

Josephine found herself worlds away but still at home in the New York Public Library.

FROM NHULUNBUY TO NEW YORK

The New York Public Library Science, Industry and Business Library (SIBL) is, literally and metaphorically, half a world away from the remote Top End Northern Territory town of Nhulunbuy. Josephine Meredith found a trip to New York was a great opportunity to fulfill some of her personal career goals.

One of the premier research institutes in the world, SIBL is very different in terms of resourcing, programming, and community expectations to the tiny Nhulunbuy Community Library where I had my start in the world of libraries. I had decided to enrol in the Masters of Information Management at RMIT and, as part of this course, I was given the fantastic opportunity to undertake a three week work placement at SIBL in New York City.

Located just across from the Empire State Building, SIBL boasts an enormous collection and serves the research needs of one million people, orders of magnitude larger than the population of 4,000 in Nhulunbuy.

To begin with, SIBL seemed very large and foreign. It was easy to feel dwarfed by the immensity and grandeur of building, the complexity and number of the programs and services on offer, and the sheer size of the collection (this was not helped by the fact that I spent the first few days constantly lost in New York, and to navigate my way to work I had to look to the skyline and walk towards the Empire State Building). However, the friendliness of the staff and the all inclusive internship I undertook – which involved being given an overview of every different element managed by the library on both a micro and macro level – I soon found myself able to make the connections between the tiny community hub I had left in Nhulunbuy and this enormous institution.

Whatever their resources and community, libraries large and small face many similar challenges and opportunities. Creating new projects fulfilling targeted community



needs and responding to information requests both involved and simple; these are shared experiences across our profession, regardless of whether you are providing information about high finance or assisting children in a craft class. While different cultures and groups may approach their information seeking needs and behaviours differently, the role of the librarian to facilitate this information gathering was similar.

I was able to see how technology could be integrated to create valuable teaching and information seeking tools for patrons. By placing technology at the forefront, SIBL really represents the direction in which libraries are moving.

Many of SIBL's extensive programs engaged community partnerships, allowing the library to offer information, expertise and engagement beyond the SIBL's own resources. An example of this is the SCORE program, where retired professionals assist people with their small business information requirements.

My placement was an opportunity to fulfill some of my own career goals in the information management world. Now, as I am concluding the last semester of my Masters of Information Management, I feel ready to pursue a career in this dynamic industry with greater confidence and I will be able to bring my new understanding to my future employment.

While Nhulunbuy Community Library and SIBL may be very far apart, they both represent knowledge hubs in a changing world, and I am grateful for the opportunities granted to me by both.

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