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Obituary

Janine Anne Riley

(nee Gittos)

It is with great sadness that I write about my friend and our colleague Janine Riley, librarian and archivist, who died in Queensland on Friday 10 March. She died from Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) at the Wesley Hospital in Brisbane aged 51 years.

Jan was born in Subiaco, Western Australia. I first met Jan in 1968 when she returned to Western Australia with her family and we were undergraduates together at in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Western Australia. She was warm, enthusiastic and always fun to be with. We drank many a cappuccino in the Reid Library Coffee Shop together.

After marrying Tim Riley and having two children, Elizabeth and Catherine, she studied at Curtin University of Technology and completed her Graduate Diploma in Information and Library Studies. Her fellow students write that she features in their fondest memories of Curtin, enlivening the breaks in between lectures. She was admired for her lively intellect and her sure judgement.

Jan was for many years librarian at All Saints College. She was known to all the staff, students and parents as the open, friendly, knowledgeable, energetic and purposeful librarian in the Senior School Library. This was a role that she occupied alongside several teacher-librarians, all of whom she helped to become more and more technically literate as she herself readily embraced and pioneered in information technology. As a librarian she was admired for her attention to detail, her caring attitude and the way she was prepared to tackle any problem head-on — like automating the library.

As part of her interest in capturing the history and the culture of All Saints College, Jan embarked upon the course of study that was eventually to make her the first formally qualified school archivist in Perth. She first of all completed a short course in archives administration and then in 1996, she graduated with a Masters in Archives and the Penny Fisher Prize for being the top Masters student at Monash University that year.

Jan became the inaugural archivist at two Perth schools, All Saints' College and Perth College, two schools with almost diametrically opposite archival needs. Jan was always willing to take up

a challenge and her colleagues write that she seemed to find a rich satisfaction in these roles. The headmaster of All Saints' College writes that because of Jan's work 'the College



now has the confidence of having its records and the key elements of its culture and history properly stored, recorded and archived. This means that future generations will have ready access to important and valuable information.' Jan became a leader in the WA School Archive Special Interest Group and the local Australian Society of Archivists Branch. She combined her knowledge of archives with the IT skills of Dave Clement to produce and distribute Archive Manager, a software package specifically designed to meet the needs of small archives. Her archival colleagues believe that Jan moved the school archives community from mere passive collections to really pro-active attempts to create archives which were accessible to a wide range of users. Her colleagues were also impressed by her vital enthusiasm for historical memory as a community right.

In 1997 Jan and her husband moved to Brisbane where she soon became involved again, accepting a position as archivist at Brisbane Girls Grammar School and participating in the formation of a Queensland School Archives SIG and the organisation of the Brisbane conference.

Those who knew Jan will attest to the fact that below her gentle exterior lay great strength, determination and commitment to people and causes dear to her. She was an excellent role model for her daughters and other women. She was a caring mother and managed to juggle a balance between the competing demands on her time.

The two professions have lost an outstanding librarian and archivist. Her family and friends are grieving for the loss of a warm and lovely person.

Carol Newton-Smith, business librarian, The University of Western Australia with contributions from Pam Barnett, Maggie Exon, Anthea Harris, Tony London, Sue Manolas and Vicky Wilson