

Out in the real world

With all that's happening in the working world, does formal library education prepare you for working in a library? Well, yes – and no, says Suzanne Hemming.

No amount of theory can prepare you for an actual workday in a library (in my case a school library). The things you think are important turn out not to be, and you find yourself doing tasks you couldn't have imagined. I remember gearing up to answer the queries of questing young minds, only to find that they were primarily interested in the location of the toilets and 'borrowing' tissues.

What courses can't teach you are the vagaries of human behaviour. Once working in a library, you really need to relearn everything you have just studied. Think of your studies as a backgrounder, a lengthy reconnaissance into the world of information.

Library courses should give students the solid practical skills required to be a true library professional and not spend too much time on what information is, or what libraries do, or why we need libraries at all. A bit less navel gazing wouldn't go astray.

As for keeping abreast of technology, I find the best way is to simply find a reason to use it. Our library is about to be redeveloped so we have created a library wiki to track the progress of the project, and all library staff members are able to contribute.

Perhaps there is no longer such a thing as a library education, just lifelong learning as we forever try to keep up with the Apples (and the Microsofts, and the Tweeters and the bloggers..).

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Education Working Group formed

ALIA has established an Education Working Group to support and advise the Association. The group will check accreditation reports, assist with monitoring and identifying impacts to ALIA's accreditation program, and any new developments in this area.

Current membership of the Education Working Group includes a number of ALIA member volunteers with a diverse range of expertise and experience in education and professional practice and almost all have previously participated on ALIA accreditation panels. They are Derek Whitehead, Director, Information Resources at Swinburne University of Technology, Stuart Ferguson, Assistant Professor, Knowledge and Information Studies, at the University of Canberra, Andrew Shiells, Teacher, Library and Information Services, Canberra Institute of Technology, Lisa Given, Professor of Information Studies, School of Information Studies, Charles Sturt University, Di Booker, Director (Policy) for the Australian Qualifications Framework Council, Ian Rogers, Teacher, Library Studies, Victoria University, and Janetta Mascilongo, who has recently moved from her role as Director: Professional Services at ALIA to take up a new role as Assistant Director, Document Services in the Defence Library Service.



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