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Library trainees are a great asset

The Resource Centre at Brauer College began a very successful traineeship scheme in 2006 in response to a shortage of staff.

Three years on, our trainees continue to provide a much needed and valued extra pair of hands, together with a youthful and fresh approach to the job. Staff and students have responded well: a trainee is a welcome role model in the library and living proof that librarians are not necessarily middle-aged!

Each trainee has been carefully chosen. A job description was created which was detailed and rigorous. The position was locally advertised and a shortlist created with interviews conducted on the basis of quality written applications. Interview questions were devised to ascertain who was best suited to the job. Importantly, we inquired into the likelihood of the candidate pursuing a career in the library and information sector. Other questions were designed to assess candidates' reading habits and IT capabilities. We felt it was vital that the traineeship be treated formally as a real job and not 'just' a position to be filled during a 'gap' year.

Box Hill TAFE was selected as the Registered Training Organisation because it enables the Certificate III in Library/Information Studies to be completed off campus – an important consideration for country schools. Box Hill TAFE provides a training plan and an outline of each of the different skill sets the trainee must prove competency in. Intended to be learned on the job and not just be the product of study, these skills are easily taught over the course of the year as part of a normal working week. They include 'providing quality customer service', 'searching databases', 'occupational health and safety', 'developing and using information literacy skills' and 'using multimedia'.

The trainee must also be registered through an accredited Group Training Organisation – in Warrnambool, WestVic Work Force – which provides the registration, overall supervision and paperwork necessary to ensure that proper procedures are followed to receive the government rebate. Trainees at Brauer College are paid according to the Department of Education School Service Officer (SSO) 1 pay scale and have exactly the same working hours and holiday and sick leave entitlements.

The formal assessment of these competencies must be carried out by a Level 4 Work Training Assessor. I was keen for our assessment to be carried out by a practising librarian, as I felt that an assessor trained in other work methods might not appreciate our craft or the unique challenges presented by a large, busy school library.

Consequently, Michael Schack, currently Cataloguing/Systems Librarian at Warrnambool's TAFE Library, was approached. Michael has been a willing and effective collaborator in our training and assessment process, developing a number of straightforward, brief written and practical tasks designed to show evidence of the candidate's developing range of skills. Michael spends a couple of hours with us every few weeks to assess our trainees. He asks questions, observes them at work (eg working at the desk, consulting with staff), views written responses from the trainee and obtains a progress report from the library manager.

Our trainees' contribution goes beyond that which is formally assessable. They take away good, solid training and experience, plus a raft of generic skills that can be applied to any job.



Cancer Council's Big Morning Tea in the library – organised by our trainee, Meg MacFarlane

All three trainees have contributed widely to our co-curricular program and have brought their own range of skills and interests to the job. They have coached the dancers for our school musical, participated in school camps, been involved in a canoe trip, and taken part in our Book Week activities – including our famous rap dance on stage! They have shown creativity and resourcefulness beyond expectations: we have been privileged to have a wonderful series of

displays and artwork far beyond what any of us 'oldies' could achieve. Our trainees have given valuable advice and feedback on what the kids 'really' want, but have always been the most reliable of workers when it comes to modelling sensitivity across a range of issues and presenting a united front on behaviour and discipline.



Brauer Library Staff posing as Einstein, a publicity stunt for our version of the *Einstein Factor*, which formed part of Book Week celebrations and was organised with assistance of Meg MacFarlane

Our thanks go to Anna Lewis, Alicia Bates and Meg MacFarlane. Together they have brought a fresh perspective to the job and helped create the unique atmosphere that is Brauer College's Learning and Teaching Resource Centre. **Q**

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