

## WHY SHOULD LIBRARIANS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PURSUE A VOLUNTARY POST-MASTERS CERTIFICATION?

### *Mary Y. Moore, Chair, Committee on Education*

One of the things that Council members asked for last winter was a rationale – a solid set of reasons why the American Library Association should facilitate the development of a certification program. It is my hope that the following will satisfy that request:

These are my thoughts on the subject.

- Would provide an opportunity for a formal approach to in-depth study of a particular specialization.
- Would provide an opportunity for a change of professional focus from one area of specialization to another.
- Would provide an opportunity for professional update and refreshment.
- Would provide an opportunity for a portable credential recognized world-wide.
- Would provide an opportunity for improved salary status.

And here are the thoughts of Monique Le Conge from YALSA:

Post-Master's certification would serve Young Adult librarians positively. Many of us chose this area of specialization after earning an MLS. I consider myself lucky, as I had employers willing to assist me with training and workshop opportunities. Others in the field, though, are not as fortunate. Many librarians or other library staff serving young adults were asked to work in that area, whether it was something they wanted or not. Others may have been interested, but are inadequately prepared for the challenges that working with teenagers can bring. Not only is there a need for basic knowledge of the ever-growing YA literature, adolescent psychology, and but also for the various skills that come with young adult services, such as booktalking, marketing, displays, teen volunteers, etc.

The Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), a division of ALA, has YA Trainers, who routinely present workshops around the country. These programs are designed to improve and enhance the skills of those who work daily with teens, as well as those who do not specialize in YA service, but have contact with teens as part of their jobs. While this program serves an existing need, there remains a lack of formal education and on-going updates of skills for YA librarians. Furthermore, this training tends to focus on the most basic training whereas those who work primarily with teens need instruction that is more advanced.

Many MLS programs do not offer many classes aimed at youth services, let alone young adult services. For the young adult librarians who may not feel that they have learned enough during their Master's studies, certification and post-graduate classes will allow them to hone their skills and look beyond their degree classes.

And finally, Don Sager writes:

During the early nineteenth century it was possible for Abe Lincoln to read law, and gain admission to practice law on a wide range of issues. Today, we require our lawyers to complete post-graduate studies, pass a rigid bar examination, and specialize in an array of subjects such as intellectual property, the environment, and medical malpractice. We wouldn't place our loved ones in the hands of a physician who still practiced medicine based on nineteenth century standards, nor do we allow engineers and architects

to design buildings and other projects relying upon nineteenth century technology and license requirements.

Yet, we still permit members of the library profession to serve these and many other professionals, relying upon the same one-year post-graduate degree that Melville Dewey and his colleagues adopted one hundred years ago.

Our professional literature is filled with accounts of librarians who have failed to gain recognition for their assistance to society and the other related professions such as education. Many reasons have been expressed on the struggles of academic librarians to gain faculty rank. Public librarians have long been criticized for promising more than they were qualified to understand and deliver. School media specialists are consistently at a disadvantage in assisting their faculty to integrate new information formats into the curriculum, because they lack the opportunity to master new technology. Special librarians are often the first to be eliminated when a corporation or institution faces financial reverses.

In the words of that great philosopher, Rodney Dangerfield, “we don’t get no respect.” I believe that is our own fault. We cannot continue to ignore our obligation to establish higher standards for our profession, in terms of continuing education and certification. Without these standards and opportunities for growth, library service to our clientele will decline. The time for further debate on this issue is past. We either need to move forward, or move out of the way.

Donald J. Sager, President  
Gossage Sager Associates LLC  
ALA Councilor-at-Large  
Past President of the Public Library Association  
Former Chair, ALA Core Values Task Force