Review Article

Library Association of Ireland launches
Professional Knowledge and Skills Base (PKSB)

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What is it?

Earlier this year I was pleased to have the opportunity to use the *Professional Knowledge and Skills Base (PKSB)* online tool to assess my library knowledge and skills and to identify gaps which might inform my continuing professional development.

The Professional Knowledge and Skills Base (PKSB) was developed by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) (http://www.cilip.org.uk/) in the UK through consultation with employers and the library and information community. It was later customised by the Library Association of Ireland (LAI) and is available free of charge to LAI members.

How does it work?

PKSB is available via the Library Association (https://libraryassociation.ie/) website as an editable PDF document (https://libraryassociation.ie/career/pksb). The toolkit document can be downloaded and saved to your desktop where you can update it regularly with your skills analysis.

The toolkit is divided into two main areas, Professional Expertise and Generic Skills. At the core of both of these are Ethics and Values. Each area is broken down into further detail with each section having between 4

and 8 further knowledge and skill headings. I found this method really helpful in terms of formulating skills as the headings are very clear.
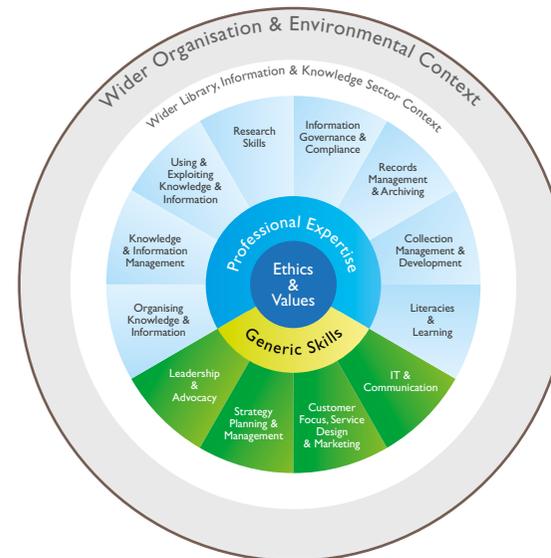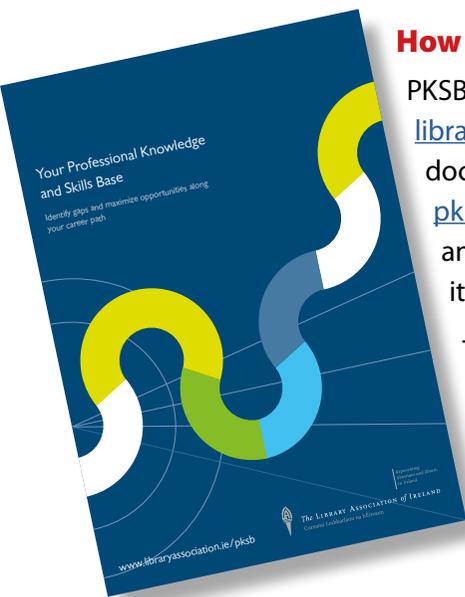

Figure 1: My Professional Knowledge and Skills Base

You can download the toolkit from https://libraryassociation.ie/career/pksb. To access the document, you enter your name, LAI membership number and date before you begin to fill in the various fields.

There are four self-assessment ratings: None (0), Basic (1), Good (2),

Comprehensive (3) and Advanced (4). These ratings are thoroughly explained on page 4 of the toolkit. I found it useful to refer back to these ratings periodically when completing the toolkit. I was able to score my level of knowledge and skills using the ratings and it helped highlight areas that I need to develop.

I would recommend you go through the completed toolkit with your manager as a way of jointly identifying areas you feel you need to develop.

Some tips

- Open and save the PDF in order to fill in the form which is easy to do as it is similar to a word document.
- You need to have your LAI membership number to progress. This is entered on page seven and you need to do this before you can start to enter information in the fields.
- In terms of time taken to fill it in, I spent about 20 minutes on it every other day over the course of two months. One tip is to complete one section at a time.
- At 45 pages, it is quite long. However the knowledge/skills area is already filled in for the user, this makes it more straightforward as you then just need to fill in your current and ideal rating.
- Each users level of knowledge will, of course, vary depending on grade, where you work etc. It is a large document and all areas might not be immediately relevant to each individual, but remember that you can work within your own context.

Reflection

I liked the structure of this toolkit and found it very easy to follow. It helped me to see where I might increase my knowledge in certain areas or develop skills in other areas. It also got me thinking how I might fill those gaps. One area I identified as needing development was the section on "Collection Management and Development". Maynooth University (MU) library has just completed a new Collection Development Policy and as part of my role as subject librarian I will be involved in the implementation of this policy. The knowledge and skills area helped me identify areas that I need to develop such as collection evaluation and information quality and acquisition.

Collection evaluation is vital to ensuring that the material we select for purchase or accept as donations meet our collection user needs. This will also give me the knowledge to evaluate material against a set of pre-determined criteria. The PKSB determines other factors in this area such as how to select materials and resources keeping in mind open access, repositories and new forms of publication. The PKSB highlighted to me that this is an area which I feel I need to improve my skills on. Some of the competencies I feel I am strongest in are in the generic skills category such as Leadership and Advocacy, Strategy Planning and Management, Customer Focus, Service Design and Marketing and IT and Communication. As a librarian working in Information Services these competencies are vital to my position in MU library. As a subject librarian, I also have strong competencies and professional expertise in areas such as Research Skills, Literacies and Learning, Knowledge and Information Management.

Having completed the PKSB, I now have a toolkit document which I can refer back to periodically and perhaps use in a future application for Fellowship of the Library Association of Ireland (FLAI). It would have been useful to have had the PKSB to inform my application for the ALAI in 2015. At present we are working on a new Strategic Plan for Maynooth University Library. As part of this we are undertaking a Strategic Staff Development Initiative (SSDI) and some of the insights I have gained will be useful in that broader endeavour.

The toolkit is a great starting point to assess skills and knowledge, identify gaps and start thinking of how they can be addressed in consultation with your manager. It could be a particularly useful tool for organisations who do appraisals or PMDS. It is an excellent structure that has the potential to feed into a skills analysis template for staff training and further development and has the potential to contribute to local and national CPD planning.

For more information please see www.libraryassociation.ie/pksb or contact pksb@libraryassociation.ie

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