



Library Worklife:
HR E-News for Today's Leaders.
growth • advancement • opportunity
for all library workers

Volume 4, Special Issue • April 2007

[Library Worklife home](#)

Certification

[Download this article in PDF format](#)

Professional Certification of Chefs: A Possible Model for Library Workers? (v2n4, April 2006)

By **Christine Martin**

[Editor's Note: Since the [Certified Public Library Administrator Program \(CPLA\)](#) has begun, we thought you might be interested in how other professions conduct certifications. CPLA consists of nine standards, and librarians with three or more years of experience in a public library must complete courses, with an evaluation component, for seven of the standards. PS: Congratulations to our first class of applicants and the new providers.]

The heat was on.

Chef Michael Harris plunged two live Maine lobsters into a pot of boiling water. He had already prepared chicken Marsala with Russet potatoes, julienned vegetables and a Belgian endive salad. Now all that remained was to prepare the lobster and meet the test's final "15 minute service window." He had prepared more complex meals in his nine-year career, but now he was trying to pass a test that would make him a "certified executive chef" under the rules of the American Culinary Federation (ACF) based in St. Augustine, Florida. The credential would acknowledge his years of experience in busy restaurant kitchens. It also would help convey his expertise to potential employers.

The ACF has been certifying chefs since 1981. While the above account is fictional (it's from information posted on the ACF web site, www.acfchefs.org), the ACF's credentialing program might serve as a model for library workers if the American Library Association-Allied Professional Association (ALA-APA) moves to certify not only public library administrators, but also library support staff.

Why use chefs as a credentialing model?

1. It recognizes work experience as well as formal education. Some chefs graduate from a culinary school or other academic program accredited by the ACF (such as the Culinary Institute of America in New York City), but not all chefs hold an academic degree.
2. The field includes both unionized and non-unionized personnel.
3. Both fields include individuals who work part-time (one in five librarians, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
4. Applicants for an ACF credential must not only show work experience and classroom hours, but also pass an actual test. ALA-APA does not require applicants for its certified public library administrator (CPLA) designation to sit for an exam, but ALA-APA might incorporate exams into the certification model if it ever moves to credential library support staff, who usually lack a master's degree in library science.
5. The chef's credentialing program gives credit for supervisory responsibility, as well as work

experience and education.

How does the chefs' credentialing program work?

The ACF certifies five levels of chefs, ranging from "certified master chef" (a designation held by only 59 people in the whole world) to "certified culinarian," which is an entry-level designation. Below the vaunted "master chef" comes the "certified executive chef" who usually supervises an entire food-service establishment, including multiple kitchens, the "certified chef de cuisine" who usually supervises a kitchen, and the "certified sous chef" who usually supervises a shift. ACF also offers certifications, 14 in all, for pastry chefs, personal chefs, and culinary educators, including those who teach in high school or vocational education programs.

The ACF also runs an apprenticeship program, in which high-school graduates work for three years under a "certified executive chef" and enroll in technical courses, usually at a community college. Thus an aspiring chef can enter the profession in one of three ways: by enrolling in a culinary school, by serving an apprenticeship and attending a community college, or by simply landing a job in the industry.

The ACF awards educational points for:

- classroom training offered in conjunction with its annual meeting and through local chapters, as well as distance learning and online programs offered throughout the year;
- classroom training offered by other groups, such as the National Restaurant Association;
- medals won in cooking competitions;
- presentations made at professional conferences;
- service as a judge as a cooking competition; and
- service as an ACF board member, chapter president, or committee member.

The table below shows the types of certification offered by the American Culinary Federation.

Chef	Pastry Chef	Culinary Administrator	Culinary Educator	Personal Chef
Certified Master Chef	Certified Master Pastry Chef			
Certified Executive Chef	Certified Executive Pastry Chef	Certified Culinary Administrator	Certified Culinary Educator	Personal Certified Executive Chef
Certified Chef de Cuisine	Certified Working Pastry Chef		Certified Secondary Culinary Educator	Personal Certified Chef
Certified Sous Chef				

Certified Culinarian	Certified Pastry Culinarian
-------------------------	--------------------------------

- Certified Culinarian: Entry level
- Certified Sous Chef: Supervises at least 2 others (often responsible for a shift)
- Certified Chef de Cuisine: Supervises at least 3 others (often responsible for single kitchen)
- Certified Executive Chef: Supervises at least 5 others (often responsible for entire food service operation in restaurant, hotel, club, hospital or other food service establishment)

But does certification increase wages?

Of course, the real question is whether certification increases wages for chefs or cooks or anyone else in the food service industry. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (or BLS, part of the U.S. Department of Labor) reports in its online Occupational Outlook Handbook that "median hourly earnings of chefs and head cooks were \$14.75 in May 2004." Earnings for other types of food service workers, such as restaurant and cafeteria cooks, were closer to \$9 per hour. The BLS also reports that the highest ten percent of the 125,000 people who worked as "chefs and head cooks" in 2004 earned more than \$26.75 per hour. (www.bls.gov/oco/ocos161.htm)

The ACF reports that it has certified 10,000 people over 25 years. Can we assume that these 10,000 certified chefs (or at least those who are still working after 25 years) constitute some (or even most) of the 12,500 chefs and head cooks that the BLS reports as earning more than \$53,500 per year (i.e., \$26.75 per hour multiplied by 2000 hours in one year of full-time work)? There is no way to know without asking the ACF (www.acfchefs.org) to divulge its members' earnings. Unfortunately, this information was unavailable at press time. But certainly certification can be taken as a measure of the chefs' commitment to their field. As the BLS says, "executive chefs and head cooks who work in fine-dining restaurants require many years of training and experience and an intense desire to cook . . . Although certification is not required to enter the field, it can be a measure of accomplishment and lead to further advancement and higher-paying positions."

Certification such as the ALA-APA's new Certified Public Library Administrator (CPLA) also may help library employees advance their careers. The American Culinary Federation's web site (www.acfchefs.org) calls the ACF's certification program a "career ladder" that gives chefs a "portable credential" that they can show to employers to demonstrate a level of accomplishment beyond work experience measured only in years and initial formal education. So, too, librarians may be able to use the CPLA to demonstrate that they have a set of administrative skills, such as personnel administration, budgeting, fundraising, and marketing, that they may have encountered only briefly in library school. If nothing else, the experience of earning the CPLA credential may give public library administrators better tools to do their jobs, which can only lead to greater confidence in telling employers—and ultimately the public—what's cooking at the library.

Christine Martin is a freelance writer and 1997 graduate of the [University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science](#).

Is This Your Story? If So, Consider Certification (v3n12, December 2006)

The Certified Public Library Administrator (CPLA) Program has candidates just like you, whether you've had three or thirty years of management experience, love continuing education or do it because you know you must to



advance, live in a small town or a large city. If you identify with one of these stories, consider applying to become a candidate of the CPLA program before January 5, 2007—www.ala-apa.org/certification/cpla.html. If you have a *different* story, consider applying so that you can inspire others.



I was hired directly out of Library School by the City of Duncan to be groomed as their Library Director. All of my administrative training was gained through personal research, workshops, and trial and error.—*Wendy Allen, Roanoke Public Library, VA*

I feel unprepared in some key areas of directorship, such as budgeting and facility management, and this is why I am excited and would greatly benefit from the Certified Public Library Administrator Program. This certification would provide the knowledge and skills to take me to the next level in my profession, by building on the foundations learned in graduate school.—*Jennifer Plohr, Elia Area Public Library District, IL*

It has been 25 years since I graduated from library school. The demands made upon librarians and libraries have changed dramatically since 1981. I have acquired the skills needed to manage human and information resources; however, it is more difficult to find educational opportunities that focus on the business side of library management.—*Lois Blythe, Burlington Public Library, VT*

I seek to become a Certified Public Library Administrator to give my experience professionally recognized depth and the physical validation of a title.—*Patricia Linville, City of Seward, AK*

I would also like to be able to contribute to the library profession.—*Suzanne Cline, Amos Memorial Public Library, OH*

My career goals are to continually improve my skills and knowledge in order to improve and streamline existing library services, to manage library personnel as a leader, and to strive to offer new services to meet the continually shifting needs of today's highly educated and motivated public.—*Debra Czarnik, Lee County Library System, FL*

Although I began my career in Medical Libraries, it was in public libraries that I found professional and personal fulfillment. *Janice Fisher, Riverside Public Library, IL*

My director has stated that she will be retiring in three years. She looks at me to follow her.—*June Kruer, Charlestown-Clark County Public Library, IN*

I believe the mission and vision of any organization should inspire and energize those who work in it. I enthusiastically enjoy the challenge of managing the many aspects of a busy public library. I strive to keep pace with the rapidly changing field of information science, knowledge management and overall public library management.—*Karen Mahnk, Town of Lake Park Library, FL*

I believe CPLA certification will give me a competitive edge in the job market and help alleviate any reservations an employer may have about the breadth of my experience.—*Mary Medjo Me Zengue, Addison Public Library, IL*

I have the privilege of being the director of a small public library in Exeter, RI, that opened in September of 2004. This town never had a library before.—*Amy Neilson, Exeter Public Library, RI*

If you have any questions about the CPLA program, please call 800-545-2433, x2424.

*We would love to have your **feedback** on these articles!*

Copyright 2004–2007 ALA-APA. Contact Jenifer Grady, 50 E. Huron, Chicago, IL 60611, 312-280-2424, jgrady@ala.org for more information.