

Health Library Staff Member Spotlight

Glynis Jones

Team Leader Librarian, South Metropolitan Health Service

Glynis.jones@health.wa.gov.au

When did you first start working in a health library?

I started as a health librarian at Curtin University in 1996 and after a long career in academic libraries (moving in and out of health roles) I finally had the opportunity to move to a truly dedicated health library early in 2022.

How did you join health librarianship?

My current position popped up in my LinkedIn profile at a time when I was neither looking for new opportunities nor considering any career change. I was happily and gainfully employed in a senior leadership role at the University of Western Australia as an Associate University Librarian, responsible for research and academic support, teaching and learning support, and frontline services to students. But the idea of working in a hospital library, and in a leadership role, was an opportunity too good not to explore further as this was always where I had imagined I would be when I graduated with my library qualification. I applied for the position and the rest is history, as they say.

What was your previous employment background, prior to health libraries?

My first position in a Library was as the inter-library loans clerk at the medical library at the University of Melbourne. With the encouragement of clients, I transitioned across the road to Royal Melbourne Hospital where I trained as a registered nurse. Whilst I very much enjoyed my time as a nurse, I felt a definite pull towards libraries and in the early 1990s I undertook studies at Curtin University to become a librarian.

In 1996 I took my first role as a professional librarian at Curtin University Library in a small branch library providing support to the allied health schools of physiotherapy, occupational therapy and podiatry. Over a 25-year career that has spanned 6 universities across 3 states of Australia, I have worked in both client services and technical services roles, predominantly in senior management positions. Along the way I completed a Graduate Diploma in Higher and Tertiary Education which has been useful in developing and delivering research and information literacy training to clients.

How do you describe your current position?

My current position is such an interesting and exciting role, leading a team of incredibly knowledgeable and skilled staff to deliver client services across the South

and East Metropolitan Health Services in Perth, WA. Our client base is a diverse staff cohort of more than 15,000 people ranging from university students through to clinicians, researchers and senior executives.

I see my team as being the interface between the clients and the collections, and we provide extensive literature searching services, training and support for clients in the use of information resources to inform evidence based practice, scholarly communication and research support, and a general reference service. Our services range from being very hands on to self-service at the point of need via online resources, and we are increasingly providing support online via Teams as well as physically in person.

What do you find most interesting about your current position?

Everything! Being new to my role, every aspect that I discover and start to explore is interesting, but if I must pick one, it would be the interactions with clients. Talking with them about their roles, their research, and why and how they will use information to inform their practice, is something that I will never tire of and it reinforces the importance of what we do as health librarians.

What has been your biggest professional challenge?

Managing a team of about 50 staff plus 35 casuals, to continually deliver services to students and staff across 6 library sites at a university, during the COVID pandemic would have to be up there on the list, for sure. Add to that, the need to implement organisational change to significantly reduce the salary budget, during the very same pandemic, and I will admit to feeling a little tired at the end of 2021. Having said that, it was a great learning experience and I am confident that I contributed to some positive outcomes for both the Library and the students and staff of the university.

What would you do if you were not a health librarian?

Good question. I guess if my current role hadn't been available to me, I would still be happily working in a university library, but that's not a very interesting answer. There was a small time when I first moved to regional Tasmania when I was unable to find work as a librarian so I enrolled in a professional dressmaking course at the Tasmanian Polytechnic and thought it might be fun to make costumes for movies or theatre. But then I got a job at the University of Tasmania and the closest I now get to making costumes is making the clothes I wear to work.

What do you consider the main issues affecting health librarianship today?

As a new player in this field, I'm not sure that I am in the best position to answer this. What I have seen so far are challenges in maintaining a skilled workforce and managing succession planning; the ever-increasing costs for subscriptions above and beyond CPI along with the open access movement for both publications and data; and the exponential growth in published information requiring new ways to synthesise content and an increasing demand for support for systematic reviews and

meta-analyses. Whilst I guess these are issues, it's such a negative word, I prefer to think of them as opportunities.

What is your greatest achievement?

I have no idea, perhaps it's still ahead of me! In 2021 I was awarded Senior Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy for my sustained record of effectiveness in support for teaching and learning. I felt very proud to achieve this award, alongside academic colleagues, in recognition of the value that librarians can add to higher education.

Do you have a favourite website or blog?

No, I am a big fan of Google and Google Scholar and tend to search for information at the point of need. Too many alerts and I might fall into a pit of information overload despair.

What advice would you give to a new member of HLA or a new graduate information professional?

Hmmm, is this akin to me writing advice to my younger self? This question had me stumped for a while but how about the following:

- Be open to all possibilities and opportunities and try not to be too rigid in your idea of a career path. Good career opportunities come to those who are open to new challenges.
- Don't be afraid of management and leadership roles, they are much more rewarding and not as hard as you might imagine.
- Finally, don't fall for the imposter syndrome. Librarians have a lot to offer and we should never forget this.

