

# RESEARCH ISN'T ONLY FOR ACADEMICS


**L**ifelong learning isn't just about what you can learn, it is also about the knowledge that you can pass on. ANJA TAIT looks at why and how LIS practitioners can become more involved in research and passing their knowledge on to others.

Lifelong learning implies a lifelong curiosity. And curiosity drives research. I invite all library and information professionals who assume that research is something other people do to rethink what research means to them. Research is about having curiosity and asking questions: 'Why do we do what we do? Why do we do it this way? Are there other ways to do what we do? How do others do stuff, and why? What else might we do?'

Research involves undertaking systematic inquiry. Practitioner inquiry, or practitioners as researchers, is a rigorous and legitimate pathway to systematically reflect on current practice, learn about others' practice, and try out new approaches to practice. Practitioner inquiry is relevant for all our contexts, whether our audience is scholars from the academy; government departments; legislatures; students; families; travellers, or individual patrons with a nagging question.

The Library Applied Research Collective (LARK) recently hosted a webinar, *Professionals as researchers: developing research skills in library and information practice*, which included a range of speakers from libraries and beyond, who discussed how to build

and nurture research practice professionally. There was information about communities of practice in an academic setting; identifying and applying practitioner skills to the practice of research; and an introduction to the ALIA LIS Practitioner Research Specialisation ([bit.ly/2M0zqDR](https://bit.ly/2M0zqDR)) and associated competencies.

Lifelong learning is inspired by lifelong curiosity and begins with reflective practice. Recognising our own and our colleagues' practice wisdom is a strong starting point for our inquiries. From there we can begin to understand what skills of inquiry we already possess, and what we need to acquire to begin exploring ideas, policies and practices in libraries in a systematic way. In time we hope to see increasing number of library and information professionals from Australia submitting practitioner research to the *Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association* and hearing about their endeavours in *INCITE*. 

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