

EEL... ENERGISE, ENTHUSE, INSPIRE

EEL 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 Lesa Maclean at maclean.lesa@gmail.com

Giving up anonymity

Last year was a transformative year for library science student Julia Garnett. She embraced her new profession with her heart, soul, and voice, using ALIA's 5th New Librarians Symposium's theme of metamorphosis to take flight towards her new career.

In January 2011, I took a leap and applied for the Library and Information Science program at Queensland University of Technology (QUT). With an English degree and two years experience in marketing behind me, I wanted more, so I decided to go for it. My family was thrilled. My friends gave me lots of 'likes' on Facebook. My husband upgraded my Macbook. Suddenly I was a full-time master's student, but part of me was still a shy

"I'VE NEVER BEEN SO EXCITED

ABOUT WORK!"

Canadian girl who loved libraries and the anonymity of blogging.

I'm not anonymous anymore. I attended as many library events as I

could fit in that year, from presentations and tours to drinks and quiz nights, and I met a lot of people. 2011 has been all about professional development, and that meant building an online identity. I now blog under my full name, and I bought a domain name that matches my Twitter handle. Finally, I took a deep breath, warmed up my singing voice, and uploaded my first YouTube video.

Why Go to NLS5? – a parody of Don McLean's *American Pie* – was my entry to a contest for free registration to ALIA's 5th New Librarians Symposium (NLS5) in Perth. I sang my way through my metamorphosis from girl to undergrad to library student. To my surprise, the New Generation Advisory Committee (NGAC) awarded the prize to my "quirky, fabulously clever" video. Since I'm still relatively new to Australia, I thought NLS5 would be a great way to meet people and get involved in my new profession. I ordered business cards, packed my bags, and prepared to represent QUT and new grads in Perth.

QUT encourages students to build a personal learning network (PLN). I highly value my PLN and the support of my peers. I couldn't have asked for a better group of people to study with. They've become my friends, my advisors, my fan club, and the first members of my PLN. My network is bursting with knowledge, encouragement, and amusement, and it's grown since the symposium. Networking with other NLS5 attendees was a challenge I set for myself, and I can't tell you how valuable those connections are – now, and into the future.

There were so many iPads, laptops, and smart phones at NLS5; you'd be forgiven for thinking you'd walked in on an IT conference. Luddite librarians? Hardly. Tweets, blogs, and photos taxed the conference wireless as we shared little gems with people who couldn't be with us.

The guest lecturers I've heard at QUT gave me an indication of how dedicated information professionals are, but I was unprepared for a ballroom full of them. It was overwhelming, inspiring, and a little intimidating. The introvert in me was out of my comfort zone, but the

friendly, enthusiastic vibe at NLS5 drew me in. Suddenly I was a part of something bigger – part of a passionate, evolving profession that values lifelong learning, engagement, collaborative research, and information needs.

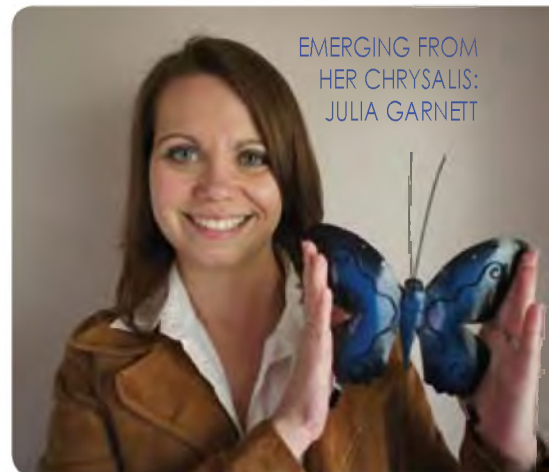
The speakers were authentic, energised, and full of ideas. We heard about storytelling, digital futures, trends, hidden rulebooks, research, entering the workforce, networks, and metamorphosis (the conference theme). I already knew that not every information professional works in a public library, but hearing from people in the field made it more real. Career options seemed boundless. I've never been so excited about work!

The phrase "emerging professionals" was used in one session, and I feel it acknowledges dedication to self-driven development. Professional development takes real work, but you don't have to do it on your own. Ask someone you admire if they'll mentor you. Build up your own PLN, set goals, and encourage each other to go for those jobs that seem out of reach. More than one speaker told us how they'd pushed themselves and landed a great role – so don't underestimate yourself. As new grads, we can bring our enthusiasm, creativity, fresh perspectives, curiosity, energy, and commitment to learn.

Learning doesn't just happen in formal environments. Invest in yourself. Whether it's attending a conference or teaching yourself a new tool, your experiences can lead to amazing opportunities. Being the ALIA NGAC winner gave me an easy way to introduce myself, and I found that some people already recognised me. Don't forget to invest in your community, too – volunteer, engage with your peers, and contribute in a meaningful way. If you're excited, you may inspire others to be too.

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Julia Garnett is an enthusiastic student of library and information science, and she can't wait to enter the profession. Her favourite things are reading, writing, dancing, and a good cup of tea, most of which can be found in a library. Since she's not anonymous anymore, you can follow her on Twitter (@jzgarnett) or read her blog, Seeker. Finder. Reader. (jzgarnett.com)



EMERGING FROM
HER CHRYSALIS:
JULIA GARNETT