

Librarian thanks PVNET for kick-starting her career

By Michelle Fisher Special to the News
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Technology has changed the face of every single industry in America, even the more traditional ones. Just ask Lisa Campbell, of Rancho Palos Verdes, who never imagined that a fun internship at Palos Verdes on the NET, or PVNET, years ago would prepare her for the computer-driven career of ... librarian. Once associated with dusty books and rolling ladders, this traditional job has a new operating system, and wizards like Campbell are writing the code.

“This profession is changing so fast. It’s a really exciting time to become a librarian,” says Campbell, who has worked at the University of Alabama’s Gorgas Library since 2009. “Most of the job descriptions I see now have technology requirements like HTML, Java or XML. My job involves organizing information. It’s funny that XML is now one of many languages used to describe libraries’ digital collections.”



Rancho Palos Verdes resident Lisa Campbell’s internship at Palos Verdes on the NET prepared her for her current career, which involves writing computer code for libraries.

Funny, Campbell explains, because her PVNET internship gave her the same skill set as required by her current position. There, she instructed young students on MS Word, Excel, Flash, Dreamweaver and Web browsing while also doing XML coding for the city of RPV website. At the Gorgas Library, she researches, writes code and teaches college students how to optimize their academic research. She also worked in the University of Pittsburgh’s library for four years.

“Every job I’ve had since working at PVNET came about in part because of my experience there. Every job has required some combination of teaching, public service and technology skills,” Campbell says. “I’m the kind of person who likes to learn a little bit about everything, so being exposed to a wide variety of software was great.”

Campbell recalls teaching herself computer programs through trial and error as well as learning from her peers, dabbling in animation, graphic design and content management systems. She is grateful to PVNET founding Director Ted Vegvari for creating a supportive atmosphere that encourages people to explore and take risks.

“It felt like a real job because Ted treats everybody like a peer. It’s a really collegial atmosphere,” she says. “People were always encouraging if there was something new you wanted to learn.”

Campbell stresses that her increased self-confidence and initiative paid off in other areas of her life. At Carnegie Mellon University, she mastered in cello performance, studied computer science and learned to bake professionally (check out her food blog, www.lisa-campbell.com). Campbell opted for a master’s in library science over a culinary career because she loves working with information

almost as much as she does people.

“What sold me on my current position were the potential for positive change and combination of both technology and innovation. I am pretty self-directed and do a lot with technology,” she continues.

“One project is creating online tutorials showing different library skills, such as using electronic resources and other tools. I also teach undergraduate and graduate students online research skills, like advanced Internet searches and using databases.”

Vegvari is very proud of Campbell and not at all surprised about her current success, or that of other interns who have pursued digital animation, programming and GIS (geographical information systems). He is also quick to credit the city of RPV for making all of this possible.

“Lisa was a natural at teaching. She’s one of those people who learns something and then can easily pass it on to others,” Vegvari says. “She’s brilliant — she picks stuff up in two seconds.”

Vegvari still marvels over how fast Campbell could learn a new concept, apply it and then understand it well enough to teach others. She functioned very well in the “highly collaborative” center, he says, because of her initiative and enthusiasm.

“She would kick start people, get things moving and people had to keep up with her,” Vegvari recalls. “Now she’s doing very similar work to what she was learning to do here eight years ago. One of the projects she’s working on is making websites searchable, locatable and identifiable so they can work with database systems.”

Adds Vegvari, “PVNET was a great training ground that prepared her for the real world. It’s very exciting to see where our interns end up.”

Like her former mentor, Campbell finds her job rewarding because of the impact she has on young students.

“We’re here for students. That’s who I have in mind when I’m doing my work,” Campbell says. “That’s what I love about this job, just having the ability to make a difference.”

For more information on PVNET internships and courses, visit www.pvnet.com or call (310) 544-5393.