

# COMPETENCIES FOR CARL / ABRC LIBRARIANS

Prepared by the CARL / ABRC Competencies Working Group

## INTRODUCTION

In 2010, the Canadian Association of Research Libraries - Association des bibliothèques de recherche du Canada (CARL/ABRC) published the first edition of the Core Competencies for 21st Century CARL Librarians. Competency profiles are used in many professions to enhance individual and organizational success as well as serve an overall professional purpose. Competencies for any professional group are generally comprised of listings or groupings of knowledge, skills and mindsets<sup>1</sup> that define and contribute to success in the field. Competencies can also be used to design and develop position descriptions and postings, support training and education, as well as to identify performance indicators and develop evaluation programs. Learning organizations, such as many libraries, strive to move beyond mere adaptation to engender forms of generative (“active”) learning and to enhance the capacity to create or develop (Senge 1990). Competency mindsets that cultivate generative learning are the gold standard for competency work and foster learning, growth and development within the organization as a whole, as well as for the individual.

In 2017, at the request of CARL/ABRC’s Strengthening Capacity Committee, the CARL Competencies Working Group (CCWG) was formed to update the publication and to create a new guide for academic librarians working in Canada’s research libraries. The renewed competencies are designed to assist in setting both personal and organizational professional goals while providing potential opportunities for librarian recruitment, research, training and development. CARL/ABRC libraries may decide to reference this document in their strategic planning or organizational restructuring as well as in developing mission and vision statements and identifying institutional professional development needs. Library schools may want to use the competencies when developing curricula and in preparing graduates for job interviews, while employers may use them for recruitment and training new librarians, or librarians transitioning to an academic setting.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this document the following definitions apply:

- **Competencies:** A competency is a grouping of knowledge, skills and mindsets that define and contribute to success in the field.
- **Mindsets:** A mindset is a collection of attitudes, inclinations or habits of mind useful in achieving an outcome. Mindsets don’t have defined limits and therefore allow for development and greater mastery over time.
- **Principles:** A principle is a basic concept, generally recognized as true, that everyone can understand. Principles represent an objective reality that transcends cultures and individuals and does not change over time.
- **Skills:** A skill is defined as a learned capacity to carry out a specific task. Skills are often gained through formal training and repetition.
- **Values:** Values are beliefs and opinions that people hold regarding specific issues or ideas, and are ultimately internal, subjective, and malleable.

Although the profile aims to present a list of competencies for academic librarians working in research environments, individual libraries may decide to place greater or lesser emphasis on different aspects of the competencies, depending on the nature of individual academic/research librarian positions and as levels of specialization increase and evolve across the profession. Consequently, in revising the original *Core competencies for 21st Century CARL Librarians* (2010), CARL/ARBC has moved towards an aspirational approach, basing this document on commonly agreed upon principles. We aim to increase alignment between aspirational values and the knowledge, mindsets, and skills in academic librarianship that are often required for success. The primary goal of developing competencies is to serve the academic and research communities and to adapt to a dynamic, constantly evolving research and information landscape. As the environment of research libraries has changed dramatically in the 21st century, information technologies have evolved to the point where sophisticated tools are widely used. Research and teaching support is increasingly user-centered and responsive to the needs of the academic community - from undergraduates to senior faculty members. In achieving their respective missions and vision for the future, for example, research libraries increasingly value collaboration, leadership, innovation, and sustainability. This profile was designed specifically for use in Canadian research libraries but could be applicable in other contexts and jurisdictions.

## **METHOD**

The objective of the CCWG was to review and revise the original 2010 document to better reflect the current needs of the profession and outline the collective set of knowledge, skills, and mindsets required for success in professional practice. The process was highly consultative, with diverse opportunities for library directors, library staff and representatives from library schools to provide feedback. In addition, the literature was reviewed and consulted extensively to provide foundational concepts for the generation of the document. The CCWG conducted two in-person focus groups at the 2017 Research in Academic Libraries (ReAL) conference in Vancouver, and at the 2018 Ontario Library Association Super Conference in Toronto. In addition, four virtual focus groups were conducted by different national regions (Western Canada, Central Canada, Quebec, and Eastern Canada) in the summer of 2018. The CCWG also circulated a survey to academic librarians and human resources professionals and consulted with several iSchool deans. Forty-four librarians participated in the focus groups and 52 survey responses were received.

## **COMPETENCIES WORKING GROUP MEMBERS**

Chair: Kathleen De Long (Alberta)

Members: Dean Giustini (British Columbia), Julie Hannaford (Toronto), Vivian Lewis (McMaster), Bill Sgrazzutti (Regina), Phil Taber (New Brunswick), Carole Urbain (McGill), Christine Walde (Victoria), Brett Waytuk (Regina), and Julie Morin (CARL / ARBC).

**THE CANADIAN RESEARCH LIBRARY OF THE 21ST CENTURY IS AN OPEN AND EVOLVING ECOSYSTEM of learning and innovation: user-centered, dynamic, research-driven and dedicated to its diverse user communities. The 21st century CARL/ABRC academic librarian is a conscientious and dynamic creator, curator, and steward of the knowledge created, generated and preserved by the activities of the research library.**

With this statement in mind, the following competencies, with associated knowledge, skills, and mindsets, have been identified. The bullet points under each competency statement should be read as illustrative rather than comprehensive.

### **ACTIVE LEARNING & ADAPTATION**

**Academic librarians prioritize fluid approaches to their work and the diverse environments they support and engineer; predictive and proactive, they anticipate and prepare for future opportunities and challenges with clarity and foresight learned from previous experiences.**

**Elements of this competency include the following:**

- Ability to adapt to a variety of working/learning styles, scenarios and organizational cultures;
- Ability to stay abreast of research in a specific area, to support a research agenda, to support colleagues, or to support other work as a librarian within the library.
- Knowledge of emerging trends and initiatives in library spaces and buildings, including the ability to anticipate future trends in knowledge organizations and scholarship;
- Understanding how to solve problems and design new methods/procedures when established ones do not suffice or do not yet exist;
- Understanding how to leverage expertise to create new experiences and generate new knowledge for users;
- Understanding change management and innovation principles within the organization that promote a forward-thinking, proactive, curious, learning culture;
- Understanding how to work flexibly and effectively in the face of ambiguity and be open to a changing workplace or library culture;
- Understanding shared network thinking across all models of scholarly production.

### **COLLABORATION**

**Academic librarians work collaboratively to support one another and achieve the strategic priorities of their libraries and universities; connective and cooperative, they contribute and sustain the living network of relationships that define the research library and its fundamental role within the academic environment.**

**Elements of this competency include the following:**

- Ability to actively build and continually seek meaningful relationships with a wide spectrum of users and communities to strengthen capacity and sustain long-term impact.
- Knowledge and understanding of the importance of critical and scholarly engagement, particularly with those associated within their area of professional, research or subject expertise;

- Knowledge of the extra-institutional environment (regional, provincial, national and international organizations that affect library organization and operation), and the Canadian and international higher education environments;
- Knowledge of the larger institutional organization, including the post-secondary educational environment, organizational structure, institutional decision-making bodies and processes, institutional budget process, institutional mission, goals and objectives;
- Understanding the importance of developing critical, strategic, professional, and personal working relationships that are connective, perceptive, intuitive, and supportive;
- Understanding how to develop and support collaborations and partnerships with relevant and diverse groups and research communities, including participation in grant-funded projects and community research, both in and out of the library, in pursuit of shared goals;
- Understanding how to apply strategic directions and priorities of the research library to the benefit of all.

## **CONSULTATION & COMMUNICATION**

**Academic librarians effectively communicate and accurately demonstrate and implement the purpose, goals, and vision of the research library. They lead and encourage meaningful discussions and conversations that support and enhance the growth of dynamic research, scholarship, and pedagogy.**

**Elements of this competency include the following:**

- Ability to use excellent communication skills in the workplace, including the ability to listen actively, and be open to others' feedback and ideas.
- Ability to manage and resolve conflict in a mindful and respectful, diplomatic way;
- Knowledge of the diverse range of expertise, services, collections, and facilities of the research library as essential components of the research life cycle and for teaching and learning;
- Knowledge of how to support a diverse range of user experiences and needs, including those related to teaching and learning, data management, scholarly communication, digitization, and grant writing;
- Knowledge of the Canadian copyright environment and an understanding of scholarly communication models and practices, including an imperative understanding of the importance of open access;
- Knowledge of the concepts and principles of information, digital, and data literacy for higher education, including the value of integrating critical thinking, experiential and lifelong learning into teaching and instruction methodologies, including the principles of metaliteracy in the academic environment;
- Understanding how to provide relevant and timely information to all library stakeholders, including scholars, researchers and students;
- Understanding library and institutional goals and objectives;
- Understanding cultural and societal importance and impact of research libraries, including upholding the right to freedom of information, and to preserve the outputs of human knowledge;
- Understanding information policy concerns related to privacy, security, authentication, and the rights of users.

## **CURATION & PRESERVATION**

**Academic librarians are stewards in the collection and curation of scholarly resources, and provide critical and innovative paths of interpretation, contextualization, dissemination, and preservation for future generations and systems of users.**

**Elements of this competency include the following:**

- Knowledge of the research life cycle of library resources, including scholarly publishing from creation through various stages of use to disposition;
- Knowledge of systems and data services (data manipulation/curation, metadata migration, big data, data analysis/visualization, business intelligence tools, data sharing statements/plans);
- Knowledge of collections strategies, including the history, concepts, issues, and methods related to the acquisition and disposition of resources;
- Understanding the principles, activities, policies, procedures, and services for persistent open access;
- Understanding best practices, standards and protocols of digital curation, including the selection, collection, preservation, description, organization and archiving principles for digital documentation and research data in various formats;
- Understanding curation and preservation methods for print-based general collections, as well as special collections and archives;
- Understanding how information is organized for easy identification and retrieval, including cataloguing and metadata standards for all formats;
- Understanding institutional repositories, including the basic structure, content and use of campus institutional repositories.

## **EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION**

**Academic librarians uphold systems of equitable beliefs, ethics, and actions from the library's diverse learning communities and the communities they serve; they conscientiously aim to restore, implement and protect diverse ways of knowing and being in the world through the practice of librarianship.**

**Elements of this competency include the following:**

- Ability to sense their responsibility towards individuals and society, with a focus on stewardship and service;
- Ability to participate with and encourage diverse communities at all levels of decision-making;
- Knowledge of promoting open scholarship and expanding equitable access to information for purposes of teaching, learning, and research;
- Knowledge of promoting intellectual freedom through the development, management and preservation of the scholarly research record;
- Knowledge of developing and maintaining accessible spaces, technology, and resources;
- Knowledge of research ethics in practitioner, researcher, and service roles;
- Knowledge of the importance of working with Indigenous communities to decolonize libraries and meet the TRC's calls to action;
- Understanding diverse teachings and worldviews, particularly and including Indigenous-engaged learning and ways of knowing and being in the world;
- Understanding cultural differences and beliefs to enhance their own personal awareness beyond the culture or cultures they are familiar with, as a necessary step in appreciating the importance of diverse ways of knowing and being in the world;
- Understanding how to foster diversity, equity and inclusion within libraries and with their external communities.

## **ENGAGEMENT & PARTICIPATION**

**Academic librarians demonstrate engagement and commitment to the profession and in their professional lives; they take an active part in the varied activities at their libraries and are mindful in their work and interactions with colleagues and the communities they serve.**

**Elements of this competency include the following:**

- Ability to expand knowledge according to the state of research and practice in librarianship;
- Ability to mentor and recruit new members of the profession;
- Ability to work, negotiate and manage conflicts with the aim of achieving a common goal;
- Ability to interact effectively and work collaboratively with diverse stakeholders;
- Ability to embrace diversity and complexity;
- Ability to show respect and value for the skills, experiences, creativity and contribution of team members;
- Knowledge of the library or library system, including its structure, decision-making bodies and processes, advisory committees, budget processes, key policies and procedures, key collection strengths, services for students, faculty and community;
- Knowledge of the social, cultural, economic, political, and environmental history of research library practice;
- Knowledge of the ethics, values and foundational principles of the library and information profession;
- Knowledge of how to give and receive opinions and feedback from team members in an open, clear and respectful manner;
- Understanding the importance of being well prepared in order to effectively participate in team discussions;
- Understanding and involvement with professional associations for the purposes of advocacy and/or professional development.

## **EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT**

**Academic librarians evaluate and analyze the library's vast array of activities by responsively meeting user needs through continuing assessment. They enhance and improve the library's evolving mission and vision.**

**Elements of this competency include:**

- Understanding their university's strategic plan, institutional priorities and pressures, which inform the library's priorities;
- Knowledge of the concepts, methods, technology and tools for service, resource and project evaluation and outcomes assessment;
- Knowledge of principles of computational thinking, design thinking, user experience (UX) design, and functional expertise; learning technology-integrated tools, including the structure and use of campus learning management systems and how they apply to assessment;
- Knowledge of how information is located, critically evaluated, and assimilated for the creation of new knowledge;
- Knowledge of institutional teaching and learning programs, goals and outcomes, as well as evidence-based, assessment strategies and tools to effectively connect with stakeholders and integrate and assess information literacy programs as appropriate;
- Understanding of planning and resource implementation, including strong assessment skills to evaluate new services and/or resources and risk management;
- Understanding the advantages and disadvantages of any action or decision and being able to effectively evaluate to support active and effective decision making.

## **LEADERSHIP & FACILITATION**

**Academic librarians provide and support leadership at all levels to drive and sustain the strategic priorities that contribute to the vital impact of the research library.**

### **Elements of this competency include:**

- Ability to demonstrate emotional intelligence, compassion, and the ability to steer and enable critical conversations;
- Ability to vision in a rapidly changing and dynamic academic environment;
- Ability to inspire and empower others by initiating, implementing and supporting innovation, creativity, and risk taking by motivating others to strive for excellence;
- Ability to support and actively encourage ongoing professional growth and development of all library staff.
- Knowledge of the applicability of varying leadership styles and decision-making models;
- Understanding the past, present and future role of the research library;
- Knowledge of strategic planning skills to assess current and future directions in both research libraries and higher education;
- Understanding general management principles, including financial and human resources;
- Understanding the principles of effective personnel practices and human resource development, including an understanding of the organization's policies and guidelines, including any relevant collective agreement.

## **VISION & INNOVATION**

**Academic librarians are important partners and practitioners in supporting and developing the genesis of diverse and dynamic knowledge, systems, and services through the ongoing development and creative engagement with new tools and models of research. Inquisitive, innovative and entrepreneurial, academic librarians bring energy, expertise, and inspiration to the 21st century research library.**

### **Elements of this competency include the following:**

- Ability to demonstrate creative initiative in exploring and experimenting with new ideas, technologies and services;
- Ability to channel a vision into appropriate experimentation and workable solutions;
- Ability to handle the complexity and diversity of points of view;
- Knowledge of project management, including planning, organizing and managing resources to successfully complete specific project objectives within a certain time frame;
- Knowledge of change management techniques to facilitate acceptance, engagement, and new practice within the work team affected by the changes;
- Knowledge of new programs and entrepreneurial/startup activities as targets for new types of library support;
- Knowledge of the fundamentals of qualitative and quantitative research methods including the research process (e.g. question formulation, peer review);
- Knowledge of research methodologies and methods, research lifecycle, research support, and supporting the institutional research enterprise;
- Understanding the changes in higher education, the shifting research and scholarly environment, and advances in technology;

- Understanding the rights of users and creators of information in open culture;
- Understanding stewardship of resources.

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