

## Shanachie tour Downunder

### *Make stories, tell stories, keep stories*

Once upon a time, shanachies travelled from one Irish community to another offering their storytelling skills in exchange for food and temporary shelter.

Erik Boekesteijn and Jaap van de Geer are modern day shanachies, two Dutchmen travelling around the world telling stories of libraries. They have visited big (the New York Public Library) and small (Picton, NSW) libraries and a lot in between. They are capturing on video and blogs what libraries are doing to ensure their future, and how they are engaging with their communities. They work at DOK, the library concept centre in Delft, where they are constantly pushing the boundaries of what a public library can be.

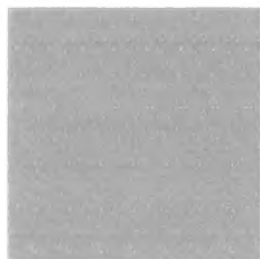
Building on the success of their library road trip across the USA in 2007, the Shanachies arrived in Perth in mid-November with their laptops, cameras, video recorders and sound equipment to record their journey across Australia. After presenting a workshop and exploring some of Perth, they flew to Brisbane where they picked up their *Lizard King*, a small version of the famous MotherShip that they drove across the US. They were mightily impressed with the new Brisbane Square library and presented to the staff at BCC and participated in an unconference at the State Library of Queensland. They then drove from Brisbane to Melbourne via Sydney on the Pacific and Princes Highways, conducting a workshop at the State Library of NSW, interviewing library staff and meeting and talking to Australian librarians. They were keynote speakers at the very wonderful ALIA New



*Erick and Jaap in Sydney*

Librarians Symposium in Melbourne and also featured at a workshop hosted by the State Library of Victoria.

Their presentations about their US tour were energising, insightful and fun. Miss Liberty, a human statue on New York harbour, opines that no one will need libraries because everyone has the internet. Paul Holdengraber tells how he is “oxygenating” the New York Public Library; he stages over 90 live events a year and each draws 1,000 people. Two librarians in the small town of Florence, Colorado enlisted the help of a 15 year old patron to download an open source Library Management System and then wrote a song about it. These and more of their American adventures can be found in their book and DVD – *Shanachie tour: a library road trip across America\**.



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They also talked about DOK, the library concept centre in Delft, one hour from Amsterdam, where they both work. The library is in the centre of town, in what was formerly a supermarket. The architecture is of the exposed concrete school, with bright primary colours throughout. There is a dominant staircase leading to the upstairs area where a coffee shop does great business next to the large AV area. The overwhelming feeling is of a bright, vibrant, happening space – and this is supported by a wide variety of programs and services.

The Director of Delft Library, Eppo van Nispen tot Sevenaer, was formerly the CEO of a television station in the Netherlands. Three years ago he decided he wanted to give something back to society, and recognised public institutions as very important and libraries as treasures. He has very strong ideas about what libraries can be – and he says that life is about having fun, but most libraries are about not having fun. The DOK theory is that “life is all about having more fun than you can think of, and it starts at the library.”

DOK is truly a library of the future. There is content everywhere – books, CDS, DVDS, magazines. There are screens and play stations and special sound chairs where you can listen to music. It is a fabulous library and a great story.

Wherever Erik and Jaap have been, they have inspired people with stories and their passion for libraries. The story of their Australian tour is on their website <http://www.shanachietour.com> and they hope to make a book and DVD about their adventures here too.

*So many brilliant ideas that can easily be put in place here. Sharing what you gained was very valuable and now we can all use the information with our Councils. Can we hire Erik and Jaap for a year to work with us? Inspiring stuff!* (Tania Paull, CEO, Central Highlands Regional Library)

*I really enjoyed their presentation at the State Library of NSW – It was great to see so much passion for public libraries (and plenty of humour).* (Roger Henshaw)

The Shanachie tour Downunder was sponsored by ALIA West, Brisbane City Council, State Library of Queensland, State Library of NSW, Roger Henshaw Consultancy Services, Viclink and Yarra Plenty Regional Library. The State Library of Victoria was a supporter.

\*The book is available from Yarra Plenty Regional Library for \$60 plus GST.

**Christine Mackenzie**  
CEO, Yarra Plenty Regional Library  
[cmackenzie@yprrl.vic.gov.au](mailto:cmackenzie@yprrl.vic.gov.au)

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