

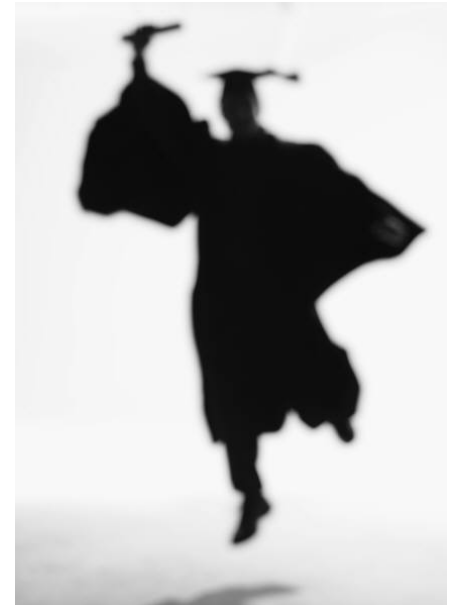
# The missing link: Alumni chapters and the professional development of librarians

Clare Glanville



# Alumni chapters

- Alumni = university graduates and former students
- Chapters are valued for:
  - Fundraising
  - Promotion and marketing
  - Engagement in teaching and research
  - Mentoring, employment and careers services





# LIS education at QUT

- Graduate diploma in library science first offered at QIT in 1975
- Continued until subsumed into Masters of Information Management in 2005
- Graduate diploma in Teacher Librarianship also offered – now Master of Learning Innovation (Teacher-Librarianship)



# Evolution of a chapter

- Research and professional engagement strategies highlighted a need to create ongoing links through which dialogue between industry professionals, educators and professional association could continue.
  - Student expectations survey
  - Research into the required discipline knowledge and generic capabilities of 21<sup>st</sup> century information professionals
  - Student mentoring program



# The Information Professionals

- An alumni chapter supported by QUT for graduates of library and information studies and teacher-librarianship programs.
- Three goals
  1. Host social events
  2. Encourage networking among members
  3. Create professional development opportunities for past, present and future students





# Chapter achievements

- Current membership = 80
- 3-4 events annually; Average attendance = 35
- International guest speakers, networking, mini-conferences, presentations, tours
- Conference scholarships
  - ALIA 2004
  - EBL 2005
  - NLS 2006





# Pilot research

- How does *The Information Professionals* chapter fit into the professional development plans of its members?
  1. Literature review
  2. Online survey of members
  3. Supplementary interviews with three committee members
- While a small sample size, it is hoped future research can build on this initial project.



# Results

- Networking was strongly identified as the most valuable outcome of attendance.
- Members all planned to attend future chapter events.

*Survey response: “By exposing me to information knowledge that I do not have access to at work, keeps me touch with fellow professionals, makes me think about my knowledge, ideas, preconceptions.”*



# Professional development sources

## Three levels of participation

Most participation



Least participation

Level 1	In-house/work-based activities; reading
Level 2	Conferences; ALIA events; Alumni events
Level 3	Writing papers/articles/online; formal study



# Discussion

- Alumni chapter is succeeding in meeting two of its three goals – social events and networking.
- But the chapter's efforts to provide quality professional development opportunities is not being recognized as being of value to members' continuing professional development.
- Why? Perhaps because only one out of 17 respondents was enrolled in ALIA's CPD formal program.



# Future directions

- Suggestions for future activities included:
  - Events on address selection criteria and job-seeking skills
  - News flashes and RSS feeds to aid professional reading
  - Online events (podcasts?) for geographically dispersed members





# Engaging alumni members in CPD

- Provide certificates of attendance to members for participation at alumni-run PD events
- Provide access to events that would otherwise be financially prohibitive (conference bursaries or subsidies; “mini-conferences”)
- Cooperative activities with ALIA to build the membership of both groups collaboratively

*“Those things can cost a fortune and as a reference librarian entrance-level I am not getting sent to stuff like that.”*



# Success through support

- Success of the chapter has been underpinned by the support of QUT's Alumni and Development office.
- The chapter can repay this support by engaging members in the activities of the university – as mentors, guest lecturers, research participants and return students.

*“I’ve been thinking of going back (to study). You can go to events and there are people who have updated their qualifications and I can talk to them.”*



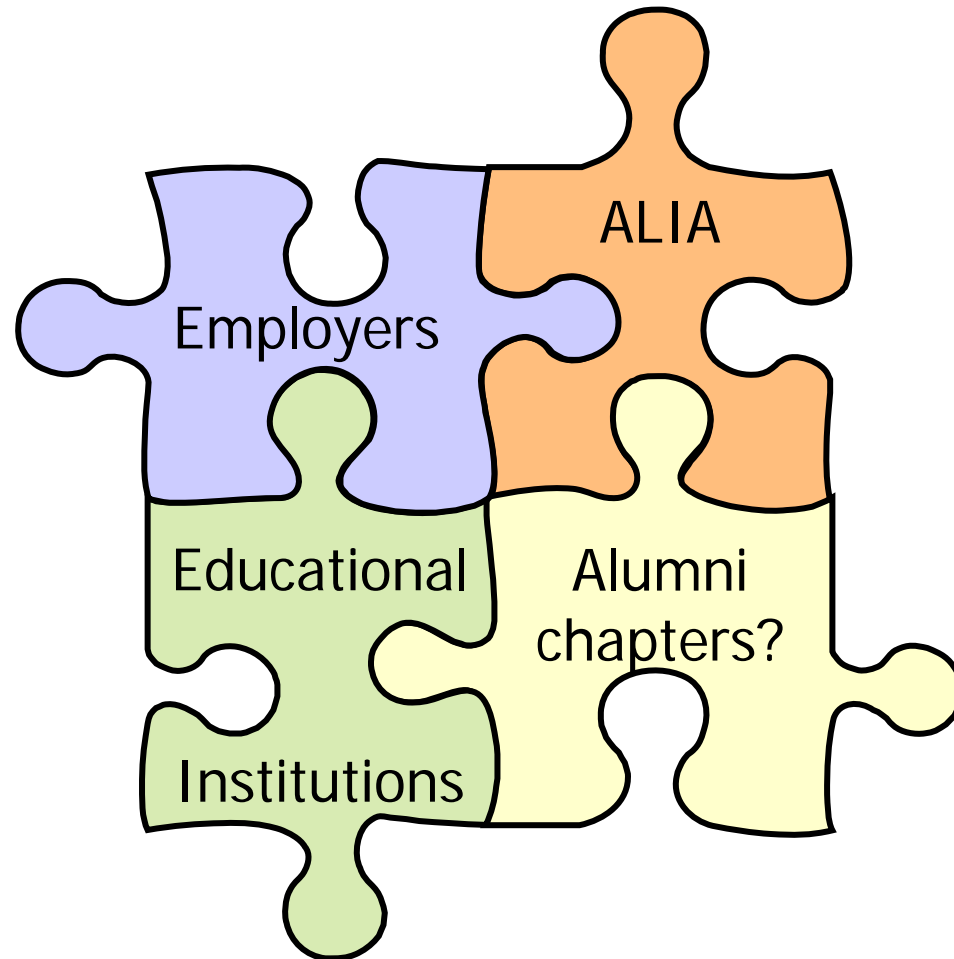
# Alumni in context

*“Alumni can provide the missing link by way of resources and assisting universities to remain in touch with the changing demands of the industry and society.”*

(Sharda & Butler 2004)

But can they do more?

# A missing link?





# Thank you

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Brisbane Alumni event – Tuesday Oct 10<sup>th</sup>

Copyright challenges and changes in the age of user generated technologies: Wikis, blogs, YouTube, MySpace, Flickr and beyond

<http://www.alumni.qut.edu.au/voluntee/chaptersandc/library.jsp>