THE FUTURE OF READING

Keep reading
The advent of Book 2.0
Challenging ourselves as readers
New PD as CAVAL transitions to ALIA
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One of the things I love about Public Libraries, the journal of the US Public Libraries Association, is the way in which the obligatory photograph and short biography of contributors is complemented by details of what they’re reading. Similarly I’ve taken to including my current reads in my email signature line as a way of subtly highlighting the importance of reading. I’ve been quietly surprised by the number of people who’ve commented positively on this. It does of course raise a few ‘housekeeping’ issues:

- Is it over the top to include more than one title? I find it reassuring to note that most contributors to Public Libraries list at least two titles in their ‘on the go’ pile, so I’m assuming that it’s OK.
- Will I be judged by what I’m reading? As LIS professionals we stress the line ‘it doesn’t matter what you read so long as you’re reading’ but do we practice what we preach? The audio books I’ve been listening to in the car my frequent trips to Canberra during my term on the ALIA Board frankly border on trashy (know, judgement value!), but it keeps me alert and amused; enough so that I’ve been known to sit in the car for until the end of the chapter when I reach home.
- What if you forget to change your signature line? Will regular correspondents think “she’s been a long time reading that?”

In the spirit of sharing this Frontline is dedicated to what I’m currently reading.

- Doesn’t every library/librarian have a book group in their lives? Pageturners is one of my library’s book groups and is open try everyone. We started it several years ago to counter the difficulties new residents faced when trying to break into the ‘closed shop’ of many of the established groups. Subsequently we have an ever changing audience which makes for a stimulating time. The wine and cheese helps too! For next month we’re to read anything by Alexander McCall Smith which takes me outside of my preferred zone – but isn’t that what book groups are all about? I’ve chosen to read Corduroy Mansions (2009), a novel set around a crumbling mansion block in London’s Pimlico. Interestingly Corduroy Mansions was first released as a serial novel in the UK’s Daily Telegraph (shades of Charles Dickens) and available on line to listen to or download, a nice juxtaposition of the traditional and emerging technologies. And yes Corduroy Mansions does have a Facebook page.
- American Patchwork and Quilting et al. OK, I admit it, I’m a quilting junkie and a total sucker for any glossy magazine on the topic which appears on the news stand. Unfortunately as library budgets constric there’s a real danger that we’ll cut our periodicals vote, especially when so many titles are available on line. In doing so are we disadvantaging our readers? With their easy format and enticing covers, magazines are the perfect entree for some hard to reach client groups including young readers and new arrivals. They add to the ‘living room’ environment and the human feel of our spaces.
- The book I’m reading for me is Barbara Kingsolver’s The Lacuna (2009), an epic novel of a man caught between two nations, the Mexico City of artists Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, and pre- and post-war United States. It was my companion on a return flight from Orange to Melbourne a few days ago and I can only concur with a critic in The Independent (UK) who wrote this “is the first book in a long time that made me swap my bike for public transport, just so I could keep reading.” The Lacuna is a springboard book; already I have pile of related reading including a biography of Leon Trotsky and an expose of McCarthyism set aside to explore. I wonder how well we signpost such pathways when working with readers?
- Where would our reading piles be without the work inclusions? You know, the articles, journals, and books that often do the commute with you becoming more and more dog eared as they make the journey between home and work without once being opened.

My current travelling companions are actually on active service and bear the post-it notes to prove it, The Bookends Scenarios; alternative futures for the Public Library Network in NSW in 2030 (2009) has been developed by the Library Council of New South Wales in association with the Neville Freeman Agency. As its title suggests it discusses how the future of NSW public libraries might unfold over the next twenty years through scenarios which enable consideration of the types of roles, products, and services that will be offered. I was a participant in several of the workshops that were part of this project and it’s fascinating to see the results of our varied deliberations brought together and gives a considered direction for the future.

Similarly Michael Dewe’s Renewing our libraries; case studies in replanning and refurbishment (2009) is giving me a framework as I work through the issues around what I want from refurbished spaces in several of my branch libraries.

Finding time for professional reading is a constant dilemma and I’m sure I’m not alone in saying that, more than anything, the piles of unread material have the ability to bring on a case of guilty conscience. ‘I must be a very bad librarian!’ A speaker at the Australian School Library Association conference in Perth last September talked about book groups within the workplace where colleagues shared their professional reading experiences, addressing the issues of isolation and death by information.

The quotes about reading are numerous and most strike a chord. My current favourites are ‘We read to know we are not alone’ (C S Lewis) and ‘Reading is a ladder out of poverty’ (British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown). As LIS professionals we recognise the primacy of reading, it’s core to our profession and the services we deliver. One of the priorities recognised at the ALIA Public Libraries Summit last year was for a National Year of Reading and already discussions have begun with partners to progress for 2012. We’re really excited about this initiative and will be sharing details with you over the next few months.

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Volume 31 • Issue 3 • March 2010
On Reading – just so much a part of life

When Kate van der Veer, our inCite editor and Publishing Manager, said to me, “We’re doing this issue on the future of reading – so what are you reading?”, it got me to think about the variety of reading I have experienced over the past few weeks and how much reading has changed for us all as new formats come into our individual spheres. When people ask me if I am a librarian, I still say yes – but they then expect a good book recommendation. In my current role, there is a lot of professional and organisational reading – board papers, reports, letters, forms, documents, contracts, agreements, but little time for reading for pleasure.

What have you read this week? In the past few weeks, I have read a copy of a handwritten note on parchment from our early history for Library Lovers Day, an e-book on a computer and multiple tweet messages, children’s books for future NSS, and cookbooks for new recipes. Do you count audio books in ‘reading’? I know that many rural Australians use this as a great method to keep up with reading while clocking up the kilometres. What about when you ‘read’ a human book – as part of the Living Libraries program at your local library or university?

We’re also inundated with choice on how we choose what we read – does it get delivered in the post (Annual Reports, government reports, library newsletters) or via email or text messages? Is it loaned/borrowed from a friend’s home collection or passed down from a family member? How do you choose what book to read next? I find recreational reading choices at the bookstore and library sometimes a little challenging – how do I choose! For me, I make links to previous authors or themes (see my choices below) or I just go down the list of prize winners.

Professional reading also comes in a variety of forms – journal articles and abstracts, e-list messages, website information, electronic newsletters, or even handwritten scribbles on reports from colleagues. Professional reading can be found in newspaper and e-news articles (see ALIA and internet filtering in the news), presentations, and videos from conferences (see http://www.vala.org.au for a good example). Don’t forget, some professional reading also counts towards your PD points, and should be included in your PD record.

The ‘art’ of reading is different for everyone – but basic literacy is essential for a thriving economy. We know that Australia needs to improve in the literacy ‘stakes’ and as library professionals, it’s part of our role to contribute to this important part of national infrastructure. Articles in this edition outline many such programs throughout Australia.

Kevin Rudd talked about children’s literacy and reading in his blog post this month (http://www.pm.gov.au/PM_Connect/Pms_Blog/Childrens_Literacy) – and his guest editor Morris Gleitzman also commented about school libraries and their importance. Many Australians mentioned library programs on the blog, including State Library of WA’s Better Beginnings, NSW Premier’s Reading Challenge, storytimes, baby rhyme times, and ALIA’s Summer Reading Club.

I think one of the great things about working in libraries, and something we should all be thankful for, is the wide variety of reading we get exposed to – I can’t think of any other profession that gets to witness such a wide spread. So – enjoy your reading, in whatever form it takes.

The list of some of what I am reading for recreation: (yes, I start books and don’t finish them)

- Innocent Traitor – by Alison Weir. Borrowed from a friend while I was in Paris last year
- Lunch in Paris – by Elizabeth Bard. A new purchase, as I hope to be back in Paris this year to visit that same friend!

ALIA continues the internet filtering debate

Following a range of meetings and discussions, on 15 February 2010 ALIA released the joint statement of Core Principles for a Safer Internet – a partnership document between ALIA, Google, Yahoo!, and the Inspire Foundation. The statement, links, and media articles can be found at http://www.alia.org.au/internetfiltering. All members are encouraged to look through the documents linked from this page. ALIA joined many other organisations and groups debating and opposing the government’s proposed filtering plans. Our main viewpoint centres around the lack of effectiveness of the proposed URL blocking. It will not lead to a safer internet experience for children (which is the stated goal of the government). Along with representatives from Yahoo! and Google, I will be visiting Ministers and ministerial advisors at Parliament House to discuss our core principles and to update both government officials and opposition members on our concerns at the proposed mandatory ISP level filtering.

Our ongoing theme for 2010 is that every ALIA member is an advocate. Your support as a financial member assists with this advocacy work, and your voice assists as an advocate for our Association’s core values. Our 2008 Member Survey showed just how important advocacy is to us as a sector, and we are pleased and excited to be working towards better solutions on your behalf, and grateful for your continued support towards this and the other important issues that affect all of us.

For more comments and latest news on this advocacy issue, please revisit or RSS http://www.alia.org.au/internetfiltering and http://www.alia.org.au/blog

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ALIA and CAVAL announce new direction for LIS training in 2010

ALIA and CAVAL are pleased to announce the transition of CAVAL’s public training program to ALIA in 2010. The addition of selected courses and trainers from CAVAL’s popular program will further enhance professional development opportunities for ALIA members. CAVAL will continue to offer customised in-house training and consulting services to its eleven member universities, and other libraries and agencies in the profession.

Drawing on a highly talented team of trainers developed by CAVAL over nearly 10 years, ALIA will supplement its current coverage of training subjects. Available training formats will include face-to-face seminars and workshops, online courses, webinars, and teleconference workshops. Topics covered will include advocacy, budgeting, change management, customer service, leadership, library marketing, project management, resume writing, technical services, and staff development.

Judy Brooker, ALIA Professional Development and Careers Manager says the aim is “to provide a broad range of training and development opportunities for everyone working in the profession, regardless of their work circumstances or location”.

One of the key messages for ALIA in the 2008 Member Survey was the importance of Professional Development, with a special focus on members in regional areas. ALIA remains committed to enhancing both member value and the profession at large. Training programs are an excellent way for LIS professionals to gain knowledge of, and experience in, not only new and emerging technologies, but also build on basic and fundamental skills.

As a leader in library innovation for over 30 years, CAVAL is pleased to see its public training program forming the basis of new and invigorated professional development opportunities for ALIA members.

For more information about ALIA training topics, dates, and locations, visit http://www.alia.org.au/education/pd/pd.services/

Introducing the new ALIA directors 2010-2012

ALIA Vice-President (from May 2010)
ALIA President (from May 2011)
Margaret Allen
Margaret is CEO and State Librarian at the State Library of Western Australia.

Director (from May 2010)
Andrew Hocken
Andrew is the Sales Director at Baker & Taylor/YBP.

Director (from May 2010)
John Bayliss
John is the Director, Macquarie Regional Library Services.

Director (from May 2010)
Julie Rae
Julie is General Manager, Community Information Access for Vision Australia.

For more information about the Board of Directors and the 2010 Board Elections, please visit www.alia.org.au/governance/elections.
Professional development

Introduction to Library Metrics – A participant’s report

In late November 2009 I had the opportunity to attend the excellent ‘Introduction to Library Metrics’ workshop as an ALIA sponsored participant. The professional development workshop was delivered by Sue Henczel, as part the PICS seminar series (www.pics.com.au). The workshop was a great opportunity to learn about the challenges of statistics collection and share the experiences of colleagues in the profession.

An intriguing feature of the library profession is that we tend to collect a lot of output statistics (e.g. number of patrons, loans, reference inquiries, etc) over time, but don’t necessarily use them for our advantage, or have a clear understanding of why they were collected in the first place. When developing a statistical framework for a library service it was suggested to consult the two (rarely used?) standards relating to library statistics collection;


University libraries and public libraries seem to have well established collecting protocols relating to state/national benchmarking activities, but smaller, special libraries tend to have their own individual collecting practices. At the Fairfax Media Research Library in Sydney, we collect reference statistics, (including number of queries, time taken, client details, and resources used) via RefTracker software. This has been useful for tracking trends over time and is informative for resource allocation in relation to staffing and collection management. I will be analysing these statistics to measure the effects of changing the default search interface of our online full text newspaper database, the Fairfax Digital Collection (FDC) to a more ‘user friendly’ web search engine – will this mean less reliance on library staff to search FDC for end users? Time will tell.

Participants also heard of a trend towards finding ways to measure impacts and outcomes, especially in relation to corporate objectives – for example finding social capital measures (public libraries) and rating graduate attributes such as information literacy (university libraries). Ilief the workshop with a challenge to take back to my team – how to measure the impact of library services tied to a corporate objective – how do we measure our contribution to ‘quality journalism’?

Eke Woldring, Research Librarian, Fairfax Media ewoldring@fairfaxmedia.com.au
Currently reading Water for elephants: a novel by Sara Gruen

Public speaking with confidence

Library professionals are required to speak with confidence in presentations to their managers and boards, to members of the public with internal staff training and especially when advocating for extra funding and more resources. This skill can be learned.

Dr Irena Yashin-Shaw has developed a teleconference course for ALIA specifically designed for librarians and library technicians to build public speaking skills.

Dr Yashin-Shaw is an experienced professional speaker, educator, and workshop leader who has helped many people to discover the joys of public speaking and the success that it brings. She is Immediate Past President of the QLD Chapter of the National Speakers Association of Australia (NSAA) and the current National Professional Development Manager of NSAA.

You will have four opportunities to participate in the ALIA Teleconference Course in 2010. The course will provide guidance in preparing speeches so that members can present well in public forums and develop strong verbal cases when opportunities arise.

By the end of the teleconference course participants will be able to prepare a 1–2 minute speech, identify strengths, skills, and capabilities relevant to their verbal presentation, prepare responses to workplace public speaking demands, and develop a professional development strategy to support continued confidence building in public speaking.

For information http://www.alia.org.au/education/pd/pd/services/

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Currently reading The art of travel by Alain de Botton

Camden Living Library is part of community harmony strategy

Camden in Sydney’s south-west is like many communities in Australia. It is facing a population increase and in the next 25 years the number of people in the area is expected to grow from 50,000 to 250,000. That means the cultural and linguistic makeup of the area will change in the coming years.

In 2008 the Camden Council received funding from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship for a Local Government Area Community Harmony Strategy. This two-year program of low-key, community activities is helping Camden to positively respond to these population changes.

There are seven projects in the strategy which come together to form a whole of area approach. It will encourage people in schools, key organisations, and faith communities to regard Camden as the place where everyone belongs. This March the Council is using Harmony Day on 21 March as a focal point to bring the community together.

Camden’s Living Libraries Program has also been playing a key role in the strategy by introducing people from different sections of the community to one another.

Living Libraries in Camden is similar to undertakings elsewhere. It relies on local volunteers to act as books that library patrons can borrow. Through conversation and sharing their personal experiences the volunteers help break down prejudices and address misunderstandings. So far 20 people have volunteered as books.

Among them are an 18-year-old Muslim woman, an Indigenous elder, Council staff, and an 80-year-old nun who has travelled the world and migrated from the UK when she was 75.

The Council estimates Living Libraries has made a positive, local impact and Syd Lee, a volunteer who works for the Council, agrees.

Syd said his contribution to the library efforts has been to share his story as a Chinese Australian growing up in Sydney’s inner suburbs. And he has used the opportunity to put another perspective on media reports that were circulating some time back about intolerance in the Camden community.

“I just wanted to share my background and highlight that I value and am a product of Australia’s mature diverse community. Camden has mainly an Anglo-Saxon population mix and I have not personally encountered any issues about my cultural background.”

For Camden, Living Libraries is a key part of the City’s Community Harmony Strategy. Like Harmony Day and other Council activities it is helping to build community resilience and limit the potential for intolerance as its population grows.

Libraries can use Harmony Day on 21 March 2010 to promote their Living Libraries program, bring communities together and profile their services.

Order free promotional items through www.harmony.gov.au

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Currently reading Six pixels of separation by Mitch Joel

Volume 31 Issue 3 March 2010

Living Library ‘Book’ Syd Lee

inCite 7
ALIA Access 2010 Conference
1–3 September
Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre
‘THE’ ALIA event of the year
(You wouldn’t want to be anywhere else!)

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION OPENING SOON!
Save the date! Conference early-bird registration will open on Thursday, 1 April. Prices and latest information will be available on the ALIA Access website http://conferences.alia.org.au/access2010/

You will go home from the conference feeling inspired. And why wouldn’t you, with an abundance of new knowledge, new friends, new perspectives, and new dreams!

Access innovation
The 2010 event will challenge the traditional format of ALIA conferences with a focus on making the conference more ‘accessible’ for delegates and vendors. The 2-day multi-sector conference will feature library tours, video streaming, a conference dinner in multiple locations, ‘bring your own satchel’, and an associated exhibition with library industry suppliers. More will be revealed as the planning progresses.

Access people
The ALIA Access 2010 Conference will attract over 500 professionals from almost all sectors of the library industry. The Conference program has been specifically designed to have a multi-sector focus: the only problem will be choosing! The Conference will include streams from public, health, specials, TAFE, and new generation professionals, as well as workshops on interlibrary lending, LIS education, acquisitions, library leadership, and information literacy.

Access inspiration
Delegates will range from new graduates to senior library managers from across the Asia-Pacific region. As this is the only ALIA Conference in 2010, library professionals will see this as a crucial event within the industry calendar and use it as an opportunity to foster the professional interests, aspirations, and give them and their staff an opportunity to exchange and create knowledge and ideas that will move our profession forwards.

We look forward to seeing you at the ALIA Access 2010 Conference!

Kamara Buchanan
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Currently reading People of the Book by Geraldine Brooks

Get Ready to Access All Areas!
Library and Information Week 2010 will be held from 24–30 May.

New and exciting products will be available shortly. Keep visiting the website to be the first to have your official Access All Areas merchandise!


National Simultaneous Storytime 2010

Little White Dogs
Can’t Jump
By Bruce Whatley and Rosie Smith

Merchandise available soon!

Follow us on twitter and comment on the conference. #ALIAAccess
To someone who started raiding the adult fiction collection at the tender age of nine, it came as a shock to learn that humans were never *gasp* born to read. Born to be wild, perhaps, but not literate.

But how could this be? I read the labels on jam jars at breakfast if the newspaper is late. I’ve even been known to read the local equivalent of the Innkeepers Act (peeling behind the door) if without a book at 3am in a foreign hotel.

How can reading be unnatural?

In her fascinating book *Proust and the Squid: The story and science of the reading brain*, cognitive neuroscientist Maryanne Wolf argues that the invention of writing, and thus reading, barely two thousand years ago, compelled our ancestors to substantially rearrange their brains – a process only made possible by the inherent ‘plasticity’ of that wondrous organ: the brain’s inherent ability to make new connections.

With this physiological rearrangement, and the capacity of writing to capture and communicate a seemingly limitless array of ideas, came new ways of thinking – opening the door to a vast intellectual workshop that humans have yet to fully explore; and for which both teachers and librarians like to think they hold the keys.

Fully two millennia since the first Sumerian etched his shopping list in wet clay, the majority of us still don’t find the related processes of reading and writing easy to master. Wolf is right – reordering our primal brain for literacy does not come naturally. I won’t belabour the point with random quotes from the library’s photocopier manual, which I still personally believe was authored by a team of great apes working under extreme duress, and with very blunt pencils.

There is hope however. Evidence gathered by educational researchers over many decades confirms that the earlier we are exposed to reading as children, the easier it is for us to learn to read and write effectively – to become functionally literate. Furthermore, quality does trump quantity – getting the basics of spelling and grammar right (and right) from the start is critical.

Not too many years after the Sumerians, or possibly the Chinese, introduced writing to the world, my parents signed me up at our local public library. Wonder of wonders, the Children’s Library had books – lots of bright and appealing books, attended by pleasant staff who still looked young enough to be our grandmothers and who encouraged us to read.

The desire to nurture new generations of readers is still, I believe, at the heart of professional librarianship today. And if it’s not, it should be. In our Brave New World of online gaming, social networking, and the library as ‘third space’, I fear that libraries are afraid to be libraries (collections of books), and thus run the very real risk of becoming nothing at all – a funky irrelevancy.

I believe we should not – indeed must not – lose sight of one of the core reasons for libraries and librarians: to nurture and support a love of reading in people of all ages, and from all walks of life. Without access to a vibrant local library, what becomes of the child growing up in a home without books? Schools can only do so much to fill the void.

I freely admit to being a library junkie. Whenever I’m in another city or town, I always make time to visit the local public library, and from it I invariably learn much about its community. In Australia, public libraries vary considerably according to the makeup and relative fortunes of their local communities. As a rule however, the majority still appear to share a common mission – to nurture reading as both a skill and a pleasure.

For those who think I’m being a fuddy-duddy or worse still, luddite, take the example of one State Library’s self described “program for children under 8 years, available online or onsite”. Take a child to the physical manifestation of this ‘program’ and you might as well be visiting a hamburger chain for all the incentive children are given to engage with the written word, let alone read! A few books are kept as props – one guesses for story time – but even these are downplayed in favour of questioneable online games.

Compare that approach to the State Library of Western Australia, where the Better Beginnings program has been in operation since 2004. Better Beginnings takes the lessons of Wolf and others at face value and provides parents with the raw materials and encouragement to read to their children from an early age. Every parent with a newborn baby is eligible to receive a free reading kit which includes a board book – for some babies, the first book they will ever experience.

A 2009 study of Better Beginnings by Edith Cowan University shows what can be achieved, and what is at stake for libraries if we lose our way and forget our mission. Prior to Better Beginnings, 14% of parents reported reading to their children – after receiving the free reading kit, this figure climbed to 83%. Even more startling, after receiving the kit, 94% of parents reported that they or someone in their family had shared a book with their child in the past week.

In all of this, there is also a substantial payoff for libraries. The Better Beginnings data showed the number of children registered as library borrowers increasing from 4% pre-program to 23% post-program.

In a world increasingly prepared to countenance stilted computer game plots as acceptable reading for children, especially boys, I believe libraries must stand firm and continue to provide a higher quality alternative. I’m not saying every child under five should be able to recite Shakespeare, but let’s give them the raw materials and encouragement to start doing what doesn’t come naturally – reading – and do it well. We owe them at least that much.

On the Edge aims to be a conversation-piece, promoting discussion, engagement, and interest in the monthly theme. The opinions expressed in On the Edge do not necessarily reflect those of the Australian Library and Information Association
Keep reading

The State Library of Victoria’s Reader Development unit is engaged in developing and delivering programs and professional development that support the activity of keeping Victorians reading. In addition to the work of its Centre for Youth Literature, the library now also manages the Victorian Government’s Young Readers program, and the adult-oriented recreational reading Summer Read program alongside other reading promotional projects in partnership with publishers, the public libraries, and other organisations. The library is currently preparing to deliver BookWell – a pilot project in bibliotherapy training as well as the Victorian roll out of Frontline, Opening the Books online reader development training course. Additionally it has contributed to the establishment of ACLA, the Australian Children’s Literature Alliance – which seeks to provide a Children’s Laureate (a reading advocate and reading role model). ACLA has already established a website linking professionals in the field and reading promotional organisations nation-wide. www.acla.org.au

At the core of this work is keeping young people reading for their immediate enjoyment, future wellbeing, and success. The critical links between literacy, school performance, and adult life chances and the converse negative health and social impacts of poor literacy skills are well documented. While not a literacy program as such, the Centre for Youth Literature’s goal is to keep young Australians reading for pleasure. Continued engagement with reading also shows to have a positive impact on wellbeing and social engagement. Books provide young people with a way of understanding others’ lives as well as their own, at what is possibly their most confusing time of life. Teenagers are hungry for ideas and are questing for what youth literature and other forms of reading material offer.

Peers, family members, trusted teachers, and bookstore specialists inform young people about their reading choices as well as the highly used website www.insideadog.com.au developed by the Centre for Youth Literature. The Centre presents professionals with information and insight about youth literature; provides authors and publishers with a platform; speaks directly with young Victorians about reading; and supports the development of dedicated youth literature bodies in other states and territories. It is also proactive in providing information and leadership in the landscape of young people’s reading habits and behaviours.

Library Consultant Sue McKerracher has crafted and extended the research conducted on the Centre’s behalf, as part of a strategic review process, into a report that provides an update on the highly valued Young Australians Reading report of 2001. The purpose of the research was to track the changes since the last strategic review of the Centre for Youth Literature in 2004; to describe the effect of these changes on young people, their families and professionals in the field; and to discover future trends that will help inform teachers, librarians, and the organisations involved in encouraging young Australians to read for pleasure. Each element of the chain is included, from the author through to the young reader, via publishers, bookshops, public libraries, and school libraries, with guidance from peers, parents, teachers, and librarians.

Keeping Young Australians Reading identifies:

1. Why it is important to keep young Australians reading
2. What the barriers to reading for pleasure are
3. How to overcome these barriers (particularly devastating for Indigenous students and those in remote areas)
4. Trends in young people’s reading and
5. Challenges for professionals

Keeping Young Australians Reading provides facts and figures, observations, statistics, and quotes. It cites other reports, websites, and sources of useful information. It has been designed to be an advocacy tool as well as providing both insightful reading and professional toolkit armoury. The full report can be downloaded at the State Library of Victoria’s website at www.sl.vic.gov.au/about/information/publications/policies_reports/keeping-reading.html

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Currently reading Cooee by Vivienne Kelly
The advent of Book 2.0

The book is undergoing a transformation, but I’m not talking about a morphing from printed book to e-book; this transformation concerns the book’s huge social splash.

Book reading has largely been a lone, isolated experience, not counting book clubs of course; although the act of reading, particularly getting lost in a novel, means blocking out the outside world.

With the onset of the digital world and web 2.0 in particular, the focus is on communities online. Young and new generations are growing up in a reality marked by social connection, chiefly on the internet, but studies show they demand this in the real world too, largely eschewing lone activities for ones with friends.

With this move towards increased social interconnectivity, the book has entered a new realm too. It hasn’t, as some have propositioned, been relegated to an increasingly populated dusty shelf waiting for the widespread take-up of the digital e-book.

Not only are book groups in high demand, but booklovers are populating websites like LibraryThing, Good Reads, Shelleri, and iRead on Facebook to share their favourite reads, reviews, and chat to other readers. Sites like MeetUp.com are allowing booklovers to find each other and organise real-world meet ups to talk about books.

Social connection is even demanding book reading. What teenage girl would say no to reading the *Twilight* series, if it meant feeling left out when everyone is talking about it. It’s reading peer pressure!

The idea of Book 2.0 is that the book isn’t being shunned in favour of social connection — it is being integrated.

The library is in an interesting position in the wake of Book 2.0. With library premises serving as community hubs, it can provide, and indeed is providing, this book-inspired social connection at the library, but it is also able to promote interaction online. Indeed, the library is able to make reading an engaging experience, not just between a person and a book, but among people.

YPRL’s Yarra Plenty Reads is an ongoing program that promotes and encourages reading through displays, author visits, and literary events that follow the YPRL 12 month calendar of themes for each year. The program came as a result of research and community consultation for the YPRL Reader Development Strategic Framework where it was highlighted that YPRL needed to have an overall approach to promote the love of reading. One of the premises of the program is to create opportunities for community to connect with each other and provide speakers and programs that encourage connection.

Under the banner of Yarra Plenty Reads there are four programs designed to encourage reading and connection: **bedside reads**, **live reads**, **community reads**, and **screen reads**.

**bedside reads** – bedside reads is an ongoing, informal bookchat program for adults designed to encourage a love of reading and create opportunities for people to share reading experiences. A bedside reads program consists of adult readers coming together to share reading experiences. The program is usually hosted once a month and lasts for about 1 hour with a guest reader.

**live reads** – Reading events where authors, illustrators, poets, playwrights, and publishers reveal the stories behind their published works, live reads is designed to create opportunities for our communities to connect with literary artists.

**screen reads** – the community can join in programs that focus on books that have been made into movies. screen reads is designed to provide opportunities for the community to engage in current literature and film. A screening of *Twilight* at Lalor Library recently brought a crowd of teenagers to the library to cheer for Team Edward or Team Jacob.

**community reads** – Community members are invited to join vibrant groups that share writing and reading experiences with others. community reads incorporates book and writing groups, and any other literary group that connects community members with other people with similar interests.

The library is encouraging online social interaction about books too. YPRL is actively engaging with users with Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and sites like LibraryThing and Chilifresh. But later this year a YPRL website redesign will bring web 2.0 social interaction to the library’s central online presence. The new website will encourage library members to interact with each other and staff online through the website, and will be integrated with the library’s catalogue. It’s Book 2.0 in action.

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Currently reading *The Pregnant Widow* by Martin Amis

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Challenging ourselves as readers

As public library staff, we participate every day in conversations with our customers about their reading habits. But are we offering the best possible service to our customers as we attempt to aid them in their reading choices?

The challenge for 2010 is to ‘Read Outside of the Square.’

In The Future of Reading (Library Journal 1/11/2009), Tom Peters beseeches libraries and librarians to “cling to your power base—readers—not your brand.” His call to “cleave to the needs and wants of readers” requires library professionals to “study their reading habits, then design and redesign our content collections, systems, and services to help them improve and maximize their reading experiences.” The NSW Readers Advisory Group is rising to this call and encouraging public library staff to better understand the needs of our readers by instigating their own ‘reading challenge.’

2010 staff reading challenge

Library staff are often approached for book and reading recommendations. We use many techniques to help us understand what a customer is looking for, including Nancy Pearl's concept of ‘Doorways’. Training in Readers Advisory is available and all NSW public library staff are encouraged to share ideas and techniques on the NSW RA wiki.

This year, however, in order to encourage staff to step outside of their own reading comfort zones and better understand the needs of their borrowers, the NSW RA Group has set up a new annual staff Reading Challenge.

The challenge for 2010 is to ‘Read Outside of the Square.’ Many of us are so comfortable with our own reading preferences that we rarely stray outside them. We all have expertise in the areas that we like to read, but often have large gaps in our knowledge about other parts of our collections. As professional staff who assist customers with their reading choices, it is essential that we know about the material that we make available to our borrowers. The Reading Challenge is about encouraging staff to keep up to date with new reading trends and experience the books we may find ourselves suggesting to customers, even if reading preferences and appeal characteristics differ!

As we break out of our own familiar reading moulds, by sharing our experiences ‘Reading Outside the Square’ with other library staff, we are creating a shared learning experience that we can all benefit from.

How you can get involved

Sign up to the NSW RA wiki (http://readersadvisory.wetpaint.com) and join the NSW Readers Challenge. Each month, nominate a book that you will read that is outside of your normal reading zone and explain why. Don’t be afraid to experiment! Peters stresses that there is a need for librarians to not only encourage but “aid and abet experimentation in reading.” This is your opportunity to experiment and test your own tastes and preferences. Why do you like what you like? Do these preferences have to be restricted to the genres you normally read or can you find similar elements in new types of reading? You might be surprised at the results!

The other aspect of the challenge is to read beyond just novels. Our customers are finding other ways to read, outside of the formats that a traditional library offers. Why don’t we join them?

The aim of this exercise is to explore the world of the reader so that we can further understand the needs of our library customers!

Reading the future

Peters states that “never before has so much reading material been so easily and quickly available to so many people. If reading founders, it will not be because of a dearth of things to read.” There is a need for us, as library professionals, to understand the way that writing is changing and the way that the reader is interacting with new forms and formats. The NSW Readers Advisory Group is encouraging public library staff to take the Reading Challenge to discover emerging reading trends and better understand their customers’ reading habits. We also hope to, in our research and experimentation, find new avenues for the voracious readers that already value their local library service.

Through this challenge, we hope that library staff across Australia will find ways to further engage with their library customers. As Peters notes, “we are in a long-term commitment with readers. We need to be vocal, flexible, and patient as the longstanding relationship between readers and the libraries that serve them continues to evolve.” This challenge is but a first step in participating in that evolution, and we look forward to your valuable contribution.

Happy Reading!

Vassiliki Veros (City of Sydney Council)
Jenn Martin (Auburn City Council)
on behalf of the NSW Readers Advisory Working Group

2010+Reading+Challenges+for+all+Readers

Vassiliki Veros is currently reading The Spellman files by Lisa Lutz
Jenn Martin is currently reading in the skin of a lion by Michael Ondaatje

Murder at the Metcalfe: a Readers Advisory seminar for crime and mystery

The NSW Readers Advisory group is holding their annual seminar on the 23rd of March, 2010. This is a wonderful opportunity for library staff from across the state to come together to explore a reading genre and other advances in readers advisory.

http://crimera.eventbrite.com/

With crime and mystery on this year’s agenda we have a broad group of speakers to help explore the many places that crime and mystery can take you. We have the senior editor from the Genreflecting Advisory series, Diana Tixier Herald, who will be talking about the genreblend of crime and paranormal fiction, Peter Milne, the crime selector from Abbeyes bookshop, and international bestselling author, Matthew Reilly. We will also have speakers talking about the genres of crime, a panel of librarians speaking about crossover genres – romantic suspense, children’s crime, and crime in literary fiction as well as a resource information session and a murder game for all attendees.

The Readers Advisory seminar is a highlight on the NSW public libraries annual calendar and we all look forward to a great day at the State Library of NSW.
Teenagers: our future readers

Teenagers are our future and an important group to attract as library users, but finding teenagers who willingly visit their school or public library can prove difficult. In December I submitted my PhD thesis for examination on the topic of teenagers’ reading and use of libraries. My main area of investigation was their thoughts on graphic novels, however the discussion ranged across the broad spectrum of reading materials, from books, both fiction and non-fiction, to Wikipedia and social networking sites.

I talked to 40 teenagers during focus group sessions with students at Perth metropolitan high schools in late 2006. (Their names have been changed to ensure confidentiality.) Teenagers with a wide selection of reading habits and preferences took part. Although it is a small sample, the findings indicate they have views as diverse as is likely among teenagers in general.

While their level of enjoyment for reading and subsequent reading habits varied, a universal belief was the need to find the “right book,” whether it was “interesting”, “good”, or something they “related to”. This extended to finding the right reading material for those who found traditional books abhorrent (strongly expressed by some) and preferred magazines, graphic novels, or the internet. Adam (age 16) described the result of finding the right book, “If I find one I do like then I’ll just be there for hours”, and Jeremy (age 14) explained what happened when he chose the wrong book, “If I’m not into the book and I’m struggling, I just find I avoid reading.”

While teenagers’ thoughts on graphic novels informed my initial research questions, this was not highlighted in the information given to students, thus with a variety of views on and exposure to graphic novels took part. I discovered a greater number of teenagers were avid readers, compared with other studies. Among the 40 teenagers, graphic novels were not found to be universally liked, although for some the format was the perfect material to entice them to choose reading as a pastime. This incongruence with the experience of public and teacher librarians found in the (mainly anecdotal) literature is likely caused by the teenagers I spoke to being drawn from teenagers in general, rather than those who use libraries. The latter could encompass more fans of graphic novels, who would be encountered by librarians.

It is as important to study non-users of libraries as it is to investigate those who frequent libraries. Among my research participants, libraries were not a favoured place to visit. Their school library was a more common destination than a local public library because they were forced to visit during classes held in the library. This implied that given the choice, they would never venture into a library. Even among those who enjoyed reading, their reading matter was often found elsewhere, for example, their home book shelves or bought by their parents. A minority of particularly avid readers, such as Rita (age 15) who said, “I generally like reading if I have nothing to do which is pretty much most of the time, I’m just reading,” had discovered libraries were the best source for their voracious reading appetites.

Class visits to the school library were often conducted with the intention of students using library resources to find assignment information. Among participants, the internet or “Googling it,” was much preferred to locating a book and reading it to find information. Marika (age 14) considered looking through a book harder than typing a search term and the computer doing the work for her. Marika and others had no concept of the online critical literacy necessary to evaluate the results of a search, but there were students who realised the importance of evaluating online information and balancing it with conventionally published sources.

All teenagers used the internet for entertainment and socialising, although some to a lesser or greater extent, and the majority had computers with internet access at home. While using IM, social networking sites, and other online communication tools involve the literacy skills of reading and writing, teenage participants rarely equated the internet with reading. In fact, reading was almost universally associated with books only. This was highlighted by Leah and Tom (both 14) who proudly declared their hatred of reading and that they never read. Further discussion drew them out to name books they had enjoyed during English classes, their use of the internet, and liking of magazines. In Leah’s case she also found pleasure from biographies of people she admired.

My research demonstrates the changing nature of reading, including the different literacies inherent in the more visual materials of the internet and graphic novels. Reading involves more than just traditional books and the future of reading will not necessarily continue the primacy of print on the page and a book held in our hands. Whether reading online, a graphic novel, or traditional book, teenagers are reading and we need to acknowledge and support their reading choices.

I have written a number of articles during my research which include full reference lists. These are available through my research website and blog http://alia.org.au/~csnow/research/. I am currently working at Curtin University Library while awaiting the outcome of my thesis examination.

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Currently reading The hunger games bk 2: Catching the fire by Suzanne Collins
A personal history of reading

I used to be an avid reader of all sorts of material: fiction and non-fiction, books and journals, biography, history, and how-to books.

A large chunk of my childhood was spent wandering around in my local library (Hornsby) on Friday nights, when Mum and Dad would take us there for an hour or so. Later in my youth, I can remember riding my bike up to the library in the holidays to find some books. I discovered all sorts of material, particularly on my then favourite non-fiction topic of electronics. I read books from the teen fiction category, which helped me get through those turbulent years. I read books from the teen fiction category, which helped me get through those turbulent years. And I used the library for various other topics, mostly to do with DIY bicycle maintenance, computers, and science fiction.

Around year 9, my interests seemed to drift from reading to dreaming to chasing girls. Later, in year 11, my friends and I started a band at school, and my library activity was at a low. But after year 12, and a fairly poor HSC effort, I had a job as a library assistant back at Hornsby Library. “You’ve always been a good reader,” Mum said, showing me the advertisement in the local paper. Sure enough, I was soon working a 35 hour week as library assistant, while still doing gigs with the band on weekends.

I liked the library job, but mostly because of the human contact, not so much for the books. One of my supervisors (a really great colleague) at a branch library one day said to me, “Andy, have you ever thought about doing the library course?” She was a very encouraging, wonderful branch librarian, and she was looking out for me. Grudgingly at first, I took up the degree course and started attending night classes. Pretty soon I was doing better than I expected, and started to feel pretty good about myself. The band was still active, and I was starting to pass my subjects with credits. The library often was useful, too, both as an income source, but also as an information source. I still found myself reading the electronics books occasionally, but now it was so that I could build an amplifier for the band, or learn more about music. I still valued the information resources highly.

I got a lot of self-esteem back from before the time I had done my HSC, and started throwing a bigger effort into my studies. Before long I was getting better marks, even distinctions, and I felt like I could really succeed.

Meanwhile the band was closing down – the guys were starting to find alternative life pathways (as I was), and after some of the original members quit, my heart just wasn’t in it anymore.

Fast-forward about 25 years, and here I am, still working in libraries, still reading, but still romantic about ‘the band’. These days I tend to read fiction only when I have a long holiday break, or just when I have nothing better to do. I still read a lot of non-fiction material, mostly DIY books, car maintenance, and the like, or the history books that my wife loves to read.

I think as we grow up we all will continue to read, so long as we have found it to be useful or enjoyable in the past. But there will be times in our journey when we have other things to do that are perhaps a bit more exciting than books at the time. I’m just glad I’ve had such great libraries at my disposal along the way.
The future of reading – a historical perspective

Pharaoh Den, fourth Egyptian king of the first dynasty called upon his royal seal bearer, “Tell me, Hemaka, of this roll of cloth made from the reed of the papyrus?”

“As you wish”, replied Hemaka. “They say that words can be engraved on its surface with dye and rolled away to be stored and read again at a later date. As you know, our people have always recorded our heritage on the monuments of our time and the walls of our tombs. I don’t trust this papyrus, master, it just seems so impermanent.”

The empty roll of papyrus found in the tomb of the first Egyptian dynasty is the oldest known remnant of this world changing technological advancement, but, being blank, it gives no testament whatsoever to the abovementioned conversation.

Perhaps Hemaka was not technologically savvy. Or perhaps, since his fate was to be sealed in the tomb with his master, he thought this might finally be his chance to write that novel he had always dreamed of.

It wouldn’t have been successful, as the novel was not popularised until the development of the more advanced and cheaper technology of paper and print. But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

It is believed that language developed in Homo sapiens between 100,000 to 50,000 years ago, perhaps due to a mutation of the brain, or perhaps evolving over millennia. This development occurred alongside advances in sophistication of tools and the migration out of Africa throughout the world.

Language enabled our ancestors to communicate complex concepts, such as how to fashion tools, hunt, travel, and, in general, how to survive. Language provided Homo sapiens with innumerable advantages which enabled them to evolve, even though their actual bodies have changed little in nearly 200,000 years.

It is not surprising then that Homo sapiens next sought to find new ways to capture their new-found language. Phonetic language systems of writing are believed to have evolved over many millennia and in multiple locations. Sumerian Cuneiform script is perhaps the oldest and was reasonably well established by the 34th Century BCE, in what is now southern Iraq.

The development of written scripts coincides with the transition from the Neolithic period or late Stone Age into the more advanced Bronze Age. Significant leaps in the development of Homo sapiens as a species have coincided with these major advances in language.

Since then, new technologies in writing have continued to be introduced at an exponential rate. Papyrus was used for the creation of scrolls beginning in the 4th Millennium BCE. Parchment was also later used. These technologies, however, were expensive to produce and therefore only available to the elite.

Have the Homo sapiens reached the pinnacle of their evolution? Or is there still room for growth?

The invention of paper and then finally the moveable type printing press in the 1450s meant that reading was able to spread to the masses. And spread it did; we are now at an unprecedented point in history where more than 5 billion of the Earth’s 6 billion population are able to read.

A recent step forward in writing technology, is an invention we call ‘the computer’. The computer is a tool which has not only streamlined production of writing: it has also enabled the introduction of a wide reaching network of communication, which we call ‘the internet’. We now find ourselves in a world where information (bits of writing) can be communicated almost instantaneously across the globe.

If this is the present, then what is the future of reading? By what means will the Homo sapiens read next?

Writing and reading is a natural extension of language. The ability to develop language and writing, and to be able to read and understand this writing has provided Homo sapiens unprecedented opportunities for advancement.

Have the Homo sapiens reached the pinnacle of their evolution? Or is there still room for growth?

Whatever it is that the future descendants of Homo sapiens will read, they are now faced with a new challenge. There is now more writing available than any of them can begin to comprehend, let alone read.

Perhaps they will find new ways to expand their minds. Perhaps they will discover ways to combat the challenges to their survival, such as climate change. Perhaps their reading will even enable them to spread further into the galaxy, as the early development of language enabled their ancestors to venture out of Africa and into the world. The possibilities seem endless.

Perhaps there will be a group of professionals who could themselves evolve with the ever-changing technology to guide and assist the Homo sapiens through this vast and changing web of information.

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Currently reading: Orbital burn by K A Bedford
Unscrambling the scribble

Studying for a Masters of Education at the ripe old age of 50+ has certainly been a challenge, but the idea of sitting for an exam spun me into a panic. I did everything I could think of to prepare, including reducing the entire content of the subject ‘Online Communities’ down to ten slightly risqué acronyms (hey it worked thirty years ago) and spending an hour in the local newsagent deciding which pen to buy for the exam.

As I read over the exam questions I was fairly confident, despite the butterflies, that I’d be able to pull this thing off, but soon to my great amazement, I realised that there was one thing I hadn’t prepared for. I’d forgotten to practice using my fancy new pen. My handwriting limped and stumbled across the page like the faltering steps of a sodium-deprived long distance runner. The scrawl I left on the page was depressingly illegible – even to me. My hand seized up. I was paying the price, after twenty years, of letting the computer do all the writing for me.

Over the past few years there’s been much discussion about how computers are changing the way we read. Our attention spans are shorter, we prefer quick bites of information preferably with graphics, nobody is reading the classics anymore, and the Holy Grail of computer interfaces is the one which exactly replicates the experience of reading print on paper.

But my experience with a written exam got me thinking about the almost equally dispiriting influence of computers on handwriting. Will handwriting eventually disappear altogether? Neef, Dijck, and Ketelaar ask the same question in their 2006 book appropriately titled Sign Here!: Handwriting in the Age of the New Media. They argue that handwriting didn’t disappear in the wake of previous ‘writing machines’ and it’s hard to believe it will happen in the computer age either as long as handwriting’s technologies are “intimately tied to particular practices and forms that are continued in the present.”

However, the most frequently employed “practices and forms” being continued in my world are the post-it notes dotted over the computer at work and the weekly grocery list. Are these the mundane uses to which handwriting will be limited in the future? Already the illuminating practice of being able to trace an author’s creative process through successive manuscript revisions belongs to the past. Another primary source of information, the letter, has always been important to historical researchers because letters often reveal the hidden motivations and personal influences driving those who shape events and intellectual thought. They also reveal discrepancies between the private and the public self. Charles Darwin’s lifelong correspondence gives us an insightful and comprehensive picture of the man and his theories to which we would not otherwise have access. Along with love letters, unless someone has the forethought or interest to print them out, the similarly rich sources of information to be found in the emails of today lie unrecoverable in cyberspace.

Then there’s the fact that all typing looks the same. I’ve always treasured the individuality and immediacy of hand written communication and I’m still popular at parties with my knowledge of graphology which is supposed to reveal a writer’s hidden personality (sometimes better not to mention those earthy downstrokes).

There’s no longer the same emphasis on handwriting at school that I experienced growing up in the 50s and 60s and unless calligraphy becomes a more popular art form it’s unlikely that anything can be done to stop handwriting’s speedy decline. Soon we’ll need a new edition of Eve McLaughlin’s Reading Old Handwriting, originally published in 1979 to help people trace their family histories. Unfortunately, I can’t use the following quote as an excuse for my own poor exam performance, “Documents penned by more highly educated people tend to give more trouble. The more used a person was to writing, the less neat it was …”

After years of relying on the computer to do most of our writing for us, perhaps we should change this line to read, “The less used a person is to writing, the less neat it is …”

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Currently reading The Case for God by Karen Armstrong
Reading vs. computer games: what will the future hold?

Computer games have been a much-feared commodity for many years. As a child of the 80s I grew up playing Space Invaders, Pacman, and other such games, while the adults around me complained that kids would stop reading, that they would become addicted to computer games, and that society would crumble. Despite all the doom-saying, my friends and I did not stop reading and, surprisingly, society has remained intact.

So here we are now in 2010, and the same fears are still troubling people. Will computer games seduce our youth away from the written word? Can the book compete with the computer game? As games get more sophisticated, with more realistic graphics and increasing interactivity, will books fall by the wayside?

The flaw in this thinking is the belief that there is a direct competition between books and computer games. The fact is that there are a lot of things that compete for time in the life of young people — homework, chores, family, hanging with friends, sports, games, television, etc. And kids will always find the time to do the things they like doing. Assuming they like both reading and gaming, they will find the time to do both — as well as watch television, play sports, hang out with friends...

Kids have been playing games a lot longer than there have been computers. Computer games are simply a technological step forward in game playing. In fact, playing games has become more like reading: someone other than the player is providing the setting and story.

Both reading and computer games are forms of escape and enjoyment. They are not mutually exclusive. Playing computer games can lead to reading and vice versa. Many successful books and movies spin off into the world of games. Harry Potter is probably the ultimate example of this — seven books that have lead to extremely successful films and computer games. Many computer games are also finding new life in the literary world. The Warcraft and Final Fantasy games are the two that immediately spring to mind, as they have a plethora of tie-in novels.

I would argue that there is a greater competition between genres than between games and reading. As an adult my interests have widened, but as a kid I was singularly focused on science fiction. I read books of that genre and I played games of that genre. A grade 6 boy recently told me his favourite game was Assassin’s Creed 2 and that his favourite books were the Horrible Histories books. The game is a historical adventure set in the 15th and 16th centuries about a young assassin who uses a variety of amazing weapons. The books look back on all the nasty, gory, horrible elements of bygone ages. Kids will always find time for the things they like, be it science fiction or gory history.

I do not necessarily believe that authors and publishers need to come up with gimmicks to compete with computer games. But given the amount of reading material available to young people today, a gimmick or a new approach can help a book stand out from other books. Take for example, Gabrielle Lord’s Conspiracy 365, a thriller set over the period of a year and published as a series of twelve books released monthly throughout 2010 — the release timeline mirrors the timeline of the story. The series has its own website and was launched with a competition to win a Wii games console.

For an author or publisher, finding a link between their book and the world of computer games can be a plus, be it a competition to win a games console or an actual story link, such as with Gillian Rubinstein’s Space Demons trilogy from the 1980s, in which kids find themselves trapped within a computer game. As an author myself, I set my latest book, Gamers’ Quest, within a computer game world. I endeavored to mimic the feel of a computer game in the pages of this novel. And I have used a computer-animated video with the look and feel of a game to promote the book.

So what does the future hold? I think that games will continue to become more sophisticated, that books will look for new and exciting ways to attract readers, that kids will continue to both read and play, and that adults will continue to fear the technological advancement of computer games.

George Ivanoff
Author of Gamer’s Quest
http://www.georgeivanoff.com.au
Currently reading Solace and grief by Foz Meadows

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Early childhood literacy – Bongo’s big day out

The local community of Bankstown is one of the most culturally diverse Local Government Areas (LGA) in the country – 36% of residents are born overseas and almost a third are from non-English speaking backgrounds; almost one quarter speak another language and English not well or not at all. These cultural factors create great challenges in terms of teaching literacy, challenges that are magnified by relatively low levels of educational attainment, compared to the Sydney region.

Against this backdrop, the Bankstown Library and Information Service set up a working group, the Baby Steps to Literacy Group, to help address the early childhood literacy needs of the local community. The Group, comprising community groups from Bankstown and State Government agencies, developed a picture book for babies and toddlers, Bongo’s Big Day Out. This book links literacy and everyday Bankstown life, a seemingly simple resource that encourages parents in Bankstown to incorporate early childhood literacy practices into their day-to-day lives.

Research used in supporting the project proposal included data from the 2006 Census question, “How well does the person speak English?” Further, the data indicated an increasing trend in the LGA of people who have English as a second language, and who spoke English not well or not at all.

Linking literacy with day-to-day life is recommended by many literacy experts including the Australian Scholarships Group and author Mem Fox.

The character of Bongo was already known by library users as Bongo is an orangutan who is the mascot for Bankstown’s Lapsit program. Bongo attends all lapsit sessions and a bigger than life-sized Bongo is prominent at the Summer Reading Club’s presentation evenings. And yes, one of our intrepid library staff is inside the orangutan suite at many of the library events. Within the book, Bongo is seen at places of local interest such as the library (of course!), the park, the post office, the airport, the train station, and the Friendship Gardens. Simple statements describing Bongo’s location helps the child start to recognise letters and sounds, and associate these with recognisable landmarks.

As part of the awareness campaign, the library held a competition to name the book in conjunction with the community groups, and the winning entry was Bongo’s Big Day Out. The book was launched at the Bankstown Library in June 2009 by the Mayor, Cr Tania Mihaluk, and guests included Nadia Wheatley, well-known local children’s book author, and childhood expert Dr Leonie Arthur from the University of Western Sydney.

Following the book launch, the demand for lapsit has increased at all Bankstown library locations, resulting in sessions conducted on a regular basis. Our larger branches are holding double lapsit sessions to meet the increased demand. The Library also held a double lapsit session at the Children’s Festival in September 2009. And the library’s Community Access team has developed a one-off lapsit taster the help meet the increased demand.

The book is distributed to new parents participating in the Bankstown Community Resource Group early childhood programs, Baby Health Centres, playgroups, and all Library Literacy programs. In addition, at the Bankstown Children’s Festival “Welcome to Babies” 200 newborns and their families were provided gift bags from the library that included the Bongo’s Big Day Out book and other library merchandise. The project set the initial print run at 3000 with facility for further copies to be printed depending on local demand.

Feedback from the community has been very positive. Bongo is becoming an even more recognisable symbol for the children, as the local community groups have adopted Bongo as a mascot as well as appearing at children’s library events. The publication of Bongo’s Big Day Out has provided a simple literacy tool for the community and also reinforces Bongo with the local area and with the library.

Robyn Owens
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Currently reading Memoirs of Hadrian by Marguerite Yourcenar
Reading is alive and well!

Reading has never been more alive and well than here in the United Kingdom (January 2010) where I am researching Bibliotherapy as part of my undertaking on being awarded the Barrett Reid Scholarship in November 2009.

Bibliotherapy is the term used to cover a range of activities that use creative reading to promote health and wellbeing, from sheer enjoyment and leisure reading through to therapeutic models that address mental health issues.

The ‘Get your life back…books can help’ scheme in Essex County Council Libraries is an example of the Books on Prescription model that nurtures partnerships with local GPs and other health professionals to provide authoritative information and recommended self-help books in public libraries.

Creative Bibliotherapy uses established reading development practices to emphasise the health benefits for people who are isolated, lonely, socially marginalised, or living with or caring for those with dementia or Alzheimer’s.

Public libraries are well placed to provide this service by linking what they already do with a wide range of new partnerships in health and community sectors.

The healing power of reading is being taken even more seriously now that the Museums Libraries and Archives Council in the UK has commissioned research to scope public libraries’ activities in the area of health and wellbeing. The work will be delivered by the Reading Agency, headed by Debbie Hicks.

I attended the Read to Lead five-day Accredited Facilitator Training residential course run by The Reader Organisation to learn the skills necessary to lead Get into Reading groups using their principles and practices. Reading groups are held in a variety of venues including libraries, community centres, prisons, hospitals, drop-in centres, and care homes, and are designed to bring good quality literature to anyone in a shared reading experience. Texts are read aloud by the leader who invites others to join in as little or as much as they wish. Particularly valuable results are being detected in the mental and emotional health of participants.

“I haven’t looked at a book in fifteen years,” said a participant at a drugs detox unit. “It makes me wish I hadn’t thrown those years away, because I’d forgotten what it feels like when you read something like this, the power of words, I mean.”

Who says ‘reading is dead’, ‘reading is dying out’, ‘books are obsolete’?

Come and talk to me! I have been inspired by what I have seen and heard and read. Bring on ‘the reading revolution’. Let’s make Reading: the lost skill?

Not from where I stand…

Can the future of reading be predicted by the continuing popularity and vibrancy of English literature courses? Last semester at the University of Adelaide, over 200 first-year students signed up for a course on Shakespeare. When I started my work as English Research Librarian in 2007, a similar number over-flowed the lecture theatre for a first-year course called Landmarks of literature (otherwise known to its lecturer as ‘Big books’), a selection of works that included Dickens’ Bleak House and Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina.

The particular kind of reading that these students engage in – the study of literature – does have a future when the academic teaching and library practices designed to support it continue to evolve. When I studied English literature in the 1980s (last century!), I spent wonderful hours reading heavy paperback editions of great novels, sitting in tutorial rooms discussing literature with other students, and paging through the library’s multiple volumes of the MLA international bibliography in search of literary criticism.

Students in the 21st century do the same reading, differently. They are still reading the same captivating and challenging poems, plays, and novels; they are still studying Shakespeare and Coleridge, Charlotte Bronte and Virginia Woolf. But they also have the opportunity to read texts that I was not offered, such as gothic literature, the ‘Art of Crime’ in 19th and 20th century fiction, self-writing, and creative writing.

The library’s collections have changed to keep pace with this new teaching and reading, both in content and in format. The students I help today can use e-books if the texts they want are already out on loan; they have access to more literary criticism through databases such as MLA and Austlit, and backfiles of electronic journals on sources such as JSTOR and Project Muse. Students of Shakespeare can use online concordances rather than print ones to study the use of particular expressions, and access the library’s online subscription to the Oxford English Dictionary to trace the origins of specific words.

Academic teaching practices have evolved to encourage students to read English literature. There are still intellectually stimulating lectures and seminars, and these are enhanced by technology ranging from PowerPoint presentations to podcasts. Students contribute to online discussion boards, make postings on Facebook, and write their own poetry and short stories when they study these genres.

So things have changed from last century to this: but the students are still reading the literature that I, and decades of other students, read. George Eliot is still on the syllabus, as is James Joyce and Oscar Wilde. The introductory first-year lectures that describe the course requirements include a PowerPoint slide that has the word READ flashing multiple times. Students know that they are expected to spend 12 hours a week on their course: three contact hours, approximately three hours of preparation and six hours reading.

As the discipline librarian, I attend English lectures as often as I am able to, and I have yet to go to one where reading and the university library are not discussed. Is there a future for reading? Yes, if the passion of the readers I meet at work every day is anything to go by.

Jennifer Osborn
Research Librarian for English, Classics and German
University of Adelaide Library (Jan 2010)
jennifer.osborn@adelaide.edu.au
Currently reading Journeys to the interior by Nicholas Rothwell

What are YOU reading?

Jennie Bolitho, Beaumaris Branch Manager
Bayside Library Service, Melbourne.
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Currently reading The little stranger by Sarah Waters
Me, myself, and my e-book reader

Travelling on the bus one day, I noticed an elderly woman reading from a hand-held computer screen similar to an iPhone. As I discreetly peered over to see what she was doing, I saw in large font “Chapter 15” and realised to myself that, in fact, she was reading a book. Although the youth of today are so-called technologically-savvy, I had no idea what the device was. It was a librarian who explained to me that the device was an Amazon Kindle, a type of e-book reader. This made me question what is happening to the future of reading. Like televisions today, will reading be switched to digital? Would this mean the end of books?

The future of reading is not in doubt. Reading is needed in all aspects of life, whether it is choosing our favourite meal off a menu or understanding the instructions to operate a new camera. Yet the mediums used for reading have changed and will change over the years as new devices are brought onto the market. E-book readers became increasingly popular in 2009. But according to the Gartner Hype Cycle, e-book readers also reached their peak of inflated expectations last year. In other words, the media created hype and great anticipation around the product even though much of the technology is pointless. Undeniably e-book readers have plenty of benefits. They are relatively inexpensive, are portable, and can access many e-books on one reader. An e-book reader would save my back as I lug my textbooks to and from university. However, as quickly as new devices are available just as quickly they become redundant. Why have an e-book reader, iPhone, mp3 player, and computer when they can all be combined into one Apple iPad, the most recent toy on the market?

It is creation of countless superfluous devices that has sustained the survival of the book. Just as the hype cycle explains, once a new gadget appears on the market, people become excited. But after a while people realise that this gadget barely improves or enhances their current lifestyle. So they return to something safe, genuine, and tangible. In the case of reading, that device is the book. Books will still be there when the computer crashes or when the e-book reader screen scratches. Accessing information from books is quick and unproblematic. As a current university student, I have come to appreciate books more. Reading a book is less eye-sore than a glaring computer screen. Moreover, books add a personal dimension which e-book readers and other technologies do not provide.

Picture yourself sitting under a shady tree, sipping on fine wine and munching on brie and biscuits. You are reading Jane Austen’s classic, Pride and Prejudice. Smelling the musky pages of your book could take you back to the lawns of Pemberley. This ambient situation just would not have the same feel if you were reading from an ebook. I am sure you would agree that the future of reading and books is safe, for now at least.
It still helps to have an experienced partner

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into his somewhat distorted Orwellian construct of a world. From the Prefects on, high, to the Grey labour force, everyone knows their position in life, and all work towards moving up the social ladder. We experience the growing affection of Eddie for Jane, a lowly Grey, and her continued questioning of his beliefs, and, following their narrow escape from a colour mining survey to High Saffron, we experience his awakening, and understanding of the world as it really operates.

The road to High Saffron is a good read. It contains all the quirky eccentricity of previous Fforde novels, with his usual collection of puns, allusions, and chortles for the reader’s pleasure. Unfortunately I found it a bit underdone. The story meanders for the first half, and becomes predictable in the second. Eddie is a little too thick and juvenile for the role he plays, and so many strings are left untied that the book lacks closure – which I found unsatisfying.

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Where’s the gold?
Pamela Allen
Puffin Books, 2010
ISBN: 780143501473
RRP: $14.95

In true form, Pamela Allen delivers another treat for the very young in this paperback edition of Where’s the Gold. It is a tale of three not so brave and bold pirates, Jeremy, Bellamy, and Ted, along with their noisy parrot who are in search of golden treasure. The illustrations perfectly match the essence of the text and build the suspense for the pre-reader. As they make their way down, through, and up a tunnel, the facial expressions of Jeremy, Bellamy, and Ted say it all. The repetition and rhyme is typical of Allen’s style and the moral of the tale speaks to adults and children alike.

‘Happiness is not getting what you want, but wanting what you have got.’

Diane Hollingsworth
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Three weeks to say goodbye
CJ Box
Corvus, 2009
ISBN: 9781848872929
RRP: $32.95

This thriller opens in a straightforward pedestrian manner, but steadily gains momentum. The McGuanes, parents of an adopted daughter, are given only 21 days to hand her over to a delinquent birth father and his authoritarian federal judge grandfather. The twists and turns of the flawed US legal system that allows a legally adopted child to be taken nine months after custody, and placed in the arms of an 18-year-old with gangland connections and murky ulterior motives, is matched by the extreme lengths that the McGuanes go to in order to save their daughter from an uncertain fate. Gang reprisals, beatings, murder, blackmail, and undertones of child abuse are par for the course as this novel gains pace and delivers a stunning conclusion. CJ Box’s story is all the more shocking for the normality of the adoptive parents who are pushed to the limit of their morality to do what they know is ultimately right for their family. The corruption within the US legal system is exposed within this fictional tale, but it’s all too believable in a state where the rich seem to get away with murder. A great rollicking read.

Naomi Doessell
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The Dig Tree: the story of Burke and Wills
Sarah Murgatroyd
Text Publishing Company, 2009
ISBN: 9781921520990
RRP: $26.95

Praise for Sarah Murgatroyd’s vivid account of Burke and Wills’ expedition across Australia: Sarah Murgatroyd writes with ease and humour. She writes in a style that both the age-old historians and the novice can relate to and be engaged with in the thrilling and sometimes sad recount of the two explorers’ journey.
Sarah Murgatroyd has brought to life Burke and Wills’ courage, sufferings, and foolishness in a detailed and readable way. She captures the essence and substance of the whole expedition, its environment, and the psyche of all the people involved. One can almost smell the earth and feel the hot winds on one’s face while reading the story.

With Sarah Murgatroyd’s entire recount of Burke and Wills’ inadequacies and incompetence, one is left to wonder whether it was sheer luck or sheer determination that enabled Burke and Wills to struggle through a harsh and inhospitable land.
Through Sarah Murgatroyd’s words, Burke and Wills have shown us a glimpse of how far human endurance and perseverance can go. They have demonstrated the human nature of decency and compassion up to the end.

An absolute page-turner!

Joanne Lane
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Shades of grey: #1 the road to High Saffron
Jasper Fforde
Hodder & Stoughton, 2010
ISBN: 9780340963043
RRP: $29.95

The road to High Saffron is the first of a trilogy titled Shades of grey by Jasper Fforde, author of the Thursday Next and the Nursery Crime series, set in Chromatica, a few hundred years after “Something That Happened”, where your ability to see a dominant colour determines your caste, your position, your future expectations, and, of course, your name. And so the pun begins.

Eddie Russell travels with his father Holden to East Carmine, a hamlet at the edge of the civilised world. Throughout the narrative, their every action is dictated by the Rules, the breaking of which leads to a trip on the Night Train to Emerald City and Rebooting. Fforde has inhabited East Carmine with an interesting assortment of characters, all of whom fit nicely

Leith Robinson
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Deeper than the dead

Tami Hoag
Orion, 2009
ISBN: 9780752891644
RRP: $32.99

1985. Four kids stumble on a murdered body.

Ambitious small town detective calls in FBI. FBI agent is a pioneer in fledgling art of criminal profiling. How do the local cops react to these new tangle ideas?

The eighties are the new olden days, grist for the thriller writer’s mill – how did we ever solve crime without DNA testing, profilers? In Tami Hoag’s latest thriller, the hunt for a serial killer starts out with an interesting premise, the emotional effect on the child of discovering a body. Mums, dads, and each child’s situation are presented through the eyes of Anne, the children’s school teacher. She helps the police with their enquiries, in particular the FBI agent, Vince.

There are multiple characters and story lines. This detracts from the tale and ultimately none of the characters are more than two dimensional. This coupled with too long a book, plus gratuitous violence and unrealistic scenarios spoil what could have been a better developed, terser tale.

I had no trouble early on figuring out ‘who did it’, and the other stories were also easily predictable.

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Earth to Hell: journey to Wudang

Kylie Chan
Harper/Voyager, 2010
ISBN: 9780732286866
RRP: $22.99

Kylie Chan’s Earth to Hell is the first book of journey to Wudang, sequel series to The Dark Heavens trilogy. Though it is set 8 years after the events of Dark Heavens, not much seems to have changed. Aside from passing references to their age, Chan’s characters might as well have been frozen in time for all the change and progress they’ve made.

Kylie Chan seems to have taken the old adage, ‘write what you know’, a bit too far. The main character, Emma Donohoe, bears a remarkably strong resemblance to her creator. Both were raised in Brisbane Queensland, and moved to China in their 20s where they met their future husbands. The main difference between them seems to be that Emma is amazingly good at martial arts and able to turn into a snake at will, whereas Kylie presumably cannot.

Earth to Hell is scattered with pop culture references, and not all of them current or relevant. These references amount to one character, usually Emma, saying “this reminds me of X” followed by another character saying, "yes, that’s why we call it the X-car”.

Despite its many and varied faults, I enjoyed reading Earth to Hell. Chan’s writing has an addictive quality that made it hard for me to put the book down.

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Making history: the SDA Victorian branch 1908/2008

Interviews by Jim Tennison, research by Barbara Niven
SDA Victorian Branch, 2009
ISBN: 9780646523477
RRP: $60.00

At the turn of the 19th Century shop assistants in Victoria worked a 65 hour week over six days for a pittance. Making history... details how the Shop, Distributive, and Allied Employees Association (SDA) improved the industrial landscape for retail workers over the last hundred years. Recurring issues are extensions to trading hours and eroding of workers rights.

With 220,000 members, the SDA is a moderate but effective union and the largest union in Australia today. It prides itself on leading the way in the fight for equal opportunity for women, underpinned by a social justice agenda. It was a leader in convincing governments, employers, and individuals to embrace universal superannuation.

The book is a centenary celebration of the SDA based on union records and interviews with key personnel from 1907 to the present day. The often unfair balance between employers and employees is explored from the points of view of the seven SDA secretaries from 1907 to 2008, and twelve union organisers responsible for direct member contact.

The text and photographs together with a select bibliography, sources, and index ensure the book is an accessible social and political history of the SDA and of Victoria, particularly Melbourne.

Sue McKenzie
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Lonely werewolf girl

Martin Millar
Piatkus, 2010
ISBN: 9780749942830
RRP: $19.99

As the title suggests, our protagonist is a teenaged werewolf called Kalix, who has been outlawed from her clan’s estate for assaulting the thane, her father, over love gone wrong. Living on the streets of London, she is slowly drinking herself to death and close to overdosing on laudanum when she finds herself entangled in a clan war. Other major characters include two humans caught up in Kalix’s life and Kalix’s siblings – a fashion designing sister, a cross-dressing brother, and another, more ambitious brother who wants Kalix dead for the attack on their father. Also featured are werewolf hunters, fairy queens, fire queens, and elemental princesses.

This very long book could have benefited from some serious editing. Not only were there some basic grammatical mistakes, but I found myself thinking that many characters, and even some chapters, could’ve been removed without really affecting the storyline. I initially hoped this book might be a useful ‘next read’ to Stephenie Meyer’s Twilight series, but the passion just wasn’t in it, and I suspect many Twilight fans would be left disappointed.

Every character is flawed, leaving me feeling like I didn’t really care what happened to any of them. I can see what Millar was aiming for, but unfortunately I feel he’s just missed his mark on this occasion. Although obviously targeted at the ‘teen girl’ market, I would recommend school librarians read this book first before considering it for their collection.

Kathryn Cass
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Sue McKenzie
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Call for **Expressions of Interest** for **Advisory Committees**

ALIA’s Board of Directors is calling for interested members to join Advisory Committees.

The committees are:

- ALIA Copyright and Intellectual Property Advisory Committee
- ALIA Government Publications Advisory Committee
- ALIA Interlibrary Lending Advisory Committee
- ALIA New Generation Advisory Committee
- ALIA Online Content and Regulation Advisory Committee
- ALIA Research Committee

For further information on the committees and guidelines go to: www.alia.org.au/governance/committees/

The term of appointment is for three years with the option of renewal for another three years. The nominations will be considered by the Board of Directors with appointments to commence from May 2010.

For further information on the working of any of ALIA’s Advisory Committees, please contact Sue Hutley, ALIA Executive Director sue.hutley@alia.org.au or 1800 02 0071.

A CV and a 100 word statement in support of your expression of interest is to be forwarded to ALIA Executive Support Officer, jenna.walter@alia.org.au by close of business, April 2 2010.

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A staff development secondment develops a staff member

Committed to my own professional development and professionally active, I couldn’t pass up the chance to work in the area of Staff Development of my library. I began my career at RMIT University in July 2007. Early in 2009, library staff were asked to express interest in working in Staff Development for one day a week for six months, to release our Staff Development Librarian for a special project. Although I enjoy my role as a Reference Officer, I was keen to take on a new challenge and broaden my skillset. Working in Staff Development was a very different environment from the reference desk!

My clients were my colleagues, spanning the library as a whole, with six sites and 170 staff. One of the best things about the role was building relationships with other staff, and learning more of the intricacies of the library structure, invaluable for someone relatively new to the organisation. The role required a different approach, and a different mindset, to my substantive job. There was a lot of planning and organisation involved in everything I did to ensure good outcomes. Although this could be frustrating and tedious at times, I have to admit I do enjoy a good spot of paperwork every now and then!

Staff Development gave me the chance to really show what I was capable of. I felt an enormous sense of satisfaction every Tuesday night as I left the building, knowing that I had done my best, and was being acknowledged and complimented for my work. I was fortunate that the Staff Development Librarian was very open to sharing with me what her job entailed, giving advice and criticism where needed, while also allowing me to explore things for myself. The three projects I was given particular responsibility for were: planning and implementing two induction mornings for new library staff, managing the development and provision of workshops for library staff on key web 2.0 technologies, and improving the Staff Development intranet pages.

The web 2.0 sessions took the most planning and effort. The library had created its own 23-things-style program, 21 Luneges, which all staff were encouraged to participate in during 2008. I was a ‘champion’ for the program at Bundoora campus. The take-up rate in that format was not particularly high. The Mini Luneges workshops were another way to raise awareness of web 2.0. It was crucial that these be run by staff, for staff, so it was one of my tasks to seek out interested, knowledgeable presenters to be involved. I also determined from the original feedback received that blogs, RSS feeds, social bookmarking, tagging, and social and professional networking were the most popular modules. There were four presenters, including myself, and each of us was responsible for one particular tool. I developed the basic structure each session followed, but content was up to the individual. These were required to fit into a maximum one hour timeslot, giving staff a basic understanding of the tool and why it is important or useful to know about, with an emphasis on the library context, and include time for practice, with set activities. Overall, reaction to the workshops was very positive, particularly because they were straightforward and allowed time for hands-on.

The induction mornings for new library staff were also a success. It was important that the Library Executive be involved, to give an understanding of the library structure and their roles within it. I also knew that participants would appreciate hearing a front-of-house staff member’s personal story of working at the library and what it was like for them being new. I ensured interaction between new and existing staff with a morning tea break, and a speed-dating game, where new staff had to start up a conversation with existing staff, by initially finding out about their role at the library, and also something other people may not know about them. After ten minutes, the new person had to move on to their next ‘date’. Anyone who thinks that library staff are quiet is wrong. Even the whistle was drowned out!

Working on the library Intranet pages using FrontPage was interesting, deleting and creating new content and seeing almost immediate results. Initially, it was thought that I may not have much time to make any substantial progress with this before my secondment ended, so it was an accomplishment that I did. I have since been made an editor for the Bundoora intranet pages.

I learned a lot during my secondment. I now have an understanding of how library administrative processes work, better project management skills, improved efficiency and effectiveness at work, improved written and verbal communication skills, and most of all, I can really apply my charm and powers of persuasion! About mid-way through the secondment, I came to really appreciate what both jobs gave me and recognised how essential it is to have variety in your work if you can. My reference work benefited: I gained that extra pinch of enthusiasm for it. I hope that further opportunities to work in other areas of the library continue to come my way. I would definitely encourage others to seek out short-term development opportunities within or outside their organisations. It’s worth it.

Daniel Giddens is a Library Officer in Information Services at RMIT University Library, based at the Bundoora campus. He combined this with Staff Development work between March–September 2009. He completed the Graduate Diploma in Information Management at RMIT in 2006. His professional interests include web 2.0 and its potential use in libraries, and information literacy. He is also a Committee member of the ALIA New Graduates Group in Victoria.

Daniel Giddens
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Energise>> Enthuse>> Inspire!
…gives a voice to the new generation of library and information professionals. If you have any suggestions or topics for this column, please contact the column co-ordinator Naomi Doessel, naomidoessel@gmail.com
What the Google Books Project mean for your library?
The smaller your library collection, the more you have to gain from access to the Google Books Library Project. Find out why major libraries like Harvard are allowing their collections to be scanned for the project and how you and your users can benefit from the project. Australian libraries will be able to access a world of material that was never possible before.

Google Books Library Project
This project is an effort by Google to scan and make searchable the collections of a number of major research libraries. The Google Books Library Project involves libraries, and it is in addition to the Google Books Partner Program, which involves publishers and authors. Together the two, the project and the program, comprise Google Book Search. The older works held by the major research libraries complement the newer works (that are often provided in sample only by publishers), The libraries project is a good source of out-of-print and orphan works whereas the publishers program mainly gives limited sample access to in-print material.

Why libraries are participating in the project:
• It is a safeguard against catastrophic loss of books occasioned by natural disasters such as earthquakes;
• it allows users to identify books of interest with a precision and speed previously unimaginable;
• it makes our collections accessible worldwide;
• it once was the case that only those who could visit our library were able to 'visit' our books.

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To learn how to get the best out of searching Google Books look at video user stories at http://books.google.com/googlebooks/userstories.html, which shows how users have used it for blogs on dresses, medical research, and family history.
The future of reading

Well, you might say that everyone reads material from the internet (except people with vision impairment who ‘listen’ to it through screen readers), but what I’m really looking at here is the act of reading from the net instead of reading from a book or magazine.

(If you wanted to range more widely, you could also venture into some very interesting issues like how watching news video instead of reading news text is the way that we’re moving – and has been since TV entered our lives. But meaty subjects like those can wait for another day.)

It all depends on who you are, what you want to read, and what technology you have available. For me, I’m still not comfortable reading any more than a short article on a screen. Give me paper – a newspaper, a book, or a magazine – and I’m happy. A slab of text on a desktop or laptop screen is much less attractive. I know this is a personal preference and any particular change to my lifestyle or working habits (taking up a regular commute, for instance) would make me think seriously about my options.

As an example of the importance of content, I heard Mark Davis from the University of Melbourne Book Industry Study (http://newroom.melbourne.edu/news/n-233) being interviewed on ABC radio and he said they found that book sales are increasing despite the onrush of new technological solutions. He cited the example of cookbooks, which would work better in the kitchen than their electronic versions. (On the other hand, a tech guru has written that a wireless-enabled Tablet or Netbook could be attached to the fridge door to display recipes, shopping lists, and other useful information. I guess you could scan the kids’ pre-school drawings and add them to the screen wallpaper – the possibilities are endless.)

But other aspects of content really depend on availability. In my case, I read mostly non-fiction and I find that much of what I want is not available in electronic formats – that sort of material will be there some day, but not yet. And it’s even harder if your choice of reading is older material which isn’t quite worth digitising yet.

Even if you can find that sort of book in electronic form, the readability issue is quite obvious in the case of reference works and those with a mix of text and graphics; the sort where you’ll want to flip back and forwards through the pages. And the difference in usability is even more marked when you’re reading large format books with full-page illustrations or diagrams or maps. That’s when the limitations of a small-screen device become really obvious. Which is why the reading devices on offer won’t meet all the needs of all the population.

But it’s always poor practice to base important decisions on the current state of technology. The Apple iTab, released late in January is a good example. After plenty of speculation – some quite wide of the mark – we now know a lot more about it than before. There are the usual complaints about what’s not in this first version (eg a camera, no USB ports, no Flash support), but that doesn’t really detract from the product as a tablet device. It will develop further.

And it’s now clear that Apple will be getting content (books, articles, news) in a way that’s as revolutionary as iTunes was for the music industry. Imagine a simplified way of paying for just the snippets or chapters of a book instead of the whole work. Imagine also an online citation to a journal article that has a hot link to a service where you can buy the few pages of that citation immediately for a couple of dollars and have it downloaded to your tablet or laptop or your desktop computer. And then think of what this would mean to the services that libraries of all types are currently providing to their users.

And talking of paying for services, the dilemma for news publishers isn’t going away. The New York Times is the latest to join Mr Murdoch’s attempts to monetise (ugh!) their content, relying on a metering method that grants readers access to a certain number of free items each month and then requires them to pay after that. It’s a model that seems to be working well with the Financial Times so far, but the obvious advantage that newspapers like those have – their very desirable brand – is not one that others can readily count on. And that’s where the Apple revolution may have a big impact on the newspaper world, especially the smaller players, in the same way that iTunes has enabled small record labels to make more of a living.

Further on the NYT’s metering method, Stephen Bartholomeusz writing in the Business Spectator (one of the best free online papers around) has pointed out one benefit of that model: that it can be tweaked at will. If you want to attract new users or allow special deals for a period, just increase the number of free views for a while. You can always lower it later.

Reading has a future – in printed or electronic form. There’s a trend to do it more online, but paper isn’t going to fold any time soon.

Kerry Webb
kwebb@alia.net.org.au

Currently reading 1812: Napoleon’s Invasion of Russia by Paul Britten Austin

Don’t forget to visit my blog
NSW Parliamentary Library
Staff Reunion

A unique reunion luncheon for staff who had worked with Russell Cope (Parliamentary Librarian, 1962-1991) brought together a cross-section of staff from those years. A working party of present and former staff organised the contact of the dispersed staff and the reunion arrangements. The venue, Bill and Toni’s East Sydney restaurant, was festively decorated for the 35–40 people who attended the reunion in late November.

John Botherway and Andrew Cope flew up from Melbourne, Necia Agnew came from Canberra, Marlene Knowles and Lyn Miller came from the Central Coast, several came from the Blue Mountains.

The reunion stretched from noon to 6 pm, allowing plenty of scope for reminiscences to be exchanged and photos inspected. A number of working highlights and personalities of the past were recalled with hilarity. Only the news of the death of former Deputy Parliamentary Librarian, Richard Baker, brought a note of sadness.

Recalling happy times and events, participants mentioned the celebrations throughout 1990 to mark the Parliamentary Library’s sesquicentenary. As Australia’s oldest parliamentary library, it received wide notice at the time and even held the first Open Day in the Parliamentary Library’s history. The 1990 celebrations mark a highlight in the library’s annals. A second, earlier highpoint, but no less significant, was the move in 1980 to the spacious, elegant new library in the award-winning parliamentary building facing the Sydney Domain.

The reunion did not let sad developments dampen its spirits. The general consensus was one of gratitude for the good, stimulating times we enjoyed. An added pleasure was seeing old colleagues doing well in family and professional life. The camaraderie from those days was still much alive at the reunion.

Russell Cope
rcope@ozemail.com.au

Currently reading The Politics of Professionalism by Juris Dilevko

President Jan Richards and Directors invite members
to join them at 6:00pm, Tuesday 18 May 2010 for the

ALIA Annual General Meeting

Second notice of Annual General Meeting and call for motions

The 22nd Annual General Meeting of the Australian Library and Information Association
will be held on Tuesday 18 May 2010
Proposed location, ALIA House, Canberra (TBC)

Rules of Meeting

1. Motions for discussion at the AGM are to be forwarded in writing to the ALIA Executive Director, ALIA, PO Box 6335, Kingston ACT 2604 by Friday 5 March 2010. Motions should be signed by the movers either individually or on behalf of a division/group of the Association. All such motions received will be published in the AGM agenda notice in the March & April issue of inCite and on ALIA.net.
2. All motions to be put to the AGM must appear in this published agenda.
3. The only items that may be raised under general business are those of an informal nature, or those that are within the scope of the business already laid down. Motions of a substantial nature relating to items not covered in the notice of the meeting will not be allowed.
4. If any item of urgency arises which is not within the business of the meeting, the Chairperson has the power to accept it without notice or rule that notice must be given.
5. All motions additional to those on the printed agenda and in accordance with rule 4, and amendments, shall be in writing, signed by the movers (forms will be provided) and delivered to the Chair.
6. When addressing the Chair, the person desiring recognition will properly identify themselves, giving his or her name and affiliations. Only ALIA members may speak.
7. Debate shall be limited to three minutes for each speaker; no speaker may have the floor twice on the same question until all who wish to speak have spoken.
8. Proxies. To be valid, proxies must be in the form set out in the Constitution item 8.2 and be in the hands of the ALIA Executive Director, ALIA, PO Box 6335, Kingston ACT 2604, email address: enquiry@alia.org.au, by 6:00pm AEST on 17 May 2010. Proxy forms must not specify how the holder of the proxy is to vote on specific areas. A proxy must also be a member. A form is available from ALIA National Office or on ALIA.net at http://www.alia.org.au/governance/.
9. By general consent, if there be no objection, or by a two-thirds vote, any rule governing the debate may be suspended.
10. The Chair’s rulings on procedural matters may not be debated. The reference for rules and their interpretation by the Parliamentarian will be Joske’s The law and procedure at meetings in Australia, 10th ed, 2007. A Parliamentarian will be appointed to advise the Chair on procedures and to assist in determining the results of a poll of members present if necessary.

All members are invited to attend. RSVP Jenna Walter, ALIA National Office, ph 02 6215 8222; jenna.walter@alia.org.au
Mount Gambier celebrates new library

Even the rain was not going to miss the opening of Mount Gambier's new city library. Mayor Steve Perryman and Senator Dana Wortley introduced and officially opened the library and the community came back with a red hot response!

Approximately 7000 people came through the doors of the new library on Thursday 17th December 2009. There were 137 new memberships; 2382 borrowed items between 613 patrons; 1268 returned items; and 70 new wireless internet registrations. Thirty-five computer stations were used solidly between 12:00 and 8:00pm and the situation was exactly the same for the PlayStation 3s.

The Bookmark Cafe was by no means idle either; 420 customers and 350 coffees demonstrate that the vibe was well and truly enjoyed by all.

The library follows a clockwise circulation pattern, with the adult collections grouped centrally and announced by a clearly defined timber path. The active spaces, including cafe from which other functions radiate, are located along the perimeter east wall and accessible for extending trading hours. Back-of-house functions, which include the capture and preservation of Mount Gambier's cultural and documentary heritage, are clustered along the western and southern walls.

Patrons are consistently expressing their appreciation to staff for the Council's commitment to their vision of Mount Gambier as the most liveable city in Australia. The new library and the development of the Civic Precinct is proving to be a benchmark for the Council's commitment to their vision of Mount Gambier as the most liveable city in Australia. The new library and the development of the Civic Precinct is proving to be a benchmark for Mount Gambier's new city library. Mayor Steve Perryman and Senator Dana Wortley introduced and officially opened the library and the community came back with a red hot response!

Call for Expressions of Interest

Editor: The Australian Library Journal

The Editorial Board of The Australian Library Journal is seeking expressions of interest in the position of Editor from suitably qualified and experienced persons. The Journal is published quarterly and covers a wide range of professional interests in the sector. Published by the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), the Journal is now in its 55th year. It is the flagship publication of the Association and the Editor will be expected to be familiar with its evolution and with ALIA's objectives, programs, range of interests, and place in the LIS sector.

Experience in the professional field, in serial publications, and as an editor are important. Applicants should briefly address the selection criteria (indicating editorial experience) and supply the contact details for two referees.

A maximum of 400 words outlining their thoughts on possible editorial directions for ALJ and its relationship to ALIA's other publications would also be acceptable as part of the application.

Further information on the duties and responsibilities of the editor and the roles of the Editorial Board and the Association, and copies of the selection criteria, is available from Sue Hutley, Executive Director, ALIA, PO Box 6335, Kingston, ACT 2603, ph 02 6215 8215, sue.hutley@alia.org.au.

Closing date for expressions of interest is March 19 2010.

ACT Public Service Executive Award

In December 2009, Vanessa Little, Director of the ACT Library and Information Service, was presented with an ACT Public Service Award by ACT Chief Minister Jon Stanhope.

The Awards are the premier whole of service awards for ACT Public Service (ACTPS) Executives, and recognise high achievers in the ACTPS Executive community using the ACT Public Service Executive Capabilities as criteria. Nominees who are selected to receive the awards are judged to have demonstrated capabilities of outstanding ethical leadership.

Vanessa’s award is recognition of her work with the community, her staff, and other stakeholders, to raise awareness of the role public libraries play in lifelong learning and social inclusion, and to look for opportunities to collaborate and encourage partnerships that benefit the community.

Sarah Steed
Programs Manager, ACT Library & Information Service
sarah.steed@act.gov.au

Call for Expressions of Interest

Members, Editorial Board: The Australian Library Journal

ALIA is seeking expressions of interest for up to seven members of the Australian Library Journal Editorial Board from suitably qualified and experienced persons. The Journal is published quarterly and covers a wide range of professional interests in the sector. Published by the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), the Journal is now in its 55th year. It is the flagship publication of the Association and the Editorial Board will be expected to be familiar with its evolution and with ALIA's objectives, programs, range of interests, and place in the LIS sector.

Editorial Board members will maintain ALIA membership, and will be involved in the overall policy and development of the journal, including determining the broad character of particular journal issues, assisting in the peer review process, and contributing ideas, themes and possible authors. Communication is via email and meetings are via teleconference. Membership of the Editorial Board is on an honorary basis.

Interested people should email their expression of interest to Sue Hutley, ALIA Executive Director, sue.hutley@alia.org.au. For further information, contact Sue Hutley, ph 02 6215 8215.

Closing date for expressions of interest is March 19 2010.
ALIA welcomes members who joined the Association in November 2009 and congratulates our members who have upgraded their qualifications.

**New members**

**Member to Associate Member**
- Jeanette Day VIC
- Sissel Marie Vatne NOK
- Sudeshna Chakraborty AED
- Ying-Hsang Liu NSW
- Damaris Olea NSW
- Shing Lin Cecelia Lee SGD
- Shaira Gaytan Santoyo SA
- Meadhbh Murphy IEP
- Nataliya Samokhina QLD
- Julie Beer ACT
- Jo Anne Rey NSW
- Alexandra Drysdale SA
- Geraldine MacLean QLD

**Member to Library Technician**
- Sashi Reddy VIC
- Edith Fullalove VIC

**New Associate Member**
- Anne Le NSW
- Rima D’Arcy NSW
- Marli White NSW
- Teresa Suhocz VIC
- Kerry Gittins NSW
- Catherine Moffat NSW

**New Institutional Member**
- St Mark’s Anglican Community School WA

**New Library Technician**
- Frank Dirschler NSW
- Naomi Williams ACT
- Ann McCaul VIC

**New Member**
- Maura Best VIC
- Margaret Parker NSW
- Lisa Etherington WA
- Marisa Verno NSW
- George Phillips WA
- Judith Tent NSW
- Tracey McDonald NSW
- Barbara Mauro VIC
- Pat Fischer QLD
- Claire Farrow WA
- Amy Reynolds NSW
- Agnes Haider VIC
- James Whittle QLD
- Elizabeth Peters NSW
- Jennifer Surtees TAS
- Chantal Louys NSW
- David Wilkinson VIC
- Chris Ferguson NT
- Elizabeth Buzo NSW
- Glenn Gomes NSW
- Brooke Conboy VIC
- Kentia Boyle VIC
- Nicole Hilder VIC
- Margaret Barnes NSW

**Readmitting Associate Member**
- Jan Coe WA
- Heather Pearsall NSW
- Michael Smith NSW
- Linda Cohen NSW
- Patricia MIlne ACT

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**Events**

**ACT**
Check the events listing online at http://www.alia.org.au/events/act.htm for events.

**NSW**
**23 March:** Murder at the Metcalfe: a Readers Advisory Seminar for Crime and Mystery NSW Readers Advisory group annual seminar. State Library of NSW. http://crimera.eventbrite.com/

**31 March:** Library Folk in the Pub. Guest speaker: Dr Michael Olsson from UTS. 6pm in the Vine Bar, The Madison Hotel, Surry Hills. Gold Coin donation. Contact Katrina McAlpine, ph 0421 593 449, katrina.mcalpine@gmail.com.

**TAS**
Check the events listing online at http://www.alia.org.au/events/tas.htm for events.

**VIC**
**1 April:** 5 – 8 pm Edible Book Week Festival The Melbourne Athenaeum Library, 188 Collins St, Melbourne. 2 gold coins. Check http://www.flickr.com/photos/tags/books2eat/ for examples of what you can do. Contact : allison@melbourneathenaeum.org.au & let her know if you’ll be bringing an edible book.

**WA**
**25 March:** WA Library Technicians’ Students Invitation Evening. 5.30pm for 6pm. Great Southern Room, State Library, Perth Cultural Precinct. RSVP essential for catering. Free. Contact Judy Allan, ph 0892752306, pjallan@arach.net.au

**National Events & Campaigns**
**2 April:** International Children’s Book Day


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**Conferences**
**1–3 September:** 2010 ALIA Access 2010 Conference. Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre. Kamara Buchanan, ph 02 6215 8222, kamara.buchanan@alia.org.au

**PD opportunities**
**22 March:** Public Speaking with Confidence (Part 1) 10:00–10:45 am. Teleconference Course. Join Dr Irena Yashin Shaw for part 1 of 4 in her teleconference course specifically designed for librarians and library technicians to build public speaking skills. Full rates: $165.00 ALIA members, $220.00 non-members [GST incl]. Contact Judy Broker, ph 02 6215 8216, Judy.Broker@alia.org.au
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Our collaborative team join with the City of Mount Gambier in celebrating the opening of the new Library on December 17, 2009.