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Building the basis for evidence based library and information practice

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: With a total of 111 million annual visits, libraries are fundamental to Australia's social fabric and increasingly to its success as a national economy. In the current volatile economic climate however, Australia's libraries are being called upon to do more with less. This paper will present the findings of a project funded by the Australian Research Council that aimed to help Australia's libraries to make tough decisions in an environment where there is competition for limited resources. The project established an empirical basis for evidence-based library and information practice (EBLIP). Simply stated, EBLIP is an approach to professional practice that is grounded in the use of research to gather evidence to inform the many decisions and problems that a practitioner must address.

Methods: The project consisted of two sub-studies. The public library sub-study was conducted using ethnography. Over a 5-month period, a member of the research team

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travelled to a regional public library service on 15 occasions staying between 3 and 4 days on each visit. The researcher observed, interacted and became involved in the day-to-day activities of this library. These activities were recorded in a journal and added to the researcher's insights and thoughts. Additionally, 12 face-to-face interviews with staff in positions ranging from the operational to the executive were conducted. The academic sub-study was conducted using Constructivist Grounded Theory. Semi-structured interviews were conducted either in person or via Skype, with 13 librarians from Queensland universities. Interviewees were in a diverse array of roles, from liaison librarian to manager and library director.

Results: The public library sub-study found that the following key aspects depicted the experience of EBLIP in a public library: leadership, culture, learning, context, collaboration and second nature. In the academic library sub-study six categories were constructed which describes librarians' experiences of evidence-based practice as: empowering, intuiting, affirming, connecting, noticing and impacting.

Conclusions: The project findings help extend the current but limited empirically derived understanding of EBLIP. This project has identified and articulated several key aspects that need attention if EBLIP is to be developed as an approach to professional practice. These key aspects will be of interest to LIS educators, professional associations, employers and practitioners.

INTRODUCTION

Evidence-based practice is founded on the premise that professional 'practice should be based on up-to-date, valid and reliable research' (Brice & Hill 2004, p. 13). EBP is a topic of growing worldwide interest in the library and information sector. Over the past fifteen years there has been burgeoning interest in the concept as shown by the regular biennial

international conference established in 2003, the launch of the open source journal Evidence Based Library and Information Practice in 2006, and the growing body of literature discussing and critiquing the concept as applied within the profession (Booth & Brice, 2004; Crumley & Koufogiannakis, 2002; Hallam & Partridge 2006). Whilst numerous studies have been undertaken under the guise of being evidence based, very few studies have empirically explored EBP as the object or phenomenon of study. There have only been three studies to date that have explored how library and information professionals conceive and experience EBP: (i) Partridge et al (2010) used phenomenography to explore variation in the how nine Australian librarians experienced EBP; (ii) A grounded theory study of 19 Canadian academic librarians was conducted by Koufogiannakis (2012) into how evidence-based practice was being used for professional decision making; (iii) Gillespie (2014) used expanded critical incident approach to investigate the lived experience of 15 teacher librarians as evidence based practitioners in Australian school libraries. This paper provides an overview of a three-year project, funded by the Australian Research Council, which explored the ways in which Australian LIS professionals experience EBP. The project will contribute to the small but growing number of studies that are seeking to establish an empirical base for “evidence based library and information practice”.

THE PROJECT

The three-year project commenced in 2013 and included two interconnected sub-studies. Together the sub-studies provided for the first time, an empirical basis for evidence based practice in the context of Australian library and information profession. A brief description of each sub-study, including participants, data collection, analysis and findings follows.

Sub-study 1: Evidence based practice and academic libraries

Sub study one explored academic librarians' experience of evidence based practice. Constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) was the research approach employed. The rationale behind grounded theory was that theory should be grounded in empirical evidence, that is, evolve from data rather than be developed 'a priori' and then tested. Data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews with thirteen academic librarians recruited from Queensland universities. The librarians were employed in various roles ranging from liaison, reference and information librarians to library executives, team managers and directors. Participants were recruited via a purposive sampling approach and were contacted directly by email. Interview questions were designed to allow participants to describe their experiences of evidence based practice. In keeping with the grounded theory approach there was one primary interview question: *Can you tell me about your experience of using evidence in your professional practice?* In addition a range of follow-up questions were also used to probe or elicit further information from participants about responses they provided.

Data collection and analysis was undertaken simultaneously, with 'each informing and focusing the other' (Charmaz, 2006). This is a key element of grounded theory. Typically data is collected initially from a small pool of participants. This data is analysed and the results inform the direction of further data collection, including sampling strategies. The researcher returns to the field continually until theoretical saturation is achieved. The findings from this sub-study provide a holistic view of academic librarians' experience of evidence based practice. Six categories of experience were constructed. It is beyond the scope of the current paper to give a detailed discussion of each category. Further details regarding the sub-study's findings are presented in Miller, Partridge, Bruce, Yates, Howlett (submitted). A brief summary of each category is provided below.

Empowering

Academic librarians describe their empowering experience of evidence based practice in terms of both:

- 1) Being empowered by clients, colleagues and institutions through improved practice or performance; and
- 2) Empowering clients, colleagues and institutions through improved practice or performance.

Librarians in this study discussed having mutually empowering experiences of building self-confidence as competent practitioners, and building confidence in the people they work with and serve. In this category evidence-based practice is experienced as interacting with anything (or anyone), which is perceived as an indicator of improved or good practice or performance. An academic liaison librarian reflects on this experience as follows: 'I judge how I'm going by my interaction with the team, so if that's healthy, I'm meeting my deadlines... the quantity of my output... if I get that occasional thank you from a researcher or a good class evaluation... I'm fairly confident that... I'm earning my wage at least.' (Participant 6). From a senior level librarian perspective, the empowering experience is more about enabling colleagues to 'build capacity' across the University library: 'I think it's important for them to collect... for them to be aware of what evidence they're going to need to support how they're performing... because they're required to do it and you're building on it and getting people to share practice in meetings because it's required, then you start getting sharing and building of capacity in that evidence-based approach to what they're doing.' (Participant 10). In this category, evidence can be stored and gathered either physically (i.e. document or email as proof of a positive outcome) or mentally (i.e. memories or knowledge of an interaction with a positive outcome).

Intuiting

Academic librarians describe their intuiting experience of evidence-based practice in terms of both:

- 1) Being intuitive to understand colleagues, clients and institutions; and
- 2) Using own intuition, wisdom and understanding of library staff/clients' behaviours to solve problems and re-design services.

Librarians in this study described evidence-based practice as drawing upon intuitive forms of evidence to inform their practice. This is often described as an emotional experience of being intuitive or learning to use own intuition during professional practice such as problem solving, as the following senior level academic Librarian expressed in relation to using her intuitive understanding of staff under her supervision: "I've learnt to trust my gut, and... I've learnt not to be scared to invite someone into the office and say "are you alright?", and they're like "oh you know what, no I'm not"... I just try and allow them to just get it out and be alright..." (Participant 11). In this category, intuitive evidence is often described as 'evidence in one's head' and as a 'learning process' that can be either conscious (when verbalised) or sub-conscious (when experienced but not yet verbalised). The next quote from a liaison librarian encapsulates the experience of being intuitive as evidence based practice: "it's constant learning... there's a lot of evidence in my head that's hard to sort of verbalise... through my learning process, I can see, well, that worked, that didn't work... it's not even a fully conscious process, but just keep adapting... it's often funny how in a presentation, or in a meeting, something that you read last year, or last month... just comes back to you, and so you use that as part of the conversation" (Participant 2).

Affirming

Academic librarians describe their affirming experience of evidence-based practice in terms of both:

- 1) Being affirmed through receiving and sharing feedback; and
- 2) Using affirmation to strengthen support for action.

Librarians in this study discussed affirming action as a way of experiencing evidence based practice. In this sense, evidence is the corroboration of supportive feedback received and shared by colleagues, clients and institutions, while evidence-based practice is experienced as being affirmed by various stakeholders or resources, and is also experienced as using affirmation to strengthen support for action and as indicators of effective performance, as the following quote suggests: “I think I’m performing... effectively when my colleagues give me positive feedback or include me in... can you join this thing because your input is important or we value your input.” (Participant 8). Being affirmed and using affirmation or support from one’s own team is often experienced simultaneously resulting in the feeling of having a good plan that meets clients needs, as the following quote from a librarian illustrates: “Primary means [of evidence] would be from my manager and also my colleagues. We are quite supportive of each other and we always discuss... we sort of bounce ideas off each other, and I think in that way you feel like what it is you’re going to plan to do... you’ve worked it out to be a good idea and hopefully it meets the needs of the staff and students for the faculty.” (Participant 1).

Connecting

Academic librarians describe their connecting experience of evidence-based practice in terms of both:

- 1) Being connected with clients, colleagues and institutions; and
- 2) Building connections with clients, colleagues and institutions.

Librarians in this study experience being connected and building connections as evidence-based practice through 'every interaction' they have, especially with clients. Being connected and building connections are experienced simultaneously on an individual level as librarians being social and developing good working relationships with colleagues and clients, and on an institutional level to feel connected to the university and the context it is operating in as a whole: "...it's the ability to get on with... all those areas that are there... maybe it's a bit social too.... I think it's not just that you're a nice person or anything... it enables you to have a big picture of where the [organisation] sees itself going."

(Participant 8). Building connections with clients is experienced through both formal (written) and informal (verbal) conversations with academic staff and students, where feedback is collected through listening and questioning, which can be used to enhance or change services and/or practice, as the following quote from a liaison librarian illustrates: "I might be... walking along a corridor, and an academic will actually... come out of their office..."Thanks...I like... the library... what service they're offering, or what you did in that class the other day,"... whereas the formal feedback might be they'll send me an email after class to say... "We hope you can continue doing... joint classes" (Participant 3).

Noticing

Academic librarians describe their noticing experience of evidence-based practice in terms of both:

- 1) Being actively aware of, observing and reflecting on clients, colleagues and literature within and outside of own university; and

2) Noticing patterns in data to inform decision-making.

Librarians in this study described the experience of noticing as being actively aware of, observing and reflecting on their own personal experiences. Noticing library usage patterns in data is experienced as evidence-based practice, whether informally or formally observed, for example: "...So I've got a library guide, which is all about how to reference in APA style, and I have a few different tabs for each of the sources that you may be referencing – and I was looking at the statistics for that site 'cause I really want to know how many students are actually accessing it" (Participant 1). However, while some librarians in this study are adept at 'keeping an eye on' (Participant 3) usage patterns from quantitative data, they are uncertain about how to use this evidence once identified. One of the main experiences reported by librarians in relation to noticing is the perception that, while more challenging to capture 'mental notes' for future use, qualitative data gathered from informal conversational feedback were more insightful and useful for decision making than quantitative data gathered from client surveys or databases where only numbers of interactions have been recorded. On a broader level, librarians are maintaining awareness of professional literature to evaluate specific library activities and make decisions in terms of industry standards and best practice, where applicable.

Impacting

Academic librarians describe their impacting experience of evidence-based practice in terms of both:

- 1) Being impactful on clients, colleagues and institutions; and
- 2) Having a visible impact on clients, colleagues and institutions.

Librarians in this study discuss a perceived shift in practice towards moving away from ‘the background’ to become more visible or present with stakeholders, both physically and mentally – as this quote from participant 1 encapsulates: “...getting to know the faculty was a really difficult thing because in the reference librarian position... you’re not necessarily out there trying to meet people, trying to get known by a specific group of people... So when I came into this role... it was a bit of a challenge for me to change the way... I interacted with staff and students to make myself more known.” This experience involves librarians consciously making an effort to change their mindsets (‘being impactful’) to increase their visibility or status in the faculty in order to be more impactful on clients, colleagues and their institutions, and also impacting on stakeholders (‘having a visible impact’) which can mean personally experiencing or seeing their impact as a result of this change in practice. Having a visible impact is experienced as feeling a sense of satisfaction through seeing their own positive contribution making a difference to academics’ work. This can be through various forms of evidence such as anecdotal feedback or comments expressing genuine understanding and appreciation, public recognition such as award nominations, and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data to measure their ‘impact factor’².

Sub-study 2: Evidence based practice and public libraries

Sub-study two explored how evidence based practice was experienced in one Australian public library. Ethnography³ was the research approach employed. Ethnography is the

² The impact factor is a measure of the frequency with which the average article in a journal has been cited in a particular year.

³ The two sub-studies employed two different qualitative methods, thus enabling a deeper understanding of EBLIP to emerge. They will also allow for critical insight and commentary on the appropriateness and impact of the different qualitative methods in developing our understanding of this new and emerging field of study (i.e. EBLIP as the object of study). A commentary comparing and contrasting the two different methods employed and insights obtained is beyond the scope of the current paper.

study of human social phenomena and community. Summertown Library is the site for this investigation. Summertown is a pseudonym used to protect the identities of the participants. The Summertown Library is a service provided by the Summertown City Council. The Summertown Library services a large provincial town of over 180,000 residents. Three branches are strategically located with another branch planned in the near future to cater for the growing spread of the population. Summertown as a coastal town has a port and is the service centre for outlying mining and industrial industries. In more recent times it has become a site for migrant and refugee families.

One member of the research team travelled to Summertown 15 times over a six-month period. Each visit was of between 3 to 4 days. Initial visits took a 'big net' approach where the researcher was immersed in as many activities in the library as possible (e.g shelving, assisting customers on the floor, culling, storytelling, assisting in the mobile van and offering assistance wherever possible). At day's end the researcher recorded the events in a journal. Included were unobtrusive observations, comments and interactions with staff and attempts to interpret what the researcher was seeing. In addition thirteen participants from within the library staff representing diversity in the operational units and management levels were interviewed. Each of the interviews began with asking the participants to describe their role in the Summertown library. Further indicative questions included: *What does the phrase evidence-based practice mean to you? Can you give me some examples of how evidence-based practice is enacted in this library?* A probing question following could be, *How are these types of evidence useful? What evidence do you have that the library is delivering a quality service?* Additionally, the researcher collected a range of print materials, including promotional leaflets of library activities, strategic plan and related timelines, planning proforma, feedback forms.

Ethnographic data analysis is iterative 'as it builds on ideas throughout the study' (Fetterman, 1998, p. 92). Analysis is a refinement of the data with the researcher trying to fit selections of the data into the bigger picture; in this case experiences of evidence-based practice. The researcher's reflections and interpretations, observations, interactions and field notes provided the data for the current study. In keeping with the ethnographic approach, the findings are presented as a thematic narrative. Evidence-based practice is experienced in Summertown Public Library through four interconnected and interdependent cultural orientations. It is beyond the scope of the current paper to give a detailed discussion of each cultural orientation. . Names and places have been changed to ensure participant confidentiality. Further details regarding the sub-study's findings are presented in Gillespie, Partridge, Bruce & Howlett (submitted). A brief summary of each cultural orientation is provided below.

A culture of valuing

Evidence based practice involves being valued and valuing each other. Summertown Library team has a culture of valuing each other. This valuing can be witnessed through the ways skills and achievements of staff are acknowledged and shared. Open acknowledgments shared face-to-face and among staff is affirmative evidence. An example of evidence as affirmation was the daily session, 'toolbox' which occurred at fifteen minutes before opening time. The staff stood in a circle near the library entrance and whoever was the senior staff member on site would lead the toolbox meeting. Anyone could speak but the meeting was kept on topic due to the fifteen minute time frame. There was a similar flow to each of these meetings and topics covered included issues that had arisen or follow up from the previous day's meeting, staff absences and replacements, activities happening in the library for the day, general issues with library management, customer concerns which had been raised and work place safety. It was a time when anyone could share responses and incidents, usually a firsthand encounter or email,

relating to customer reactions, events they had attended and general feedback. An example of such an incident came in the form of an email which came to Tonya⁴, the Executive Manager which contained much praise for one of the junior staff members. The incident related to a customer who had brought his small daughter, named Alice to the library for a Storytime session. In this session, Alice had a wardrobe malfunction where the strap on her sundress came apart. It was a distressing situation and the library staff member offered to fix the dress with a brooch she was wearing. Alice was most unsure at first, but when the staff member explained that it was a special brooch, of Alice in Wonderland, the young Alice with much pride accepted it. Disaster averted and the most relieved father took his now smiling daughter home. Tonya's sharing of the email acknowledged the staff member going beyond the line of duty in freely giving the brooch to the young Alice.

Feedback as affirmative evidence to staff could also be more formal. Maggie who works within the Learning Engagement programs had a range of evidence strategies mostly relating to customer satisfaction that provide evidence of this. She was aware of the face-to-face feedback that occurred at the point of contact with customers and supervisors and saw this an affirmation of practice and acknowledgment of the efforts she put into meeting customer requests and needs. Additionally, Maggie valued the direct feedback she received from her supervisor when achievement plans were required to be completed. The meeting between Karen, her supervisor and Maggie was collegial and non-threatening. She explained,

A general chat, I love that. Because so many times you can just work and work and work and your supervisor will just say nothing and you're thinking am I - what

⁴ As previously noted names and places have been changed to ensure participant confidentiality.

am I doing, you know? But my supervisor is very, very good like that. If I'm doing a good job she'll tell me I'm doing a good job. They've - that just prompts me to do even better, you know?

This response is an indication that Maggie accepted this as evidence that she was performing effectively in her role. The positive feedback leads to her a raised awareness on which aspects of her role were effective. The flow on effect is increased productivity and a developed sense of wellbeing and affirmation that she is performing well.

A culture of being

Evidence-based practice involves being and becoming a professional. Evidence-based practice may not be an obvious and conscious activity in the day-to-day practice of library professionals. In professional practice it can be so subtle as to be indiscernible. It becomes part of being a professional, working to self-improve and provide the best possible service to customers. In the early stages of the researcher's visits to Summertown Library, they struggled to see how evidence-based practice was occurring in the daily activities of the library staff. The researchers own experiences of evidence-based practice as both a former librarian and now as an academic scholar should have placed them in a position to see clearly how this organisation went about the business of evidence-based practice, however the researcher felt they could not see evidence-based practice at all. They knew they had to be missing something or doing something wrong, but could not determine what it was. The researcher came to realise that the evidence was more subtle. So subtle that the library staff reacted and responded to evidence as it presented itself in a manner which was intrinsic to their daily practice. It was so subtle and embedded into daily practice that responses were made without effort or conscious thought. They were blissfully unaware that they were doing evidence-based practice. Over

time, the researcher came to understand that there was an understanding and a collective vision among the staff across many levels of the library organisation and among the different operational sections of the library. Many of the responses that staff made were based on intuitively discerning appropriate evidence. There was an attitude of continual improvement of their own practice and to meet the needs of their customers. The Local History Collection of the Summertown library and the staff who managed it provide an example of this.

Over many years, the Local History Collection has grown in response to the community's desire to keep records and learn more about its local history. Camilla indicated that the collection 'grew from nothing really' and it seemed that in the early stages that there was no clear plan to build such a collection. That is, there was not a plan to target particular items for the collection, or to put parameters around what should or should not be included. The collection evolved rather than being deliberately curated. Much of the collection has come from donations and contains many items of memorabilia, newspapers and many photographs and as such it is an archive and tells the story of Summertown's past. As the collection has grown, it has become highly valued and supported by the Summertown Council, so much so that renovations were undertaken to accommodate the collection in climate controlled rooms. Additionally, there was support to apply for a funding grant to purchase specialised equipment to digitalise some of the collection. As a result, much of the collection is now available online.

As a direct response to growing customer requests and customer feedback, the collection has grown. The staff in the Local History Collection have much direct contact with library customers, many of whom visit the library regularly and are well known to the staff. Many are searching family history and using the facilities to digitalise their own artefacts. Much of

the feedback the staff receives is at the point of contact with the customer. Camilla was aware that word of mouth encouraged many new customers to venture into the archives of the local history collection. 'I think a fair number of our customers say that they've talked to somebody who's had information from us and come, so obviously they've had a good report on us and have decided to use the service themselves.' Camilla valued feedback from customers and said, '...in my case, I think I receive emails back pretty regularly almost all the time with people thanking me and saying that it was just what they wanted and they're happy with what was found and it's helped them get their family tree together or do the display they wanted or whatever.' Mostly these emails were the only documented evidence, and there seemed to be a relationship with the customers and active response to their requests. Camilla described the feedback she received as providing her with a 'sense of well-being' which related to her performance and the relationships she had with the customers.

Formal reporting in the form of customer satisfaction and evidence of meeting targets was more of a concern for Betty as the manager of the Local History Collection. She was able to demonstrate that the section was meeting targets and demonstrated improved performance in relation to workshops, their quality and the increased number that were being undertaken. However, there was much unrecorded and undocumented evidence that Betty responded to when planning the future direction of the Local History Collection, coming from direct contact with library customers.

For Betty, there was a real sense of self improvement, of upskilling herself and her staff to meet customer needs. The staff were gaining in confidence in their new skills and were able to share these to guide their customers. Rachel, the third staff member assigned to the Local History Collection, did most of the digital conversions for the library and taught

customers how to use the equipment. Hers was a steep learning curve and she enjoyed sharing her new skills. When I asked Camilla in interview, what indications she had that she was delivering a quality service, she responded with, 'Well apart from knowing that you are.' Camilla's sense of knowing is a culmination of various factors including the feedback she receives on a daily basis, the value that is placed on the collection and the people who work to make it accessible. She is being part of the collective vision for the library and its collection.

A culture of learning

Evidence based practice involves being a learner and supporting the learning of others. Summertown Library's multi-layered approach to a learning culture was demonstrated in the way in which skills and experiences were shared from frontline managers to operational staff. As staff at Summertown Library were growing and learning in their roles they were seeking affirmation and guidance to do their jobs better. A culture of continuous improvement guided by organisational objectives and measured with customer satisfaction surveys, personal achievement plans and the like, drives impetus for improvement. In striving for best practice, staff at all levels of the library were seeking clarification of the meaning of evidence-based practice and asking questions about how evidence-based practice could assist them.

In a culture of continuous improvement and where people are valued, learning is integral to work life. People continue to learn; from their supervisors, from each other in shared experiences. In Summertown Library, sharing was part of the culture; staff had a way of working out how to get things done. They relied upon and drew on the practical knowledge and experiences of colleagues. For the staff at Summertown Library, evidence-based practice was a way that they could improve and something they wanted to learn more

about. For example, Nadia's perception of evidence-based practice is that of lifelong and embedded practice; as something that is so familiar that they are difficult separate.

So I would say that it's (evidence-based practice) definitely something that we need to focus more time on and I can see too that evidence-based practice, it's something that... it's not just something that you do for a project, it actually needs to be an everyday practice. So it becomes a habit, similar to what we have in terms of, you know, continuous improvement and our smart service. It actually needs to become part of the culture.

A culture of leading

Evidence based practice involves leadership at many levels and leading towards one shared vision. Despite being situated over three locations, Summertown's Library Service has a one organisation ethos. It is like a cycle of leadership building the ethos, with the ethos in turn, building or enabling leaders. The organisation is people focused; people are valued and supported. There is no hesitation among staff to assist another staff member or customer. It is a happy and productive workplace, where staff get on with the job. To explain, it is the type of workplace where goals are clearly set and everyone just works out how to meet them. They fit in with each other and make adjustments where necessary.

A premise within organisations is that being at the top or at the executive levels of an organisation automatically makes that person the leader. The following paragraphs illustrate how leadership within the organisational culture contributed to the way in which staff at Summertown Library experienced evidence-based practice.

Tonya is the Executive Manager of the Summertown Library. Within the Summertown Council structure there are many executive managers and it is possible that any executive manager could head any of the departments at any time. The researcher had many informal chats with Tonya during the visits to Summertown and learned that the library was considered to be the 'shining beacon of the Council' in regard to management and customer service delivery. The researcher's observations and immersion in the culture of the Summertown Library allowed them to witness Tonya's influence and guidance.

The researcher's initial insights indicated that Tonya is guided by intuition but uses statistical data as determined by the Summertown Council and State Library to report on the success of the library's activities. She considered that, 'evidence-based practice means making decisions based on evidence rather than what you think you know or what you feel'. In practice though Tonya experienced evidence-based practice on many levels. In her role as the executive manager of the library Tonya needs to have a bigger picture of how the library fits with and complies with the parent organisation. Tonya actively sought information or evidence from within council for demographic information, population trends and from further afield, community needs in a changing economic environment.

Statistical data was gathered to meet specific purposes. Data supported decision making in particular to enhance customer experience. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in conjunction with the statistical data assisted the review processes, budgets and programs. A particular focus for the coming year was to review the acquisitions model. This would draw upon a range of evidence sources including data from community engagement, surveys, focus groups and statistical data.

The researcher witnessed many incidents where Tonya actively experienced and gathered evidence firsthand. She spent time on the library floor every week with the purpose of seeing for herself what was happening and getting a 'feel' of work flows and observing staff responding directly to customer requests. When she was on the floor, customers did not realise that she was the executive manager and neither did Tonya respond to them in that way. She responded as any of the operational level library staff would do. Face-to-face engagement with customers allowed Tonya to model the behaviours she expects from all staff. At the same time she is gathering useful evidence from the customer's perspective and the ways in which they use the library. While on the floor she is gathering incidental evidence by observing work flows and staff interactions with customers.

Tonya's actions of modelling behaviour and acknowledging success are ways in which she can build her influence. Leadership at many levels of the Summertown Library in conjunction with a one organisation ethos enabled the experiences of evidence-based practice to build momentum.

CONCLUSION

The work presented here is one of a small but growing number of studies that has begun to establish an empirical basis for evidence based practice in the library and information profession. The projects findings have the potential to assist library educators, associations and others involved in the supporting, preparing and educating LIS professionals at every career stage to develop the skills, knowledge, mindsets and actions needed to facilitate and advance evidence-based practice.

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