

FEELING SOCIAL?

As a distance education student in rural South Australia, Amber Freeman doesn't have many opportunities for face to face networking activities in the library and information sector. She knows she's not alone in this so in the EEL column this month Amber asks, how do you discover peers who share your professional interests, education and career goals from your remote farmhouse while your toddler sleeps?

Although I have a solid understanding of my career values, skills and expectations, I lack familiarity with key individuals and organisations outside the public library system offering future career opportunities and support.

LinkedIn is the professional's social media choice, and is wonderfully helpful for making formal professional connections with both individuals and organisations. What I crave, though, is a more casual engagement with fellow professionals and students. To hear others' anecdotes and ideas, leads and links. To immerse myself in the profession socially, making valuable connections on both a personal and professional level.

Library and information professionals have a strong blogging presence both nationally and internationally. With over 11 million Australian users of Wordpress and Tumblr combined, locating blogs that match my content and currency expectations can seem like an endless jaunt through blogland. Pinterest is a very fun visual discovery tool, but its user-generated content and personalisation algorithms mean it has limitations for professional connectivity.

For me, Twitter is the answer. I am putting time into looking at the profiles of individuals and organisations I value professionally. Who are they following? How and what are they tweeting? What sort of links are they posting? What is their ratio of retweet/favourite/post? What lingo and hashtags are they using to communicate?

In this way, I have constructed an advantageous following and followers list quickly, and have incidentally discovered some exciting blogs and websites. I am making connections with experts and newcomers in diverse roles, asking and answering discussion questions, learning by researching tweet content and acronyms I don't understand, and identifying organisations for future employment and individuals for future mentoring.

Depending on your interests and specialisations, there are some fantastic international discussion groups open to



Say hello to Amber in the Twittersphere!

participation. @Snap_Roundtable hosts #snaprt chat for students and new archive professionals, @INALJOntario offers a discussion for those looking for library jobs with #inaljchat, and communal Irish LIS bloggers @libfocus host #irelibchat, or join in with #uklibchat, #libchat, #libpitch and #SLAtalk. You can keep up with university, public and private libraries both local and around the world, as a newbie, you can stay updated with news and events via @ALIANewGrads, and if you're enthusiastic about promoting sustainability in libraries follow the ALIA Sustainable Libraries Group @GreenLibraries. Currently my favourite tweeter is @hacklibschool, a profile and accompanying blog 'by, for and about LIS students' (hacklibrarianschool.com).

Twitter also allows you to engage with conferences and meetings you can't attend. I followed the highlights of the UK Librarian's Information Literacy Annual Conference 2014 via @LILAC_conf and #lilac14, kept up with the chatter in Las Vegas at the ALA Annual Conference by following #alaac14, and followed the IFLA World Library and Information Conference in August via @IFLA and #wlic2014. I look forward to following the ALIA National Conference in September at @ALIAconference and the ALIA Information Online Conference in February 2015 at @ALIAonline.

It's not all business either. Check out librarian fashion and style with @LibWardrobe, have a laugh at @FakeLibStats, and sympathise with first world #librarianproblems or #saturdaylibrarian.

So don't be shy. Share and broaden your enthusiasm for this diverse, challenging and inspiring industry of ours! I hope to see you in the Twittersphere.

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