## LIS INVESTIGATIONS

Where ALIA's Research Advisory Committee brings you news from the world of library and information services research.

## FROM OUR COLLECTION:

Nes, Sturle, and Anne Moen. 2010. Constructing standards: a study of nurses negotiating with multiple modes of knowledge. *Journal of Workplace Learning* 22 (6):376-393.

## SETTING A STANDARD

uring a time of frequent change and, in many areas, increasing regulation, the library and information profession often revisits its professional standards. LIS professionals who work in educational and medical organisations are particularly used to constant references to standards – from professional credentials to standards in behaviours and recommended practices. It is hardly surprising that a search for information about LIS professional credentials and standards on ALIA's ProQuest database returns numerous articles about school libraries and, sometimes, the medical profession. Todd, Ross J. 2012. Visibility, core standards, and the power of the story: creating a visible future for school libraries. *Teacher Librarian* 40 (1):8-14,4.

The first article by Nes and Moen discusses how multiple modes of knowledge are critical in formulating the constantly evolving nursing practice. Standards can't be divorced from the workplace and local knowledge, argue the authors. They look into a case of developing hospital procedures for stain disinfection in which medical staff draw upon existing professional standards as well as local practices and experiences to set standards for their workplace.

Personal experience, collective expertise and formalised knowledge are all modes of knowledge which shape accepted practices in this case. Standards are not prescriptive documents. Nes and Moen "have demonstrated how standards challenge local expertise and create tensions leading to expansion and construction of a new standard". Formalised knowledge, as presented in official publications, is a major factor in standard-setting, but the local culture and professional experiences shape it in accepted norms and procedures.

## A VIEW THAT OUR PROFESSIONAL INSIGHTS, AND STORIES OF OUR CLIENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS MATTER, OFFERS A LIBERATING APPROACH TO STANDARD-SETTING IN PRACTICE.

Many refer to requirements in health and education, some to standards which we, as LIS professionals, should set for ourselves. Two articles which caught my attention, however, took a different perspective, suggesting stories and experiences as an insightful way of thinking about standards and norms.



The second article is about the power of the story to create a vision for school libraries. Ross Todd argues for the use of narratives and stories to develop rich insights. By looking into stories of how school libraries helped students in developing life skills, librarians gather ideas about their role and purpose.

In a research study into the status and context of school libraries in New Jersey, Todd listened to stories of many stakeholders. Stories about the role of libraries in learning confirm and strengthen librarians' understanding that educational standards, and the development of students' knowledge by applying these standards, is at the core of school library practice. The school library as a pedagogical centre, the school librarian as a co-teacher, and the focus on curriculum standards and inquiry-based learning emerge from study narratives and form a strong vision for libraries to be shared with school communities.

For a professional who considers ways of balancing the needs of the workplace with wider professional standards, these articles offer a useful perspective on, and methods for, the development of our own standards. A view that our professional insights, and stories of our clients and stakeholders matter, offers a liberating approach to standard-setting in practice.

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