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A professional development journey

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A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY

Professional development has been a bit of a journey for me. For the first 13 years of my professional career I worked primarily in Melbourne theological libraries. My connection with ALIA was limited and most of my professional networks were with members of the Australian & New Zealand Theological Library Association (ANZTLA). Managing small special academic libraries provided me with the opportunity to develop a broad range of skills and to gain experience in a number of areas. However, managing work demands along with a busy family life meant that there never seemed to be enough time left in the day to take a more intentional approach to my own PD.

All this changed in 2003 when I resumed my ALIA professional membership after a break of several years. I think that this decision was influenced by the mini life crisis of me turning forty around this time. I had been thinking about where I wanted to be in the future and what steps I needed to take now in order to get there. This kind of questioning ultimately led to some significant changes in both my personal and professional life.

I took my ALIA membership a step further in 2003/4 by becoming a member of the association's PD Scheme. Initially, this was a way of focusing on my career and being more intentional about goal-setting. Some of my personal professional goals were quite scary for me and included things like overcoming my fear of speaking in public. Joining ALIA's CPD Scheme helped me to step out of my comfort zone. It gave me the confidence to try new things and encouraged me to seek support for initiatives I would not have previously attempted.

One of the first things I did was complete ALIA's career development kit. This gave me 20 of the 30 points required each year to be a part of the scheme. The huge range of eligible activities meant that it seemed relatively easy to accumulate the required points. In 2006 I was able to apply for the ALIA Certified Practitioner Certificate and in 2007 I was awarded an ALIA Associate Fellowship. These were practical benefits of joining ALIA's PD Scheme. Having the extra post nominals after your name looks good on your CV and certainly helps when you are taking that next step on your career path.

My career development plan influenced my decision to seek formal qualifications for the work-based research project I was undertaking at the time. The outcome of this process was that I eventually completed a thesis as part of a Master of Arts by Research. I was extremely fortunate to be awarded an Australian Postgraduate Award and this scholarship enabled me to work full-time on my research during 2006. Often one opportunity seems to lead to another and this research project ultimately gave me the opportunity to present my first ever conference paper and have my first peer-reviewed article published. And when it was all over I had the confidence to apply for my current position as Team Leader, Resource Services at Southern Cross University in Lismore.

Only a few years ago I would have considered myself a quiet-achiever in my own small library. By making the decision to take my PD more seriously I have been able to tackle some personal scary things and achieve success in (for me) previously uncharted waters. I hope that my journey might encourage others to tackle some of their own 'scary things' and embark on PD journeys that they, like me, never previously imagined themselves being able to undertake.

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