Left to right: ALIA Sydney's Vesna Cosic, Gabrielle Fury, Amy Croft and Kirsty Butler. On screen: Tracey McDonald (and her daughter) and Lauren Castan.

EXPANDING **HORIZONS**

2013 was a year of many firsts for Kirsty Butler. She attended her first conference, got her first proper 'librarian' job, joined the ALIA Sydney Group committee, and planned and ran her first event for the group.

For anyone unfamiliar with ALIA Sydney, we are a group of library and information sector professionals and students, who put on affordable professional development events for members of the LIS community.

Most of our events are held in Sydney's CBD, but we hold at least one event outside the city centre (usually in Parramatta) each year.

One of our most successful events in 2013 (and the first event I organised) nearly became our biggest disaster. It was our Parramatta event, and we had lined up an impressive panel of speakers, including the Executive Director of ALIA, Sue McKerracher. Disaster struck an hour before attendees were due to arrive. I arrived at the venue at 5pm to see it surrounded by police tape and firefighters.

The firefighter I approached told me the venue (Parramatta Library) was closed. I promptly burst into tears. He tried to console me, asking if I needed to return a book(!) Once I explained I was actually supposed to be hosting an event for 50 people in an hour's time, he sent me to a huddle of library staff, who had magically managed to secure us a meeting room in the council building next door. Thanks Deborah and Hiba, and the Council's IT guys who 'teched out' our meeting room.

We ended up with an enthusiastic bunch of attendees who were thrilled to hear our exciting speakers, and all were incredibly understanding and patient.

The most important thing I learnt that night was that if I could pull that off, I could do anything. Now I'm a Convenor of ALIA Sydney, leading it in new directions. One of these involves creating opportunities for LIS people to share their ideas and opinions on how ALIA Sydney can better contribute to their professional development. We've started holding bimonthly meetups (our next one is in July, keep checking the ALIA events calendar for more details) and inviting people to join our social media conversations.

Another initiative is expanding ALIA Sydney's collaborations with other groups and organisations. For the past three years we have worked closely with the City of Sydney on the annual Hallowed Group event. Last year we partnered with the NSW Lib Techs and NSW New Grads to present the Unmeash2 Unconference. This year we will continue our involvement with both events, as well as presenting a workshop with the NSW New Grads. Next year we are taking on our biggest and most exciting challenge yet when we convene NLS7.

We are always looking to form new alliances to expand the professional development opportunities we can offer. If you're in Sydney, I hope to see you at one of our events. If you aren't, I hope to see you at the ALIA National Conference in Melbourne where ALIA Sydney will be facilitating the pre-conference workshop Taking charge of your LIS career. Either way, I urge you to seize opportunities to expand your own horizons.

KIRSTY BUTLER (with wisdom from Amy Croft)
Co-Convenor
ALIA Sydney
www.alia.org.au/groups/alia-sydney