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Introduction

Purpose of the book

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) introduced its new Framework of Qualifications in April 2005. There are four elements in the scheme: Certification, Chartered Membership, Fellowship and Revalidation for Chartered Members and Fellows. The assessment of each level of qualification is by submission of a portfolio. This book has been written to support any Member of CILIP who wishes to apply for a professional qualification. This revised edition reflects the changes to Certification and contains some new personal contributions. For many of us working in the library and information profession the production of a portfolio was a new experience and there has been much discussion about the nature of the portfolio. This book is designed to answer some of those questions, sharing the experience, hints and tips of putting a portfolio together from colleagues who have successfully gained their qualifications.

Each chapter deals with a specific aspect of the portfolio, giving examples from each qualification as appropriate. The book can be either read straight through by potential candidates or used with greater discretion by applicants who may be having difficulties with particular elements of the portfolio.

Alan Brine, in the Foreword, provided an overview of how portfolios can be used in all aspects of a career and how important reflection is for the information professional. Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter,

looking at the purpose of the book and briefly outlining CILIP's Framework of Qualifications and the reasons for adopting a portfolio approach. It also discusses the support available to Members as they put together their portfolios, especially the CILIP Mentor Scheme. There are two very important aspects to the Framework: all portfolios must meet specified assessment criteria and applicants must demonstrate an appropriate level of reflective writing within their portfolios. Chapter 2 discusses the assessment criteria and attempts to show how you can build your portfolio to ensure that it meets those criteria; Keith Wilson, Chair of the Chartership Board, gives the views of an assessor and moderator. Chapter 3 is concerned with reflective writing and how you can begin the habit of reflection and learn to be more evaluative; Keith Trickey talks about his life experience as a reflective writer. Chapters 4 to 7 consider each element of the portfolio in more detail: the CV, the development plan, the personal statement and supporting evidence. Each chapter provides hints and tips about the element it covers and provides personal stories focusing on the element from ACLIPs, MCLIPs, FCLIPs and Members who have revalidated. In the final chapter, Chapter 8, presentation and submission are outlined and some thought is given to what happens next.

All of the chapters in this book refer back to CILIP's website and the information and supporting documentation that can be found there. It is recommended that you check there for the most up-to-date information and formal documentation.

Remember, you are not alone in going through this process; we can learn so much from other people's experiences.

CILIP's Framework of Qualifications

CILIP's professional qualifications are only available to Members of the Institute. They are the only professional qualifications in library and information work in the UK and are recognized globally.

Certification scheme

‘Certification is the recognition of the contribution made in library and information work by para-professionals’ (CILIP website). Applicants must have been working in library and information work for two years (full-time equivalent) or longer. The post-nominals ACLIP are awarded to successful candidates.

A Certified Affiliate with a minimum of two years’ relevant post-Certification experience and development can submit an application for Chartership.

Chartered Membership

‘Chartered Membership is the second level of professional qualification awarded by CILIP and is considered the “gold standard” for library and information professionals’ (CILIP website). There are various pathways to Chartered Membership, but all Members must submit a portfolio to meet the same assessment criteria. Advice on the most appropriate pathway is available from the QPD team at CILIP.

Fellowship

‘Fellowship is the highest level of professional qualification awarded by CILIP and recognizes a high level of personal commitment and achievement’ (CILIP website). Fellowship is normally awarded only to Members who have been on the Register for at least six years, although exceptions may be made in some cases. The new Framework of Qualifications introduced a new category of eligibility for Fellowship for Chartered Members who have successfully completed two cycles of revalidation (see CILIP website).

Revalidation

‘Revalidation is open to all Chartered Members, including Fellows, who wish to gain evidence and recognition of their commitment to personal professional development’ (CILIP website). Normally Members complete

three years of Revalidation and each year is recognized by CILIP; for some Members who have undergone several years of CPD after Chartership or Fellowship, the submission can be made immediately. A certificate is awarded on successful completion of each three-year cycle of Revalidation (see CILIP website). Currently Revalidation is voluntary, but, in line with other professional associations, CILIP is developing a compulsory CPD Scheme to replace it. Although this scheme may be ‘lighter touch’ than the current one, it will nevertheless require reflection on personal and professional development through a range of CPD activities.

The portfolio approach

Building a portfolio to demonstrate your best work is not a new concept. Artists, photographers and architects have always used this approach and recently more professions, such as the teaching profession, have adopted the portfolio concept. Your portfolio is an evaluative review of professional development and should present evidence to demonstrate that you meet the criteria of assessment for the award of a CILIP professional qualification. CILIP sets the criteria (see Chapter 2) and each individual applicant selects their own evidence to meet those criteria. CILIP chose the portfolio approach based on the experience of the Chartership Board, CILIP’s equivalent of an examination board, over many years and on the increasing need of information professionals to evaluate, articulate and demonstrate their own effectiveness and value. If we learn early in our careers to analyse, record and evaluate our professional development then it is easier to plan and implement continuous professional development. (Chapter 3 discusses reflective writing in more detail.)

The portfolio approach allows individuals to present information that they have selected to meet the criteria. The evidence should reflect on all professional activities undertaken and provide a rounded picture of each applicant. The emphasis is clearly focused on the individual and what they personally have learned: on output rather than input. The heart of the portfolio is not the posts you have held or the courses you have undertaken but the outcome of those activities. The focus is on

you and how you have developed professionally, and personally, to meet the challenges of a demanding and ever-changing information environment. The portfolio covers past achievements, present experience and proposed development.

Support for portfolio building

For many of us, compiling a portfolio is a new experience so, as well as the handbooks and regulations for each award, there are additional sources of support for candidates. CILIP's Career Development Group (CDG) organizes events specifically for candidates and has regional Candidate Support Officers (CSOs). Much of the support is aimed at Certification and Chartership candidates, but CDG also organizes some events for Fellowship and Revalidation candidates. There are also special courses for those wishing to move from ACLIP to MCLIP. Information on these events is available on the CILIP website: www.cilip.org.uk/jobs-careers/qualifications/cilip-qualifications/portfolio/pages/example.aspx.

Information on becoming a mentor and details of training courses run by CILIP's Personnel, Training and Education Group (PTEG) are also available on the website at www.cilip.org.uk/jobs-careers/qualifications/cilip-qualifications/mentor-scheme/pages/resources.aspx.

The Qualifications and Professional Development (QPD) Department at CILIP can help with individual queries. It also advises overseas candidates on all aspects of their applications.

There are also discussion lists for each qualification, except Fellowship:

Certification: LIS-CILIP-ACLIP

Chartership: LIS-CILIP-REG

Revalidation: LIS-CILIP-REVAL.

To join any of these discussions lists go to www.jiscmail.ac.uk. These lists allow for frank and down-to-earth discussion between candidates.

Another invaluable means of support is the CILIP Mentor Scheme; see www.cilip.org.uk/jobs-careers/qualifications/cilip-qualifications/mentor-scheme/pages/default.aspx.

It is compulsory for all Chartership candidates to have a mentor. It is strongly recommended that all Certification candidates also find one. A list of mentors is available on the CILIP website. You can choose someone from your own sector or someone from a different one. Mentors can operate face-to-face or in a virtual relationship. Mentor support is crucial for overseas Members. Candidates for Fellowship and Revalidation often find it useful to work with a ‘buddy’ or in a small support group. You can discuss the various elements of your portfolio and use your ‘buddy’ or support group to check that you have provided relevant and appropriate evidence. A mentor who is registered on the CILIP Mentor Scheme will have undertaken mentor training and will be familiar with the process of building a portfolio. The mentor is not a supervisor but is there to help and support you to select evidence and build the most effective portfolio.

There are also examples of successful portfolios on the CILIP website and held by the Candidate Support Officers in the regions and home nations; but remember, your portfolio is unique – it is about you and how you meet the assessment criteria. There is no perfect model portfolio, just an effective portfolio demonstrating your development.