

LIBRARY TECHNICIANS

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Well it's conference year once again. It doesn't seem very long ago that we were gathering in Fremantle.

I'm really looking forward to the Hobart conference in August. I've always viewed attending conferences as a great big adventure. Not only is it an opportunity to catch up with old friends and meet new ones but this year it's also a good excuse to visit Tasmania as I've never been there before. It might be a little chilly for me, coming from the West, but I'm sure all the beautiful scenery and wonderful hospitality will more than compensate.

I've been busy saving for and planning my post-conference tour of Tasmania. It needs some finetuning, and I'd like a few more days from work – so would everybody – but hopefully I'll have it all finalised soon.

See you in Hobart in August!

PERSONAL PROFILE

The personal profile for this issue is from Gail Dunn who works at Marsdens The Attorneys in Campbelltown, NSW.

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What a wonderful feeling it was to open up my bible, the *Australian Law Librarian*, and see a column dedicated to Library Technicians. It was like finding out there are other life forms out there just like me. Two years ago I discovered in about one week that managing any library was considered strictly the domain of the librarian. After seven years in a public library I had decided to make a career change and accept the almost overwhelming position as Library Manager of a medium size suburban law firm. This library consists of a main library, five branches and me.

As I sat at my desk that first week I thought 'OK, I've got a computer, the Internet and I'm sure all these books don't just look impressive. I'm going to be fine.' However, while I knew the basics of library operations I wasn't familiar with my subject area or my patrons. On reflection, this was a handicap in this business.

Then came a blow to the midsection! I wasn't prepared for the truckloads of updates that arrived daily. There must be some mistake – the publishers have doubled up somewhere! I certainly wasn't prepared for the disappearing book fiasco either. After all, solicitors are professional, intelligent people, right? If you ask them to check out the book by writing their name in the register then of course they'll do it. Wrong!

I also was not prepared for the way the books were tossed from branch to branch resembling a game of volleyball. The act of signing out a book would only be done in my presence. Add to my disillusion the fact that my employers had no idea what I did everyday. Couldn't be too much. So I might as well be in charge of purchasing all of the firm's stationery, toners, printing needs and produce the corporate newsletter as well. Oh, and by the way, can you teach the whole firm to use the Internet and whip up some manuals to go with them? Sure!

It was in this dark despairing week that I discovered the anz-law-librarians list and made a pathetic plea for some kind of advice, assistance, anything to help me solve some of the problems I was facing. I had a heartening number of replies. At the invitation of the first sender, I telephoned the librarian, and straight after our hellos I was promptly asked about my qualifications. The librarian in question thought

she had solved my problems instantly: 'You're a technician dear – get out of there.'

Alas, I have a mortgage, so running screaming from the building wasn't an option and nor was it the answer I was looking for. The other email respondents were all very warm and only too happy to help me whenever I needed them. I never did tell anybody else my terrible secret though.

When I discovered the *Australian Law Librarian*, I waited eagerly for each issue to arrive and consumed its contents ravenously. I became a lurker on the anz-law-librarians list and made several attempts to find forums for my own kind out there somewhere, but to no avail.

Now I help as many people on the list that have helped me. I don't believe technicians should have their own forum any more, even though their numbers in special libraries are growing. Whether you're a technician or a librarian managing a library, we all have similar problems so why not pool the knowledge? Thank you *Australian Law Librarian* for the space.

P.S. Some things never change, I still have truckloads of updates delivered daily, and even after automating the circulation system the books still mysteriously disappear. But with a little help from my friends I have managed quite nicely.