

Library sector is relevant

Alana Garwood

When I completed my Graduate Diploma in Librarianship in 1986 there were very few Aboriginal people working in libraries let alone with librarian qualifications.

In 1989 I joined the library of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, as it was known then, as a bibliographer. Working at the Institute has given me opportunities to help my people. There are so many people still trying to find their families, or just trying to find any information on the history of their family. The first thing I did when at the Institute was to research all the information that is held there on my family — I discovered written material, photographs and even audio tapes of my great-grandmother telling stories. I know how I felt when I found all this information, so helping others has been a priority for me.

In 1992 I was seconded to the School of Aboriginal and Islander Administration, University of South Australia, to convert their resource centre into a library. Even though I enjoyed my year of cataloguing, reorganising and educating university stu-

dents about library use, I was keen to return to the Institute.

In 1993 I was invited by Te Ropu Whakahau, the Maori Library Workers Network, to visit New Zealand and attend the NZLIA conference. From that visit, Melissa Jackson (State Library of NSW) and I were inspired to form an Australian indigenous network. In November 1993 the Institute hosted the 'Gathering and sharing workshop', from which was formed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library Resource Network, and I became the co-ordinator. Since then we have held a number of conferences, and the name has changed to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library and Information Resource Network (ATSILIRN).

Two projects I have been involved in are the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols for libraries, archives and information services* and the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander thesaurus*. The protocols have been nominated by the

Australian Government for the UNESCO prize for Human Rights Education.



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Today, although the participation rate by Aboriginal people in the sector is increasing, there is still a need for greater participation, which is why I have taken leave from the Institute to work with ALIA on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment and career development strategy for the library and information sector. This is my opportunity to once again help my people. This year has been a hectic one for me, not only persuading libraries to employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but also the more difficult task of persuading Aboriginal people that a career in the library sector is relevant and important to them. ■

Alana is the national co-ordinator of the ALIA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment and career development strategy for the library and information sector

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