



Regional support for new graduates

Regional areas such as Central Queensland have a lot to offer — sun, beaches, national parks and, of course, a variety of library environments and employment opportunities.

Moving into a new profession and workplace can be a daunting task for many new graduates. For those moving to regional areas, new physical and social environments can further inhibit the transition from study to work. To help ease the transition for all new graduates in the area, the ALIA Central Queensland New Graduates Group (CQ NGG) has been established.

In early February the inaugural meeting of the ALIA CQ NGG was held in Rockhampton. Attendees included library students, new graduates and experienced librarians from public, university and hospital libraries in the Rockhampton area. Held in the social atmosphere of a local pub, the meeting was an opportunity for participants to discuss the focus and future direction of the group.

Library managers and directors in the area are supporting the CQ NGG, with Graham Black (library director at Central Queensland University) and Cheryl Haughton (library manager at Rockhampton City Council) offering support and assistance in establishing the new group.

A draft calendar of events has since been circulated, outlining future events such as dinners, a host-a-murder party, trivia nights, a cocktail party and visits to local attractions and beaches. Possible professional development activities include visits to a variety of libraries within the district. A Library Week activity including special ALIA guest speakers is also currently being explored.

The aim behind establishing this new graduates group in Central Queensland is to apply the philosophy of the ALIA New Graduates Group to the local region, an environment that is conducive to this kind of initiative. With smaller numbers of librarians within close proximity of each other, regional areas can potentially provide tight-knit working communities of peers. For regional new graduates in particular, peers can offer an essential source of support, experience and professional wisdom. Providing opportunities for peers to meet and form networks is therefore imperative to their professional development.

New graduates moving to the region from major cities often associate physical distance with professional isolation. New graduates and library students from regional areas can also feel isolated by the perceived distance between them and professional activities, particularly as many formal professional development activities are held in major cities. For regional librarians, attendance at such functions can be heavily dependent on the institution's budget, while family and other commitments can also inhibit the ability to travel. As may be expected, many regional libraries are smaller in size and have fewer staff, so with fewer peers present in the immediate workplace, opportunities for new graduates to network can be limited. It is this gap that the CQ NGG aims to bridge.

With the group only in the initial stages of development, CQ NGG convenors already have several issues to consider. Presently all events and activities are based in the Rockhampton and surrounding areas, which physically encompass only a small proportion of the Central Queensland region. While expansion into other areas is dependent on interest and existing ALIA activities, some possibilities have been considered. There is the potential for satellite groups to be formed in areas interested in furthering the aims of the group. If interest is widespread, special events may also be organised at a variety of locations throughout Central Queensland, further enhancing networks and promoting collaboration.

Regardless of location, the establishment of the CQ NGG will assuredly enhance the experience and development of participating new graduates. While the Central Queensland region already has much to offer librarians personally and professionally, an environment actively supportive of new graduates will be of benefit to those already in the region, and a positive factor in attracting new professionals to regional areas.

Participation in the Central Queensland New Graduates Group is open to anyone from the region who is interested in supporting new graduates and meeting peers in a social environment. For more information about the ALIA CQ NGG, or to find out what events are currently planned, please contact Kate Watson at k.watson@cqu.edu.au. ■

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...gives a voice to the new generation of library and information professionals. If you have any suggestions or topics for this column, please contact the column coordinator, Kate Watson, k.watson@cqu.edu.au.