

A Delphi Study on Perceptions Concerning Training for Information Professional and Library Staff in Academic Libraries in Italy

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The purpose of this study was to review the level of awareness of the importance of education and training through association policy and organisational practice in the profession of librarianship in Italian academic libraries. A total of 50 librarians were surveyed from university libraries in the North and Centre of the country, distributed through e-mail, limiting the investigation to development of professional and para-professional staff.

In particular, this study covered post-qualification education and training activities for professionals, including those opportunities which have educational or training potential, such as conferences and seminars, alongside with formal/informal educational activities: (short courses, lectures, courses for further qualification, in-service training programmes) and all those activities that do or do not lead to a recognised qualification not provided by qualifying bodies.

The Delphi method was used to achieve a consensus inventory model of the perceptions above described and to find out the most important trends in changes observed in the library environment by academic librarians.

The intent was to develop a comprehensive scheme around the key question that is “*what is the perception of library staff around training and information technology innovations in Italian academic libraries?*” and Delphi has proved an effective method of eliciting input, defining the problem of the study, and arriving at consensus among a group of respondents. Anyway, the general feeling pervading questionnaires is that many librarians have been faced with learning new skills on the job, often with little systematic training, coping with a continuously changing environment, leading to poor morale and no job turnover.

Table 1 illustrates the topics of possible or predicted educational interest or needs and feelings on new information technologies grouped into four main themes.

Elements of great impact on library ethos	Library Management – Problems	Information Technology	Reasons for Training
Library collection development, customer services, information skills, indexing and cataloguing, resource sharing, acquisition policy.	Economics and fundings, development work, licensing, copyright, competitiveness project & team work.	Weak technical infrastructure, upgrades, legal, networks, digital libraries, software, marc formats, opacs, library users, intermediaries, collection development..	Learning organisation, collaboration with degree programmes, life-long staff training, misuse of services, language skills, IT skills, development, commitment