

Competencies and Education for a Career in Cataloging Interest Group

ALA ANNUAL MEETING | FRIDAY, JUNE 24, 2016

The Competencies and Education for a Career in Cataloging Interest Group (CECCIG) met during the 2016 ALA Annual Conference on Friday, June 24 in Orlando. 47 people participated in the meeting.

SUMMARY OF THE MEETING

CECCIG co-chair Karen Snow opened the business meeting by acknowledging and thanking the interest group leadership, co-chair Jennifer Liss, incoming co-chairs Susan Rathbun-Grubb and Allison Yanos, and incoming co-vice chairs, Maurine McCourry and Elizabeth Shoemaker. Snow then invited Bruce Evans, chair of the Cataloging Competencies Task Force, to present the draft, *Core Competencies for Professional Catalogers*.

DRAFT CORE COMPETENCIES FOR PROFESSIONAL CATALOGERS

Evans briefly alluded to past work of the [Cataloging Competencies Task Force](#) (see the [summary of the 2016 Midwinter meeting](#) on this topic) before bringing attendees up to date on how the Task Force went about drafting a cataloging core competencies document. After explaining the purpose, structure, and high-level content of the draft document, Evans invited attendees to break into small groups to discuss the draft. Each group reported their comments and suggestions to the whole. The discussion is summarized below.

The draft will be available for comment until July 31, 2016. Presentation slides are available on the Interest Group's ALA Connect website.

Presentation slides: <http://connect.ala.org/node/255496>

Draft for comment, *Core Competencies for Professional Catalogers*:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cHCaGdSEhVEban4v6BQ246k1cNn3VrYHCICFFx2DDY0/edit?usp=sharing>

SUMMARY OF IN-PERSON FEEDBACK ON THE DRAFT

Context, purpose of the document

- Audience

- Attendees thought it was a little unclear to whom the document is intended for; statement on page 1, "for use by cataloging practitioners and educators," excluded hiring managers, library and library school administrators, vendors, etc.
- In defining audience, participants began suggesting more use cases for the document (advocacy, training, strategic planning)

Layout, Organization

- Participants generally liked that the document provided a map for helping professionals attain core and "going beyond the foundation" levels of competencies
- Suggestions about how the "going beyond the foundation" content might be organized
 - Remove the "going beyond" section completely and making a separate document
 - Interfile the "going beyond" sections with the core sections
 - Some participants suggested making it clearer that the "going beyond" sections are listing more advanced skills and knowledge
- A phrase from a cataloging practitioner for thinking about levels of competency: "you can do the work; you can lead the work; you can mentor others in this work"
 - Participants asked that the Task Force look again at using competencies as paths toward specializations or for advocacy roles (mid-career professionals who've already obtained the core)
- One participant wondered if a "transition" layer could be inserted in between core and "going beyond" competencies

Granularity

- Page 3 Knowledge of trend in cataloging profession
 - "Understands how cataloging fits within broader library context ("big picture" knowledge)"
 - Participants wondered if this statement might be broken into the institutional context (one's local public services) and the information landscape context (beyond one's local institution)
- Some liked the detail, others thought it was too much
- Granularity of the document is uneven in places:
 - Core Competencies – Knowledge Competencies (page 2) relies heavily on examples, rather than text of the competency, to convey concepts needed
 - Going Beyond – Skill & Ability Competencies (page 6) lacks an introductory paragraph and examples in certain places

Use of Examples

- Participants didn't agree on the point of using or omitting examples:

- Useful for explaining terms that might be unfamiliar or too abstract
 - Revision could include a glossary of terms (or do a better job of defining terms "in-line") so that examples might be omitted; some wanted both a glossary and examples
 - Some participants found the "structure", "encoding", and "value" section on page 2 to be particularly in need of better explanation
- Examples were weighted toward academic libraries
 - Reference to a licensed product (Oxygen XML Editor) might be weighed with a reference to an open source alternative
- Some examples were problematic—the "understands integrated library systems" example blended vendors and systems
- Examples might be seen as an endorsement—something the task force certainly hadn't intended
- Examples might be seen as prescriptive, in spite of the Task Force's best efforts to discourage prescriptive reading
 - This was of particular concern for cataloging educators

Problematic or Missing Competencies

- Core Competencies – Behavioral Competencies
 - Soft skills are hard to teach in a cataloging class!
 - Task Force worked on the assumption (but never recorded in the document) that core competencies would be attained through LIS courses, internships, and the first few years in a professional cataloging position
 - One participant, who was a technical services manager, envisioned giving this document to new hires to help them develop a growth plan
- Core Competencies – Behavioral Competencies "Multiculturally sensitive"
 - Multiculturally sensitive could be seen as being able to provide service to diverse patrons (outward looking); participant stressed the need to foster an inclusive work environment (inward looking)
- Going Beyond – Skills & Abilities "Ability to train others to develop aforementioned fundamental skills"
 - Ability to train but also the ability to develop training for others
 - Some wished the Task Force had formally defined core competencies for managers of catalogers/cataloging operations

Meta

- Include statement that the document is intended to be dynamic and should be reviewed and updated
 - Suggestion to apply the phrase "neither prescriptive nor exhaustive" (appears on page 2 and 5) to the entire document

- Is this a "governance" concern? To whom does this document belong? Should a committee take on this responsibility?

General Observations

- Core competencies for paraprofessionals catalogers is out of scope for this document (Bruce addressed this in slide 11); however--
 - Paraprofessionals are being called up on to perform work once done in professionally classed positions