Support and understanding the key to success

I had not considered a career in the information industry before this opportunity and I must admit that I did not fully understand the scope of the information industry. So basically it was really down to saying to myself 'why not' and 'have a go'.

I started a cadetship as part of the ALIA/ASA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy for the Library, Information and Archives Sector in February 1997. My cadetship was with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) Library and Information Centre.

Mary Porter

In March 1997 I started studying full-time at the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT). I enrolled in the Diploma of Library and Information Studies. From day one I loved what I was learning, yes even AACRII!

All the staff at the CIT were supportive and determined that I would finish even with all my self doubts — it had been ten years since I last studied.

It was great to have the opportunity to study full-time, which allowed me to concentrate fully on my studies and not have to worry about fitting classes in around work.

Whilst studying we were required to complete two industry placements and luckily living and studying in Canberra we had a vast range of placements.

My first placement was with the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs. The second was with the National Archives of Australia. Both of these gave me a great insight into the information industry.

During the Christmas break I worked at the ATSIC library, the staff were great and showed me a lot of different aspects of their library. I was also asked to undertake a project on Benchmarking on the Serials processing and Acquisitions.
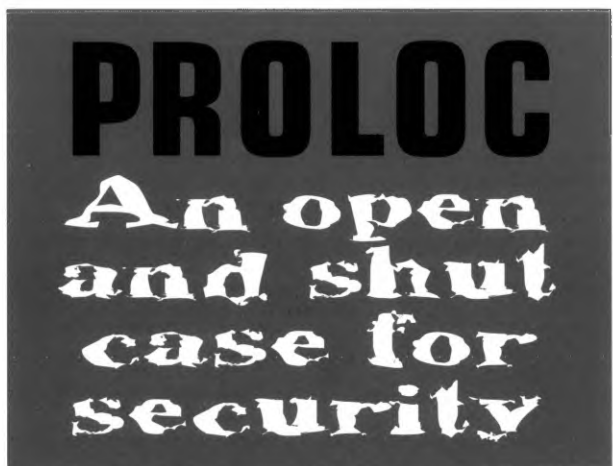
I completed my formal studies in December 1998. I then started full-time work with ATSIC library. I was fortunate in that the library manager trusted me to do the work of the acquisition's officer and since then she has encouraged and trusted me to take on more responsibilities.

I graduated in March 1999 with my Diploma in Library and Information Studies. I was so proud that day.

I still believe that the support and understanding between my family, friends, ATSIC staff, ALIA and the teaching staff from CIT has helped me through the two years and given me the confidence to be where I am today. I would like to publicly say a big thank you to all of them.

Mary Porter, acquisitions officer, ATSIC library