

# Reflections on theory and practice

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**M**ine was not an auspicious beginning for a career in the library profession. Enrolling on the rebound from another organisation that had lost my application I presented myself at Riverina-Murray Institute of Higher Education [now Charles Sturt University] School of Information Science. Woefully ignorant of what a library career involved and having spent years as an alien resident in Asian countries that had no history or network of public libraries I also had no recent experience of libraries.

My acquisition of theory relating to librarianship, management and sociology was a linear progression from zero to what I initially hoped would result in one magical multi-theoretical formula to solve every problem every time. Now the overall process of learning is more memorable than particular theories that have become so merged with

practice that it would be difficult to tease them out.

Application of theory to library practice was extremely interesting during my placements in community and university libraries. Only after experiencing a library workroom did I really understand how libraries operate.

The exponential rate of change in politics, technology, the economy and society creates a highly dynamic work environment that can be seen as either a threat or an opportunity. To engage this environment successfully requires reflection not only on theory and practice but also on professionalism.

I joined ALIA as a student because it was recommended by our lecturers. The professional journals provided analysis and discussion of current issues and policies and how these impacted on the library sector and were

very useful for assignments. I am still a member and value the support that ALIA provides and the opportunities for networking that are so important in regional areas where physical and professional isolation is a major issue for library staff. The Riverina Regional Group is active in organising workshops and seminars to meet continuing professional development needs that may not be served by employers. The ALIA policy statements provide inspiration and an authoritative professional framework within which to interpret and implement change and to remind us that what we do is special and important.

On reflection I cannot think of any other profession that would have provided me with the diversity, challenge, and enjoyment as does a library career.

*[Jennifer graduated in 1991]* ■

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