

# RETURNING TO WORK

**R**eturning to working in libraries after a few (okay many) years away from the workforce while looking after my two children, I found the whole landscape of the library world looking quite daunting, ereaders, Twitter, Facebook... of course I was familiar with all of these, but not in the work sense. Back in those long ago days when I was studying Library and Information Studies at the University of South Australia, the libraries we spoke about were a very different beast than the libraries of today.

Before I had my first child, libraries had already begun to change – automated check-outs, CDs and DVDs and internet access had all been introduced. But now it seems that there are changes every second and there are big, big questions being asked – will there still be enough jobs in libraries? Will libraries even exist in 15–20 years? Does the general public recognise the importance of libraries or have they lost their value?

So how was I to get back into this ‘new’ library world? An old and faithful piece of advice has never been more apt – network, network and then network some more!

I made contact with any friends and acquaintances I had in the industry and, well, talked their ears off. I emailed, I chatted on the phone and I caught up with as many of these contacts as possible. I rejoined ALIA, which then gave me access to valuable elists, and a great source of information about local activity and local jobs. I found most people don't mind a quick catch-up over coffee, and it was through one of these catch-ups I heard about my current position at ALIA. My role as State Manager at ALIA has been a perfect way to ease back into working life through working part-time and flexible hours.

It's been enlightening and inspiring to get out and hear what's happening in local libraries. The role of libraries may have changed, but the enthusiasm and spirit of the library professionals has not.

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## Top tips for returning to work

- **Time management 101:** Plan your schedule realistically so there's room for the unexpected. This helps you get used to leaving home on time (leaving a few things off your morning to do list just might be necessary).
- **Involve everyone:** If you have a partner, children or family members who aren't used to you working, talk to them about the support you will need and what they can do to help you transition back to work. Check your new workplace's policy on personal phone calls and interruptions so everyone knows what's appropriate.
- **Home work is real work:** If you are working from home, set yourself a schedule and stick to it. You need to respect your work and so does everyone else, even if you do get to do it in your slippers!
- **Revitalise your work wardrobe.** It will help you start that new job feeling good.
- **Enjoy yourself.** Starting any new job is a big deal and can be daunting so be kind to yourself while you settle in and take the time to celebrate your new direction.



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