

Reading Bingo!

Forget the draughty halls and cardigans, *Reading Bingo!* is a professional development activity that is fun and easy to do.



Although at Central West Libraries most of us read for pleasure, we can tend to follow our own interests and may find helping our clients with different reading habits a bit of a challenge. *The Joy of Reading* is a key focus of CWL's Strategic Plan and is seen as an important part of our library service. Questions were raised as to how to introduce a program that would use what we already do and also challenge and reward participation.

Enter *Reading Bingo!*, which was devised from other staff development programs, and could be undertaken by any

of our fulltime, part-time, and casual staff at their own pace over six months. The bingo grid contains a range of activities and questions covering the essential elements of cultural awareness, marketing, communication, team work, training, technology, personal development, fun, readers' advisory, innovation, and motivation. Quite a list, but it serves to steer one's reading in different directions. In this way, *Reading Bingo!* incorporates the philosophy of advocates such as Nancy Pearl.

We wrote reviews for titles in the Library Catalogue, sampled some amazing dishes from international cuisine (the fun bit for sure!), participated in storytimes and book discussions groups, and gave databases such as Novelist a workout. One staff member admitted that she had already read a couple of the world literature titles in English and Spanish: bonus points for that one.

Reading Bingo! encouraged us to think about the process and benefits of reading as well as the diversity of interests that emerged as we talked about what was read. As the activity progressed, more comments and ideas about promoting the joy of reading were added to the *Reading Bingo!* board. Here's an idea: a bookmark that talks to you, glows in the dark, and "has a light to attract attention"!

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E-portfolios: personal learning, professional development

The single most effective tool in my current professional development kit is my e-portfolio. Essentially it's an online record of my professional development activities, achievements, and works-in-progress: a source of information about my career. When I want to do so, I can share elements of the portfolio with my manager, my colleagues, or a prospective employer: a meeting record, a project summary, an action plan, a tailored CV. Or I can simply keep track of my learning and professional development for myself.

The self-directed learning has proved to be the most valuable aspect of the e-portfolio for me. While I began using an online portfolio to help with the annual PDR (Planning, Development, and Review) process at the University of Adelaide – sessions where

we discuss our work and share our goals with our managers – I quickly found that the portfolio was becoming more than a record of my year's professional development. It was becoming "a personal space for learning." (Sutherland)

Perhaps I can explain this most clearly with an example. As I was writing an assessment of my year's 'Research Skills' sessions for English undergraduates, I included information that was useful for my manager: the number of students I taught, the resources that I used, the feedback that I received from students and lecturers. In the process of writing, I found myself reflecting on other, wider teaching and learning issues: *why* did I teach X and not Y, *how* did I motivate the students and help them to learn, *when* were the library sessions most (and least) successful?

As a result of these reflections, I now use other features of my e-portfolio to develop my teaching skills. I keep a personal blog of my teaching activities, write lesson plans, store some of my resources, and keep a file of links to journal articles on teaching information literacy. This is personal learning for my professional development: helping me to enhance my skills, to reflect on my work, and to provide a better service for my students.

I also use my e-portfolio for another important area of my work as a librarian: mentoring one of the new graduate librarians at the University of Adelaide library. My mentoree also uses an e-portfolio (she is involved, through ALIA, with the Australian e-portfolio Project). Rebecca and I can view, comment, and collaborate on selected parts of one another's e-portfolio. For example, she can contribute to my mentoring blog and I can have input on her action plan for developing her presentation skills. Along with our other mentoring activities – informal meetings, library visits, work-related projects – we find that the e-portfolio is a valuable tool in our mentoring relationship.

E-portfolios aren't for everyone: it takes time and energy to create and maintain one (not to mention access to the right software: I use PebblePad, which is a fabulous tool.) But if you enjoy working on your professional development and personal learning as a librarian, they're a great way to go!

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Reference:

Sutherland, S (2005) *E-portfolios: a personal learning space* in de Freitas, S and Yapp, C *Personalisation in the 21st century* Stafford: Network P

It's not just about the conferences

Whenever I thought about possibilities for professional development, I often thought in terms of attending conferences, seminars, and other 'official' learning experiences. While these are indeed fabulous opportunities where many new things can be learned, I have found another extremely useful learning experience that has furthered my professional development – involvement. The main barrier to involvement is that commodity of which there is so very little – time. However, once I committed myself to managing the time commitment, involvement – however accidental and unexpected for someone with a healthy cynicism when it comes to committees – has brought me a number of personal and professional gains.

I used to believe strongly in three very simple edicts when it came to any sort of involvement. The first was never volunteer for anything. The second was that the only thing committees manage to produce are camels. The third was if you don't like it, do something to change it. While the first two edicts seemed perfectly reasonable, I came to realise they were inhibiting my personal and professional development. The third edict was fine