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Kay Wilson, Network Librarian, Alford, United Kingdom: A Day in Her Life

Kay Wilson is a network librarian at Alford Academy, in Aberdeenshire, Scotland. She has been in post for a little over a year. Previous to this she was a school librarian, research assistant, and lecturer at the Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen. Alford is situated in the northeast of Scotland, a rural community, approximately 26 miles west of Aberdeen. Alford Academy has a roll of over 600 pupils from 51-56 (12-18-year-olds). It has 13 associated primary schools. Kay's post of Network Librarian involves managing and developing the public and school library services in Alford. Alford Academy is a community school where the public and school population use the same library facilities. Aberdeenshire Library and Information Service funds the public library stock, and the school library stock is bought by the Network Librarian from a school-based budget. All stock can be borrowed by all client groups. The school library is supported by the schools department in Aberdeenshire Library and Information Service, which can provide extra resources. The library is staffed by the Network Librarian who is full time and by part-time staff (2 senior library assistants, 1 library assistant, and 3 relief assistants). At any one time two staff are on duty. The library is open from 8:45 a. m. until 4:30 p. m. every day and also 6:00-8:00 p.m. Monday to Thursday. On Saturday the library is open from 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. The school year runs from the end of August until the end of June, with holidays at Christmas and Easter and in October. Kay has a Bachelor of Arts in librarianship and information studies.

It hasn't been a good night. Our son Euan has been kept awake by teething pain, and as a result his dad and I are looking a bit tired. Nothing that a cool shower and a bowl of cereal can't cure though. By 7:45 a.m. Euan and I are washed, dressed, and breakfasted. He plays on the floor with his toys and our black Labrador Isla while I pack my bag for work. Copies of 51 Information Skill booklets, amended lists of Topic Boxes, development plans, all get thrust into my haversack. Didn't have a chance to look at them last night - Euan decided to learn how to crawl, and we were both too entranced by him to work!

It is a lovely morning, and Isla bounds out of the back door to race round the garden as I pop Euan in his car seat. We are to drop him off at his childminder, Lynn, for the day. Euan is far too interested in watching Isla chase our cat to get strapped in, but eventually, Tigger in hand and his bag of food and change of clothes beside him, we set off. It is only a two-minute drive from home to Lynn's. Euan is eager to have a cuddle from her as usual. He waves ta-ta, gives me a kiss, and I set off on my next two-minute drive to work. On the way, I pick up the newspapers and magazines for the library from the local newsagent. Both public and school borrowers use periodicals regularly. I've created Topic Boxes on issues such as environment, Scottish politics, drugs, and health. We cut up the newspapers from the day before

and file relevant articles in the box files. I also send for related leaflets. The pupils use them heavily for project work, and I am currently looking for space to expand the collection. Staff were sent memos at the end of the spring term regarding the Topic Boxes: which were relevant; which could I bin; were there new topics in the curriculum to be considered? I created an index for the Topic Boxes so that users could look up key words and find out which box would hold useful information for them.

I get to the library at 8:30 a.m. School starts at 8:45 a.m. One or two regulars pop in to change books, browse through the newspapers, or chat. The library is fairly well situated for school use, but the public have to walk right through the school to reach us. Unfortunately, they have had to learn to avoid class change times.

Today is Wednesday-delivery day. Requested items from our borrowers arrive by van from library headquarters. They are sorted out, assigned to the correct borrower, and filed. Borrowers who have requests waiting for them have their names put up on a whiteboard. As they collect their requests, the list diminishes. Requests are satisfied by other branch libraries in Aberdeenshire and also by stock held at HQ. We also run an Inter-Library Loan service where we can request materials from across the UK.

Next, the first class of the day arrive for their information skills session. Each first year (SI) class comes to the library during their first few weeks at the academy. Sheets are made up for them to follow in reference work and in how to use the computer catalogue to find nonfiction books. I want to revamp this whole area and will be putting it in the development plan. I'll speak to colleagues to see what approaches might work and then tailor it to suit our pupils in Alford. This class is particularly boisterous, but they seem to be getting the hang of the computer catalogue. They work in small groups and help each other out. I've provided them with maps of the nonfiction area. The nonfiction sequence is a little complicated due to the shape of the library. Something else for the development plan?!

Lunchtime beckons. Lunch hour for the pupils is from 11:50-12:50 p.m. The library is busy, as it has turned wet outdoors. Some are working, some are chatting, some are being a nuisance, some are helping to shelve-the usual mix. Two members of the public venture in to use the local studies section and the reference section respectively. An older reader comes in to change her talking books. She is a regular and can't see very well, so we spend time reading the plots to her-she likes murder and intrigue. She has read most things in Alford Library, so we reassure her that a talking-book exchange is imminent. We exchange main book stock twice a year. Other sections-talking books and videos-are exchanged almost on an ad hoc basis. Main book stock exchanges involve two members of staff going to library HQ to choose stock. The stock is crated at HQ and sent over. Staff in Alford take off stock that hasn't been borrowed for a while to make room for

the exchange stock. It is hard work, and we treat ourselves to lunch in a nearby cafe afterward.

In the afternoon, I get down to writing the development plans: one for the public library and one for the school. The public library one has a number of targets including: staff communication (developing daily bulletins to keep staff up to date); promoting health information to children under 5 and their parents or guardians; and reorganizing the fiction area.

The school development plan includes: revamping the 51 information skills program; revising the 51/52 reading program (producing more update-looking certificates, begging suppliers for pens and book tokens for rewards, buying new stock); looking afresh at the staff base (promoting new material, bookmarking, and promoting useful Web sites).

It is 4:30 and I've shut up shop. It has been another busy day. I've had a chat with a colleague in Community Education, and we have some common interests in health information promotion to explore. But that's tomorrow - all I want now is a big cuddle from my wee boy. Euan greets me with a huge smile and a demonstration of how fast he can crawl. In a flash, he has my developments plans out of my bag and strewn across the floor. Is he trying to tell me something?

This account has been created from a year of experiences at Alford Academy. My previous experiences as research assistant and lecturer have been invaluable to my present position. My job has many challenges and I love the opportunity of trying to meet each one. One minute I am discussing project planning with a member of teaching staff; the next minute I can have a toddler pulling at my jacket wanting me to tell them a story. What more of a balance could any job provide?