



info@aslaNSW

Newsletter of the Australian School Library Association New South Wales

Autumn 2011

Research

Professional Learning

Advocacy

From the Executive

Ken Brock

On behalf of the committee, welcome back and thank you for your ongoing constancy and support. As the decade begins, we are encouraged to reflect upon the challenges and opportunities ahead and to nurture the hope and optimism that will move us forward.

Your committee has a number of issues and projects to address in the coming year. We have the good news that Peter Garrett has 're-referred' the Inquiry and wait with anticipation and confidence to capitalise on its findings. Transforming the findings and recommendations into positive outcomes will require ongoing commitment and vigilance to address entrenched attitudes and misconceptions.

The new ASLA National constitution requires that ASLA (NSW) revisit its constitution to determine what adjustments may be needed to regulate our relationship. To expand our membership, with a focus on attracting new and aspiring members of our profession, we also hope to recruit dedicated members to serve on a Professional Learning sub-committee. Reaching out to regional NSW is another important goal and requires that closer relations be fostered with the various regional associations. Finally, and perhaps more importantly, a shared innovative vision is required for our association in order to advance our profession in NSW.

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Leading Perspective

Linda Gibson-Langford

I received an email over the holidays... it was amusing in a tongue-and-cheek way. It reached out to all who were born in the 1930s to 1970s: quite a range. Its message was to remind us to celebrate ourselves as survivors of a society that forgot to 'protect us'. An excerpt from this memory of childhood went like this:

... we survived being born to mothers who drank while they carried us & lived in houses made of asbestos. They took aspirin, ate blue cheese, raw egg products, loads of bacon ... We had no childproof lids on medicine bottles... we rode our bikes, we had no helmets or shoes, not to mention, the risks we took hitchhiking ... we would ride in cars with no seat belts or air bags. We drank water from the garden hose and NOT from a bottle...

WE WERE ALWAYS OUTSIDE PLAYING! ... And we were O.K. ... we built tree houses ... played in riverbeds with matchbox cars. We did not have Playstations, Nintendo Wii, X-boxes, no video games at all, no 999 channels on SKY, no video or dvd, no mobile phones, no personal computers, no Internet or Internet chat rooms, no Facebook.....WE HAD FRIENDS and we went outside and found them! RUGBY and CRICKET had tryouts and not everyone made the team. Those who didn't had to learn to deal with disappointment. ...getting into the team was based on MERIT. ... We had freedom, failure, success & responsibility. We had balance.

Whilst many of us will relate to the above wistful memory, it is as it is—a memory of growing up in so called simpler times. The challenge though is to not get melancholic for the good ol' days but to focus on balance in our lives. There wasn't a day during my summer break in snow-bound Canada where I didn't commune with my iPad through Skyping, playing Scrabble, reading e-books, checking in with CNN, organizing 'playdates' with my *Facebook* friends. But this was happening in balance with my walk in the woods or along the ice canyon, or skiing in the afternoons, or playing a very imaginative game of tooth fairy with my niece's kids.

Our experiences are largely controlled by who we are and what we value. We can despair about our e-culture or be healthily engaged in it. If we think smarter, we can still bring to our lives balance between the world of online and 'real things'. A Personal Learning Network (PLN), a strategy where help, support, knowledge creation and sharing are at our fingertips, could be a great start. You work on it when it suits you, giving more flexibility in your lifestyle, rather than less. You develop it according to your interests and needs, and you save time, a lot of time, searching and downloading. It actually helps you to find that balance between learning, networking and living.

This is the **Year of the Rabbit**. It is also the year of **Moving Forward**. Let's make this the **Year of Balance**, as well.

We thank the following contributors to this issue—

Ken Brock	Susan Cordell	Amy Foster	Jessica Francis	Linda Gibson-Langford
Di Laycock	Andrea Lovell	Lucinda Whitehurst & Brenda Snead		

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State Library Day

March 12

9.30am-3.30pm

Moving forward: Digital citizenship and redefining *classroom*

A special day of celebration, renewing friendships, and being part of a very special professional learning event.



Robyn Treyvaud



Invited 2010 TED speaker

Robyn Treyvaud is an educational leader and an online safety educator advising schools, communities, media, industry and government across Australia and the Asia Pacific region. A member of Symantec's International Advisory Council, she is the Director of Education and Global Initiatives for the iKeepSafe Coalition in the USA where she develops and promotes strategic policy and intervention plans uniquely tailored for partnering countries.

Robyn was a leading content contributor to the ACMA CyberSmart website.

Andrew Douch



2008 Innovator Teacher Recipient

Andrew is a Biology teacher and teacher leader in the use of emerging technologies. He also runs a VCE Biology podcast with an audience of 3000 students. Andrew has inspired and helped many teachers to use leading edge technologies in the classroom and create excitement in the learning environment. Andrew has won many awards including the Microsoft Worldwide Innovative Teacher of the Year for 2008, after winning the equivalent Victorian and Australian awards in 2007 & 2008. He is in demand as a keynote speaker both locally and overseas.

Download the **Registration Form** from

www.aslansw.org.au/learning

From the research



Dr. Cordell (scordell@uwa.edu) would be very interested in receiving your comments, questions and own stories of your library as safe haven.

Susan Cordell is a former teacher librarian who is currently Assistant Professor of Library Media in the Julia Tutwiler College of Education at the University of West Alabama in Livingston, Alabama.

Her doctorate investigated how teacher librarians perceived themselves as protector over intellectual freedom versus tendencies toward self-censoring their own library collections. All teacher librarians in her study regarded themselves as protectors of intellectual freedom and defenders against censorship, including self-censorship. However, almost all of participants described things they had done that were unquestionably acts of self-censorship: removing “controversial” books from library shelves, placing certain titles in restricted areas, or refusing to purchase them altogether. Interestingly, these teacher librarians did not recognize their actions as those of a self-censor. She wasn’t surprised. Being a teacher librarian herself, she knew too well the pressures, both stated and silent, to please all parents, teachers and administrators at all times.

She shares with us what did surprise her.

School libraries—into the marginalised zone

As a teacher librarian for twelve years, I was aware that my own library was a place where students who “had no place” in the school gravitated.

My most frequent visitors were not the athletes, nor the most popular, nor the most involved. Rather, they were the troublemakers, the quiet, shy “misfits,” the students who did not fit in anywhere else in the school. Many of these students were also among my most avid readers. We spent breaks, time before and after school, and as much class time as their teachers would tolerate in the library discussing favorite books and genres, popular video games and characters (of which I knew very little but determined that I would be a patient listener) and, rarely, what was going on in their classroom, the corridors, the lunchroom, the gym, the playground and other places where they were bullied, isolated or otherwise pushed to the periphery of their peer groups.

Which brings me back to my doctoral research!

I interviewed teacher librarians of students in middle to high schools (ages 9-18) all across Alabama, a southern state hemmed in by Georgia, Tennessee, Mississippi, Florida and the Gulf of Mexico. They represented tiny, rural community schools as well as those that were among the largest and most urban in the state. Their students represented a rich diversity of race, ethnicity, social and economic status, language, political persuasion, religion and sexual orientation. These teacher librarians shared many commonalities and represented some significant differences as well. However, during every single interview (which was conducted individually, not in a group setting), without my coaching, prompting or even asking, each teacher librarian mentioned the fact that her library was a “safe haven” or “refuge” or “safe place” for the students who were marginalized or “othered” by peers, faculty, the community at large, or all of the above.

As my interviews with the teacher librarians progressed, all of them observed that many

Comment from one teacher librarian in Cordell's study

“We're a small school, very sports-oriented, so normally these [marginalized students] are not your sports-oriented students. I find more boys than girls here... They do like to read. I even have one [outcast] boy that all he loves to do is read books online, so he'll just come in and sit at the computer and read online.”

of the students they would consider “others” were their **most avid readers** and most frequent visitors. This was particularly true in the smaller schools.

However, as my study continued, the same observations were mirrored in larger schools, and seemed to be students who did not fit into the “normal” population because of socioeconomic factors, grades and/or discipline.

Identified amongst the marginalised were those who abused drugs, with one exception. If those students were also on the popular list, they were not in the library with the other “misfits”. Interestingly, drug or alcohol abuse alone was not viewed as marginalising; it was combined with the position of the abuser in the social hierarchy.

The collective descriptions of the marginalised students comprised students who were: gay, lesbian or questioning; substance abusers; from abusive or neglectful homes; pregnant or teen parents; very shy or withdrawn; socially outcast; or “troublemakers”; economically disadvantaged

and/or culturally “backward”; overweight or “ugly”; mentally, emotionally or physically disabled; and bi- or multiracial. The “others” were commonly described as students who seem to need or desire the attention of teacher librarians.

All of the teacher librarians in this study shared a similar sentiment: *“The outcasts are usually our best patrons!”*

Heightened awareness

Although I completed my dissertation, my interest in and concern for the marginalized students who daily inhabited my library continued, even increased.

As a result, I have talked with colleagues throughout the southeastern United States, and found a mirroring of my unanticipated findings.

The *stories* I collected were testament to the fact that teacher librarians were acutely aware of the needs of the children who enter the library doors each day. They provided the books these students requested—most commonly science fiction/fantasy, adventure, anime, manga, graphic novels, and the classics.

Although the participants in my study were glad to stock more innocuous titles that their “other” students desired, not all of them were willing, because of their tendency toward self-censorship, to purchase the titles they believed would benefit the students—books on eating disorders, parental abuse and neglect, substance abuse, rape and sexual abuse, just to name a few.

The teacher librarians' compassion was evident, but they appeared unable to cross the barriers—erected either by them or externally—that would allow purchase of potentially controversial books that could help their students but might become too problematic for themselves.

While giving credit to those teacher librarians for their apparent concern toward the “others” in their midst, Kincheloe (2007, p. 9) would argue that they are not doing enough. She notes that,

simply caring about students, while necessary, does not constitute a critical pedagogy. The power

Questions to think about

Is your school library a safe haven?

Do you routinely serve the types of marginalized students described in Cordell's study?

How do you serve them?

What "special" things do you do to make them feel welcome, safe and important ?

dimension must be brought to bear in a way that discerns and acts on correcting the ways particular students get hurt in the everyday life of schools.

If "the outcasts are usually our best patrons," then it is our responsibility to provide a socially just and equitable space for them, a safe haven, if you will.

Teacher librarians' commitment to the protection of intellectual freedom requires that they provide for the needs of *all* the school's students, and perhaps there is a greater responsibility toward those students who are marginalized than those who swim easily in the mainstream.

Catering for the "others"

In what ways can teacher librarians cater to the "others" ?

The teacher librarians expressed their concern, and perhaps compassion, by talking to their students about books, buying titles they knew the "others" would enjoy reading, and allowing them to share library space without

judgment or dismissal.

Colleagues mentioned using activities such as book discussion groups, gaming tournaments, and poetry slams as well as various aspects of the performing arts to pull these students into the mainstream. Still others share the controversial titles with their students, ones that may never be checked out but found constantly out of place on the library shelves or occasionally stolen.

Lynn Evarts (2006), a respected teacher librarian and author, argues:

The library and the librarian are ideally poised to help these young people because the library is not a structured classroom environment; there are no grades or assessments, and the librarian does not carry the stigma that a counselor sometimes holds for students. The library can simply provide a safe space and resources for those students who are self-isolated. Because the librarian can be very proactive about harassment, peer-isolated

students can feel safe as well.

Evarts provides caveats, such as:

- take care of yourself; realize that you cannot change the entire world.
- form alliances with the school's guidance counselors, administrators and teachers.

The school library appears to be the last bastion of safety for those students who exist on the school community periphery, whether by choice or imposition.

If this be the case, teacher librarians are uniquely positioned to effect change in the lives of students who need us most.

References

- Evarts, L. (2006, December). The school library as sanctuary. Accessed January 16, 2010, at www.voya.com.
- Kincheloe, J. (2007). *Critical pedagogy*. New York. Peter Lang.

John Hirst Award 2011

Mrs Kerry Gestier

The **John Hirst Award** recognises outstanding service to school libraries in NSW—**Kerry Gestier** is a deserving recipient.



For colleagues in the Riverina, and past students of CSU's teacher librarian courses, Kerry is well-known for her compassion, enthusiasm, and professionalism in advocating the special role of teacher librarians in New South Wales.

Majoring in teacher librarianship (1977), Kerry has never faltered in her passion for promoting the school library as a centre for learning. She has worked across all sectors and year levels, and now, in her role as Education Officer with the Catholic Schools Office in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga, she continues to advocate for school libraries, both locally and nationally.

Kerry's commitment to teacher librarianship and to ASLA (NSW) has been long standing and has included membership of the state committee, including program convenor for the 2004 State Conference, regional RivPat committee, the HUB, as well as an active lobbyist in pursue of trained teacher librarians in every school. She is an excellent conference presenter, promoting teacher librarianship a range of topics.

It is with pride that ASLA (NSW) recognises Kerry's sustained commitment to school libraries and teacher librarians. **Congratulations, Kerry.**

Strategies, compiled by Cordell, from her participants and colleagues

- Buy titles that will draw these students in. If, for example, you have a student who struggles with self-mutilation, try to draw her to the library with books that address cutting.
- Let other teachers know that your library is a safe haven so that they can subtly encourage students to visit.
- Show interest in your students by responding to what they are reading individually and recommending related topics or titles that they might enjoy.
- Set aside books that these students might be interested in, and let them know what you are doing.
- If feasible, consider letting these students eat their lunch in the library, since the playground is a "hot spot" for bullying or ostracism.
- Display books you want certain students to peruse in areas of the library that they frequent. Even though a young 'teen may feel uncomfortable checking out a book on eating disorders, she may sit and read it in her "safe haven."

John H Lee Memorial Award

Joint winners 2011

Ms Sharon McGuinness & Ms Jane Pretty



As teacher librarians in neighbouring schools, **Jane Pretty** (Waniora PS) and **Sharon McGuinness** (Thirroul PS) share a passionate interest in writing and for some time had discussed the need for a project that would engage their students in creative writing that could lead to igniting their students' own interest, both within and beyond the classroom.

The installation of the DET '*Connected Classrooms*' saw Jane and Sharon utilising **video conferencing** and **Brigit software** (sharing the IWB) between both schools to conduct three workshops with local author Sandy Fussell. Both teacher librarians felt that by developing this writing project, it may act as an example to others within the school and also the other teacher librarians within ISLA (Illawarra School Libraries Association), of which both teacher librarians are committee members. Little did they know that their project would attract a grant from the National Literacy and Numeracy Week as well as secure an invite to present their project at the 2010 *Future Directions in Literacy Conference* held at Sydney University.

In the true spirit of John H Lee, Sharon and Jane are recognised for their initiative in using ICT in learning and teaching and sharing their ideas further afield. They are to be congratulated as the recipients of the John H Lee Memorial Award.

ASLA (NSW) Teacher Librarian of the Year

Cranbrook School values excellence in teaching and learning. No more is this so clearly demonstrated than in the acclaim Cranbrook community holds for their **Head of Library, Susan Glasson**. Headmaster, **Jeremy Madin**, is proud to acknowledge the initiative, expertise, leadership and professionalism that he sees in Susan. She is warmly appreciated and highly valued by the teaching team, as well as fondly regarded by her students. As Mr Madin notes, '*Susan is an active member of the Curriculum Review Group, IT in the Curriculum Working Party, and Frameworks of Learning Planning Group. She has been one of the prime motivators for thoughtfully considered change and for thorough and successful implementation. In particular, Susan has championed three other innovatory pedagogies: questioning techniques in researching and learning; methods of expanding student access to peer-referenced research tools; and intelligent usage of Smartboard technology. She makes it plain to students and teachers that information is not knowledge, and knowledge is not necessarily wisdom. She pushes us all to the wisdom end of the spectrum: asking the right questions, using sound enquiry tools, communicating clearly and debating with respect for evidence and logic.*'



Is it little wonder that her colleagues endorse Susan as an exceptional teacher librarian. Susan becomes ASLA (NSW)'s nomination to the ASLA National's Teacher Librarian of the Year. **Our heartiest congratulations, Susie.**

ASLA (NSW) AGM Report

*Ken Brock submits this report tabled at the
AGM of the 30th October 2010 .*

It is with satisfaction that the committee of the Australian School Library Association (NSW) Inc. presents an annual report which demonstrates that it has effectively dealt with the many challenges presented during a very busy year. Long time committee members and office bearers of the state and territory associations cannot recall a year busier than 2010. Negotiations to achieve consensus on a new national constitution for ASLA and the Federal Inquiry into school libraries have placed very real additional demands on this committee. A committee comprised of volunteers can only achieve so much in a given period. This is especially so for a committee who are also employed full time in school libraries. It has been said that those who can, do; whilst those who can do more, volunteer. Volunteers make sacrifices for the benefit of others. Hence this and previous committees are to be thanked for their efforts to further our aims.

Governance

All incorporated associations in NSW are obliged to meet the regulatory requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Act 2009*. This legislation provides the framework for the governance of incorporated associations. The act requires associations to lodge with the *Registry of Co-operatives and Associations* an Annual Statement (Form 12) and accompanying financial statements presented to members at the AGM. Today we have signed the Form 12 and a copy of the audit reports to be submitted to the Registry. Much effort had to be expended earlier this year to comply with a request from the Registry to submit Annual Statements for a number of previous years.

Succession

The new legislation recognises the need for the **orderly transition of association business** when there is a change of personnel on the committee. Consequently office bearers are now required to **hand over all documents of the association within 14 days of relinquishing office**. The committee has recognised this need and has endeavoured to keep all documentation up to date. Furthermore, to avoid the loss of corporate knowledge, efforts have been made to document the core functions of the association to enable seamless succession. Tribute must be paid to Andrea Lovell, association treasurer and to Bill Sommerville, whose long association with ASLA (NSW) has been of invaluable assistance in piecing together the past to aid present administration.

Awards

The awards subcommittee [thank you Anni Tokatlian & Ailsa Holmes-Walker] managed all aspects of the award process. Hence we have nominations in for all three major awards for 2011. Apart from the three traditional awards, there are other awards that ASLA (NSW) can nominate individuals for. These include various awards granted via the Professional Teachers' Council (NSW). This year ASLA (NSW) successfully nominated a member of the press for the PTC NSW Media Award—journalist Marilyn Parker.

ALoud

Once again ASLA (NSW) had a successful application from CBCA (NSW Branch) to partly fund, through the ALoud program, *The Broken Hill Children's Literacy Festival*. We are confident that this festival was enriching for the participants as the 2009 *Bourke Children's Literary Festival* that you were able to read about in the Spring edition of *info@aslaNSW*. Thanks to Peta Newsam for coordinating the ALoud Program Grants for the committee.

info@aslaNSW

Linda Gibson-Langford has been editor of the newsletter of ASLA (NSW) for some four years. In fact *info@aslaNSW* is her creation and it has become an intelligent voice for events, issues and ideas that enhance and inform those who work in our profession. When it arrives in the mail do we stop to think that those pages represent so much that is good about our profession? Each issue is the result of considerable effort by Linda to source copy. It is with pleasure that we express our appreciation to Linda for the consistent quality of this publication. It is also appropriate to express appreciation to Di Laycock for her quarterly column of informative snippets.

Professional Learning

The year began with an especially successful SLD themed *New literacies, new learning*. The Professional Learning Officer, Terry Bruce graciously stayed on past the end of her tenure in December to see this event through. With no PLO and the demands of the **Inquiry** along with **pressing management issues** we were unable to offer any professional learning in second term. However in September, Ailsa Holmes-Waker arranged for John Clear of the AIS to present a session of *Google and Beyond* at The King's School. One participant expressed how impressed she was with *Google and Beyond* but was disappointed at the poor attendance. Lower than usual registrations at PL events is a trend experienced by a number of professional teaching associations. In May, the committee was informed by the Institute that **participation data for courses undertaken since 2008 had not been forwarded**; this has now been done. It is important to note that the need to validate PL events for NSW Institute of Teachers (NSWIT) accreditation has significantly increased the preparatory work for PL organisers. This must be followed by accurate record keeping and submission of the data to the PTC as the NSWIT registered provider.

We are pleased to report that we were able to negotiate a discounted rate to attend *Power searching with the Pros* workshops in Canberra and Sydney in November. The planning for the 2011 SLD *Moving forward...Digital citizenship & redefining 'classroom'* is well under way, thanks to the work of Linda Gibson-Langford and Ailsa Holmes-Walker.

We have been unable to secure the services of a PLO, however, we are hopeful of announcing a replacement in the near future.

The Inquiry

Along with more than 300 organisations and individuals, ASLA (NSW) prepared a comprehensive submission for the Inquiry into School Libraries. A few committee members met during the Easter holidays and discussed issues that should be addressed and the president wrote the submission (<http://www.aslansw.org.au/links/>). This submission has also been tabled at a PTC NSW Board meeting. The president joined Karen Bonanno and June Wall of ASLA National at the first public hearing for the Inquiry. We look forward with anticipation to the resumption of the Inquiry and the publishing of its report.

Moving forward

We move forward with confidence to 2011. We thank you for your ongoing support and request that you encourage more TLs to join their professional association. Whilst those who do more may volunteer, the committee needs more members who are willing to volunteer by nominating for committee positions and providing assistance to the committee for it to serve the members better. For the long term survival of your professional association, we need to see a new generation of TLs joining and getting involved in the life and work of the association. There is so much talent and energy amongst the TLs of our state and ASLA (NSW) needs to tap into some of that talent.

ASLA (NSW) FINANCIAL REPORT

prepared by **Andrea Lovell**

Australian School Library Association [ASLA (NSW)] for the financial year 2009-2010 has functioned in a responsible financial manner.

The **handover of financial matters** has absorbed considerable time and attention for this committee.

This has included contacting the auditor to forward, to the committee, the ASLA (NSW) **audit reports for a number of years**, along with acquiring the paperwork related to the Association's financial matters to enable the establishment of sound fiscal management for ASLA (NSW).

Mr Kenneth Brock [President ASLA (NSW) during this period] initially took on the role of treasurer in the absence of an appointed treasurer. I was appointed as an interim treasurer by the committee on the 20th March.

My aim as interim treasurer has been the establishment of **transparent financial conditions**.

This has included the appointment of the **PTC Bookkeeping Service** to handle all payments and collation of financial statements. These statements have meant a treasurer's report has been available for each committee meeting. This has enhanced decision making pertaining to ASLA (NSW) finances.

The PTC Bookkeeper has empowered me as interim treasurer to have accurate up to date financial statements.

Any queries that have arisen I have been able to email through and to have a prompt response which has allowed action to be taken as needed.

My tasks have included constant liaising with the PTC Bookkeeper and K. Brock as our President. I have also prepared a treasurer's

role statement to assist future treasurers in the smooth and non-disruptive handover of financial responsibilities.

The committee voted to appoint T. Gibbs as the auditor instead of J.A. McCann as voted at the 2009 AGM.

This has enabled the presentation to the ASLA (NSW) members of the following audited report (see website for Financial Statements for the 2009-2010 financial year at <http://www.aslansw.org.au/members/>).

Note that there are two sets of figures: those to end of January 2010 prepared by J.A. McCann as part of the handover of financial information from the previous committee and a 5 month report prepared by T. Gibbs to the end of June 2010, which is representative of the committee's commitment to transparent financial statements.

(Refer to figures on audited report dated "for the year ended 30th June, 2010")

Thank you to the committee for entrusting me with the responsibility of being interim treasurer on behalf of ASLA (NSW) members.

It is my recommendation that with the finances of ASLA (NSW) now functioning efficiently, that we as a committee focus on the development of professional learning and other important activities to benefit ASLA (NSW) members.

Broken Hill

Children's Literary Festival 2010

Jessica Francis is the former coordinator for the Regional Children's Literary Festivals under the ALOUD program.

Broken Hill held its second CBCA NSW Children's Literary Festival (also known as ALOUD!) in October 2010. Special guests **Libby Gleeson, OAM** and **Oliver Phommavahn** ran 2 full day master classes in writing for both primary and secondary students. To the authors' delight, groups of motivated and enthusiastic children were hungry to gobble up every tasty morsel of writing advice our authors had to offer.

Supervising teachers for both the primary and secondary classes were amazed at how well the students responded to the authors' words and were glad to have picked up quite a few teaching tips themselves throughout the day. After pumping out pages and pages of descriptions, plots, characterisations, and those ever tricky twists in the tales, sounds of "it was great", "really funny" and "we didn't even have to do any work today" were testament that the ALOUD program was important to these outback kids.

Each day, parents came to hear the children read their work (to view photos and videos and to read extracts from the children's work click onto the CBCA NSW Facebook group).

As an extra bonus, all teachers in Broken Hill were invited to attend a very special Creative Writing Professional Development Session presented by Libby Gleeson, who is also a strong literacy advocate.

Browzer's Bookshop in Argent St. held a book signing for our authors and along with this special event, teachers, local authors, community members and passing illustrators (including **Craig Smith**, no less!) joined us at the Palace Hotel to gaze upon the magnificent murals adorning the walls and to share their thoughts with like-minded lovers of children's literature. There was plenty of time for

mingling, interspersed with entertaining speeches.

Oliver's funny and intelligent account of his journey to becoming a published author reminded us that we are all a bit "same, same, but different". Hearing Libby read from *Mahtab's Story* and, speaking of her inspiration for the telling, touched every heart. This was a truly spectacular evening and, just as for Bourke in 2009, it is really the community we must thank for making this a memorable evening.

It was a rare privilege to have two guest authors entertain the students and tourists during the Kindergarten literacy lesson at The Broken Hill School of The Air. I'm sure the children would not have minded missing their "sounds" that morning in exchange for hearing the lilting voice of Libby Gleeson calling "Coo-ee, Louis" over the airwaves, and being drawn into Freya Blackwood's magical illustrations. To be able to read such captivating texts is surely the reason phonics lessons exist. Grumpy also entertained the crowd, with the assistance of his faithful aide, Oliver. He showed us that a good story can also be very, very funny (and just a little bit naughty).

Students who attended the Writing Master Classes in October are eligible for free entry into our **Frustrated Writer's Mentorship Program** in 2011, and we encourage children's writers of all ages to enter this unique program. Keep watching the CBCA NSW website for updates.

We also encourage more schools and communities to follow the leads of Broken Hill, Bathurst and Armidale in applying for an ALOUD grant. This grant can be put towards staging a smaller, or an even more grand, version of the Bourke and Broken Hill CBCA NSW Children's Literary Festivals.

CBCA NSW is extremely appreciative of the continuing support of ASLA (NSW) and Arts NSW who make it possible for these world-class Australian wordsmiths to travel to economically, socially or geographically disadvantaged communities all across NSW.

Battle of the Books

St. Christopher's Lower School Richmond, Virginia

Lucinda Whitehurst & Brenda Snead

*I am team leader for an international action research team, convened by the **International Boys' Schools Coalition**. It's a great role, especially as I work with teacher librarians across the world and have had terrific chats about teacher librarianship from their perspective.*

*One of my team members is looking at how to enhance her annual **Boys and Books Competition** to engage her Year 5 boys—somewhere along the line their enthusiasm for Battle of the Books begins to wane. But that's a different story.*

I asked her and her colleague to share their version of Battle of the Books with our members.

Hopefully, you may be inspired to trial the idea.

Linda Gibson-Langford

members, who administer the program, assign the boys to mixed-grade teams with at least one faculty coach. Then the fun begins!

Teams, lately 14 teams with 10 - 12 boys each, are kept secret until the highly anticipated **BOB Kick Off** in late October when names are read aloud and colorful team t-shirts are distributed to participants. A light-hearted rivalry ensues as teams meet monthly through to February to discuss their books, to plot strategies, and to bond with one another. (The sense of community that is fostered by BOB was an unanticipated, yet significant, benefit).

Many of the boys share the view that "being on a team" or belonging to a group is the best thing about the program.

Battle of the Books (BOB) is a voluntary reading program open to boys in third, fourth, and fifth grade. It was started five years ago to build enthusiasm for reading through competition, and to interest boys in reading books they might not choose on their own. Incorporating a tournament structure, group meetings, and peer support, BOB has been a success with approximately 75 percent of students electing to participate year after year.

In October, the second month of our school year, boys are invited to sign up for BOB after watching an entertaining chapel talk, skit, or video commercial promoting it.

They are given informational brochures to take home and share with their parents. Once the signed forms are returned, two faculty



Through *Battle of the Books* they interact with peers of varying ages whom they might not otherwise encounter and they engage with faculty members in a new way. Teacher-coaches act primarily as mentors whose role is to encourage and support the boys rather than instruct them. Thus, a different kind of relationship is fostered.



The primary purpose of BOB remains to **promote reading**. Twenty books of varying genre and levels, among them some quality “sleeper” books that don’t often circulate due to cover design, are chosen each year. Boys are required to read at least three titles from the list, but most read more. A few read all twenty. Perhaps they are motivated by a sense of duty to their team; perhaps merely a natural competitiveness.

Every year boys comment that BOB causes them to “*read books they normally wouldn’t choose*,” however, not everyone who joins

BOB is an avid reader. Reluctant readers are targeted, too. When they sign up, boys are asked to **check the one category that best describes their interest in reading**: Love it, OK, or Yuck. Turning “yuck” responses into “love it” or even “ok” is what BOB strives to do.

Because initial response to the program exceeded expectations and the number of participants is always high, the actual competition is conducted over a two-day period. (A practice takes place in January). In the first round, teams rotate to three different classrooms, where they answer “*In what book...*” questions about the books they’ve read. Parent volunteers read the questions, and the boys have time to confer before the team captain writes the group’s response on a whiteboard. The four teams with the most points advance to the final round, held just prior to term break.

This event, the culmination of the five-month BOB program, is attended by all students and teachers in first through fifth grade, as well as many parents. Excitement is heightened by the format, which incorporates an element of speed as team captains ring buzzers to indicate when they are ready to answer a question on their team’s behalf. Correct answers are awarded a point, while incorrect responses result in a point deduction. Boys must be quick *and* accurate in order to triumph.

And triumph they do! Final scores are always close, with a mere point or two separating the winners from the three runner-up teams, and few questions answered incorrectly. This result indicates that boys are not only reading but also comprehending the texts. They are growing intellectually as well as emotionally. Many life lessons – sportsmanship, commitment, responsibility – are taught through *Battle of the Books*. Not everyone wins the competition, but all are rewarded by the experience. They just don’t *know* it yet. :)



RSS with Di Laycock

...snippets designed to entertain, inform and inspire.

RSSinfo@aslaNSW

As some of us tend to do in the holidays, I've spent the morning cleaning. But my cleaning hasn't involved dirt and dust, mops and dusters. I've been cleaning online. For me, 2011 is going to be the *Year of the PLN* (Personal Learning Network), and I've been cleaning up my online 'house' to ensure that my PLN runs efficiently and effectively.

To make my network run efficiently, I've revisited my *iGoogle* homepage to ensure that my RSS feeds are still relevant. I've also checked that my *iGoogle* gadgets are those that I use regularly. Sitting alongside my homepage is my *Yoonoo* sidebar that accesses my *Twitter* and *Facebook*, whilst my *Diigo* toolbar and favourite bookmarks adorn the top of the screen. So there it all is on the one screen... a one-stop shop where I can keep in touch with my online PLN. Further, whilst failing eyesight deters me from accessing my PLN through *iGoogle* on my iPad or iPhone, I have ensured that I have the apps to do so. My favourite iPad app for this purpose is *Flipboard*.

So now I can access my PLN efficiently, but how do I intend to use it effectively? Will almost-instant access 24/7 to so many people and so much information give me full-blown membership to what author Damon Young calls the *distracted society*; a society where we constantly seek an online *hit* to avoid confronting the human issues of pain, boredom and anxiety? In living our lives online are we also actually become lonelier, as MIT Professor Sherry Turkle suggests in her recent book *Alone but together*?

There's probably not a single one of us who isn't distracted when we go online. Is this a bad thing, however, to go exploring unknown paths that often reveal hidden treasures? Is our love affair with connectedness really

creating what Turkle describes as the "*perfect storm of confusion about what's important in our human connections*"? Not necessarily. Balance is the key, and balance is what I'm aiming for as I grow and maintain my PLN.

I'll be selective about the feeds I receive and the tweeters I follow. I'll be active in my own contributions to my network, so that when the time comes, my own calls for assistance won't fall on deaf screens. And I'll try as hard as I might to use good ol' willpower to step away from the screen every now and again to enjoy the company of the people and places that comprise my physical world.

Of course, if willpower fails to bring me balance, I guess I'll have to resort to outside help and participate in initiatives such as *Screen Free Week*, or follow a more drastic measure such as acquiring one of those programs that locks you out of the Internet for a designated time. Or maybe I could set the alarm clock to tell me when I can return to the screen for another "fix".

What I certainly will do is take on board the spiritual guidance of Jeff Utecht (*The Thinking Stick*) on maintaining a PLN in what could be an addendum to Max Ehrmann's *Desiderata*, Utecht poses:

Try and find that balance between learning and living. Understand that you cannot know it all, and begin to understand that you can rely on your network to learn and store knowledge for you. A sense of calm begins as you understand that you can learn when you need to learn and you do not need to know it all right now.

So my online house is clean, at least for now. How's yours?

What's on 2011

12 March



Moving forward: Digital citizenship
and redefining *classroom*

State Library, Sydney

See advertisement this issue

7 - 11 August

IASL Conference

Kingston, Jamaica

2 - 5 October

ASLA XXII Biennial Conference 2011

Saint Ignatius' College,
Sydney

Check the association's website (www.aslansw.org.au/learning) over the next few weeks for updates on professional learning 2011.

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