Health Library Staff Member Spotlight

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When did you first start working in a health library?

My first health library role started in 2013, which coincidentally was my first library role ever. I loved every moment of it and am eternally grateful to my first manager for taking a chance on me.

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

My first career was a digital producer and website manager. I learned so many relevant skills for libraries, information presentation and management through my first career working experiences.

How do you describe your current position?

I am the Director - Library and Information Literacy Services for Northern Health. This role involves leadership of a team of passionate information professionals; promotion of library services to the wider organisation through multiple channels; strategic leadership of library services and resources to deliver to NH organisational goals; and delivery of education, training and resources that support health information literacy for NH staff and students.

What do you find most interesting about your current position?

The whole thing - there are so many opportunities to continually improve and refine as an information professional, a leader and an individual. No two days are ever the same and I'm continually excited by how the library can evolve and expand our support of Northern Health. There are opportunities everywhere, which I find very motivating.

What has been your biggest professional challenge?

I think my current role and my move across to hospital libraries, as distinct from health libraries in other settings would be the biggest professional challenge of recent times. I am delighted to have had this opportunity and I am still in a very active learning phase, there is so much to know and master in health libraries. As a leader, there is also always more to learn and the Director aspect of my work offers a lot of scope for professional growth and development.

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

Ummmm, I'm going to assume I can still be a librarian. So I would hope to continue my librarian work in a different aspect of libraries. I'm most curious about State Libraries so perhaps I'd try and work in that setting.

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

Questions abound around how we should best qualify and acknowledge librarians as a profession; integration of classic evidence-based health literature sources (journals, bibliographic databases etc) with a changed user information seeking landscape (ie: search engines – general and academic); and the continual challenge of communicating library value and contributions to the health organisations we are part of along with positioning our libraries for growth as our organisations grow.

What is your greatest achievement?

I am passionate about library outreach and I'm most proud of my contribution to the Dementia Australia Library Popup libraries, which grew from one pilot site to an active service across Victoria. It was so exciting to see library resources become available to a broader audience on a regular basis.

Do you have a favourite website or blog?

At one point in time I would have nominated Twitter, which I still find useful for brief library updates from health libraries and libraries of other types, however as Twitter is experiencing changes at present, it is unclear whether this will remain my preferred forum for general library news and views.

What is your favourite non-work activity?

Aside from spending time with my family, I continue to practice my skills as an equestrian. Still so much to learn about horses and horsewomanship.

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

Whilst you may think you know which library sector interests you, I urge you to spend some time in other sectors. Each has its own challenges and much can be learned from working in each setting. The experience gained can be repurposed to health library settings, I regularly find my knowledge of secondary and tertiary education libraries informs my thinking and decision-making in my hospital library. All experience give us something worthwhile.

