

What do you do?

You know you work in a special library when questions like ‘what do you do?’ and ‘where do you work?’ become complicated.

We work in the Knowledge Services team of the Communications and Knowledge Services Unit of Health Support Services. Health Support Services delivers the shared services program for NSW Health. Shared services include information technology, food, linen, finance, human resources, and knowledge services.

The knowledge services team has two key information products – the Clinical Information Access Program (CIAP) and the Australian Resource Centre for Healthcare Innovations (ARCHI).

Bronwyn: The short answer is I work for NSW Health, as a library professional. The long answer is that I work for CIAP, a website, which provides state-wide access to a range of online health information resources including electronic journals, databases, and clinical point of care tools. Many people comment to me that I must like reading. The reality of my job is that I don’t physically touch any reading material. I look after the CIAP Helpdesk and monitor the resources. The knowledge of electronic health resources, the publishing world, and a thorough understanding of search strategies are key components of my job.

Catherine: The short answer is I’m a librarian for NSW Health. The long answer is I work on ARCHI, which is a knowledge sharing platform for health professionals. ARCHI tries to connect people to information and to each other, so that they can learn from existing programs and not reinvent the

wheel. We work mainly improving health processes, rather than clinical care. It’s not a ‘real library’ as such: it’s me, a computer, and conversation. One of my favourite things to hear in this kind of conversation with non-librarians is “I didn’t know librarians did websites.” Yes. We do everything to with creating access to information.

While we generally specialise on our own products, we also cross over and have opportunities to work with the broader team. We support the Web Services team with information management, and search function advice for the websites they develop.

Our job descriptions were recently reviewed. All of the library professional skills were kept in the new descriptions. This outcome reflects the value our (non-librarian) executive places on the unique skill set of library professionals.

Our roles within NSW Health demonstrate the value of library professionals working within a non-traditional environment adding value and order to a very eclectic set of resources. They also demonstrate some of the potential scope of the work we can do.

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AGLIN

The interests of special libraries funded by the Australian government are represented by the Australian Government Libraries Information Network (AGLIN). Member libraries service organisations ranging in size from the Department of Defence and CSIRO, to smaller agencies such as the Australian Electoral Commission. Client groups include Australian government employees who research, develop and implement government policy as well as the Australian government, parliament and the Australian community.

After some twenty years of discussions and submissions to government on the need for a coordinating body for government special libraries, the Federal Libraries Information Network (FLIN) was established in May 1993. The name of the Network was changed in 2003 to reflect changed government terminology. AGLIN continues to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of library and information service to government. This has been achieved through representation, professional development and training, networking, collaboration and consortium arrangement, as well as partnerships with ALIA and National Library of Australia (NLA).

AGLIN is an independent incorporated body funded by its members. It is managed by an Executive in accordance with its constitution. The Executive is drawn from the general membership and elected at the Annual General Meeting. Included in the Executive is a representative from the NLA who provides valuable advice and information, and the AGLIN Aurora Leadership scholarship recipient for that year so that they can reinforce some of their newfound skills. The Executive is supported by ongoing taskforces including Consortium and Training and Development, and ad hoc working parties. Since 2008, AGLIN volunteers have been supported by a part time Executive Support Officer, located at ALIA House in Canberra.

Since its inception, AGLIN has facilitated cooperative schemes. The Consortium Taskforce has negotiated deals with a number of vendors. AGLIN members assisted the

Department of Defence in establishing their standing offers for Publications and Library & Information Services Contract Personnel. These Standing Offers provide an effective and efficient purchasing tool that is compliant with Australian Government procurement guidelines. Many AGLIN members also share reciprocal inter-library loan arrangements.

Professional development and training supports staff in member libraries. Affordable and subsidised training has been delivered through forums ranging from the one-hour Information Sharing Forums arranged in collaboration with ALIA to two-day mini conferences. Topics focus on issues of relevance to government libraries, including procurement, providing evidence of the value of your library, best practice and benchmarking. In 2010, AGLIN is partnering with ALIA’s Special Libraries Advisory Committee to present the special libraries stream at the ALIA Access Conference in Brisbane in September. Additional professional development opportunities are available through scholarships to attend conferences and the Aurora Leadership Institute. Discounts are also available to AGLIN members for training provided by ALIA and CAVAL.

Continuing financial and governance pressures require resilient libraries that can adapt to provide services and resources to meet the changing goals of their organisation. Membership and active participation in AGLIN activities and events achieves a strong interactive network regarded as an integral part of the government information framework. Further details about AGLIN can be found at <http://www.nla.gov.au/aglin>.

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