

# Warrior librarian



**Geraldine Barkworth**

Bold Women Big Ideas



**Amanda Credaro**

Biblia, Warrior Librarian

### Transformation. Opportunity. Future trends.

...a new series of interviews with library and information professionals rising to the challenges of the modern LIS sector.

Suggestions for interviewees are always welcome. Please contact Geraldine Barkworth via e-mail. ■

Humour is essential for health and well-being. Especially for stressed and stretched library professionals. The library world has its very own Steve Martin, and she's a teacher-librarian living in Sydney. **Geraldine Barkworth** interviews **Amanda Credaro**, whose exploits are tracked on 48 000 links worldwide. Her creation, *Biblia*, the Warrior Librarian, scores over 600 000 hits on Google. Credaro says 'Don't take yourself too seriously, but make sure others do', explaining that it is at the shelf-face that librarians 'need to educate and lead management.'

Taken from Amanda's authorised unauthorised biography:

*As a child, I loved animals; I lived on the outskirts of a country town and kept horses in my backyard. We always had a dog, cat, birds, and assorted reptiles, so it was not surprising that I grew up wanting to be a veterinarian. I worked hard at school and went to university... and in 1978 became a geologist. This proved to be a financially rewarding career move. It was accompanied by a high level of job satisfaction, was intellectually challenging, and (almost) never boring. After 6 years working in the mining industry, I voluntarily left, and took a job selling steel library shelving.*

*After 18 months in the new job, I was progressively promoted from customer services supervisor (the complaints department) to State sales manager. I was well respected in the company, and had a number of huge salary jumps. So I left and became a high school science teacher. Finding this a frustrating, poorly paid job, I naturally stayed for 15 years.*

*As I approached my golden years, I took a fancy to becoming a florist – so I enrolled in a Master of Applied Science (Teacher-librarianship). As one does. Having worked like a dog to finish a two-year course in just over 10 months (setting a record that went completely uncelebrated by the university), I accepted a position as the teacher-librarian at a private senior college in the western suburbs of Sydney. Having plenty of spare time (not), I finished my second masters degree, an MEd in Information Technology. This also set a new record for course completion – and despite numerous Distinctions and High Distinctions, I did not get the Dean's Award. Again. Sigh....*

*Moving around to different types of libraries not only provided a wealth of experience, it also helped finance a lavish lifestyle notable for extravagant holidays, hot and cold running servants and a high-roller reputation in many casinos. Not.*

*In amongst the last three paragraphs, I started the satirical online library journal,*

*Warrior Librarian Weekly, created Biblia, and established and continue to maintain the Australian Casual and Relief School Library Staff database. This seems to help fill that empty void between working full-time, raising a family with my grossly underpaid husband, launching The Hindsight Institute, and maintaining my other hobbies and amusements.*

**'AB Credaro is the Steve Martin of the library world.'** (Colleen McDonald, head librarian, International College, Beirut, Lebanon). **You have web cult status internationally... what kind of role does Biblia play for the Australian library profession?**

Yes, it's really a bit of a giggle for me, having fans. But what is not widely known is the large amount of hate mail I receive. Stunning to think that there are those in our profession who apparently lack a sense of humour. A number of people have told me that they don't find *Warrior Librarian* 'funny'. The stock answer to that, of course, is that it's only so for those with a sense of humour.

As to what I can do for the Australian library community, perhaps my greatest contribution is to help support and improve morale. The importance of preserving self-esteem and inner wellness should never be overlooked.

**Where did the concept of Biblia, Warrior Librarian, come from?**

The name itself evolved early in my library career, when I started signing myself in e-mails as Amanda, the Worrier Librarian. 'Biblia' was a derivation of bibliophilist (after 'sophist').

When I first started studying for my library qualifications, I was terribly naïve. Like most people in most things, it was genuinely the case of 'the more you learn, the more you find out how little you really know!' 'Biblian' angst developed as the reality checks bounced increasingly higher; then of course my innate inability to take myself seriously further complicated matters.

**When Biblia shuts down for the night, who are you?**

Biblia is a 24/7 persona, although often in a mild-mannered guise. Subversive is not a completely inappropriate label. In some ways, Biblia is the part of me that vocalises those invectives that it would be unwise for Amanda Credaro the employee to articulate.

**What drives you? Where do you get your creative energy?**

Injustice drives me, together with impatience and my chronic astigmatic worldview. I'd like to think that my creative energy is a gift of the Muses, but more likely it's a by-product of a wicked sense of satire and an unrestrainable impulse for parody.

**What gives your life meaning and purpose?**

Money. Witness the millions I've made from *Warrior Librarian*. As if.

My message is 'Don't give up, even if they are bigger than you.' I've taken on the US Internal Revenue Service, the Australian Broadcasting Commission, and Qantas. And won. Injustice, particularly in the form of bullying, inspires a lot of what I do and say.

It's very important to me to know I'm nobody's doormat. Librarians are worth a lot more money than they'll ever get paid, considering the level of service and dedication they provide. I say, don't take yourself too seriously; but make sure others do. Working in libraries can be stressful so humour is really needed in the workplace. My ideal job would be morale officer for a large corporation. I'd ensure the corporate library was well stocked with humour books.

**Why did you write *Biblia's Guide to Warrior Librarianship: Humour for librarians who refuse to be classified?***

I'd always wanted to write a book. I also had a hankering to parachute jump, go to Vienna, and many other life experiences. I've now worked my way through about 20 per cent of my cumulative life goals. Every time I think I've finished, something else occurs to me. Twenty years ago I thought I was 80 per cent through my list.

**You've had a vast variety of careers... why the current incarnation as a teacher-librarian?**

Many of the other things I've done professionally grew out of hobbies. Equestrian photojournalism was one of these. But I'd bet that over 80 per cent of any librarian poll would show that it was a love of books and reading that prompted the majority of the profession to join it. It sure wasn't for the power and the glory!

At the moment I'm not working in a school library. My current work is with the NSW Department of Education and Education's Centre for Learning Innovation, where I'm working at the bleeding edge of educational publishing and digital storage and access. My role includes user-friendly metadata creation to aid resource discovery by untrained end-users. This is living proof of the much-published concept of the high transferability of library skills!

**And which skills do you see as highly transferable?**

I see 80 per cent of library people as fabulously well intormed, which is applicable anywhere; we have high level search skills and a methodical approach to any task involving complex, sequential work.

**What are the pivotal issues for modern librarianship?**

I'd very much like to say the major issue would be street performer protocol and digital copyrights, because this paper by Kesley scored nine citations when I checked this topic on the 'net. But I guess it may be a little further down any list of pivotal issues.

Each type of library is facing its own set of challenges: public librarians are inundated with requests for computing facilities; corporate librarians are finding their profession under threat from short-sighted management; health librarians are facing many ailments (sorry, couldn't resist that one); and many teacher-librarians are still coming to grips with basics such as nomenclature.

So in the first instance, the fulcrum would appear to be the clarification of core functions in order to justify survival, in many cases. Change management is another issue that requires careful attention, but interestingly enough, from a completely different perspective from that of management dictating to the workers. Clearly it is at the shelf-face that the greatest understanding exists of the nature of changes in the informational landscape. It is up to us to educate and lead management.

**What have you learnt from your greatest struggles?**

My greatest struggles have been with myself. I have never mastered *The Art of Letting Go*. Although it's possible to rationalise that some skirmishes are worth fighting, and the rest should be abandoned, it's always easy to be caught up in the heat of the battle. Especially ones that you've started yourself. But I think I'm getting better. I've started a number of 'small fires' recently, and I'm watching from what I hope is a safe distance.

**What are you currently reading?**

I've just finished reading Markus Zusak's latest work, *The Book Thief*. Zusak is one of my favourite Australian authors, not least because of his craftsmanship in appealing to the young adult male reluctant reader. *The Book Thief* was well out of the norm for that genre. A sad loss to teenage boys who are into sports, but a welcome arrival for readers of other tastes. In the last few days I've also finished a Patricia Cornwell (my high-carb reading), plus a snack of Greg Dinallo (*Red Ink*).

For the last 12 months, I've also been reading my way through the Pulitzer Prize winners. It's an interesting exercise, observing the preferences of the award judges. I find that it's also a valuable scaffold for maintaining, if not developing, the skill of evaluating material from genres and styles beyond the range of a librarian's personal preferences.

**What's next for Amanda Credaro?**

Long term, I have a few half-baked manuscripts I'd like to finish. They're not exclusively satirical in nature, nor are they confined to librarianship. I have been invited to join the in-house speakers bureau of my American publisher, but I'm happy to speak anywhere, anytime, and with anyone, about the importance of libraries and librarians, reading, literature, collection

development, internet use, and just about anything else. I think they're getting used to it down at the supermarket, although the plumber seems to be a little wary.



One of the many faces of the *Biblia Warrior Librarian* wary.

I was actually approached by one of the local community radio stations about doing a weekly 'book spot', but I wanted prime time rather than 2:00am. Some things are not negotiable. But back down here in the real world, I have no definite plans. At least none that are publishable. Can anyone smell smoke?

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*Geraldine Barkworth used to work in libraries and now coaches library professionals to build their people management skills and take their next great leap forward in career and life. You can receive her free e-zine by contacting her at [geraldine@boldwomenbigideas.com.au](mailto:geraldine@boldwomenbigideas.com.au) or 02 6685 1917.*

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