



MEET CATHERINE NEW

What is the difference between a librarian working in research services and one in a public library? CATHERINE NEW, of the Office of Research and Development at Curtin University, shares her experiences.

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

As a child I changed my mind on a daily basis. I loved looking through the employment pages; those that interested me were journalist, architect, park ranger and political advisor.

WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO BECOME A LIBRARIAN?

After completing a BA, I wanted to do further study that was more profession-oriented. While working as a casual library assistant at the Academy Library at the UNSW Canberra, I decided a degree in information management would open up more career opportunities.

WHO OR WHAT HAS INFLUENCED YOU MOST IN YOUR CAREER?

The weather! I couldn't handle the Canberra winters. I did a stint in Newcastle and now I've lived in Perth for the last seven years, though sweltering through another summer may have me searching for somewhere milder! I have been able to find work easily each time I have moved.

YOU NOW WORK IN RESEARCH. DO YOU MISS ANYTHING FROM WHEN YOU WORKED IN LIBRARIES?

I can't often provide the standard of service I would like to when responding to clients. Libraries have a higher standard of customer service than is found in many other areas.

WHAT SKILLS AS A LIBRARIAN DO YOU FIND USEFUL IN YOUR RESEARCH ROLE?

Communication skills and the ability to analyse and interpret information. As a research services librarian, my knowledge of data management, open access and bibliometrics has proved useful. Information search and retrieval skills are a great help.

WHAT NEW SKILLS HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM YOUR CURRENT ROLE THAT WOULD BE USEFUL IF YOU WERE TO RETURN TO LIBRARIES?

I took on the role in the Research Office as a secondment opportunity and to get an insight into the complete research life cycle. The services and resources libraries provide are the foundation upon which research can be built. With a more complete picture of the research cycle, I have a better understanding of where libraries can provide additional services.

WHAT IS THE THING THAT SATISFIES YOU MOST ABOUT YOUR JOB?

The interactions with the researchers and providing quality service. My previous library role had been more project based, with limited contact with clients. If I were to return to libraries I would try to move into a role that included more direct contact with clients.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF WORKING IN RESEARCH?

The heavy workload and trying to provide meaningful feedback in subject areas I don't understand.

WHICH PROJECTS THAT YOU'VE WORKED ON HAVE YOU FOUND PARTICULARLY INTERESTING?

I particularly found the investigations into open access in the academic environment interesting – the history of open access, various publication models, the research impact of open access and so on. I've thought of doing a PhD on the economics of open access.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE SOMEONE WHO IS JUST STARTING OUT AS A LIS PROFESSIONAL?

'Things work out best for those who make the best of how things work out' is my motto. Take risks. Even if some roles aren't what you are after, each can offer skills and experience to be built upon. When applying for a job, don't be discouraged if you don't meet the specific criteria; you can often apply experience from other areas to address the requirements.

WHAT PERSONAL QUALITIES DO YOU THINK A PERSON NEEDS TO WORK IN YOUR ROLE?

The ability to prioritise and multi-task. Attention to detail. A large part of the role involves ensuring compliance with guidelines and funding rules, so it is necessary to interpret rules and apply them.

WHAT IS THE MOST COMMON QUESTION YOU ARE ASKED WHEN YOU TELL PEOPLE WHAT YOUR JOB IS?

'What do you research?' When I explain that I work in research administration, the next is 'What are the most interesting research applications you have read recently?' One of the more exciting aspects is reading about the varied and interesting research happening at the university.

WHAT BOOKS ARE YOU READING NOW?

I'm not much of a reader, but I've just finished *The Dressmaker* by Rosalie Ham for a book club I am in. I found the writing style very engaging, but I did not really enjoy the book – mainly because I found the characters so horrible. I currently have two books on the go – *Islam and the Future of Tolerance: A dialogue* by Sam Harris and Maajid Nawaz and the first book of the 'Belgariad' series by David Eddings. I have just returned home from a visit to my parents, and Mum was trying to offload my old stuff so I am reliving my childhood! After that, I'm guessing the next book I read will probably be the next book club book. Or book two of 'Belgariad'.

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

A commitment to the profession and its future. I have been a member of the ALIAWest committee for the last six years. Attending events is great for professional development, but also a great networking opportunity to meet fellow library workers – and potential future co-workers! ✨

CATHERINE NEW
Research Development Officer
Office of Research and Development
Curtin University
C.New@curtin.edu.au