

Energise>>Enthuse>>Inspire

From little things, big things grow...

I grew up in the little library on Toowoomba's Little Street where Robyn Sheahan was children's librarian, and where I read my way through an amazing collection of paper dreams. Mr Kucks, our school librarian, kept a beehive behind a viewing window and encouraged our creativity for BookWeek. It was there I learned my first interesting word – obstreperous, while reading Ted Greenwood's *The Obstreperous Kite*. Later I cycled with friends to the Resource Materials Centre at DDIAE (now USQ) to plunder encyclopedias for homework and to read desk graffiti. It was there I discovered Brett Whitely's confronting artwork and saw Australia reflected within.

"No career blossoms in isolation, nor where you expect it to."

Since those early days of exploration I have worked in educational libraries from primary to post-secondary, as a freelance cataloguer, and in public libraries – all in rural and regional areas. I qualified as a technician

while working with former Melbourne librarian Ruth Newton at Dalby's agricultural college. I learned more about butchering and horse whispering than I ever thought possible. This period saw my first involvement with ALIA through branch meetings in nearby Toowoomba. Before it was even a mission statement, I found myself passionate about bringing together people and information; a mission enacted each day by librarians in the now grand Toowoomba library.

Through a long period of small town living, and with a desire to make a difference in the community, I signed on with Charles Sturt University's degree program. Highlights of my course were units on postmodern literature, information literacy, collection management, web 2.0 applications, nomination for the Zenith Prize, and our group tour visiting libraries at Brisbane Square, GoMA, and the Supreme Court.

While on the Fraser Coast, I harboured a not-so-secret desire to become a youth librarian. I worked in school libraries and the public library and actively participated in National Simultaneous Storytime and Readers' Challenges with enthusiastic children and dedicated library staff. After the demise of Nestl_'s national writing competition for children I established the *wordbox* website for young authors, a site now supported nationally, and was honoured to tutor a creative writing workshop for young people leading up to the Mary Poppins Literary Awards. I had lived on the Coast for eleven years and fully expected my dream job to materialise there.

I graduated in April, but nobody was moving from their Coast jobs (the beach! the sunshine!) and I began to think that I would be left all alone on a library shelf like an old Mary Rodgers paperback. I heard that two fellow graduates, Sharon Uthmann and Corrinne Hills, had moved states for jobs in a public and special library respectively. The decision was not made easily, but what followed was an organised campaign of application writing for far-flung library and library-ish positions. I went to telephone interview stage with a couple, had an eye-opening interview at Inala for a Brisbane position, and (pinch me) now find myself living up north, over 1000 kilometres away from the Fraser Coast, working with a great team to provide information services to the Townsville community.

How do you get a good job in libraries? Be involved in the profession, continually develop your skills and knowledge, be creative, network, be open to possibilities, and never say never to moving town or sectors. Guide others! I rate Corrinne's New Librarians' Symposium paper (Hills, Dec 2008) as a lightbulb read. I was already doing some of what she suggested – volunteering, creating opportunities, attending conferences, joining listservs. The fearlessness Corrinne projected in moving states and jobs was inspirational.

In my search I discovered graduate programs, job agencies and alert services, listservs, and blogs. I won't have been the first to be inspired by Brisbane Square's vibrancy and community engagement, but I will say it reinforced that I was heading public.

In an interesting twist, I was born in Townsville, but my family left shortly before a cyclone hit. My colleagues look at me sagely and say, 'you haven't been through a summer here, have you?'. No, but winter's gorgeous! CityLibraries Townsville staged a successful Queensland Public Libraries Association/Public Libraries Association conference in October, and staff progressed through a Learning 2.0 program culminating in focus groups with Dr Michael Stephens. I have been blessed with an exciting position at a progressive library service within a supportive regional council. And there's so much going on in Townsville! Greek Fest, Kite Fest, Airshow, NQ Fury, plays, markets....

My first months as Information Services Librarian have been engaging and fast-paced. My broad responsibilities include website management, reference services, and management of our Spydus LMS. I am in the dynamic Information and Digital Services team led by our Coordinator Warren Cheetham, and like others, work across branches and across teams.

Twenty-five staff from all teams work shifts on reference desks (or information service points) at three physical branches and our well-regarded Local Collection in Flinders Street branch. Our key focus is on customers and we aim for customers never to leave empty-handed. The varied interaction with people from our community makes each day worthwhile.

Since starting with CityLibraries I have been like a kid at Christmas with our Spydus LMS, discovering its capabilities and my own. I have been out in the community promoting CityLibraries to schoolchildren and seniors, and I got to dress as a pirate when the Children and Youth Services team staged Talk Like a Pirate Day, so I'm happy. No career blossoms in isolation, and it is the people along the way who influence us directly and indirectly, along with the effort we invest, that leads to landing that big job. I'm sure it's not always 1000 kilometres away!

Hills, C. 2008. *First job, next job, this job: a plan for success*. NLS4 – Australian Library and Information Association New Librarians Symposium. CQ Functions, Melbourne, Vic. 5-6 December 2008. Available online: <http://conferences.alia.org.au/newlibrarian2008/Program.html>.

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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 co-ordinator Naomi Doessel, naomidoessel@gmail.com