

Recharge your **ENTHUSIASM BATTERY** at a library conference

LIZ FINLAY, recipient of the New Generation Advisory Committee's bursary to attend NLS8, reflects on her recent experience in Canberra.

As I walked out of the National Library of Australia after the closing session of NLS8, my immediate thoughts centred on the difference wrought in the space of two years. NLS7 was my first library conference. I had just started my Master of Information Studies, segueing from my previous career of working with survey data. I knew only the people that I had travelled to NLS7 with. Everyone I spoke with was friendly, energised and enthusiastic. I felt welcome but just, oh so slightly, like a fish out of water.

My conference buddies from 2015 couldn't make it to NLS8 and I was a little anxious about going on my own. What I had overlooked was that in the two years since NLS7, I had started work in a library and had made connections in the LIS world. I had an amazing weekend at NLS8 reconnecting with people, meeting new friends, learning new things and sharing experiences. Two years on from my first library conference, I felt a lot closer to 'finding my tribe', as Kate Byrne, Clare McKenzie and Alyson Dalby – keynote speakers at NLS8 – put it.

Sorting through my notes in the weeks since NLS8, I started thinking about belonging to a profession and what that means. R David Lankes, Director of the School of Library and Information Science at University of South Carolina and author of *The New Librarianship Field Guide*, reminded us that abstractions have power; they shape us and our interactions with the world. How does the abstraction of belonging to the library profession shape me and my interactions?



Liz Finlay

Obvious benefits spring to mind. I can join – and have joined – ALIA, our professional association that represents the interests of LIS professionals and forms a core around which networking and professional development can occur. I can connect with people who are enthusiastic and welcoming, and with whom I share a professional identity and a passion for the difference we make in the lives of others.

But the thought that lingers with me from NLS8 is that being a member of a profession means to give as well as to receive.

Kate Byrne, Clare McKenzie and Alyson Dalby encouraged us to 'do something, do it together' and 'be the next person on the path', while reassuring us that it's okay to not have ideas if we find people whose ideas we can help realise. These concepts collided with Mylee Joseph's encouragement to 'say yes' and to start with listening, in order to understand the problems that people are trying to solve. This was all synthesised for me by Mary Carroll and Sue Reynolds's concept of professional citizenship. Citizens are here for the long haul and it's in their interest to contribute to make the world around them a better place. So, at the end of NLS9, I want to be able to reflect on how I have contributed to my new profession since NLS8. ✨

LIZ FINLAY
liz.j.finlay@gmail.com
@finlay_liz

Liz Finlay is studying a Masters of Information Studies at Charles Sturt University and works as a library assistant at a college library in Canberra.

STRONG VALUES + WORK ETHIC = GETTING GOOD STUFF DONE

FEEDBACK FROM NLS8

The New Librarians' Symposium 8 (NLS8), took place in Canberra in late June. The New Generation Advisory Committee (NGAC) tell us about the themes that emerged from the discussions, especially the idea of seizing the initiative.

The theme of June's New Librarians' Symposium 8 – DIY Library Career – took on a number of meanings throughout the course of the event, and we were inspired by the encouragement that speakers and attendees gave each other to go out and do something, to experiment and try and make things happen. Many also reflected on the 'Y' in 'DIY' – that you can do things yourselves and that you don't always need to wait for a large organisation to be the initiator of action. You and a small group of like-minded individuals can collaborate, share knowledge and be the instigators of change.

The symposium was also an exciting opportunity for us to talk with students and new graduates in between sessions about their ideas and hopes for the future. From our table at the NLS8 breakout space, we invited attendees to write down their answer to the question: 'what matters to you?'

Their responses covered a range of subjects, but some common themes emerged very quickly: diversity, social justice, open access, community engagement, innovation, literacy and learning, employment and professional development.

The feedback we received is a reflection of the values of students and new grads; we want a profession with a greater diversity of voices, experiences and skills. We want challenging, reflective discourse about the nature of our work and the ways in which we can do it better. We want quality, accessible information to be freely available for everyone who seeks it. We want to be advocates, both for ourselves and in collaboration with our communities. We want to find new ways of working and to support the ongoing development of a broad range of literacies.

We want meaningful, fairly paid and reliable jobs that give us the opportunity to broaden our skills and experience and to make a positive impact on others.

Seeing these values expressed in the context of a symposium that encouraged initiative and collaboration was all the more exciting. We asked new librarians what matters to them, and their answers described a vision of this profession which is open, just, vibrant and powerful. We believe that moving closer towards that vision is something we can all achieve – by taking action and by working together. ✨



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