



ONE YEAR LATER

After seven rewarding years at Charles Darwin University as a Liaison Librarian, MICHELLE TURNER was looking for a new adventure. In November 2016 she accepted the position as Librarian at the Northern Territory Education and Darwin Languages Centre Library. Michelle tells us how she's faring one year on.

The NT Education and Darwin Languages Centre Library is a small specialist library located in the Darwin Languages Centre that comprises three collections: NT Education collection, Language collection and an Aboriginal collection. The library provides resources to all educators throughout the Northern Territory, to government and non-government schools as well as the corporate sector of the NT Department of Education and staff working throughout NT school libraries.

I accepted a position at the library with some apprehensions relating to 'flying solo' after coming from a team environment. My trepidation level about coping with the new role was high, but taking on this new challenge has renewed my passion for libraries and the library profession.

The first 12 months have just flown by and it feels like I have only just started. There have been plenty of adventures and challenges, successes and failures, plus

Michelle Turner

moments of total overwhelming doubt as to the direction of the library and what I am trying to achieve. Luckily, I have several great colleagues who always take the time to listen and provide awesome advice. I'm also supported by the school principal, Jeannie Bennett, who highly values the library and its role in the school environment.

In the first few weeks I felt the pressure of the enormity of the role I had taken on. My head was spinning and days were long as I struggled to get a sense of the future direction of the library. Oh, for the comfort of my old job that I knew so well!

Out came the paper and pencil as I started to draw a map of what was happening in the library, who my clients were, what their needs were, how they used the library and how I could support them. Gradually the library picture became clearer, there was a little less head spin and more excitement about what I could achieve to promote and improve the library services and support. Next came my to-do list: what needed to happen, how I could achieve it and prioritising the long list into short- and long-term goals.

The physical library space is quite small and was overflowing with fantastic resources just waiting to be discovered and borrowed. Shelves were crowded with resources of all formats throughout the three collections: books, CDs, DVDs, teaching kits, dictionaries, educational games, flashcards, baskets of musical instruments, puppets and much more. I started by cleaning out the compactus so I could use this space to house class sets, games, flashcards and teaching kits. Once school had finished for 2016 I set about shifting items into the compactus, providing a browseable roomy feel on the shelves and

stopping the smaller items getting lost among the bigger items. With more shelf space I was able to house CD and DVD collections on their own shelf instead of with the books. This task was completed just in time for the start of school in 2017. More visitors, I have noticed, are browsing the shelves now they are not so crowded. Weeding and rearranging the language collection and the education collection was an enormous undertaking but it provided fantastic results in terms of ease of access and space for new acquisitions. The first item was ticked off my to-do list.

The other big item on my list was creating an online presence for the library. Previously the library's only online presence was a link on the NT Department of Education website but that disappeared when the website was redesigned. Once again out came the trusty pencil and paper. I drew a rough diagram of the library website's design and content. To be included on the NT Department of Education website I needed to adhere to certain guidelines, including format and colours. I really wanted the website to be visual rather than text based, so this wasn't ideal. With limited web design skills I needed something that was relatively simple to use and easy to update. I subscribed to Springshare Libguides and set about creating my website (ntschoools-dedcll.libguides.com/home). Once the site was ready I sent it to a couple of colleagues who provided constructive comments. The website went live at the end of April 2017, and I have slowly been introducing the site to educators. Another to-do item ticked off the list. I felt a sense of achievement on launching the website, although I still tinker with changes when I get feedback from clients.

What else have I ticked off my list? Promoting the library was high on the list, so I hosted an open afternoon with the enticement of food. Emails were sent out to generic school addresses and any individual email addresses that I had acquired. Unfortunately only five people attended the event, so I was disappointed with the response. I brushed off the disappointment, put my thinking cap on and decided to take the library to educators if they were too busy to come to the library. I emailed primary school principals, offering to bring resources to their schools to showcase what the library has to offer. I received an amazing response and for seven weeks I was kept extremely busy visiting schools as I displayed library resources and promoted library membership. The positive response was overwhelming: I had teachers filling out membership forms and borrowing items on the spot. It has also resulted in teachers emailing me their planned themes for resourcing ideas at the appropriate year level, an increase in teachers who visit the library for items and some teachers who come into

the library in the holidays to find resources before they start writing their programs!

Smaller to-do list items ticked off for my first year include organising networking opportunities for school library staff, creating a liaison point between school libraries and the Northern Territory Library, completing a road trip visiting school library staff in Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs to promote the library resources and services, organising and facilitating two Schools Catalogue Information Services workshops in the NT and creating an electronic newsletter to be emailed to library patrons.

I feel a strong sense of accomplishment knowing that the NT Education and Darwin Languages Centre Library is now in the spotlight of educators and the corporate education sector, although my to-do list doesn't appear to be any smaller! I have met many school library staff throughout the Northern Territory who are enthusiastic about putting their library at the forefront of the school and I feel excited to be able to support them.

Bring on the next 12 months! 🌟

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