

I.3 The American Library Association's Committee on Accreditation

In 1924 the ALA created the Board of Education for Librarianship to carry on the accreditation of programs of education for librarianship. The Board became the Committee on Accreditation (COA) in 1956.

The COA is a standing committee of the ALA. Its charge is “to be responsible for the execution of the accreditation program of the ALA, and to develop and formulate standards of education for library and information studies for the approval of Council” (*ALA Handbook of Organization*). In meeting this charge, the COA is guided by the following principles:

- The accreditation of library and information studies (LIS) educational programs is coordinated through a single agency that represents the interests of the members of the profession;
- Accreditation enhances the quality of library and information services through the improvement of the professional education available for librarians and related information professionals;
- The spirit of accreditation lies in its constructive and continual evaluation and assessment of LIS educational programs.

The COA has developed an accreditation process that seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- To respond to the content and emphasis of the *Standards*;
- To incorporate suggestions of the LIS educational community and the LIS profession;
- To conform to good practices in the accreditation process in accord with provisions set forth by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA).

I.3.1 Scope of the COA

The COA accredits master's programs in library and information studies that are offered under the degree-granting authority of institutionally accredited institutions located in the United States and also in its territories, possessions, and protectorates. By agreement with the Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA), the COA also accredits LIS master's programs in institutions in Canada.

As a prerequisite to the accreditation of programs, the ALA requires that the institution be accredited by its appropriate institutional accrediting agency. This requirement does not apply in Canada, however, which has no institutional accrediting system. A Program Head must immediately inform the Office for Accreditation of any change in institutional accreditation status.

The COA is responsible for overseeing the development of standards for accreditation of master's degree programs in library and information studies. The development of standards is a broadly based, inclusive process involving members of the profession and the public. The COA continually reviews the standards at its regularly scheduled meetings and periodically appoints standards review subcommittees to determine when revisions are necessary.

I.3.2 External recognition of the ALA COA

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) officially recognizes the American Library Association as the accrediting agency for master's-level programs in library and information studies. The ALA is also a member of the Association for Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA) and follows its *Code of Good Practice*.