



# ARE LIBRARY SKILLS HELPFUL IN OTHER FIELDS

Doreen Sullivan talks to three people who have a library degree but now work outside the sector.



## **CHERYL WALKER, OFFICE MANAGER**

Now the office manager at Precision Locksmiths, former librarian Cheryl Walker confesses she's 'gone to the dark side'. She's now 'working with blokes in a trade'. Her career path? 'Mine's a bit weird. I accidentally got into my current job. I married it.'

Previously she worked in public libraries for over a decade and then worked in a school library for two years. During her library career she was an active participant in ALIA Victoria groups where she held a number of office-bearer roles. She found ALIA remarkably helpful for professional development.

Five years ago she joined her husband in the business when he had a vacancy that required exceptionally high trust in the employee.

Precision Locksmiths is a Victorian family business with eight staff members. Cheryl does the IT and administrative tasks. She's responsible for the company website maintenance and helps with Google AdWords campaigns. Apart from actual locksmithing, she pretty much does it all because, 'If it's your own business you work harder for it'.

Did her library qualification help her in her current role? 'The qualification, no, but my experience, yes.' That said, she feels that the emphasis on customer service in libraries could transfer over to owning a small business, especially if it's coupled with financial experience, attention to details and accuracy. Drily she adds, 'I don't think a lot of librarians are clamouring to be employed by locksmithing businesses.'

As for returning to libraries in the future, Cheryl notes, 'I've always thought I'd go back but the biggest problem is that the longer I'm out, the harder I'm going to find getting employment.'



### JANE MILLER, PLAYWRIGHT

Jane Miller is currently Team Leader, Library Systems at Melbourne University and a playwright. She hasn't left the world of libraries but juggles dual professions.

Jane has always been a librarian, earning her library qualification in 1991. Earlier she held roles such as

reference librarian and liaison librarian for science. In the mid-1990s she moved into library systems work and gained further qualifications in the field.

Always an avid theatre-goer, after early experience writing plays at the end of high school and the start of university, Jane returned to writing plays about eight years ago, first completing a few short courses in play writing. She won an award at the Short & Sweet Melbourne Festival, which showcases ten-minute plays, giving her confidence to keep on with the writing. Since then she's had several plays produced. Jane says, 'If I need a chunk of time to concentrate on writing—like when I had a season at La Mama—I take annual leave. I took four weeks off for the La Mama season.'

Asked if the library work feeds into the play writing or vice versa, Jane states that there is little overlap, with the possible exception of using her IT skills when she built her website to inform people about her plays.

The universities she's worked at know of her other role and she has had 'really supportive bosses' and a sympathetic environment.

Writing around a full-time job is important but so too is her library career. 'I've always felt lucky to have two streams of work—keeps things interesting. There's a nice balance between the logic and problem-solving of my IT/library work and the creative side of my writing.'



### SUSAN CRNKOVIC JONES, HEAD OF CUSTOMER INSIGHTS AND ANALYTICS AT TARGET

Susan Crnkovic Jones summarises her job as 'I get information'. She adds, 'This is a combination of research (analytical insights) and marketing campaigns.

How do customers buy? Can

we predict customer buying behaviour? So I facilitate information or research so that we can make better buying decisions.'

Although she never wanted to work as a typical librarian she thought the skills gained from a library degree would be useful. She studied for the graduate diploma in 1993–1994, a time when the internet was just beginning to take off. A stint setting up the resource library for accounting firm Arthur Andersen sparked her curiosity and initial interest in libraries.

After the diploma, she says her 'career took off elsewhere and I fell into marketing roles, away from information science. This was not a conscious decision. I believe that careers are not necessarily linear.'

Asked how she'd react to a job seeker with a library qualification looking for a position in market research, Susan is keen. 'I work in an area where you need to get information. This is not as easy as some might think.' She feels the library qualification is perfect for market research. Crossover skills exist with 'making sense of data, understanding how data is used, and being able to transform complex ideas into simple terms for others.'

As far as Susan is concerned, 'Library skills are utterly transferable.'

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