

Sharyn English

BACK 2 BASICS PERTH 2011 CONFERENCE REPORT



Firstly, I must commend the committee, they have most certainly set a very high standard in all aspects of event management and produced a first rate programme. I have no doubt that all who attended benefited and learnt a great deal from the line up of outstanding speakers.

I am indeed indebted to the WALT group for establishing, then distributing, the student grant that enabled me to attend the 2011 ALIA National Library & Information Technicians Conference.

The theme of the Conference, **Back to Basics** was delivered across three streams: Personal Development, Professional Development and Client Services. I was very pleased to see the personal development presentations included. This facet of learning is an often neglected part of workplace training in all professions.

Rachel Green <http://www.rachelgreen.com/> was an absolute delight and added an energy that not only filled the room but I am sure spilled over. Rachel exudes confidence. She proved herself to be a skilled teacher, able to interject humour constantly throughout her presentation. Rarely is learning such fun; a wonderful talent. The skills Rachel advocated on how to Drop the ball or more precisely NOT catch the ball, to Monitor your Mind and confidently converse with others, will considerably benefit all delegates, both in the workplace and in every aspect of their lives. <http://www.confident-woman.com.au/>

The Benjamin Andrew footpath library was a major drawcard for me since I had previously seen a television programme about this unique and altruistic foundation. Sarah Garnett was the focus of my essay and did not disappoint. Her presentation touched us all and many were moved to tears – it was truly inspirational. <http://www.footpathlibrary.org/about.html> . There are many delegates now keen to contribute to a Footpath Library here in Perth.

However what really did surprise me was Andy Wright <http://www.storyteller.net.au/>. I had very little, if any, interest in hearing about storytelling. I stand corrected. He was fantastic; what a story he has to tell. I had a lump in my throat when I heard his very own true tale about his early life and, most significantly, an encounter he had as a small child with a librarian and the subsequent effect it had on his future career choices. This was a timely and important reminder for all of us: of the impact our behaviour towards others has and the difference one person can make.

In the professional development stream, I was very impressed with the presentation titled "Preparing an Engaging Presentation". I only hope that one day I will be able to emulate all the pointers that Dr Lisa Cluett from UWA was able to succinctly and expertly pass on to us. This satellite event at the State Library was most worthwhile and to date, the best presentation on this topic I have attended. Lisa has an infectious personality and went on to demonstrate her ability to "walk her talk" when she engaged us all again at the Pan Pacific with her workshop on *Spreading the emerging technology "virus"*.

Lisa is the project leader of a federally funded research project working across WA to investigate how staff learn about, apply and spread knowledge of emerging technologies. <http://www.altc-viral.groupsie.com/main/summary> . We were to discover how we can all learn and lead others. This was a most informative session on the dynamics of learning and the different approaches available in the workplace. Lisa encouraged us to think small and use a different and more informal approach with social media technology. Practical solutions that are simple to implement include using:

- ❖ "The book club" approach; sit down together, more conversational style
- ❖ Ask questions - let people know you are curious and enthusiastic
- ❖ Job role is not of key importance, virus can be spread from the bottom up
- ❖ Zone of proximal development: easier to learn from someone just ahead of you
- ❖ Regular short sessions

Elaina Norton from Broward County U.S.A. proved herself to be a dynamic speaker and eloquently reinforced that we all have a part to play, in not only our own workplace, but in keeping the library industry alive.

Elaina reminded us not to be complacent and that **all** staff need to pull together, and we must not leave our survival to the administration. Her call to action for all of us to be proactive and not reactive is excellent advice. People love libraries but do not understand the costs involved. We are fortunate to have forewarning of what is happening in the U.K. and U.S.A. to library funding. Libraries and their staff need to know how to influence and advocate for their funding. This was an excellent opportunity to gain new insights and learn of the business models available. Now is the time to be taking on board the various recommendations and advice offered so we can work solidly towards not only surviving but thriving.

Another important aspect of the conference was that I was able to increase my knowledge of facilities and services, while learning about the diverse range of libraries and many career opportunities that exist. While attending various sessions throughout the conference I was informed of the library services provided for the police in remote areas of Queensland; there was an interesting presentation on the new 97 million dollar Macquarie University library, during which we were to hear about the workings of the automated storage retrieval system (ASRS), and we also heard from the staff at the Australian National Library. I certainly benefited from attending the *Acquisitions Basics and Beyond* satellite event. These informative sessions enabled me to fill in some gaps in my knowledge of this area.

As a newcomer to the industry I was pleased to receive information from the ALIA representatives regarding the many services and resources available. Of particular interest are the training events and professional development courses provided, including the ability to attain Certified Practitioner status. <http://www.alia.org.au/education/pd/>

Alison Sutherland from the State Library reinforced the benefits and importance of pursuing and taking responsibility of your own professional development. Alison was to further encourage us with her insights and humour, the many pathways to learning, and reminded us that everyone has skills and there is always an opportunity to learn something new.

Grant Stone would have to receive a special commendation on his exceptional ability to not only to be a professional master of ceremonies but his ability to seamlessly manage and manoeuvre through the jam packed programme, despite any changes or the inevitable technology glitches, and keep everyone laughing as well was most impressive.

I would strongly recommend attending and participating in the conferences to all staff, and in particular students, who have a considerable amount to gain in many areas. I was especially thankful to have this opportunity as I personally found the conference to be rewarding and enjoyable, and feel I learnt a great deal across a range of avenues.

“The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who can't read & write, but those who can't learn, unlearn & relearn.” - Alvin Toffler