

# the last word

## Volunteering for the profession

*Lesla Maclean is an active member of ALIA. She's been volunteering as the EEI coordinator since 2011, became a Victoria Regional Coordinator on the New Graduates Committee this year, and has recently been announced as a committee member on the 6th New Librarians Symposium.*

In today's busy society, it can be difficult to find time to volunteer. You're already busy working hard at building your career, balancing family obligations, staying in shape, and pursuing hobbies like finding time to read that book you've put aside for the last three weeks. Is it really worth trying to find an extra few hours each month to volunteer for your professional

organisation? The benefits of volunteering are extensive, both to you and your professional community. At least that's what I've found.

There are many benefits to being actively involved with ALIA. Being part of an industry that relies increasingly on contract work, I believe volunteering can advance an individual's career by providing opportunities to learn new skills that might not otherwise be available. It gives you the opportunity to practise important skills used in the workplace such as task management, time management, and organisation.

Volunteering can also help you build upon skills you already have and use them to benefit the wider profession. For instance, it has helped me further develop and improve my communication and marketing skills. My role as coordinator of the Energise, Enthuse, Inspire (EEI) column for INCITE has helped me to make new connections and increase my professional network with individuals from a wide range of library and information management fields. This has been a great help in sourcing writers and topics for the EEI column. It has also helped me to build my resume and demonstrate my commitment to the profession. A good volunteer history adds depth and breadth to a resume and demonstrates that you are an employee who comes value added!

Of course, it isn't always easy. Volunteering also challenges you. Sometimes the time commitments can be difficult. For instance, with EEI I have to find time to market the column, source contributors, respond to numerous emails of interest, read widely,

provide feedback and direction to contributors, and provide editing assistance with content and format, all while juggling the normal demands of everyday life.

I've learned a few things along the way with EEI that will serve me well in the future. When I started, I had little editing experience, just a desire to learn. Luckily I've had assistance from the INCITE editor along the way. One of the great things about volunteering is there's always someone there to help you learn the skills you need. I've also learned to have a plan B. People can promise they'll have an article in by the requested date, but that's not

always the case. Plan B ensures I meet my deliverables.

I could have chosen to volunteer for any organisation, but I like

volunteering for ALIA. I like helping my profession and the individuals that make up that profession. I will continue volunteering and committing my free time to ALIA because I like the feeling of being connected to my professional organisation, gaining contacts within my profession, enhancing my own professional reputation, and helping new graduates (the future library leaders) to develop themselves within the profession.

I actively advocate for ALIA membership and involvement. If you want your profession to thrive and grow with change, you need to support the organisation that supports you. When it comes to volunteering, passion, positivity, and a readiness to do what's needed are the only prerequisites. And while learning new skills can be beneficial to many, that's not the only rewarding experience to come from volunteering. There are many opportunities to volunteer with ALIA. Don't be afraid, get involved!

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LESLA MACLEAN: DON'T BE AFRAID – GET INVOLVED

"A GOOD VOLUNTEER HISTORY ADDS DEPTH AND BREADTH TO A RESUME AND DEMONSTRATES THAT YOU ARE AN EMPLOYEE WHO COMES VALUE ADDED!"