

Supporting literacy in Tasmania

Cathy Doe, senior manager (public library services), State Library of Tasmania

The State Library of Tasmania has an important role in providing support for the development of pre-school literacy, by providing children and parents with free access to a wide range of quality literary resources. The main strategies depend upon introducing children to literature — books, reading, stories, rhymes, word games and so on — from a very early age, and then maintaining a program of regular contact.

The State Library provides an excellent range of resources and a number of activities to encourage parents and children to use their local library. The three key areas being targeted are:

- improving and enhancing story-telling sessions;
- adding value to library resources by providing improved professional advice, reading lists and supporting materials for parents and carers; and
- expanding the program piloted at Burnie and Kingston Libraries.

Babies who read, succeed!

Kingston Library in partnership with Blackmans Bay Children's Services, developed an early literacy kit for parents and carers to use in the home with their child.

Babies who read, succeed encourages parents and carers to read to babies from the earliest opportunity by lending copies of a package of pre-selected children's books and supporting information about the value of reading to children.

Packs have been developed for three age groups: 0 to 1 years, 1 to 2 years and 2 to 3 years. Each pack contains five books appropriate to the particular age group, and an attractively presented 'Picture book list' of recommended titles that can be borrowed from State Library collections.

Following a very successful launch in May 2002, the Kingston Library trial of *Babies who read, succeed* has proven to be very popular. In 2003–04, all city libraries and five key branches were provided with Baby book packs and a number of packs were also made available for statewide reservation. The program has been publicised through all Tasmanian child-care centres and the response has been very positive with most libraries reporting an overwhelming demand.

The program is being assisted by Acer Computers who have provided \$15 000 over three years to help develop the resources and publicise the program. This

has allowed the program to be extended to all libraries statewide in 2004–05.

Also in 2004–05, the State Library has partnered with the Department of Health and Human Services to include a publication on nutrition education as a standard item in each of the Baby book packs.

Supporting family literacy

Current experience in Tasmanian schools, libraries and childcare services — through programs such as *Babies who read, succeed* — indicates that there is much to be gained by children and their parents from family involvement in literacy programs. Family literacy programs, however, have not been used explicitly as a tool for improving adult literacy within Tasmania.

The State Library is currently working in partnership with the Office of Post-Compulsory Education and Training (OPCET) to develop a pilot program for implementation in two libraries in low socio-economic areas, with a view to extending to other locations if the trial is successful. Hugh Fielding, senior project officer — adult literacy, is currently on secondment part-time from OPCET and will manage the pilot program. Hugh has extensive experience with the Institute of TAFE Adult Literacy program. The program is to be known as Literacy Education for Adults and Families (LEAF), and the objectives of the program include:

- enabling opportunities for parents/carers and children to learn and think about literacy practices in their everyday lives; and
- recognising and building on the literacy strengths of both parents/carers and children.

The program will develop from the needs and interests of all participants.

Burnie CLASP

Burnie Library is delivering a CLASP (Connecting Libraries and Schools Program) project to schools in the Burnie area. The program targets children in Kindergarten, Prep and Grade 1, with library staff delivering a reading and activity session in the classroom. The program forges a link between the class and the library and aims to encourage the students to further their literacy skills by visiting the library with their parents. The project has achieved a marked increase in junior library registrations and attendance, with an associated increase in attendance at regular storytime sessions.

Extension of storytime

A pilot program is being developed for Saturday morning story sessions at the

The cake was cut, the system was launched!

Librarians from all over south-east Queensland joined Bond University Library and Technology Services staff to celebrate the launch of the Aleph500 library management system recently. After an exciting, and sometimes unpredictable journey through the evaluation and implementation stages, it was time to celebrate and thank everyone who had helped out along the way.

Bond University Library director, Gulcin Cribb extended thanks to the many libraries that had assisted with site visits and valuable advice. Ms Cribb also commended Bond University's Technology Services team and the various Library teams for their commitment and dedication to the project.

Peta Hopkins, project manager for the implementation, outlined some of the challenges encountered during the implementation phase and talked about the significant developments anticipated in the coming months.

'One of the major benefits for the Bond community will be enhanced access to information as we maximise the potential for linking to full-text electronic resources,' said Ms Hopkins.

After the launch, visitors took a tour of the newly refurbished John and Alison Kearney Law Library and tested their searching techniques on Bond's new library catalogue.



Claudette Pope, Peta Hopkins and Gulcin Cribb cut the cake

Bridgewater Library. Discussions have been held with the Bridgewater/Gagebrook Urban Renewal Project on the possibility of attracting local volunteers to assist with this program.

In 2003–04 the volunteers storytime sessions were extended to a number of library branches where appropriate volunteers are available. Another forthcoming program is to support and promote one-off storytime sessions at library branches in isolated areas. These sessions are run by Young People's Services staff and Branch Support Team librarians.

Reader Development Program

The Reader Development initiative aims to raise the profile of reading for pleasure and recreation, and encourages library clients to expand their reading horizons.

In recent years, the State Library has been implementing ways to improve collection browsing for clients who are seeking a type of reading experience rather than a specific title. Strategies have aimed to:

- increase the availability of popular reading materials;

- more regularly refresh branch library collections; and
- heighten the visibility of new and existing publications.

Reader development calendar

Central to the Reader Development initiative is the Reader Development Calendar. At the end of each calendar year a list of themes is developed for the coming year. In 2004 there were six themes, with each one running for approximately two months. The themes chosen are deliberately broad, ensuring that all major service points have reasonable stocks of material suitable for display, and that displays can be readily replenished and maintained throughout the period. In addition to displays of library materials, each theme is supported by posters and bookmarks.

Work will continue on improving the range of reader advisory information available through the website, including and extension of the 'Good reads' and 'Readalike' listings, links to other relevant web resources, and possibly readers' comments or reviews.

Adult Literacy Taskforce

There is a need for improved co-ordination between the Australian federal and Tasmanian Governments in their efforts to raise adult literacy skill levels. Both Governments recognise the relationship between adult literacy and a wide range of social and economic indicators. Equally, both governments recognise that they have a responsibility to ensure that resources are not wasted and that better access to literacy support is provided to those in need, regardless of which tier of government funds and/or delivers what program. The Australian and Tasmanian Governments have established Australia's first joint government taskforce on adult literacy. The taskforce will develop and implement a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to co-ordinate current state and federal initiatives in adult literacy. This MOU will set out agreed areas for taskforce action, including new joint initiatives aimed at ensuring every adult Tasmanian has access to quality adult literacy support. The director (library and information services) is a member of the taskforce. ■



Travelling to Europe and looking for work?

We are the leading UK Recruitment Agency specialising in the Library, Information, Records and Knowledge Management Sector. We have temporary and contract vacancies in both the public and private sector.

Call the contract recruitment team on
+44 (0)20 7251 5522



tfpl

TFPL Recruitment 17-18 Britton Street, London EC1M 5TL, United Kingdom

tel: +44 (0)20 7251 5522 fax: +44 (0)20 7251 8318 email: recruitment@tfpl.com

www.tfpl.com