



FOCUS WITHOUT BLINKERS

When starting out in your LIS or GLAMR career, you might have your heart set on obtaining a specific job title. But, as ALISA HOWLETT says, this focus in a rapidly changing environment could blinker you from professional development opportunities and pathways you hadn't thought of or expected.

As I write this, I will have completed my first week as Coordinator (Evidence-Based Practice) at the University of Southern Queensland. This newly created role involves engaging the different areas of the library service to help ensure the best available evidence is collected and used to support ongoing improvement, performance measurement and decision-making, as well as foster the development of an evidence-based practice culture within the library. My new role has come at a time when all my professional experience to date can be directed towards an end I've become most passionate about as an information professional. I've come into my own and feel ready to take the next step in my career.

For those who are starting out, or at an early career stage, here are two key lessons I've learned over the last seven years or so.

LESSON 1: Your ideal job may not have been created yet.

The LIS (or GLAMR) profession is constantly changing. Job titles are coming and going. So for me, chasing a particular title was meaningless in guiding my professional development. Some might feel disoriented by not knowing exactly where they might end up. A bit of tough love here: accept this feeling and move forward.

Developing self-awareness by engaging in reflective practice from an early stage in the career is important in identifying opportunities and potential pathways. Be strategic with professional development planning by pursuing opportunities that spark your interest,


build capabilities or develop the skills you want as an information professional.

Follow your interests and learn all you can along the way because you never know if your ideal job might be just around the corner.

LESSON 2: Be flexible with where you start. Don't put blinkers on.

Your LIS degree is a time for exploration. Even your first few years as a new graduate are a time for exploring, gaining experience and putting what you've learned into practice. This is not a time to beat yourself up because you didn't get that entry-level job in the information sector you had your heart set on.

When I entered the profession in 2010, all I wanted to do was work in an academic library. I thought I had my career path figured out. But I found that I couldn't get a look in the door for the mile-long line of others ahead of me. I had to make a start, as I needed an income, so I looked elsewhere. My first library job was 'Technical Librarian' for a regional airline. In 18 months, in conjunction with my study, I learned a heap about core library functions, client relationships and the role of the library in contributing to the business. From aviation, I worked in government record-keeping and information management and archives, where I did a lot of professional 'growing up'.

You can find career lessons in any information sector you work in. All of them contribute to your makings as a library and information professional. 

ALISA HOWLETT, AALIA (CP)

Coordinator (Evidence-Based Practice), Library Services
University of Southern Queensland
alisa.howlett@usq.edu.au
@acrystelle