

2019 MARGARET JENNINGS AWARD PROFILE

SHIVAUN TIJOU: CURTIN UNIVERSITY

Tell us how you first got involved in the archival profession?



I lived in England for many years, teaching primary school and pursuing my interest in family history by visiting archives and using online records. When I returned to live in Australia, it was difficult to find a similar job and I decided it was time for a career change. I saw a career coach about how to turn my hobby into a career and spoke to different people in the archive profession. That kindled my enthusiasm and I enrolled in Curtin Uni's online graduate diploma course in Records Management and Archives, whilst also volunteering at the NSW Girl Guide State Archives for practical experience.

Tell me about someone who has influenced your decision to study and/or work in the archival profession?

One of the people I spoke to was Morwenna Dixon (then NSW School Archives SIG Convenor and now ASA Secretary) as she was (and still is) the school archivist at Barker College, near where I lived. I liked the idea of maintaining a connection to education and grilled Morwenna about life as a "lone arranger". I loved the sound of her jack-of-all-trades experiences and wanted to do something similar, if not in a school, at least in a small, specialised archive.

What would you tell someone who is thinking about studying in the area?

I would warn them they might not be able to switch off thinking about archival concepts in their day-to-day life! They might pick up a random piece of paper and fret that it is devoid of context. Or be out shopping and wondering what the shop has that is of enduring value and how it could be preserved. (Or maybe that's just me becoming so absorbed and fascinated by my new world!)

If you could change one thing about archival practice, what would it be?

It would not be so much change, but I hope to see more of it: the increasing awareness within the archival world (and society in general) of different viewpoints on 'keeping' records and archives. During my course, I found articles about Indigenous and care leavers' perspectives particularly interesting (and poignant). It makes me question "Should we have archives at all?"

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What would you like to be doing in five years' time?

Five years ago, I assumed I would still be a teacher in the future! Now I am working as a scanning clerk in the not-for-profit sector, at the frontline of records-making. As there is no Records Manager or Archival Officer in my organisation, I would love to be doing either job and spreading the joy of recordkeeping and preserving archives to my colleagues and the wider community!