

Celebrating achievements: graduating from TAFE

It was with great delight that I recently represented ALIA at two TAFE NSW graduation ceremonies for library and information studies. There is always much to celebrate on such occasions. For many students finishing the course is the result of an amazing juggling act that involves part- or full-time work, partners and families, the challenges of studying when English isn't your first language, and countless other aspects of busy lives.

I was particularly pleased to present ALIA Student Awards to three outstanding students, Joanna Coad and Yu Hang Chingmy Lam from Sydney Institute and Bronwyn Adnum from Hunter Institute, and would like to congratulate them once again on their achievements. An ALIA Student Award recognises academic excellence with a year's membership in the Association, a year's subscription to the student's choice of ALJ or AARL and an award certificate.

At the ceremony at Hunter Institute, new graduate Kim Armstrong gave a very moving account that reminded all of us in attendance that study is often about much more than academic results. Here is shortened version of her address:

When I began this course in Feb. 2006, I had lost my identity in the isolation and mundane monotony of being a stay-at-home mum and I felt invisible to society most of the time.

As time passed, going to TAFE, working with teachers and students, learning something every day, laughing a lot, I gradually felt valued and accepted, which I certainly did not expect to feel by going to TAFE.

I could not have completed this course without the wonderful support and friendship of my fellow students and I would like to say thank you to all of my classmates for the help you offered me. Many times I walked out of a class teary eyed (hello Dewey Decimal Classification) to find someone waiting for me with an offer of a visit to the 'cafeteria', where they would commiserate with me and cheer me up. Sometimes it was only the thought of seeing my friends that day that made me go to TAFE.

I would also like to thank all libraries who agree to take students on work placements. The experience gained while on placement is invaluable. Dealing with a customer who has rang the library, upset over an overdue book notice arriving on the day of her husband's funeral or having a homeless man come to the library asking for help are things you just don't learn in a classroom.

To the teachers, thank you as well. I certainly appreciated the work and hours you put into teaching me. I hope you had some fun teaching this class even as you dealt with meltdowns over things like PowerPoint presentations, giving any sort of speech to the class and melodramatics like "I can't use FrontPage it's stupid!" or "What are we doing this for if it's not going to be in the test?" [When I said to our teacher] Jenny Banville, "We were the best class you ever taught, weren't we?" she diplomatically replied, "Well, you were certainly one of the noisiest!"

Many students have found paid employment as a direct result of completing this course. Congratulations!

What I found, doing this course, is not so tangible. I found fantastic friendships, and as corny as it sounds I found my identity as an individual, not just somebody's mother.

So, to all students who received their diplomas and certificates, well done! Be proud, what you have achieved is no small thing. I'm not sure what your piece of paper means to you; mine says to me 'I am not invisible anymore'.

To Kim and to all newly graduates, congratulations! You certainly aren't invisible and on behalf of all ALIA members, I'd like to welcome you to our profession – we look forward to the contributions you will make. I hope you'll join ALIA so that together we can shape the future of our profession.

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Research Applications in Information and Library Studies Conference

The website for RAILS5 is now live at: <http://www.hss.uts.edu.au/conferences/rails/>

RAILS5 is being organised by the Information & Knowledge Management Program, University of Technology, Sydney with the support of the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) as a satellite event to ALIA Information Online 2009 on January 23, 2009.

RAILS5 continues and builds upon the theme of Linking Research with Practice, which has become an ongoing focus of the seminar series. This theme has the aim to build partnerships among educators, researchers and practitioners to ensure that a culture of research-led, theoretically-informed, innovative practice is nurtured in the fields of librarianship, information and knowledge management.

The seminar aims to bring together practitioners, educators and researchers in the fields of librarianship, information management and knowledge management. New researchers are encouraged to attend the seminar, and to submit papers or abstracts for short presentations.

As with past seminars, RAILS5 will continue to raise the profile of research in the information and knowledge professions by:

- making educators and researchers aware of practice-based research that is currently underway and encouraging debate about it
- identifying research required by Australian practitioners and educators
- making practitioners aware of university-based research that is currently underway and encouraging debate about it
- promoting the research agenda of Australian LIS peak bodies
- showcasing emergent trends and important developments in information/knowledge research and practice.

RAILS5 will offer the option of either full peer-reviewed papers, to be published in a special issue of the *Australian Library Journal*, or short presentations.

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