



the world's becoming  
**SWETswise**

Everything you need to  
acquire, access and manage  
your subscriptions

[www.swetswise.com](http://www.swetswise.com)

## The **funny** side of librarians

At the Gulliver Forum, held in Melbourne last February, guest comedian Alan Brough (ABC's *Spicks and Specks*) began with a special announcement: he had just enrolled to study to become a librarian. When asked why, he replied, "I always wanted to become a librarian - that, and I had a crush on most of my librarians".

It's not the first time that the library and comedy worlds have collided. Saint Lawrence of Rome, considered to be the patron saint of librarians, is also patron saint of comedians.

In this day and age, we're seeing a spate of library comedy arising in the community. Josh Earl, school librarian from 'Scollingwood Scollege' (name changed for legal reasons) has been performing library-related comedy for years. Adelaide-based writer and former librarian Tracy Crisp was a finalist in last year's Raw National Comedy competition and included librarian jokes in her performance at the Melbourne Town Hall (broadcast on national television). And there was that ABC television comedy, *The Librarians*.

What better way for a library professional to engage with the community? Public forums on the library industry are hard pressed to draw a crowd from outside the profession. Provide entertainment and you've got people's attention.

As his comedy show's title suggests, Josh Earl is a librarian and preformed his show at last year's Melbourne Comedy Festival. I'd seen him before, and he's very entertaining, but also, as I also use my profession as a librarian as material for comedy gigs, I had to be sure that our material didn't overlap - joke-plagiarism is a cardinal sin in the comedy world, doubly so for a librarian comic! (I would at least cite my sources).

Josh structures his show around the ten major divisions of Dewey Decimal Classification, focusing on various aspects of his life, from quirky family issues, to mutant spiders, and, a somewhat abridged summary of the life of Melvil Dewey. Josh seems to both dispel and reinforce the librarian stereotype simultaneously, combining fashionable pop culture with nerdiness.

My own show, 'Librarian Idol', is more cabaret than comedy per se. A debut solo act, it recounts my sentiments about being a new graduate librarian, and how my viewpoint has changed drastically in the space of one year. Its premise is that we work in a profession that has a very unfortunate stereotype, and it's one that needs to change...



As a profession that is as old as civilisation, the idea of the librarian has such a strong branding that comedians who explore this realm already have half their work done for them. Comic entertainment is an exciting and positive way to engage our communities, challenging their view of the world without being intimidating. And really, we all need to laugh at ourselves once in a while.

**Andrew Finegan**  
[afinegan@gmail.com](mailto:afinegan@gmail.com)