

Behind the Scenes with the Core Competencies Task Force

As you've probably heard by now, the NASIG Board has endorsed the [Core Competencies for Electronic Resources Librarians](#) as an official policy document. In this article we will take you "behind the scenes" to explain the process we used to arrive at this document, suggest some ways that you can use the competencies, and update you on our goals for this year.

The Road to the Core Competencies

The NASIG Core Competencies Task Force (CCTF) was created in 2011 with a charge from the NASIG Board to develop statements of core competencies for electronic resources librarians and serials librarians. Chairing the task force was a natural next step for Sarah Sutton, who had identified a set of core competencies as her dissertation project at Texas Woman's University (Sutton 2011), and presented the research at a popular NASIG conference session the previous year. In joining the new task force, we brought our own experiences teaching, publishing and working in the fields of serials and e-resources librarianship, in libraries with varying user populations, sizes, and geographic locations.

Work on the core competencies proceeded over the course of a year, beginning with an initial conference call to establish our goals and timeline. We agreed that we wanted to produce a document that would be flexible enough to accommodate e-resources work in any size of organization. We decided to use Sarah's methodology of conducting a content analysis on job descriptions. To ensure we were analyzing up to date positions that had actually been filled, we decided to ask e-resources librarians to send us their own position descriptions. During the next several months, we queried librarian listservs and received many job descriptions from around the country. We coded the documents in Google Docs, looking for patterns in the skills and experience, knowledge, and personal attributes called for. As we suspected, we found that the type of organization made a big difference in what e-resources librarians were expected to do, to know, and to be. We also received confirmation that many employers treated experience and knowledge as two separate things.

After some discussion, we organized our findings under seven categories: the "life cycle" of electronic resources, technological competence, research and assessment activities, communication, supervision, professional development, and frequently mentioned personal attributes. As we drafted a bullet-pointed narrative to share with the NASIG Board, Sarah kept in contact with the Board and the CCTF liaisons, Katy Ginnani (2010-2011), Clint Chamberlain (2011-2012), and Selden Lamoreaux (2012-2013). A special session at the 2012 conference was set aside for the NASIG membership to review our findings (Borchert 2012). Insightful feedback from this session helped us clarify our objective in the final revisions to the competencies document. We were not seeking to prescribe the responsibilities of every e-resources librarian, but rather articulate the full range of skills, knowledge, and attributes from which each organization would select based on their structure, users, and resources. In the months after the 2012 conference, Sarah worked with us to complete revisions to the document, and she submitted the finished product to the NASIG Board for their endorsement this summer.

How can you use the competencies?

Competency statements assist professionals in defining their own responsibilities, educating newcomers to their field, and communicating their value to outsiders. We see the Core Competencies for Electronic Resources Librarians as being relevant to a broad audience, including:

- LIS faculty, who can use it to develop and assess curriculum, prepare syllabi, and choose knowledgeable practitioners as course instructors.
- LIS students, who can use it to plan their course of study and build needed job and internship experience while in library school.
- Library leadership, who can use it to create job descriptions when hiring an e-resources librarian or evaluate existing librarians.
- E-resources librarians, who can use it to identify professional development opportunities, and to articulate their responsibilities as part of a self-evaluation for promotion or tenure. Competencies documents are good “conversation starters” that help colleagues in other areas of the library or elsewhere on campus (administrators, faculty in liaison departments) understand what e-resources librarians do.
- LIS researchers, who can mine the competencies for problems that need to be solved and research gaps waiting to be addressed. Historians can read the competencies as a snapshot illustrating concerns in the field of e-resources librarianship at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century.

What is next for us?

The NASIG Board has asked the CCTF to complete the Core Competencies for Serials Librarians during the 2013-2014 year. We will provide progress updates throughout the year, and ideally have a draft ready for perusal by the 2014 Annual Conference.

View the Core Competencies for Electronic Resources Librarians at <http://www.nasig.org/committee-core-competencies-task-force.cfm>.

2013-2014 Core Competencies Task Force

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