

Pondering education

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While I sit and ponder education in the field of information and library studies I ask myself about theory and practice. How do I feel about the graduate diploma that enables me to be employed as a professional librarian?

Fortunate for having had not only the benefit of one year (1996) at Curtin University of Technology completing the Graduate Diploma in Information and Library Studies, but also a previous year at Edith Cowan University completing half of the library technician's course. Less fortunate that the graduate diploma was so intense with the practicum replacing the mid-year break. A small, hard, bite of reality amidst the theory.

Has the theoretical knowledge gained really helped? A comment that comes to mind is 'you won't need that in the real world, all that theory!' Well, I have certainly forgotten things and some things have not been particularly useful (yet) but the theory taught has established a foundation upon which I build my knowledge and relate my experiences. The theoretical content of my education is of the utmost value.

Even more valuable is a blend of this theory with practical application.

Sharr Medal presentation

The 1996 Sharr medal was presented to Curtin graduate Gaynor Deal on 20 March. The presentation function was held in the Alexander Library Building theatre. Dr Sharr presented Gaynor with her medal. ALIA Western Australian branch president Margaret Starre read the citation of Gaynor's achievements and Gaynor's name was added to the Sharr Medal Honour Board that will now be displayed in the Department of Information Studies at Curtin University.

Gaynor was chosen from a very strong group of nominees. The selection panel for the medal commented on how close the leading candidates were, all nominations and interviews were of a very high standard. Gaynor was se-

lected as the most outstanding library studies graduate. Jeff Herd, who studied at Edith Cowan University, was chosen as the most outstanding teacher-librarian graduate.

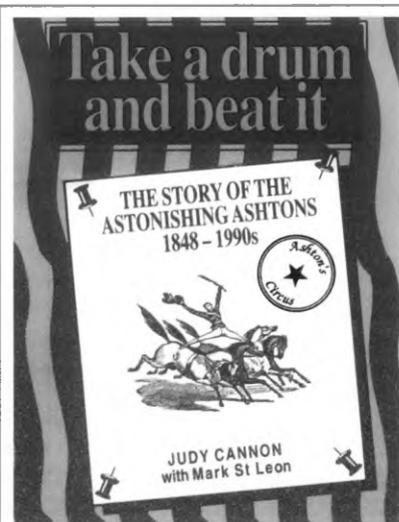
My education sought to supply me with an ability to apply a theory to the practical environment. The basics are instilled and the ability to transfer and adapt skills is evident. In retrospect though, the opportunity to apply theory more often in a variety of 'real-life' practical environments could be beneficial; guest practitioner speakers and library visits add that touch of reality. The benefits of networking (particularly through ALIA) and mentoring from an early stage of one's education should also be promoted and encouraged.

These comments are based on several part-time/casual positions I have held during my studies and two since graduating. Each position has given me a different perspective on theory and practice and I expect to add many more as I progress through my career. I believe my current reflections to be pertinent to a rethinking of education, afterall, I have first-hand experience.

To advance librarianship into the future we need to combine theoretical knowledge with increased and varied practical application during our education. Through this commitment, we will be well qualified to provide our communities with the information that they seek as our profession plays a vital role heading into the 21st century. ■

Gaynor and Jeff, as the finalists, made presentations to Branch council at the March meeting. Gaynor's presentation concerned continuing professional development for librarians and Jeff's was on the Internet and the teacher-librarian. Both candidates gave professional presentations and Gaynor was chosen as the winner. Congratulations to Jeff on being a finalist and congratulations to Gaynor Deal for being awarded the 1996 Sharr Medal. ■

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This is the story of Ashton's Circus, founded in 1851 by James Henry Ashton, and of the Ashton family. It is also a story of Australia, for James Ashton rode alongside the making of history for over 40 years and when he died the bush stopped to mourn him. His family took over the reins and incredibly continued to meet up with history. Four generations of Ashtons still travel the continent to entertain and astound crowds of Australians. The circus fought its way through bush fires, floods, the Depression, war closure, competition and other hazards. Why? Because of a passion for circus and the magic which fires joy in every child's eyes. 'Take a drum and beat it' is an important piece of social history. It is also a tale to entertain and amuse.

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