

SPOTLIGHT ON NICK HORSNELL

LIBRARY TECHNICIAN &
PROCESS SPECIALIST, PERTH



A former international hardcore punk band member is possibly the last person you'd expect to get a gig in a public library, but Nick Horsnell is rocking it as winner of the Australian Libraries and Information Association's TAFE graduate award in 2020. Working across six libraries in the City of Swan, Nick is up-skilling the teams and up-dating the tech to create the most vibrant and supportive community hubs with ever-evolving programs of events and services.

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Give us your bbq pitch. What do you do?

I work across six public libraries in the City of Swan area and the systems that support the delivery of library services to all six communities. So, a lot of my day-to-day work is behind the scenes. As a technician, I'm making sure the library catalogue is up to date and accessible to our customers and our staff. As a process specialist, I'm supervising, training and up-skilling our front-line staff and improving processes to help deliver the best library experience to all our communities.

Every library and community is different, delivering a whole host of community services and programs, not just books. We have young families with little kids coming in for story time. Students needing a place and resource for study and research. Adults looking to learn new skills or improve their tech literacy for managing everyday-life stuff like rate payments and animal registration. We even have Thinking Green and Nature Know-How workshops to promote sustainability and local wildlife conservation.

Did you always plan to work in this industry?

In year 12, I was really into photography and got a place on a media studies course straight out of school. At the same time, my band started touring Australia and overseas, so I put my studies on hold for a while. We toured the US, Europe, Japan and south-east Asia, and I learned a lot about myself, the wider world and different cultures. But by 2012 our lives had got more complicated. Band members were settling down with loved ones and pursuing goals outside of music, and we were touring a lot less. It was time for me to get back into the workforce, and the only real experience I'd had was in managing the logistics and merchandising of our tours. So, I got a job combining these two skills in the local surf industry, which is another of my passions.

So, how did you get into libraries?

I wanted to be more involved in the community and logistics didn't really give me that opportunity. I'd always enjoyed reading books and record collecting too, so library studies seemed to be a good fit. I enrolled in the Cert IV Library and Information Services course at TAFE and went on to study the diploma. I was still working full-time in logistics while studying, volunteering at various art gallery libraries and doing placements at other libraries. It was a busy time! Then I was offered a casual role as information officer at Swan Libraries and jumped at the chance to get my foot in the

door. I put my hand up for more hours, got a part-time position, then took on the full-time library technician role once I'd finished my diploma.

How would you describe yourself?

I'm calm and positive, friendly, open and adaptable. I like connecting with people, finding common ground and building relationships.

What do you love most about the industry?

The camaraderie and support. It's in everyone's nature in the library space to help each other. There's a real sense of community within the team, and a shared goal to connect with and support the wider community too, whether that's helping young children improve their literacy skills or helping the older generation improve their tech literacy. We offer so much and we're constantly evolving. Libraries aren't the quiet places they used to be. They're very vibrant. There's always a lot going on. And they're very open, accepting, and welcoming places.

What's the best part of your job?

As a technician, I really enjoy making information and resources more accessible to people. As a process specialist, what I love most is creating an open, supportive culture with clear lines of communication – making sure everyone is on the same page and positive about what we're achieving together for our communities.

What's your best advice for anyone starting out?

Come in with an open mind to all areas of the sector, from museum and art gallery libraries to academic, government and public libraries, and put your hand up for volunteer roles and casual positions. Show you're keen to be a part of the team and your local community, working with people of all ages, from diverse cultures.

And what's next for you?

Being quite new to the process specialist role, I'd like to push myself, learn more and make a difference in this space. In the future, I'd be open to diversifying into museums or academic libraries.

Connect with Nick on LinkedIn

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