

Directline

On Reading – just so much a part of life

When Kate van der Veer, our *inCite* editor and Publishing Manager, said to me, “We’re doing this issue on the future of reading – so what are you reading?”, it got me to think about the variety of reading I have experienced over the past few weeks and how much reading has changed for us all as new formats come into our individual spheres. When people ask me if I am a librarian, I still say yes – but they then expect a good book recommendation. In my current role, there is a lot of professional and organisational reading – board papers, reports, letters, forms, documents, contracts, agreements, but little time for reading for pleasure.

What have you read this week? In the past few weeks, I have read a copy of a handwritten note on parchment from our early history for Library Lovers Day, an e-book on a computer and multiple tweet messages, children’s books for future NSS, and cookbooks for new recipes. Do you count audio books in ‘reading’? I know that many rural Australians use this as a great method to keep up with reading while clocking up the kilometres. What about when you ‘read’ a human book – as part of the Living Libraries program at your local library or university?

We’re also inundated with choice on how we choose what we read – does it get delivered in the post (Annual Reports, government reports, library newsletters) or via email or text messages? Is it loaned/borrowed from a friend’s home collection or passed down from a family member? How do you choose what book to read next? I find recreational reading choices at the bookstore and library sometimes a little challenging – how do I choose? For me, I make links to previous authors or themes (see my choices below) or I just go down the list of prize winners.

Professional reading also comes in a variety of forms – journal articles and abstracts, e-list messages, website information, electronic newsletters, or even handwritten scribbles on reports from colleagues. Professional reading can be found in newspaper and e-news articles (see ALIA and internet filtering in the news), presentations, and videos from conferences (see <http://www.vala.org.au> for a good example). Don’t forget, some professional reading also counts towards your PD points, and should be included in your PD record.

The ‘art’ of reading is different for everyone – but basic literacy is essential for a thriving economy. We know that Australia needs to improve in the literacy ‘stakes’ and as library professionals, it’s part of our role to contribute to this important part of national infrastructure. Articles in this edition outline many such programs throughout Australia.

Kevin Rudd talked about children’s literacy and reading in his blog post this month (http://www.pm.gov.au/PM_Connect/PMs_Blog/Childrens_Literacy) – and his guest editor Morris Gleitzman also commented about school libraries and their importance. Many Australians mentioned library programs on the blog, including State Library of WA’s Better Beginnings, NSW Premier’s Reading Challenge, storytimes, baby rhyme times, and ALIA’s Summer Reading Club.

I think one of the great things about working in libraries, and something we should all be thankful for, is the wide variety of reading we get exposed to – I can’t think of any other profession that gets to witness such a wide spread. So – enjoy your reading, in whatever form it takes.

The list of *some* of what I am reading for recreation: (yes, I start books and don’t finish them)

- *Innocent Traitor* – by Alison Weir. Borrowed from a friend while I was in Paris last year
- *Lunch in Paris* – by Elizabeth Bard. A new purchase, as I hope to be back in Paris this year to visit that same friend!

ALIA continues the internet filtering debate

Following a range of meetings and discussions, on 15 February 2010 ALIA released the joint statement of Core Principles for a Safer Internet – a partnership document between ALIA, Google, Yahoo!, and the Inspire Foundation. The statement, links, and media articles can be found at <http://www.alia.org.au/internetfiltering>. All members are encouraged to look through the documents linked from this page. ALIA joined many other organisations and groups debating and opposing the government’s proposed filtering plans. Our main viewpoint centres around the lack of effectiveness of the proposed URL blocking. It will not lead to a safer internet experience for children (which is the stated goal of the government). Along with representatives from Yahoo! and Google, I have been visiting Ministers and ministerial advisors at Parliament House to discuss our core principles and to update both government officials and opposition members on our concerns at the proposed mandatory ISP level filtering.

Our ongoing theme for 2010 is that every ALIA member is an advocate. Your support as a financial member assists with this advocacy work, and your voice assists as an advocate for our Association’s core values. Our 2008 Member Survey showed just how important advocacy is to us as a sector, and we are pleased and excited to be working towards better solutions on your behalf, and grateful for your continued support towards this and the other important issues that affect all of us.

For more comments and latest news on this advocacy issue, please revisit or RSS <http://www.alia.org.au/internetfiltering> and <http://www.alia.org.au/blog>

Sue Hutley
ALIA Executive Director
sue.hutley@alia.org.au



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Your local ALIA contact

LLOs are ALIA representatives in each state/territory. Their duties include being a point of contact for members and non-members.

ACT: Robyn Ellard
02 6215 8250
robyn.ellard@alia.org.au

NSW: Alyson Dalby
0404 655 319
alyson.dalby@alia.org.au

NT: Jayshree Mamtora
0416 366 634
jayshree.mamtora@alia.org.au

QLD: Claudia Davies
0407 964 967
claudia.davies@alia.org.au

SA: Jeannine Hooper
0437 167 050
jeannine.hooper@alia.org.au

TAS: Sally Murdoch
03 6228 7904
sally.murdoch@alia.org.au

VIC: Margie Anderson
03 9315 1090
margie.anderson@alia.org.au

WA: Carol Newton-Smith
08 9381 5674
carol.newton-smith@alia.org.au