



# FRONT AND CENTRE

*Kim Sherwin: 'The most exciting thing about our profession is the unknown.'*

In the Sydney office of Arup, an international and independent firm of designers, planners, engineers, consultants and technical specialists, Kim Sherwin and the Arup University team (which includes the library) have embarked on a workspace experiment that emphasises the library's central role within the organisation, and their commitment to working with the business, not just in it.

Arup employs 11,000 people in 91 offices across some 39 countries worldwide. The organisation first came to Australia in their role as structural engineers working on the Sydney Opera House in the 1960s. Arup is a multidisciplinary firm that works across a range of sectors, including the cultural sector, and our portfolio includes work on a number of international

and national library projects, including the Docklands Library in Melbourne and the Green Square Library in Sydney, along with various state library projects. Arup's project work isn't just related to the physical buildings however, it also expands into the social infrastructure of libraries, through projects carried out by the various consulting teams.

At the organisation's Sydney office, our team is trialling a new approach to the physical organisation of our corporate library. From a standard traditional office layout a few months ago, part of Arup's Sydney office has now been transformed into a mix of flexible spaces, and the Arup University team are now working in the middle of a new workshop and community space.

The team have a permanent space and we also all have laptops so we can roam. As needed, we, and the firm's staff, who are part of the trial, have adopted an 'activity-based working' approach, where staff sit and work in spaces reflective of the types of work that they are undertaking. This includes quiet spaces to write reports, spaces where groups can collaborate around a screen, sitting to standing desks, and even 'tweet seats', designed to allow a staff to relax, put their feet up and read or work on a mobile device.

The current project will continue for the next three years, and even though it's only been going a few weeks, already the experience is helping us with our ultimate goal – thinking about our space and working methods in the new office to which we are relocating in 2018.

Globally, Arup has always had a library in some form and currently there are libraries in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth, Singapore (all part of the Australasia team), London, the Midlands (UK) Hong Kong and Johannesburg. In 2014, the Australasian library team became part of Arup University, an internal structure which aims to foster the creative development of the people, knowledge and skills of the firm.

Arup University was given global and regional strategic importance in 2014 to drive our technical excellence, and is underpinned by sharing, communication and visibility. Being part of Arup University has led to many opportunities for the library team, and the new space in the Sydney office has been no exception.

**Annual Conference**  
**1-2 October 2015, Sydney**  
 Gold Sponsor: Hal Leonard Australia Pty Ltd

---

"Portals and Pathways: Building music connections"

Current developments & best practice in the provision of services to music users.

Including the successful "Getting to know the score" workshop covering basic music reference and cataloguing for non-specialists.

Registration: \$120; Concession: \$60  
 info@iamlaustralia.org.au  
 www.iamlaustralia.org.au

Arup has a very open culture and – because the employees own the company – a very flat structure. We had an idea to do some research into the future of libraries, so we did it. Providing there’s a good business case, you can get most things across the line here. It’s an opportunity-rich environment, but it takes hard work – it doesn’t just happen.

We had the support of the organisation globally through the Arup Foresight team, to look at what libraries will be like in the future and we’ve run a series of workshops in London, San Francisco, Sydney and Melbourne. The final report will be released soon, with key findings including strong consensus on the need for diversification and the importance of flexible spaces.

Working with the organisation and not just in it, is a priority for us. We redefined our role by supporting the winning work effort. We work on the organisation’s terms.

A lot of people are surprised to find we don’t have barcodes on our book collection. The value of barcoding isn’t there for our business; instead our focus is on our research activities and adding value that is visible to the business.

The books are in the industrial-looking lift lobby area and deliberately not next to the library team at all. The books in our collection aren’t the defining thing about our library.

New starters at Arup get excited by the offering that the library team provide in terms of research support to the business, something that they often haven’t experienced in other organisations. This provides a great way to connect with new starters and they often get hooked. We do everything in our team.



Arup’s specially designed ‘tweet seats’.



Ready for anything: Flexible workspaces for every need.

One of my proudest moments was to see the library put on the ‘regional pedestal’ by winning an award for Best Support in 2013, along with the CEO’s Excellence and Values Award, and a colleague in Singapore won the Best Support award the following year, so we know our libraries have been recognised by everyone for providing real value to the business.

I’m known as a librarian, but I get involved in so many other things as well. I’m seen as having diverse skills across the organisation. My contribution also includes being part of project work, notably in the library sector. The key to this success is that I do it because I enjoy what I do and it’s beneficial to the culture and business of Arup.

While it may well be more difficult to undertake an experiment such as the new workshop layout and activity-based approach in an organisation with more levels of management between frontline staff and the executive team, I believe it’s not impossible.

It doesn’t matter where you work, as long as you display value and make the most of opportunities. If you’re not doing your job on the business’ terms and you aren’t visible, you may as well pack up and go home.

The most exciting thing about our profession is the unknown. There will be opportunities we don’t know about yet. We’re all running to keep up. We don’t have to do it all but we can’t be precious about our skills; we have to adapt in order to survive.

**KIM SHERWIN**

Senior Librarian & Knowledge Specialist

Arup

[kim.sherwin@arup.com](mailto:kim.sherwin@arup.com)

[@misskimsherwin](https://twitter.com/misskimsherwin)

For more information on this project, visit <http://bit.ly/1O1oXUC>.

# The Seventh New Librarians' Symposium

Prepare for take off! The Seventh New Librarians' Symposium is on in July, and this year it's all about trajectories. The Organising Committee is busy making sure it is better than ever. Here are seven reasons why you should pack your bags and hop on board.



## 1. It IS all about you

Any LIS student or professional will get value out of NLS7, but the symposium is geared towards new and soon-to-be LIS Workers, and those who are taking new steps in their career. So if you are new to the LIS world, or looking to change your direction within the industry, this event is perfect to find inspiration, advice and skills to help you travel wisely.

## 2. No frills = value for money

New graduates and students: we hear you loud and clear. Conferences can be expensive, which is why the symposium is designed as a low cost, high value event. The usual conference frills and tassels are kept at a minimum so the savings are passed on to those who need it the most – our delegates!

## 3. Networking

No one can deny the value of networking in our industry. Students, solo information professionals, academic, corporate or public librarians, and technicians can all have the chance to meet and talk with each other. We also want delegates to be inspired by the multiple directions LIS leaders have already explored, and be an inspiration to others by showing you the places you can take the profession.

## 4. Workshops and tours

Professional development is a key part of NLS7. Delegates have the choice to attend workshops designed to increase your knowledge and skill in a particular area (think copyright, online user accessibility and more). The tours not only get you an inside look at the heart and soul of different libraries, but give you the opportunity to pick at the brains of those professionals who keep these places going.

## 5. Supporting new and first-time speakers is a priority for NLS7

We offer a safe platform for you to have your say (or dance, poem, song) and welcome presentations from all levels.

## 6. Did we mention it was in Sydney?

If you love the city experience, then you'll get it at NLS7. Take in glorious Sydney and everything it has to offer with all the new friends you'll make at the symposium. The conference centre is in one of the city's most vibrant suburbs, Surry Hills, known for its funky bars, variety of restaurants and art studios. Not to mention you are a stone's throw from Sydney CBD.

## 7. Keynote speakers

The keynotes at NLS7 are nothing short of inspirational. They will challenge you to see your career or organisation's trajectory from a new perspective. They come from all corners of the industry, so be prepared to walk away inspired, enthused and equipped to set yourself on the right path with new knowledge, skills and colleagues.

For all the important details, visit [www.nls7.org](http://www.nls7.org) and follow us on @ALIANs7

# Register Now!