

PEN PALS



ACROSS THE GLOBE

Connie Pan is a librarian at Central Queensland University (CQU) Library in Sydney, a large public and very international university. Shannon Robinson is a subject specialist librarian at Denison University Library in Ohio, a small undergraduate college. Pen pals through the International Librarians Network, Connie and Shannon want to share what they each learnt from their 'global colleague' in a library across the world.

When we were first put in touch by the ILN pen pal network, we were both tentative about what we would have in common. We started our conversation with weekly emails, and quickly realised that though we worked in libraries at the opposite ends of the globe, and which on first appearance looked entirely different, there were many similar underlying policies and practices.

CQU has one library system even though the university has many campuses across the country and has a floating collection between library branches, while Denison University participates in two consortia. At the core, our libraries function very similarly.

We also found that despite very different backgrounds and training, the essence of our roles was not disparate. Our day to day work duties are very much alike – helping students, information literacy class and answering reference questions. The only difference is that Shannon is working with art students and Connie works with international students.

From simple conversational exchanges, we found we could tap into a wealth of accumulated knowledge in another library that would otherwise be inaccessible and unknown to us individually. We were also able to share technical expertise and innovative approaches to managing information, including materials such as library guides. Keeping up with changing technology is a large part of both of our jobs and it has been great to talk with each other about our personal learning experiences with technology.

We were each also able to get a taste of what it was like to work in an entirely different library setting, which then informed and changed our own way of working. For example, CQU Library's methods of outreach and instruction, by the nature of the university, are quite different from Denison

University Library. This has encouraged us both to think differently about our approaches to students, both in person and through our virtual systems.

We are both very keen and proactive about our ongoing professional development, and we have also swapped ideas and experiences about professional development. We have each learned about our respective professional associations, including ALIA and the Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) in Australia, and the American Library Association (ALA) and Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) in America.

Aside from work, and as time progressed, we have also learnt a lot about each other's lives. We enjoy seeing a new email in the inbox. We are ILN pen pals for sure, and now also long distance friends who chat about our workplaces and our hobbies.

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ALIA NATIONAL 2016 CONFERENCE



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