

Energise>>Enthuse>>Inspire

Proud to be a public librarian



Young Lesa holding her public library bag

When I first decided to enrol in an applied science course and become a librarian, the last place I wanted to work was a public library. I thought public libraries were the short straw of the library world, with angry patrons, minimal opportunities for professional development and career advancement, boring work, and, ultimately, an embarrassing job to have. However, my thought pattern was changed when I did a professional placement at my local public library. Of course the only reason I opted to do my placement at the Wyndham Library Service was because it was close to home and I could sleep in!

I soon learned that working within a public library was so much more valuable than I initially perceived, and when I was offered a job at the end of my placement, I didn't hesitate. I was rewarded with immediate personal development. I was a really shy person who would never say "Shhhh" to anyone, but by working on the circulation desk and interacting with members of the community, I have become more confident and think nothing of having a conversation with a complete stranger about the weather, a book, or their day.

Public libraries also offer professional development and career advancement. We regularly receive free council run training to attain and improve our transferable skills, like customer service. We also get opportunities to attend conferences and library training programs, and are encouraged to apply for higher positions. I've been at the Wyndham Library for over a year now and within that time I've seen staff advance in their careers: from library officers to librarians, librarians to branch managers, and branch managers to senior managers. I would very much like to continue my professional development at this same library service, and, who knows, maybe one day I could be a branch manager. The sky is the limit in a public library!

While studying, I had never worked in a library. Once I started library work, a lot of the pieces of the puzzle of library theory started to fall into place for me, and I began to understand how much was involved in working in a public library. I fractured my knee and couldn't work on the desk, and long-standing staff were kind enough to teach me cataloguing. I undertook the cataloguing subject at university, but there's nothing like cataloguing books in a library to fully understand the process. I learned so much more by doing it, rather than cataloguing fake books by hand and writing essays about the pros and cons of the MARC, Dewey, and AACR systems. I was then offered the task of cataloguing all the junior, young adult, and teacher resources for a new library branch that will be opening up this year at Point Cook. There's something very exciting about a new library that you can walk into and say "I catalogued all of those books!"

As a public librarian you meet friendly, interesting, and quirky people, some of whom provide interesting dinner conversation with family and friends. I once had a patron invite me to go to a festival with him. When I looked it up on the internet I was shocked to discover it was a nudist festival. I now try and keep

Energise>> Enthuse>> Inspire!

...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 co-ordinator Naomi Doessel, naomidoessel@gmail.com

my conversation with this patron short. By working in a public library you develop the valuable skill of maintaining professional relationships and distance with patrons.

Some perceive that working in a public library just involves books, but there are also multimedia items, children's activities, presentations, and exhibitions as well. From 2nd March this year my library will be part of the State Library of Victoria's *Travelling Treasures Exhibition 2008* (come check it out!). We will be showcasing some of the State Library's heritage documents and artefacts relating to Captain James Cook and Charles Darwin.

So how do we get more librarians interested and holding a favourable view of working in public libraries? I believe we need to get them exposed to the environment. A professional placement within a public library is not necessarily a library student's first choice. To overcome this, universities need to offer students more than one professional placement so they can experience diverse library environments.

I would recommend to all library students to go out and get a job in a library, even if it is just casual. There is nothing like real experience to prepare you for the library world, and it will lead you to other opportunities.

I love working in a public library, but if I had never been exposed to the environment through my placement I would have missed out on the joy and pride I have come to know from working there. I am proud to be a public librarian!

Lesa Maclean

Reference Librarian, Wyndham Library Service, Vic

lesa_maclean@bigpond.com

GORMANS REMOVALS LIBRARY MOVING PROFESSIONALS



STACK MOVING

Works In Conjunction
With Your Carpet Layers

RECARPETING

Don't Pack! Let the Professionals
Lift It Up and Move It Across the Room
Keep Your Collection Intact
The Proven System That Works
Protective Materials for Floors

For over 45 years, Gormans Removals have developed and built specialist equipment to take the hassle out of moving office and library equipment.

We adopt a systematic approach to all moves. This includes detailed planning by photo taking and mapping to ensure all items moved go back to exactly the same place.

A major advantage of our stack moving system is that you can leave 98% of the books on the shelves. This maintains the catalogue order of the books and reduces the possibility of stock damage.

We work in conjunction with builders and carpet layers to ensure minimal disruption of your library services.

Other library services include complete external relocations (i.e. building to building) using numbered trolleys to preserve the individual library cataloguing systems.

GORMANS REMOVALS



1300 668464
MOVING

Brisbane (07) 3881 3300 Rockhampton (07) 49274522

www.gormans.com.au

The Library Moving Professionals. Family owned and operated since 1962