



ALIA WA Library Technicians Conference Grant

eXperiences, eXcellence, eXpectations:

I would like to begin with saying thank you to the WA Library Technicians Group for providing the opportunity and the means to attend the conference.

Writing the essay was actually where the conference experience began. The essay topic led me to look further into what ALIA can provide for library technicians, and it also caused me to contact the WALT group, a first step in networking and career development. That first step was setting the scene for an inspiring and educational experience at the conference.

The conference was preceded by a day of industry tours around Sydney. I chose to go on two bus tours around North Sydney and Bankstown. In North Sydney we visited Sydney Shore Grammar School, the Australian Catholic University Library and EBSCO.

In Bankstown, the most interesting tour was LJ Cullens Bookbinders. Working in a legal library we have a large number of serials and reports that are bound. Visiting the factory to see how it is all done was a real eye opener. We saw step by step how the books are bound or repaired, some by hand and some using timeless technology!

We also visited Australian National Archives, which wasn't much to look at but interesting to hear about how they work and the things they deal with. The bus tours were also my first opportunity to meet some of the other delegates in a casual environment.

I arrived at the Centre on Wednesday morning, after a little expedition navigating the Sydney Streets and various methods of transport, in time to hear the first keynote speaker, Alex Byrne from IFLA. The first five minutes foreshadowed the whole conference as I began busily writing notes on things I knew nothing about and was keen to hear more.

Everyday I attended various keynote speakers, sessions and workshops. I will briefly discuss some of my favourites.

Flying blind: the provision of library services to the blind and vision impaired by Rachel Johnson.

Whilst in Sydney I stayed with relatives. My Uncle has been blind since birth but has achieved so much in his life. This gave me a personal interest in Rachel's session about the provision of specialist free resources to a national community of clients, of whom only 1% ever visit the library. Technology and awareness has made a great difference to the lives of vision impaired and blind people around Australia.



At the end of the first day we had 'communities of interest', I joined the 'Specials - health, law and government' group. This was an opportunity to hear from other people in the same type of library and was one of the most beneficial sessions for information and networking. I think these community meetings should have been held two or three times throughout the conference.

Session six on day two, Morphing the Technician by Rebecca Evans from ALIA. This was a great session. I came away from it believing I can get more out of my career and having a few goals in mind. The ALIA career development kit and scheme are fantastic ways to get started whatever stage you're at or whatever your goals might be. Having received ALIA membership as part of the Essay Grant, this is something I will take advantage of.

A more practical session was Tips and tricks on book repair by Dorothy Pearson. Although this session was 'sold out', a few of us were able to sneak in and watch anyway, and I'm glad I did. Dorothy was a great presenter and we all agreed she should be making a book repairs video - cooking show style. She has some neat tips and tricks from her many years experience and combined with the tour of the bookbinders I now have a clear picture of how best to repair books.

Session three day three, RFID Standards by Brian Dunne from 3M. Just the day before at the conference I heard about RFID for the first time. Radio frequency identification is the new technology making multiple self check and stock take easier, faster and more accurate. Brian went into detail of how RFID works and the standards in place, or not in place, in Australia. This was very exciting for me, and I have already convinced my Manager to begin looking at using an RFID system in our library.

Also on the technical side, the afternoon plenary session What's in the box by Steve King of ASI Solutions, was very educational. He cleared up some of the technical jargon and explained some of the recent technological developments and trends in the computer world. This talk was cut short due to time constraints but I would like to have heard more and for there to have been even more detail and time for me to grasp each concept.

Two very funny, very entertaining speakers were Robert Knight Paradise lost or opportunity knocking and of course Elliot Goblet. Robert Knight showed a slide show of rural libraries with a hilarious commentary of his own experiences. His main point was that we should seek opportunities, take risks and make the most of what happens.

Elliot was a fun way to wind up the conference with humour that required no brainwork! I also really enjoyed Drum Beats who had most of us tapping sticks or shaking eggs and shouting in our seats.

The exhibition showcased many library products and services and at first I thought there was not much relevant to a law library. However by the end of the week after talking to people and looking at the displays over and over I did get more out of it than just a cup of coffee!



Not to forget the social events! I attended the first timers' dinner on Tuesday night at Docks Hotel. The food was good and I got to meet some more delegates who were also attending a conference for the first time. On Wednesday night we had the Opening cocktail party. Although there were no cocktails in sight, it was nice to have a relaxing drink with new friends at the end of the first day. On Thursday night we had 'A night to remember' at Dockside. The food was delicious, the band was rocking and everyone let their hair down! Friday night closed the conference with the Farewell drinks, and we finally managed to get the WA delegates together for a photo.

I found the morning teas, lunch and afternoon tea breaks in the exhibition foyer to be some of the most valuable times for meeting people and networking. I found it funny that most of the people I became friends with, and networked with were other WA people, but when we all get back to our everyday jobs, they are the ones I will be working with and contacting, and it will be great to know the person on the other end of my inter library loan request!

All in all, I had a truly fantastic time. The conference was an educational eXperience, which inspired me to strive for eXcellence, it exceeded my eXpectations, and broadened my horizons, leading me to raise my own eXpectations. I can't wait for the neXt one.