



# New graduate's recipe for success

## Feeding the professional development needs of regional/rural library professionals

### Ingredients...

- 1 new graduate with plenty of enthusiasm and strong communication skills
- 1 supportive library manager
- 1 cup of regional or rural areas
- 1 serve of professional development funding
- 1 packet of events and conference all-sorts
- 1 New Graduates Group — check to see what is in season in your area
- 1 mentor — peeled but with core intact
- 1 full bag of online communication
- 1 membership to ALIA

Many new graduates work in regional and rural libraries in Australia. They may have moved 'bush' for their first professional position, have studied externally and always lived in regional areas, or recently moved away from a metropolitan area to obtain the next 'step' in their career. I moved 'beef' rather than 'bush' — to Rockhampton in Central Queensland (yes — the beef capital of Australia!) to further my career.

Being a new graduate is challenging. You are in a new profession, a new career (sometimes a first career), and will often feel overwhelmed. Living and working in a regional/rural area adds to this challenge as you are physically isolated from major professional development and networking opportunities which are promoted and held in metropolitan areas.

Follow this recipe to overcome your physical isolation, create your own networks, and create an increased connection with the profession.

### Method...

*Step 1: Combine the new graduate and the supportive library manager into a mixing bowl*

Sit down with your employer to negotiate and develop a professional development plan that suits both parties. Ask what the set institution professional development policy is in regard to all staff levels. If your employer fails to fund professional development opportunities for new graduates — find out the reasons why — and then negotiate, negotiate, negotiate!

*Step 2: Add the professional development funding*

The cost of professional development events is often prohibitive for new graduates in regional/rural areas. The cost of travel and accommodation on top of conference registration costs can escalate. If there is not enough funding available, why not discuss the option of sharing the cost with your library manager and meet them halfway?

*Step 3: Add the full bag of online communication*

New graduates working in regional/rural areas need to take advantage of online networking opportunities. Living and working in a regional/rural area encouraged me to move online with my professional development. There are numerous e-lists and websites created primarily for the purpose of connecting new graduates. Examples include:

- ALIA's NewGrad e-list <http://lists.alia.org.au/mailman/listinfo/aliaNEWGRAD/>.
- NEWLIB-L: <http://www.lahacal.org/newlib/>.
- NexGen Librarian. <http://lists.topica.com/lists/nexgenlib-l/>.
- SALIN: <https://listserver.ilinders.edu.au/mailman/listinfo/salin/>.

*Step 4: Remember to stir in events such as the New Librarians Symposium*

Honestly, this event is the best thing since sliced bread for new graduates. It is a symposium created by new graduates for new graduates, and is just awesome. You will come away from the event enthused, inspired and full of ideas for your own development as well as that of your parent organisation. This event will be in Adelaide this December, and is shaping up to be a first-class event. If you cannot secure funding to attend this event — I recommend getting there by hook or by crook. <http://conferences.alia.org.au/newlibrarian2004/>.

*Step 5: Add or renew ALIA membership*

You can actively participate with ALIA online. Rather than withdrawing from ALIA activities, as I thought I might have to when I moved to Rockhampton, the situation instead made ALIA involvement a professional lifeline. I have met more people in the profession, been involved with more ALIA activities and developments, and felt more connected with the association since moving regional/rural — and online.

*Step 6: Sift in a New Graduates Group*

ALIA New Graduates Group is a national ALIA group and is aims to connect new graduates across Australia. Although the groups are currently meeting in metropolitan areas, the committee is actively looking for places to establish the group regionally. Would you be interested in having a New Graduates Group meet in your area? Contact the convenor Alison O'Connor [alison.oconnor@bdw.com.au](mailto:alison.oconnor@bdw.com.au), or your group regional co-ordinator to discuss options: <http://alia.org.au/groups.html>.

*Step 7: Stir the ingredients together with a wooden spoon and add the mentor*

Every new graduate who is serious about their professional development should have a mentor. You might already have someone in mind, or you can contact ALIA to see if there is a mentoring program currently running in your state. My mentor lives 700km away, but we still have a strong relationship. If you have trouble finding a mentor from the library sector, maybe consider looking elsewhere (for example someone else in your community that may help with generic skills and general support in your career development).

*Step 8: Before pouring mixture into pot, consider creating local professional development opportunities*

Work with other organisations in the community to create training and networking opportunities in your own area. For example: just when I was feeling disappointed to be missing out on the Brisbane Library Week trivia night, a library manager here in Rockhampton decided to run a local Library Week trivia night. It was fantastic, with library staff from the local libraries attending.

*Step 9: Sprinkle with salt, pepper, initiative and a pinch of proactive. Pour into a melting pot to simmer. Check regularly.* ■

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**Energise>>  
Enthuse>>  
Inspire!**

...gives a voice to the new generation of library and information professionals. If you have any suggestions or topics for this column, please contact the column co-ordinator, Kate Watson, [watsonk@cqu.edu.au](mailto:watsonk@cqu.edu.au).