

FROM GLASGOW TO BENDIGO

RUSSELL EASTON recounts his a career change to the LIS sector and how his newly acquired skills from the University of Strathclyde took him from Scotland to Australia.

After ten years of working in IT and many years thinking about a career change, I made the decision in 2013 to seek the advice of a career coach. I wanted a career in which I could be more involved in the local community but also make use of my existing IT skills. Over the course of a few weeks of tests, discussions and research, it became clear that of all the possible options, librarianship was the career for me.

This all coincided with a plan to return to my homeland of Scotland, as my Australian wife and I wanted to live and work in Glasgow for a few years. Before leaving for Scotland, I applied for, and was successful in gaining, a place on the MSc Information and Library Studies course at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. The master's was a fantastic experience and my studies covered a wide range of subjects, from cataloguing to writing strategic plans to copyright. I loved every minute of it, and it reaffirmed that I had made the right choice.

I spent a month's placement at BBC Scotland, where I worked in their digital library team, helping to import and catalogue old newsreels. Through this placement I was introduced to the library team at Scottish Television (STV), where I secured a job upon graduating. Working as a Media Librarian at STV was fascinating; I was responsible for cataloguing and archiving the output of one of STV's channels – STV2 – which included a daily variety and entertainment show, as well as sports, local history and music programs. I also provided a research service to the production team, often working to very tight deadlines to find and prepare old footage in time for that evening's broadcasts.

In August 2017 we returned to Bendigo, Victoria, where thanks to ALIA's reciprocal recognition of accredited LIS courses with CILIP, I was lucky to find that the local library service, Goldfields Library Corporation, was advertising for casual library staff. I began working as a casual, and a short time later a number of part-time positions were advertised. I now work at the library in Heathcote, a small country town about 40 minutes from Bendigo.



Russell Easton

The personal aspect of working in the library of a small country town is exactly what I hoped for when I first started thinking about a career change. The library provides a social hub for the community where patrons stop by not just to borrow books but also to chat and catch up on local news. For some, visiting the library is their main social interaction for the week and it's a privilege to be part of this close-knit community.

In early 2018, I will be taking over the storytime session at Heathcote, which will increase in frequency from once a month to once a week. I hope that we will increase the number of children who attend, which is now quite low. I'm preparing for this role by practising my rhymes, songs and stories with my one-year-old daughter.

I am passionate about getting more young people reading and visiting libraries, and I'm looking into how we can attract more children and families to visit us. Making sure we have an interesting and up-to-date collection and raising awareness of the library and the services it provides is key to achieving this. The ALIA PD Scheme (Public Library specialisation) is really helping me to learn the skills I need and keeping me up to date with the latest developments in the industry, and I have already attended a number of training courses and seminars.

The advice I'd give to new or aspiring librarians is to take every opportunity available to you – it's a great profession and you never know which area will interest you most until you try. 🌟

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