WALT Conference Grant Recipient

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WA Library Technicians Group (WALT) Conference Grant ALIA National Library Technicians' Conference 2007

Essay Topic: What goals have you set for yourself as a practising Library Technician and how do you see Library Technician membership of ALIA assisting you towards achieving these goals?

Most of us wear a number of "hats". I am no exception to this situation. I am a mature student, having returned to studies at Edith Cowan University a few years ago. I am a wife who enjoys challenging discussions (often centred on "fixing" the world). I am a mother of three children, the last just finishing high school, and hence I have become an expert in teenage angst. I expect in the next year or two, I will also join the ranks of "grandparent-hood". I am also about to become a carer to my elderly mother, and quickly learning about how difficult life is for the less physically able among us. In the midst of all this, I work in a public library (City of Wanneroo). I have many goals in life, especially as I have only discovered in the last five years what I want to be when I "grow up".

I have two main goals as an aspiring Library Technician. My first goal is to become truly professional in assisting people who would otherwise be unable, in finding the information they need. I believe that in our information-overloaded world, some people have trouble accessing the suitable materials. Sometimes, people experience problems because of physical or mental disabilities, while other patrons are unable to fulfil their needs because of a lack of knowledge of where and how to look. I aspire to find ways to help both of these groups. It brings me satisfaction when I am able to teach someone how to find information through the library. I love to show people both how and where to look for physical items, as well as information found through our computer resources. As an aspiring Library Technician, I strive to be able to help all types of patrons learn how to find the most suitable materials for them.

In my university course, I produced a paper on "Assistive Technologies for Disabled Patrons", in which I addressed some of the available technologies as well as some emerging technologies. The research I put into producing this paper, has prompted my thinking about how we might be of more assistance to our patrons. Since this time, I have been thinking about how we might help patrons to bridge the technology gap and therefore be more able to recognize those resources that might assist them. Many patrons, including seniors, have computers available, but do not know how to use the library catalogues to request materials. I would very much like to design a "hands-on" course to teach patrons how to use the catalogue and as well as how to access the library's facilities for disabled patrons.<>

I would love to take this course into seniors' centres. I feel that becoming a member of ALIA and hence having access to their resources will provide me with valuable resources to furth er my goals.

I believe that the most important (and for me, most satisfying) work of a Library Technician involves helping people learn how to find the information they require. The day where people rely solely on browsing shelves to find interesting items is long gone. As a society, we have become "information-rich", but "time-poor". We need to locate required information quickly, and in specific forms. The modern library carries so much more than books; we are truly becoming information centres and consequently the hub of our communities. I would very much like to be in a position to offer training sessions on finding resources and run library tours that include access training.

ALIA's Policies state (in part) that it "plays a vital role in ensuring that education for the profession produces graduates who have the ability to provide excellent library and information services to benefit the nation and individual clients and who can respond to and meet the ever-changing information needs of a dynamic society". (http://www.alia.org.au/policies/education.role.html, retrieved April 10, 2007). As I progress towards my qualification, I know that I will be relying on my university lecturers and course advisors, as well as ALIA to help me learn how to fill this role.

My other motivating goal is to assist people in their lifelong learning. As I don more and more "hats", I continue to learn. I love studying and the continual growth that learning stimulates. The need for lifelong learning is echoed in ALIA's Core Values Statement, number 3. This states "Commitment to literacy, information literacy and learning. We enable independent and formal lifelong learning by providing resources and expertise to meet the needs of learners, and of the human spirit." (http://ww.allia.org.au/policies/core.values.html, retrieved April 10, 2007). I have a background in Adult Education, and have returned to study as a "mature student", so that I can obtain the skills and experience necessary for me to do precisely what this core value states. I want to be able to help others find the joy and fulfilment that I do, in reading and studying, and continuing to grow as a contributory member of our society).

The ALIA Conference this year will be of great interest to me in pursuing my goals of assisting people from all walks of life to find the information they require, and secondly to encourage people along the path of lifelong learning. I very much look forward to an opportunity to attend the Conference and take advantage of learning from the experiences of others in the Library community.