

# EEL... ENERGISE, ENTHUSE, INSPIRE

EEL gives a voice to the new generation of library and information professionals. If you have any suggestions or topics for this column, please contact the column co-ordinator Lesa Maclean at [maclean.lesa@gmail.com](mailto:maclean.lesa@gmail.com)

## A different perspective

*Pixie Stardust believes that in today's library and information industry new graduates need to grasp as many opportunities as possible. Winning a trip to the American Society of Information Science and Technology conference in the United States was one of those opportunities, providing an insight into our industry at an international level.*

As an enthusiastic young librarian I take any chance I can to get involved and expand my own professional experience. Last year, I entered and won an essay competition for which the prize was a trip to the annual American Society of Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T) conference and a year's membership to the organisation. I didn't hesitate to try my luck – the chance to gain a perspective on American librarianship while visiting the beautiful city of New Orleans was too good to resist.

I found the ASIS&T conference program to be more diverse than Australian conferences I have attended or read about, with six streams covering information behaviour, knowledge organisation, interactive information and design, information and knowledge management, information use, and economic, social and political issues.

The two keynote speakers were similarly diverse in their background and their presentation. Tom Wilson, Professor at the University of Sheffield, spoke on the future of preservation and the challenges collecting institutions face. One point he made – which I had never considered – was the long term insecurity of electronic and cloud-based preservation solutions due to the depletion of energy sources or damage or destruction to server farms.

The other keynote speaker, Steve Kelling, Director of Information Science for the Cornell University Lab of Ornithology, spoke about a crowdsourcing approach to research and conservation. Ornithology has been the first academic discipline to be transformed by crowdsourcing. Using the skills and passion of 'citizen scientists' to record and collaborate on data has greatly expanded the size and range of data gathered in this field, with 24 million observations made in 2011 by 25 000 contributors. This incredible level of community engagement and willingness to take part is encouraging to any discipline.

I was impressed by the range of speakers and information professionals at the conference. Over 500 people from 27 countries attended, allowing for many networking opportunities and helping me develop an understanding of international library situations. I discovered there is a huge focus on

library research in the United States, with many library jobs requiring PhDs. Library students are encouraged to undertake research and are supported by professors with a range of research specialisations. Many universities offer masters and doctorate programs in information science and management and there is a range of grants available to support research. However the negative aspect of this is the huge tuition fees that students accumulate. Without support such as we have via Australia's Higher Education Loan Program and our adequate salaries, their debt can be crippling.

I was somewhat surprised to learn of the challenges associated with education and employment in the United States. It really made me appreciate the benefits and opportunities that are available to us in Australia in terms of education, employment benefits, wages, holidays, healthcare, and superannuation. The Australian library and information industry really is amazing.

I am so grateful for the opportunity to attend an ASIS&T conference and to gain a perspective on the situation and outlooks of librarians and information professionals

in the industry in the United States. I encourage other new library and information professionals to seek out involvement in a range of library and information organisations worldwide. There is a wealth of opportunities available for professional development and new experiences.

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HERE'S TO OPPORTUNITY:  
PIXIE STARDUST

"IT REALLY MADE ME APPRECIATE THE BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITIES THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO US IN AUSTRALIA"

