

Volunteer in the Spotlight



Nathalie Smith is a member of the Red Centre ALIA Group and is on the organising committee of Dreaming 08, the ALIA 2008 Biennial Conference. nathalie.smith@batchelor.edu.au

Why do you enjoy volunteering for the library profession?

Since I was in my teens I've volunteered to meet new people and gain new skills. I automatically became an active participant in Red Centre ALIA soon after I moved to Alice Springs. Now it's coming up to three years and I find it adds an extra dimension to my usual routine and has me taking on roles I didn't even know existed.

What are three things you'd like us to know about you?

1. My first language is English, but I spoke three languages and used these interchangeably, experimenting with them, before I was five years old. This makes me observant grammatically and gives me an interest in language structure in general but sometimes leaves me searching for an appropriate word or phrase in English, like a 'second language' speaker would.

2. I grew up and was educated in Papua New Guinea until the age of twelve.

3. I tango.

How do you ensure balance between your work, volunteering and home commitments?

My partner is strong and supportive and helps me offload all my stress and celebrate my achievements. He makes sure I keep the achievements at the forefront of my mind. Tango and friends help me feel good and keep me grounded. Work and volunteering are

interwoven right now. Luckily I am able to manage the two together. It helps having such a group of professional companions working with me.

What gives you a sense of purpose and accomplishment?

Watching our students graduate; when I see something I have created and developed, utilised; when I gain respect from simply doing what I enjoy, and doing it well; when I implement a decision based on wisdom I have learnt from another.

If you could have your ideal role in the world, what would it be?

So many to choose from, these are the main two: librarian in the UN — living in Geneva; what I'm doing right now — with a lot more time in the day.

Which kinds of libraries have you worked in?

Academic libraries — TAFE and universities. I have always felt more comfortable in this environment, since as a child, when I was helping my parents photocopy their PhD theses.

What are you currently reading?

Visitants by Randolph Stow. I have just finished reading *The Good Women of China* by Xinran, which I liked a lot. I found it gave me an insight into other women's lifestyles and life struggles.

What do you feel are your greatest achievements and successes?

Keeping close relationships with old/good friends. Maintaining my true self. Figuring out the right career for me. Getting this job and rising to its challenges.

What do you currently do for a crust?

I'm the Campus Librarian for Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education in Alice Springs. Our client base is mostly from remote Central Australia although we do serve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from all over Australia.

Interview by Jayshree Mamtara



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Robin Hempel retires

Robin Hempel, Manager of Reference Services at the Northern Territory Library (NTL), has retired after a long career in libraries. Robin has been a member of ALIA and ALIA NT for 30 years, but her involvement with the association goes back to 1964 with the National Board of Examiners. Robin has held many committee and executive positions in ALIA NT and co-founded the Top End group.



She cites a career highlight as 'making the front cover of the *Australian Library Journal* in April 1977' — the entire *ALJ* for 1977 was devoted to articles on the NT. Another highlight was being awarded Citizen of the Year, 2002 for the community of Litchfield.

Robin's retirement plans include completing a PhD in Australian Poetry, doing some casual library work and joining in ALIA Top End events.

ALIA thanks Robin for her dedication to the profession and the association; we wish you all the best for an enjoyable and fulfilling retirement!