

(lending services coordinators, acquisitions officers, and interlibrary loans/document delivery officers), library technicians (acquisitions, serials, course reading, e-reserve, inter-campus loans, and online readings), and library assistants (shelvers, some basic interlibrary loans/document delivery processes, and the loans desk). A number of these staff are actively involved in ALIA activities, both national and state-based.

We hold regular committee meetings for the different divisions, but as we are so spread across the country we cannot meet face-to-face very often. In order to compensate, we hold regular meetings via teleconference, email, or videoconference. The manager who chairs the relevant committee sends out regular correspondence via email to inform the staff of important changes that affects all campuses. Following this, a video or teleconference is held to discuss the issues 'in person'.

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The changing role of the library technician

Traditionally library technicians have been employed as experts with training in a specific technical process. These days, the library has changed and so too has the role of the library technician. But changes in the library haven't brought restrictions – just opportunities for the library technician.

With the introduction of outsourcing at Yarra Plenty Regional Library, library technicians have the opportunity to reapply their expertise in a less technical, more strategic environment. With a greater understanding and conceptual view of libraries, technicians have been provided with a platform to contribute their knowledge in a variety of areas including branch management and strategic planning. As a result, hierarchical barriers are beginning to soften, giving technicians the opportunity to pursue managerial roles and/or contribute to the strategic direction of the library service.

I have been fortunate enough to be involved in a state-wide resource sharing initiative called LibraryLink Victoria, which was introduced into Victorian public libraries in 2007.

Having completed a Diploma in LIS, my technical skills have been invaluable in the application of LibraryLink Victoria to our resource-sharing service. My position as Interlibrary Loans Coordinator has enabled me to build on my technical skills and perform a more strategic role in the planning and implementation of resource sharing both locally and statewide.

This has led to some positive personal experiences, including membership of various leadership groups and the opportunity to submit papers to relevant journals and conference programs, enhancing my interest in managerial and leadership roles. I've since become a member of the The Management Development Program recently implemented by Yarra Plenty Regional Library.

The Management Development Program has been designed to develop participants, preparing them for management roles. This is an excellent opportunity for technicians to demonstrate their leadership and technical skills in a combined role. Participants are not required to possess managerial experience and are selected on merit by their managers.

As libraries continue to evolve so too do the roles of library technicians. Expertise and knowledge nurtured through the ever changing world of libraries (or community spaces) provides the opportunity to reach the ultimate goal of providing excellent services to the most important people of all: our customers.

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LTs – worth their weight in gold

What do currently trained library technicians have to offer? Their national training package has a 'whole of industry' focus, preparing students and trainees for work across all sectors of our industry. The required qualification, Diploma of Library/Information Services or Advanced Diploma of Library/Information Services, typically involves the equivalent of two years full-time coursework, during which students develop extensive work-ready skills in customer service, team work, web 2.0 technologies, library promotion, multimedia and web development, group training and presentation, information literacy and research, young adult and children's literature, circulation services, cataloguing and classification, acquisitions and end processing, ILL and document delivery.

The employability skills embedded in the training package ensure a strong customer service focus across all areas of training.

Current library technician graduates have skills in new technologies and information formats and can deliver responsive customer-focused service to meet heightened expectations within our user communities. The training package for Library/Information Services is constantly reviewed by industry; it reflects and supports the widespread implementation of new trends and embraces the service opportunities now possible.

Most employers are aware of the benefits of employing qualified library technicians who, as a result of their comprehensive practical coursework training, can readily apply these valuable skills. It is however worrying to hear that some library employers, when filling customer service positions (CSOs), choose applicants who have generic customer skills from other industries with few, if any, library-specific skills. These unqualified CSOs are offered the same rate of pay as newly qualified, skilled library technicians, even though they do not have the spectrum of industry specific skills needed to deliver quality customer service.

Library technicians, with their extensive range of customer-focused skills and enthusiasm, weigh in extremely well in the information industry employability stakes.

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What do you do in a school library all day?

Note: Tasmania uses the college system for years 11 and 12 with most high schools being for years 7–10.

I am currently employed as a library technician in a senior secondary college in Tasmania. We cater for students studying pre-tertiary subjects for university entrance, as well as offering many VET subjects for students who are not on the path to university. The college is split over two campuses, with two libraries. We



each have our own collection, but there are frequent exchanges between the campuses depending on staff and student requests.

I work with the teacher librarian to provide library services to our campus of approximately 400 students. We provide resources for the study and recreational needs of the students as well as a teacher resource collection for the staff. We also have a number of ESL students to consider.

As a library technician I undertake many tasks within the library, and this gives me a lot of variety in my day-to-day work. We don't have a circulation desk roster, as there are only two of us, so we each keep an eye on the desk while attending to other tasks. This is all part of the multi-tasking that goes on in school libraries.

The day starts with me opening up at 8am. Once workstations are up and running, the first task is usually checking any digital recordings from the night before. We record free-to-air programs using the ClickView video delivery platform. As each program that is recorded has to be edited and converted before any metadata can be added, I try and start this in the morning and work on it throughout the day as time allows.

Once that is underway there are usually some students who may want to borrow items or need assistance with finding required resources. I am always amazed at the amount of students who claim to not know what an OPAC is! Especially as I know that the feeder schools educate their users to be self-seeking in their information needs.

Returns are usually beginning to come in and need to be processed and ordered ready for shelving. Shelving is usually done throughout the day as the need arises. The school day begins with a morning tutor group which is then followed by a morning session, middle of the day session, and an afternoon session. After morning tutor group, any students who are on a study line come in as well as any class group bookings that we may have. This is when we get quite busy with students looking for resources and us helping to locate them.

While this is happening I try and keep an eye on how the program editing is going and also start to catalogue new items. We get our catalogue records from SCIS (Schools Catalogue Information Service); if they don't have a record of the item in hand we will try the State Library of Tasmania, the NLA, or Library of Congress for records. If a record still can't be located, I will then create an original catalogue record. I enjoy original cataloguing but it is time consuming, so these items often have to wait until quiet times to complete them.

Once items are catalogued and checked by the teacher librarian, they can then be end processed. Not very exciting but it gives me a chance to sit at my desk and is a good task as interruptions don't affect the quality of the outcome.

Sometimes we record old tapes to DVD (within the constraints of copyright) – this then means that discs have to be printed, covers made, and the item copy catalogued and made shelf ready.

Student computer use needs to be monitored from time to time, and this is done randomly throughout the day. Monitoring of computers is done by means of software that enables us to see what is on each screen in the library. We have many students studying pre-tertiary subjects and never enough PC's to go around, so computers are only for study purposes.

When time allows I start on the journals. I usually try and do these once a week, otherwise they become unmanageable. Journals are first accessioned, then copy catalogued, and end processed. As we get a number of journals each week it is important to keep them up to date.

Throughout the day I will look for metadata for the recorded free-to-air programs. I usually go to SCIS for this or to the appropriate TV station, and then enter it onto our ClickView holding so that staff can have an indication of what a program is about.

Displays are done regularly, usually on a two-week rotation. They are usually based around a theme or a particular subject area which helps to create awareness of the resources available. We also display new items, which is popular with the keen readers.

Squeezed into this are a break for morning tea and a lunch break. My days always pass quickly and sometimes I feel like I am running from task to task, never quite finishing what I started. Would I change it? No! I love what I do and enjoy helping students reach their learning goals.

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A day in the life...

I am the Acquisitions Officer at the Lenton Parr Music, Visual and Performing Arts Library located at the Southbank Campus of the University of Melbourne. This library supports the Faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts and Music, so the majority of the collection is creative arts-based and includes art, music, dance, drama, theatre production, and film and television resources. It is a small, but very busy library with three full-time, three part-time, and casual staff. Three of us are library technicians and three are librarians, one the cataloguer. Although we all have specific roles, we all work on the loans desk and are able to assist with some other jobs as required, such as basic reference requests.

My role as Acquisitions Officer includes responsibility for ordering and processing items requested by academics and the librarians. Formats required are varied – books, music scores, sound recordings, DVDs, and CD-ROMs – and sources are not always through suppliers. Therefore a fair bit of detective work is sometimes required to source the requested items. Films that are requested are often hard to source and may not have English subtitles, so you have to check for all these sorts of details! One of the art lecturers requested a catalogue from an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This was not available through any suppliers so I emailed the museum and received a reply that there had been no catalogues printed for that particular exhibition. This is just one example of trying to source items.

I enjoy working with academic staff to ensure we are getting what they need and to liaise with them when items are ready for use. I also work closely with the cataloguer and interact with colleagues located at the Parkville campus where I attend training and meetings as part of a larger acquisitions team. I also enjoy the varied work and interacting with students and academic staff.

Jane Cousens
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Variety adds spice to work life for Curtin University library technicians

Oscar processes material submitted by staff and postgraduate students for the university's institutional repository; Jo works primarily with clients helping them use library resources, contributing to some of the information literacy classes, and coordinating the library's orientation program for new students