

A rekindled flame: getting the passion back

Out of the frying pan ...

After 2 years in the position of Library Manager with Queensland Health's Mackay Health Service District, I was feeling tired, jaded, and in desperate need of a change from my work life. I have always enjoyed my work so it was important to me to find a solution. I considered my options:

- Study
- Move within Queensland Health
- Move within my district
- Move to a different type of library, and even
- Move to a different type of employment.

Each of the potential solutions had its own issues or drawbacks:

- I was already undertaking Post-Graduate studies in e-health, undertaking FOLIOz, and completing online subject offerings from Queensland Health in conjunction with the University of Queensland.
- Moving within Queensland Health would mean relocating to another city.
- If I were to move within my district, what would I do? There are not any other staffed libraries in the district.
- I had tried working in a variety of libraries in the past and found I got the most professional and personal satisfaction from working in special libraries.
- I did not have a clue what other employment I might consider.

What to do – the 'ah ha' moment

I thought long and hard about how I could make my job more interesting and provide me with the challenge that I required. The answer eventually came to me from my own district; it was as easy as scanning advertised positions and keeping an ear to the ground.

I often assisted Medical Education Officers (MEO) with their information needs. I investigated their role and decided that I could do it too as I have experience in curriculum development and teaching. A temporary vacancy became available; I applied and accepted a three-month secondment. I was able to transfer my skills and knowledge, initially to the interview, and then to the actual role.

Into the fire ...

Strategically situated on the surgical floor of the Mackay Base Hospital, the Medical Education Unit employs six staff. I replaced a very experienced MEO and had to hit the ground running. The Unit was involved in its four-yearly arduous accreditation.



My contribution

There was an advantage in having worked in the same organisation. I had knowledge that was valuable to the MEU and it certainly lifted both the library's and my profile within the

hospital's medical fraternity. I set about organising systems, writing policies, developing curricula, teaching and running workshops, counselling junior doctors, undertaking skills development for other Unit staff, implementing evidence-based practice, promoting and initiating a journal club, upgrading Unit's access and usage of information technology and Departmental applications, and I even organised for the Unit's office rewiring!



So what did I learn?

I learned many things in my two months with the Medical Education Unit including job application and interview skills, insight into client needs and issues, developing a new team, and keeping an eye out for opportunity.

The most important lesson I learned is to not under-value my own skills. What we may take for granted, others find of benefit. I took the time to record the skills that I developed and those that I already had and place them in a document that I can use for preparing job applications. This was a good reflection tool and forced me to think further on the skills that I already have and to identify those that need further development.

Three months was a good timeframe – enough to learn, contribute, and see some of my projects come to fruition. I received excellent feedback from my Director on the contribution that I made to the Unit. My experience of secondment related to health librarianship but a public or tertiary librarian or library technician could just as easily have undertaken an alternative secondment.

Back to the frying pan...

I have been back in my substantive position for three weeks. The first week, I attended the International Congress of Medical Librarianship in Brisbane. It was a further source of inspiration and provided me with reassurance that my work standards are on a par with many of the speakers. I also recognised and that it was well and truly time for me to give back through research, writing, and presenting the knowledge that I have in librarianship.

Walking back into the library was like coming in as a new employee. It gave me the opportunity to see things in a new light and identify glaring faults requiring attention. As a result, I have already made a number of improvements – including writing this article!

I am reinvigorated and keen to get to work every day. This experience does not mean that I will stay in my position forever but it has given me a respite from stagnation and inspiration and focus for another year. Overall, I thoroughly recommend undertaking a secondment; it is of benefit to both your personal development and your employer.

I am extremely grateful to Mackay Health Service District for allowing me the opportunity to participate in the secondment and to attend the ICML.

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