



Lee Bess: Say yes to committees!

GIVE SOME, GET SOME: COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP DOES BOTH

Nothing illustrates collaboration quite like a committee. But for some, just hearing the word can induce feelings of anxiety, nausea and even, in extreme cases, a nervous twitch. The reasons for these reactions can be varied – and valid – but if you’re a serial committee-avoider, you could well be missing out on a chance for some serious collaboration, personal growth and a real sense of accomplishment. Lee Bess explains.

I’ve been on all sorts of committees over the course of about 40 years; the first at the age of 12, when I reached the heady heights of power as secretary of the school Forestry Club. I’ve been on committees for school, tuckshop, book club, various work committees, and football. Most recently I was part of the organising committee for the TAFE Australasia Library Conference (TALC), the Queensland VET Libraries Association (QVLA) and the ALIA Qld Group.

I’ve experienced the best and worst of committees. So why do I enjoy what many shudder at the thought of?

WHAT YOU CAN GAIN FROM BEING ON A COMMITTEE

- Meet new people
- Become better known
- Show off your existing skills
- Learn new skills
- Add to your resume
- Get things done
- Work successfully in a team
- Learn negotiation skills
- Open your mind to new ideas and opinions
- Feel good about accomplishments

TIPS FOR JOINING A COMMITTEE

- Use the first few meetings to get to know the people and for them to get to know you
- Find out the history of the group – you’ll get valuable insight into the strategic direction, goals and previous achievements
- Be willing – don’t be a bystander
- Be brave – speak up at meetings
- Back up others when you agree – it can be scary expressing a different opinion
- Be flexible – allow the majority to rule
- Deliver what you promise
- Ask if you need help – it’s a team!
- If you’re particularly nervous, find a friend to join with you

WHERE TO FIND COMMITTEES

At work

- Special project or event committees
- Social Club
- Book Club

BE AN ACTIVE PART OF YOUR PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION

- Choose an ALIA Group (check them all out on the ALIA website to find colleagues who share your interests)
- Join a conference committee

So stop staring at your feet or rushing to the bathroom when you hear the word ‘committee’. Put your hand up – it’s not nearly as scary as you think.

LEE BESS AALIA

leebess2014@gmail.com

@leebess1

After several years working in TAFE libraries, Lee is now enjoying work in a high school environment, at St James College in Brisbane. She continues to be involved in the ALIA Qld Committee. Lee blogs with fellow new graduate Michelle Coxsen at: twonewlibrarians.wordpress.com/.