

So, you want to work in the library and information sector...

How can you achieve the goal of an interesting, fulfilling career in library and information services — not just a job? *inCite* talked to three

ALIA members about what has helped them turn a job into a career.

The ways in which people enter the profession are many, as are the reasons why they chose the profession in the first place. Alison O'Connor, now Melbourne library services manager at the law firm Blake Dawson Waldron, admits to sticking call numbers on her family's books as a child and not letting her sisters take a book without first checking it out. Mylee Joseph, library manager at Hurstville Library and Information Service, was always interested in libraries and did her Year 10 work experience placement in a library. She began working as a library assistant while she studied to become a qualified librarian, and she is convinced that the reason for her success — firstly while studying, and later after she qualified — was the incredible support that she received from her library colleagues. Jenelle Cleary, who works at the Victorian Parliamentary Library, chose to train to become a librarian because she realised that her job as a web development officer would not offer her the face-to-face contact that she relished. But she didn't want to just shelve books. She now works in a demanding, but rewarding position where she not only handles reference enquiries from members of parliament and their staff, but also conducts training courses and helps to promote the services offered by the library.

A recurring theme with these three librarians is how important participation in ALIA activities has been for their career development. Alison believes that her involvement with ALIA — from participating in the Victorian Group Mentoring program, to her attendance at the ALIA-sponsored Aurora Leadership Institute, and her group and committee activities — have greatly helped her career, either by helping to develop her skills or by providing her with that connection that has led to further career opportunities.

For Mylee, ALIA has provided the opportunity to network outside the public library sector, and the opportunity to learn from other colleagues. Her participation in the first ALIA National Policy Congress gave her an insight into the diversity of issues on a national level, and sharpened her awareness of the shared challenges faced by the

Thinking outside the square

From libraries, to life coaching...

Are library and information skills transferable to another career? Geraldine Barkworth, now a successful career and personal coach believes so. Geraldine has made five lateral career moves to date. She worked as a locum in special libraries, then sales and marketing for EBSCO, was the Canberra Manager for recruitment firm, Library Locums, and then moved on to career consultancy and leading workshops. Now retrained as a life coach, Geraldine offers career and personal coaching programs to library professionals.

How do you move from library and information work to career and personal coaching? According to Geraldine, information management is the common denominator. Library and information professionals know how to get the right information at the right time. They are expert at connecting people with information: retrieving and re-packaging the information that their clients need. As a career and personal coach, Geraldine still has to know how to manage information; coaxing the information out of the client in order to help them create their own unique solutions. Another skill set, developed through library and information work, is an understanding of documenting systems and procedures — skills useful to any career, and especially in building a successful business.

Some of the things that Geraldine sees as lacking in library and information education are leadership, business and self-management skills and these are areas that she often focuses on with clients.

Geraldine works with library and information professionals from all levels: from chief executive officers to library assistants. She enjoys a continuing connection with the sector and believes that she has a birds-eye view of the profession through her contact with library workers across Australia. This, combined with her work on both sides of the library scene, career consultancy and training skills make her ideally placed to assist library personnel with their personal and professional development. Geraldine takes continuing professional development seriously and is the editor of the International Coach Federation's *Australasian Coaching News*, and she maintains her membership of ALIA to keep in touch with issues important to the profession.

Tips for library professionals

Geraldine believes that you should always prepare for any career move, be it a sideways step to a complete 'sea-change'. Take time to study the area to which you want to move. This ensures that it is not only the best move for you, but is likely to impress any interviewer with your knowledge of the sector. And her second piece of advice: be persistent, be flexible, be focused and have fun!

Geraldine can be contacted at **BOLD WOMEN: BIG IDEAS** at vision@norex.com.au

profession. Mylee has also been part of the Next Generation Policy Advisory group, which has members from all sectors, but with one thing in common — they are all younger members of the profession. She believes that involvement in ALIA has helped her to attain her current position as it demonstrates her interest in, and commitment to, the profession as a whole.

The New Graduates Group has provided networking opportunities for Jenelle Cleary. She sees this group as a forum for sharing experiences, and as a social group which has the advantage of providing professional support.

Each is an active committee member. While taking on unpaid extra work is a challenge, all three believe that committee work is a great way to build on your skills. You will:

- strengthen your event management skills;
- often have to work as part of a virtual team; and
- increase your powers of negotiation during committee meetings — all great skills to add to your résumé.

Tips for new graduates

All three high-achievers agreed on these three keys to success:

Energise...

- Join ALIA and get involved — be an active member. The New Graduates group is a great place for new members of the profession to start. Active participation in the Association will build your network of professional colleagues and give you insight into other aspects of the profession.
- Don't be afraid to accept short-term work contracts: these short-term placements not only give you great experience, but they can often provide contacts, and lead to bigger and better things.
- Be flexible: you need to be able to balance work, study, and your life!

Enthuse...

- Take up new challenges and opportunities when they are presented to you — you never know where they may lead.
- Don't expect to get the perfect job first — each library has its own culture and way of doing things, and every job that you take is an opportunity to build on your skills, strengths and experience.

Inspire...

- Look for opportunities to share what you have learned: present papers at conferences, contribute to library e-lists and write articles for publications.

Successful professionals have one thing in common: something — or more usually someone — has inspired them to achieve their goals. It is up to the current crop of library and information professionals to inspire the next generation in taking up the challenge! ■

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