

The Information Networker Program at Lake Joondalup Baptist College



Badge worn by students involved in the program

In May 2006 Stephen Sampson, Head Librarian at Lake Joondalup Baptist College, approached the WA Library Technicians Group requesting an experienced technician to attend his school for a discussion session with some students on the role of a 'real life' Library Technician. The call was put out for volunteers, and during the following week – which was coincidentally Library and Information Week – Wendy Morris and I attended Lake Joondalup Baptist College.

The students are part way through a Certificate II of Library Studies and had only had experience in their school library. The combination of my corporate law library role (Jackson McDonald), and Wendy's university (ECU Joondalup) role gave a broad range of experience and examples. We described our main duties, and how our role fits into our particular type and size of library. The students were attentive and responsive, asking questions and expressing interest in their course and the industry.

After the talk, we were given a tour of the school's library, including the workrooms, and were shown some examples of what the students do for their service time in the library. Wendy and I both enjoyed visiting the students and were pleased that we could do something to help promote our industry to a younger audience. Plus, we got chocolate :)

At the next WA Library Technicians meeting (15 June 2006) I gave a brief report to the group about our visit to LJBC. I was glad to hear that the rest of the Group was as interested as I was in hearing more about how Stephen Sampson started the course and whether we as a group could be of any future assistance to the school as the course develops.

I invited Stephen to write an article about how the course began and his plans for the students and the school (below).

The ALIA mission statement reads:

It seeks to empower the profession in the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services to the nation, through leadership, advocacy and mutual support

I would like to compliment Stephen on his initiative in starting this course, and his contribution to the development and promotion of the library industry. We wish him luck in the completion of this first 'guinea pig' course.

**Felicity Stride, Library Technician,
Jackson McDonald Lawyers and WA
Library Technicians Group member**

Creating Information Networkers

The impetus for the establishment of this program came from three main directions.

For many years school libraries have had library monitors: students who received informal training so that they could be given some responsibility to assist library staff with basic tasks. Recently Scotch

College in Melbourne has developed a more formalised training program and came up with the name 'Information Networker'.

High schools are beginning to offer lower-level TAFE courses (mostly Certificate I and II) embedded as part of a TEE course or as a standalone. It was clear that when we interviewed prospective applicants for library clerical positions they often held no library qualifications.

In addition, our college has been seeking to develop pathways for students to contribute to the wellbeing of the school community through acts of service. Students who serve the school community extensively over a minimum of two years can be awarded College Colours for Service.

Our response to these three circumstances was to integrate the Certificate II in Library/Information Services with

training in the day-to-day operations of our school library. We adopted the name 'Information Networker' to replace the more dated term 'library monitor'. The Information Networker program was devised as a two-year voluntary program that students would complete outside class time. During the program, students would be expected to complete two units per semester. At the end of that time, they could also qualify for College Colours for Service.

To be able to deliver and assess the Certificate II, our teacher-librarians had to complete a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. To be able to deliver the course we entered into an auspicing agreement with Central TAFE, which, as part of this agreement, provides the course material. With the exception of the unit Assist in Circulation Services, their course booklets can be used 'as is'. Much of the course is hands-on training and includes duties such as issuing and returning loans, reference assistance, online searching, shelving, bibliography construction, ordering procedures and processing of information resources. The program is open to students

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Information Networkers issuing a loan

in Years 9–11. Ten students at a time can take part in the program.

There are a number of benefits for students who complete the program: the development of information literacy skills; development of knowledge of the library and information services industry; development of information technology skills; development of customer service awareness; development of leadership skills in providing information service; completion of the nationally recognised Certificate II in Library and Information Services; extra points gained for TAFE entry; and the possibility of achieving College Colours for Service.

To be accepted into the program students must be committed and prepared to undertake to: complete and submit the Information Networker application form; serve in two 30-minute time slots each week in the library in their own time; attend training workshops once a week; wear the Information Networker badge with pride; help out their fellow students in their various classes where they can provide practical assistance to the information needs of others; promote their role to the College community including at

parent evenings; to serve for a minimum two year period to complete the Certificate II and to qualify for the time requirement for College Colours for Service.

Our Information Networkers have recently visited the various kinds of libraries. They have also learned about the important functions that Library Technicians perform in our profession. We were privileged to have Wendy Morris (ECU Joondalup) and Felicity Stride (Jackson McDonald Lawyers) visit us to

run a discussion session on the role of Library Technicians. Our students were surprised by the diversity of tasks that Library Technicians can perform.

The other important benefits in running a program such as this. The profile of the library department has been lifted in the college community. Promotions through the college newsletter and assemblies have contributed to this end, as have Information Networkers acting as tour guides in the library on our annual



Information Networkers searching among newspaper micorfilms in the Battye Library

college enrolment information evening. Once the Information Networkers become proficient in their duties, this will release our library clerical staff to tackle other tasks. For the teacher-librarians delivering the course it has provided opportunities to review library processes and procedures in detail. Finally, I hope that, through programs like this, we will attract student interest in our profession.

Stephen Sampson
Head of Library
Lake Joondalup Baptist College

A large banner for Libraries Australia. On the left, the text "libraries australia" is written in a lowercase, sans-serif font, with a decorative graphic of black dots of varying sizes to its left. On the right, there is a logo for the National Library of Australia, featuring a stylized building facade above the text "NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA". Below the banner, there is a photograph of two young people sitting at a computer workstation in a library, looking at the screen. The background of the banner is a blurred image of a library interior.

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