

# My Online Life - Library Monitor

By Sue Osborne

I suppose for my first column, I should try to give you all a sample, a taste if you will, of my own online life.

My online life really began back in 2006 when I participated in the very first '23 Things' course offered by the School Library Association of Victoria and the State Library of Victoria. I was a newly appointed primary school librarian feeling my way back into almost-full-time work after the birth of my children and I was looking for an 'in' to get myself up to speed quickly. The self-paced course guided me through many things I had heard of (like that new-fangled thing called Facebook) and managed to turn me off others – like Second Life. I slipped my moorings and let myself sail into the sea of social media and online tools – and never looked back.

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Now, eleven years later, I find myself more firmly entrenched in the online world than ever. Not only do I have a social media presence on Twitter, Instagram and, yes, Facebook, I also manage three blogs (details below) and use a myriad of tools, like Evernote and Dashlane, to keep my working and personal life ticking along.

My school has embraced the Cloud, with our LMS now floating around in the internet ether and colleagues collaborate with me on documents and ideas in real time using Sharepoint and Yammer. We can meet across our four Aussie campuses using Zoom meetings and we are more connected than ever before.

Even my university study is in the Cloud. Studying a Graduate Diploma in Children's Literature at Deakin, I have thirty to forty classmates and a tutor who I never see, but I converse with them via discussion boards. Simple, convenient. While I miss the face-to-face interaction of an actual meeting or tutorial session, there is something liberating in studying and meeting online. I can do the readings at my own pace. If I am participating in the discussions and posting answers to weekly questions the tutor is happy, and I can work on my assessment project at times that fit around the other demands of full time work and family.

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One thing I have noticed about communicating online is you need to be very precise with language. Words must be chosen carefully so as not to be misconstrued. Tone, gesture and facial expression are not at one's disposal when chatting to your fellow student from Tassie, New

Zealand or the Northern Territory. It is a potential minefield, but one I am happy to navigate. Reading the responses to the weekly questions and topics from so many diverse places and people only serves to deepen my understanding of both the subjects and the participants. I am talking every week with people I would otherwise never have crossed paths with in my usual life. We all have a common goal, but each person's path is different and together we improve the whole.

This was brought home to me recently when our subject tutor went MIA for a fortnight. After a week without her acknowledging our posts we started to discuss amongst ourselves (for that is all we had) what might be going on. I, and a few other students, took it upon ourselves to speak for the group and approach the Head of Department. Knowing we had the support of the other online students gave us the confidence to speak up and we discovered, after the department did some digging, that she was on extended sick leave and no-one had considered the impact her absence was having on the online students.

Once they were alerted, the department, to their credit, appointed a new tutor very quickly. Without that online

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group, and the feeling of common purpose it had already generated, we might still have been floundering in the deep, deep waters. I tell this story not to criticise the university, but to demonstrate that my online study has formed relationships that are supportive, vibrant and valuable – equally as valued and satisfying as my social media relationships can be. I look forward to continuing this online journey with my fellow students, and with *Synergy* readers, as I swim further into new online oceans.

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Worth Reading, Worth Sharing: <https://worthreadingworthsharing.wordpress.com/>

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Mind Reset: Life after gastric banding surgery: <https://mymindreset.wordpress.com/>