

# GREAT SOUTHERN LIBRARIAN

**K**ARMEN PEMBERTON, *University Librarian of the University of Tasmania, tells us about her work, a bizarre request from a student, and what it takes to be a university librarian.*

## WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD, WHAT DID YOU THINK YOU WOULD DO AS A CAREER?

I would number all the books that belonged to my younger sister and me and I would issue them to her! Fines and charges seemed to be a big part of this game and were settled with golden shower (*Pyrostegia venusta*) leaves.

## WHAT DOES YOUR ROLE AS A UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN ENTAIL? AND HOW DID YOUR CAREER LEAD YOU TO THAT ROLE?

At present, one of my most important roles is to engage the university community in conversations in order to develop a shared library vision for the future: what will the library be like in 2025? Will there be books? How will staff and students use our services and how will we deliver on the 'Library Everywhere' vision? Promoting library services, and in particular articulating the value of those services, has been a constant in my career, which spans 26 years in public library services and the last eight years with the University Library.

## WHO OR WHAT HAS INFLUENCED YOU MOST IN YOUR CAREER?

I have been positively influenced by and privileged to work with some very talented and clever colleagues over the years. I really love the synergy of working in small teams, generating new ideas and sharing successes.

## WHAT'S THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE YOU FACE IN YOUR JOB AND HOW DO YOU WORK TO MEET THIS CHALLENGE?

The open agenda and changes in the wider higher education, scholarly publishing and research environments coupled with new generations of students learning in digital environments will continue to challenge us with the requirement for new services, staff skills and expertise. But these trends and issues, of course, also provide opportunities.

## WHAT SATISFIES YOU MOST ABOUT YOUR JOB?

I appreciate being part of the University's Division of Students & Education senior executive. This, and membership of key university committees, positions Library Services very well strategically, provides a platform for advocacy and enables a clear direction for the university's priorities. What I enjoy most about the job is the whole university environment and the vitality and diversity of the students.



Karmen Pemberton

## DOES THE ISOLATED NATURE OF THE STATE AFFECT YOUR LIBRARY AND YOUR JOB?

Because it's the only university in Tasmania, and because library services are delivered from different locations, the opportunities for professional networking have to be created. Staff are encouraged to attend conferences, forums, participate in webinars and cultivate and foster professional relationships.

## WITH THE ADVENT OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES, HAS YOUR ROLE CHANGED MUCH SINCE YOU FIRST STARTED?

New and developing technologies continue to impact on academic and research libraries in an exciting way. The New Media Consortium's *Horizon Reports* provide an excellent overview of technology trends, including the time-to-adoption, and I always look forward to these reports.

## WHAT FEATURES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA'S LIBRARY MAKE IT UNIQUE? ARE THERE DIFFERENT CHALLENGES?

As the only tertiary library in the state, the library has an important role in connecting with other libraries and the wider scientific research community as well as, for example, the legal community.

## WHAT'S THE MOST FASCINATING SUBJECT AREA IN YOUR LIBRARY?

Our Special & Rare Collections offer primary research material and comprise culturally and historically unique Tasmanian material from individuals, families and organisations. We believe we have the largest Quaker collection in the Southern Hemisphere, we house the Royal Society of Tasmania's library, and other significant collections include that of Andrew Inglis Clark. We are committed to making these collections discoverable to the world.

## HAVE YOU EVER HAD ANY BIZARRE REQUESTS FROM STUDENTS?

I can think of a few strange requests! Last year a student came into the Morris Miller Library, newly arrived from overseas, and could not remember their new address or how to get home.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE SOMEONE WHO IS JUST STARTING OUT AS A LIS PROFESSIONAL AND WHO WANTS TO WORK IN THE SAME FIELD AS YOU?

I would advise new LIS students to think about gaining transferable skills that enable them to work across library sectors.

## WHAT PERSONAL QUALITIES SHOULD A PERSON HAVE TO BE A SUCCESSFUL UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN?

Passion, energy and a commitment to demonstrating strong leadership. Negotiating and influencing, staying open in communicating and encouraging the open sharing of perspectives. Building trust and recognising good effort is important too. Management theorist Simon Sinek suggests this is about making staff feel safe and secure. Lastly, perhaps staying power!

## IF YOU WERE STUCK ON A DESERT ISLAND, WHICH THREE BOOKS WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO HAVE WITH YOU?

I would take Dr Seuss's *Oh, the Thinks You Can Think!*, Neil MacGregor's *A History of the World in 100 Objects* and one of Michael Leunig's books.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR YOU TO BE A MEMBER OF ALIA?

We should all take responsibility and contribute to our professional association, of which we should be proud.

# ALIA NATIONAL 2016 CONFERENCE CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

The ALIA National 2016 Conference program committee invites abstracts relating to the conference theme Engage, Create, Lead.



The conference theme is intended to draw focus to the issues of:

**ENGAGE** – how do we ensure we understand the broader environment in which we operate and how do we connect with it?

**CREATE** – how do we add value to our libraries and communities and actively participate in creative initiatives?

**LEAD** – how do we maintain and grow our place and relevance within the community through change and leadership?

Within these themes you are invited to consider a range of topics relevant to the library and information environment including, but not limited to the following:

**Engage** – Connecting outside the profession • connecting outside the region • librarianship in Asia • connecting outside library walls • inclusion • online • non-traditional connections • supply chain • publishers • communities • other partners • spaces for connections • connecting in a self-serve • online environment • keeping customers involved • gaming, learning spaces • inside/outside building connections • connecting with customers.

**Create** – Content generation and curation • local history • special collections • grey literature • library as publisher • role of research librarian • practitioner researchers • academics • capacity of libraries to bring things together • mash-ups • digital spaces • experiencing & using new technologies/programs • maker-spaces • experience spaces.

**Lead** – Leadership skills for a 21st century library • leading at every level • evidence based • managing up including into the parent organisation • demonstration of value • how to convince/argue new program value • innovation.

Details on submitting your abstract are available on the conference website: [nationalconference.alia.org.au/content/call-abstracts](http://nationalconference.alia.org.au/content/call-abstracts)

All abstracts should be submitted prior to **19 November 2015**.

Monday 29 August – Friday 2 September 2016, Adelaide Convention Centre

[nationalconference.alia.org.au](http://nationalconference.alia.org.au)

#national16