Tara Johnson, Library Technician for Sunrise Health Region

Christine Neilson
University of Saskatchewan

Tara Johnson is a woman who is passionate about libraries. By the age of 9, Tara knew exactly what she wanted to do with her life, and for the past ten years she has been rising to the challenges of connecting her patrons with information. Her first full-time position after graduating from the library technician program at Grant MacEwan College was running the library of a K-12 school in Macklin, Saskatchewan. Starting with only a sticky note for guidance, Tara eventually became the school's network administrator in addition to her library duties. Always ready to try something new, Tara decided to switch library sectors completely, and moved to her current position in Yorkton, Saskatchewan as Library Technician for the Sunrise Health Region two years ago.

Moving to the health sector from her school library was a big change. Tara quickly reacquainted herself with the Library of Congress system after 8 years of pure Dewey; she began working with medical terminology and specialized resources; and the biggest challenge of all, she had no physical library space for patrons to visit. As the sole information professional in the Region, Tara serves over 2,600 staff members who are spread across 13 rural communities. Most of the library materials available to her patrons are accessible online - save for a collection of approximately 400 medical texts - and all of her services, including reference, literature searching, interlibrary loan and document delivery are offered from her cubicle in the Yorkton Regional Health Centre. A virtual library works well with her dispersed clientele, but a lack of designated library space has made connecting with her patrons difficult at times. Despite the challenges, Tara absolutely loves her job. Her biggest accomplishment to date has been converting the library catalogue from an Access database to the Mandarin integrated library system.

Tara's colleagues in the Saskatchewan health library community know her as a friendly, outgoing woman who is always ready to help out. It seems fitting that if asked what she likes best about her work she will tell you that it is working with great people, as well as the opportunity to learn about things through the course of her duties that most people never think about (and maybe don't want to). Although Tara would like to return to a school library one day, she enjoys what she's doing and doesn't see herself leaving the health region anytime soon. No matter where she finds herself in the future, it's clear that Tara is in libraries to stay: "I love my job. I could never imagine another career".