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Volunteering for the profession

Lesa Maclean is an active member of ALIA. She’s been volunteering as the EEI coordinator since 2011, became a Victoria Regional Coordinator on the New Graduates Committee this year, and has recently been announced as a committee member on the 6th New Librarians Symposium.

In today’s busy society, it can be difficult to find time to volunteer. You’re already busy working hard at building your career, balancing family obligations, staying in shape, and pursuing hobbies like finding time to read that book you’ve put aside for the last three weeks. Is it really worth trying to find an extra few hours each month to volunteer for your professional organisation? The benefits of volunteering are extensive, both to you and your professional community. At least that’s what I’ve found.

There are many benefits to being actively involved with ALIA. Being part of an industry that relies increasingly on contract work, I believe volunteering can advance an individual’s career by providing opportunities to learn new skills that might not otherwise be available. It gives you the opportunity to practise important skills used in the workplace such as task management, time management, and organisation.

Volunteering can also help you build upon skills you already have and use them to benefit the wider profession. For instance, having little editing experience, just a desire to learn. Luckily I’ve had assistance from the INCITE editor along the way. One of the great things about volunteering is there’s always someone there to help you learn the skills you need. I’ve also learned to have a plan B. People can promise they’ll have an article in by the requested date, but that’s not always the case. Plan B ensures I meet my deliverables. I could have chosen to volunteer for any organisation, but I like volunteering for ALIA. I like helping my profession and the individuals that make up that profession. I will continue volunteering and committing my free time to ALIA because I like the feeling of being connected to my professional organisation, gaining contacts within my profession, enhancing my own professional reputation, and helping new graduates (the future library leaders) to develop themselves within the profession.

I actively advocate for ALIA membership and involvement. If you want your profession to thrive and grow with change, you need to support the organisation that supports you. When it comes to volunteering, passion, positivity, and a readiness to do what’s needed are the only prerequisites. And while learning new skills can be beneficial to many, that’s not the only rewarding experience to come from volunteering. There are many opportunities to volunteer with ALIA. Don’t be afraid, get involved!

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“A GOOD VOLUNTEER HISTORY ADDS DEPTH AND BREADTH TO A RESUME AND DEMONSTRATES THAT YOU ARE AN EMPLOYEE WHO COMES VALUE ADDED!”

LESA MACLEAN: DON’T BE AFRAID – GET INVOLVED