



The power of literacy is one of the central themes within *The kite runner*, for instance, where the narrator's desire to become a writer distinguishes him from his peers. The novel highlights how the written word can build a sense of social status for the individual in cultures like Afghanistan.

The Khaled Hosseini Foundation, accessible online, further raises awareness and support for various literacy initiatives as well as teacher training courses and creating libraries in Afghanistan.

The UN Millennium Development Goals of Afghanistan documented that Afghanistan has one of the lowest literacy levels in the world, between 9–18 % (UN, 2005).

The paper, entitled "Afghanistan and Multiculturalism in Khaled Hosseini's Novels: Study of Place and Diversity", is published by Emerald Group Publishing in volume 3 Issue 2 of *Multicultural Education & Technology Journal*.

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## Collection development in early childhood resources

The Australian Catholic University is a multi-campus institution comprising of six campus libraries, five of which house collections for the Faculty of Education. In 2007, a project was developed to start building the collection for the new Early Childhood Education program that was commencing in 2008.

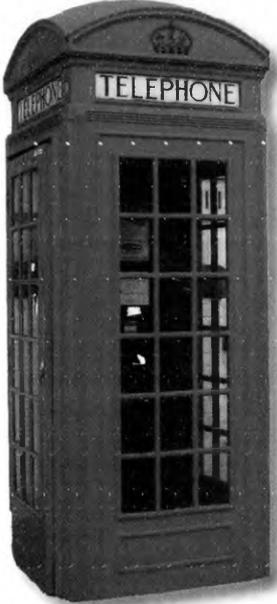
One key outcome of the project has been the establishment of important new partnerships with academic staff to facilitate collaborative collection development. Academic staff in Early Childhood contributed their expertise,

and suggestions according to what resources were required for the curriculum. This partnership ensured that the library had a relevant and well balanced collection and has raised faculty perception of liaison librarians. This, in turn, has established a solid foundation for future liaison work. The library's resources were promoted to students through displays and exhibits to assist in locating a variety of book and non-book items.

To assist us with our understanding of the kinds of resources used in early childhood, we visited Early Learning Centres in conjunction with the academic staff. We discovered a shift from a cognitive development to a socio-cultural approach to learning. Children interact and use each other's strengths and there is interdependence and cooperation as opposed to independence and competition. Children develop good social skills and learn what their strengths are, and are seen as capable individuals who can direct their learning experiences with the facilitation of the teacher. Knowledge gained from visiting the centres was then incorporated into the collection development of the library's resources. This included:

- **Concrete materials**  
The library explored the concept of including concrete materials, or realia, in the collection. The collection includes puppets, dolls, felt, and magnetic resources.
- **Community experiences**  
Children are exposed to their community and city as much as possible. They visit their parents' workplaces and become involved in the work environment. Prepping them with our resources in the collection on community helps is beneficial. Some experiences included visiting a bakery to handle food and sell bread to customers, providing real-world math; going to a café to order a babycino, to build social and numeracy skills; and plotting city sites to determine what constitutes a city.
- **Art**  
Children's development is not considered in compartmental stages. Our library acquired art books that use photography and the processes of art and modern philosophies of how a child learns art. Some of the work created at an early learning centre included the Harbour Bridge made of wire, a large canvas showing Sydney in Ken Done style, disposable camera photos (after they are taught how a camera works) documenting an event or something the children are studying, and heads of a pharaoh

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# TEACHER LIBRARIANS

and Anubis the god of the underworld from Ancient Egypt made of paper mache, then painted in glorious gold and black.

- **Popular culture**

Children studied superheroes and the effects that popular culture and the media has on our lives. Children record their experiences and if a child introduces a topic, they may talk about it, read a story related to it, create something, or study it in the garden.

The visits gave us practical knowledge on how children learn best through experiences and that there is more to literacy than reading and writing. Gaining this insight into the learning processes of young children, as well as working collaboratively with academic staff, provided the project team with a foundation and inspiration for acquiring material for the collection. Feedback from the students has been positive and the collection is highly used by both early childhood and primary education students.

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## Building literacy: synergies & partnerships

Public libraries have a significant role to play supporting families and educational institutions in building literacy. They offer an accessible building, are open at times customers want to use them, and have staff who can assist in navigating the maze of information available. Traditionally, public libraries have offered this service by providing access to a huge range of materials and resources to encourage both children and adults to develop their literacy skills and a love of reading.

However, in recent years, public libraries have also started offering specific programs designed to build literacy. This has been a key interest for Fairfield City Library Service where 67.3 % of the population speak a language other than English. This means that many families are unable to help their children with their homework and assignments. It also means that many adults in the community struggle with English language and literacy skills. In order to support the work done by the schools and the agencies working with adults, we have designed a suite of programs and resources including Family Literacy classes, Homework Centres, YourTutor online homework help, Babytime, Storytime with Dad, English Conversation Classes, and orientation tours and classes for ESL groups from schools and community agencies.

The programs all work due to the synergies and partnerships developed between the library and other agencies and businesses. These take some time to develop, but are a valuable asset to libraries which often have extremely tight resource allocations. Our partners have access to staffing, resources, and an audience that can complement what we, as a library service, bring to the project. The Family Literacy and YourTutor programs were initially funded through CDSE (Community Development Support Expenditure) in partnership with local clubs. As this is non-recurrent funding, Council then continued the funding. However, as these programs have grown and developed over the years the funding structure has needed to change accordingly.

One area of exceptional growth was the YourTutor service. The number of students wishing to access tutors in maths, science, English, and research outstripped the funding Council was able to contribute. The University of Western Sydney is now an enthusiastic partner in providing the YourTutor online homework service to an ever growing number of local students – over 2500 students from January to July 2009 alone. UWS' support has dollar matched Fairfield City Council's contribution and enabled

thousands of extra students to access this resource, thereby helping to build the literacy, numeracy, research, IT skills, and confidence of local students.

Storytime with Dad is run in partnership with Learning Links, The Smith Family, and UnitingCare Burnside. These agencies all have an interest in building children's literacy and language skills as well as encouraging fathers to be active participants in their child's development. The sessions are run once a quarter and only use male staff to role model good emergent literacy practices to the dads and granddads who attend with their children. The sessions are also multicultural and multilingual – stories and songs are in community languages as well as English to encourage dads to build their family language skills. This project shows the synergies that can come into play when libraries work with other local agencies to produce a program none could offer individually.

Recently there has been increased interest in adult and young adult customers looking to improve their language and literacy skills. Groups from ACL (Australian Centre for Languages), MTC Work Solutions, the Intensive English Unit at local high schools, Australian Citizenship classes from the local community centre, and Atlas (a service for young adults with disabilities) come to the library for tours and classes in specific areas of interest. The groups are given registration forms and library brochures, in community languages if needed, before their first visit. Filling in the registration form then becomes a class literacy exercise: addresses are checked by teachers against their class rolls and registration forms returned to the library. When the students come for their first session, they receive their library card and can start borrowing straight away.

The increasing number of these groups has encouraged us to start a new literacy collection (Beginner Readers) to fill gaps in our existing collections. Beginner Readers will be mainly aimed at children learning to read, but will also cater to young people and

## Library and Information Managers.

Applications are now open for the postgraduate programs in Library and Information Management or Business Information Management offered by UniSA.

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