

# BOOKS

## LIBRARIANS

### LOVE



**N**othing says 'must read' quite like a librarian's stamp of approval. Wouldn't it be great if each month librarians across Australia could vote for their favourite newly published books and the website of Librarians' Choice released the top 10 picks for the month? HEATHER WELLARD reports.

It's an idea to connect readers with books, build great relationships with publishers, create audiences for authors and provide content for library promotions. Two ALIA Members have created a website, LibrariansChoice.org, where Australian book reviews will be aggregated, and the creators have approached NetGalley to give librarians access to advance digital galley reviews.

Colleagues for 15 years, librarians Melanie Mutch and Megan Tolnay are working together on this project. It's modelled on the US program LibraryReads (libraryreads.org); its goal is to help the adult audience discover great reads. Melanie and Megan saw the appeal of this American idea and are intending to roll it out in Australia. Their website is up and running and the momentum is building.

To access advance digital copies of manuscripts, the team from Librarians' Choice contacted NetGalley (s2.netgalley.com) and invited ALIA to participate by authenticating library staff. NetGalley offers advance reading copies to professional readers – librarians, reviewers, journalists, bloggers, booksellers and educators – who can join and use NetGalley at no cost. NetGalley's aim is to design programs and features that help professional readers be effective influencers and provide more information to publishers about how early reading ignites buzz and promotes sales. The aim is for ALIA Members – personal and institutional – to have a badge added to their NetGalley profile to facilitate access to

review copies, so ALIA Members can easily nominate any of their approved titles for Librarians' Choice right in their accounts.

While it's still early days, Librarians' Choice will aggregate the book reviews, and each month the 10 most popular new releases will be promoted. Reviews are invited from all Australian library staff for titles from any Australian publisher.

'This is an opportunity to show how professional and influential librarians are at understanding what their readers want and to turn readership advisory skills into materials that libraries can use,' Melanie said. 'Librarians understand that library users are also book buyers. Once they discover an author at the library, it often leads to book purchases of the catalogue and discovery of similar genres or themes.'

'Each month, we intend to provide a PDF via email that will feature a list of the top 10 reads recommended by librarians. We also aim to produce display materials that can be freely downloaded and printed for the library's promotional use. Helping this initiative is the landmark agreement between the Australian Publishers Association and ALIA to allow libraries to use book covers to promote books and authors without seeking permission each time.'

Melanie says it's an opportunity for public library staff to be part of a national program. 'Sometimes on the customer service desk in a library it can be hard to feel as if you're part of the bigger picture. But this is a great opportunity for staff picks to be contributed to an Australia-wide list.'

The program has another advantage, as it will help Australian librarians to stay informed about new releases and publishing trends. It will also showcase the important role public libraries play in building excitement for new books and authors, as well as creating lifelong readers. 