

SALIN: a Library and Information Network turns 10

Ten years ago, a group of newly minted library professionals formed the South Australian Library and Information Network (SALIN), channeling their energy into proactive professional development and networking. SALIN saw significant growth, and in 2003, four of its founding members wrote a paper¹ outlining the progress they'd made, the challenges they anticipated, and the safeguards they'd adopted to ensure SALIN a sustainable future. SALIN is now 10 years old, the executive committee consists of an entirely new membership, and the committee is still going strong. So how did a group of relatively new information professionals turn an unfunded, grassroots group, into a professional organisation that is viable in the long term?

Not only were the original members of SALIN enthusiastic enough to establish a committee, they also took time to plan for its future, thinking beyond their own membership. Although there is no formal succession plan, executive committee members have staggered their departures in such a way that organisational knowledge is largely maintained. Vacancies are filled quickly, and the committee size has stayed relatively consistent, ranging from 7 to 10 executive members.

From very early on, SALIN's vision, objectives, and membership structure were documented and a file sharing system was established to host minutes, agendas, promotional, and administrative materials. The system is simple and strong and provides a good foundation.

Moreover, because the vision itself is clear – to provide inexpensive opportunities to network and engage in professional development through a collegial and supportive environment – the planning and decision making process is simplified. Long standing events, such as 'Day in the Life' and 'Ready to Apply' are perennially popular, on topic, and provide a starting point at each year's annual planning meeting. Because the format is familiar, the work that goes into each of these events is significantly less than the activity that goes into something completely novel.

Despite having well documented policy, clear objectives, and overarching goals, the committee is always willing to accommodate a great idea and a change of direction. In 2008, the committee had the opportunity to screen *The Hollywood Librarian* and rearranged their schedule to ensure it happened. More recently, the executive committee recognised the untapped potential of the SALIN website, appointed a webmaster, and began a redesign. Organisation of such events and projects is time consuming, but professionally rewarding and rejuvenating. Importantly, project work is usually divided among small working groups, which allows committee members to pursue projects of special interest. Letting people play to their strengths means more projects on the table, and very stimulating monthly meetings!

No matter how strong the foundation and adaptable its agenda, a committee that does not engage with its community falls apart. SALIN has a good relationship with other professional organisations, as evidenced by partnerships on projects such as 'Ready to Apply', and involvement of committee members, past and present, in ALIA work.

In SALIN's experience, there are always new professionals or LIS students who value the informal, inexpensive support network offered by the committee, and want to contribute to their chosen profession, develop their skills, and improve their employability. By coming to events, participating in online discussions, and maintaining their membership, the library community shows its support of SALIN and greatly contributes to its success.

SALIN is sustainable because people want to be involved; to give back to the profession, to develop professionally, to engage. The atmosphere is collegial, and the recruitment is the very best sort, primarily word of mouth, which speaks volumes about the satisfaction of its membership.

Ten years ago, SALIN's founding members wanted to make the most of their professional lives. By documenting the steps taken, recognising the importance of flexibility, and engaging the community, they laid the groundwork for a sustainable network. Here's to another 10 years.

If you'd like to join SALIN, it's free to do so! You can sign up at <https://listserver.flinders.edu.au/mailman/listinfo/salin#join>

Louise Gillis
Flinders University Library
louise.gillis@flinders.edu.au

¹ Ursula Henderson et al. "Opportunities for the new generation: the formation of a networking group," *Australian Library Journal* 52.3 (2003): 261-268.

Partnering with the Profession

- **20+ years experience in Information Management**
- **Employment Consulting & Library Technical Services**
- **Local, State & Federal Government endorsed supplier**

Zenith is a specialist agency offering Employment Consulting and Library Technical Services to the Library, Records, Archives and Information Management industries. Zenith serves clients across all sectors from public libraries and government departments to education, large corporate and not-for-profit organisations.

With offices in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra, and as a member of Careers MultiList, with over 90 affiliate partners around Australia, Zenith can offer a wider range of employment and technical services than other agencies within the Information Management sector.

As a partner we recognise you as a dynamic and creative market leader who appreciates emerging technologies and the impact a highly capable and motivated team can have.

A successful partnership with Zenith is assured as like us, you:

- embrace change and demonstrate a flexible approach to influencing stakeholders
- have a customer centric perspective which is evident across all business initiatives
- are keen to accept constructive input from experienced industry partners.

Please call John Cooksey, General Manager - Employment Services or Julie Daw, General Manager - Library Technical Services on 1300 852 555.

www.zenmgt.com

ZENITH
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Franchise Partner of CareersMultiList.com.au