The Information Networker Program at Lake Joondalup Baptist College

In May 2006 Stephen Sampson, Head Librarian at Lake Joondalup Baptist College, approached the WA Library Technicians Group requesting an experienced technician to attend his school for a discussion session with some students on the role of a 'real life' Library Technician. The call was put out for volunteers, and during the following week – which was coincidentally Library and Information Week – Wendy Morris and I attended Lake Joondalup Baptist College.

The students are part way through a Certificate II of Library Studies and had only had experience in their school library. The combination of my corporate law library role (Jackson McDonald), and Wendy's university (ECU Joondalup) role gave a broad range of experience and examples. We described our main duties, and how our role fits into our particular type and size of library. The students were attentive and responsive, asking questions and expressing interest in their course and the industry.

After the talk, we were given a tour of the school's library, including the workrooms, and were shown some examples of what the students do for their service time in the library. Wendy and I both enjoyed visiting the students and were pleased that we could do something to help promote our industry to a younger audience. Plus, we got chocolate :)

At the next WA Library Technicians meeting (15 June 2006) I gave a brief report to the group about our visit to LJBC. I was glad to hear that the rest of the Group was as interested as I was in hearing more about how Stephen Sampson started the course and whether we as a group could be of any future assistance to the school as the course develops.

I invited Stephen to write an article about how the course began and his plans for the students and the school (below).

The ALIA mission statement reads:

It seeks to empower the profession in the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services to the nation, through leadership, advocacy and mutual support

I would like to compliment Stephen on his initiative in starting this course, and his contribution to the development and promotion of the library industry. We wish him luck in the completion of this first 'guinea pig' course.

Felicity Stride, Library Technician, Jackson McDonald Lawyers and WA Library Technicians Group member

Creating Information Networkers

The impetus for the establishment of this program came from three main directions.

For many years school libraries have had library monitors: students who received informal training so that they could be given some responsibility to assist library staff with basic tasks. Recently Scotch College in Melbourne has developed a more formalised training program and came up with the name 'Information Networker'.

High schools are beginning to offer lower-level TAFE courses (mostly Certificate I and II) embedded as part of a TEE course or as a standalone. It was clear that when we interviewed prospective applicants for library clerical positions they often held no library qualifications.

In addition, our college has been seeking to develop pathways for students to contribute to the wellbeing of the school community through acts of service. Students who serve the school community extensively over a minimum of two years can be awarded College Colours for Service.

Our response to these three circumstances was to integrate the Certificate II in Library/Information Services with training in the day-to-day operations of our school library. We adopted the name 'Information Networker' to replace the more dated term 'library monitor'. The Information Networker program was devised as a two-year voluntary program that students would complete outside class time. During the program, students would be expected to complete two units per semester. At the end of that time, they could also qualify for College Colours for Service.

To be able to deliver and assess the Certificate II, our teacher-librarians had to complete a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. To be able to deliver the course we entered into an auspicing agreement with Central TAFE, which, as part of this agreement, provides the course material. With the exception of the unit Assist in Circulation Services, their course booklets can be used 'as is'. Much of the course is hands-on training and includes duties such as issuing and returning loans, reference assistance, online searching, shelving, bibliography construction, ordering procedures and processing of information resources. The program is open to students

Information Networkers issuing a loan