



## What the non-librarian sees

'Deoxyribonucleic acid' is extremely difficult to both spell and pronounce so it is no wonder we usually simplify it to DNA.

Wikipedia says that DNA is "one of the three major macromolecules that are essential for all known forms of life", and another description says that it is the hereditary

material in humans and almost all other organisms.

So is there an identifiable trail that clearly shows the hereditary characteristics of library and information professionals?

I am not a library and information professional but have been a library client for many years so

perhaps I am better placed to offer an opinion than one who may be accused of personal bias.

Like many of us, my first experience with library staff was at a public library. I can't recall any of the librarians I met those many years ago, but I do remember a couple of things. Everybody in the library had to be deathly quiet, the demarcation zone between the kids' space and the adults' area was clear and *A Tale of Two Cities* was not an appropriate book for somebody of my age – although I am not sure whether that was because of the violence in the book or its author's capacity to set heads nodding off in some of the more rambling sections.

But the librarian could always help me find the books I was after when I couldn't follow that really complex Huey, Dewey and Louie filing system they used or reach the top shelf.

There was a library at the high school I attended and the librarian doubled up as the music teacher. She was glamorous, with what I thought was a glamorous job, partly because she seemed to have access to really innovative technology such as recordings of Shakespeare's plays. Most importantly, she introduced me to books of criticism of the texts I was reading, so I had somewhere to go to get help in understanding what those books and plays were all about.

I met my favourite librarian in a film. Bunny Gibson was Kate Hepburn at her best and exhibited the true DNA of a librarian if you ask me. *The Librarians* was not satire, it was buffoonery. In *Desk Set*, Bunny and her team were at risk of being made redundant by a computer and a time and motions man (Spencer Tracy of course). Bunny and her team were brilliant at their jobs; customer service was their focus, they all multi-tasked, they worked and played as a team, they gained pleasure in their achievements and they sought the right answer, not just any answer.

As a library client, these are the hereditary characteristics I identify in all the library and information professionals who have helped me over the years.

As humans, though, we have to evolve and compete. Information professionals must now also be able to advocate, because they are competing for scarce funds. They need to have their own continual learning gene because change occurs at such a rapid pace. I think they also need a *Star Trek*

gene that takes them to places no person has been before. By this I mean that in all types of library or information service, the

clients are busy adapting technologies, new forms of networks, different standards of social behaviour and etiquette that, if not embraced by the profession, must be at least understood. It's a question of how brave we are.

Rob Miller  
ALIA Acting Executive Director  
rob.miller@alia.org.au

"BUT THE LIBRARIAN COULD ALWAYS HELP ME FIND THE BOOKS I WAS AFTER WHEN I COULDN'T FOLLOW THAT REALLY COMPLEX HUEY, DEWEY AND LOUIE FILING SYSTEM THEY USED OR REACH THE TOP SHELF."

## ALIA SNAPSHOT

### New State Manager for WA

Welcome to Noreen Kirkman, ALIA's new WA State Manager. A long time member of ALIA, Noreen has a wealth of experience in outreach librarianship and will be a wonderful asset to ALIA and our Western Australian members.

### Hash it up for LIW and NSS

Get those socially media-savvy fingers tapping for Library and Information Week and National Simultaneous Storytime 2012 with these hashtags: #liw2012 for Library and Information Week and #nss12 for National Simultaneous Storytime (we like the symmetry of this one as 2012 is also the 12<sup>th</sup> year of running NSS!)