

EEI... ENERGISE, ENTHUSE, INSPIRE

EEI gives a voice to the new generation of library and information professionals. If you have any suggestions or topics for this column, please contact the column co-ordinator Lesa Maclean at maclean.lesa@gmail.com

Library cadets – recruiting for the future

If libraries of the future need new thinking, Todd Orme has an idea where it might be found.

Libraries are an evolving organism. They are at the mercy of new technology and its users. Adoption of such technologies have been widely publicised as crucial in maintaining the longevity and relevance of libraries into the future. A key determinant of libraries maintaining their knowledge, skills and aptitude in the technological age is the 'blooding' of a new generation of technologically savvy librarians, which poses the question – how can libraries encourage, facilitate and successfully recruit new graduates to the library industry?

According to Stephen Abram via his blog, *stephenslighthouse.com*,

24% of employed librarians are 55 years of age or older. This figure isn't surprising to many in the library industry I am sure, but it does paint an interesting picture. Further, Abram expresses that growth in the librarianship industry and job opportunities are expected to be favourable in the near future, because "a large number of librarians are likely to retire in the coming decade". This situation was evident within Deakin University Library where in 2008, over 28% of its professional staff was aged over 55, and 53% aged over 50.

With an aging, experienced workforce nearing retirement, the challenge was – how do you preserve the valuable knowledge possessed by long serving staff? How do you attract new professional librarians with the skills, knowledge and attributes to fill vacant positions, and lead libraries into the future? My current position at Deakin University Library provides an example of a successful strategy to achieve this.

I am currently employed on a full time basis as a library professional cadet. Deakin University Library's cadet program offers a wonderful opportunity to combine work and study over a three year period. I am one of seven cadets across three of Deakin's four campuses. As cadets, we are able to actively participate in a comprehensive, on-the-job rotational training program that targets all areas of the library – teaching, learning and research services, information management and access, finance, business and marketing - allowing us to gain practical experience and develop leadership skills, whilst completing formal study with study leave and financial support. The program includes a structured approach designed to equip us with the necessary skills and experience to be competitive for future employment in the highly dynamic library sector. We are given every chance to participate in professional development opportunities and freedom to participate in all library-related activities.

"While the body of people recruited [to MLS programs] from libraries is generally diverse and guarantees new librarians with great faith in the profession, it tends to make for an older constituency of students, deeply rooted in libraries as they exist. The library of the future may have difficulty being born in that culture. If the field needs new blood, needs younger librarians who have more of their careers ahead of them and thinking that is brand new and out of the box, it needs a younger generation of recruits to go with the strong librarians brought in from libraries today to create the library of the future."

Programs such as these provide the means, motivation and inspiration to attract and enthuse new graduates to undertake a career in libraries, whether they are unsure of their future path or possess a particular interest in libraries. Participants are supported to gain a professional library qualification, whilst gaining on-the-job experience, providing the ideal platform for a long and successful career as library professionals.

As John N. Berry III, long-time author in *Library Journal* expressed, "While the body of people recruited [to MLS programs] from libraries is generally diverse and guarantees new librarians with great faith in the profession, it tends to make for an older constituency of students, deeply rooted in libraries as they exist. The library of the future may have difficulty being born in that culture. If the field needs new blood, needs younger librarians who have more of their careers ahead of them and thinking that is brand new and out of the box, it needs a younger generation of recruits to go with the strong librarians brought

in from libraries today to create the library of the future."

This provides a great summary of what is required to be undertaken by libraries in the future – something that I feel incredibly lucky to be involved in. Cadet programs such as the one I am currently undertaking at Deakin University Library are a superb way to entice the 'new blood' as outlined by Berry into the industry. I would certainly recommend it.

Todd Orme
t.orme@deakin.edu.au

Todd Orme is a Library Professional Cadet with Deakin University Library. After working on a casual basis in libraries while completing an undergraduate degree in commerce, Todd decided on the completion of his commerce degree that the library industry provided most interest to him. Currently undertaking a Master of Information Studies at Charles Sturt University, Todd has a keen interest in the future of library management – in particular the role of recruitment and succession planning in ensuring that libraries continue to meet the needs of users by using relevant and revolutionary technologies to facilitate teaching and learning.

Twitter: @todd_orme



Cadetship is a great start – Todd Orme

Meet EEI Coordinator, Lesa Maclean at NLS5 Lesa will be presenting at the NLS5 conference in Perth in September. If you would like to meet with Lesa, leave a message at the ALIA stand in the exhibition area. Ideas for columns always welcome!

Correction: In June inCite, Carla Daws article stated she attended Information Online with funding support from ALIA New Graduates Committee. InCite has been advised this funding was from the ALIA New Generation Advisory Committee. Our apologies for any confusion.