

## The experience of evidence-based practice in an Australian public library: an ethnography

[Ann Gillespie](#), [Helen Partridge](#), [Christine Bruce](#) and [Alisa Howlett](#)

### Abstract

**Introduction.** This paper presents the findings from a project that investigated the lived experiences of library and information professionals in relation to evidence-based practice within an Australian public library.

**Method.** The project employed ethnography, which allows holistic description of people's experiences within a particular community or cultural setting. A member of the research team visited a public library regularly over a six month period. Data collection comprised interviews, observation and document analysis. A field journal was also maintained where daily activities and interactions were recorded.

**Analysis.** Ethnography involves many levels of iterative analysis. Data extracts were identified, grouped and further refined whilst maintaining the context of the whole experience of the culture.

**Results.** Evidence-based practice is experienced in the library through four interconnected and interdependent cultural orientations: (i) culture of valuing; (ii) culture of being; (iii) culture of learning; and (iv) culture of leading. These orientations represent not only how evidence-based practice is experienced in the library but also how it has been enabled.

**Conclusions.** Context or environment is significant in terms of library and information service professionals' understanding of evidence-based practice. Evidence-based practice can be beneficial to all such professionals, as it builds professional knowledge and deeper understandings of practice at all levels of professional experience.

## Introduction

In the past fifteen years, there has been a growing interest in evidence-based practice in the library and information profession worldwide (see [Booth and Brice, 2004](#)). The literature indicates that, evidence-based practice in the context of the library and information profession refers to the process of using formal research skills and methods to assist in decision-making and establishing best practice ([Booth, 2002, 2007](#); [Eldredge, 2000](#)). While numerous studies have been undertaken under the guise of being evidence-based (see for example the empirical papers published in the online journal [Evidence Based Library and Information Practice](#)), very few studies in the library and information profession have explored evidence-based practice as the object of study. As such there is a lack of theory-guided and empirically tested models or paradigms for the concept. This has implications for how well evidence-based practice can be implemented within the professional practice of library and information professionals. This paper outlines a research project which explores the lived experiences of evidence-based practice within one Australian public library. The paper concludes with a detailed description of the research findings.

## Literature review

Evidence-based practice consists of a systematic and structured process for identifying, acquiring, appraising and applying evidence to decision-making in professional practice ([Brice and Hill, 2004](#)). Originating in healthcare, evidence-based practice has seen a broadened application into other areas such as education, social sciences, crime and justice and library and information practice ([Brice and Hill, 2004](#)).

### A decision-making framework for library and information professional practice

The current evidence-based practice model in the library and information profession is founded on a conceptual re-modelling of the decision-making framework from evidence-based medicine and health librarianship ([Todd, 2006](#), p. 32). Eldredge ([2000](#), p. 291) proposes the first

framework for evidence-based practice in the library and information profession and posits that it '*seeks to improve library practice by utilising the best available evidence combined with a pragmatic perspective developed from working experiences*'. An early definition of evidence-based practice within the library sector by Booth (2002) builds on this framework to outline a basic process, identify sources of evidence to inform library and information practice, as well as how the role of evidence is applied to improve practice or '*professional judgments*'.

*Evidence-based librarianship is an approach to information science that promotes the collection, interpretation and integration of valid, important and applicable user-reported, librarian observed, and research derived evidence. The best available evidence, moderated by user needs and preferences, is applied to improve the quality of professional judgments. (Booth, 2002, p. 53)*

The literature exploring evidence-based practice in the library and information profession focuses on a step-by-step procedural model (also known as the 5 As) popularised by Booth (2007), with the importance of asking a '*clearly defined, answerable question*' (Eldredge, 2000, p. 291; see also Booth, 2006; Crumley and Koufogiannakis, 2002).

Todd begins to acknowledge the role of professional knowledge in the evidence-based practice process and presents an *holistic* approach to evidence-based practice in the school library context. Todd's (2009) conceptual model integrates available research evidence with professional knowledge, whilst also engaging with locally derived evidence to identify issues, needs and opportunities to actively contribute to the school's learning goals. Yet a direct application to professional practice remains unrealised in the current evidence-based library and information practice model.

Few empirical studies have explored how library and information professionals perceive and experience evidence-based practice. A study by Partridge, Edwards and Thorpe (2010) was the first Australian study to explore variations in how library professionals experienced evidence-based practice. Partridge, Edwards and Thorpe

used a phenomenographic approach to categorise five different experiences of evidence-based practice:

1. Evidence-based practice is experienced as not relevant.
2. Evidence-based practice is experienced as learning from published research.
3. Evidence-based practice is experienced as service improvement.
4. Evidence-based practice is experienced as a way of being.
5. Evidence-based practice is experienced as a weapon.

The research suggests experiences of evidence-based practice by library professionals are '*complex and multi-dimensional*' and are influenced by context or work environment and culture.

A grounded-theory study of academic librarians by Koufogiannakis (2013a) reveals evidence-based practice being used for decision-making in the work environment. Here too, context influenced how evidence-based practice was experienced. Koufogiannakis (p. 4) found that an individual librarian's autonomy and power over a decision, determined how evidence was used. When an individual librarian is making a decision, evidence will generally be used to confirm a position and/or knowledge. In a group or team situation, where the individual librarian has less power over a decision, evidence may be used to influence it (Koufogiannakis, 2013a, p. 6).

A case study of an academic health services library identified and gathered evidence to support an operational review of the library (Bayley, Ferrell and McKinnell, 2009). The review included decisions about staffing, improvements to services and physical space. This is an example of evidence-based practice in action and is consistent with what Partridge, Edwards and Thorpe (2010) describe as *service improvement*. The case study by Bayley *et al.* (2009) also suggests the potential use of evidence as a weapon to influence decisions made outside the control of the library or information service (Koufogiannakis, 2013b, p. 6). These experiences of evidence-based practice suggest a need to situate the library or information service within a bigger picture to

derive an understanding from a contextual viewpoint to produce a model that is reflective and relevant to daily practice.

Evidence-based practice, or the integration and application of evidence in the library and information professional context is not a linear process, as Booth's (2007) 5As model would assume. A study exploring Australian teacher-librarians found evidence-based practice to be a holistic experience (Gillespie, 2014). In experiencing evidence-based practice, evidence may be purposefully engaged with, or sought after, or it can be encountered as a serendipitous event or activity (Gillespie, 2014, p. 18). For the teacher-librarians in Gillespie's study, evidence-based practice can be guided by practitioners' professional knowledge of knowing when and how to actively engage with evidence. This experience of evidence-based practice is similar to that described by Koufogiannakis (2013b, p. 4) when individual decisions are being made. The studies of Koufogiannakis (2012, 2013a) and Gillespie (2014) found that different types of evidence are gathered and used together in combination to make decisions and improvement to practice.

The research to date provides insights into the gaps in current understandings of evidence-based practice in the library and information profession. Little is currently understood about how evidence-based practice is conceptualised and experienced within the practice context of public libraries. A better understanding derived from an empirical basis is therefore important in supporting library and information professionals to fulfil the aims of evidence-based practice in continuously improving practice in their library communities.

## Research approach

This study adopted an ethnographic approach to investigate the lived experiences of evidence-based practice within an Australian public library. Ethnography was considered the ideal approach to respond to the research question: *What are the lived experiences of evidence-based practice among public library professionals?* Additionally, ethnography as a research approach has not previously been used to explore how

evidence-based practice is experienced in library contexts. This approach will therefore shed new empirically derived understandings on how library practitioners actually experience evidence-based practice. An interest in peoples' lived experiences may be described as a focus that '*orients us holistically towards peoples informed existences, considering people and what informs them, within their wider environments in a manner which considers people and their world as inseparable*' ([Bruce, Davis, Hughes, Partridge and Stoodley, 2014](#), p. 5).

Fetterman ([1998](#), p. 2) considers that '*the ethnographer is interested in understanding and describing a social and cultural scene from the emic, or insider's perspective*'. The emic perspective is fundamental to understanding how people experience the world around them ([Fetterman, 2008](#); [Wolcott, 1990](#)). Ethnographers also present an etic perspective as a way to make sense of what they have collected. The etic perspective involves stepping back from the insider's view in an attempt to make sense of the culture or phenomenon being investigated ([Fetterman, 2008](#)). Cultural narrative is the key objective of ethnography, hence the real voices of the participants are integral in relating the findings. The ethnographer is both a storyteller and a scientist and endeavours to understand the native's or in this case, the library practitioners' experiences.

## Cultural setting

Summertown Library is the site for this investigation. To protect the identities of the participants, Summertown and the names of the participants are pseudonyms.

Summertown Library is a service provided by Summertown City Council. Summertown Council as the parent organization finances and guides many of the activities and programmes of the library. Summertown Library serves 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. The library executive is part of the council's organizing

committee, causing the library to work within the structure of the council while it controls many of the systems and processes in the management of the library. Consequently the strategic plan and subsequent programmes of the library have an alignment with those of the council, hence the effectiveness of these programmes is measured against *pro formae* designed and systematised to fit the many departments of the council.

## Data collection

After approvals and ethics clearances were confirmed one member of the research team travelled to Summertown fifteen times over a six-month period. Each visit lasted between three and four days. Initial visits took a *big net* approach where the researcher was immersed in as many activities in the library as possible. Emmerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995) consider that ethnographic fieldwork is not a detached or passive observation. Consequently, the discussion presented here on the data collection, analysis and findings will be expressed in the first person. This first person voice represents that of the research team member who was situated in Summertown doing the interviews and on the ground observation.

I involved myself in many library activities from shelving, assisting customers on the floor, culling, storytelling, assisting in the mobile van and offering assistance wherever possible. At each day's end I recorded the events in a journal. Included were unobtrusive observations, comments and interactions with staff and my first attempts to interpret what I was seeing. These were recorded electronically, allowing me to use an iPad, laptop or PC in any location. Journal notes included the more structured meetings and descriptions, locations and work roles. Over time, utilising *judgemental sampling* (Fetterman, 1998, p. 33), I was able to identify potential participants for interviews. Judgemental sampling involves conscious selection of potential participants by the researcher. In using judgemental sampling, the researcher draws upon their experiences to select participants which are in the researcher's judgement, representative or typical. As I came to know the staff, I became conscious of those who may be approachable for interviews and would

openly speak about their professional practice. I chose thirteen participants from the organization to represent the various operational units and management levels. The interviews utilised open-ended questions and were recorded in face-to-face settings. Each of the interviews began with asking the participants to describe their role in 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?* Probing questions following could be: *How are these types of evidence useful? What evidence do you have that the library is delivering a quality service?*

The interviews lasted from thirty to sixty minutes. Later these interviews were transcribed into a Word document. Additionally, I collected a range of print materials, including promotional leaflets of library activities, strategic plan and related timelines, planning proforma, and feedback forms. My immersion included having a staff e-mail account, access to the intranet and related software.

## Data analysis

Ethnographic data analysis is iterative '*as it builds on ideas throughout the study*' (Fetterman, 1998, p. 92). Iterative analysis occurs on many levels and my journal was used extensively to capture my thoughts and evolving understandings. Initially, in the analysis process, I identified pieces of information from the collected data, being mindful that the primary lens was experiences of evidence-based practice. I did this by reviewing each interview and using a table in Word, highlighting significant aspects and incidents in the interview, and making notes in the adjoining column. These notes were my first attempts to build categories or themes to organize the data. At the conclusion of each transcript analysis I wrote a response which captured my early and emerging thoughts. These were shared with the wider research team for response and feedback. Fetterman (1998, p. 92) describes how the researcher finds their way as an '*analytic trek – between logical and enticing paths*'. The right path weaves between the two pathways to find genuine patterns of behaviour. '*Choosing the right path requires discrimination, experience, attention to both*



*detail and the larger context, and intuition'* (Fetterman, 1998, p. 92). I worked through the notes I had made in conjunction with the preliminary categories I had added to the interview transcripts. I began to organize all of the data sources into themes, gradually refining and merging the themes until four main themes emerged.

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. A useful technique in this process is triangulation. Triangulation improves the quality of data and the accuracy of ethnographic findings (Fetterman, 1998). Triangulation was achieved through multiple sources of data. These included participant interviews and analysis, my reflective responses, open thought discussions with the wider research team, and in the final analysis stages, reference to the literature. As I revisited the interviews I began to identify patterns of thought and behaviour. Fetterman (1998, p. 96) considers that '*patterns are a form of ethnographic reliability*'. These patterns emerged as the significant themes of the findings.

In ethnographic style, I then began to write to recapture and reconstruct the months of data collection, observations and reflections the study had revealed. The writing clarified my thinking as I grouped the various data sources into themes. My qualitative, interpretive approach allowed me to penetrate the surface and find out about the thoughts and feelings of the participants. Henstrand's (2006) application of Geertz's interpretive anthropology provided a way to present the real voices of the participants through narratives and vignettes. My approach included my reflections and interpretations, observations, interactions and field notes. The etic and emic perspectives guided me to build a picture of the evidence-based practice experiences within the culture of Summertown Library.

## Findings

In keeping with the ethnographic approach, the findings are presented in themes as a narrative. Wolcott (1990, p. 50) considers that '*there is no ethnography until culture makes an entry*', hence the findings are expressed as

cultural orientations. Evidence-based practice is experienced in Summertown Public Library through four interconnected and interdependent cultural orientations (See Figure 1 for a diagrammatic illustration):

- i. A culture of valuing: evidence-based practice involves being valued and valuing each other.
- ii. A culture of being: evidence-based practice involves being and becoming a professional.
- iii. A culture of learning: evidence-based practice involves being a learner and supporting the learning of others.
- iv. A culture of leading: evidence-based practice involves leadership at many levels and leading towards one shared vision.

A description of each of the four cultural orientations follows, together with illustrative quotes that were derived from the research interviews. Where quotations are shown, a pseudonym for the participant is provided.



**Figure 1: The culture of evidence-based practice at Summertown Public Library**

## **A culture of valuing**

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 is the daily session termed toolbox which takes place fifteen minutes before opening time. Staff stand in a circle near the library entrance and the senior staff member on site leads the toolbox meeting. Anyone can speak but the meeting is kept on topic due to the fifteen minute time frame. There is a similar flow to each of these meetings and topics covered include issues that have 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 that have been raised and workplace safety. It is a time when anyone can share incidents and responses, usually a firsthand encounter or e-mail, relating to customer reactions, events they have attended and general feedback. An example of such an incident came in the form of an e-mail which came to Tonya, the Executive Manager, praising 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, young Alice accepted it with pride. Disaster was averted and the most relieved father took his now smiling daughter home. Tonya's sharing of the e-mail acknowledged the staff member going beyond the line of duty in freely giving the brooch to young Alice.

Two further incidents demonstrate a culture of valuing. During a conversation with Karen, the manager of the Learning Engagement section, she explained to me the importance of developing an understanding of indigenous cultures and the leadership, enthusiasm and innovation demonstrated by a staff member called Kiah. As we walked to the lunchroom, we stopped by Kiah's workspace where Karen introduced us, acknowledging the fantastic work

that Kiah was doing with indigenous cultures and bringing them into the library. Another similar incident occurred when Tonya suggested that I seek an interview with Cailey, the Children and Youth Services Librarian, as to use Tonya's words, '*she is a huge advocate for the young and teenage people who visit the library*'. Both of these acknowledgments from executive and upper management were shared as part of general conversation. They were not forced or contrived as something for my benefit. Affirmative evidence as part of conversation is an everyday occurrence among all levels of staff.

Feedback as affirmative evidence to staff can also be more formal. I interviewed Maggie who works within the Learning Engagement programmes. She shared a range of evidence strategies most relating to customer satisfaction. She is aware of the face-to-face feedback that occurs at the point of contact with customers and supervisors and sees this as an affirmation of practice and acknowledgment of the efforts she puts into meeting customer requests and needs. Additionally, Maggie values the direct feedback she receives from her supervisor when achievement plans are required to be completed. The meetings between Maggie and Karen (her supervisor) are collegial and non-threatening. Maggie explains,

*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 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 accepts this as evidence that she is performing effectively in her role. The positive feedback led her to a raised awareness on which aspects of her role are effective. The consequences are increased productivity and a developed sense of well-being and affirmation that she is performing well.

The examples of Kiah, Cailey, and Maggie are indications that staff value and respond to the face-to-face feedback that occurs at the point of contact with customers and

supervisors. They see these as evidence affirming practice and self-improvement as well as acknowledgment of effort they put into meeting customer requests and needs. A culture of valuing and openly acknowledging the achievements and efforts of staff enables evidence-based practice to flourish in many less formal settings.

## A culture of being

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 improve individual practice and provide the best possible service to customers. The following example relates my own experience as an observer and researcher where I began to see the subtle ways in which evidence was used to inform and change practice among the staff of the Local History Collection of Summertown Library.

In the early stages of my visits to Summertown Library, I struggled to see how evidence-based practice was occurring in the daily activities of the library staff. The early visits were quite confusing to me as an observer. I felt my own experiences of evidence-based practice as a researcher should have placed me in a position to see clearly how this organization went about the business of evidence-based practice, but I was confused. I could not see evidence-based practice at all. I knew I had to be missing something or doing something wrong, but could not put my finger on what it was. I came to realise that the evidence is more subtle. So subtle that library staff react and respond to evidence as it presents itself in a manner which is intrinsic to their daily practice. It is so subtle and embedded into daily practice that responses are made without effort or conscious thought. They are blissfully unaware that they are undertaking evidence-based practice. Over time, I came to understand that there is an understanding and a collective vision among the staff across many levels of the library organization and among the different operational sections of the library. Many of the responses that staff make are based on intuitively discerning appropriate evidence. There is an attitude of continual improvement of their own practice to meet the needs of their customers. The Local History Collection of

Summertown library and the staff who manage 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 indicates that the collection '*grew from nothing really*' and it seems that in the early stages 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 came from donations. It contains many items of memorabilia, newspapers and photographs and as such it is an archive which tells the story of Summertown's past. As the collection has grown, it has become highly valued and supported by 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 digitise 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 a lot of direct contact with library customers, many of whom visit the library regularly and are well known to staff. Many are searching family history and using the facilities to digitise their own artefacts. Much of the feedback the staff receive is at the point of contact with the customer. Camilla is aware that word of mouth encourages 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 values feedback from customers and says,

*...in my case, I think I receive e-mails 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 e-mails are the only documented evidence and there seems to be a relationship with the customers and active response to their requests. Camilla describes the feedback she receives as providing her with a 'sense of well-being' which relates to her performance and the relationships she has with customers.

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

For Betty, there is a real sense of self-improvement, of upskilling herself and her staff to meet customer needs. The staff are gaining in confidence in their new skills and are able to share these to guide their customers. Rachel, the third staff member assigned to the Local History Collection, did most of the digitisation 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*'. This response is an indication that there is a general sense of well-being and the evidence here could be a sense of knowing that comes from shared visions and working as a collective.

## **A culture of learning**

Summertown Library's multi-layered approach to a learning culture is demonstrated in the way in which skills and experiences are shared from frontline managers to operational staff. As staff at Summertown Library grow and learn in their roles they are seeking affirmation and guidance on how to do their jobs better. A culture of continuous improvement guided by organizational

objectives and measured with customer satisfaction surveys, personal achievement plans and the like, drives the impetus for improvement. In striving for best practice, staff at all levels of the library seek clarification of the meaning of evidence-based practice and ask 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 and from each other in shared experiences. In Summertown Library, sharing is part of the culture; staff have a way of working out how to get things done. They rely upon and draw on the practical knowledge and experiences of colleagues. For the staff at Summertown Library, evidence-based practice is a way that they can improve and something they want to learn more about. The following perceptions of evidence-based practice are taken from interviews at Summertown Library. At the beginning of the interviews participants were asked, '*What does the phrase "evidence-based practice" mean to you in this library service?*' Nadia, Betty, Xavier and Karen are managers of different sections of the library and their responses follow.

Nadia's perception of evidence-based practice aligns with Summertown Library's culture of learning. She expresses it as a lifelong and embedded practice; as something that is so familiar that it is difficult to discern.

*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.*

Betty's perception of evidence-based practice is more practical and relates to the evidence which is gathered from evaluation forms and customer surveys. Yet in Betty's explanation, there is a sense that she is looking for more, but is unsure how to apply it to her context.



*I do try to, to get people to tell me what they want. But, I don't know – people just seem to respond to what you put out there. They go or they don't go rather than... you know, it's more of the same. I don't know. More of the same is usually... like we have about eight likes on the evaluation form. And I say to people "The evaluation form is there to make sure that we can improve or put on events that you'd be more interested in or more of the same" or... that sort of stuff. But that... that's sort of never worked. That's it. See, we, we don't really have a lot of evidence... I sort of go with the flow, I suppose.*

Xavier experiences a raised consciousness of evidence which goes beyond the formal responses and surveys such as that which is required of the organization. He states that evidence could include customer experience.

*I hadn't really thought about the customer - or the customer experience, what evidence can we get from the customers both formally and informally. Yeah, I think that I - that's certainly started the conversation thinking it's what other libraries or other people other institutions have done outside of ours. I didn't really think about, yeah, the customer part probably broadly.*

Karen's view of evidence gathering is that it could provide short term indicators of programme effectiveness, but is aware that evidence gathered over longer periods would be useful. She has difficulty in obtaining *concrete evidence* as she terms it. Karen expresses a frustration in explaining and communicating with other departments within the council to understand the types of evidence that would be helpful.

*I guess it is, in terms of what I do and my team does, it's about talking to the community, finding out what their needs are and delivering programmes that meet those needs and then evaluating those programmes to see whether that has worked. I guess what we don't do enough of*

*is maybe that longitudinal evaluation of those programmes, so we don't, for example, we have a number of book clubs but we don't look at the impact of those clubs in a historical way I suppose – we just continue to deliver them. So I guess evidence-based practice with book clubs might be that we evaluate those and see how they've impacted upon participants and upon their lives, I suppose.*

*I guess what I would like to add to that is that we would like to find out what other people think of the library and what we do. Some concrete evidence rather than just the hearsay, which is nice, but... I guess Community Development (a department within Summertown Council) have talked about doing a community wellbeing indicator – developing something like that. And I had spoken to them about maybe we can be one of the things that's measured in that. And that's a longitudinal thing and if that happens that would be great. But often when I say that to people they don't understand.*

Tracy is new to the organization and is still finding her way. In recognition of her skills and 'can do' attitude her role had been expanded. She is not a manager, but her role involves writing and scoping the learning programmes. It could be that her newness to Summertown Library guides her insightful observations and perception of evidence-based practice.

*I first considered that evidence-based practice wasn't used a lot but now I can see that looking at what we're doing and assessing and building on it so - so that we don't keep doing what we've always done and we find better and smarter ways to work. I think we do do it now that - I guess that when you threw up the term evidence-based practice you don't - you think of stats and ... All of that sort of thing. You don't think of all the little things, like we've been discussing. It is something that we do but it's unconscious.*

Finally, Tonya the Executive Manager of Summertown Library provides her perceptions. She expresses evidence gathering as a quest to find evidence that goes beyond being superficial.

*Evidence-based practice means making decisions based on evidence rather than what you think you know or what you feel, ....Because I do think, I do think that's one of the potential failures of libraries is that they think they know. You know, we think we know what people want to read. We think we know what they want in the information, what the information inquiry is going to be about, we think we know what it is they want to learn about but if you get that wrong, then ... Yeah, you're second guess..., we're always and that is a real trap. And I'm sure there are lots of libraries who know... they can think they know their communities so well that they don't need any ..., they don't need that evidence. They don't seek it out, so I think that's a danger. It is a danger because you just become then distant, separated from the actual community needs and wants.*

## A culture of leading

Leadership in Summertown Library operates within a one-organization ethos where a synergy exists between the two dimensions of leadership and a one-organization ethos. It is like a cycle of leadership building the ethos, with the ethos in turn, building or enabling leaders. The dimensions of leadership and of a one-organization ethos will be explored in this section. First, an explanation of the one-organization ethos will be given to set the scene. Following this will be the dimension of leadership, concluding with how these two dimensions work together to enable evidence-based practice to be experienced within the context of Summertown Library.

Despite being situated in three locations, Summertown's Library Service has a one-organization ethos. The organization is people focused; people are valued and supported. There is no hesitation among staff to assist a

customer or another staff member. It is a happy and productive workplace, where staff get on with the job. This means that it is the type of workplace where goals are clearly set and everyone just works out how to meet them. They accommodate each other and make adjustments where necessary. One section of the library which has a high level of interaction with the public is Customer Services and Operations. This division of Summertown Library is the front-of-house face of the library service. Nadia, as the Customer Services and Operations manager, and Fay, who works face-to-face in operating the mobile van, will be highlighted.

Nadia's responsibilities as Manager of Customer Services and Operations are the three main branches and the mobile services. These are the physical library environments, rather than the virtual. Nadia's role places her at the forefront of customer service and this coincides with Summertown Council's focus on delivering quality customer service. With this focus, a purpose for evidence gathering has been identified and the feedback forms generated by the council for all service departments, being generic in nature, have a high emphasis on customer service. However, Nadia has identified additional areas where evidence could be used for purposes other than measuring customer satisfaction. Nadia considers that other useful evidence could include evidence as an indicator of change or as an indicator of issues which may need to be addressed or for new programmes to be introduced.

*I think definitely the types of evidence that's useful are those that indicate where change is happening and where there are gaps... because at the end of the day, it's about gathering evidence to show that not only what the community trends are, but what is the difference that we are actually making in the communities, so that we can invest in that further and improve it.*

Gathering and presenting evidence helps in decision-making and Nadia indicates that over time their strategies have evolved and incorporated a range of evidence sources. Nadia explains,

---

*Something I have noticed is that in terms of statistics and what we gather, we definitely do gather more and when we make decisions - because the library offers such a variety of experiences and because people are coming into the library for much more varied reasons now that means that we've needed to develop our statistics. So for example, for decisions where in the past you know say five or more years ago you'd go "Oh let's just look at the loan statistics" ... And whereas now you wouldn't do that. Now you you'd end up looking at your loan statistics, your internet usage...*

*I also think too that more and more, we're gaining an understanding of, you know, the difference that we do make in the community and what it really means. And we're actually gaining more of an understanding of the reason for a long-term vision and you know looking at the long-term impact of, of what we do out in the community. So yeah, whereas before I think, I think many, many years ago, it would have been fine to be short range.*

Nadia indicates that statistical data from various sources are heavily relied upon as evidence, yet there are other 'softer' types of evidence that are informing decision-making and practice. Nadia states that... '*feedback's definitely important*' and considers that staff should be more aware of feedback to advocate for and promote what they do. Evidence used for advocacy as benchmarks for the ways in which a programme and those involved in its delivery have been successful indicate that Nadia has a people-focused view of evidence-based practice. She explains that '*a lot of what you do is still gut instinct... because we are humans*'. Intuition is something that is developed over time using a variety of sources to assist the library professional to come to conclusions, '*all of those things build a picture of what is happening*'. Many factors contribute to the evidence picture; although Nadia calls these '*gut instinct*', it is a combination of intuition, professional knowledge, feedback from customers, and colleagues working together to build a picture.

One of the service delivery operations, which is part of the Customer Services and Operations section, is the mobile library service. I spent a day in the company of Fay as we travelled to outlying communities.

Fay is a qualified librarian and takes great pride in her work. Driving the mobile van is only one aspect of her role and she is responsible for rotating the materials for loan and keeping the stock relevant to her customers. She knows most of her customers by name and takes the time to listen to them. In the confined space of the mobile van, she ensures that there is a good selection of materials for her customers to choose from. She selects items to meet their requests and requirements, and at times predicts what materials could be of interest. Many of the customers are retired or elderly or young mothers with small children. Fay rotates the stock every two to three weeks and observes what is being borrowed, what has been borrowed a lot and could be '*read out*' as she terms it.

It is evident that Fay shares Nadia's people-focused view of evidence, but there are no structured evidence strategies in place for Fay to draw upon. Her interactions and observations guided by her intuition and professional judgement ensure that she is able to maintain a collection relevant to her customers. The high number of regular customers and high borrowing statistics associated with the mobile van could be seen as evidence of this. Examples from the Learning Services and Customer Services and Operations sections of the library highlight that evidence-based practice is a professional habit of the staff at Summertown Library. However, evidence-based practice is experienced within the organizational culture with managers, operational staff and executive staff all working at different levels of leadership. The following section will explore evidence-based practice in relation to aspects of leadership within the organization's culture.

There is a belief in some organizations that being at the top or at the executive levels of an organization automatically makes a person the leader. The following paragraphs illustrate how leadership within the organizational culture contributes to the way in which staff at Summertown Library experience evidence-based practice.

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

Tonya is guided by intuition but uses statistical data as determined by Summertown Council and State Library to report on the success of the library's activities. She considers 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 experiences 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 aligns with the parent organization and complies with its requirements. Tonya actively seeks information or evidence from within council for demographic information, population trends and from further afield, community needs in a changing economic environment.

Statistical data are gathered to meet specific purposes. Data support decision-making in particular to enhance customer experience. Key Performance Indicators in conjunction with statistical data assist the review processes, budgets and programmes. A particular focus for the coming year is to review the acquisitions model. This will draw upon a range of evidence sources including data from community engagement, surveys, focus groups and statistical data.

I witnessed many incidents where Tonya actively experienced and gathered evidence firsthand. She spends time on the library floor every week with the purpose of seeing for herself what is happening and getting a feel of work flows and observing staff responding directly to customer requests. When she is on the floor, customers do not realise that she is the executive manager and Tonya responds to customers as any of the operational level library staff would. Face-to-face engagement with

customers allows Tonya to model the behaviour she expects from all staff. At the same time she is gathering useful evidence from the customer perspective and the ways in which the library is being used. 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 Summertown Library in conjunction with a one-organization ethos enable the experiences of evidence-based practice to build momentum.

## Discussion

A great deal has been written about evidence-based practice relating to library contexts and generally it describes evidence-based practice as a process of evaluating research as it is presented in the literature ([Booth, 2002, 2007](#); [Eldredge, 2000](#)). This paper presents and highlights evidence-based practice as an experience in the everyday work lives of library practitioners. Hence, this may place an emphasis on practitioner-observed and user-reported evidence sources. Yet, there were incidents where staff reported the use of research-derived evidence, especially in decision-making at executive and management levels and in setting long term aspirational goals. For instance, Cailey who works in the Children's Services section relates an incident where floor staff wished to remove the book spinners used to display books in the teen and junior sections of the library. The book spinners were considered untidy and made locating book difficult. Cailey was able to bring to a management meeting literature which supported the use of book spinners especially for junior and teenage customers. In light of this evidence from the literature, the book spinners stayed and were subsequently moved to more prominent places in the library.

Another incident highlights how research literature is consulted to inform future planning. Xavier, the manager of the technological and digital presence of the library uses research literature to gain further insights into projects he is considering to enhance digital delivery and presence. In



strategic planning meetings decisions are made for the short and long term that utilise a combination of research literature, environmental scans, incidental observations and customer feedback. Evidence from many sources are considered in the decision-making process. For instance, at operational levels much of the contextual evidence is in face-to-face interactions and observations; whereas at management and executive levels evidence can be drawn, although not exclusively, from the more structured and formal sources of feedback forms and statistical data interpretations. It does not seem to be the case that one type of evidence holds prominence over another.

The research about evidence-based practice as an experience reveals that there is no one way to be an evidence-based practitioner ([Gillespie, 2014](#); [Partridge, Edwards and Thorpe, 2010](#)). The findings from this study reveal that evidence-based practice in a public library is highly nuanced and multi-layered. Staff at all levels of the organization are drawing on evidence related to their own contexts to inform practice. These are their first-hand experiences of evidence-based practice. All of these layers of evidence when shared can be used to build a unique picture of Summertown Library.

## Implications of a culture of valuing

In a culture which openly acknowledges the positive impact of the actions of staff, observations and face-to-face feedback are highly valued as evidence. Consequently, those at the operational levels, such as Maggie, Kiah and Cailey can be disadvantaged in the ways in which they can collect meaningful evidence. Without documented evidence it places them in a follower capacity. Due to the systematic way in which feedback forms are generated and used as a means to demonstrate the meeting of organizational goals, it is difficult for Maggie to gain acknowledgement of her effectiveness when she is working in supporting roles and on call roles where she fills in where necessary. Her effectiveness and the positive impact she has made in responding to customer face-to-face feedback is unrecognised in the customer feedback forms and can only be acknowledged through supervisors who may observe or have the information relayed to them by word of mouth or e-mail.

## Implications of a culture of being

A shared vision among the staff guides responses to incidental evidence. These responses are embedded and subtle and are second nature. Staff are not consciously aware that they are being evidence-based practitioners. Part of staff members' professional identity or reason for being is to meet the needs of their customers. Staff are able to do this by directly engaging with customers, finding out what they need and then responding by assisting them to access the best information. There are immediate responses requested by customers in a face-to-face situation, as well as planning for long term ease of access. In responding to the changing focus of the collection, Betty is aware that her role has changed. She has moved from purchasing a vacuum cleaner and eight litres of vinegar to combat dust and mould, to working to build a direction for the collection. Betty's closing comments in her interview are, '....I sort of go with the flow I suppose.' If going with the flow means keeping an open mind, responding to what customers say, being brave enough to try something new and take the staff who work closely with you on the journey, the evidence must be everywhere.

## Implications of a culture of learning

Learning is intrinsic to being human. Every new day is an opportunity to learn something new. Learning which occurs in everyday working life is mostly informal and there is a close connection between informal learning and working. Cohen (2013) considers that informal learning in the workplace is hands-on and contextual; it is implicit or subconscious. Additionally, it is the characteristics or culture of the organization and its frontline managers or supervisors that will enable or hinder learning. Cohen considers that many frontline managers perceived their roles '*to be one which is concerned with the promotion and facilitation of employee learning so that their employees are able to perform better in their current role*' (Cohen, 2013, p. 515). Karen, the Learning Engagement Manager was aware that learning in the library was both formal and informal.

*I guess learning is really one of those*

*things. And often people think of learning in terms of the formal stuff, whereas often the informal stuff leads to the formal stuff. Or even the informal stuff helps builds confidence that makes you a better person living in the community.*

Learning at Summertown Library is multi-layered. At all levels of the library - operations, programme delivery and management, staff are learning and growing. In a collegial environment, working and learning are closely linked. In much the same way, evidence-based practice could be described as an aspect of learning.

### Implications of a culture of leading

The findings presented leadership and a one-organizational ethos as dimensions working in synergy, each supporting the other. It is like a cycle of leadership building the one-organization ethos, with the ethos, in turn, building or enabling leaders. Maxwell (2005, p. 1) considers that '*Ninety-nine per cent of all leadership occurs not from the top but from the middle of an organization*'. Those situated as middle managers (Nadia) and at operations (Fay) are clear about their functions and lines of responsibility. Yet they demonstrate a certain independence to make changes where necessary to the programmes they deliver; their involvement is more than just delivering programmes to a prescribed format. This could relate to professional engagement or passion, but it could be deeper than that. Staff at all levels are constantly interpreting the events evolving from their surroundings to ensure that the programmes maintain an alignment with the overall strategic direction of the library. It is unstated, but there seems to be an element of trust in professional relationships, between executive, management and operational levels.

An ancient proverb attributed to the Turks, '*A fish stinks first at the head*' with the modern variant '*a fish stinks (or rots) from the head down*' is metaphorical rather than biologically correct, but the meaning is clear, being that '*when an organization or state fails, it is the leadership that is the root cause*' (Martin, 1996). From this, it could be inferred that the opposite could also apply, that an

organization that functions well could be attributed to its leadership. A further premise within organizations is that being at the top or at the executive levels of an organization automatically makes that person the leader. Taking an alternative view, Maxwell (2005, p. 7) states that '*position has little to do with genuine leadership*' and that people can lead from any position within an organization.

Maxwell provides some insights regarding trust relationships in organizations. He considers that empowerment is not an avenue to promote self-interest; that when empowering staff with authority, it works never to serve their own interests. '*Trust is built one block at a time and builds a faithfulness to serve the people who gave you that authority*' (Maxwell, 2005, p. 32). There is an element of empowerment and confidence in many sections and operations of Summertown Library. An example provided in this paper is where Fay demonstrates that she draws on evidence sources around her, communicating and taking the initiative to ensure alignment with the overall strategic direction. Leaders can be in any or all parts of an organization. Maxwell (2005, p. 29) considers that good leaders at the top of the organization will break ground for their people. In doing so, they create momentum for the entire organization. Tonya's ways of interaction, sharing, encouragement, modelling and acknowledgment are actions which bring to life an organization's shared vision and belief in its leader.

## **Cultural tensions: barriers and the glass ceiling**

In today's economic climate there are many instances of libraries being under threat, yet this does not seem to be the case in Summertown Library. This could be due in part to the high approval ratings collated from proforma feedback forms and customer surveys which reflect Summertown Council's focus on customer service. The library maintains a consistently high customer service approval rating of 95 per cent. In some respects Summertown Library has reached a glass ceiling and actions for constant improvement in customer service will make little impact on this rating. Yet, the library executive and managers are constantly seeking evidence, which

could inform them to better meet the needs of their customers; the proforma feedback mechanisms are not able to provide them with this information. A dilemma for library staff is a sense that evidence gained from observations, interactions, intuition and professional knowledge could be discounted by senior management or those in authority in the council as not being valid or trustworthy. Tonya as Executive Manager is aware that the library is able to produce a range of statistical data, and these data are used in relation to meeting standards in library service delivery. There are many unanswered questions in regard to the types of evidence and strategies for collecting it.

In taking longer term views, Karen as Manager of Learning Engagement and Nadia as Manager of Customer Service and Operations have identified other types of evidence which might assist them, but which they are unable to access. Karen expresses this evidence tension from the perspective of her Learning Engagement team:

*I guess in terms of what I do and my team does, it's about talking to the community and finding out what their needs are and delivering programmes that meet those needs and then evaluating the programmes to see that has worked.*

Karen raised the issue of being able to build data over time in longitudinal studies and how they could measure the long term impact of the programmes they are delivering.

Nadia in her role as Manager of Customer Services and Operations identifies areas of evidence gathering that would be useful for future planning. *'I think that definitely the types of evidence that's useful are those that indicate where change is happening and where there are gaps...'* Nadia indicates that the library has access to quantitative data, which they are able to gather, but there is a problem, that the statistics are quite general, *'they're (the data) not specific and they're not dealing in why community members are choosing to do what they do'*. Additionally Nadia can see a need for data gathering and interpretation that could be used for long term planning; as a predictor for future community needs. *'We need to look at evidence of how things are going to be within five or ten years... for*

*instance what customers are coming into the library for and why...that kind of layering of data'. Nadia also echoed Karen's concerns regarding the library's impact in the whole learning community, 'How do you prove that libraries have an impact within that learning?... that is the type of evidence that we actually need to gather and libraries don't do it'.*

The interview excerpts reveal a growing awareness that the organization-prescribed evidence cannot provide the types of evidence which can guide longer term planning and measure how the library impacts on its community. Tensions are evident between evidence, which is prescribed in predefined formats, and evidence, which is gathered in incidental encounters. In not acknowledging and documenting evidence gained through observations, face-to-face feedback, customer interactions and professional knowledge the unique story of Summertown Library cannot be told.

Karen and Nadia as managers have expressed a big picture view of evidence. They are able to provide the evidence required by the council to meet predefined formats, achievement plans and requirements relating to strategic direction. Yet they are aware that these types of evidence are not able to provide information about the impact of current programmes, or inform long term planning and direction setting. They are aware too that this type of evidence could be gained from outside sources, beyond the council and there are obstacles to gaining evidence of this type. However, the types of evidence that Karen and Nadia have identified that would assist them in providing the big picture would not be unique to Summertown Library and are things that perhaps library associations would be better placed to access. In expressing these concerns Karen and Nadia are forward thinking in the ways in which they can use evidence.

## **Conclusion**

Making comparisons between how the literature describes evidence-based practice as opposed to the lived experiences of library professionals which this study reveals is akin to describing procedural approaches to evaluating evidence versus opening the potential to reveal

many types of nuanced evidence which are part of everyday work life. This difference in approach may explain the apparent confusion among library practitioners about how to be evidence-based.

In Summertown Library there are many examples of evidence being gathered to make changes to better meet customer needs and to inform professional practice. Much of this evidence is incidental and not recorded, but combined with intuition and professional knowledge informs future direction. Staff are recognised and encouraged to be guided by their professional knowledge to meet the challenges of the programmes they are delivering. They feel empowered to make adjustments where necessary guided by evidence that is presented to them. In this way, all levels of the organization are functioning to meet predefined goals and momentum is maintained for continued improvement.

This paper presents the findings from a study that explored the lived experiences of library and information professionals in one Australian public library at a particular point in time. In doing so the study has provided new insights into the realities of how evidence-based practice is understood, experienced and enacted for one group of library and information professionals. More research is needed to further develop our understandings of how evidence-based practice is actually understood and experienced by library and information professionals in different contexts and over a longer period of time.

## **Acknowledgements**

This research forms part of a three year Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Project entitled Building the basis for evidence-based library and information practice: a qualitative study (ARC DP 130102710). The authors would like to thank the “Summertime Public Library” who generously contributed their time and thoughts to this research project.

## **About the authors**

**Ann Gillespie** (now retired) was a postdoctoral research fellow within the Information Studies Group of

Queensland University of Technology. Her 2013 doctoral thesis, *Untangling the evidence: teacher librarians and evidence based practice* investigated evidence-based practice in primary schools. Her thesis and earlier papers are at

[http://eprints.qut.edu.au/view/person/Gillespie\\_Ann.html](http://eprints.qut.edu.au/view/person/Gillespie_Ann.html)

**Helen Partridge** is Professor and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Scholarly Information and Learning Services) at the University of Southern Queensland, West Street, Toowoomba, QLD, 4350, Australia. In this role she has oversight of Library Services, Office for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching and the Digital Life Lab. Helen's research focuses on the interplay between information, learning and technology. She has been a visiting at the Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford (2011) and the Berkman Center for Internet and Society and Society, Harvard University (2014). She can be contacted at

[helen.partridge@usq.edu.au](mailto:helen.partridge@usq.edu.au)

**Christine Bruce** is Professor in the Information Systems School at the Queensland University of Technology, Queensland University of Technology, GPO Box 2434, Brisbane, QLD 4001, Australia. with a focus on qualitative and information research, especially information literacy. Christine is also Director, Research Training for the Science and Engineering Faculty and Convenor of the university's Higher Education Research Network. She is a Principal Fellow of the U.K. Higher Education Academy. She can be contacted at [c.bruce@qut.edu.au](mailto:c.bruce@qut.edu.au)

**Alisa Howlett** is an information professional in higher education, currently coordinating projects related to improving library services and student learning experiences in the Queensland University of Technology, 2 George Street, Brisbane, QLD, 4000, Australia. She has previously published research findings related to EBLIP in Information Research. Alisa has a Bachelor of Business from Queensland University of Technology and received her Master of Information Technology (Library and Information Science) in 2013 She can be contacted at [alisa.howlett@qut.edu.au](mailto:alisa.howlett@qut.edu.au).

## References

Bayley, L., Ferrell, S., & McKinnell, J. (2009). Practicing



what we preach: a case study on the application of evidence-based practice to inform decision making for public services staffing in an academic health sciences library. *New Review of Academic Librarianship*, 15(2), 235-252.

- Booth, A. (2007). Evidence in 'real time': the story of an international workshop. *Health Information and Libraries Journal*, 24(3), 227-231.
- Booth, A. (2006). Clear and present questions: formulating questions for evidence based practice. *Library Hi Tech*, 24(3), 355-368.
- Booth, A. (2002). From EBM to EBL: two steps forward or one step back? *Medical Reference Services Quarterly*, 21(3), 51-64.
- Booth, A. & Brice, A. (Eds.). (2004). *Evidence-based practice for information professionals: a handbook*. London: Facet.
- Brice, A., & Hill, A. (2004). A brief history of evidence-based practice. In A. Booth & A. Brice (Eds.), *Evidence-based practice for information professionals: a handbook* (pp. 13-23). London: Facet.
- Bruce, C., Davis, K., Hughes, H., Partridge, H. & Stoodley, I. (2014). Information experience: contemporary perspectives. In C. Bruce, K. Davis, H. Hughes, H. Partridge & I. Stoodley (Eds.), *Information experience: approaches to theory and practice* (pp. 3-15). Bingley, UK: Emerald. (Library and Information Science, 9.)
- Cohen, J. (2013). The nature of learning being facilitated by frontline managers. *Human Resource Development International*, 16(5), 502-518.
- Crumley, E., & Koufogiannakis, D. (2002). Developing evidence-based librarianship: practical steps for implementation. *Health Information and Libraries Journal*, 19(2), 61-70.
- Eldredge, J.D. (2000). Evidence-based librarianship: an overview. *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association*, 88(4), 289-302.
- Emmerson, R.M., Fretz, R.I., & Shaw, L.L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Fetterman, D. (2008). Emic/etic distinction. In L. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (p. 250). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fetterman, D. (1998). *Ethnography: step by step*. (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Gillespie, A. (2014). [Untangling the evidence: introducing an empirical model for evidence-based library and information practice](#). *Information Research*, 19(3) paper 632. Retrieved from <http://informationr.net/ir/19-3/paper632.html> (Archived by WebCite® at <http://www.webcitation.org/6lzc13AKN>)
- Henstrand, J.L. (2006). Seeking an understanding of school culture: using theory as a framework for observation and analysis. In V.A. Anfara & N.T. Mertz (Eds.) *Theoretical frameworks in qualitative research* (pp. 21-41). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Koufogiannakis, D. (2013a). [Academic librarians use evidence for convincing: a qualitative study](#). *SAGE Open*, 3(2), 1-12. Retrieved from <http://sgo.sagepub.com/content/3/2/2158244013490708.full> (Archived by WebCite® at <http://www.webcitation.org/6dULFnTEe>)
- Koufogiannakis, D. (2013b). [EBLIP7 keynote: what we talk about when we talk about evidence](#). *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, 8(4), 6-17. Retrieved from <https://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/EBLIP/article/view/20486/15965> (Archived by WebCite® at <http://www.webcitation.org/6dULV0QTn>)
- Koufogiannakis, D. (2012). [Academic librarians' conception and use of evidence sources in practice](#). *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, 7(4), 5-24. Retrieved from <http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/EBLIP/article/view/18072> (Archived by WebCite® at <http://www.webcitation.org/6dUL0t7P0>)
- Martin, G. (1996). [The meaning and origin of the expression: a fish rots from the head down](#). Retrieved from <http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/fish-rot-from-the-head-down.html> (Archived by WebCite® at <http://www.webcitation.org/6lR7hdegh>)
- Maxwell, J.C. (2005). *The 360° leader: developing your influence from anywhere in the organization*. Nashville, TN: Nelson Business.
- Partridge, H., Edwards, S.L., Thorpe, C. (2010). Evidence-based practice: information professionals' experience of information literacy in the workplace. In A. Lloyd & S. Talja (Eds.), *Practising information literacy: bringing theories of learning, practice and information literacy together* (pp. 273-298). Wagga Wagga, NSW: Charles Sturt University, Centre for Information Studies.
- Todd, R.J. (2009). [School librarianship and evidence](#)

[based practice: progress, perspectives, and challenges.](#)

*Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*,  
4(2), 78-96. Retrieved from

<https://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/EBLIP/article/view/4637> (Archived by WebCite® at  
<http://www.webcitation.org/6dUUBCTlq>)

Todd, R.J. (2006). School libraries and evidence-based practice: an integrated approach to evidence. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 12(2), 31-37.

Wolcott, H.F. (1990). Making a study "more ethnographic". *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 19(1), 44-71.

#### How to cite this paper

Gillespie, A., Partridge, H., Bruce, C. & Howlett, A. (2016). The experience of evidence-based practice in an Australian public library: an ethnography. *Information Research*, 21(4), paper 730. Retrieved from <http://InformationR.net/ir/21-4/paper730.html> (Archived by WebCite® at <http://www.webcitation.org/6m5HJfG6K>)

Find other papers on this subject

Check for citations, [using Google Scholar](#)

Facebook

Twitter

LinkedIn

Delicious

More

---

© the authors, 2016.

**127** Last updated: 13 November, 2016

---

[Contents](#) | [Author index](#) | [Subject index](#) |  
[Search](#) | [Home](#)

---