

Introduction

This paper will give an overview of the four positions that I have worked in between September 2005 and April 2006. The paper will give a personal account and outline of the diverse tasks that I participated in and will detail the work I performed and new skills I acquired.

The four positions were located within three different divisions. I was working with staff and in work areas that I was unfamiliar with and having to report to four different managers. The tasks performed in each of the new work areas were different to my every day work.

Position number 1

Monograph Cataloguing

My full-time, on-going substantive position

I have been a staff member in the Collection Management Division for a number of years, working in a variety of positions. In the last few years, I have worked in the Cataloguing Department. My main tasks are the original and copy cataloguing of current monographs that are received by the department and problem solving any cataloguing issues that arise. I am based with the current monograph cataloguing team, which comprises four librarians and four library technicians. Approximately 150 monographs and other format items are received per week from the Orders Section. The current monograph intake is shared amongst our team members. Other staff members within their own teams catalogue serials and non-book items.

Working in Cataloguing is my full-time on-going substantive position. It is the position that I come into in the mornings and leave from when I go home in the evening.

Position number 2

Retrospective conversion of the Manuscripts card catalogue

Project participation – October 2004 – October 2007

Since October 2004 I have participated in a project for which the State Library made a successful submission to acquire funds from the R. E. Ross Trust Fund. The aim of the project was to continue the retrospective conversion of the Manuscripts Library card catalogue into the State Library's Voyager on-line catalogue. The funds were used to employ myself and two other staff members to work on the project.

The end result of the project means that more of the Manuscript treasures, which until now have been hidden to on-line users, will be accessible to many library users from Australia and around the world.

At the time of starting the project, it was estimated by Manuscripts staff that only 40% of the items listed in the card catalogue were available on Voyager.

The duration of the project is for three years, expiring October 2007. I was asked to work six hours per week, which I spread across two to three mornings per week.

My usual routine from Mondays to Wednesdays is to start work in the mornings in Cataloguing and then later in the mornings spend time working on the retrospective conversion in Manuscripts. Thursdays and Fridays are spent full time in Cataloguing.

Retrospective conversion of the card catalogue

When I began work on the retrospective conversion of the Manuscripts card catalogue, my Manuscripts mentor explained to me what a manuscript item is and showed me examples. She took me through the procedures of cataloguing a manuscript item. In the back of my mind I thought how easy is that, I do it every day. But there were several new cataloguing procedures and new library jargon that I needed to become familiar with. For example: MS numbers, Accession register books, Provenance files, Descriptive lists and the Art and Architecture subject index. And guess what else. There is no need to use Dewey numbers and Cutter-Sanborn tables.

Put simply, the general procedure is to consult the accession register for the next MS number and work backwards from there. The accession register has accession details and a short description of the item received by the State Library. The MS number is the manuscript accession number for that item. The next step is to locate the catalogue card in the catalogue and retrieve the item from stacks. Items are usually housed in archival boxes and the whole box, which would contain a number of items, would be brought to my workstation to work from. Using Voyager and with the manuscript item in hand, I would search for the bibliographic record. If I found one, I would edit the brief online bibliographic record and add our holdings. The record would then be exported to Libraries Australia. If I couldn't find a bibliographic record on Voyager, a new bibliographic record would be created, holdings added and the record exported to Libraries Australia.

About two years into the project, the earlier entries in the accession register were becoming illegible and the accession information was even more minimal than in the past years, so a decision was made to work from the actual items from the Manuscripts stack area. In this way, any outstanding material from the accession register would also be catalogued. This method of work ensured that all items in each of the archival boxes would be found and made accessible via the Manuscripts Catalogue.

Outcome

Now almost three years down the track, approximately 85% of these items are accessible on the on-line catalogue. The project is nearing completion, both in time and content. For Manuscripts staff the project means that fewer library users will be coming into the Manuscripts Library to consult the card catalogue. The project has ensured that many more manuscript collection treasures are readily accessible to all library users across Australia and around the world by searching the Manuscripts Catalogue on-line.

This project has greatly facilitated access and usage of manuscripts materials. Library online users using the in-house catalogue have requested several items that have been recently catalogued.

I am enjoying my time immensely working on this project. Each archival box or folder brought to my workstation is, for me, a new treasure to examine and explore further. I am filled with intrigue at the rarity and historical significance of these items.

The majority of items handled, some very fragile, date from the very early 1800s. These include – diaries, ship logs and bundles of letters to loved ones, written with

emotion and detail, telling of the early pioneers' journey across the sea and their hardships and experiences of their new found land. These personal annotations were written in ink or pencil. Numerous certificates, indentures, last will and testaments and genealogical family trees also make up a big number of the treasures held by the Manuscripts Library. All of this is a huge contrast to my daily work in Monograph Cataloguing as I handle and catalogue recently published items.

Position number 3

Project work - Technology Services (TS)

Project participation – August 2005 – April 2006

In August 2005, the Manager of my Division approached me, together with another cataloguing colleague and asked us if we would be interested in working on a short term project known as the Ballarat Moves Project. Our task would be to change location prefixes of items currently located on-site to a location prefix to show relocated items being moved to an off-site store in Ballarat. I was asked to work in the position for a total of two days per week and my colleague for a total of three days per week. We would be working within the TS work area at the State Library.

Technology Services Division covers a wide range of support services both to staff and the public. Some of the Division's area of responsibility covers problems with staff and public PCs, printers, managing software applications and databases, including Voyager, the Library's integrated library management system.

My colleague and I discussed amongst ourselves our working arrangements. We worked out a timetable that suited us both, taking into consideration our current cataloguing workflow and that there would only be one workstation available for us to use in TS. I also took into consideration that I was still working two to three mornings per week in Manuscripts. The decision was made that I would work Monday to Thursday afternoons in TS and my colleague would work five mornings plus Friday afternoon.

The timetable was emailed to our TS supervisor and staff within our division were also notified. A copy of this item, including telephone numbers, was placed near our divisional telephone and on my desk.

Before I go into detail on the TS project work, the following is some background information on the Ballarat off-site store.

Ballarat off-site store

Prior to the Ballarat off-site store being built, parts of the State Library's collection were stored in four off-site locations around Melbourne because there was not enough space to store its entire collection on-site. Conditions of these off-site stores were less than ideal and there was no room to accommodate the collection's continuing growth.

The Victorian government provided funding to construct a new purpose built store for the Library's off-site collection. It was a partnership entered into by the State Library of Victoria and the University of Ballarat. The store is located in Ballarat, west of Melbourne, approximately 1½ hours drive from the State Library of Victoria.

With the construction of the Ballarat store, the Library was able to consolidate its four off-site collections into one large location with optimum storage conditions, which include: -

- climate controlled facility
- fire prevention measures
- security systems and
- space for 10 years growth at active title

The Ballarat store contains 45 linear kilometres of storage space, including 10 years growth at active title. The Ballarat store was completed in November 2005.

TS project work

When I started work in TS in early September 2005, I established an early and regular routine. In the mornings I continued to arrive at my desk in Cataloguing and a short time later I went to Manuscripts, where I continued to work on the retrospective conversion of the card catalogue. I usually returned to my Cataloguing desk at around 11:30 and then went to lunch at noon. On my return from lunch, for four afternoons, I collected my bag and jacket and went to TS. I usually worked there till five most nights.

As part of the Ballarat Moves Project, one of my tasks was to change location prefixes on the catalogue, to show relocated items are now housed in the Ballarat store. Global relocation was accomplished by using *Vger Location Changer* and for item type changes *Pick an Scan* was the tool used. A note was added to the bibliographic records on OPAC for those titles identified as moving to the Ballarat store. These titles were unable to be requested by users until the completion of the relocation to the Ballarat store.

In preparation for the Ballarat Moves Project, collection managers earlier in the year had reviewed their respective collection materials. Serials, newspapers and other materials were to be relocated and many other sequences integrated. Selected data was retrieved by TS staff from Voyager for those materials to be relocated to the Ballarat store. My task included checking through lists of Excel spreadsheets that contained barcode numbers and Voyager bibliographic record numbers. Between my colleague and myself, we broke up the work within these Dewey sequences – 000-599 and 600-999. I was responsible for checking the 600-999 sequence. Spreadsheets with newspaper and serial titles were also scanned and checked.

With the State Library's 150 plus years of history, as you can imagine there are some long running serial and newspaper titles that still continue today and with each having long and at times complex holdings attached. Some serial and newspaper titles have experienced title changes and when scanning the Excel spreadsheets, I had to be aware of possible title changes that may have occurred and perhaps had not been identified by library staff as a title that should be relocated to the Ballarat store.

The job required long periods of scanning to be done at a computer monitor and sitting at the workstation for a long period of time. I needed to scroll down page after page of Excel spreadsheets containing barcodes, bibliographic records and Voyager bibliographic record numbers and be able to spot inconsistencies. Attention to detail and patience were a definite must for this task. This type of work certainly made me

more aware of my sitting posture at the workstation and of the need to take a break every so often by walking around the office area. Sometimes I would break up the scanning task by going to the stacks to resolve problems.

Some of my other duties included: -

- shelf checking to help resolve migration problems
- working with collection managers, face-to-face or by email to clarify a variety of issues that came up during the course of my day and
- helping to write procedures

I developed an understanding of how to use the global tools and how files need to be prepared. I also acquired a good working knowledge of Excel, which I still use today. The many years of experience in working in Cataloguing and other areas of the State Library worked to my advantage when it came to resolving problems.

Ballarat store material

The type of material that was relocated from the State Library and housed at the Ballarat store was aged and not frequently used material from the Victorian and Australian collection, some newspapers, pre 1976 serials and some manuscripts and pictures.

The offsite collection now consists of approximately: -

- 100,000 hard copy newspapers
- 25,000 boxes of Australian Manuscripts collection
- 750,000 bound serials, mostly pre 1976
- interstate and international government publications
- some patents and trademarks

The off-site collection move was a major project for the State Library and the largest move of collection items in its history. Almost one million items were sorted, cleaned, labelled and repackaged in readiness for when the Ballarat store was opened and fully operational by May 2006.

My colleague and I would catch up with TS related matters in the mornings before we began our respective jobs. If necessary, we would also meet during the day. Meetings with TS staff would be held weekly to see at what point the project had arrived and if we were keeping to our target.

Outcome

Library users and staff were constantly kept informed on the State Library's website with updates and with notices within the Library. Once the Ballarat store was operational library users could place requests for items to be brought to the State Library. The turnaround time for all deliveries from all collections would be next business day. Library users can place a request for these items from any of the information desks by late in the afternoon and all orders will be available at 10:00 the next day. Orders placed on Friday and Saturday are available at 10:00 on Monday.

This project made me realize how important it is to input item holdings information correctly onto Voyager when I am cataloguing in my every day job.

Having an excellent knowledge of Voyager cataloguing and State Library cataloguing procedures made my job easier to achieve, together with attention to detail and problem solving issues.

Working on this project did prove a steep learning curve, but it was one challenge that I enjoyed taking part in.

Position number 4

Staff Exchange – Manuscripts Collection

Duration – April 2006 – October 2006

A staff member from the Manuscripts Collection approached her Manager with the idea of initiating a staff exchange with a staff member from the Cataloguing Department. The Manuscripts Manager approached the Manager of Collection Management Division and my name was put forward. I was approached to see if I would be happy to participate in the staff exchange. When I agreed, a meeting was arranged with the various managers, the staff member and myself. Our various duties were outlined and the start and finish dates were agreed on. The duration of the staff exchange would be for six months – from April to September 2006.

With both staff members agreeing to the arrangements, my divisional manager made contact with Human Resources. Managers then informed their staff via email of the new staffing arrangements in their areas.

During these six months, the Manuscripts staff member continued to work half a day per week on an information desk shift roster, as was her routine and the remainder of her time was spent in Cataloguing.

For the first four weeks of April, I worked in the mornings in Manuscripts and I continued to work in Technology Services in the afternoons. At the end of April when my time in Technology Services came to an end, I worked full time in the Manuscripts Collection.

My first morning in Manuscripts consisted of being introduced to the staff again and given details of their duties. I was also given a more detailed tour of the Manuscripts Gallery or work space and stack area. All the staff in Manuscripts work on a number of information desk shift duties during the week. The consequence of this is that on any given day not all of the Manuscripts staff is present in the Manuscripts Gallery. The information desk roster containing the names of staff within this division is listed on an extensive Excel spreadsheet together with their desk shift. Each shift is represented by a combination of letters and numbers. To the experienced, the meaning of each shift is very clear, to the uninitiated it means very little. But, in a short space of time I became proficient at reading and understanding what the various desk shifts meant and knew exactly where staff were located at any given time.

Training sessions

Soon after I started working in Manuscripts, I attended several information sessions to familiarize myself with the various collections that make up the Heritage Collection. Staff from Manuscripts, Rare Books, Maps, Pictures and the Children's literature collection gave these sessions. These sessions also helped me when my time came for working in the Heritage Collections Reading Room, for which I was given separate

training. The Heritage Collections Reading Room is a room where fragile, rare and historically significant materials can be viewed under supervision. Items include manuscripts, ephemera, newspapers, pictures, maps and rare books which have been retrieved from storage and brought to the reading room at pre-arranged times for viewing by library users.

My introduction to the Manuscripts collection was by way of answering 30 reference questions. These questions gave me the opportunity to find the correct answers to the questions, by familiarizing myself with the collection. Two weeks later, a Manuscript staff member went through the questions with me and explained the various resources that can be used to answer queries.

Some of my other duties included: -

- accessioning manuscript items on arrival. This included sorting, repackaging, cataloguing and shelving items
- retrieving and reshelving items from stacks and the Heritage Collections Reading Room
- retrieving and preparing items for exhibitions and photocopying
- face-to-face and telephone reference enquires

Some manuscript items are received from donors in a poor and fragile state, in unstable boxes and are very dusty. Working in this position has made me more aware of the need to handle items carefully as some need to be handled with great care. Once items are received, they are accessioned, sorted, packaged in acid free sleeves or folders and placed in archival boxes. Because of my cataloguing experience, I was given the opportunity to catalogue these items.

For the first four weeks of April, I would finish my work at around noon and go to lunch. At around 1:00 I would head to Technology Services to begin my work there for the afternoon.

I was still kept on the Cataloguing email list, thereby receiving news about work matters and attended their monthly meetings when I was free from manuscript duties. At times, due to staff and desk roster constraints, I found it difficult to attend these meetings and to have regular morning or afternoon teas with my cataloguing tea group. Keeping up with my tea group was a good way of keeping in touch informally.

Benefits

This staff exchange occurred between two willing staff members working in two different divisions and performing very different day-to-day tasks. The staff exchange gave my colleague and myself the opportunity to multi-skill ourselves, gain new experiences and work in different teams and environment. I feel that I am able to interact not only with Manuscripts staff better, but also other staff within the division.

While working in Manuscripts, I also attended several monthly divisional meetings and I was also notified of various meetings and news items through email. I was also given the opportunity to take part in a three day workshop on 'Front of house/Back of house' restructure which proved an eye opener to me because the other sections that comprise the Heritage Collections were involved and I was able to hear their side of things.

CONCLUSION

When I started work in Manuscripts on the retrospective card catalogue project, I was filled with apprehension on my first morning because of the unknown, but I also went with an open mind to learn and acquire new information and knowledge, as this was an area that I knew very little about.

Each morning as I have done for the past three years, working on the Manuscripts card catalogue, I leave Cataloguing with a smile, knowing that I am going to enjoy my time in Manuscripts. I continue to work six hours per week in Manuscripts and I still continue to go there with a smile and a keenness to learn more and discover new treasures.

When my time came to begin work on my secondment as a full-time staff member of the Manuscripts Collection, I entered the Manuscripts Gallery full of confidence because I was aware of my surroundings, I was familiar with the staff and the type of duties that I would be doing.

When I started work on the Ballarat Moves Project, I felt that I was entering the unknown. My only contact with the department previous to this project was via email to the Help Desk for PC problems, email problems and the like. So on my first afternoon in Technology Services I was filled with some apprehension and anxiety. But I need not have worried. All the staff made me feel most welcome. My position there was not to look after the day to day hardware and software problems, my duties were to collect, analyse and problem solve issues that arose from the relocation of material to the Ballarat off-site store.

I must admit when my time was coming to an end in Technology Services, I had this *flat feeling*. My time in TS was filled with energy and challenges, being kept alert and being on the go for a lot of the time that I was there. As interesting and enjoyable as it is working in Cataloguing, it just doesn't have the same hype or energy. Don't get me wrong. I absolutely love the challenge that descriptive cataloguing of monographs gives me, applying a unique call number and being able to add that information onto Voyager. The staff that I work with are an absolute joy and I am always in excellent company in sharing a joke, a laugh or even to problem solve a work related problem.

For each of the project positions I devised a system where work related papers, notes and stationery were kept in different folders for the various jobs at my Cataloguing desk. As I moved from one position to the other, I would need to only collect the appropriate folder and head off to the job. Good time management and organisational skills are a definite must when trying to work around two or three jobs simultaneously. Good communication between Cataloguing and project staff members is also a must.

My cataloguing friends always greeted me on return to my desk with a pleasant smile and asked about my work. They have been interested and eager to hear about manuscript items that I have catalogued and the historical interest and the fragility of the items. They also queried me on what stage I was up to with the TS project and how I went with my Heritage Collection desk shifts. It was always lovely to start my

day or to return at the end of the day to Cataloguing because this is where my long term friends are.

In conclusion:

Make it your business to be **Informed** of your surroundings.

Make time to **Innovate** changes

It's up to you to **Initiate** that next step

By doing so, you will be **Inspired** by your new surroundings