

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



As a student of information studies, I am clearly optimistic about the future of the profession for librarians and other information professionals. Indeed I am investing heavily in the premise that there will be some kind of a positive future for the profession, although perhaps not in the current form and definition we recognise today.

My six year-old is full of questions about "the olden days", about which I always assumed I knew nothing, and would talk to my grandparents. Her generation however look to their parents and teachers to show them the value of the resources we often take for granted. This week, Miss 6 asked me why all the old books from my childhood were paper: "Were you too poor to buy eBooks in the olden days, Mum?" She and her classmates take for granted this new technology, and associated formats, not thinking for a moment that things have been different in the past. She is fascinated that libraries have been around since "the olden days" and talks freely about taking her children to the library when she's older.

The future of the profession is a given to my Miss 6, who optimistically expects that this generation will look after the resources we have, preserve them for future use, and invent new ways of engaging a future audience. My hope is that governments, state, territory, and federal, will also recognise the value of libraries, librarians, and other information professionals, thus ensuring the future of the profession. As naive as this view may seem, I am encouraged by my kids, and by the literacy units I assist with in Kindergarten/Prep. These children want to read, they want access to information to assist their learning, they want their reading choices to be respected, and they consider librarians to be valuable members of their local community, so much so that I was invited to talk to the Kindergarten classes about my job which they declared "awesome". This optimism and enthusiasm is fuelling my studies as I finish my Masters in Librarianship.

A critical part of the future of the information profession is the students, graduates, and new professionals that emerge from around the country. The New Librarians' Symposium in Perth last year filled me with hope that the profession has many talented, intelligent, and optimistic graduates to ensure a bright and exciting future. The draft program for NLS6 in Brisbane already shows that this is still the case, and that there is reason to hope. Brisbane 2013 will be doubly important, to illustrate the importance of the profession within the library

and information community, and to publicise to the government that Queensland does have a place for libraries, librarians, and information professionals of every kind, despite recent events.

Of course this future is not certain. Government libraries are being closed across the country, acquisitions budgets are being slashed, and libraries are being decentralised and merged into IT departments. The lack of understanding of the profession is astounding. Teacher-Librarians are not valued despite indisputable research findings showing they more than pay for themselves. In Canberra we see high profile government departments and agencies closing libraries in the attempt to reduce spending. Queensland has recently seen the lengths some governments are willing to go. To me this shows a complete lack of awareness of my chosen profession, for which I am determined to see a bright future.

Optimistically I am entering this profession trusting that the future of the profession will be one where librarians and information professionals are recognised for their expertise and unique contribution. That information in its multitude will need to be organised, described, and found. That governments will value education and therefore school libraries. That public libraries will continue to inspire generations. That governments will understand the role of libraries in information, research and policy within their many departments. As I watch my children reading hard copy books that I owned as a child, and asking curly questions requiring accurate research, I remain optimistic that the future will value and need my chosen profession.



Jessica Begley graduated from Melbourne University with Honours in Urban Planning. After following research interests in Social Planning, she enrolled in her Masters of Information Studies in Librarianship at the University of Canberra which she is due to complete in 2013. Jessica works for AGLIN (the Australian Government Libraries Information Network), and is co-chair of the Proposals and Speaker Liaison sub-committee for NLS6. Jessica is currently researching in the area of children's and youth services' literacy. She is looking forward to

meeting fellow inspirational and enthusiastic LIS professionals at NLS6 in Brisbane 2013.

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