

Early professional learning in collecting institutions: navigating the opportunities and obstacles

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What inspires individuals to embark on a first or second career in fields or professions where positions are not always permanent and where there is a perception that colleagues have to retire before there is an opportunity to achieve a promotion? A research project in progress explores the experiences and expectations of a group of 16 archivists, curators and information professionals or librarians who are starting new careers or positions in collecting institutions. The paper focuses on their professional learning and how they connected their previous study, including internships and work experience, to their new environment.

Introduction

Understanding the transition from learning a profession or discipline in an educational setting to learning in the workplace is a challenge to educators, employers and professional associations, along with the individuals who are taking up new positions in their chosen discipline. What might be even more of a challenge, is understanding why individuals take up positions that might not be permanent, where the salaries are not high, promotional opportunities are scarce but where commitment to and passion for their field is strong.

It is hoped that a research project exploring the expectations and experiences of a group of archivists, curators and librarians, will lead to an understanding of how this transition happens. How, for example, do individuals build upon their initial professional learning? Is their initial commitment sustained? The research seeks to understand the extent of the initial learning environment in the workplace and to examine how knowledge gained in the formal educational setting is applied and further developed.¹ The need to undergo this transitional or situated learning to apply theory to practice, and to understand the context and culture of the organisation is regarded as essential, but should be done well.²

By listening to the experiences and expectations of these newly employed individuals, educators, employers, supervisors and professional associations can gain insights into, and enrich, the relationship between education, the workplace, continuing professional development, and the wider community environment. The need to give a voice to new employees as learners is reflected by Sissel (2001):

Only when adult educators embrace a true commitment to try and understand the lived experiences and perspectives that diverse learners bring to educational settings, can the interests of both the educator and learner be at the centre.³

Theory and practice associated with adult learning, learning in the workplace and professional development will provide the broader framework of the research. It is trying to understand how newcomers make sense of their new environment, rather than describing and evaluating the learning and development programs of collecting institutions.⁴ As research-in-progress, this paper will focus on the data

that has been gathered from a series of interviews with new employees.⁵ It will begin by briefly explaining the research framework and highlight aspects of the new employees' experiences while learning and working. Opportunities and obstacles they faced will also be explored and then emerging themes will be discussed. It will conclude with some reflections on where the findings to date might lead.

Research design

The research design is a qualitative approach in understanding how a group of individuals make sense of their world and presents the research through their eyes. This is referred to as phenomenological research within a constructionist epistemology.⁶ For this research it means that each individual will have a different understanding of their experiences. It also means that the research cannot make generalisations, but rather, will provide insights and facilitate 'lessons learned'.

Data were gathered through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. There are quantitative surveys about initial employment, development and retention, but this project explores the perspective of the new employees themselves.⁷ To seek potential participants, several Canberra-based collecting institutions were approached with an invitation to new employees working with a collection in some capacity to participate.⁸ It was then up to individuals to volunteer.⁹

There is a longitudinal aspect to the research as participants were interviewed three times to mark different milestones over a two-year period.¹⁰ With 16 participants from seven different collecting institutions, the target was 48 interviews and these were completed in early March 2008. All participants stayed with the study.¹¹

The research findings will be assessed against three main theoretical frameworks as reflected in the literature: learning in the workplace, adult learning principles, and continuing professional development (also referred to as continuing professional education).¹² Research into the education and development of the professions or disciplines reflected in the work of the participants will also inform the analysis of the findings.¹³

The research was not specifically seeking archivists, curators and librarians, but rather it was looking for new employees, with tertiary qualifications relevant to working with collections. To label potential participants at such an early stage may have narrowed the field of volunteers. It was also possible that, as new employees, potential participants may not have identified themselves with a specific professional description. As the collecting institutions had a mixture of archival, library, museum and gallery responsibilities, it would have been very limiting to name a particular discipline or focus on just one area of responsibility. The labels of archivists, curators and librarians were chosen for this paper to describe in a general way the responsibilities of the participants in the research, without identifying the individuals or the collecting institution in which they worked.

The similarities and overlap in responsibilities of archivists, curators and librarians working in collecting institutions is also reflected in the literature. For example, through comparing Summerrell (1999) and Maybry (2001), it is evident that there are common issues facing reference services in archives and libraries.¹⁴ The Special Libraries Association (2003) has developed a set of competencies for the 'information professional' working in libraries, museums, galleries and archives.¹⁵ Apostle and Raymond (1997) and Cox (2005) both debate the dilemmas facing traditional library and archival professions respectively, and the growth of 'information management' qualifications.¹⁶ Pederson (2005) discusses synergies, and differences between archivists, librarians, and manuscript curators in discussing development of professions.¹⁷ Schwirtlich (1987) compares the responsibilities of archivists, curators and librarians.¹⁸ The synergies in practice and education are reflected in approaches to literature, and to educational and procedural resources.¹⁹ Furthermore, the formal qualifications achieved by the participants crossed the archives, library and curator fields, and adds to the rationale for looking widely.²⁰

Background of the newcomers

The paper will now highlight aspects of the data gathered from the interviews, starting with a picture of the participants' backgrounds and initial learning environment.

The educational qualifications of the participants were in the fields of heritage management, museums, archives, managing art collections, digital and multimedia collections, art history, heritage, information management or librarianship. These qualifications were obtained from vocational or higher education institutions.

Before embarking on these degrees, the participants all had some kind of exposure to a collecting institution; through work placements in school, volunteer employment in a local community, paid employment, or as a researcher or user. This early experience was instrumental in the decision to embark on their choice of career. During degree courses they also worked as volunteers or in part-time paid employment. Unexpectedly, it was found that all 16 participants had made a deliberate decision to study in order to start a career in a collecting institution.²¹

The interviews revealed that 12 out of 16 (75%) had undertaken some kind of internship or work placement as part of their degree. The extent of the role of internships in preparing the participants for formal employment emerged surprisingly from the initial analysis. For this paper, such 'internships' are defined as work placements undertaken as part of a vocational, undergraduate or postgraduate degree.²² The internships all involved some level of assessment and reporting, so these were not the same as working in paid employment or working as a volunteer while studying towards a degree.

Internships gave valuable introductions to the workplace environment, advantages with applying for positions and assistance in helping the participants to 'hit the ground running'. Internships helped apply theory to practice and aided them in making sense of what they had studied. There were a variety of models implemented by different educational institutions, including week-long or year-long placements (or a combination of both), mentors, reporting and assessment.²³

The timeframe for internships seemed to work best if it was over a semester or a year, rather than just a two-week placement. Longer placements gave participants exposure to different events and areas,

and also allowed them time to meet colleagues and 'become known'. All participants undertaking internships highlighted benefits, including:

- exposure to different aspects of the field,
- time to undertake real projects,
- time to understand the work context,
- access to a mentor,
- opportunities to assess practice against theory,
- confirming extent of interest in the field, and
- using the internships in job applications to demonstrate familiarity with practice and working in a team or office environment.

One participant had an internship while studying and working part-time. A real difference was noticed between the professional learning gained during the internship and through the assigned mentor, and with part-time paid employment where the expectation was to carry out set duties at a specified level.

Another participant did not have access to an internship and commented that colleagues undergoing degrees with internships appeared to have fewer problems securing employment. Another did not have an internship while undertaking postgraduate studies as they were already working in the field. Upon reflection, that participant felt that it would have been beneficial to work in another institution to gain different perspectives.

What emerged from the education and experiences that the participants brought to their new positions was that they already had considerable exposure to the theory and practice of their field of interest. They had acquired a body of knowledge that they did not realise they had. This extent of knowledge and skills was further confirmed when they were able to immediately apply what they had learnt in their new position - 'it all came together and made sense'. Given that for 10 out of 16 (62%) participants, this was their first full-time position since graduating, they had a great deal to offer and may not necessarily be considered the 'novices', or new employees who 'lack the understanding and procedures to discern the nature of the problem and consider the most appropriate solution.'²⁴

Working as archivists, curators and librarians

Having once commenced work, the range of responsibilities that the participants collectively undertook is summarised using general terminology that is not specific to any one collecting institution. Their work included:

- cataloguing, registering or describing the collection against the principles and practices relevant to that organisation and discipline,
- researching the collection for exhibition or publication purposes,
- managing the storage, preservation and movement of collections,
- providing reference or education services,
- digitising collection material, including preparation of captions and discovery metadata, and
- preparing and curating exhibitions and displays (physical and online).

The new employees participated in a range of professional learning activities designed to expand on the domain-specific knowledge and practice as described by the profession or field. Examples of domain-specific knowledge include the 'Statement of Knowledge for Recordkeeping Professionals' and 'The Library and Information Sector: Core Knowledge, Skills and Attributes'.²⁵ Professional learning also covered the institution-specific policies, procedures and systems to manage the collection.²⁶ Examples of how professional learning was achieved are listed below, some of which will be discussed in more detail:

- mentors and mentoring others (some had mentors during their internship),
- rotations and rosters,
- attending and speaking at conferences,
- in-house seminars led by internal and external speakers,
- communities of practice or forums,

- further formal study for higher education or vocational qualifications,
- intensive development programs tailored for collecting institutions, and
- learning from supervisors and team members.

Emerging themes: opportunities and obstacles

Having presented a picture about the background and the work environment, the paper will now explore some opportunities for and obstacles to professional learning that have emerged from preliminary analysis of the interviews, focussing on the employment environment and relationships.

Contract versus permanency

The status of being on contract versus permanency was both an opportunity and an obstacle. For 9 out of 16 (56%), the commencement of their new positions took place under a contract. Being on a long-term contract of 18 months or more was seen as positive in giving flexibility with future choices of positions and moving elsewhere, including overseas. However, being on contract was seen as an obstacle where the contracts were for short periods of 3 to 6 months. There was a feeling of having the contract status 'always hanging over my head'. This brought uncertainty, missed salary increases and missed opportunities for professional development. Participants on contract had to work very hard to gain access to external professional development and were often only invited to attend when there were last minute vacancies.

Of the nine participants on contract at the start of their employment, three were still on contract after two years with no immediate prospects of permanency. For those gaining permanency in the two-year period, it was certainly a relief, giving them the opportunity to 'blossom and grow' in their career.

Performance management schemes

All the collecting institutions had a system for managing performance, personal development, or planning learning and development. Plans were prepared on an annual basis. A typical program or plan included one or more discussions and a written document stating expectations, projects, and learning and development needs. Some agreements were linked to salary increments.

From the participants' perspectives, the agreement did not work when training was not included, commitments to training were not followed through, review took the form of a 'tick the box mentality', or there was no discussion about future opportunities within the organisation. The participants did not see the performance management system itself as an obstacle, only the lack of commitment by supervisors, which in turn led to a sceptical approach for future agreements and missed development opportunities. Only 3 out of 16 (18%) participants had positive experiences and outcomes over the whole two years with their performance agreements.

Orientation and induction

In the collecting institutions where the participants worked, the terms orientation and induction were used interchangeably. For this paper, 'orientation' was used to describe the initial few days or first week for a new employee. Orientation usually involved discussions with human resource areas, introductions to colleagues, and tours of the work area. These were often rushed and incomplete. Some collecting institutions had a more formal induction program held 2 to 3 times a year, as a full-day or half-day workshop. In these programs new employees were introduced to representatives from other areas of the organisation, with talks about strategic objectives and directions. When these were held several months later, they were not seen as worthwhile. Participants who were able to attend these induction workshops within the first few months of their arrival found them valuable.

The most unhelpful combination for a new employee appeared to have been a rushed hour-long orientation sorting out employment

conditions and codes of conduct guidelines, and an induction several months later or not at all. If the supervisor did not take responsibility for this initial orientation then it was the team that filled in the gaps. Responses to questions about how they would improve orientation and induction for the next intake of newcomers suggested that it was better to have information overload at the start as it gave context and helped rectify any shortfall. Information overload may be unavoidable, but if the orientation could have been more structured, it would ensure there were no significant gaps in what the newcomer needed to understand. Where a newcomer had someone else also starting at the same time, they helped each other when supervisors were not able to take on the orientation role.

Rotations and rosters

'I had to fight my supervisor to get onto a roster'. This was one new employee's belief in the value of working in a different area of the organisation. Short-term rotations and rosters gave real exposure to the wider context of the workplace. Rotations and rosters were always regarded as development or promotion opportunities, even if at the same level. It was recognised that it was difficult in smaller organisations, but having exposure to what others were doing was still encouraged. Even visits to other collecting institutions were valued, not just to see exhibitions, but to learn how the work was organised and the challenges faced with managing, describing and providing access to the collection. Rotations helped new employees choose areas in which they would or would not like to work in the future, but there was also a perception that rotations could lead to being 'stuck', if there was no longer-term plan in place.

Taking up new positions

There was no expectation of rapid promotion or high salaries among the participants at the start of their new position. With comments such as 'I would not have taken up this profession if I wanted to be rich' or 'someone has to die or retire before there is a vacancy', it was surprising to find that 13 out of 16 (81%) had taken up temporary or permanent positions at the same or higher levels during their two years. While

the different positions may not have led to higher salaries, they saw the movement as an opportunity to learn more. There was certainly more movement than expected by the participants, as revealed in the final interview when they compared their initial expectations with what they had achieved. During their contracts, 3 out of 16 (18%) participants left at some point to work in another collecting institution, through frustration at continual renewal of contracts, or due to the lack of professional development. They remained committed to their field, but it was the employment conditions that seemed to be the catalyst for leaving.

Supervisors

Supervisors were regarded as either a source of opportunity or an obstacle to development. Valued supervisors encouraged the new employees by helping them understand their new responsibilities and learn about the organisation. Supervisors who were not so well valued were those who were 'too busy', micro-managed the work of the new professionals, did not trust their professional skills and knowledge, or did not share information to help them understand the wider context of their work. In these situations, there appeared to be little recognition of the accumulated knowledge and experience the participants had brought with them and that it could be readily applied in the new context. During their employment, 4 out of 16 (25%) participants lost their initial supervisors and were without an immediate supervisor for lengthy periods. They felt they had no champion to help them seek improvements, and had to rely on their own research and the support of their peers to understand the context of their work. Reidy (2006) in discussing work placements as part of tertiary studies argues that:

the perception that the supervisor was 'very professional' or 'had a really good knowledge' about her professional area, was extinguished by the anxiety that each student experienced when the supervisor was physically absent or lacked the ongoing, readily accessible presence of a committed mentor or advisor.²⁷

In contrast, where there has been a good supervisory relationship:

The most important outcomes of the best supervisory relationships are neither equipment or resources, but the essential trusting conversations that enable students to ask for advice, discuss difficulties and set up the trusting spaces necessary for risk-taking and experimentation that so often accompany deep and lasting learning.²⁸

Teams

Most of the new starters worked closely within a team, although the level of support and sharing of knowledge varied. Where there was no supervisor the team took on the supervisor and mentor role of explaining the broader context, detailing the processes and even helping with recruitment applications. The team was certainly a major source of learning and motivation to stay in the position, providing emotional and professional support.²⁹ Two participants worked in areas where knowledge and work were not shared and they were 'left to their own devices'. Billet (2001) argues that learning from the team can be both a positive and potentially negative experience, especially as the team can pass on inappropriate knowledge or not share knowledge at all.³⁰

Buddies

There are two main types of buddies with whom the participants developed relationships, both of which were valued:

- a fellow newcomer with whom they discovered what they needed to know and understand, and one who gave moral support when supervisors were changing or absent; and
- an existing employee who was tasked with showing the newcomer the processes and systems through shadowing work and sharing knowledge.

Mentoring relationships

There is no one definition that reflected how the participants perceived and experienced the concept of a mentor and it was not necessarily

undertaken by one individual. The participants found mentors or relationships in several roles:

- their supervisor,
- other colleagues at a higher level, formally assigned or developed through informal contacts,
- a mentor assigned during internship,
- team members, and
- being a mentor in the second year to the next intake of new employees.

The professional learning that was fulfilled by the mentor role included:

- understanding more about the profession or fields covered by the collecting institution,
- a 'sounding board for ideas',
- 'looking out for me',
- sharing knowledge about current or future work activities,
- career options, paths and immediate employment opportunities, and
- 'getting to know the organisation'.

There appears to be a growing recognition that in the workplace, the concept of a mentor is multi-faceted. It is not a single person as presented in some educational literature,³¹ but more about combinations of supervisors, colleagues, teams, 'buddies' and contacts through professional networks.³² There is debate, however, as to the extent to which a supervisor, obliged to ensure productivity, can be a mentor as well.³³ Whatever meaning participants attached to the concept of a mentor, it was important to have access to one or more individuals for advice and guidance beyond the day-to-day work. Of all the professional learning the participants had access to, the absence of a mentor was the most keenly felt and certainly regarded as an obstacle.

Supervisors, mentors, teams and buddies were regarded by the new employees as an essential link between the experiences and knowledge of new starters and the systems, procedures, culture and goals of the

organisation. Where these relationships provided the links, the participants settled in quickly and job satisfaction came early. Where the supervisor was absent or did not trust the skills and knowledge of the newcomer and would not let them 'get on with the job', frustrations set in early and feelings of not being valued increased. One participant felt that when starting in a new collecting institution, they had 'jumped out of the frying pan and into the fire' with not being trusted to get on with the work and not allowed to develop procedures for new work processes. The people the new employees worked with really mattered, with absent and distrusting supervisors being real obstacles to job satisfaction and professional growth.

Relationships with the profession and wider community

Attending conferences, seminars or joining an association were seen as opportunities to make a contribution and engage with the wider profession or field of work. Participants were grateful to attend such events and valued finding out how other institutions approached issues. Conferences proved to be catalysts for joining professional associations. Two participants delivered papers at professional conferences in their first two years, something they had not expected to do.

Working with the collection to improve description, condition and accessibility was the greatest motivation for the new starters to stay on contract, not seek promotion nor employment elsewhere and to overcome obstacles such as lack of access to supervisors. Commitment to the collection was greater than to their employer. Job satisfaction came from seeing results of their work in preserving and controlling the collection through contributing to exhibitions, launches, publications and liaising with external clients.

Despite being committed to their field and valuing their contribution to the community, only 9 out of 16 (56%) had joined a professional association by the end of the two years. Reasons for this included being 'not sure which one', 'too expensive' (some were on salaries of less than \$50,000 and paying off tertiary fees), or 'no one has mentioned any to me'. These perceptions about cost and choice present challenges to professional associations. How could they be more visible? How can associations reach out to the newcomers and encourage this enthusiasm to engage with their field and learn more?

Observations and reflections

What does all this mean and how did the new employees make sense of what they faced? What have the participants revealed about their experiences and expectations? What was their view of working in collecting institutions as archivists, curators or librarians?

Several issues about access to professional learning did emerge over the two years that could be interpreted as obstacles to professional development. One participant had to fight for the opportunity to go on a roster to learn more about the organisation. Keen to learn more once working, there was an element of frustration when some did not know initially that they could have asked for training and so missed out on opportunities. By the end of the first year, everyone realised they had to make their own opportunities. One participant felt that after a year they had reached a 'brick wall of learning' as the initial professional development did not move beyond basic levels. Another was ready to leave their organisation after only one year until they were offered an intensive professional development program, which turned out to be a 'life saver'. In contrast, another participant was unsure about an in-house year-long program but, as it progressed, valued the opportunity to visit and undertake duties in several areas of the organisation and experience how different areas worked as an integrated whole. The program helped the participant gain a position in an area of special interest.

The participants had joined collecting institutions with experience and qualifications, and a passion to work with the collection in some way. Motivation to learn about their field, the organisation and to see the end result of large collection projects was far greater than permanent promotion or high salaries. How are employers, educators and professionals nurturing this passion and commitment? Are stakeholders recognising the knowledge and experience and understanding of these new employees, who are not really 'novices'? Offering internships could help employers attract new employees and give educational institutions and employers a dynamic link between theory and practice. Recognition and trust in their professional expertise seems to be far more important than a high salary in the first two years, or even permanency.

The participants revealed that they did not want to stop learning once they joined the workforce or changed careers. They were eager for

more professional development. The participants were most frustrated when they did not have access to professional learning, when they were not encouraged to join rosters, participate in seminars or put forward changes in procedures. Formal study was not on everyone's agenda, but access to professional development opportunities was critical. In-house seminars, rosters, mentors and short rotations were all valued, but the participants were not always encouraged to participate.

There appears to be a strong relationship between continuing passion for the work and access to professional development, a relationship that needs more exploration. Performance agreements with a strong learning and development focus could help integrate the participants' experience and qualifications with the workplace and encourage them to identify potential opportunities. It would be desirable to avoid the situation where one participant said 'I did not know that I could have asked for training until the event had passed' and another who felt they had 'hit a brick wall of learning'.

Finding out more about an organisation, profession or field was vitally important to the participants. It was essential that they understood the broader context of their work and how it was integrated with other areas of the organisation. It was not enough to remain isolated in their daily tasks, even if they were passionate about working with the collection. To find out more about the broader context, new employees need to be listed on rosters and rotations, and not wait for someone to present them with a learning and development program. This would apply whether the position was permanent or on a contractual basis.

Despite all the obstacles that the participants faced, by the end of the two years they were still passionate about learning more and still motivated to work in the field. Only 4 out of 16 (25%) had either left the organisation that employed them at the start of the two years or were actively applying for positions elsewhere. Two left out of frustration, one for family reasons and one for a permanent promotion. All four continued to work in collecting institutions, so were still committed to their field.

The challenge ahead for further research is to explore the interview data in more depth, study and resolve the contradictions, and assess the participants' views of their experiences against other research. By understanding their perspectives of learning and working in the field, and how they make sense of their new environment, all stakeholders can help ensure that obstacles are minimised, or turned into opportunities.

The following quote seems to sum up well what has been revealed so far over those early years. While it relates to internships, it applies equally well to the findings discussed in this paper:

Learning is as much about identity as expertise and that belonging and becoming within workplaces, their professional networks ... can be either happy or hazardous processes.³⁴

Through the eyes of a small group of new employees this paper has attempted to give some preliminary insight into what it was like for them starting out, what they brought with them, what they experienced and believed; insights that might result, hopefully, in more opportunities than obstacles, more 'happy than hazardous' experiences. These insights could also help stakeholders better 'understand the lived experiences and perspectives' of new employees in those initial years of working and professional learning, as urged by Sissel in the opening remarks of this paper.

Endnotes

¹ The author would like to acknowledge the collecting institutions for their support for this research and the participants for staying with the research over a two-year period. She would also like to acknowledge the University of Canberra for supporting her attendance at the ASA 2008 Conference.

² S Billett, 'Performance at Work: Identifying Smart Work Practice', in R Gerber and C Lankshear (eds), *Training for a Smarter Workforce*, Routledge, London, 2000, p. 133.

³ P Sissel, 'Thinking politically: A Framework for Adult and Continuing Education', *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, no. 91, Fall 2001, p. 9.

⁴ For this paper, a collecting institution has a broad meaning covering archival institutions, galleries, libraries and museums. The participants worked in a range of these types of institutions, but in accordance with the ethics guidelines for this research, the institutions are not named individually.

⁵ The in-depth analysis of the findings against the literature has yet to be undertaken. For an initial analysis of the literature about professional development in collecting

institutions see M Hoy, 'Professional Development and Competency Standards', *Conference Proceedings of the International Council of Archives Congress*, Vienna, 23–29 August 2004, available at <<http://www.wien2004.ica.org/fo/speakers.php?ctNo1=48&ctNo2=&IdSpk=225&AlphSpk=H&p=&SpkV=2>>, accessed 26 June 2008.

⁶ M Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1998.

⁷ Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee, *Recruitment and Training in the Australian Public Service*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2003. Graduate Careers Australia has annual surveys of graduates covering employment, satisfaction and occupations, available at <<http://www.graduatemcareers.com.au/content/view/full/24>>, accessed 26 June 2008.

⁸ In accordance with the ethical guidelines for this research, my own employer, the National Archives of Australia, was not approached for the formal data-gathering process. All institutions involved were very supportive of the research, for which I would like to express my gratitude.

⁹ S Sarantokas, *Social research*, third edition, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills, Hampshire, 2005, p. 164. This self-selection method of gathering data is also described as purposeful sampling.

¹⁰ The first milestone was a few months after they started, the second at the end of their first year and the final at the end of their second year.

¹¹ Models for interview structure based on I Seidman, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*, second edition, Teachers College Press, New York, 1998. Another valuable resource is H Rubin and I Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, second edition, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, 2005.

¹² Examples include: R Burns, *The Adult Learner at Work*, Business and Professional Publishing, Chatswood, Sydney, 2002; M Knowles, *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*, Gulf Publishing, Houston, 1990; G Foley (ed.), *Dimensions of Adult Learning: Adult Education and Training in a Global Era*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 2004; R Gerber and C Lankshear (eds), *Training for a Smarter Workforce*, Routledge, London, 2000; P Jarvis, *Adult Education and Lifelong Learning: Theory and Practice*, third edition, Routledge Falmer, London, 2004; and S Billett, *Learning in the Workplace: Strategies for Effective Practice*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 2001.

¹³ Research projects relating to education and careers of archivists, curators and librarians include V Walch (principal consultant), 'A*Census-Archival Census and Education Needs Survey in the United States', *American Archivist*, vol. 69, no. 2, Fall/Winter 2006, pp. 291–527. This report is also available with extended tables and extra links, for download from the Society for American Archivists website at <<http://www.archivists.org/a-census/>>, accessed 15 May 2008. H Prins and W de Gier, *The Image of the Library and Information Profession: A Report of an Empirical Study Undertaken on Behalf of IFLA's Round Table for the Management of Library Associations*, Saur, München, 1995. M Broadbent and K Grosser, *Special Library and Information Service Centres: Their Continuing Professional Development*, Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne, 1986. Australian Public Service Commission, 'Graduate Trends', 2003, available at <<http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications03/graduates1.htm>>, accessed 26 June 2008.

- ¹⁴ R Summerrell, 'Improving the Education and Professional Development of Reference Archivists', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 27, no. 1, May 1999, pp. 74–95. C Maybry (ed.), *Doing the Work of Reference: Practical Tips for Excelling as a Reference Librarian*, Haworth Information Press, New York, 2001.
- ¹⁵ Special Libraries Association, 'Competencies for Information Professionals of the 21st Century', 2003, p. 2, available at <http://www.sla.org/PDFs/Competencies2003_revised.pdf>, accessed at 26 June 2008.
- ¹⁶ R Apostle and B Raymond, *Librarianship and the Information Paradigm*, Scarecrow Press, Boston, 1997. R Cox, *Archives and Archivists in the Information Age*, Neal-Schuman Publishers, New York, 2005.
- ¹⁷ A Pederson, 'Professing Archives: A Very Human Experience', *Archives: Recordkeeping in Society*, Centre for Information Studies, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, 2005, pp. 51–74.
- ¹⁸ Anne-Marie Schwirtlich, 'Introducing the Archival Profession', *Keeping Archives*, second edition, Australian Society of Archivists, Canberra, 1987, p. 9.
- ¹⁹ Australian Society of Archivists, notice to 'Aus-Archivists listserv' about forthcoming publications, 20 June 2008: 'The editors of *Library Quarterly*, *Archival Science*, and *Museum Management and Curatorship* are pleased to announce plans for a special triple issue exploring the shared information needs and challenges facing libraries, archives, and museums in the information age; the overlapping educational goals of library and information science, archival studies, and museum studies programs; and areas of convergence for educators and professionals working to meet user needs in libraries, archives, and museums.'
- ²⁰ Courses that cross the fields include: Edith Cowan University, 'Graduate Diploma in Science (Information Services)', available at <[http://www.scis.ecu.edu.au/Future/Courses/Postgraduate/128/Graduate+Diploma+of+Science+\(Information+Services\)](http://www.scis.ecu.edu.au/Future/Courses/Postgraduate/128/Graduate+Diploma+of+Science+(Information+Services))>, accessed 27 June 2008; Curtin University of Technology, 'Graduate Diploma in Information and Library Studies', available at <<http://handbook.curtin.edu.au/courses/19/191806.html>>, accessed 27 June 2008; and Australian National University, 'Graduate Diploma in Arts, specialising in Museums and Collections', available at <<http://studyat.anu.edu.au/majors/6100SMUSC/courses.html>>, accessed 27 June 2008. This indicative list does not necessarily reflect the studies undertaken by the participants.
- ²¹ In contrast, research, in the archives field at least, indicates 'accidents of circumstances' to join the archives profession. A Pederson, 'Understanding Ourselves and Others: Australian Archivists and Temperament', *Proceedings of the Australian Society of Archivists Conference*, Brisbane, Australia, 1999, p. 80. Pederson does go on to say 'that it was meeting practitioners *in situ* that enabled them to decide that the work would suit them' (p. 81). This would support the participants' experiences of choosing to study in the field through some kind of exposure. M Pember, 'Do You Really Need a Degree? Preliminary report into a decade of recordkeeping education at Curtin University', *Proceedings of the Joint National Conference of the Australian Society of Archivists and the Records Management Association of Australia*, Hobart, Australia, 2001, p. 229, also indicates an unplanned trend towards 'joining the archives profession'. The study of archivists in the United States also revealed a trend towards the 'accidental archivist', Walch, 2006, p. 485, extended online publication of the census report.
- ²² As an example, the Australian National University, 'Graduate Diploma in Arts, specialising in Museums and Collections', has an internship component in a museum or other collecting institution. Assessment includes reports, diaries and reviews, available at <<http://studyat.anu.edu.au/courses/MUSC8005/details.html>>, accessed 27 June 2008.

²³ Examples of different models can be found in research into internships undertaken by: B Alderman and P Milne (in the library field), *A Model for Work-based Learning*, Scarecrow Press, Lanham, 2005; J Reidy (in nursing, engineering and teaching), *Learning to Work: Students' Experiences During Work Placements*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2006. Research by these authors will inform the analysis of findings about the role and value of internships.

²⁴ Billett, *Learning in the Workplace*, p. 57.

²⁵ ASA/RMAA Joint Education Steering Committee, 'Statement of Knowledge for Recordkeeping Professionals', 2006, available at <<http://www.archivists.org.au/course-accreditation>>, accessed 28 June 2008. The statement can also be found on the Records Management Association of Australasia website available at <<http://www.rmaa.com.au/docs/profdev/StatementKnowledge.cfm>>, accessed 28 June 2008. See the Australian Library and Information Association, 'The Library and Information Sector: Core Knowledge, Skills and Attributes', available at <www.alia.org.au/policies/core.knowledge.html>, accessed 28 June 2008.

²⁶ This paper does not include a discussion about the general administrative training that the new employees undertook.

²⁷ Reidy, *Learning to Work*, p. 108.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 126.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 133.

³⁰ Billett, *Learning in the Workplace*, p. 84.

³¹ Jarvis, *Adult Education and Lifelong Learning*, p. 164.

³² R Burns, *The Adult Learner at Work*, Business and Professional Publishing, Chatswood, NSW, 2002, p. 286; P Jarvis, *Globalisation, Lifelong Learning and the Learning Society*, Routledge, London, 2007, p. 149; Reidy, *Learning to Work*, p. 153.

³³ C Hughes, 'Issues in Supervisory Facilitation', *Studies in Continuing Education*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2002, p. 68.

³⁴ Reidy, *Learning to Work*, p. 184.