



ILN

A MEETING PLACE FOR LIBRARIANS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

The International Librarians Network is the largest mentoring program for librarians on earth. **JENNY MUSTEY** tells us about her experience as a participant and as the Australian Ambassador.

Over the last two years I have had the privilege of being part of the International Librarians Network (ILN), which has opened my own world in a way I could never have imagined. I now have my own mini global network of five colleagues from different countries and a wonderful connection to fellow ILN Country Ambassadors.

The opportunities for professional development, mentoring and connection are what drew me to this program. Keen to get involved in international librarianship, I participated in the pilot round of the program, which was the perfect way to start.

From small beginnings, it grew rapidly, and now involves some 2,200 library professionals from over 80 countries. A librarian can apply to be partnered with another from another country. There are now two rounds of the program a year, in which partnerships are facilitated – each one lasting four months.

Its rapid growth and success is due to the vision, dedication and extremely hard work of ILN Directors Alyson Dalby, Clare McKenzie and Kate Byrne. All of the ILN team volunteer their time – an incredible commitment that has created an impressive professional development opportunity reaching all corners of the world. Through their constant strategic planning and evaluation the Directors have established a

strong structure for the organisation that addresses sound legal, risk and financial management.

As well as the ILN Directors and board, there are two Social Media Coordinators: Lisa Miller, who looks after a very active Facebook page and Twitter account; and Brett Williams, who is developing a wonderful ILN presence on LinkedIn. They have been working incredibly hard to spread the word, encouraging discussion and engagement with participants and the wider professional library industry. The ILN website – www.interlibnet.org – is the best starting point to find any information relating to the ILN. It is constantly being updated and provides more details of the ILN structure, the timeframes and the application process, as well as guest posts from Directors, Ambassadors and participants.

The Country Ambassadors are crucial in promoting and encouraging the involvement of library professionals in their own countries. Ambassadors need to know the best and most appropriate ways of spreading the message. A number of countries have been involved since the beginning; Australia always features strongly as does Nigeria, the Philippines and the United States.

Apart from my role as Australian Ambassador I have also participated in four rounds since the pilot in 2013. I have met colleagues from the Maldives, New Zealand, Afghanistan, Canada and the United States. Each partnership has been a positive exchange of information and I consider these colleagues also to be my friends. During each partnership



**INTERNATIONAL
LIBRARIANS
NETWORK**



Jenny Mustey

we communicated either via email or social media. It is really up to the participants how they wish to communicate. The commitment to the program means exchanging information at least once a week for an hour, if possible. Social media makes it easier to do this, and the ILN team support participants by providing discussion topics to help spark conversation. Due to the nature of the program, everyone's experience is unique. The ILN is a meeting place for librarians with plenty of opportunity to connect with new people and discover novel, amazing and interesting things about each other's workplace and country.

Some of my personal highlights from my partnerships have been:

- Discussing the challenges of technology, training and professional development in each country
- Sitting on a train between Melbourne and Bendigo and talking to my partner in Afghanistan via messenger chat; I could never have imagined that possibility
- Implementing a program idea from my partner in Canada at our library service and giving them feedback on how we adapted it to our needs
- Showing my workplace via Skype to my partner in the U.S. and meeting her colleagues

There are so many other interesting things that have happened and I know it will continue to be a blast. It's such a fabulous way of making connections, helping colleagues, learning together and building a network of like-minded professionals.

The best thing is that it is free, open to everyone in the industry – working or studying – and is fully supported by a great ILN team. Please consider getting involved; email contact@interlibnet.org for more information. Expressions of interest are now being taken on the ILN website for the next round that starts early next year.

JENNY MUSTEY

Library Services Manager – Shire of Campaspe
j.mustey@campaspe.vic.gov.au