

STAYING IN THE LEARNING GAME

Jane Orbell-Smith is the Librarian for HCare, Queensland Health and ALIA Queensland State Manager. She currently sits on the Health Libraries Australia Executive and National ALIA Careers Advisory Committee. She has been collecting ideas on how LIS professionals can stay up to date and in touch with our profession.

During my career as a librarian, I have witnessed really good people lose interest and de-skill in their profession. It can occur just as easily for a library professional who is working as part of a large staff as it can for a colleague working on their own or in a remote location. Our profession is not alone in this regard; a simple Google search on 'professional isolation' produced a hit rate of a staggering 31,800,000! Refining the search by adding the term 'librar*' reduced the results to 2,130,000; one can draw from this that librarianship is only one of many professions encountering this issue.

We have now acknowledged the problem; the real question is how do we address professional isolation? I believe the key is to think laterally, brainstorm ideas and look beyond the email that pops into your inbox or the quarterly staffing bulletin. Be proactive!

There are many ways to stay in touch, no matter where you are based or your work place, type or size. I have shared this information with many colleagues over the years and built the list from my own research and experience. I do not claim originality for the list but neither can I attribute the listing to any particular author or authors.

It's a good idea to begin with small steps. Tackle one issue or idea each week so you don't overwhelm yourself in the process. Add your own ideas to this list and get started today.

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A LIST FOR LIFE-LONG LIBRARY LEARNING

- Network
- Attend staff gatherings
- Organise a morning or afternoon tea for your colleagues/clients
- Attend staff meetings and participate in discussions and submit reports
- Email/visit colleagues
- Select and send information updates in areas of interest to staff
- Join and participate in professional associations
- Join non-library professional networks online (such as LinkedIn) or in person (such as Zonta)
- Liaise with library professionals from other organisations
- Attend short courses
- Join list serves and RSS news alerts
- Undertake professional reading
- Tap into any in-house training – it may not be directly related to librarianship but may well be relevant to your wider working requirements
- Use social media
- Ask clients and colleagues what they are working on at the moment and how you can help
- Stretch yourself on projects – try something different or build on skills you already hold
- Design and upload a new webpage
- Design and teach an information literacy skills course
- Lift your profile in your employing organisation
- Write and publish articles or a letter to the editor
- Attend conferences and workshops
- Find a mentor
- Become a mentor
- Participate in peer and professional supervision
- Work with near by library staff and develop your own in-house training group
- Start a journal club
- Undertake a job swap or short contact in another position



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