

# REGIONAL AND RURAL LIBRARIES

virtual library offers customers a 24-hour library service which includes not only online databases but real time tutoring known as YourTutor and a downloadable audio book service, Overdrive.

Soon, the Heritage Services recently digitised oral histories will be added to the Overdrive Digital Library. The Geraldton-Greenough Library is the first public library in Western Australia to offer this service. The library also offers a free wi-fi service to its customers.

The Librarian Special Services has been running Better Beginnings, an early intervention family literacy programme since 2006. This program has provided every baby born in Geraldton-Greenough with a reading kit containing a quality board book.

Better Beginnings babies are invited to a presentation at the library and are also invited to a first birthday party and rhyme time sessions which encourage continued use of the library.

Heritage Services is a very busy area in the library. In addition to looking after the Local Studies Collection, Heritage Services also manages several special projects. These include: the Oral History program – with a focus on the digitisation of the existing Oral History Collection; a publishing program, the *Midwest Heritage Booklet series*, which to date has produced three titles in a series of eight; and the *Voiceprints of Geraldton Project*, a collaboration with the Perth International Arts Festival and Artistic Director Bill Bunbury, which was brought to a successful conclusion in February 2009.

Geraldton-Greenough Regional Library is one of eight Western Australian regional public libraries who have accepted an invitation from Libraries Australia to contribute records to their catalogue.

This year marked the twentieth anniversary of the Randolph Stow Young Writers Awards (RSYWA), which is run by the Geraldton

## Library and Information Managers.

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Mid West Regional Group of ALIA and supported by the library. The awards celebrate the life and work of Stow and his links with Geraldton, where he was born. Students from years four to twelve who reside in the Mid West Region are eligible to enter poetry and prose.

Friends of the Geraldton-Greenough Library (FOGGL) are always on hand to lend support and help promote the Library.

The library is also responsible for providing support, advice, and training to 27 libraries in the Mid West. The City Librarian visits these libraries on an annual basis. Distances covered are vast and involve many road trips. Regional visits open our eyes to the importance a library plays in the community, no matter how small. A regional meeting is held in Geraldton once a year, which provides a chance for library officers to exchange information, receive some training, and to meet our staff, as well as a representative from the State Library of Western Australia.

The library is now faced with a new challenge. Mid-2010 will see us relocating to the heart of the CBD into an old supermarket. Planning has been underway for the past year and renovations of the supermarket building are to commence in January. We look forward to providing the public with a new look and another service with the installation of RFID.

Life is never dull in our library world. I hope this article has provided readers with a taste of library life in Regional Western Australia.

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## Celebrating 20 years: A voice for NSW public libraries

The Country Public Libraries Association (CPLA) was formed 20 years ago in Parkes, on 21 June 1989, as a result of the ongoing failure of the NSW State Government to provide adequate funding for public libraries. The association is now called Public Libraries NSW – Country (PLC).

### History of the Association

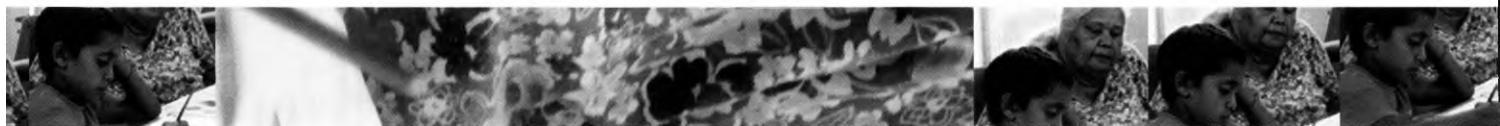
Throughout the 1970s and 1980s public libraries in NSW had been suffering the effects of declining funding and support by the State Government. Library buildings were neglected and inadequate, collections were in a poor state with little hope of improvement, and staff were becoming demoralised.

In 1989, a new drive to improve the situation of public libraries began to emerge. It was led by prominent local government councillors such as Phil Potter and Bob Osborne, and general managers such as Colin Mills and Brian Andrews.

The idea of forming a Country Public Libraries Association began to take hold. Colin Mills, then the Parkes Council General Manager, organised a meeting of all country public libraries in June 1989, to coincide with a visit to Parkes by Mr Peter Collins, then NSW Minister for the Arts. Letters were sent to the General Managers and Mayors of all NSW councils urging them to come to this important meeting.

When Minister Collins arrived at Parkes he got quite a shock. He was expecting a small gathering of library representatives and was greeted by 200 plus councillors, mayors, general managers, and staff all fired up about the issue of funding for country public libraries.

It was to be a potent mix of people at all levels of local government that set the course for future participation in the CPLA, and one that would make the emerging organisation a force to be reckoned with. It is possibly the only organisation in local government where councillors and staff work so effectively together.



Within three months, Minister Collins announced an additional \$3 million dollars for public libraries. This was an extraordinary achievement and represented the first funding increase for many years.

The increase in funding served as the catalyst for a renaissance in the provision of public library services in country NSW that has continued, with Councils taking a new pride in their library services. Many new purpose-built libraries have been constructed, the quality and range of collections has improved remarkably with many new formats introduced, and it has seen the widespread adoption of new technologies, including free access to the internet.

### Association milestones

Some of the key milestones in the 20 year history of the Association follow.

- The formation of zones across the state, with regular meetings of library staff has created a vibrant network to share and develop ideas for new and improved library services.
- The annual conference has been held every year since 1989, and is a key forum for the Association. Major issues confronting the members are discussed and resolved upon, and future directions set for the year ahead.
- Participation in the **Library Funding Review Committee** in the early 1990s led to a more equitable distribution of funding for country libraries.
- The establishment of **NSW.net services** was made possible through the strong country library networks of the CPLA, and led to the State Government providing recurrent annual funding for the service.
- The establishment of the **Colin Mills Scholarship** provides encouragement and incentive for professional development.
- The establishment of the **Marketing Awards** provide strong encouragement for libraries to develop their marketing and promotions skills and initiatives.
- The agreement with **Libraries Australia** provides strongly discounted access for country libraries to their services.
- The close co-operation with the **Metropolitan Libraries Association** has seen success with lobbying efforts .
- The change of name to **Public Libraries NSW-Country** and the recent establishment of a part-time Executive Officer position have moved toward dealing with the increased complexities of running the organisation, and greater member expectations.

### Lobbying campaigns

Lobbying and advocacy have been a core role for the Association in the past 20 years. In 2001, the CPLA joined forces with the Metropolitan Public Libraries Association and the Local Government and Shires Associations to strongly lobby the State Government. Representatives of these organisations met with the Premier Bob Carr, and the result was a strong increase in funding from \$19.9 million in 2001/02 to \$24.8 Million by 2005/06.

In November 2007, the Association organised the **Public Libraries Day of Action** to protest cuts to library funding in 2006/07 and 2007/08. Country libraries held a protest rally outside of Parliament House in Sydney, and libraries across the state organised a variety of protest activities.

In 2009 the State Government announced an additional \$9m in funding for country libraries, \$1 million in 2008/09, and increasing to an additional \$2 million from 2009/10.

### Conclusion

In June 2009 , country library delegates gathered once again in Parkes to celebrate 20 years of a remarkable organisation, and launched a special book on the history of the Association. But the task doesn't end there, and the Association is still hard at work charting the way forward to meet the challenges for the next 20 years.

(Copies of the History book for the NSW Country Libraries Association can be obtained by emailing [peter.conlon@qcc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:peter.conlon@qcc.nsw.gov.au) )

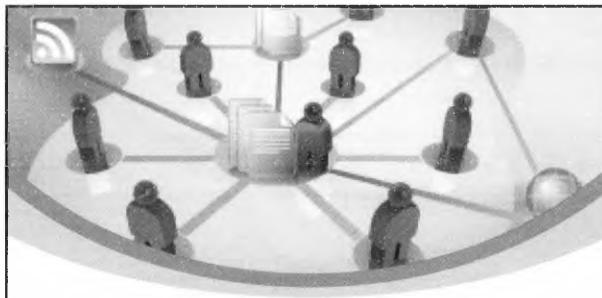
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## Is this the smallest operating public library in Australia?

Quambone is a small rural community about 60km to the west of Coonamble NSW and is part of the Coonamble Shire Council. The Quambone Village Library has been referred to as one of the smallest operating public libraries in NSW and Australia. It measures 3m by 3m. It has been established for about 30 years and is open for one hour, twice a week. The book stock of about 450 items includes adult fiction and non-fiction, junior fiction and picture books. It serves 90 people and does about 150 loans a year.



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