

**FRIENDS OF  
LIBRARIES  
AUSTRALIA**

# NEWS UPDATE

**WINTER/SPRING**

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# 25<sup>TH</sup>

*Anniversary  
Edition*

*The national voice for 15 million Public Library Members*

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# FRIENDS OF LIBRARIES AUSTRALIA



## **FOLA NEWS UPDATE**

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# Founder's Message

## *Friends — a personal reflection*

DANIEL FERGUSON

The story of FOLA has also been the story of Friends groups. Individuals coming together in support of a goal and something they value.

The journey to our 25th celebration of FOLA commenced more than forty-one years ago, when I walked into the Menzies Library at the ANU and found an invitation to a talk sponsored by the 'Friends of the Menzies Library'. It was my first contact with what a 'Friends' group was all about.

Some years later, as President of the Library Promotion Committee of Victoria, I was convinced that Australia needed 'Friends' of Library groups. On a visit to the United States in 1990 and a meeting with Sandy Dolnick, Executive Director of Friends of Libraries USA (FOLUSA), I was given the challenge, go back to Australia and start a body like FOLUSA. After some years developing Friends groups in Victoria, and witnessing the development in South Australia, it was time to start a national body, similar to FOLUSA in Australia. And so, on the 9 December 1994, the Hon Justice Michael Kirby AC, CMG, launched FOLA at a function in Queen's Hall, State Library of Victoria.

Remarkable events have followed over the past 25 years. Friends of Library groups have developed in every corner of the Australian

community. Notable, the largest group at the National Library of Australia in Canberra. I have been privileged to travel to every corner of Australia to promote 'Friends' and invited to many countries around the world, UK, New Zealand, South Africa, Singapore, South Korea and Canada.

The impact has been as unique and varied as our country. However, the sustaining feature of all groups has been to develop and support better libraries for all. Something our past FOLA president, Dr Alan Bundy AM maintained was at the core of all we stand for.

FOLA as a national body only exists because Australians, library users, tax-payers and voters want and value a quality library service. Today more than ever, this is being acknowledged. However, to achieve a worlds-best practice, we as Friends must continue to challenge those who deliver this service to us and our communities. Being involved, is what Friends do best.

And finally, FOLA's foundation sponsor and supporter for twenty-five years, the Walshe Family and Bolinda. Thanks for the journey together. So much more still to achieve.

**Daniel Ferguson**  
**Executive Director & Founder**





# Leadership

## *A key element in the success of a Friends group*

Sustained leadership is a key element in the success of a Friends group. Groups that have an individual and a support team, usually achieves greater results for both the library and the community. Some clear examples have been: Stirling, Port Macquarie, Barossa, Altona, Balmain, Great Lakes and Kew.



Margaret Broeks being presented with Life Membership by FOIA President, Dr Alan Bundy AM at the University of Melbourne, 9 December 2009.



L-R: Dr Alan Bundy, Christl Markovic, Dr David Parker

*“Groups that have an individual and a support team, usually achieves greater results for both the library and the community.”*

### Eric Flynn

#### a Friend indeed

*A personal reflection by Daniel Ferguson*

Eric Flynn (1917-2002) founding member of the Friends of Kew Library in Victoria died in October 2002. Eric was also influential in the formation of FOIA and worked tirelessly for the success of the Friends movement in this country.

My first meeting with Eric was in 1984 at the Kew Library in Victoria during a Library Promotion Committee of Victoria seminar on Council engagements. From that moment we became Friends and Eric assisted and supported me personally over the next 18 years in pursuing my passion - the development of Friends of Libraries in Australia.

“Eric’s great personal strengths [were] wisdom, support and considered advice.”

One particular reason may have been his personal knowledge of and experience with Friends in the United States, as Eric’s daughter, a librarian was living in the US and Eric made frequent visits to that country over many years. As an engineer by profession, Eric had considerable skills in analysis and judgement on a given situation.

Eric assisted me in establishing the precursor to FOIA, with the establishment in 1987 of the LPCV Friends sub-committee, together with Mary Kellner, Julie Wychardina and Helen Hayes. Over the next five years the promotion of Friends in Victoria developed, conducting seminars and workshops for several years at Albert Park Library, providing a Resource File (edited by Eric in 1988, 1990), distributing publicity and supporting the development with a small LPCV grant to newly established groups. These were exciting times.

On my return from a visit to the USA in 1996, and meetings with various Friends groups and FOELISA in New York, Eric supported my intention to pursue a national body similar to FOELISA. And this was pursued over the next few years. This was one of Eric’s great personal strengths - wisdom, support and considered advice.

As a result of the advice of Kew, Eric will long be remembered for his contribution to Friends of Kew Library. As a founding member of FOELISA he worked tirelessly on behalf of Kew citizens. Along with Clive Rasmussen he initiated a “Save the Library” group in the mid 1980s when it appeared the library would remain in its original condition. Eric and Clive organised a petition which was signed by over 400 residents in only a few days. Eventually Council gave approval for the library to be relocated to the old Travers Hall building and later refurbishment resulted in the present excellent facility. From these beginnings, the Friends of Kew Library was formed, with Eric being the first President, and for some years he and Clive Rasmussen shared the position of President and Secretary.

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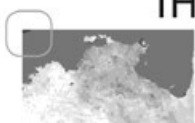
Judith Hansen, Deb Sommers with Daniel Ferguson, displaying some of the many FOIA awards

# Friends

## In the Community

As communities differ, so do the ways in which individual Friends groups go about the task of achieving success. Some examples are: Ballina, Barossa, Wingecaribee, Murray Bridge, Wagga Wagga.

### THE CAT IN THE HAT



Friends of Ipswich Library Service (FOILS) participated in the recent Ipswich Festival Street parade with members dressed as storybook characters to embrace the 'Ipswich-Celebrating the World of Children' theme. Photo: *The Cat in the Hat*, aka Marlene Whybird, in the parade. Photo courtesy of *Queensland Times*.



# Advocacy

## Working towards a Vision

Advocacy plays a key role for many Friends. Often a vision of achieving something, maintaining what they have, or improving services. Examples of some Friends groups are – Great Lakes, Port Macquarie, Castlemaine, Stirling, Echuca, Toowoomba.



Friends of Great Lakes Library Service: FOGLLS committee members in front of the new library (l to r) Sue Buls, Helen Blades, Cheryl Rodham, Helen Duggan and Helen Bryan

### HANDS OFF OUR LIBRARY!



Angry words: Marg Scott, secretary of the Friends of Alexandra Library, and other members stage their protest. Photo: Jason South, courtesy The Age Newspaper.

*"For some 20 years, Libby Kotschet (Chidrens Librarian) has been the driving force behind children and youth involvement in the Junior Friends."*

Residents in a small town in Victoria's north fear council cost cutting will hit at the heart of the community with three positions at the local library made redundant. (reported the Age newspaper on 18 September). Community members have remained united in their stance against last year's cut to library staff. A special meeting of the Friends of Alexandra Library discussed cuts which saw well respected library member and founder of the Junior Friends – Libby Kotschet, along with Annice Walse and Kylie Towers, dismissed from their roles.

For some 20 years, Libby Kotschet (Chidrens Librarian) has been the driving force behind children and youth involvement in the Junior Friends, the group she established. It has become a role model for younger activism within the Friends movement as a whole and has been well supported during this time by the adult members of the Friends of the Library group at Alexandra.

FOLA president, Dr Alan Bundy wrote to the Premier of Victoria, condemning the actions of Murrindindi Council, and pointing to the overwhelming benefits such a library service delivers to the rural community.

Murrindindi Shire Council mayor John Walsh, CEO Margaret Abbey and Cr Margaret Rae stated that council would be making "considered responses" to the motions passed by meetings held by the community.



*"Most of all, on behalf of all the Library staff, to the best Library friends group in the world, have a wonderful and safe Christmas"*  
– Chris Jones, Library Manager



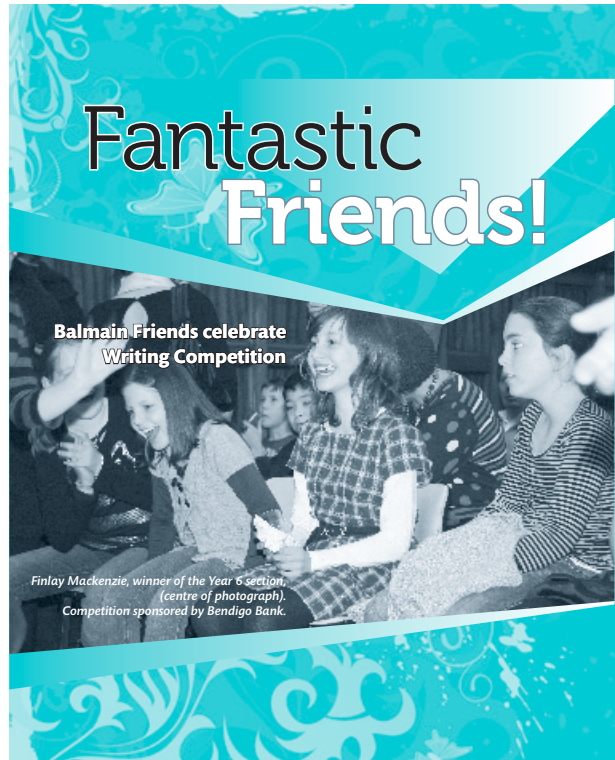
# Youth

## *Appreciating the Youth Market*

Key to the future growth of Friends, is to develop an interest and appreciation of our youth market.

A number of libraries have been very successful, namely Alexandra within Murrindindi Shire in Victoria, who have one of the oldest Junior Friends groups in the country, thanks to Libby Kotchet. At Balmain the Friends have developed key programs with youth in local schools to be involved in aspects of Library-Friends programming, with the support of local community sponsorship.

*“A number of libraries have been very successful, namely Alexandra within Murrindindi Shire in Victoria.”*



*“At Balmain the Friends have developed key programs with youth in local schools.”*



*Strengthening Friends Lessons from Balmain Friends (NSW)*

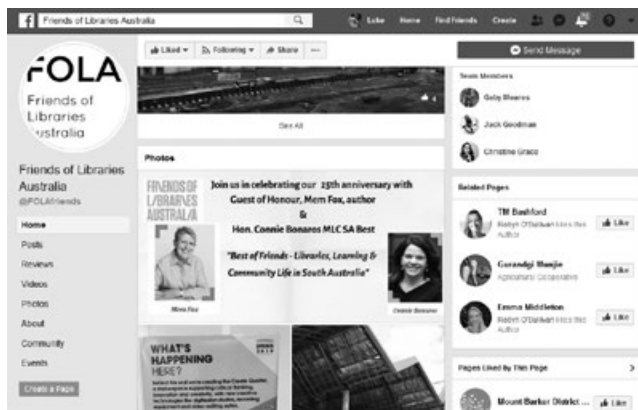


*MURRINDINDI JUNIOR FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY – Alexandra (Vic)*

# Future Opportunities

## *Building a Social Media Voice*

FOLA president, Jack Goodman has undertaken a specific interest in how FOLA and Friends groups can develop by building a social media voice. FOLA has updated its website, and this will be enhanced. Our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/FOLAFriends](http://www.facebook.com/FOLAFriends) is achieving encouraging results. Another project is Book Feasts – Engaging with Authors to support public libraries.



Taryn Bashford, founder of Book Feasts



Noosa Book Feast event

Facebook reaching your community

Friends of Castlemaine Library (Vic)



*“Book Feasts – Engaging with Authors to support public libraries.”*

*“FOLA has updated its website, and this will be enhanced.”*



# Building better libraries

*Friends groups can make the difference*

One of the most satisfying goals for a Friends group can be in seeing a new library building built. This can often come after many years of struggle and campaigning. Friends groups can often make the difference and some good examples are to be found at: Port Macquarie, Stirling, Toowoomba, Albury, Echuca.

*“after many years of struggle and campaigning. Friends groups can often make the difference.”*



**SUCCESSFUL FRIENDS**  
15TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF FOLA  
PORT MACQUARIE LIBRARY



*“One of the most satisfying goals for a Friends group can be in seeing a new library building built.”*



**THANKYOU FRIENDS  
A NEW LIBRARY FOR TOOWOOMBA**



Port Macquarie Library, NSW



Campbelltown Library, South Australia

# International connections

## *A Changing Landscape*



FOLA has been part of a worldwide body of Friends groups, connecting with one another over 25 years. In the early years, FOLUSA in America, FOCAL in Canada, Friends of the British Library in the UK, Friends of Dunedin

Public Library in NZ, the Library Associations in South Korea and South Africa. However today, the only national Friends body that remains is FOLA. Other bodies have amalgamated into new organisations, as in the USA.

*“FOLA has been part of a worldwide body of Friends groups.”*



*“Today, the only national Friends body that remains is FOLA.”*

# FOLA

## Keys to Success

# Library Advocacy

Following are ways you can support your library.

As a member of library staff, as a Friend, as a library user, every day is an opportunity to confirm and communicate how important your library is to the entire community.

“Define your project clearly and always seek the approval of your librarian. Divide your event into ‘chunks’ to make planning less formidable, who will do what: what committees are needed; you have to ask for participation and know what you’re going to do.”

“Benefits of membership may include such things as a newsletter, invitations to special events, shop early at the book sale. Some groups offer premiums, a calendar, a coffee mug, or a bookmark.”

The collage features several key documents from FOLA:

- Growing Friends in the next decade:** Discusses the use of technology and the importance of having a clear vision and goals.
- Moving into the Community:** Focuses on how library groups can become visible players in the life of the community.
- Incorporation:** Provides a detailed guide on the legal process of incorporating a library group, including public liability insurance and the role of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).
- Six Basics of Working with Volunteers:** A numbered list of essential skills for managing volunteers, such as recruitment, supervision, and evaluation.
- Friends and Library Management:** Explores the relationship between Friends and library staff, covering roles, responsibilities, and communication.
- Membership Drive:** Offers strategies for recruiting new members and retaining existing ones, emphasizing the importance of a clear value proposition.

Members of your group should participate in other community organisations and be aware of the necessity of being ambassadors for the library.



# FOIA

## Celebrating Successes

### CELEBRATING 20 YEARS FOR FOIA @ STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA



**Friends Make a Difference**

**Supporting our community**

**20 YEARS FRIENDS OF ALTONA LIBRARY**

Denise Ferguson (FOIA) C Leigh Hoadings (Berrimong) Basil Roberts (FOIA) Suzanne Gaddy (Library Manager) From left Tony Parker (FOIA) Lind Muller (FOIA) Margaret Brooks (FOIA & FOIA) Lindy Sutherland (Library staff) Elin Hough (FOIA)

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*Celebrating*  
**TEN YEARS**  
**10**  
 Friends of Libraries Australia  
 TEN YEARS  
 FRIENDS OF LIBRARIES AUSTRALIA  
 www.foia.org.au

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Friends of Libraries Australia Inc  
 Level 10, 1315  
 Telokorua Dr, CMC



Madeline Gass receiving award from Richard Ware, Balmain/Rozelle Community Bank



At The 15th Annual General Meeting Of FOLA at Port Macquarie Library. Above, L to R: Debbie Sommers, Judith Hansen, Dr Alan Bundy

**Friends of the State Library of South Australia celebrate 75 years**

STATE LIBRARY South Australia Friends



Director General Dr Marie-Louise Ayres cutting the National Library cake with former director-general Jan Fullerton AO

# Libraries build communities

## *Developing Social Capital*

### Dr Alan Bundy AM Past president of FOLA

In the last ten years there has been increasing research aimed at demonstrating how public libraries—the ‘new village green’ social researcher Hugh Mackay describes them—uniquely help build communities and that social capital which is so greatly needed in many parts of Australia. Much of this research has come from the UK, the US and Canada. There have been, however, some noteworthy examples from Australia. These include Eva Cox’s 2000 *A safe place to go: libraries and social capital* [http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/pls/publications/pdf/safe\\_place.pdf](http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/pls/publications/pdf/safe_place.pdf) and in 2004 Candy Hillenbrand’s MA thesis *Public libraries as developers of social capital* (University of South Australia), parts of which have been published in March and June 2005 issues of the journal *Australasian public libraries and information services*.

Adding to the evidence about the great value of public libraries — and to the need to fund them much better than the current 7c per Australian per day — are the outcomes of a two year Victorian study which is the first comprehensive Australian study looking at the value public libraries bring to their communities. *Libraries building communities* confirms that no other agency has such a wide role, a broad and diverse range of users, and actual and potential impact on the community and the quality of lives.

The study sought the views and ideas of almost 10,000 people via online and telephone surveys, focus groups and interviews and aimed to increase community awareness of the scope of public library services and show how public libraries can help achieve government policy goals. For library staff and Friends of Libraries groups it:

- presents clear new data on the contribution libraries make to their communities

- provides case studies that show how Victorian public libraries lead in innovation
- identifies groups that are not currently well served by their libraries, and offers solutions
- builds awareness of the critical social capital and community role of public libraries.

The findings of the study are presented in four reports, and are reviewed in an executive summary.

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#### Report one: Setting the scene

Covers the concept of community building, the Victorian government’s policy agenda, the Victorian public library network, project methodology, and relevant research.

*“Libraries building communities confirms that no other agency has such a wide role.”*

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#### Report two: Logging the benefits

Outlines community views on the role and benefits of public libraries.

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#### Report three: Bridging the gaps

Provides socioeconomic demographic profiles of library users and nonusers, as well as strategies for bridging the perceived gaps in public library service delivery.

*“A two year Victorian study which is the first comprehensive Australian study looking at the value public libraries bring to their communities.”*

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#### Report four: Showcasing the best

Gives over 30 examples of innovation and excellence in Victorian public libraries. *Libraries building communities* is an outstanding example of research which should be read and used for local advocacy by every Friends of Library group in Australia. You can download your copy free at [http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/about/information/publications/policies\\_report/plu\\_lbc.html](http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/about/information/publications/policies_report/plu_lbc.html).



Libraries building communities is a big report and it is really worth investing \$38.50 + \$7.00 p&h in Australia to buy a boxed set of the five individual parts from the State Library of Victoria's Online Shop (libraryshop@slv.vic.gov.au.) However check with your library as it may already have ordered its copy.

each, and review at your next meeting what information and evidence can be used for advocacy for improvements to your library service, or in publicity about your library's value to the community you represent. If you take up this suggestion your summary (up to 250 words) for the next FOLA Newsletter of what you gained from it would be most welcome.

*"ask four members of your FOL group to read through one of the reports each, and review at your next meeting what information and evidence can be used for advocacy for improvements to your library service."*

Here's a suggestion. When you have access to the four reports, ask four members of your FOL group to read through one of the reports

## FRIENDS OF ALTONA LIBRARY

40th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION FOR ALTONA LIBRARY



*Friends of Altona Library (Vic) presented the birthday cake for the 40th celebration of the first library building in Altona. The Friends group was established in 1987 and has been a driving force in library development in the area. The group was founded by Daniel Ferguson (Executive Director, FOLA) during his time as Library Manager.*

# Successful Friends

## *A Culture of Enhancement*

### **Daniel Ferguson Founder & Executive Director of FOLA**

To have friends can be hard work. As in personal life, friends require nurturing and understanding. The relationship is not a one-way process. The same can be identified with Friends associated with libraries. Some clear messages remain timeless.

The most successful Friends groups worldwide approach the relationship as a partnership. Key to the successful partnership are some characteristics that can be stated by:

- A basic understanding of goals and objectives
- An appreciation of each other's individual potential for achievement
- The shared enjoyment of ultimate success.

Apart from the United States, home to the Friends movement, one country from which Australia can learn is New Zealand. They appear to have found a successful model for sustainable Friends development, and no place more so than at Dunedin Public Library. Another clear winner has been Christchurch City Libraries, who this year celebrates 150 years of library services. Christchurch Friends are relatively new, formed in 1988. Dunedin has longevity, having its origins dating back to 1890, making it one of the oldest 'modern' day Friends of Library groups worldwide. Both these groups have individual memberships of over 300.

Key to the success of these two groups, and many groups, both in Australia and worldwide are some guiding principles.

All parties must clearly understand their respective roles in order to work together towards common goals. The primary responsibility for bringing about this favourable state of affairs rests, in large measure with the library manager. And, although Friends can exist without the strong support and direction of the library administration, it will not sustain a *culture of enhancement*.

*To bring about this 'culture of enhancement' nine guiding principles must be nurtured and sustained. They are:*

1. The library manager's desire for a Friends group and a belief in the benefits of having such a group. Unless the library administration really wants a Friends group, it is less than fair to encourage citizens to form one. Well intentioned motives may lead to the formation of a group and successful goals achieved in the short term. But sustainable development of a *culture of enhancement* is unlikely to be evident for the long term benefit of the library service.
2. Availability of time to work with Friends. Continuous communication, information, and encouragement are needed to sustain interest on the part of volunteers; the library manager must be available for such leadership.
3. Willingness to assist Friends in understanding the legal and organisational structure of the library. If Friends are not told how they fit into the organisation, chaos can result. Effectively, not a path for sustainable growth.
4. Necessary staff leadership in helping the Friends formulate long-term goals and short-term objectives. The Friends program is most valuable when it moves the total library program forward. The Friends group should be challenged to think and plan on a broad scale, beyond the facilitation of regular events ie. Book sales, author visits, assistance with programmes and funding provision. They need to be incorporated into a culture of improvement.

*"All parties must clearly understand their respective roles in order to work together towards common goals."*

*"If Friends are not told how they fit into the organisation, chaos can result."*

*“Most importantly, the realisation that the library manager’s performance can and should inspire faith in the library program and, therefore, increase and inspire the Friends’ willingness to work for the program.”*

5. Honest appraisals by both parties as to whether the library’s program is worthy of a Friends group. If library programs do not meet community needs, a Friends group will be useless.
6. Time to attend all Friends meetings, whether they be executive committee or general membership gatherings. The Friends must be made to feel that the library manager is an important and indispensable part of its endeavours.
7. Praise and publicity for the achievements of the Friends. All appropriate governing bodies should learn of their achievements. An exemplary role model in Australia, is Chris Jones, Library Manager at Great Lakes (NSW), and Bernie Hawke (Dunedin, NZ), not only do they give time and knowledge on the subject of Friends, they are above all, passionate. Managers who are ‘passionate’ about Friends help create the culture in which Friends groups survive. They are helping to build more sustainable libraries.
8. Awareness of how the community views the Friends. A group that becomes elitist, overspecialised, or simply social may antagonise voters in local elections. The library manager should see that Friends activities are broad-based and varied.
9. Most importantly, the realisation that the library manager’s performance can and should inspire faith in the library program and, therefore, increase and inspire the Friends’ willingness to work for the program.

Cooperation is vital for creating a *culture of enhancement*. Without it, the longer term success of the Friends can be limited.

The Friends of the Christchurch City Libraries have strengthened their charter by enunciating clear strategic directions which sustain a partnership and enhance the library. *Key among the strategic goals are:*

- Making voluntary contributions through, for example: promoting activities of the Friends to other members of the community informally; and participating in any new library initiatives that will benefit from an involvement of the Friends.
- Advocating the value of libraries and exerting political influence, through: making submissions to the Christchurch City Council Annual Plan and other local government documentation requiring feedback.
- Highlighting literacy and reading
- Enhancing the library experience through: providing a social connection for people to interact and discuss the value of reading, books and libraries at meetings and other activities.
- Contributing to the financial well-being of the Friends by developing a list of potential sponsors from the local businesses and exploring opportunities for sponsorship.
- Promoting and extending membership by sharing information and strengthening relationships.
- Planning for future growth and development through: gaining feedback from members and library staff on a regular basis.

These are by no means casual goals. They are about connecting and developing a sustaining culture that shares and values the library user and non user as an asset in the development of the library. Often, the library manager is unable to undertake actions, either being restricted by council as an employee or by implication, as being seen to be involved in political decision-making. Also, managers must often abide by a code of conduct that restricts engagement with sponsors and the business community. This is where the Friends can be of value. They can perform a role as part of the community, deciding what is and is not seen to justify a ‘community of interest’. The library manager cannot display a political role, and the elected



# Successful Friends

## *A Culture of Enhancement*

(continued)

representatives may have an agenda not favourable to the library. The Friends group can transcend these debates.

If the Friends have a purely 'partisan' objective, this may at times conflict with the library management. Conversely, the library manager needs to reflect views and aspirations of the community. The power to elect representatives, vote and provide budgets comes from the community and a library administration that undervalues this, provides no service at all.

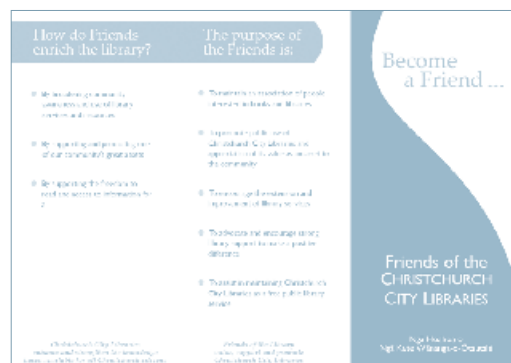
Dunedin Friends illustrious history is both witness to longevity and the creation of a culture where both parties are enhanced. The Friends are valued for their voice and library management listen. For the Friends, it is about examining issues and being a watchdog. A concerned citizenry and a manager who has the interests of the community are the core of the free public library movement.

Dunedin Council is committed to the principle of consultation, even when it is not required by law, for it believes it helps build positive relationships with stakeholders and the wider community and it encourages public involvement in decision-making (*DCC Consultation Policy adopted in 2000*). Council's Consultative Framework on Participation in fact mentions — 'Libraries' community surveys and consultation on options for service participation', which in fact gives the opportunity for the Friends to make regular submissions on budget and planning.

Local government in New Zealand has provided for a community voice through legislation (*Local Government Act 2002* and other legislation), requiring citizens to vote on strategic planning, this has created the opportunity for Friends and concerned citizens to argue a case for support of the library. A well developed Friends of the Library group is the perfect conduit for supporting and expressing concern for the library.

Great libraries have Friends -The British Library, New York Public Library, National Library of Australia. To sustain and value the friendship, library management need to explore opportunities with their communities. This includes creating a partnership which has been the success of many library-Friends over the decades. But to truly value and enhance the library movement we must provide the opportunities to create a culture that enhances Friends. When we do this, we shall truly value our libraries for the next generation.

*"Friends are valued for their voice and library management listen. For the Friends, it is about examining issues and being a watchdog."*



*Government funding pays only a portion of The New York Public Library's operating expenses. The Library wouldn't exist as it is today without membership support from Friends of the Library, a donor membership group of generous people from across New York City and around the world.*

*"A well developed Friends of the Library group is the perfect conduit for supporting and expressing concern for the library."*

# Accomplishments & the Future

*Jack Goodman, FOLA President*

*“Within this context FOLA’s board has been working to develop new ways to remain relevant to our members and the members of local Friends groups around the nation.”*

*“Fortunately, the pendulum has now swung back in favour of public libraries, and the broader public increasingly recognise the essential value of these spaces as community and lifelong learning hubs”*

**D**ear Friends of Libraries Australia Members and Supporters — this year we celebrate 25 years of FOLA history. The milestone provides us with an important opportunity to reflect on FOLA’s past accomplishments and to ponder the future of Friends, both locally and across Australia

Very few organisations make it to the quarter-century mark. It’s a testament to the importance of public libraries, and FOLA’s role in supporting the people who care most about these essential community institutions. In 1994 public libraries were in very different circumstances than they are today, and FOLA’s mission then was clearer than it is now.

For starters, in 1994 technology hadn’t yet entirely revolutionised the way we all access information, and no one had yet begun questioning the value or need for public libraries. Libraries still held a near monopoly on databases, and very few of us had internet connections at home.

By the middle part of the first decade of the new century, however, that had begun to change. Searching for information went from being a project that required the skills of a librarian or “knowledge professional” to being something most of us could do from home. And the further revolution brought about by mobile technologies — smartphones and tablets, supported by high-speed wireless internet — meant we increasingly grew accustomed to having all general knowledge available to us 24 hours a day, anywhere we happened to be.

These developments led some pundits to opine that libraries had outlived their usefulness and were unnecessary in our digitally immersed lives. Fortunately, the pendulum has now swung back in favour of public libraries, and the broader public increasingly recognise the essential value of these spaces as community and lifelong learning hubs. Moreover, and in spite of its name, “social media” increasingly



drives us apart and into our own silos and echo chambers, and public libraries are an essential antidote to such anti-social influences.

Within this context FOLA’s board has been working to develop new ways to remain relevant to our members and the members of local Friends groups around the nation. We have concluded that the concept of “Friends” has a far broader resonance than just members of formally structured, traditional Friends groups. In fact, everyone who sets foot in a library and finds some benefit there — educational, literary, technological, recreational, or otherwise — is a potential “friend.”

With this framework in mind, we have focused our energies in a couple of directions. First, we have decided to embrace social media, in spite of its societal and personal perils, as the easiest and most scalable way for us to embrace this broader conception of Friends. We have put most of our energy into FOLA’s presence on FaceBook, and we have been fortunate to have an incredibly talented and energetic volunteer in Gaby Meares who has taken ownership of the day-to-day running of the page. Gaby came along to one of our FOLA forums — in Balmain in 2018 — and expressed a passion to get involved with FOLA. Her background as a teacher librarian and educator make her

# Jack Goodman

## *FOLA President*

*(continued)*

exceptionally qualified for the role. Combine that with her passion for all things library-related, her curiosity and willingness to teach herself about new technology, and her general positive outlook on life, and you have a recipe for someone who is a great colleague and a pleasure to work with.

What's our goal with [www.facebook.com/FOLAFriends](https://www.facebook.com/FOLAFriends)? Simply, we want to build a wider audience of people who care about public libraries, would like to know more about them, and don't necessarily have time to participate in a formal Friends group. Every week we are engaging with library lovers across Australia, generating thousands of interactions, including a growing volume of shared communication and informal community building.

Our second initiative has also been driven by a volunteer who came to us seeking support for an idea of her own. Taryn Bashford is a young adult author who has developed a concept called Book Feasts and has been experimenting with it in her home geography of the Sunshine Coast.

What's a Book Feast? Put simply, it's a gathering of authors and readers, built around a particular theme or type of writing (biography, children's, mystery, sci-fi, etc.) which involves a brief panel discussion, a

question and answer session, and then an informal chat, including food and drink, so readers and authors can get to know each other.

In May I had the privilege of attending a Book Feast at Noosa Library, and I was amazed by the energy and joy that was generated in the room. Perhaps 40 people attended the event, which was held after work, and the enthusiasm amongst a highly diverse group of attendees was fantastic. Subsequently FOLA has continued its support for Book Feasts by developing a small website — [www.bookfeasts.org.au](http://www.bookfeasts.org.au) — designed to provide all the information needed for anyone to organise their own "chapter" in their community.

If you would like to learn more about Book Feasts, please visit the website, or reach out via our FaceBook page. And as we head into 2020, may I ask one more favour from every FOLA friend and member: Make a new year's resolution that you will share your love of libraries with someone new each week. It's a wonderful way to ensure we never take our libraries for granted.

Warm regards and safe holidays,

**Jack Goodman**  
President, FOLA

*"Every week we are engaging with library lovers across Australia, generating thousands of interactions."*

*"In May I had the privilege of attending a Book Feast at Noosa Library, and I was amazed by the energy and joy that was generated in the room."*





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# New Darling Square Library

*to take flight in 2019*



## *A modern library to support ideas and creativity*

*“Within this context FOLA’s board has been working to develop new ways to remain relevant to our members and the members of local Friends groups around the nation.”*

The new library in the heart of Darling Square (Sydney) will be housed on 2 floors of The Exchange building. Designed by Japanese Architects Kengo Kuma & Associates (who designed the stadium for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games).

An Ideas Lab, a 200sqm makerspace workshop will be one of the features. The lab will host hands-on workshops for kids, teens and adults, from coding, robotics and virtual reality to school holiday maker sessions.

The Darling Square Library will be part of the City of Sydney’s library network of 9 branches.



### **From the City of Sydney website:**

*“Our brand new library in the heart of Darling Square is fast taking shape. Darling Square is one of Sydney’s newest neighbourhoods, transforming an area next to Haymarket and Darling Harbour. Set to open in spring 2019, the library will be housed on 2 floors of The Exchange building, overlooking a public plaza.*

*The spiral-like building wrapped in timber ribbons is designed by Japanese Architects Kengo Kuma & Associates. Well known for his signature timber cladding, Kengo Kuma designed the stadium for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games and brings his vision to Australia for the first time.*

*More than 23 kilometres of sustainably sourced timber panels curve around the outside of the circular building. Creating a unique façade with a playful likeness to a birds nest, the handcrafted panels also filter natural light into the building.*

*Sydney Architects Bligh Voller Nield designed the modern interiors of the library to create welcoming and flexible spaces.”*



# FRIENDS OF LIBRARIES AUSTRALIA

FRIENDS OF  
LIBRARIES  
AUSTRALIA

## Friends Resource Book | Daniel Ferguson

- Establishing a successful Friends group
- Keeping your Friends active
- Incorporation
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- How to
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*The authoritative guide and source book for Friends of Library groups in Australasia*

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Individual	\$20	<input type="checkbox"/>
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FOL Group — 25+ Members	\$70	<input type="checkbox"/>
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