



Michelle De Aizpurua

4 LESSONS FOR NEW PROFESSIONALS

Being a newbie in any profession is difficult. But as law librarian **MICHELLE DE AIZPURUA** reports, there are plenty of things you can do to kickstart your LIS career.

Making your way in a new career can be a challenge. Over the past two years I have learned many valuable lessons while I have been building my library career. From starting out with no work experience, to working as a library technician in high schools, to my current role as a law librarian at Monash University, there's a lot I wish I could tell my junior self. If you are a student or a new graduate in the information profession, I hope my sharing of this knowledge makes your journey a little bit easier.

Lesson One: Work experience

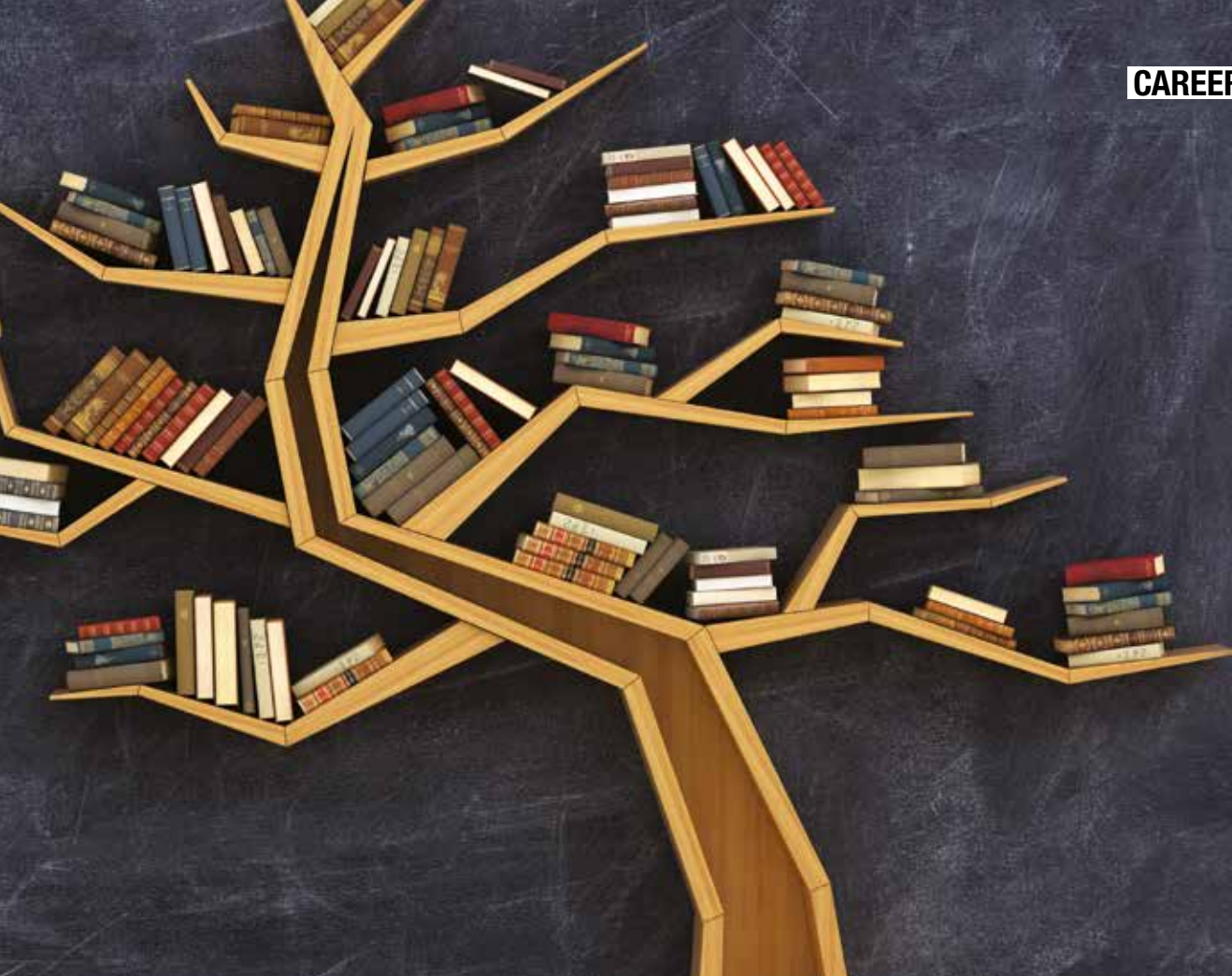
Work experience is incredibly valuable. If you weren't working in a library before starting your formal library education, you should do your best to find casual or part-time work in the industry while you study. Any entry-level position will be beneficial; you can consolidate the theoretical learning from your course and develop basic skills you can use after graduation. You may need to start out volunteering at a library or with an information-related organisation. Your course may offer a placement unit, so make sure to take advantage of this opportunity and learn as much as you can; it could even lead to ongoing employment.

Lesson Two: Networking

Everyone finds networking difficult at first. It can be awkward trying to make conversation with strangers, especially when you feel you don't know much about the profession. But networking is one of the most important things you can do to get a head start with your career. Thankfully, library and information professionals are a bunch of wonderfully supportive people who are always keen to share their knowledge and help new graduates. Try joining professional associations (some are even focused specifically on new professionals), as well as online groups and mailing lists, volunteer at a conference or attend local meet-ups and events. Pre-prepare some icebreakers and questions if you feel anxious about getting a conversation started. If you can, find yourself a mentor who can guide you in your early career.

Lesson Three: Applications

Filling out endless job applications as a new graduate can be very time consuming. Tempting as it may be, never send a one-size-fits-all resume or cover letter. The skills listed on your resume should be specific to the type of job you are applying for. Even after you have started your career, keep your resume up to date. You never know when a secondment or other opportunity may arise. Get a copy of your dream job's position description and work towards building those key selection criteria



Lesson Four: Lifelong learning

The best part of being a library and information professional is that you are always learning. It's important to keep abreast of new trends, technologies and ideas in your field. Professional development will help you grow your career, whether you are a new graduate or a seasoned professional. Read professional publications, and try writing for them. Submit posters and presentations to conferences, take some free MOOCs, sign up to forums and get involved in discussions and learn from your peers and colleagues. Make sure you take effective notes for future reference. There are countless opportunities if you are open and ready to learn.

Every one of us will take a different path in our careers, but remember to always reflect on your experiences. Take time to look back over what you have achieved, and plan your future goals. This will help you to stay on track and feel positive about your accomplishments, as well as where you are heading. Most people don't know exactly where they will end up in their careers, so be flexible and enjoy the ride. 🌟

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