

EEL... ENERGISE, ENTHUSE, INSPIRE

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Close encounters of the LIS kind

Let's all stop and think for a moment about what we were doing in January 1994. Wendy Davis was making the decision not to accept a place in a Graduate Diploma in Library Studies at Queensland University of Technology (QUT). Instead, she says, with all the wisdom of a 20 year old with a degree in classical piano, she decided to start a Bachelor of Arts with a double major in English. But fast forward to January, 2011 and there she was busy applying for a place in QUT's Master of Information Technology (Library and Information Sciences).

It was all very last minute. Yet, one of the more spur of the moment decisions of my life has so far turned out to be one of the best. Let me tell you why.

In 2006 I graduated with a PhD in cultural studies. Very soon afterwards I vowed I'd never, ever study again. I was tired and burned out. But, startling as it might seem, the life of a coffee-drinking lazy bones eventually got a little boring. Something was missing – and that something was learning. I had to face the fact that I was a 'lifelong learner'. So, I thought back to 1994 and I started searching the web for courses in librarianship that could be completed externally. I found QUT again.

Eighteen months into my library and information science (LIS) studies and I can safely say that being a tertiary educator and a LIS student at the same time has been one of the most energising experiences of my professional life. I have found the LIS focus on community, participation, engagement, support and reflection to be both astonishing and refreshing.

The QUT curriculum I have completed so far has revitalised my own approach to tertiary education in many ways. For example, my enthusiasm for the concept of the personal learning network now knows no bounds. I am constantly sharing an interesting link to some relevant content or ideas and when colleagues ask where I found it, the answer is – invariably – Twitter.

As an online student I have seen the use of technology in curriculum delivery modelled with great skill and expertise. It has inspired me to engage with my own distance students in new ways. My study has not only asked me to reflect on the work I complete, it has also helped me to reflect on how I interact with my students, evaluate my own practice and see where I can improve. So, as well as learning lots of wonderful things about

LIS, I'm actually gaining and using skills from the LIS curriculum in my current day job.

Confession time. Before my close encounters with LIS, I'd never written a formal report or proposal. That's right, it's possible to survive, hidden away in humanities departments and only write essays. That's not all. How I wish I had completed my unit in information retrieval before I had spent all those years researching and writing for my PhD. I'm now passionate about instilling in my preparatory writing students a clear understanding of how to effectively search for information. I can't wait until I get to undertake QUT's information literacy unit because that's something that crosses over into my day job

as well, and no doubt there's plenty I don't yet know.

I'm sure that as I continue on my steady journey through the course I'll have many more wonderful learning experiences that not only benefit me, but that I can

use in other ways and places. I often think back to 1994 and wonder how my life might have been different if I had accepted that initial place in QUT's LIS studies. However, my enthusiasm for what I am experiencing with the present shape of the LIS curriculum soon brushes those thoughts of the past aside. Any educational experience that can inspire such enthusiasm for my future must be doing something right.

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WENDY DAVIS' EDUCATION ROAD LED HER BACK TO INFORMATION STUDIES

