



Nancy Sylaprany

## A graduate librarian's big adventure

On Tuesday, 31st August this year I set off to attend my first ALIA conference, Access 2010. Flying from Sydney to Brisbane with a mix of trepidation and excitement, I landed at Brisbane airport and took a late afternoon shuttle bus to my hotel. Armed with my map, I stepped out to take a refreshing evening walk to the Brisbane Convention Centre (just to be sure I knew where I was going on the first day of the conference).

On the first day I attended Library Tour 2, a walking tour through lovely Brisbane city. It included site visits of the Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane City Council Library, the State Library of Queensland and Southbank Institute of Technology Library (with welcome refreshments and lunch at various stops). The tour guides at each library were friendly and generously shared information about their library's philosophy, design, facilities and services. It was a valuable day and a great precursor to the rest of the conference.

On the first day of presentations, I attended the conference stream targeted at new graduates, *What Next! Practical Information To Enhance The Career Of New Graduates*. Over the course of this day, I was able to listen to stories of the diverse experiences and journeys of many library professionals. Whilst there is no right or wrong career path for a library professional, I did discover that there are a number of steps you can take to help your career develop and take shape.

The first presentation of the day was from Kate Davis, Queensland University of Technology, who outlined more than 20 tips to assist new graduates kick-start their career. Tips included assessing what works for you and what are your priorities (both personally and professionally), having a 'willing attitude', being open-minded, networking (especially in terms of developing a personal learning network) and getting an online presence, just to mention a few. The complete presentation is available at <http://virtuallyalibrarian.com/2010/09/05/career-pimping-library-style/>. I also recommend reading Karen Bath's presentation which highlights some of the challenges new graduates face in seeking employment and provides a checklist for professional involvement.

Brenna Cook and Rebecca Whitehead gave a joint presentation describing their experiences as new trainee librarians at the University of Adelaide. Their experience highlighted the benefit of a mentoring program that teamed them with experienced and influential baby boomer library professionals. They described a rich, challenging and rewarding library journey. The trainee program has developed their abilities in many areas including public speaking and research skills and it has fostered their self-confidence which, in turn, has enabled them to try non-traditional approaches to projects.

For those interested in studying or working abroad, the presentations by Katherine Howard and Donna Priddle provided an in-depth review of their experiences and the process to achieve these goals. Hoi Ying Ng's paper discussed the development of a research proposal that evolved into a working project to develop a pilot library blog. Hoi identified the JISC I-skills cycle as instrumental in guiding the project planning process. What became quickly evident was the valuable learning experience Hoi gained.

The workshop, *Idea To Abstract: How To Write For Conferences And Journals*, explored creative methods to generate topic ideas, developing and refining an idea and conducting literature reviews. The importance of being an evidence-based practitioner was expressed and tips were provided on how to write clear, coherent and concise abstracts.

Michaela Olde's presentation, *Making The Leap: Opportunities Outside The Library Walls*, encouraged graduates to be open-minded about moving across industries or venturing into non-traditional library and information sector roles. Adding this scope to job-hunting helped broaden my view on

how to search for roles where my library studies and previous work experience might be relevant. Through listening to Fiona Blackburn, *The Older Experienced Worker: Perfect For The Industry*, I learnt that it is important to value all the skills you bring from previous work experience. They can add insight, dimension and a valued skill set.

The day ended with a presentation from Emerald Leung, *This Is Your Library Life*, an informative and fun insight into her work-life journey to date. What made this presentation memorable was her interwoven story of life and work with an entertaining interview presentation style with Naomi Doessel. The new grads stream was a conference day filled with practical career advice and plenty of inspiration from a dynamic group of committed professionals.

On the second day of presentations, I had the opportunity to listen to speakers from public and special library sectors. During this day, as presenters outlined their achievements in particular projects or discussed major challenges they presently face, I was struck by how much can be learnt from shared experiences. Libraries are ideal places for cross-pollination of ideas from people who have worked in different industries, different library sectors and of different age groups who can share unique experiences, approaches and solutions. I observed the commitment and passion that library and information professionals bring to their work, whether it be promoting literacy, providing life-long learning opportunities or seeking the best solutions for serving clients' information needs.

Overall, the conference was positive, rewarding and enlightening. I would advise other new grads to say 'yes' to opportunities as they arise and to seek out such opportunities. The conference has helped me identify areas of interest that I would like to explore further and I have gained an understanding of my role in the library community and the importance of sharing knowledge and experience with one another. I recommend to new grads and LIS students who were unable to attend the conference to spend time reviewing the papers mentioned in this article (many are accessible via ALIA Access 2010: <http://conferences.alia.org.au/access2010/program.html>). On a final note, the flight to Brisbane was relatively short but over the course of the next three days at the conference, I came away with an appreciation of the vastness of Australia and the significant work being conducted on a daily basis by information professionals all over Australia.

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### Farewell Naomi, welcome Lesa

With this EEI column we farewell the indefatigable Naomi Doessel from the position of EEI Co-ordinator, a task she has taken truly to heart and given her passion to for more than three years. Thank you Naomi. And we welcome to the position Lesa Maclean to the role from the Jan/Feb 2011 issue. So, all you new grads out there, watch for Lesa's requests for contributions, coming soon! Lesa can be contacted on [maclea.lesa@gmail.com](mailto:maclea.lesa@gmail.com).