

The Hollywood Librarian in Adelaide: encouraging professional development and networking

In July 2008, the South Australian Library & Information Network (SALIN) Executive Committee was fortunate to seize the opportunity to present *The Hollywood Librarian* movie to Adelaide audiences. The SALIN committee is entirely voluntary, thus the opportunity to organise the screening was both daunting and exciting, and clearly underlined the professional development benefits of committee membership for all involved.

Challenges faced included securing a venue, liaising with the movie's producer, finding a sponsor, public speaking, developing appropriate promotion, working out a plan for the day ... and hoping that it all came together. From July to September, committee members busied themselves and demonstrated genuine commitment, teamwork and leadership. Underpinning everything was an element of risk. None of us had ever organised a movie before! We were handling large sums of money, expecting our biggest event turn-out, and dealing with things outside our usual realm such as obtaining insurance and sponsorship. Every little detail was planned for and contingencies put in place as we desperately wanted the day to run as smoothly as possible. Visions of an empty theatre, or even worse, screaming movie goers and smoke pouring out of the projector room filled our dreams.

To our delight, the first screening was booked out within days. An emphatic decision was made to organise a second screening. This too, attracted healthy sales.

September 14—the Day of the Movie—ran perfectly. Just about everyone arrived early. Excited groups mingled in the foyer. Back of house, the sound and audio were tested. The committee shuffled nervously. Finally, the lights went down. Audiences were treated to a quick introduction by Anne Seidl, the writer and director. And then the movie rolled with 96 minutes of thought-provoking humour and pathos.

We learnt a lot from the experience. That small fish CAN swim in the big ocean, and determination and passion get you a long way. The entire *Hollywood Librarian* experience felt like a professional—and personal—triumph for us all. The SALIN Executive Committee would like to thank all people involved in the screening—including the audience. Finally we would like to make a special mention of the lovely producer, Ann Seidl.



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The Hollywood Librarian in Melbourne

Close to 300 librarians from across Victoria celebrated their profession at the Melbourne premiere of the first full-length documentary to focus on the work and lives of librarians—*The Hollywood Librarian: a look at librarians through film*.

The screening took place on September 11 at the gorgeous Capitol Theatre in Swanston Street. It was organised by VU Library in conjunction with RMIT University Library, Swinburne University Library, The State Library of Victoria, CAVAL, VATL (Victorian Association of TAFE Libraries), Viclink (Victorian Public Library and Information Network), DA Services, Elsevier and Thomson Reuters.

University Librarian Philip Kent said the University was pleased to host the documentary in Melbourne as a way to dispel some public misconceptions about the library profession. He said that the film examined the work of librarians, offering surprises for people who may have thought they know what librarians do: "Everyone has their own idea—some are positive, some negative, some laughable, and some are just dead wrong".

The Hollywood Librarian, in the first part of the film, juxtaposes the cliché (librarians in film or the cultural view) and the reality (how librarians see themselves, what they actually do). The second part, and the way in which the film is connected, is focused on the reality of libraries in relation to particularities of the United States of America. The particularity appears to be that in the USA (and in comparison to Australia) there is a lesser role of the state in funding public libraries, and historically funding has relied on philanthropy, with the net effect that there is less integration of public libraries, making them particularly vulnerable.

Following the screening, writer/director Ann Seidl spoke to the audience about her experiences in writing and producing the film and took questions from the floor.

"It was likely the biggest ALIA event in Victoria since VALA", said Derek Whitehead, Director of Swinburne University Library and ALIA President, as he brought to a close what had been a highly enjoyable and successful night.

The film has been received with enormous interest in America, New Zealand and Australia. It is soon to be released on DVD, so look out for it at a library near you!

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