

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE FOR PD



Frank Ponte

If your career is stagnating, then it could be because you're not reaching out to the wider LIS community, as FRANK PONTE writes.

The realisation

I've been working as a librarian and manager for over 15 years and, for the most part, I enjoyed my work and career progression.

So it was quite a surprise to me when I became increasingly disillusioned and dissatisfied with my job. I was losing confidence, thinking critically became a chore, and a general feeling of indifference permeated my daily routines. Thoughtful ideas had abandoned me and it felt as if my career had stagnated. What led me to this feeling

was unclear. I'd always loved my job. It got me out of bed in the morning and I was a pragmatic, industrious and dedicated worker. So why was I feeling so meh?

In the initial stages of my career I made connections, networked, attended conferences and forums. I was keen on learning and embracing change, and I was lucky to be presented with rewarding professional opportunities. As I began to feel a sense of confidence in my role and gained a handful of professional achievements, I started to disconnect from professional groups and social gatherings. This happened over a long period of time, and it was more a reaction to greater responsibility at work and additional workload than a conscious decision to disconnect.

It wasn't until the end of 2014 that I became mindful that I had disengaged from my professional peer group. I hadn't maintained a connection with the large network of librarians and library managers that I'd met throughout my career, and my role at work was becoming increasingly isolated through organisational restructure and a general sentiment from administrators that the library was somehow anachronistic.

I had no like-minded peers with whom I could discuss ideas and I was minimally engaging with other professionals through social media, as the organisation frowned on communication via Facebook, Twitter and other professional and social networks. All of this culminated in apathy and indifference regarding my career, and I began looking for a solution.

The approach

Not wanting to wallow in indifference, I acted. To begin, I researched multiple massive open online courses (MOOCs), and I uncovered one that would assist me in

understanding LinkedIn a little more. I wanted to develop an online presence that was active, connected and current and I found this course – Create an Expert LinkedIn Profile for Job Search (bit.ly/2mlDDnL). Here's what I learned from the course:

1. Don't make it another résumé.

Most LinkedIn profiles list roles and responsibilities. Get the professional edge by listing your accomplishments.

2. Decide to post at least one article each day.

Do this to ensure an active profile. I also connected my LinkedIn account with my partially active Twitter account and ensured that all posts were delivered to both platforms. I also engaged with others and provided short editorials on my posts.

3. Ensure you have a pithy headline on your LinkedIn profile.

Most people neglect to fill in the headline, which means that LinkedIn defaults to your job title. But if you include specific professional keywords in your headline, you are likely to appear in more search results.

The completion of this MOOC gave me the momentum to return to my higher education studies. I enrolled in the Master of Information Studies course at Charles Sturt University. Mary Carroll, the course director, was wonderful in helping me select my specialisation stream. I'm at the point where I have only two subjects to complete and I'm extremely motivated to finish.

I joined ALIA some years earlier but hadn't really engaged with any of the committees or professional development activities. This was all about to change as I embraced my fear of the unknown and offered to join the ALIA Reference and Information Services (RAIS) committee in Victoria.

There was nothing to worry about, as I was warmly welcomed by Sue Masey and the other committee members. As a member of ALIA RAIS (Vic) I have made contact with a wider network of individuals in our sector, learned from my peers and coordinated events with my colleagues.

I also joined the ALIA PD Scheme, which has enabled me to earn points and use postnominals. It has assisted me in my learning journey by providing me the opportunity to reflect on each professional development activity and record my insights. It's also a great resource to use for your own organisational work plans. I eagerly await the PD postings from Amy Walduck, ALIA Queensland State

Manager, each month. The ALIA PD Scheme also has excellent webinars, readings and courses that are run for each sector.

What I've learned

Don't disengage with your profession. This was by far my greatest light-bulb moment. Everything changed the moment I realised that my apathy was a product of disengagement from my professional network. The steps I took to reintroduce myself to my profession were confidence boosters and spurred me on to challenge myself with new projects.

It's now clear to me that lifelong learning is something I do without question and engage willingly in. My aim is to incorporate an element of professional development in everything I do.

In the years since this realisation I have changed my role and my workplace, taken on greater challenges at work, and ensured that I allocate time for professional development each week. I regularly engage with webinars, professional development seminars and reflect on my learning. Even if my takeaway learning is one key point, my participation is worth it.

I am now in an exciting and rewarding role at RMIT University, Melbourne, where I have been for over a year. This is what I've done in this time:

- Spoke at an OER forum at RMIT Vietnam in 2016.
- Delivered a CRIG workshop on microlearning.
- Wrote a blog piece for EdApp, a mobile learning management system;
- Developed, with another colleague, 10 experimental microlessons on academic integrity in EdApp;
- Developed a Creative Commons referencing tool called Easy Cite for the RMIT Library website; and
- Joined a project team that will create an academic integrity module with a digital credential for RMIT University.

I am always learning. I am always reading. I am always scanning social media. I am more socially connected than ever before. My ever-growing network inspires me and I do not fear any opportunities that come my way; I now, in fact, embrace them. ✨

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