

Is library theory relevant in practice?

Sharan Davison, Mt Ommaney Library, Brisbane

In April 1996, I graduated from Charles Sturt University with a Bachelor of Arts — Library and Information Science. I completed this course part-time while working full-time and with the aim of continuing to work in the public library sector.

In September 1996, I was appointed to the position of branch librarian of the newly built Brisbane City Council's Mt Ommaney Library. This position requires a range of skills including human resources management, organisational, planning and promotional ability and knowledge of reference and information services.

The library is technologically sophisticated and focuses on the provision of lending, reference, information and readers' advisory services as well


as a high level of community interaction.

My professional qualifications and employment experience provided an excellent foundation for my immediate work requirements as a librarian and for my self-development. By specialising in reference and information services in my studies I have found I acquired skills which are invaluable and in demand.

Since graduating I have undertaken continuing education courses, attended seminars organised by ALIA sections in Queensland and broadened my professional reading. This is similar to the ongoing process that many librarians use for keeping up-to-date. Working for a large and progressive organisation has been very beneficial. The Brisbane

City Council Library Service skills its staff through external and on-the-job training and by providing opportunities to act in higher positions or work at different locations and participate in challenging project teams.

Ensuring students have skills that are aligned with industry opportunities and permit self-development are essential elements of keeping academic theory relevant to practice. In my experience, my formal study achieved this. To me, the graduate has two main challenges. The first is to grasp any opportunity that allows them to build on their academic foundation; the second is to develop personal attributes, such as good interpersonal communication skills and a strong customer service orientation. ■



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