



RESEARCH AND READING: PARALLELS IN LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Lyndelle Gunton's son is learning to read, while Lyndelle is learning to research. She says they have a lot in common.

My five year old son is learning to read. It is a fascinating process to observe and participate in, as both a parent and as an information professional. I am thrilled that his enthusiasm for reading is growing steadily as he progresses. His initial tentative attempts were supported by a collaborative effort between his teachers and us to create a safe space in which he could feel comfortable to learn. Our efforts have been rewarded. His sense of achievement in reading has had a positive impact on his self-confidence and self-awareness and other areas of his learning, both in and out of the classroom. He wants to demonstrate his new skill for others and share his new love for reading.

I find the parallels between my son's literacy experience and my own recent learning experiences quite striking. In 2010 I returned to study to complete my Master of Information Technology (Library and Information Studies) at Queensland University of Technology (QUT), 13 years after qualifying as a librarian. I took the opportunity to conduct a research project as part of course requirements, enabling me to experience a different kind of learning.

In this project, I considered the relationship between information and learning, that is, informed learning. Together with my research supervisor and a supportive cohort that forms the research community in the QUT Information Studies group, I navigated the foreign land of academic research, a process that saw me submit ethics applications, conduct pilot studies, collect, manage and analyse data, and produce a project report.

I found the culture in the LIS research community to be supportive and encouraging of debutantes. I was given a safe space in which to dip my toe into the research arena. Feelings of insecurity and anxiety are acknowledged to be a part of the learning process in research. That community's support is leveraged through group meetings where participants share their achievements and concerns and ask questions, and was given a boost by my introduction to the library and information community on Twitter and becoming aware of the value of my personal learning network (PLN).

As my confidence grew and the project developed, I found myself able to engage with others; I began to feel comfortable that I had something to offer as a researcher. With encouragement from others, I sought to go beyond the initial project and, with a scholarship provided by QUT, was able to collaborate with colleagues to provide meaningful outcomes in the form of published articles and conference presentations.

While the experience challenged me in ways for which I did not think I was prepared, I discovered through my new-found awareness of informed learning that I can rise to those challenges. I have found a passion for learning that makes me want to share that awareness with others. Like my son, I have discovered a new set of skills and it is impacting on my life, both as a student and in other areas too. I feel energized to learn other things

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with my awareness and to share that new understanding with others. This desire to share was rewarded with my acceptance as a presenter at the 2011 *RAILS7 Conference*, held at QUT in May, where I delivered my preliminary research findings.

In all, my new appreciation and awareness of the value and presence of learning in our everyday spaces and the support of my research supervisor and colleagues at QUT have helped me to acknowledge personal strengths and capabilities of which I was not previously aware. Just as a new reader becomes aware of new worlds, learning to research similarly opens the eyes and expands personal and professional horizons. Such has been my journey that I am now considering a more research-focused career path, including exploring the possibility of a PhD in the future. This experience has not only been about building skills and knowledge. It's given me awareness about the value of lifelong learning and the confidence to explore opportunities, expand my horizons, and push myself further than I imagined possible. I know I'm not just preparing myself for a different workplace or job in the information profession, I'm preparing for a new mindset, a new way of living, and I like it.

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