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# The University of Wollongong Library Professional Cadetship Experience: Developing the Skills for a Career in Librarianship

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# The University of Wollongong Library Professional Cadetship Experience: Developing the Skills for a Career in Librarianship

## **Abstract**

The recently established University of Wollongong Library Professional Cadetship is an opportunity for those interested in a future in librarianship to undertake combined fulltime employment and Postgraduate study in a Library and Information Science Degree. The Cadetship model also aims to partly address the problem of succession planning for the University Library which has a vested interest in securing an ongoing generation of information professionals. In September 2005 I became the first cadet to begin the three year fixed term program, beginning with placement in Lending Services, and followed by Journal Access Services, each for a six month period. Management tools such as Monthly Reviews and Monthly Reflections, recorded in the Portfolio, are used by the cadet to document both personal and professional development issues as they relate to the current placement team. These tools are used in conjunction with monthly meetings with the team coordinator and the cadet's supervisor at which concerns relating to the program can be discussed and addressed in order to improve the learning experience of the Cadetship. On reflection, the University of Wollongong Library management will refine the advertisement in order to attract and recruit the most suitable candidates. Also, changes were made to the original organisation of the first six month placement in Lending Services in order to make the most advantageous use of the time available. Identifying these issues has enabled action to be taken to improve the Cadetship model which has provided a learning experience for all involved.

## **Keywords**

libraries, cadetships, training

## **Disciplines**

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December 1-2 2006.

## **The University of Wollongong Library Professional Cadetship Experience: Developing the Skills for a Career in Librarianship**

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Professional Cadet

University of Wollongong Library

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## **Introduction**

The University of Wollongong Library (UWL) Cadetship was created in 2005 in response to a need to address succession planning within the Library industry (Wright and Lombardi, 2006). The cadetship model aims to give the cadet a thorough working knowledge of the processes within each team of the Library. For this reason the timetable for the three years was organised to facilitate a progressive building of skills. The cadet would thus begin the placement in Lending Services, continue on to Journal Access Services and successive teams, building on accumulated knowledge and using previously learned knowledge to aid in undertaking new responsibilities and tasks in the succeeding team. Throughout the cadetship the cadet remains positioned as Library Professional Cadet regardless of the team they are in or the tasks they are performing. For example, during their time working in Document Delivery the cadet's position title will be Library Professional Cadet, not Document Delivery Officer.

## **The placement schedule**

I was the first cadet to be employed in the position of University of Wollongong Library Professional Cadet in September 2005. Such a comprehensive learning role had never previously been provided at UWL. The cadetship position involves a rotation of placements across the Library team structure over a period of three years. The initial timetable of the placement was altered slightly. Within the three years, the last placement in Information and Research Services (I&RS) was moved forward to fourth position in order to make best use of teaching opportunities at the beginning of the academic year, allowing me the chance to conduct information literacy classes.

The current schedule for the cadet is:

|                                   |          |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Lending Services                  | 6 months |
| Journal Access Services           | 6 months |
| Collection Services               | 6 months |
| Information and Research Services | 6 months |
| Planning and Development          | 3 months |
| Technology Services               | 3 months |
| Cadet's choice                    | 6 months |



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The schedule may alter again with future cadets as the Library anticipates some restructuring of the Lending, Journals Access and Collections Services teams in the latter part of 2006.

After the final scheduled placement in Technology Services, the cadet has a further six months revisiting a team of their choice. [Administration is the only team not included in the cadetship schedule, although the cadet is given exposure to administration functions involving several hours a week over a two week period, supervised by an administration staff member]. This revisit need not be in an area towards which the cadet necessarily wants to direct their career, although it is a good opportunity to build on skills that already have a strong foundation and to demonstrate an interest in a professional direction.

### **Lending Services**

The first stage of the cadetship involved a six month placement in Lending Services. Lending Services comprises all lending circulation functions, Fines and Membership, Reserve, and E-readings (Electronic readings). For several weeks I also spent some time in the Curriculum Resources Centre – a small Education Faculty library, also on the University campus.

The six month period in Lending Services was divided up into three core functions: basic circulation functions, Reserve, and E-readings. Initially, it was envisaged that my placement would follow this tripartite division. But in practice it became clear that, dependant on the Academic calendar, some periods of the year were busier than others. Therefore, the two month period in Reserve was interrupted by a month in E-readings so that I could be exposed to peak workflow times.

|                        |          |
|------------------------|----------|
| Lending Services:      | 6 months |
| Circulations functions | 2 months |
| E-readings             | 2 months |
| Reserve                | 2 months |



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Similar to training a new worker, I was trained in the functions of each area over a period of time. This generally meant I underwent two weeks of training in basic functions before gradually being integrated into the team as a working member. For example, in E-readings the regular training checklist was used to monitor my progression. The checklist was especially useful to ensure that all team processes were, to some degree, covered within the placement period.

### **A Responsibility**

Throughout the early stages of the cadetship it became evident that assigning me the 'Responsibility' of a task within the team was a way to further add value to the placement. A task Responsibility allowed me the ownership of a function. This ownership carried a sense of importance and routine that helped build the feeling of being a productive and integrated member of the team. In Lending Services this Responsibility was called Missings. This task involved maintaining a folder of reported missing items, attempting to locate them within a reasonable time frame and, in the event of not locating them, reporting them to Collection Services for possible replacement. It also involved maintaining monthly statistics of the outcomes of the Missings process.

In February 2006, Kristen Rumsey became the second cadet at the University of Wollongong Library. Kristen and I spent two weeks working within Lending Services together; my last two weeks before relocating to Journal Access Services. Within the two weeks I was able to 'hand over' ownership of the Missings Responsibility to Kristen. The hand over involved training Kristen in how to undertake the Missings task before giving her full responsibility for it during the rest of her time in Lending Services.

### **Journal Access Services**

My second placement was in Journal Access Services. This placement was composed of three months in Document Delivery and three months in Journals Processing.

|                         |          |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Journal Access Services | 6 months |
| Document Delivery       | 3 months |
| Journals Processing     | 3 months |



The allocated time period allowed adequate exposure for a thorough working knowledge of the functions in both Document Delivery and Journals Processing. I was not assigned a Responsibility in Document Delivery, principally because the team circulates functions on a rostered basis. These functions made up a full-time workload for each team member. There were not any extra tasks outside of this roster apart from financial functions particular to the Document Delivery Coordinator.

In Journals Processing I was assigned the Responsibility of receiving and processing print journals. Journals Processing is currently a team of three people, each with distinct functions. The three months in Journals Processing included hands-on practice in the various print journal processes, and in gaining an understanding of the financial functions of the Journals Access Coordinator and the database management functions of the Journals Access Manager.

### **Professional Development**

The progression of each cadet is tracked through a Monthly Review process between the team coordinator and the cadet. In conference with the coordinator the cadet identifies her performance goals for the month, the outcomes achieved, how they reflect the Values and Ideal Culture proscribed to by the UWL, and learning recommendations for the ensuing month. The Monthly Review is similar to the Development Review process that general staff undertake annually, but in a contracted form and on a monthly basis. The cadet also completes a Monthly Reflection document of ideas and inspirations related to the previous month's experience. This is less a formal document than it is a way for the cadet to use previous experiences to inform her progression through the development of ideas to be actioned in future months. The Monthly Review process is completed with a meeting between the cadet and the Cadet Coordinator to discuss the cadet's personal and professional progression. This is also a chance for the Coordinator to monitor the cadetship process and to formulate opportunities for improvement.

During the majority of the cadetship the cadet is required to be undertaking study for a University Degree in a Library qualification at Postgraduate level. This stipulation is to



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ensure that the cadet completes their studies within the three year placement period. Study is supported by the University as outlined in the *Study Time Policy* (University of Wollongong Career Development Unit, 1995). For the cadet this can mean up to 2 hours and 40 minutes paid study leave per week during session, deducted from work hours, and/or accrued time to be taken as full day study leave at a maximum of 2.5 days per academic session.

The cadet is entitled to a HECS and textbook cost remuneration allowance as well as a grant of \$1000 to cover other study expenses. These financial benefits facilitate the educational requirements of the role. Since I am required at the end of each session to disclose my marks for completed subjects, the study allowances assist me to successfully combine full-time work with study, which can be quite a large workload!

In the role of Professional Cadet I must demonstrate several important personal qualities. An interest in new experiences and working with new people is essential, as are adaptability and patience. A year in the life of a cadet involves a continual process of entering a team, integrating into that team and learning its work processes. The cadet must have an interest in continuing the learning experience as she progresses through the Library over the three year period. At the end of the three year placement the cadet will have a strong understanding of the routine procedural functions of every team in the Library - a valuable quality in an organisation with such a strong client focus towards information provision.

### **Conclusion**

The cadetship is a form of mutual opportunity for the cadet and the Library. The cadet is placed into the Library's organisation and culture as a full-time staff member and for this reason must take an active interest in integrating into each team. Part of this cultural integration includes developing a professional approach to planning workloads, as well as career planning. Career planning involves using the Monthly Review and Monthly Reflection processes to formulate a professional direction. The cadet is granted Study Time and provided with study-related allowances to aid her in completing the requisite Postgraduate study that the cadetship role entails. Within a short period of time the cadet is required to develop an understanding of the processes





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within each team and to organise her daily workload in order to achieve a high level of competency and autonomy in particular tasks. Assigning the cadet a 'Responsibility' has added an extra dimension to the autonomy and productive capacity of the cadet within each team, and has allowed the cadet to feel a sense of ownership of a task. The cadet is being trained in a cross-section of academic library processes over the three year period. The cadetship provides an opportunity for the cadet to discover and demonstrate her strengths and interests as well as to contribute to the operations of the Library.



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