



**CARLABRC**

# CORE COMPETENCIES FOR 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CARL LIBRARIANS

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## Introduction

Competency profiles have been used within many professional groups to help chart professional progress and define goals and objectives. National level statements set standards across multiple institutions. Competencies for a profession generally list or group a series of knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviours that define and contribute to performance. Competencies can be used to design and develop job postings, position descriptions, training and education programmes and performance evaluation programmes (Federal Librarian Competencies, 2008).

This competencies profile, commissioned by the CARL Building Capacity Subcommittee (formerly the Library Education Working Group, 2006 – 2009), is intended as a guide to help librarians working in CARL libraries manage their careers, set meaningful professional development goals and align those goals with the missions of their respective organizations. Librarians can also use this profile to identify strengths and gaps in their personal competencies in order to round out their portfolios. Library Directors and human resource professionals, moreover, can employ it as a compass or checklist of desirable competencies when hiring new librarians or when identifying training and development opportunities for existing librarians. CARL libraries as a collective can use the competencies profile to market the library profession and to recruit new talent.

Core competencies for 21<sup>st</sup> Century CARL librarians draws from other existing librarian competency statements and from competency research in general (Rocchi, 2008; ARL, 2001; SLA, 2001; Federal Library & Information Centre, 2008; ALA, 2008). This document also fulfills a recommendation of the CARL Library Education Working Group's final report in May

2008<sup>1</sup>. The former Library Education Working Group was established with a mandate to create relationships with those interested in library education and research, to identify next steps for taking priorities forward, and to identify actions arising from the recommendations of the 8Rs Canadian Library Human Resources Study<sup>2</sup>.

The 8Rs Canadian Library Human Resource Study was a national research project that examined key facets of library human resources from both organizational and individual perspectives over a period of two years (2003 – 2005). The study draws its name from the eight core issues that the literature suggests are central to library staff management: recruitment, retention, remuneration, reaccreditation, repatriation, rejuvenation, retirement and restructuring.<sup>3</sup> This core competencies profile addresses the recruitment and restructuring issues inasmuch as it presents a set of key skills, attributes, and attitudes which are suggested as integral to building and maintaining a nimble staff which ably serves its community and continually adapts to a dynamic, constantly evolving research/information landscape.<sup>4</sup>

Insofar as how the guidelines in this profile may apply to particular institutional settings, individual CARL libraries may place greater or lesser emphasis on specific portions of the competencies that follow. The profile attempts to reflect the unique composition of competencies required by academic librarians working in an intense, 21<sup>st</sup> Century academic research environment. The profile was designed specifically for use in Canada but the authors surmise that the basic concepts may also be appropriate in other technologically-advanced countries.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.carl-abrc.ca/projects/human\\_resources/0802-lewg\\_report-e.pdf](http://www.carl-abrc.ca/projects/human_resources/0802-lewg_report-e.pdf). In November 2009, the LEWG became the CARL Building Capacity Sub-Committee <http://www.carl-abrc.ca/about/committees/bcsc-e.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ls.ualberta.ca/8rs/8RsFutureofHRLibraries.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ls.ualberta.ca/8rs/home.html>

<sup>4</sup> Analysis of the 8Rs study results revealed that CARL library directors consider leadership potential, flexibility towards change, managerial skills, innovativeness, communication skills, specialist skills, technological savvy, people skills and the ability to manage a heavy workload to be among the most important competencies for librarians – all of which this profile addresses throughout. [Vicky Whitmell, *The Future of Human Resources in Canadian Libraries, "the 8Rs Study": Considerations for the Canadian Association of Research Libraries*, August 2006 [http://www.carl-abrc.ca/projects/scholarly\\_communication/pdf/8rs\\_v.whitmell\\_report\\_rev.pdf](http://www.carl-abrc.ca/projects/scholarly_communication/pdf/8rs_v.whitmell_report_rev.pdf)]

## An Environmental Scan: Challenging Traditional Roles

The essential role of the CARL librarian has not changed. Regardless of his or her specific position, the librarian's central mandate continues to be bringing information seekers and information sources together. This objective remains the same, whether the individual is creating metadata, answering a question at a reference desk, teaching a course, or constructing a new electronic service.

The environment within which CARL librarians execute their core mission, however, has changed dramatically. Researchers are turning away from traditional publishing venues in favour of emerging community-vetted forums to disseminate data and research findings. Students arrive on campus with their information seeking habits and strategies already formed, and with experience in a host of new sources and new technologies. Transformative technologies and the behaviors they engender have radically changed the creation and distribution of scholarly journals, data and other research outputs (Ross and Sennye, pp. 145-146). Scholars are adapting the ways they teach and the ways they conduct research to a new and ever changing digital information environment (Ibid).

The academic library is constantly challenged to remain a vital part of this changing environment. A key part, perhaps the key part, in meeting that challenge is to ensure that librarians' roles transition to meet evolving needs. New areas of expertise are developing as are new opportunities to provide innovative, value-added services for the students and researchers in the academic community. Across the country, librarians and academic libraries are reassessing the role of the librarian within the academy and this CARL competency profiles provides a national framework to help in that reassessment.

## Key Components of the New Model

The work of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century CARL librarian continues to be grounded on a solid foundation of **professional practice**. The successful practitioner develops expertise in specific areas, but builds and maintains a strong, well-rounded understanding of the library, the campus, and the larger scholarly communications environment.

**Interpersonal skills** remain as key components of the CARL librarian's arsenal. Traditional skills, like written and verbal communication, are still important – but increasing emphasis is being placed on the capacity to create and nurture partnerships, to develop innovative new programs and to **market** the library to the campus community. The new academic library practitioner is expected to be a strong advocate for the Library and its central place in the University's teaching, learning and research mission. They connect with administrators and student leaders, are often front-and-centre with faculty, and are also increasingly at the table when campus-wide IT decisions are made. Librarians advocate for

the library's central place in campus life by taking their story to the entire university community and beyond, when and where appropriate (Dupuis, p. 13). This expectation of strong interpersonal skills is standard practice for academic librarianship, and it will continue to grow in importance

Expectations for competence in **management and leadership** have increased dramatically. As leaders, academic librarians are expected to influence, motivate and challenge their colleagues and their community to advance library and institutional goals and objectives. Management skills are no longer expected only of those librarians in administrative positions. Rather, all librarians should understand the principles of budget planning, and facilities, staff and project management. Librarians holding management positions would be expected to develop their knowledge and skills in these areas to a higher level, to enable them to effectively manage the library and its resources.

Librarians are also taking on new **teaching** roles within the academy. They are partnering with faculty to teach information literacy to their students. They are working with their instructional technology / teaching support centres to enhance the resources available to instructors. They are seeking out, and often earning seats at the table when key decisions are being made concerning learning support software and systems. They share with faculty the interest in helping students use information efficiently and ethically in a “copy and paste world” (Wilson and Linke).

CARL Librarians are increasingly called upon, not just to support the **research** of others on campus, but to be researchers in their own right. More and more, academic librarians produce research and scholarly works of their own to help them gain better knowledge of the profession and to contribute back their own knowledge, skills and experience. Librarians will increasingly be required to conduct research in order to meet conditions of employment (i.e., to meet criteria for promotion and tenure or equivalent). Many factors are contributing towards this development, perhaps most notably the evidence-based librarianship movement that emphasizes continuous and rigorous assessment as the foundation for decision making. Some key topics, according to Directors of Canada’s major research libraries, are presented in the brochure *Librarians as Researchers and Writers: Research Priorities for Canada’s Research Libraries*.<sup>5</sup>

Academic librarians are also carving out new roles in support of **research data management and preservation** on campus. Libraries are not just in the business of gathering, organizing, and providing access to information. They are also actively creating knowledge, and proactively assisting their institutions manage their research outputs as evidenced by the dramatic worldwide growth of institutional repositories. To be successful, librarians must seek out good partners. They must focus their attention on creating robust infrastructure for long-term data archiving, clean work flow tools and policies for describing, managing, sharing, and providing access to the data. Librarians will also be called upon to take an intermediary role in connecting multidisciplinary research communities and providing social software services.

21<sup>st</sup> Century CARL librarians are expected to be **technologically-savvy**. They are expected to thrive in the digital environment. They are expected to be actively engaged in the exploration and implementation of new technologies on their campuses. By implementing a variety of digital web-based projects, initiatives and infrastructures, librarians preserve, extend, and facilitate access to information and knowledge comprising humankind’s cultural, scientific and intellectual heritage.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.carl-abrc.ca/projects/human\\_resources/writers.pdf](http://www.carl-abrc.ca/projects/human_resources/writers.pdf)

# Competencies for CARL Librarians

With differences in emphasis depending on the nature of individual academic/research librarian positions, the following is presented as a holistic compendium of core competencies for librarians working in an intense research environment.

## 1. Foundational Knowledge

All CARL librarians should have a strong foundational knowledge of:

- a. The social, cultural, economic, political, and information environment within which they work**
- b. Librarianship and professional practice**
  - The ethics, values and foundational principles of the library and information profession
  - The role of the library in the promotion of intellectual freedom through the development, management and preservation of the scholarly research record
- c. The library or library system within which they work**
  - Structure (the divisions, departments, units...)
  - Decision making bodies and processes
  - Advisory committees (do they exist? mandate?)
  - Budget process
  - Key policies and procedures
  - Key collection strengths (subject areas, formats, etc.)
  - Key services for students (undergraduate and graduate), faculty and scholars, the general public)
- d. The larger institutional organization**
  - The campus environment
  - Organizational structure (where does the library fit in?)
  - Institutional decision making bodies and processes
  - Institutional budget process (how is funding allocated within the university?)
  - Institutional mission, goals and objectives including
- e. The extra-institutional environment**
  - Regional, provincial, national and international organizations that affect library organization and operation (e.g. regional consortial groups, CARL, SPARC, etc.)
- f. The Canadian higher education environment at various levels**
  - Funding processes
  - Regulation
- g. Scholarly communication models and practices**  
(including institutional repositories, open access journals, data management)
- h. Legal issues related to the academic library environment**
  - Knowledge of copyright (basic understanding of Canadian copyright legislation and how it applies to libraries – reserves, photocopying, etc.)
  - A knowledge of various license models related to service and resource provision

## 2. Interpersonal Skills

All CARL librarians should have the following skills:

- Adaptability, flexibility, and eagerness for new experiences and knowledge
- Communication and advocacy – effectively conveying the importance of libraries to their parent institutions, to their target audiences/constituencies, and advancing the values of the library profession (e.g. empowering users to be self-sufficient, freedom of expression, upholding the right to access information and knowledge in all expressions, preserving the corpus of human knowledge for future generations, etc.)
- Negotiation – working with others to arrive at mutually acceptable/beneficial solutions
- Change management – being able to work effectively in the face of ambiguity; open mindedness to change and adaptation of work habits/behaviour to different conditions
- Decision making – making well-informed decisions in a manner that is perceptive of the implications; committing to actions even when faced with uncertainty in order to fulfill organizational goals
- Problem solving – identifying problems, determining relevance and accuracy of related information, and using good judgment to come up with solutions; possessing the ability to manage and resolve conflicts/ disagreements in constructive ways
- Initiative – the capacity to identify issues and to develop and implement solutions to address those issues
- Innovation – applying the imagination for the purpose of devising solutions to problems, and designing new methods/procedures when established ones do not suffice or they are inexistent
- Collaboration – working with diverse groups, in and out of the library, in pursuit of shared goals and with an appreciation of diverse perspectives; taking the library’s story into the community
- Marketing – promoting the expertise, services, collections, and facilities of the library to a varied clientele (e.g., undergraduate students, graduates, and faculty in all disciplines), and making the case to administrations for the library as a vital institution in the research enterprise and for teaching and learning
- Mentoring – providing useful advice and feedback to new members of the profession to help them attain success in the field and in their new positions
- Writing skills – preparing persuasive grant proposals or reports
- Presentation skills – ability to speak in front of an audience – with or without technology

## 3. Leadership and Management

All CARL librarians should commit to and develop the following:

- Leadership – influencing and motivating others to strive for excellence; able to adapt to a variety of working/learning styles, scenarios and organizational cultures and to lead change within the organization
- Financial management – understanding the principles of planning and budgeting in academic libraries
- Human resources management – understanding the principles of effective personnel practices and human resource development
- Services and resources development – understanding how to assess the need for and to plan and implement new services and/or resources in light of current and anticipated needs
- Risk management – understanding the advantages and disadvantages of any action or decision and being able to effectively evaluate both to support any decision made
- Project management – planning, organizing and managing resources to successfully complete specific project objectives within a certain time frame
- Assessment and Evaluation – understanding the concepts and methods for service, resource and project evaluation and outcomes assessment
- Partnerships & Collaborations – understanding the reasons and strategies for developing collaborations and partnerships with stakeholders and relevant communities

## 4. Collections Development

All CARL librarians should have a foundational knowledge of the following:

- Scholarly publishing cycle – understanding the life cycle of scholarly publishing, from creation through various stages of use to disposition
- Collections development and management – understanding the concepts, issues and methods related to the acquisition, and disposition of resources, including knowing collection strengths and library and institutional goals and objectives for resource development
- Digital curation<sup>6</sup> – understanding best practices for the selection, collection, preservation, description, organization, and archiving principles for digital documentation and research data in various formats
- Digital preservation<sup>7</sup> – understanding of the principles, activities, policies, procedures, and services for persistent access
- Management and preservation of collections – basic understanding of the management and preservation methods for general collections and for rare books and archives
- Records management – understanding how information is organized for easy identification and retrieval, including cataloguing and metadata standards for all formats.

## 5. Information Literacy

All CARL librarians should have a strong understanding of, and commitment to, the following:

- Information literacy – principles of information literacy in the academic environment, including numerical and data literacy
- Learning and teaching – knowledge of learning models and strategies as well as relevant teaching pedagogy and models for the academic environment
- Institutional teaching and learning – knowledge of institutional teaching and learning programmes and goals to effectively connect with stakeholders and integrate information literacy programs as appropriate
- Critical thinking & lifelong learning – knowledge of the concepts and principles of information literacy including the value of integrating critical thinking and lifelong learning into teaching and instruction methodologies
- Reference services – knowledge of the principles and techniques of effective reference service that provides access to relevant and reliable information
- Patron engagement – knowledge of the principles and techniques to effectively interact with users to determine information needs and when that need has been satisfied

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<sup>6</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital\\_curation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_curation)

<sup>7</sup> Reitz, Joan M., ODLIS — Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science <http://lu.com/odlis/search.cfm>



## 6. Research & Contributions to the Profession

All CARL librarians should be knowledgeable of, and commit to, ongoing research and professional development through the following:

- Research and publication – contributions through writing, editing, refereeing or reviewing of books, articles or reports
- Conferences – contributions through presentations to professional or scholarly associations/meetings
- Formal study – taken to broaden subject or professional knowledge and may include study for advanced professional and/or related academic qualifications
- Teaching – teaching courses in areas of librarianship, archives or other academic disciplines
- Conference management – planning, organizing or conducting professional programs, workshops, seminars or conferences
- Professional Associations – active participation in professional associations which may include holding executive office, serving on committees, etc.
- Active engagement in community initiatives – especially those associated with their area of professional or subject expertise
- Staying informed – ability to stay abreast of research in a specific area to support a research agenda or to support other work as a librarian within the library
- Research models and methods – knowledge of the fundamentals of qualitative and quantitative research methods including the research process (e.g. question formulation, peer review, etc.)
- Grant writing – knowledge and pursuit of avenues available for grants to facilitate research work

## 7. Information Technology Skills

All CARL librarians should have strong knowledge and capability in the following:

- Integrated library systems (ILS) – knowledge of basic structure, content and use of an integrated library system
- Emerging web technology – knowledge of major trends in web development including online social networking tools (as of 2010, would include Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, etc.)
- Electronic resources management – knowledge of how digital resources are acquired, managed and accessed
- Web page development – understanding of principles of web page design and maintenance
- Institutional repositories – Understanding the basic structure, content and use of campus institutional repositories
- Learning management system (LMS / CMS) – knowledge of the structure and the use of campus LMS / CMS
- Database management – understanding how databases are designed and structured for convenient data and/or information retrieval

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