Be my PAL

Trish Milne and Belle Alderman, University of Canberra

Part of the responsibility in any form of professional education is to give the students some understanding of the relevant professional culture as frequently, students have little understanding of the nature of the profession they have chosen.

At the University of Canberra, the undergraduate internship, *Partners in Learning* (PAL), is a pivotal unit in the course. Placed mid-way in the study program when students have completed their basic professional units, and continuing for twelve months on a part-time basis, PAL links students with experienced practitioners acting as mentors. An individualised plan of learning is designed by the mentor and academic staff, hence the name.

Of the twenty students in the first PAL cohort, eleven gained some form of employment with their organisation as a direct result of the placement, showing the effectiveness of the academic/practitioner partnership in professional education. Comments from students reflect the impact of PAL on their career aspirations.

The PAL model of internship is described and evaluated in: *Education for Library and Information Services: Australia* 12(3): 23-32, and *Different approaches: theory and practice in higher education proceedings of the 1996 annual conference of Higher Education and Research Development Society of Australasia*, p562-566. ∎

My PAL placement gave me, amongst other things, a strong client focus. I practiced a wide variety of tasks and have since commenced full-time employment at the CRC.

Tracey Hoogland

I have always found libraries to be congenial places, and I believe that a library's goal of providing access to information to be admirable, empowering even. Perhaps most importantly for me, I knew that I would be proud to say that I'm a librarian and that I would have a rewarding career. Since beginning my studies and having had the opportunity to work in a library, these beliefs have become even more ingrained. I have learned that librarians face many unforseen challenges that keep the job exciting and interesting. As part of the Partners in Learning Program, I had a mentor who said to me, 'I see librarians as being gatekeepers who provide access to the wider world of information'.

Marina Hutzler

My entry into library studies was done with only general career goals in mind. PAL was a positive experience where I was able to focus on more specific goals after being exposed to a variety of skills and roles related to the profession.
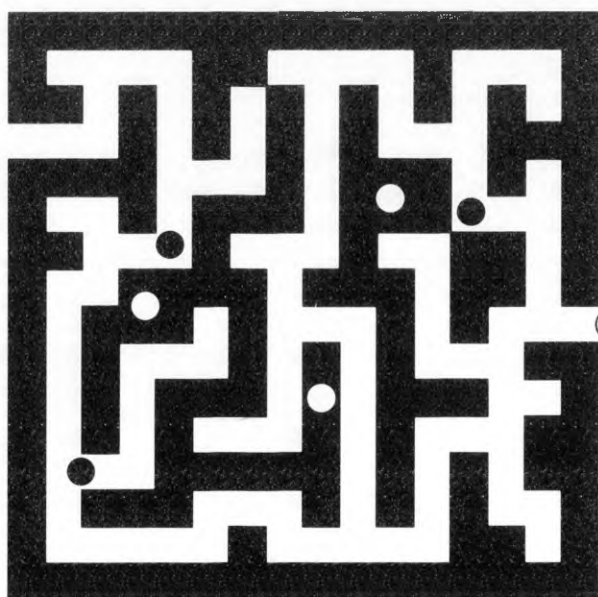
Catherine Belcher

I chose librarianship because I wanted to serve people's information needs. My PAL experiences at the National Library gave me invaluable cataloguing skills, an expanded knowledge of technical services functions, and an increased professional self-confidence.

Robert Curtis

Love of books, and appreciation of the crucial role information plays in every aspect of society, led to librarianship. While studying, I developed a keen interest in electronic media, although I lacked skill and confidence in its use. PAL enabled me to develop this ability within a stimulating, professional work environment.

Linda Elford