



NO 'ORDINARY' STUDENTS

On a recent trip to Hong Kong to teach a cohort of students newly enrolled in the School of Information Studies Bachelor and Master degrees, Mary Carroll and Bob Pymm were struck by how we, as a professional community in Australia, often still think of our colleagues and our student cohorts in local terms, yet most Australian LIS programs are now delivered either virtually or in blended form (virtual and face-to-face).

Virtual and blended approaches have enabled a global educational presence for Australian library and information science programs and for our profession more generally. Education partnerships, such as the one Charles Sturt University has had with Hong Kong University SPACE for nearly 30 years, mean there are many hundreds of graduates out there working in a wide range of fields with the common attribute of an ALIA accredited qualification.

Students such as Justine White, Samantha Solarz, and recent graduate Chris Chan, all Hong Kong based, bring their unique background and experience to the program, enriching it for all students. These students undertake exactly the same program as our Australian-based cohort and their input and insights add greatly to the overall student experience.

Justine White is originally from Sydney and started her LIS Masters while living and working full-time as a lawyer in

Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. She, like many who study in the discipline, continued her studies on a part-time basis, balancing her work as a Knowledge Manager in a law firm with looking after her young daughter. The flexibility offered by online study has allowed her to continue with the program despite crossing international boundaries.

Graduate Chris Chan works as Information Services Librarian at Hong Kong Baptist University, a position he took up shortly after graduating with distinction from the Masters program. Chris brings a truly international perspective to the profession. Born and raised in Hong Kong, Chris completed his undergraduate study in the United Kingdom.

Chris says that after finishing his undergraduate degree, he did not really know what he wanted to do for his career. "My mother encouraged me," he says. "She had been a school librarian for many years in Hong Kong."

Chris took his mother's advice and enrolled part-time in the Master's at Charles Sturt University. Studying part-time by distance suited Chris as he was able to work at the same time. This was invaluable as, according to Chris, he "was able to apply what I learned in class the next day at work, which helped me really see the value of the education I was receiving".



IMAGES LEFT TO RIGHT:

1. Samantha Solarz: a local network helps support new students in distance programs.
2. Justine White: balancing life and work.
3. Chris Chan: giving back to his new profession through tutoring and active involvement in the Hong Kong Library Association.

Chris now 'gives back' to his chosen profession through involvement in the Hong Kong Library Association and by tutoring.

New student Samantha Solarz moved to Hong Kong almost 14 years ago and has a background in finance. After her children started school she began helping out with the International Primary School community in Hong Kong and when the librarian position at the school became available she was persuaded (successfully) to apply.

Samantha now manages the library for the International stream at the school. Her ambition is to become a fully qualified librarian and learn how to enhance an already amazing job.

Over her first year of study Sam has established connections with others in the Hong Kong program, building an effective support network. Having finished her first year, she is now looking forward to another year of panic, laughter – and hopefully no tears.

Justine, Chris and Samantha are the new 'ordinary' students, working in ways which are increasingly common and are a small example of how successful an international program, based in Australia, can be.

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