

Contribute to the association the new graduate way – watch this space

Become a member of ALIA? Volunteer for the New Generation Advisory Committee? Organise and attend a national ALIA conference? Check, check, and check. So, what should I do next?

Present a paper and be a speaker for the What's Next stream at the ALIA Access Conference 2010?

Having never presented a paper before and not knowing what to expect, I worked doubly hard and submitted 2 abstracts in response to the call for abstracts. The reality hit home when the yes email arrived: I took time off from work and locked myself at home to prepare for the paper, enrolled myself on a 2-day public speaking course conducted by TAFE, spent many sleepless nights rehearsing my lines in the dark and, of course, the actual Ben Hur – presentation itself.

The night before the actual presentation, I couldn't afford to pay \$30 for the hotel WIFI. I was alone and suffered from a major nervous attack in the hotel room. I scribbled on my diary, "if I can survive my first 20-minute presentation at a national conference in front of other talented and passionate library folks, nothing will be too difficult for me". In the end, I forgot a few words and ended slightly early, but surprisingly, I did survive.

If I didn't push the boundaries and face my indescribable fear of public speaking head-on, most likely I would have had a far better understanding of the concept of weekends for the past 5 months. However, I certainly would not have been able to attend the conference in my own capacity as a new graduate, and experience firsthand all the face-to-face learning and networking opportunities with all the other new graduates, as well as attendees from other states and library sectors.

Library tours to Surfer's Paradise, free 3D movie passes in the exhibitors' show bags, and pre/post conference drinks and nibbles aside, most importantly, if I didn't do what I did, I would have missed the opportunity to experience personal growth and contribute to my own professional association at a whole new level as a conference speaker.

We might be the new kids in the block, inexperienced and sometime clueless, but the overwhelming responses from the #grads and #camp streams regarding writing abstracts for the professional journals and presenting at a conference definitely reflect a great deal of interest among the new graduates – not only the willingness to step up to the challenge as a conference speaker, but also the burning desire to take baby steps in contributing to and building up our own professional association, regardless of where we are in our professional journeys.

Watch out for the next call for abstracts from ALIA New Librarians' Symposium 2011, but if you needed an instant dose of gratification, why not organise your own new generation Library Camp and start practicing for your first 5 minutes lighting talk?

At my presentation, I challenged the audience to submit an article to *InCite*, and I am walking the talk by submitting my first 500 words. If you are inspired to do likewise, let's talk. Contact me at hilibrarian@hotmail.com or Twitter @librarianhoi

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