



New Grads in Tropical Townsville

I had been hearing about it for months, New Graduates Groups were popping up all over the country. Each week the ALIA NewGrad e-list was full of people making plans to get together, socialise and make some meaningful contact with other 'newbies'. Occasionally I would think about how great it would be to have a New Graduates Group in Townsville. But how would I go about setting one up? Is there some kind of official procedure? Would we even have enough new grads in Townsville to justify a New Graduates group? In the end, it was surprisingly easy. An e-mail to other new graduates in my area, a post to ALIA's NewGrad e-list (<http://alia.org.au/alianet/e-lists/>), and we were established.

The Townsville New Graduates Group had our first meeting in December 2004. The group is a healthy mix of the very new and the very experienced (with a new piece of paper!). Our members come from public, academic and special libraries. In the short time we have been meeting, we have had two members start their library and information studies, sending one off to Brisbane and the New Graduates Group there. We have a few members who have been librarians for several years, and a couple of brand new graduates. Conversations are never boring and rarely confined to only library issues.

Local pubs and restaurants provide the backdrop for our meetings. Our first meeting was on a balmy Saturday afternoon at a restaurant on the beach, palm trees and a tropical breeze providing a relaxed atmosphere. Our members are diverse in age and life experience, which makes the group dynamic and always interesting. We offer support and encouragement, and a heads-up on any upcoming job opportunities!

In 2005, the Townsville New Graduates Group has planned a series of tours through local public, academic and special libraries. Several members of the group have offered to give an insider's view of their workplaces and show off some of the interesting and unusual aspects of their working lives. We are particularly excited about a tour of the Library at Lavarack Barracks, one of the largest military installations in northern Australia. We will celebrate Library and Information Week with a quiz night, and as a very social group, we will continue to meet for regular networking sessions.

Since the group's inception, members have attended the New Librarian's Symposium 2 and the ALIA Information Online 2005 conference and have returned inspired and full of ideas. Reporting back from these professional development events is a highlight of our meetings.

Living and working in a regional area presents many challenges to the new graduate. Physical distance from your capital city where major networking and professional development events are held can leave you feeling isolated. Joining or setting up a New Graduates Group is a great way to get active in your profession and alleviate some of the professional loneliness.

If you thinking about establishing a New Graduates Group in your area but don't know how to begin, give this a go:

- Contact the convenor of the national New Graduates Group, Alison O'Connor (alison.oconnor@bdw.com.au), to register your interest,
- E-mail or contact any other recent graduates or students you know in your area,
- Post a message to the ALIA NewGrad e-list (<http://alia.org.au/alianet/e-lists/>)
- Set up a preliminary meeting, for example drinks after work, at a central location.

Your group may only consist of two or three people, particularly if you are in a regional area. It doesn't matter how many or how few members you have, it is rewarding to meet with other people who are in a similar position and share your experiences. If nothing else, you will make some good contacts to help with curly queries!

The Townsville New Graduates Group is looking forward to a great year in 2005. We encourage all recent graduates and students to come along to one of our meetings. It is an excellent way to meet other new graduates and socialise with friendly information professionals.

ALIA New Graduates Group is a national ALIA group and aims to connect new graduates across Australia. New Graduates Groups meet all around the country, in most capital cities and in some regional areas. To find out more, please visit the New Graduates Group website at <http://alia.org.au/groups/newgrad/>. ■

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...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 coordinator, Kate Watson, k.watson@cqu.edu.au.