



# nurturing the next generation

Nurturing the next generation of librarians is an essential part of our profession. If we are to have a future – in spite of the recent doom and gloom claims in the media that the book is dead and that reading is in terminal decline – it lies with our 'millennials', the Generation Y librarians born after the early 1980s.

As a baby boomer with over twenty years experience in academic libraries, I find that mentoring new librarians is a source of personal fulfillment as well as a professional obligation. At the University of Adelaide Library, we have recently completed our 2008 Trainee Graduate Librarian program with great success: our two 'next gen' librarians have just moved on to new professional positions in their respective fields of interest (metadata and reference/research work.) They will now help to influence the future of our profession.

What did our graduate librarians value most about the library's program? Asked to nominate five highlights, Rebecca and Brenna cited their Research Help Desk training and experience, mastering cataloguing skills, the opportunity to develop and implement a series of generic information literacy sessions, writing and presenting a conference paper, and being mentored. From a mentor's perspective, I would broadly categorize the key benefits as gaining enough work experience to develop their strengths and talents, working on self-directed projects, stretching themselves to take on new challenges and receiving one-to-one support and coaching.

My job as a mentor is to give feedback and encouragement and to help my mentoree to reflect on what

he/she is learning. Rebecca and I did this by setting goals, having regular meetings and using *PebblePad*, an invaluable ePortfolio tool that encourages reflective learning. Rebecca chose to concentrate on developing her presentation skills, and we managed this together in the context of her job here in Research and Reference Services. She made the most of her opportunities to give presentations and training sessions to our international students, attended presentation skills workshops, received feedback and coaching from me and chose to co-present a conference paper at the *ALIA Access 2010* conference in Brisbane.

Mentoring is very much a two-way experience, and while Rebecca was honing her skills as a reference librarian, I was benefitting from her enthusiasm for our profession, her fresh perspective on work that I have been doing for years and her willingness to share her Gen Y 'digital native' skills with me. On a professional level, nothing could be more invigorating for an experienced librarian than working with a new graduate who wants to learn more about the profession and its future. (We also had a lot of fun with our shared interests in Adelaide Hills wineries, chocolate, shopping and cocktails!)

The next generation of librarians is the future of our profession. Our library managers and all experienced librarians can and should nurture them: where will we be without them?

**Jennifer Osborn**

[jennifer.osborn@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:jennifer.osborn@adelaide.edu.au)

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