

Nursing my ambition to be a library technician

Kim Gosling

My career path has been quite a winding one, with many twists and turns. These days that is not uncommon. The days are gone when we had a 'job for life' like our grandparents. As a young child I didn't dream of becoming a ballet dancer or a nurse, like other 8-year-olds, but of working in a library. However my working life started as a mothercraft nurse. I was employed at the Royal Women's Hospital in Melbourne for five years before I moved on to the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital to train as a State Enrolled Nurse. Around this time I had my first child and spent the next ten years in part-time employment in retail sales and (once again) back in child care. I even attempted an accounting degree, but did not complete it. During this time, my husband and I moved our family from Melbourne, Victoria, to Ulverstone in Tasmania and finally to Ballarat, in western Victoria.

When I was 35 years of age, I was able to do some volunteer work in the library at my children's primary school. I loved it. This led to volunteer work at the local public library; again, I loved it. In 1998, the Diploma of Library and Information Science was offered for the first time at University of Ballarat. I started with the first intake.

While studying I was lucky enough to find employment at a local primary school, Black Hill Primary. In the three years I was there I learnt as much as I could about school operations, as being in a school library often means that you take on more than library work.

I started with Australian Catholic University in March 2002, and am still working there. My role involves library acquisitions, management of the serials collection and desk shifts.

My varied career path has taught me some valuable lessons that I wish to share. They underpin much of my experience.

Be a lifelong learner. Don't believe that study ends with the completion of your diploma. On-going study is still part of my life. Updating skills and information is vital in a profession reliant on IT.

Skills are transferable. No experience is wasted. If you have great customer service skills, the fact that you gained those skills working at McDonalds is usually irrelevant. Information technology skills are not limited to the software that you currently use; library management systems, for example, are very similar in their application even though the interface may be different. Volunteer experience is very valuable. It gives you an insight into the industry. It shows managers (who make employment decisions) your abilities and how you fit into the team. All of this may lead to future employment.

Network, network, network! Use your contacts and accept help. If you apply for a position in a primary school, ask a teacher or someone with a similar position to read through your application and make suggestions. Be prepared to listen to the advice of those who have experience. Join your professional association, participate in the workshops and social occasions. These extra activities are windows to professional growth and the chance to network with like-minded library lovers.

Take opportunities. Moving from one career to another involves risk-taking behaviour, especially if you have left secure employment to do it. It can be a very rewarding gamble, as I have found in my career changes. Follow your dreams! You never know where it will lead you. Most importantly, we spend many hours in our work environment, so doing something you love makes that time considerably more enjoyable.

This is an edited version of the paper Kim wrote for neXt 2005 ALIA technicians' conference.



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The Miles Regional Arts Council Inc and the Murilla Shire Council launched their one-act play competition on 3 September 2005. The closing date is 30 June 2006. Winners will be announced on 2 September 2006. Submitted plays may be in any genre, but must be new, unperformed works, 50 to 70 minutes long, with a maximum cast of six. The three finalists will be published as a collection.

For more information and an entry form visit <http://www.murilla.qld.gov.au> or contact Ann Gibbons on ph 07 4627 1131, fx 07 4627 1707 or e-mail tedgibbons@bigpond.com.