

# Career development: life after the library

I had worked in the State Library of Tasmania since 1978, and as a library technician in various positions for most of that time. There were a number of factors that contributed to my change of career from the library industry.



From l to r: Angela Males, Jane Jeppson, Kimbra Weeks, Bridget Hutton and Jacek Piotrowski at ALIA TAS Conference, 'Growing your career'

In February 2008, I was appointed as Manager of Records & Information Services at the Department of Police and Emergency Management (DPEM), based in Hobart.

I discovered moving from the library industry to education and then to the DPEM presented a number

of culture shocks. Perhaps the most significant was at DPEM where there is a culture of a 'sworn' and 'unsworn' workforce, and the expectation of respect for rank.

The core business of police, crime and investigation and community policing is such a change from education and life long learning, and I had to come to terms with this to understand the restrictions on access to information, although at first this was not easy. Access to the internet at DPEM is limited and this was a complete change of working environment from the library and information industry where internet access was integrated into daily work and the emphasis was on educating staff/clients/students to access the correct information appropriately. At DPEM, access to information is restricted and limiting access is the risk management strategy.

My previous skills and experience as a library technician have been easily transferable to the position of Manager Records and Information Services. I was surprised to realise how much I could contribute through my experience as a library technician. I had acquired a range of useful and practical skills without really realising it. For example:

- troubleshooting computer problems
- investigating system issues and errors
- developing solutions for system problems
- dealing with both internal and external IT help desks regularly
- managing staff, tasks and customer services on a day to day basis
- dealing with conflicts as well as difficult clients.

This experience and knowledge has enabled me to set-up a TRIM help desk at DPEM to deal with specific TRIM problems. Developing processes and procedures to meet the demands of both clients and staff, is, I discovered, called *business process mapping* in the project management environment. This was something that I had done routinely as a senior library technician and is now a useful skill in developing plans and business processes for the implementation of TRIM in DPEM.

I have also been able to apply practically my cataloguing knowledge to records and information management, as the same principles apply. A Business Classification Scheme (BCS) is the framework that is used as a tool to classify information into Keywords, Activity Descriptors and Subject Descriptors.

The same principles are applied to classifying records and library resources except different types of thesauri and classification schemes are used.

Developing consistent procedures manuals, training staff, and disseminating information are all skills I acquired as a library technician and are pertinent to my position as Manager of Records & Information Services.

So far—so good... I've learnt to work at a more strategic level and develop and implement policy and procedures for the whole agency which is the major difference from the work I did as a library technician. My background in the library industry is highly regarded and the library network is proving to be valuable. I have the delegated authority for the retention and disposal of all DPEM records; I don't mind the responsibility and I like being able to use my own professional judgement to make things happen and implement some changes.

I have support from management to continue the implementation of the department's electronic document and records management system, TRIM, across the agency. Yes—it's challenging and very busy, but good work. I have enjoyed working with new people to raise the benchmark for information management in DPEM.


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