7370 scheme might fill (103).

As Administration Officer for Library Examinations, he recognised the importance of practical assessment (104). As discussed in the earlier section of this review, the syllabus had already been reorganised in the 1980s to take account of employers' demands for a more practical bias. The candidate logbook of assessed practical tasks was to some extent pre-empting the NVQ portfolio of evidence.

From 1997, the newly revised certificate will be re-structured into four units to closely 'link-in' with ILS NVQ levels 2 and 3 without losing its integrity as a qualification in its own right. Appendix 7 shows the new structure. The syllabus will contain more practical written assignments, added to current coursework requirements. This is balanced by the loss of some examination questions (105).

The City and Guilds certificate will cover all of the units in the ILS NVQ level two and nine (nearly all) in level three. It is intended that the certificate will particularly relate to level three by providing the underpinning knowledge required in customer care and communication skills (106).

Bone has outlined in more detail the way in which each new unit links in with NVQ levels two and three in a recent article (107). It is interesting to note that 'quality assurance' procedures have been introduced in line with NVQ practice.

The new scheme will not come into operation until 1997. However, the existing City and Guilds certificate has already been linked with ILS NVQs at Somerset College of Arts and Technology (108).

Linking the City and Guilds LIAC and NVQs in practice

Somerset College has become the principal centre for paraprofessional education in the south-west since 1990. They have become experienced in delivering the City and Guilds 7370 Certificate and their own post-City and Guilds qualifications on a distance-learning modular basis to a geographically dispersed market.

Introducing ILS NVQs

ILS NVQs at levels two and three fitted in well with their existing paraprofessional courses and they became the first college to offer them to the paraprofessional workforce. The college was able to get ILS NVQs up and running relatively quickly by taking a consortium approach. The college became the RSA validated assessment centre, undertaking the training of assessors (competent library personnel) supplied by employers in the consortium. Somerset believe that this approach is particularly beneficial to libraries and library authorities with little experience of NVQ and assessor awards. They can quickly put themselves into a position of assessing their own staff without going through the rigorous exercise of becoming an assessment centre in their own right (109).

The rationale for linking the City and Guilds and ILS NVQ qualifications

Early on, Somerset decided to use the City and Guilds LIAC as the theoretical underpinning for ILS NVQ level two. Students on the City and Guilds 7370 were offered the chance to be entered for level two during the course. Because many students had limited workplace experience, level two seemed the most appropriate.

Level three was offered to students on the colleges own post-City and Guilds certificated courses. It was felt strongly that both ILS NVQs required a theoretical underpinning, but this was especially important at level three (110). Linking the City and Guilds course with ILS NVQs to provide underpinning theoretical knowledge has the broad support of the City and Guilds Institute, the RSA and ILS Lead Body. (111) (112).

The course timetable

The thinking behind NVQs is that they should be 'candidate-led'. The qualification should be achieved at the candidates own pace. The college requires that the City and Guilds timetable is followed. There is therefore a student intake twice a year and the course lasts one academic year. Anne Totterdell, Senior Library Education Tutor at Somerset College, argues that at NVQ level two there is not too great a work load; candidates have only two hours extra added on to their City and Guilds course each week and the dual qualification is still achievable in one academic year (the City and Guilds timetable). NVQ level three takes up to eighteen months to complete and therefore requires extra commitment (in terms of work time spent on assessment and college fees). Totterdell believes that the one candidate not taking the dual qualifications is struggling to acquire sufficient 'underpinning knowledge' at NVQ level two however, it is not compulsory to take the two qualifications together (113).

43

Other benefits

The decision to unite the two qualifications was also a financial one. The City and Guilds course attracts less FEFC (Further Education Funding Council) funding than NVQs. However, Roger Bone of City and Guilds states that the newly revised 7370 LIAC will attract increased funding.

There is already a cross-over between practical assessed work for the City and Guilds course and NVQ level two. The college accepts some C&G logbook evidence as evidence for the NVQ.

The college is obviously keen to continue to offer the two qualifications as one package. They offer NVQs at reduced cost if linked with the City and Guilds and post-C&G courses (114).

The future

The City and Guilds Institute and Somerset College believe that uniting the two qualifications is possible. There are strong marketing arguments for linking the two. There are also obvious academic and financial benefits. The partnership is a tentative one.

Somerset accept that the City and Guilds course is the only nationally recognised paraprofessional qualification now in existence but recognise that it has limitations as a vehicle for providing theoretical underpinning knowledge for NVQs. Somerset are fully prepared to offer their own alternative course in place of the City and Guilds should it become financially unattractive and be withdrawn (115).

City and Guilds have recognised the need to change and adapt to the NVQ concept of assessed standards of competence yet believe that there is a place for a more theoretical paraprofessional qualification. They very much had the Somerset partnership in mind when they revised the syllabus (116).

Totterdell believed that the way forward is to find a balance between the theoretical elements of the City and Guilds LIAC and ILS NVQs. Together they would strengthen paraprofessional education and training. At the same time NVQs are opening up new career opportunities for paraprofessionals by creating expertise in assessment and training (117).

References

1   **Hellen, Bob** cited in **Baker, D** Ref. 5, p. 33

2   Library Association Public Library Staffing Establishment and Grading
        Census, 1987 in **Goulding, Anne** The grading system and career structure
        of library assistants in public libraries. *Personnel Training and Education*,
        1992, 9 (1) p.4

3   **Scarrott, Martin** Non-professional staff: an overview. *Library Work*, April
        1989, (4), p.18

4   **Davinson, D.E.** Non-professional library staff education: a state of the art
        report and proposals for the future *Studies In Library Management*,
        1981, 7 p40

5   **Baker, David.** *What about the workers? A study of non-professional staff*
        in library work. AAL Pointers 4. London: Association Of Assistant
        Librarians, 1986

6   **Mugnier, C.** *The Paraprofessional and the professional job structure.*
        Chicago: American Library Association, 1980

7   **Baker, D.M.** *Certificates in library work: an historical-critical study of*
        non-professional level librarianship qualifications. PhD. Loughborough:
        Loughborough University, Department of Library and Information Studies,
        1987

8   **Library Association Working Party on Training.** *Training in libraries.*
        London: Library Association, 1977

9   Ref. 3 p.17-19

10   **Beales, K.** Non-professional information and training. *Education for*
        Information, 1989, 7 p.29-41

11   **Baker, D.** *Guidelines for training in libraries, 6 : Training library*
        assistants. London: Library Association, 1986

12   Ref. 5, p.37

13   Ref.4, p.43

14   Ref. 4, p.38-41

15   Ref. 4

16   Ref. 5

17   **Bowen, J** *Perceptions about training needs and further qualifications
      amongst non-professional staff in a public library.* Leeds: Leeds
      Polytechnic School of Librarianship, 1977 **in Davinson, D** Ref. 1, p.42

18   **Goulding, Anne** The grading system and career structure of library
      assistants in public libraries. *Personnel Training and Education,* 1992, **9** (1)
      p.3-17

19   Ref. 4, p.42

20   **Baker, D.** Editor, *Junior staff training.* Leicester: University, College
      and Research Section of the Library Association (East Midlands Branch),
      1980

21   **Working Party on Manpower,Training and Education.** *Training for
      library and information work: a discussion paper.* London: Office of Arts
      and Libraries, 1984

22   *Ibid.* p. 2

23   **Wallace, Val.** *Who manages the library? The role of the paraprofessional.*
      Occasional Paper 16. London: Branch of The Mobile Libraries Group Of
      The Library Association, 1992

24   *Ibid,* p.2-3

25   *Ibid*

26   Ref. 18, p. 9-11

27   **Baker, David** The City and Guilds Library Assistant's Certificate: a brief
      history [part one] *Training and Education,* 1985, **2** (3) p.42-50 *and*

28   **Baker, David** The City and Guilds Library Assistant's Certificate: a brief
      history [part two] *Training and Education,* 1985, **3** (1) p.3-12

29   Ref. 7

30   **Pryterch, Ray** ed. *Staff training in libraries: the British experience*
      Aldershot: Gower, 1986

31   **Davinson, Donald E** Non-professional library staff education: a state of the
      art report and proposals for the future.
      Studies in Library Management, 1981, 7, p37-60

32   Ref. 2

33   **Bone, Roger** The future of the City and Guilds Library and Information
      Assistants Examination 7370 and NVQs
      Personnel Training and Education, Jan.1996, **13** (1), p.6-7

34   *The future of para-professional education.* A one-day seminar held at the
      Library Association headquarters by the Personnel Training and Education
      Group of the Library Association Thurs. 27 June 1996. Author's own notes.

35   Ref.5, p37-38

36   **Russell, Norman J** Professional and non-professional in libraries: the need
      for a new relationship. *J. Librarianship*, 1985, **17** (4) p 298

37   Ref. 4, p.50

38   Ref. 7

39   **Standley, A.E.** C & G's LAC is about right [letter]
      Library Association Record, Nov.1977, **79** (11) p.651

40   Ref. 4, p.51

41   Ref. 7

42   Ref. 4, p. 50

43   Ref. 8

44   Ref. 7

45   Ref. 12

46   Ref. 8

47   Ref. 8, p. 39

48   BEC Diploma for Leeds [news item] *Library Association Record,*
      Jul. 1979, **81** (7) p.317

49   **Luccock, Graham,** Public library training I. *in* Pryterch, Ref. 3, p.19

50   **Baker, David** ed. *Junior staff training* Leicester: University, College and
      Research Section of the Library Association (East Midlands Branch), 1980

51   Ref. 4

52   Ref. 8, p.43

53   BEC qualifications opposed by special librarians [news]
       Library Association Record, Mar. 1979, **81** (3) p.113

54   **Labdon, P.** LAC-BEC: an investigation of the current position of sub-
       professional qualifications for library staff. *LEG News,* 1981, **21,** p.11

55   *Ibid.* p.13

56   Ref. 8, p.58

57   Ref. 6

58   Ref. 4, p. 52-59

59   **Jespersen, Sherry.** The development of new National Vocational
       Qualifications: with particular relevance to the information and library
       services. *Managing Information* 1994, **1** (6) p.28-29

60   **Herzog, Juliet.** The development of NVQs/SVQs.
       School Librarian, 1995, **43** (2) p.46

61   *Ibid*

62   **Herzog, Juliet.** Reforming training: National Vocational Qualifications and
       the law library. *Law Librarian,* 1993, **24** (4) p.184

63   Ref. 60, p.46-48

64   **Dakers, Hazel.** *National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs): the impact
       they are likely to make on library and information departments.* Leaflet first
       published in **Foreman, Lewis** (ed.), *Developing professionals in information
       work: personal and organisational growth in libraries.* London: HMSO,
       1992 (revised 1995).

65   Ref. 59, p.28-31

66   *Newsletter,* Spring 1996 [latest] Information and Library Services Lead
       Body c/o The Library Association, 7 Ridgmount Street, London WC1E 7AE

67   Ref. 60

68   **Dakers, Hazel.** NVQs, Follett and Fielden.
       British Journal of Academic Librarianship, 1994, **9** (3) p.179-190

69   **Dakers, Hazel.** Steering your staff down the NVQ route.
       Library Association Record, 1995, **97** (7) p.380

70   Ref. 66

71   *S/NVQs and the far-sighted employer.* A one-day seminar held by the ILS
       Lead Body, London, Library Association H.Q., 6.March 1995 [unpublished
       report by delegate K. Owen, Nottinghamshire County Council]

72   **Arundale, Justin.** *Getting your S/NVQ: a guide for candidates in the
       information and library sector.* London: Library Association Publishing in
       association with the Information and Library Services Lead Body, 1996

73   **Herzog, Juliet.** *An employer's guide to S/NVQs in the library and
       information services.* London: Library Association Publishing (awaiting
       publication)

74   **Wilson, T.D.** Are NVQs for robots?
       Library Association Record, 1995, 97 (7) p.381

75   NVQs are for people, not for robots [Letters].
       Library Association Record, 1995, 97 (8) p.428

76   **Wilson, T.D.** Challenging the assumptions of NVQs. *Library Association
       Record,* 1995, 97 (10) p.532

77   NVQs - not for professionals? [open letter from BAILER Heads of
       Departments and Schools Committee]. *Library Association Record,* 1995,
       97 (4) p.203

78   **Hobson, John.** The silent revolution at work.
       Library Association Record, 1996, 98 (4) p.202-203

79   *Ibid* p. 202

80   Ref. 78, p. 203

81   **Beaumont, Gordon.** *A review of 100 NVQs and SVQs: a report submitted
       to the DfEE.* London: DFEE, 1995.

82   Ibid, p. 5

83   **Pickles, Nigel and Totterdell, Anne.** Towards a better workforce.
       Library Association Record, 1996, 98 (2) p.91 and 93

84   **Arundale, Justin.** Prepare for the rush.
       Library Association Record, 1995, 97 (4) p.203

85   **Totterdell, Anne,** Somerset College of Art and Technology, speaker at *The
       future of paraprofessional education.* A one-day seminar held by the
       Personnel Training and Education Group of the Library Association.
       London, L.A.H.Q., 27. June 1996 [personal notes]

86   *Ibid*

87   Ref. 81, p.5

88   Ref. 85

89   *S/NVQs and you.* A one-day seminar held by the ILS Lead Body.
        Manchester, UMIST, 16. October, 1995 [personal notes]

90   Ref. 85

91   Ref. 74

92   Ref. 77

93   Ref. 74

94   Ref. 81, p.5

95   Ref. 78, p.202

96   Ref. 83, p.91

97   Ref. 77

98   Ref. 78, p.203

99   **Irving, Ann.** Aim of NVQs to complement not replace professional
        education. *Library Association Record,* 1995, **97** (6) p.327

100   Debating NVQs (review). *Library Association Record,* 1995, **97** (12) p.20

101   Ref. 74

102   **Lonsdale, Ray.** Distance learning modules, University of Wales,
        Aberystwyth. *School Librarian,* 1995, **43** (2) p. 48 and 56

103   Ref. 33, p.6-7

104   **Bone, Roger**, City and Guilds of London Institute, speaker at *The future of
        paraprofessional education.* A one-day seminar held by the Personnel
        Training and Education Group of the Library Association. London,
        L.A.H.Q., 27. June 1996 [personal notes]

105   *Ibid*

106   Ref. 104

107   Ref. 103

108   Ref. 83, p.91

109   *Ibid*

110   Ref. 85

111   *Ibid*

112   Ref. 83

113   Ref. 85

114   *Ibid*

115   Ref. 83, p.93

116   Ref. 103

117   Ref. 85

Chapter 4
Results of the para-professional questionnaire
and employer/trainer's interviews

1   Paraprofessional questionnaire

Response

The 62% response was fairly encouraging, although it was hoped that it would be higher as a stamped addressed envelope was enclosed for replies. Twenty-five (81%) respondents indicated that they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview over the telephone.

Age

The majority of respondents (36%) were aged 41-45. Twenty-seven (87%) respondents were over 30 years of age. Although it is accepted that the sample was knowingly biased, it may be argued that this does accurately reflect the age range of those employees looking at S/NVQs as a qualification. The 'S/NVQ and you' seminar was open to all interested individuals but the majority of people attending appeared to be over 30.

The one delegate that 'stood out' from the rest was a library assistant, under 20 years of age.

Sex

Twenty-nine (94%) respondents were female, two were male. It is interesting to note that only one of the male respondents was in a paraprofessional post; the other was in a senior managerial position.

Job title

The range of job titles reflected the diversity of library and information jobs available. Although this questionnaire was aimed at paraprofessional staff, a broad range of people felt able to respond. It became clear that not all 'librarians' had professional library and information service qualifications.

Nine respondents had the title of 'Library Assistant', there was also one 'Library Information Assistant' and a 'Learning Resources Assistant'. These could be grouped together at the same level as they do not suggest supervisory responsibility. However, there is the possibility that the job title does not adequately reflect the level of responsibility in the job, or the respondents' perceptions of their worth. For example, one 'Library Assistant' in a school library and one in a medical library believed they might aim at a level 4 NVQ.

Eight respondents were designated as 'Senior Library Assistants'. It may also be argued that a 'Resource Centre Supervisor', 'Library Manager' and 'Library Supervisor' were at the same level, with day-to-day responsibility for the management of their service points. All respondents considering NVQs stated that they were aiming at level 3 or 4.

The remaining respondents had interesting job titles. There were three 'Librarians' and one 'Teacher/ Librarian', all based in secondary or further education, who did not possess professional library and information service qualifications. One was considering an 'M. Lib.' qualification, another had been given the post on condition that she obtained NVQ level 4 or a degree in library and information studies. Two librarians were waiting to begin their NVQs (possibly at level 4), encouraged by their employers, but were frustrated by the lack of an assessment centre in their area.

Two 'Information Officers' replied to the questionnaire. Both were studying for a diploma in library and information studies (their description) and were not sure that LIS NVQs would be relevant to their present posts.

A personnel officer in the leisure services department of a local authority replied to the questionnaire, although possessing a Diploma in Library and Information Studies. It is interesting to see that this is a 'para-professional' post in that the respondent at that time was not working as a professional librarian, but was in a supporting role in the library service. This person had a training role and was working toward the Training and Development Lead Body's Human Resource Development NVQ. The respondent was later interviewed as a trainer and not as a paraprofessional.

A 'Principal Librarian' replied to the questionnaire. This person attended the seminar, but chose not to pass the questionnaire on to a paraprofessional, as the covering letter suggested, but to answer it personally. Although having the job title 'Principal Librarian' the respondent did not have a library and information service qualification but instead had a Diploma in Municipal Administration and was undecided as to whether a level 5 LIS NVQ would be relevant.

Department/Organisation

Table 3 shows the breakdown by organisation of the thirty-one replies to the questionnaire, the total number of questionnaires sent out in each sector is given in brackets.

Table 3
Replies by organisation

Organisation	Replies	Sent out
Business	0	(1)
College of F.E.	5	(13)
Health Authority	2	(4)
Local Authority	7	(13)
Personal Address	0	(2)
Secondary School	6	(6)
University	9	(9)
Voluntary Organisation	2	(2)

Despite the bias towards local authority public libraries and colleges of further education, it can be seen from table... that the percentage response rate from these organisations was 54% and 38% respectively . All the delegates from university libraries responded as did those from secondary schools. The reasons why there was such a good response rate will be discussed later.

Post-16 qualifications

The results show that paraprofessionals have a varied and fairly highly educated background. 94% of respondents had post-16 qualifications. As can be seen from Table 4 overleaf, sixteen (52%) respondents had one or more GCE A-levels. Eight (26%) had first degrees. These were in subjects including Textile Design, Business Studies, Education and Social Science. Nine (29%) respondents had the City and Guilds Library and Information Assistants Certificate. No respondent stated they had the BTEC National Certificate in Library Studies, however three had other ONC/HNC qualifications. One respondent had access to a post-City and Guilds management course for senior library assistants. Several qualifications reflect earlier occupations, e.g. teaching, hairdressing. Notably, three respondents had chosen to study for post-graduate library qualifications. At least one was studying on a part-time basis whilst currently employed. What might be seen as significant is that in total, only twelve respondents (39%) had an information and library qualification of any sort.

Table 4

Post-16 qualifications

GCE A-levels	16
NVQs (Customer Services or Assessor awards)	5
RSA	3
City and Guilds Library and Information	
Assistants' Certificate	9
BTEC ONC/HNC (not library studies)	2
ONC/HNC Public Administration	1
Diploma in Municipal Administration	1
Management for Senior Library Assistants (Telford College)	1
First Degree	8
Postgraduate Diploma in Library and Information Studies	3
Postgraduate Diploma in Special Needs Education	1
Teaching Diploma	1
Cert. Ed.	1

Other qualifications

City and Guilds Ladies Hairdressing	1
City and Guilds Word Processing	1
City and Guilds Initial Teaching Certificate: Adult Literacy	1
Open College Network Credits	2
South African Matriculation	1

Reasons why library and information service qualifications were chosen.

This was an open question, inviting comments. Not all respondents could answer this question but the comments of those that did are given here as they are written.

"I chose it to be able to further my career prospects".

(Public library supervisor with the City and Guilds LIAC)

"Because I got a job in information".

(Information Officer studying for a postgraduate library diploma)

"No other qualification except degree available".

(Senior library assistant, academic library with the City and Guilds LIAC and post-C&G qualification)

"Because it is relevant to my job".

(Senior library assistant, college of F.E. with City and Guilds LIAC)

"A more practical course based on what you do rather than what you learn from books"

(Senior library assistant, academic library with the City and Guilds LIAC)

"There was very little choice available for library assistants wishing to increase their knowledge/understanding of the job at the time I chose.."[sentence not finished].

(Senior library assistant, public library with City and Guilds LIAC)

"As a condition of a training place I was on".

(Library assistant, college of F.E. with City and Guilds LIAC)

"Course was offered to the library team as half-day release by the college".

(Library assistant, college of F.E. with City and Guilds LIAC)

"It was the only option offered by my employers i.e. day release".

(Library assistant, academic library with City and Guilds LIAC)

"To help with my job & improve my qualifications".

(Public library supervisor with City and Guilds LIAC)

It can be seen that many respondents felt that they had little choice of which

qualification to take, and that it was often the employer who dictated what was

available. Some respondents felt that their qualification was essential to their present

job and would enhance their future careers. It was interesting to see that one

respondent studied for the City and Guilds certificate as part of a training package.

Relevance of the information and library qualification to current employment

Comments were invited and included the following:

> "As I took my library qualification in 1982-83 I feel that it is not now very
> relevant to my present job".

(public library supervisor with City and Guilds LIAC)

> "Essential".

(Information officer studying for library diploma)

> "Minimal".

(Information officer with a library diploma)

> "Has helped me a lot in the past. In my present job the qualification and
> experience has made the setting up of routines, rotas etc. much easier. I have
> acquired a good knowledge of librarianship again [with post-City and Guilds
> management for senior library assistants course] because I learned the basics
> with C&G and then by experience".

(Senior library assistant, academic library with City and Guilds LIAC and post C&G
course)

> "Very relevant - it has given me not only an appropriate qualification but also
> a good understanding of all types of library and info work".

(Senior library assistant, college of F.E. with City and Guilds LIAC)

> "Not particularly. Need much more on computerised libraries".

(Senior library assistant, academic library with C&G LIAC)

> "Because it was so long ago I think that the City and Guilds does not have
> much relevance".

(Senior library assistant, public library)

.

"Very".

(Library Assistant, college of F.E. with City and Guilds LIAC)

"Relevant even though at present I do not do very much actual library work

but a lot of the course was still relevant to the learning centre position".

(Library assistant, college of F.E. with City and Guilds LIAC)

"Not very relevant for an academic library, more useful if you work in a

public library".

(Library assistant, academic library with City and Guilds LIAC)

.

"Very relevant, any new knowledge gained can enhance my dealings with

enquiries".

(Public library supervisor with City and Guilds LIAC)

Six out of eleven respondents who answered this question felt that their qualification

was still relevant. It is interesting to note that the two information officers had

different views as to the value of their library qualification. Two respondents felt

that as the City and Guilds qualification was taken so long ago it had lost its

relevance. One respondent felt that the City and Guilds LIAC lacked relevance

because it did not sufficiently cover information technology in the syllabus.

Reasons why respondents did not have an information or library qualification.

This again was an open question inviting comments. A selection of these are given as written:

"No courses available until possibly now".
(Library assistant, secondary school)

"Employer financing, not enough time, other commitments, studying for other qualifications at present".
(Library assistant, health authority)

"I did not want to travel for the City and Guilds".
(Library assistant, academic library)

"Have been refused day or part day release to do BTEC HNC".
(Senior library assistant, college of H&F.E.)

"Other than a degree at night school, nothing was relevant, I would not get a qualification as an assistant because it would not benefit".
(Senior library assistant, secondary school)

The reluctance to travel to college for the City and Guilds certificate was given by two respondents. Six respondents cited coming into libraries as a second career as reason why they had no formal library qualifications. One respondent had not thought of libraries as a career until working as a library assistant and now intends to study for an M.A. in library and information studies, another has been given a post of site librarian with the proviso that a degree, or NVQ level 4 is taken. It can also be seen from the comment above that at least one senior library assistant is aiming for something higher than a paraprofessional qualification.

Not all employers are willing to send assistants on to day-release courses and lack of money was given as a factor by one respondent. One respondent cited family and personal commitments as the sole reason why qualifications were not taken, although two others referred to other commitments as a factor. A temporary contract was given as a reason by one respondent who wasn't sure if a course would be appropriate.

The question on in-house training was next on the questionnaire but it is more appropriate to examine these results later. At this point it is worth looking at the results of the questions on National Vocational Qualifications and comparing them with the responses to the above questions on other qualifications.

Information and Library services National Vocational Qualifications

Table 5

Number of respondents considering ILS NVQs

Response	Number	%
Yes	17	55
No	8	26
Don't know	6	19
Total	31	100

Table 6

Level of NVQ being considered

Level	Number	%
2	3	18
3	5	29
3/4	5	29
4	2	12
4/5	1	6
5	1	6
Total	17	100

In addition, two respondents were taking the Customer Service NVQ, level three.

As can be seen from Tables 5 and 6, a majority of respondents (55%) are considering ILS NVQs, most of which are at levels 3 or 4. It is interesting to note that the existing Customer services NVQ is already being taken by two college library assistants. One respondent was taking the Training and Development Lead Body's D32/33 assessor awards.

Of the nine respondents with the City and Guilds LIAC, two are considering ILS NVQs at levels 3 or 4, two don't know and three are not considering the ILS NVQ. The remaining two are taking the Customer services NVQ mentioned above.

Of the nineteen (61%) respondents without a library qualification, thirteen are considering ILS NVQs: three at level two, nine at levels three or four and one at levels four or five. Three respondents are not considering NVQs (but one is considering an M.A. in Library and Information Studies), three don't know (of these, one may consider ILS NVQ level 5, another is considering an M.Lib degree).

It can quite clearly be seen from the results that ILS NVQs may fill a gap in paraprofessional training however, one respondent added the comment that she is

> "...frustrated as nothing [i.e. ILS NVQs] has been established in [my area] yet".

Reasons why respondents are not taking, or don't know whether to take ILS NVQs

This was an open question to discover respondents' own opinions. The reasons why the six respondents without library qualifications are not, or don't know whether to take NVQs has been mentioned above. It appears that postgraduate library and information programmes are seen to some as the most appropriate course. One respondent continued:

> " I felt NVQs were too involved for the reward".

One college learning resources assistant stated her reservations: that no decisions [by her employer] had been taken about assistance within the job whilst doing an NVQ; the cost was not known early on; and there was no assurance that NVQs would be recognised against degrees.

There is an interesting mix of comments from the five respondents with library qualifications not considering ILS NVQs, or undecided. Some of these comments are worth quoting.

> "I don't think NVQs will be beneficial to me. When I attended the seminar ['NVQs and You'] I felt that the methods were very 'bitty' and time consuming. I felt that I would be proving I could do things I had been doing for years. I certainly didn't think that my job prospects would be enhanced in any way".

(Senior library assistant, academic library with City and Guilds LIAC and post-City and Guilds management for senior library assistants qualification)

This comment is echoed by another library assistant in an academic library:

> "There would be no real benefit to me or my employer because I feel it would duplicate what I have done for my City and Guilds qualification".

One respondent felt that libraries would not accept NVQs as promotion and has therefore opted to take a degree. Two respondents were also not sure that ILS NVQs would be relevant to their posts. Another respondent stated that she was not sure that her authority was going to be involved in NVQs.

Reasons why ILS NVQs have been chosen. How will they enhance present employment?

These were also open questions inviting comment. They are best examined together. The two respondents with City and Guilds qualifications gave their reasons as follows:

> [There was] "...a possibility of obtaining a qualification equivalent to a

professional one without having to give up work". It won't enhance present employment "but will at least show a willingness to try to improve one's prospects".

The second stated: "It is a work-based qualification which draws on the knowledge one has already and offers a choice of units. There is more relevance to work and it will be of more use when applying for jobs in different fields". "It will increase knowledge and understanding of the work undertaken".

The thirteen respondents without library qualifications gave a variety of reasons why they chose NVQs and how relevant they would be to their present employment.

Five respondents chose ILS NVQs because they were work-based and could be taken 'on the job'. Five respondents also liked the fact that NVQs were closely related to their present job. The ability to "study at your own pace" was quoted by one respondent, another cited "flexibility" as the main reason. NVQs suited one respondent's domestic arrangements. Three respondents felt that NVQs would give them a professional 'paper' qualification. Two respondents said it was the only qualification available to them, two also stated that their authority was no longer offering City and Guilds and that ILS NVQs were now the favoured qualification.

Four respondents believed that NVQs would improve their current work practices, consolidate existing skills and identify future training needs. Three respondents believed ILS NVQs would lead to future promotion whilst another thought it might lead to more money but not career progression.

Comparison of ILS NVQs with other information and library qualifications

Eighteen (58%) respondents chose to answer this question, whether or not they were considering taking ILS NVQs. Two respondents who were taking NVQs chose not to answer. The question was in the form of tick boxes. Some respondents left boxes blank, possibly as a don't know. Others chose to make comments at the side. The results are given in tabulated form below.

Table 7

Comparison of ILS NVQs with other LIS qualifications

Characteristics	Better than other quals.	Same	Not as good	Total
Flexibility	15	2	0	17
Suitability to own commitments	13	3	1	17
Financial cost (own)	6	9	0	15
Time studying p/w	12	3	3	18
Time on practical work/ portfolio p/w	9	5	3	17
Total time on the course	12	5	1	18
Work time on the course p/w	11	5	1	17
Own time on course p/w	9	4	3	16
Relevance to your job	11	7	0	18
Recognition as an ILS qualification	5	7	5	17
Value as a qualification in own right (transferability)	11	3	4	18

As can be seen from table 7 , the majority of respondents believed that NVQs would offer more flexibility and would be more suitable to their commitments.

Three fifths (nine) respondents believed that personal financial costs would be the same, although six believed they would be better. One respondent commented that employers usually paid expenses.

Two thirds of respondents believed that NVQs would be better in relation to time spent studying each week and nine out of seventeen felt that NVQs would be better in terms of time spent on practical work or portfolio. Two thirds of respondents believed that NVQs were an improvement on the total time spent on other LIS courses. Eleven out of seventeen believed that NVQs were better in relation to work time spent on the qualification each week. Nine out of sixteen respondents felt that NVQs would be better in personal time spent the qualification each week.

One respondent pointed out the vagueness of these questions, asking exactly what was better: more, or less time on a qualification? The point is taken. It would have been better to be more precise. The aim was to discover whether NVQs would be more adaptable than day-release to work and personal timetables and be thus more attractive. It appears that the responses may suggest this.

Eleven out of eighteen respondents felt that ILS NVQs would be more relevant to their jobs. It is interesting to note that opinion is divided on whether ILS NVQs are better than existing qualifications. It appears that opinion is generally favourable, with five respondents believing NVQs will be better and seven believing recognition will be about the same. However, a sizeable minority (five) think they will not be as well recognised. One respondent believed that ILS NVQs were a better practical qualification but were academically not as good and there was room for both types. The majority also believe that the ILS NVQ has value as a qualification in itself and may be transferable to other occupations.

In-house training

Only three out of the thirty-one respondents stated that they had received no in-house training over the last two years. One is in a temporary post, one is studying for a postgraduate diploma in library and information studies and the third has taken a City and Guilds Adult Trainers qualification. The overwhelming majority of paraprofessionals therefore have access to a range of training courses. The number of courses attended varies considerably. One respondent lists ten, another, only one. Two assistants from a college of F.E. state that their in-house training is part of a total developmental package which includes the City and Guilds LIAC and NVQs. Several respondents without LIS qualifications have attended in-house training relevant to their posts such as information technology skills, customer service skills, careers information and 'library awareness'.

Experienced senior library assistants have had supervisory skills training, information handling, reference and enquiry training, customer care and introductions to the Internet. In addition, two respondents mentioned that they had been sent to conferences related to their work.

Finally, respondents were asked what support for training were they getting from their employer/trainer: twenty-five (81%) received financial support in the form of fees and expenses, although only eleven (36%) were given time off work. Twenty (65%) stated they were given in-house training this is in contradiction to the 90% who had earlier listed their in-house training. Seventeen (55%) felt that they received active encouragement to gain qualifications whilst eleven (35%) thought that their employer/trainer gave them 'moral' support or advice. Eight (26%) had a mentor. Three respondents ticked no boxes at all. It appears that the majority of employers or trainers support paraprofessionals in their training, even when formal qualifications are not available.

2   Results of the interview with employers/trainers

Recognition of ILS-related courses for paraprofessionals

All three organisations recognised the City and Guilds LIAC as a paraprofessional qualification. Indeed, it was the only nationally recognised qualification available in the area. Most senior library assistants were expected to have the certificate. South East Derbyshire College was the course provider for the area's public libraries, Nottingham and Derbyshire Universities, colleges of further education and school libraries.

Nottinghamshire County Council and the University of Nottingham were also supporting the introduction of ILS NVQs.

South Nottinghamshire College also offered a range of qualifications to its staff including the Customer Services NVQ, 'OCNs' (Open College Network), which were 'mini' qualifications similar to NVQ units of competence, and EMFEC (East Midlands Further Education Council) accredited one-day courses. Senior assistants were also supported on part-time professional degrees.

Involvement in supporting the attainment of qualifications.

All three organisations supported the attainment of qualifications by paying fees and expenses, allowing time off from work and giving general encouragement and support.

Implementing ILS NVQs

Both training co-ordinators at Nottinghamshire County Libraries and Nottingham University are keen to offer ILS NVQs. The South Nottinghamshire College trainer has no plans to offer ILS NVQs at his own centre and remains committed to the Customer Services NVQ for which he is co-ordinator. South East Derbyshire College will offer the ILS NVQs.

It is apparent that there are two approaches to implementing ILS NVQs. The training co-ordinator at Nottingham University has no prior experience of NVQs and is working with South East Derbyshire College's library tutor. South Eeast Derbyshire College will become the Assessment Centre for Nottingham University. The University's training co-ordinator is working towards becoming an assessor and candidates have been found to be the 'guinea pigs' for the new qualification at level 2.

Notts. County Libraries is taking a different approach. It is working towards becoming an assessment centre in its own right. It already is an assessment centre for Administration Standards, and the training co-ordinator is an internal verifier.

Both trainers expect that the underpinning knowledge at ILS NVQ level 2 will be supplied entirely 'in-house' without input from a college of Further Education. Nottinghamshire County Libraries will offer level 3, but have not considered who will provide the required theoretical base.

All three organisations have run information days on ILS NVQs and have interested candidates.

Interviewees felt that ILS NVQs may raise the profile of library and information work generally by showing how particular aspects of the service, e.g. information technology and customer service relate to other occupations. Certain skills may then become more transferable. The Nottinghamshire County Libraries training co-ordinator felt that ILS NVQs will not allow a progression from paraprofessional to professional in libraries as they are based on a candidate's current job. There will still be a barrier at level 3/4.

The training co-ordinator for Nottinghamshire County Libraries believes that employers are still not wholly committed to the NVQ concept. She suggests that there have been misunderstandings and bad publicity surrounding college-based NVQs and the NVQ jargon is putting off potential supporters.

Comparison of ILS NVQs with other paraprofessional qualifications
The Nottinghamshire County Libraries training co-ordinator has a personal belief that the City and Guilds LIAC will 'die' once ILS NVQs are more commonly available. NVQs appeal to candidates because they do not require examinations to be taken and are flexible, particularly suiting part-time staff in terms of the time and commitment required. Employers will value them because employees will be trained and assessed in the workplace against a national standard. The Nottinghamshire County Libraries training co-ordinator predicts that the City and Guilds syllabus will become obsolete and is making a comparison of the two qualifications this year (1996), but doubts whether the City and Guilds will continue to be offered.

The Nottingham University Libraries co-ordinator recognises that some paraprofessional staff seem to prefer the City and Guilds qualification because it is seen as more academic, requiring day-release and examinations. NVQs seem to be preferred by older women with family commitments who do not want to return to college, who fear examinations, or cannot spare time for study.

South East Derbyshire College is hoping that the City and Guilds LIAC and ILS NVQs will complement each other and they will able to offer a flexible package of options to employers.

Other views

The information scientist for an industrial company in Leicestershire commented that he did not think ILS NVQs would be relevant to his information unit staff as they were already well qualified, having subject degrees, if not ILS qualifications. Another Research and Information Service attached to a large company stated that continuous restructuring and upheavals within the organisation prevented them from developing formal training programmes for their staff.

The libraries training co-ordinator for another of Nottingham's universities felt that ILS NVQs would not be relevant to paraprofessional staff with the City and Guilds qualification but admitted that the ILS NVQ concept had not yet been seriously studied.

Chapter 5
Discussion and analysis

General impression

The overall impression from the questionnaire and interviews is that there is a gap in the market for another paraprofessional qualification that complements rather than competes with existing schemes. Paraprofessionals have a need for a progressive qualification and employers are beginning to recognise that ILS NVQs have relevance to their workforce.

Who are paraprofessionals?

The study was not on a large enough scale to make too many generalisations but it appears that the questionnaire results agree with the literature in that paraprofessionals are mostly female. It is notable however, that the majority of respondents were over thirty years of age and educated to A-level standard or higher. Several had come into the ILS sector as a second career and some had previously been educated to professional level (e.g. teachers). Senior library assistants and library managers were highly motivated and took a 'professional' approach to their work which the literature suggests is not recognised. Results suggest that this type of paraprofessional will be particularly responsive to the ILS NVQ concept.

What paraprofessionals want from a qualification

From the study it appears that paraprofessionals want a progressive qualification, or set of qualifications, that provide evidence of what they currently do whilst allowing for career progression up to, and including professional level. It is not evident that paraprofessionals want a parallel career structure, different from that of professionals, as suggested by the literature. They do want a flexible mode of study that recognises that many cannot be released from work, or have other commitments. The City and Guilds qualification does not deliver any of this.

BTEC National in Information and Library Studies.

The BTEC National award has gone. As no respondent had taken this qualification and the one interested assistant had been refused the opportunity, the evidence seems to confirm the literature that suggested that employers were not willing to invest in sending employees on a course with so little ILS content. The question why employers and the profession did not value the BTEC National has still not been adequately answered and probably never will now it has been discontinued.

The City and Guilds LIAC

The number of respondents to the questionnaire with the City and Guilds LIAC was notably small (29%). It appears that not all paraprofessionals have access to the qualification because of the lack of availability in the area or because their employers are not willing to release them from work. It is notable that no paraprofessional stated that they had taken the course, or had considered taking it by a distance learning route. However, one senior library assistant had studied for a post City and Guilds qualification from Telford College, Edinburgh, perhaps by this method. The results suggest that the City and Guilds LIAC is perceived to have merit as a paraprofessional qualification, but this is not unanimous.

Some believe it is better than nothing; it is taken because it is the only qualification available in the area, or the only one recognised by employers. The qualification does suit some paraprofessionals who can relate it to their work. The City and Guilds Institute has listened to some of the criticisms about the syllabus and is, for example, reviewing its information technology content. It is notable that in the review of the scheme, City and Guilds plan to introduce far more practical rather than written assessment, a move away from the 'academic' approach.

The City and Guilds LIAC does have limited promotional value, being required by some employers for senior library assistant posts. However, the City and Guilds LIAC does not enable paraprofessionals to progress to professional posts, nor does it help those who are working in professional posts without ILS qualifications. It was clear from the survey, that many paraprofessionals were looking for a qualification that would enable them to be recognised as professionals by other professionals and employers.

ILS NVQs

There appears to be increasing interest in the qualification from paraprofessionals and employers. ILS NVQs appear to fill a gap in the market for paraprofessional qualifications. The ILS Lead Body has an on-going programme of information seminars to introduce the concept to all sectors of the information and library services. The qualification is very much at the developmental stage. Levels 2-4 are now available, although it appears that levels 2 and 3 will be most readily available to paraprofessionals for the foreseeable future. It appears that demand may outstrip the supply of assessment centres and assessors at this early stage.

The trainers interviewed had enthusiasm for the NVQ concept and were instrumental in establishing the qualification in their library services. Employers are still cautious about totally committing themselves to the NVQ concept. Take-up is therefore patchy. Some employers may adopt a 'wait and see' attitude that could frustrate potential paraprofessional candidates. However, it appears that where employees take the initiative and campaign for the introduction of NVQs, as in Surrey, employers are persuaded as to their value. It is notable that there is more than one NVQ that has relevance to library and information services and that employers have to look carefully at which standard applies to their particular service.

ILS NVQs are aimed at meeting the needs of employers who have to respond to changing patterns of work and the increasingly sophisticated provision of information. Employers are increasingly recognising the benefits of time and money invested in creating a flexible and adaptable workforce able to question what they do and understand why they are doing it. It appears that employers who ignore NVQs do so to their own disadvantage.

Because NVQs do not require time off in the form of day release they may be a big selling point to employers. However, employers must recognise that NVQs require a high level of organisation and support during work time and that staff have to be released from other duties to assess and be assessed.

NVQs are perceived as being more flexible and accessible because they are based in the work-place. Employees can work at their own pace and take as long as they need (within reason) to gain the qualification. NVQs may suit more mature workers who have not studied for some years. They also do not require candidates to study in their own time or to travel to a college. ILS NVQs may remove the considerable barriers to education and training felt by some female employees.

The study suggests that because NVQs evidence what is already being done in a job, paraprofessionals working at a higher level, or those in 'professional' posts see NVQs as a way of getting their skills recognised by employers and the library profession in general. It remains to be seen how this works in practice. The literature suggests that many professionals would feel threatened if this did happen.

National Vocational Qualifications have a 'shelf-life' of three years which will ensure that they remain relevant to the job being performed however, it does not appear that employers have considered the need to renew them periodically. At the same time, at least one paraprofessional appreciated that the amount of work involved was insufficiently rewarded in terms of the value of the qualification. There still appears to be much more value placed on qualifications that do not expire, even though they may lose their relevance over time.

There seems to be some confusion as to the extent of NVQs transferability. It appears that to some this means that they will allow greater flexibility between ILS jobs. To others it means that there may be proven competency in skills, e.g. customer care that will be relevant to other occupations. It is too early to see how this will develop but both seem possible and will certainly raise the profile of information and library work as one trainer suggested.

ILS NVQs are still very much at the developmental stage. Although thay have been 'field tested' and are now being introduced across the country they have not been established long enough for firm conclusions to be drawn about their recognition as a paraprofessional qualification. The study has shown that paraprofessionals are uncertain about their value compared with other qualifications although opinion is generally favourable. ILS NVQs may have to become much more widely available before paraprofessionals feel able to compare them properly. It may be that having seen the equivocal way in which employers and professionals have treated other paraprofessional qualifications, paraprofessionals are right be cautious. The future of the ILS NVQ does depend on the attitude of employers and professionals.

The 'professional' debate as to how ILS NVQs relate to existing professional qualifications and to associateship of the Library Association is a debate in itself. However, there is a danger that at an insecure profession will again stifle paraprofessional educational developments. The evidence suggests that at present trainers are avoiding the question of the possible cross-over between paraprofessional and professional at level four. Employers may dictate the success, or failure of ILS NVQs. Where senior management does not consist of short-sighted librarians, keen to preserve their professional status, ILS NVQs may be adopted on a large scale and the academic debate on their educational and 'professional' value will be just that: academic.

The City and Guilds LIAC and ILS NVQs

From the study, it appears that there may be value in offering the City and Guilds qualification and ILS NVQs in tandem. There is a need for a theoretical base to NVQ levels 2 and 3. Whilst larger organisations may feel competent to provide education at level 2, there are many smaller units that cannot do this. Furthermore, level 3 requires a broader theoretical base that may require input from outside the workplace. The current re-structuring of the City and Guilds 7370 syllabus recognises this need.

Somerset College of Arts and Technology's combining of the two courses does offer a more comprehensive package of education and training to paraprofessionals which appears to be supported by employers. However, there is a danger that by following the academic timetable, the NVQ ethos of a candidate-led, flexible approach is lost.

The interview of trainers suggests that there is still support for a more academic qualification which will suit some paraprofessionals. It may be that the City and Guilds LIAC needs to target itself more specifically at sections of the market that still want an examination-based qualification or cannot offer in-house qualifications such as school libraries and other 'one-person' bands. The new City and Guilds syllabus may become more attractive now it has gained increased FEFC funding.

Other options

From the study, it appears that paraprofessionals wanting to progress to professional level are taking the more flexible routes to professional qualification now offered by university postgraduate programmes in library and information studies. However, not all paraprofessionals that would like to, can afford the time and commitment for this, or are supported by their employer. The availability of distance learning programmes seems to be one option that will be developed more fully in the future.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this study several questions were raised about the current state of paraprofessional education. This study has answered these questions from the literature reviewed and the questionnaires and interviews. However it is suggested that a more far-reaching study would be of use to those responsible for education and training who are having to make difficult choices as to which paraprofessional qualifications to support.

In the campaign to establish ILS NVQs within the ILS sector, there is a danger that paraprofessionals will be encouraged to develop higher expectations of a better education and career structure than can actually be delivered. It would be a shame to see such hopes dashed yet again by employers and the profession.

A coherent, structured and progressive programme of training and educational qualifications available to the most junior paraprofessional and the most senior professional is now needed. A selection of nationally recognised qualifications that would allow employers and employees to 'pick and mix' to suit their organisational and personal requirements should be a reality, not a 'pipe dream'. In the long term this is the only way the 'profession' will survive.

Bibliography

Arundale, Justin. *Getting your S/NVQ: a guide for candidates in the information and library sector.* London: Library Association Publishing in association with the Information and Library Services Lead Body, 1996

Arundale, Justin. Prepare for the rush.
Library Association Record, 1995, **97** (4) p.203

Baker, D.M. *Certificates in library work: an historical-critical study of non-professional level librarianship qualifications.* PhD. Loughborough: Loughborough University, Department of Library and Information Studies, 1987

Baker, David The City and Guilds Library Assistant's Certificate: a brief history [part one] *Training and Education,* 1985, **2** (3) p.42-50 *and*

Baker, David The City and Guilds Library Assistant's Certificate: a brief history [part two] *Training and Education,* 1985, **3** (1) p.3-12

Baker, D. *Guidelines for training in libraries, 6 : Training library assistants.* London: Library Association, 1986

Baker, David ed. *Junior staff training* Leicester: University, College and Research Section of the Library Association (East Midlands Branch), 1980

Baker, David. *What about the workers? A study of non-professional staff in library work.* London: Association Of Assistant Librarians, 1986

84

Beales, K. Non-professional information and training. *Education for Information*, 1989, 7, p.29-41

Beaumont, Gordon. *A review of 100 NVQs and SVQs: a report submitted to the DfEE.* London: DFEE, 1995.

BEC Diploma for Leeds [news item]
Library Association Record, Jul. 1979, **81** (7) p.317

BEC qualifications opposed by special librarians [news]
Library Association Record, Mar. 1979, **81** (3) p.113

Bone, Roger, City and Guilds of London Institute, speaker at *The future of paraprofessional education.* A one-day seminar held by the Personnel Training and Education Group of the Library Association. London, L.A.H.Q., 27. June 1996 [personal notes]

Bone, Roger The future of the City and Guilds Library and Information Assistants Examination 7370 and NVQs. *Personnel Training and Education,* Jan.1996, **13** (1), p.6-7

Bowen, J. Perceptions about training needs and further qualifications amongst non-·professional staff in a public library (Humberside).
Information and Library manager, 1982, **2** (10) p.15

Dakers, Hazel. NVQs, Follett and Fielden.
British Journal of Academic Librarianship, 1994, **9** (3) p.179-190

Dakers, Hazel. *National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs): the impact they are likely to make on library and information departments.* Leaflet first published in **Foreman, Lewis** (ed.), *Developing professionals in information work: personal and organisational growth in libraries.* London: HMSO, 1992 (revised 1995).

Dakers, H. National Vocational Qualifications: what is in them for school libraries. *School Librarian,* 1995, **43** (2) p.45

Dakers, Hazel. Steering your staff down the NVQ route. *Library Association Record,* 1995, **97** (7) p.380

Davinson, Donald E Non-professional library staff education: a state of the art report and proposals for the future. *Studies in Library Management,* 1981, 7, p37-60

Debating NVQs (review). *Library Association Record,* 1995, 97 (12) p.20

Ellis, A.C.O. and Hunter, E.J. Cool response to HND scheme, but situation may change. *Library Association Record,* 1981, **83** p.249

Foster, Kathleen. Education and training of non-professional staff in Sheffield City Libraries. *Training and Education,* 1986/7, **4** (1) p.2-7

The future of para-professional education. A one-day seminar held at the Library Association headquarters by the Personnel Training and Education Group of the Library Association Thurs. 27 June 1996. Author's own notes.

Goulding, Anne The grading system and career structure of library assistants in public libraries. *Personnel Training and Education*, 1992, **9** (1) p.3-17

Herzog, Juliet. The development of NVQs/SVQs. *School Librarian*, 1995, **43** (2) p.46-48

Herzog, Juliet. *An employer's guide to S/NVQs in the library and information services.* London: Library Association Publishing (awaiting publication)

Herzog, Juliet. Reforming training: National Vocational Qualifications and the law library. *Law Librarian*, 1993 **24** (4) p. 179-186

Hobson, John. The silent revolution at work. *Library Association Record*, 1996, **98** (4) p.202-203

Irving, Ann. Aim of NVQs to complement not replace professional education. *Library Association Record*, 1995, **97** (6) p.327-328

Jespersen, Sherry. The development of new National Vocational Qualifications: with particular relevance to the information and library services. *Managing Information*, 1994, 1 (6) p.28-31

Keane, J. In search of competence. *Assistant Librarian*, 1994, **87** (4) p.54-56

Labdon, P. LAC-BEC: an investigation of the current position of sub-professional qualifications for library staff. *LEG News*, 1981, 21, p.10-14

Library Association Working Party on Training. *Training in libraries.* London: Library Association, 1977

Lonsdale, Ray. Distance learning modules, University of Wales, Aberystwyth. *School Librarian*, 1995, **43** (2) p. 48 and 56

Mugnier, C. *The Paraprofessional and the professional job structure.* Chicago: American Library Association, 1980

Newsletter, Spring 1996 [latest] Information and Library Services Lead Body c/o The Library Association, 7 Ridgmount Street, London WC1E 7AE

NVQs are for people, not for robots [Letters]. *Library Association Record*, 1995, **97** (8) p.428

NVQs - not for professionals? [open letter from BAILER Heads of Departments and Schools Committee]. *Library Association Record*, 1995, **97** (4) p.203

Pickles, Nigel and Totterdell, Anne. Towards a better workforce. *Library Association Record*, 1996, **98** (2) p.91 and 93

Poole, Andrew. Which route to the future? Library and information support staff. *Library Work*, Oct.1988, (2) p.20-21

Pryterch, Ray ed. *Staff training in libraries: the British experience.* Aldershot: Gower, 1986

Russell, Norman J Professional and non-professional in libraries: the need for a new relationship. *J. Librarianship*, 1985, **17** (4) p 298

Scarrott, Martin Non-professional staff: an overview. *Library Work*, April 1989, (4), p.18

Shields, Mark. The great divide. *Library Work,* Jul. 1988, (1) p. 21-23

S/NVQs and the far-sighted employer. A one-day seminar held by the ILS Lead
    Body, London, Library Association H.Q., 6.March 1995 [unpublished report
    by delegate K. Owen, Nottinghamshire County Council]

S/NVQs and you. A one-day seminar held by the ILS Lead Body. Manchester,
    UMIST, 16. October, 1995 [personal notes]

Standley, A.E. C & G's LAC is about right [letter]
    Library Association Record, Nov.1977, **79** (11) p.651

Standley, A.E. Part-time education in librarianship: a continuing need.
    Library Association Record, 1970, **72** p.91-92

Totterdell, Anne, Somerset College of Arts and Technology, speaker at *The
    future of paraprofessional education.* A one-day seminar held by the
    Personnel Training and Education Group of the Library Association.
    London, L.A.H.Q., 27. June 1996 [personal notes]

Wallace, Val. *Who manages the library? The role of the paraprofessional.*
    Occasional Paper 16. London: Branch of The Mobile Libraries Group Of
    The Library Association, 1992

Webb, Josephine. The non-professional in the academic library: education for
    paraprofessionalism. *Personnel Training and Education,* 1990, **7** (2)
    p.21-30

Wilson, T.D. Are NVQs for robots?

Library Association Record, 1995, **97** (7) p.381

Wilson, T.D. Challenging the assumptions of NVQs. *Library Association*

Record, 1995, **97** (10) p.532

Working Party on Manpower,Training and Education. *Training for library and*

information work: a discussion paper. London: Office of Arts and Libraries,

1984

Glossary

Approved Centre

An organisation which has undergone an approval process by RSA to offer RSA qualifications (in this case NVQs).
(Terms Used in Vocational Education and Training Coventry: RSA, 1994)

Assessor

A person with specialist knowledge of an occupation or subject area, who is nominated to make judgements about a candidate's competence or evidence of achievements. May be a workplace supervisor, college tutor, trainer or manager.
(Terms Used in Vocational Education and Training Coventry: RSA 1994)

BTEC

Business and Technology Education Council. Awarding body for the National and Higher National Certificates in library and information studies.

Certification

The Certificate issued by an awarding body such as RSA Examinations Board, for either Unit(s) of, or a whole qualification. If some units towards the qualification are claimed, then an RSA Certificate is issued which lists the Unit titles. If a full qualification is achieved, an RSA certificate listing the Units and an NCVQ/RSA Certificate listing the qualification title are awarded.

(Terms Used in Vocational Education and Training Coventry: RSA 1994)

City and Guilds (C&G)

City and Guilds of London Institute. Examinations Board for the 7370 Library and Information Assistants Certificate.

Competence

The ability to perform to the standards expected in normal employment, not in a training situation. It is possible to be competent in certain parts of the job whilst not in others.

(RSA Examinations Board Glossary)

Competence-based

qualifications

Qualifications which show what a candidate can do, by observing or measuring that person carrying out a range of practical activities to prescribed standards.

(Terms Used in Vocational Education and Training Coventry: RSA 1994)

Element (of competence)   A description of a single task, behaviour or result required to be demonstrated separately, and satisfying the requirements of the full set of competences described in the industry standards for an occupation; several elements may make up a **unit** of an NVQ.
(RSA Examinations Board Glossary)

Evidence   Information which supports judgment about achievement. It can be drawn from a range of activities and be a variety of types but it must always relate directly to the element of competence being assessed; how the candidate *proves* competence.
(RSA Examinations Board Glossary)

Lead Body   Representatives for employment or an occupational sector who are responsible for establishing the standards of competence for qualifications in their industry.
(Terms Used in Vocational Education and Training Coventry: RSA 1994)

Level (of qualification)   The place of a qualification or award in a structure of several qualifications or awards in a particular vocational area, in terms of the degree of skill and knowledge required and the complexity of the occupational roles concerned; the higher the level, the more complicated and responsible the job.
(RSA Examinations Board Glossary)

93

LIAC   Library and Information Assistants Certificate. (City
                               and Guilds 7370).

LIS   Library and Information Services

NCVQ   National Council for Vocational Qualifications

National Vocational

Qualifications (NVQs)   National Vocational Qualifications. Competence
                               based national qualifications, accredited by NCVQ,
                               and incorporated into the NVQ framework.
                               (Terms Used in Vocational Education and Training
                               Coventry: RSA 1994)

Portfolio   Materials collected by a candidate, providing detailed
                               evidence for claims towards a qualification.
                               (Terms Used in Vocational Education and Training
                               Coventry: RSA 1994)

Standards   A set of competences expected of an individual
                               performing a particular occupational role, expressed in
                               terms of outcomes of work activity.
                               (RSA Examinations Board Glossary)

Transferable

(Transferability)   The ability for a competence to be applicable
                               in a different environment or use of circumstances
                               from the one(s) in which it was first assessed.
                               (RSA Examinations Board Glossary)

94

Unit (of competence)   A group of elements of competence making up a

recognisable separate function within an occupation,

which makes sense to employers as worthy of separate

certification. The smallest grouping of competences

which is recognised by NCVQ for separate

certification and credit transfer.

(RSA Examinations Board Glossary)

Appendix 1

NATIONAL VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN THE INFORMATION AND LIBRARY SERVICES

This questionnaire seeks your opinion on the value of NVQ's in comparison to other qualifications. Please comment freely on questions, or tick in the boxes where appropriate. Additional comments may be attached on a separate sheet.

Your personal information will be treated in confidence and you will be quoted anonymously.

1   Name..

2   Age (please tick one box)

20 or under	21-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51-55	56-60	over 60
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3   Male ☐   Female ☐   (please tick one)

4   Job Title _____

5   Department and/or Organisation ....

6   What post-16 qualifications do you have, or are in the process of obtaining?

G.C.E. A level ☐   BTEC ☐

N.V.Q. ☐   Degree ☐

R.S.A. ☐   please specify subject........................

City and Guilds Library   Other ☐

Assistants Certificate ☐   (please specify)................................

7   If you have a library and information service qualifications (eg. City and Guilds, BTEC) why did you choose it?
please comment...
....

8   How relevant do you feel your information or library qualification is to your present job?
please comment...
....

9   If you do not have an information or library qualification what is the reason? (include domestic as well as employment reasons)
please comment...
....

10   What in-house training have you attended in the last two years?
please specify...
....
....

11   Have you entered, or are you considering entering for the Information and Library Services (ILS) National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ's)? (please tick one box)

Yes   No   Don't know
☐   ☐   ☐

If yes, continue on question 12, then turn over
If no, or don't know, what are your reasons?..
....
.... **Now go to question 16 overleaf**

12   What level of NVQ are you considering? Level...

13 What are the main reasons you chose NVQ's?
    please specify...
    ....
    ....
    ....

14 How do you think NVQ's will enhance your present employment?
    please comment...
    ....
    ....
    ....

15 How do you think ILS NVQ's will compare with other information and library service
    qualifications e.g. City and Guilds, BTEC, in terms of the following: (please tick one box for
    each. Guesses are acceptable)

	Better than the others	Same	Not as good
Flexibility	☐	☐	☐
Suitability to your commitments	☐	☐	☐
Financial cost to you	☐	☐	☐
Time spent studying (each week)	☐	☐	☐
Time spent on practical work/portfolio (each week)	☐	☐	☐
Time spent on course (total)	☐	☐	☐
Work-time spent on course (each week)	☐	☐	☐
Own time spent on course (each week)	☐	☐	☐
Relevance to your job	☐	☐	☐
Recognition as an information and library qualification	☐	☐	☐
Value as a qualification in itself (transferable to other occupations)	☐	☐	☐

16 What support for training have you had, or are getting, from your employer/trainer? (please
    tick as appropriate)

Finance (fees/expenses etc.)	☑	'Moral' support/advice	
Time off work	☑	whilst studying	☑
In-house training	☐	Mentoring	☐
		Other	☐
Active encouragement to gain qualifications	☑	(please specify)............................	

Thank-you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Would you be willing to be contacted
for a short follow-up telephone interview? (please tick)   Yes   No
                                                             ☐   ☐

If yes, please give telephone number and extension on which you can be contacted.................................
Please return this questionnaire by 31.May 1996, in the prepaid envelope provided, or to:

Gill Coker
182 Meadow Road,
.Beeston Rylands,
Nottingham NG9 1JR

Para-professional education: interview questions.

1.   **About you**

Name

Organisation   Position

2.   **About education**

2.1 What ILS-related courses does your organisation already recognise?

2.2 How is it involved in supporting these? e.g. finance, time off.

2.3 How far have you got in implementing ILS NVQs? eg.

Registering as an assessment centre

Training Assessors/internal verifiers

Registering candidates

Training candidates

Other eg. workshops/information sessions

2.3.2 What levels are you covering?

2.4   Has the organisation experience of implementing NVQs in other areas eg. Admin. Customer Care?

2.4.1 What is its role? eg. assessment centre/training assessors/candidates

3   **ILS NVQs vs. other qualifications**

3.1 How do you think ILS NVQs will compare with other courses eg. City and Guilds, BTEC eg.

Recognition as an ILS qualification, by employers, by employees

Value as a qualification in itself - transferability

Relevance to the more flexible workforce - P/T, temps etc.

Reflect employment needs of the workplace

Flexibility as a course eg. work-based rather than college based

3.2 Do you think the emphasis on assessing work-based competence rather than theoretical knowledge is more appropriate to para-professional education? What about levels 4 & 5?

3.3 What relevance will City & Guilds/BTEC have now that ILS NVQs are available? e.g. will your organisation offer a range of paraprofessional qualifications or opt for one

City & Guilds

Library and Information Assistants Scheme (7370)

Thank you for your recent enquiry about this scheme. The scheme consists of five areas of competence as shown below. Subject areas :
- Selecting, stocking, storing and maintaining materials (consisting of two components - a written examination and practical coursework component.) (no.051)
- Providing routine customer services (consisting of two components.- a written examination and a practical coursework component.) (no. 053)
- Assisting users to locate and retrieve information (a written examination and a coursework component.) (no. 055)
- Personal presentation and communication (practical coursework assessment.)
- Organisation studies (written examination.)

Certification is achieved by the successful completion of all components. Candidates who are successful in individual components will be awarded Record of Achievements which be recognised for the award of the full certificate.

The coursework assessments are carried out by a Chartered Librarian or a librarian of equivalent experience. The practical tasks which are assessed should be part of the routine work done by the candidates in their libraries or information units and according to the criteria laid down in the scheme pamphlet and the candidate logbook.

Written examinations are on fixed dates in May and December of each year.

Entry Requirements

There are no educations stipulated to undertake the course but candidates should be working in a library or information unit to gain mastery of the practical aspects of the course.

Documentation

City & Guilds' terms are cash with order. Payment by cheque/postal order or bank draft should be made payable to City & Guilds. Please do not send loose cash or postage stamps. Centres may be invoiced. The following documents may be ordered from the Sales Department at the address below (telephone orders cannot be accepted.) Please order by Stock Control Number as printed in the right-hand column below.

	Price	Stock Control Number
Sample Question Papers	£1.65	QP-00-1737
Syllabus/scheme pamphlet	£2.40	SP-00-0737
Logbooks/Records of Achievements	£3.39	TS-00-0737
Centre Guidance Notes	£2.40	EN-00-0737

The Levels of Qualification

INFORMATION AND LIBRARY SERVICES S/NVQ: LEVEL 2

Competence which involves the application of knowledge in a significant range of varied work activities, performed in a variety of contexts. Some of the activities are complex or non-routine and there is some individual responsibility and autonomy. Collaboration with others, perhaps through membership of a work group or team, may often be a requirement.

MANDATORY UNITS

IL2.24	Process material for use
IL1.11	Identify and provide information/material required by user
CSLB Unit 3	Develop positive working relationships with customers

OPTIONAL UNITS

IL2.25	Maintain arrangement of information/material
IL2.28	Secure information/material
IL1.25	Contribute to the maintenance of a supportive environment for users
IL1.24	Direct users
IL1.16	Issue & recover loan material
ALB2 Unit 6	Maintain data in a computer system

> Candidates must complete all mandatory and any three optional units, making a total of six units to gain the full qualification.

INFORMATION AND LIBRARY SERVICES S/NVQ: LEVEL 3

Competence which involves the application of knowledge in a broad range of varied work activities performed in a wide variety of contexts, most of which are complex and non-routine. There is considerable responsibility and autonomy and control or guidance of others is often required.

MANDATORY UNITS

IL1.14	Provide information/material to user
IL2.21	Organise information/material
CSLB Unit 4	Solve problems on behalf of customers
MIS 1	Maintain services & operations to meet quality standards

OPTIONAL UNITS: USER SERVICES

IL1.12	Identify information required by user
IL1.22	Provide displays
IL1.26	Maintain a supportive environment for users
CSLB Unit 5	Initiate and evaluate change to improve service to customers

OPTIONAL UNITS: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND PROCESSING

IL2.14	Create new information/material
IL2.26	Store and display information/material
IT/APO9	Set up & maintain file structures for a library of information
IT/AP28	Manipulate and analyse numerical information
IT/AP29	Derive & manipulate complex information

OPTIONAL UNITS: SUPERVISING ACTIVITIES

MIS 2	Contribute to the planning, monitoring and control of resources
MIS 3	Contribute to the provision of personnel
MIS 4	Contribute to the training & development of teams, individuals and self to enhance performance
MIS 5	Contribute to the planning, organisation and evaluation of work
MIS 6	Create, maintain and enhance productive working relationships

> Candidates must complete all mandatory units and five further optional units. At least one unit must be taken from each Group. A total of nine units are needed to gain the full qualification.

INFORMATION AND LIBRARY SERVICES S/NVQ: LEVEL 4

Competence which involves the application of knowledge in a broad range of complex technical or professional work activities performed in a wide variety of contexts and with a substantial degree of personal responsibility and autonomy. Responsibility for the work of others and the allocation of resources is often present.

MANDATORY UNITS

IL1.13	Identify strategy to meet user's complex information needs
IL1.15	Meet user's information needs
IL2.11	Determine information/material requirements
IL2.27	Plan storage and display
MI 1	Maintain and improve service and product operations
MI 2	Contribute to the implementation of change in services, products and systems

OPTIONAL UNITS: USER SERVICES

IL1.21	Provide user education
IL1.23	Mount promotional event
TDLB B22	Design learning programmes which meet learning needs
TDLB C23	Provide opportunities for individuals and groups to manage their own learning

OPTIONAL UNITS: COLLECTION MANAGEMENT

IL2.12	Select information/material for acquisition
IL2.13	Acquire information/material
IL2.15	Withdraw unwanted information/material

OPTIONAL UNITS: SPECIALIST INFORMATION ACTIVITIES

IL2.16	Undertake research project
IL2.22	Index information
IL2.23	Abstract information

OPTIONAL UNITS: MANAGEMENT

MI 3	Recommend, monitor and control the use of resources
MI 4	Contribute to the recruitment and selection of personnel
MI 5	Develop teams, individuals and self to enhance performance
MI 6	Plan, allocate and evaluate work carried out be teams, individuals and self
MI 7	Create, maintain and enhance effective working relationships
MI 8	Seek, evaluate and organise information for action
MI 9	Exchange information to solve problems and make decisions

> Candidates must complete all mandatory units and six further optional units. At least one unit must be taken from each Group. A total of twelve units are needed to gain the full qualification.

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

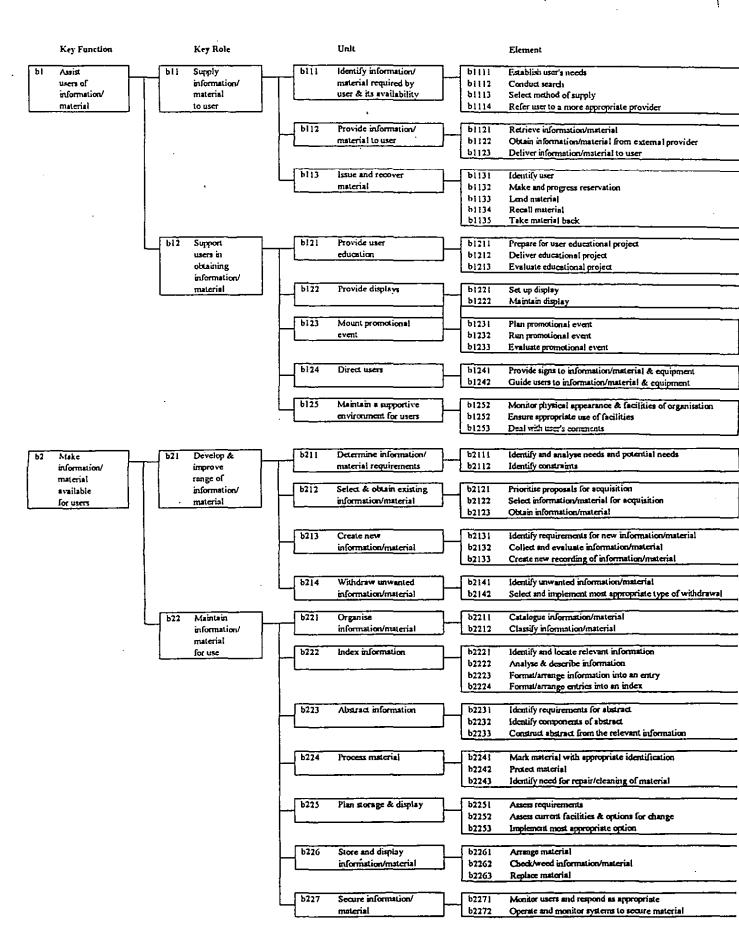|	
IL	Information & Library Services Standards
ALB	Administration Lead Body
IT	Information Technology Industry Training Organisation
MIS	Management Charter Initiative (supervisors)
MI	Management Charter Initiative (first line managers)
CSLB	Customer Service Lead Body
TDLB	Training & Development Lead Body

Appendix 4

ILS-LB - REVISED FUNCTIONAL MAP

FEBRUARY 1994

Key Function	Key Role	Unit	Element
b1 Assist users of information/ material	b11 Supply information/ material to user	b111 Identify information/ material required by user & its availability	b1111 Establish user's needs b1112 Conduct search b1113 Select method of supply b1114 Refer user to a more appropriate provider
		b112 Provide information/ material to user	b1121 Retrieve information/material b1122 Obtain information/material from external provider b1123 Deliver information/material to user
		b113 Issue and recover material	b1131 Identify user b1132 Make and progress reservation b1133 Lend material b1134 Recall material b1135 Take material back
	b12 Support users in obtaining information/ material	b121 Provide user education	b1211 Prepare for user educational project b1212 Deliver educational project b1213 Evaluate educational project
		b122 Provide displays	b1221 Set up display b1222 Maintain display
		b123 Mount promotional event	b1231 Plan promotional event b1232 Run promotional event b1233 Evaluate promotional event
		b124 Direct users	b1241 Provide signs to information/material & equipment b1242 Guide users to information/material & equipment
		b125 Maintain a supportive environment for users	b1252 Monitor physical appearance & facilities of organisation b1252 Ensure appropriate use of facilities b1253 Deal with user's comments
b2 Make information/ material available for users	b21 Develop & improve range of information/ material	b211 Determine information/ material requirements	b2111 Identify and analyse needs and potential needs b2112 Identify constraints
		b212 Select & obtain existing information/material	b2121 Prioritise proposals for acquisition b2122 Select information/material for acquisition b2123 Obtain information/material
		b213 Create new information/material	b2131 Identify requirements for new information/material b2132 Collect and evaluate information/material b2133 Create new recording of information/material
		b214 Withdraw unwanted information/material	b2141 Identify unwanted information/material b2142 Select and implement most appropriate type of withdrawal
	b22 Maintain information/ material for use	b221 Organise information/material	b2211 Catalogue information/material b2212 Classify information/material
		b222 Index information	b2221 Identify and locate relevant information b2222 Analyse & describe information b2223 Format/arrange information into an entry b2224 Format/arrange entries into an index
		b223 Abstract information	b2231 Identify requirements for abstract b2232 Identify components of abstract b2233 Construct abstract from the relevant information
		b224 Process material	b2241 Mark material with appropriate identification b2242 Protect material b2243 Identify need for repair/cleaning of material
		b225 Plan storage & display	b2251 Assess requirements b2252 Assess current facilities & options for change b2253 Implement most appropriate option
		b226 Store and display information/material	b2261 Arrange material b2262 Check/weed information/material b2263 Replace material
		b227 Secure information/ material	b2271 Monitor users and respond as appropriate b2272 Operate and monitor systems to secure material

[bfmrev2/ils/proj]

A sample element from the Information and Library Services Standards

KEY ROLE: IL1.1   Supply information/material to user

UNIT: IL1.11   Identify and provide information/material required by user

The candidate should be able to ...

ELEMENT: IL1.111 Identify user's needs

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

A   Communication is courteous and effective
B   User's requirements are identified through appropriate questioning and careful listening
C   Identification of requirements is confirmed with user
D   Competing demands for service from other would-be users are tactfully and helpfully dealt with in accordance with organisation's procedures
E   Any requirements which are beyond own competence are identified, and appropriate referral made

RANGE

i   *User contact:* face-to-face, by telephone, in writing
ii   *Competing demands:* in person, by telephone, in writing

UNDERPINNING KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

All performance criteria:
- What user groups does the organisation serve, and what are their needs and typical areas of interest
- What are the organisation's policies and constraints on meeting the needs of users

PC E:
- To whom should referrals be made, and why

In all cases, supplementary evidence may be provided to support demonstration of the underpinning knowledge and understanding through competent performance.

KEY PURPOSE: **To anticipate, determine, stimulate and satisfy the needs of existing and potential users for access to information in an ethical manner.**

KEY ROLE: IL1.1   Supply information/material to user

UNIT: IL1.11   Identify and provide information/material required by user

The candidate should be able to ...

ELEMENT: IL1.111 Identify user's needs

ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE

TYPES OF EVIDENCE

Performance evidence:
- Work products, ie written notes, file notes, letters/reports
- Observation, especially if face-to-face user contact is chosen for performance evidence
- Personal report of actual work situation/s
- Witness reports, from colleagues and/or users

Supplementary evidence:
- Questioning, in areas of the range where no performance evidence is provided
- Verbal/written tests of knowledge and understanding, where this cannot be demonstrated through performance evidence

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS

Sufficiency of evidence:
- Items in the range for which performance evidence must be provided: one from *i*, one from *ii*
- All other aspects of the range must be covered, either by performance evidence or supplementary evidence
- Candidates should be able to demonstrate consistency of performance over a period of time, and can use supplementary evidence to do so

Currency of evidence:
- Where evidence for this element has been achieved more than three years before the date of assessment, the candidate will be expected to provide supplementary evidence to show that s/he can transfer competent performance to a current context

Context of evidence:
- Specially generated performance evidence, from assignments/projects or temporary transfer to a new working environment, may be needed for the candidate to demonstrate competence. Exceptionally, a scenario may be simulated to provide support to performance evidence generated from naturally occurring performance at work.

Appendix 7

City and Guilds 7370 Library and Information Assistants Certificate

Outline of new scheme.

City and Guilds is re-structuring the current 7370 scheme into 4 new units that will wholly cover NVQ level 2 and 9 units from NVQ level 3. The revision is also covering the current coursework requirements - written practical assignments taking the place of relevant questions from written question papers where appropriate to emphasise quality rather than learning 'by rote'. A new A4 size loose leaf log book will be produced for centres. In addition guidance notes and an appropriate book-list will be included in a new-style A4 syllabus pamphlet.

Generally the 4 new units will be evaluated with the relevant NVQ units:

Unit 1 (former 058 Organisational Studies)
A new written practical assignment will be set in place of relevant questions in the current written paper to emphasise quality rather than learning 'by rote'.

Unit 2 (former 051 Selecting, Storing and Maintaining of Materials)
New sections on 'Acquisition' and 'Physical Processes' will be introduced with an increased emphasis on cataloguing. A new written practical assignment on Stock Control will be set in place of relevant questions in the current written paper.

Unit 3 (former 053 Providing Routine Customer Service)
Further consideration will be given to internal and external library guiding. Careful linking will be effected with regard to NVQ level 2 Units 6 and 7 on 'Direct Users' and 'Issue and recover Loan Material'. A new written practical assignment is envisaged in lieu of relevant questions in the current written paper.

Unit 4 (former 055 Assisting Users to Locate and Retrieve Information)
General Information Technology (IT) elements will be clarified and expanded. New practical written assignments will be considered in place of relevant questions in the current written paper. Unit 4 will equate with relevant aspects of NVQ level 3 and not NVQ level2 and will embrace customer relations in the widest possible sense.

Extract from: Bone, Roger. The future of the City and Guilds Library and Information Assistants Examination 7370 and NVQs. *Personnel Training and Education.* Jan. 1996, 13 (1) p.6