

Energise>>Enthuse>>Inspire

Library Conferences 101



Andrew Finegan

Now, in my last couple of years in libraries, I've encountered some cynicism in regards to library conferences. Some say that they're just excuses for library managers to go on all-expenses-paid holidays to Alice Springs, the Gold Coast, or even Milan.

Some say that conference papers are never relevant to their needs, and that it's all very well for academics to pontificate on matters of Library Science, but it has little bearing on the daily procedures of your average public library branch.

And for the average new graduate librarian, the idea of attending a conference might not even enter one's mind. Well, I'd like to convince you otherwise, because there is a whole world of library conferences out there that will not only widen your insight into the industry, but also enhance your career.

First, there's the issue of relevance. Sure, the New Librarians Symposium (NLS) seems an obvious choice when it comes to identifying a relevant conference event. But NLS was designed as an introduction to the world of conferences. For those who attended NLS in Melbourne last year, and got something out of it – it doesn't stop there! As new librarians, you should be trying to get as wide a range of experience in the industry as possible. You don't want to pigeon-hole yourself into one particular sector – say, as a public librarian, or a TAFE librarian, or a corporate librarian. Conferences are an excellent way of getting insight into a range of sectors, and you'll be surprised at how much of it is relevant to your field of work, and how the approach from other sectors might inspire you to do things differently in your own work. And don't just limit yourself to ALIA conferences – take a good look around at other areas of the information/education industry.

And, of course, conferences also need a wide range of papers. Not only do they need so-called academic papers, but they also need papers that share experiences, stories, and insights from across the industry. And that means new graduates – you! I often hear interesting stories from new graduate librarians, whether it be through working overseas or in regional areas, or new exciting projects that they're undergoing, or a topic of research in their studies, and it gets me excited about how interesting and diverse the industry is. These are the kinds of stories that need to be presented at conferences. And seriously, you don't need 20 years of industry experience to present a paper. You just need something interesting to say, and an enthusiasm that will engage an audience for 30 minutes. If you haven't done it

before, approach a colleague who you are working on a project with, and see if they want to co-write a paper. It's an excellent learning and mentoring experience. Again, look out for calls for papers – not only in ALIA conferences, but across the industry.

I recently spoke at the Somerset International Conference for Librarians and Teachers – an event that I'd never heard of a year ago – and it was an amazing experience, exposing me to a part of the education sector with which I had not yet been acquainted. While I was a little conscious that I might have been the token young male librarian on the program, talking about my experiences working in the Northern Territory, and being something of a library evangelist in the Fringe Arts industry, it was an opportunity to put myself out there and share my stories. That experience alone also provided me with some personal clarity on where I was in my career, by expressing it in a 40-minute presentation.

And really, the greatest value of attending and speaking at conferences is the opportunity to put yourself out there in the industry. There is a world of potential colleagues, support networks, mentors, and employers out there, but you won't meet them unless you get out there and meet them. All of my most valued associates and colleagues in the industry are people who I have met through conferences. They lead to ongoing friendships and future collaborations.

Most importantly, it is so important for library conferences to have a new graduate presence. A conference is hardly representative of the industry if it only attracts a certain demographic of library workers. They need fresh blood, fresh faces, and fresh ideas to keep it real and relevant. That's you – the new librarian.

So, I hereby throw down the gauntlet and challenge each and every one of you to find and attend at least one library conference in the next year. And if you've got something exciting to say, then for goodness sake, write and submit an abstract! Put yourself out there, and the library world will be your oyster.

About Andrew Finegan

After spending the last few years working a range of libraries in the Northern Territory, Andrew is now based in Melbourne, where he has recently been working for the State Library of Victoria and in public libraries. He is the convenor of the ALIA New Graduates Group, and a member of the ALIA New Graduates Advisory Committee. He also moonlights as a cabaret singer/songwriter, with last year's show *Librarian Idol*, which toured Australia. His new show, *The Insecurity Hour* will debut this month in Melbourne.

Andrew Finegan
afinegan@gmail.com

wharington
sustainable furniture™

RECOPOL
GOOD DESIGN
GREEN DESIGN



**DESIGNING FOR A
SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**

Australian manufactured
sustainable commercial
furniture for libraries.

**Wharington
International Pty Ltd**
48-50 Hargreaves Street
Huntingdale 3166 Victoria Australia
T +61 3 9544 5533
F +61 3 9543 1907

Certified System
Environment
ISO 14001
SAI GLOBAL

www.sustainablefurniture.com.au

Sustainable commercial furniture

Australian company Wharington International manufacture locally sustainable commercial furniture designed for the office space and public spaces like libraries and council premises and amenities. Stylish and durable furniture designed for cleaner indoor environments. The range of furniture includes: Task and Executive Chairs, General Seating, Tubs and Lounges, Sofas, Tables, Stools and Outdoor Furniture.

Eco-designed for low toxicity, longevity and durability, low product maintenance, disassembly and full recyclability at end of life. The Wharington Sustainable Furniture™ range incorporates Recopol™ recycled engineering grade plastic mouldings that form the internal framing of the furniture.

Sourcing recycate from the telecommunications waste stream, Recopol™ redeems telephone and switchboard casings for moulding into chair components.

Laboratory tested for VOC emissions, Recopol™ was found to be well below the levels specified by the Green Building Council of Australia.

Wharington are specialist fabricators of stainless steel, a durable sustainable alloy used in Wharington furniture for chair leg and arm frames, table bases and outdoor furniture.

Wharington contract manufacture to your specified finish, if required, we can provide assistance with fabric selection.

Wharington International have achieved the environmental certification ISO 14001. The company supports the Product Stewardship of their products with an Environmental Pledge to take back their furniture at end of life for re-manufacture.

For more information about Recopol™ and the sustainable commercial furniture range go to the website at www.sustainablefurniture.com.au

Yvette Karklins, Marketing Manager
Wharington International Pty Ltd
Tel: 03 9544 5533. Fax: 03 9543 1907
Email: sales@wharington.com.au
Website: www.sustainablefurniture.com.au