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FOLA

NEWS UPDATE

READING *for* LIFE



Photo: Rob Oakeshott MP and baby Olivia receive the first Port Macquarie-Hastings Library "Reading for Life" Bookstart pack from Port Macquarie Hastings Mayor, Rob Drew. See page 3

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Daniel Ferguson
Executive Director

Cutting Edge



History tells us that Western Australia has been slow to develop FOL groups compared to other states in Australia. Perhaps one reason has been the isolation from the rest of Australia, and secondly the nature of public library development.

This is likely to change. And Western Australia may become a leader in Friends development.

Individuals make a tremendous impact on the development of Friends groups. Librarians and community members can be at the 'cutting edge', leading to a long and successful partnership, bringing huge benefits to the library and the community.



At the instigation of Western Australia's State Librarian, Margaret Allen, I had the opportunity to visit Western Australia in March to conduct

a series of workshops to enhance the development of Friends. Margaret recognises that the public library network can be strengthened by enhancing the community with Friends of Library groups and this in turn contributes to the development of the public library network.

Western Australia has only four FOL groups – at Cockburn, Geraldton, Katanning and the Friends of the Batty Library (State Library of Western Australia). Given the growth of Friends groups in other states of Australia, Western Australia has a wonderful opportunity to grow in *Friends*.

More than 100 years ago, a small group of individuals believed they needed a good public library and to this end, they established the Dunedin Public Library Association (which today bears all the hallmarks of what we call – a *Friends of the Library* group). This group exists today, and is the oldest known Friends of the Library group in Australasia, established in 1890. The present president, Merle van de Klundert has published a remarkable history (*Turn Back the Pages*) of this movement from the early days to the present, more than 115 years of stoic support for the Dunedin Public Library.

Significantly, the present library manager, Bernie Hawke has stated: "the Dunedin Public Libraries Association has been and continues to be a tower of strength and support for me" (and the library).

Here are two people who understand what a difference *Friends* can make.

Do you want your library and community to be at the 'cutting edge'?

Daniel Ferguson
Executive Director

"Individuals make a tremendous impact on the development of Friends groups. Librarians and community members can be at the 'cutting edge', leading to a long and successful partnership."

Building with Friends

Reading for Life!



Advertising when the Library first opened.

Opened on 27 February 2006, the new Altona Meadows Library and Learning Centre (Vic) provides another facility to the municipality of Hobsons Bay. Supporting the new library development has been one of our most active and successful Friends groups – Friends of Altona Library, established in 1987.

As Dr Alan Bundy (FOLA President) mentioned in an address to Friends groups in South Australia on 6 April *"Friends of Libraries Australia is concerned about those many people of all ages, circumstances and backgrounds who cannot experience the full benefits of a modern public library because of poor buildings and poor access to them."*



Pictures from local schools



The Friends of Port Macquarie-Hastings Library in partnership with the Port Macquarie Hastings Library launched their exciting new *Bookstart* Project in February. The project will ensure that each mother giving birth at Port Macquarie Base Hospital receives a *Bookstart* pack containing a quality board book, information about the importance of reading to babies, information about local library services for babies, children and parents, library joining forms and a fridge magnet promoting our *Bookstart* project theme,

The project was launched by Port Macquarie-Hastings Mayor, Rob Drew and the first pack was presented to local Member of Parliament, Rob Oakeshott, and his one week old daughter Olivia. The Friends have made a commitment to raising funds to support the *Bookstart* project through book sales and other events. The Friends expect to provide 750 packs each year. To the end of April, over 150 packs have already been distributed.

The *Bookstart* project complements the Friends Schools Reading Awards project introduced several years ago, which provides an annual reading encouragement award to each of our 24 local primary schools.

The exterior of Altona Meadows Library



A PLACE WITH SPACE

how does your library rate?

The modern public library has been fairly described as the anchor of the community, and by Australian social commentator Hugh Mackay as the 'new village green'.

However to play in full this unique cradle to grave community connection and social capital role, a public library needs accessible, spacious and attractive buildings containing different but connected spaces. It also needs to be open long hours seven days a week, and adequately staffed with professional librarians.

The 31st March-1st April 2006 saw in Adelaide the first major Australian and New Zealand conference of architects, consultants, librarians, library suppliers, and local government representatives to review the progress, and issues, in achieving those types of libraries. *Places and spaces: public libraries for the 21st century* provided much confirmation from Australia and New Zealand about the renaissance of public library building – a world wide phenomenon as more countries recognise the very high return on investing in them.

During the conference, delegates were shown many examples of really attractive and welcoming libraries in Australia and New Zealand able to be the community's anchor institution, often complete with facilities such as learning centres, homework centres, youth zones, electronic training suites, generous display areas, toy libraries, local studies rooms, comfortable lounge areas, Friends of the Library lounges, Justice of the Peace rooms, coffee shops and meeting rooms.

Great progress is being made in replacing or rebuilding old, small and unattractive buildings, typically 30 years old. Yet some Australian councils are still dragging their heels on replacing the buildings of what is by far their most heavily used and valued community



Dr Alan Bundy AM
President Friends of
Libraries Australia

service. Unless there is community awareness of the deficiencies of those buildings, and a willingness to speak up about them, some councils may continue to procrastinate about new libraries or major rebuilds.

Friends of Libraries Australia is concerned about those many people of all ages, circumstances and backgrounds who cannot experience the full benefits of a modern public library because of poor buildings and poor access to them. For this reason FOLA – on behalf of Friends of Libraries groups and the 60 per cent of Australians who use their public libraries – in October 2005 made a short submission to the federal treasurer about the potential return on investment in replacing the many ageing, too small, and second rate public library buildings in Australia. That submission responded to a call for submissions from community groups for priorities in the 2006/7 federal budget. It focused on the need to accelerate the renewal of the country's public library infrastructure, particularly in lower socioeconomic areas, and in regional and rural Australia.

"Friends of Libraries Australia is concerned about those many people of all ages, circumstances and backgrounds who cannot experience the full benefits of a modern public library because of poor buildings and poor access to them."

The FOIA submission is very unlikely to result in federal dollars directly for more new libraries, but it does point to the need for systematic state and local government action to identify poor libraries, and for well informed community pressure for their replacement and improvement.



the importance of their libraries, asserting their rebuilding as a high priority and by working with library managers to convey to councils the great community and council return on investment which good public library buildings always provide.



"A public library, not its civic centre, is the most conspicuous image indicator of the dynamic of a council."

That identification and pressure still largely falls to library managers as part of their strategic responsibilities. Experience shows, however, that a limitation of that singular responsibility has been that a library manager and staff pushing the case for a better library can too easily be viewed by councils as a 'professional bleat' of those staff, rather than them truly endeavouring to improve a council's most used and valued community service for the benefit of all. Those beneficiaries include the administrators and elected members of councils themselves, given that its library is a council's most effective 'shop window'. A public library, not its civic centre, is the most conspicuous image indicator of the dynamic of a council and its responsiveness to the total needs of the community of which it is the servant.



So what is the solution, given that few councils in Australia have anything like a library advisory committee, or one with community representation on it? A number of Friends of Libraries groups around Australia have shown the way — as the library voice of their communities — by telling their councils about

An issue is that library users, including sometimes Friends of Libraries, may be far too accepting of old and inadequate library buildings and their facilities. Expectations can be too low. Sometimes this is because older adults who were children when public libraries were rare in Australia may still consider good public libraries are a privilege, not fundamental to a literate, educated, connected and civilized society.

It may also be because people have grown accustomed to local mediocrity, and have not had their expectations raised by exposure to newer libraries, or are not aware of how much all developed countries are revitalizing their public libraries, in part by replacing and redeveloping their buildings.



It is also because, by anecdotal evidence from librarians, users dissatisfied with a library's facilities and space are notoriously difficult to persuade to raise the issue with their council. This is sometimes for fear that a council may react by actually cutting services, or that user complaint will reflect against library staff who may be bending over backwards to maintain a high level of service in difficult funding and physical circumstances. Library staff typically have the highest reputation for service commitment among council staff. This sometimes works against them and the library service.

"Library staff typically have the highest reputation for service commitment among council staff."

It is therefore legitimate for Friends of Libraries to seek to involve themselves — as the library voice of their communities — in the overall strategic directions of their libraries, and to concern themselves in particular about their physical condition. This requires groups to seek information from FOLA and their library managers about the exciting developments now occurring in library buildings, where possible to visit examples of new library buildings, and to assess the strengths and limitations of what their council is currently providing. There are numerous indicators which can be used to assess the adequacy of older library buildings. A useful checklist containing some building, access and facilities adequacy indicators is to be found at the end of FOLA's second report to the nation *Community critical: Australian public libraries serving seniors* www.fola.org.au.



One basic indicator is how crowded together library shelves are, and if they are too high and too low for comfortable access by all. Library users, like shoppers,

need 60 per cent of the library's floor space to browse comfortably. This leaves 40 per cent of space for shelving and other fittings. This ratio is reversed in too many public libraries

because of lack of space. Books, including in children's areas, which are shelved too high or too low are effectively inaccessible to many library users. The number of items consulted or borrowed from high and low shelves is always very much less than from shelving at upper body level. Apart from better aesthetics and easier line of sight, this is the reason why modern library buildings have low shelves, often on wheels, and with much greater face out display of items. If your library or libraries displays those poor space characteristics, it is a clear sign that it is time to start asking questions about the solution to — and that solution usually means a new or expanded library, not simply more and higher and lower shelves, or throwing away half of the library's collection.

Fortunately an increasing number of councils in Australia — serving all socioeconomic levels of population — are investing in new library buildings, and are doing so with minimal impact on council rates. Those councils in NSW not yet awake to the priority will soon have it demonstrated to them by a project to audit the age, size and suitability of public library buildings in that state. A similar national audit is proposed for the UK, and a major recommendation at the library buildings conference held in Adelaide was that all states should conduct audits to enable a clear picture of public library buildings strengths and deficiencies across the country.

Before that occurs, all Friends of Libraries groups could usefully be identifying how *their* library or libraries would fare in such an audit. If the identification reveals major space and design issues, be aware that new library buildings often have a long gestation time. It is never too early to start talking to your council and the library manager about the council's strategy and timeline for addressing them — and to consider convening a public forum in your community about the issues if necessary.

This is a shortened version of a paper to be found on the FOLA website www.fola.org.au

Fortunately an increasing number of councils in Australia — serving all socioeconomic levels of population — are investing in new library buildings

Friends around Australia

News, Events & Ideas...



*"Eggstraordinary"
– the indefatigable
organiser of book
sales and raffles,
Joan Sivious is at
it again with an
Easter raffle."*

Geraldton (WA)

Geraldton welcomed Daniel Ferguson (FOLA executive director) on 28 March to two events at the library. In the morning he presented a workshop for neighbouring libraries on establishing and running a successful 'Friends' group and in the afternoon a social function was held with members and councillors. The group has been in existence since 1990 and is looking to forge new partnerships with local cultural 'Friends' groups at the gallery and theatre.

State Library (SA)

2007 will see the 75th anniversary of this group, the oldest in Australia. Consideration is being given to mount an exhibition in the Library of a selection of the gifts the Friends have made to the Library over the years. This would be accompanied by an update of the book *A Richness of Gifts*, which list the gifts over the years. Other functions are also planned to mark the occasion.

David Bright takes over from Dr Tony Shinkfield as FLSA president. David Bright has had a distinguished career in the law, as a solicitor, barrister and judge in the District Court before retiring in 2005. He is also a past member of the Adelaide City Council, and served on the board of the Adelaide Festival Centre trust for a decade.

Barossa (SA)



Friends welcomed Peter Goldsworthy at the **Meet the Author** event on 20 February, a function held at the Peter Lehmann Wines Cellar Door. The 2005 Local History Competition received some 126 entries. The

first prize went to Lucy Hill-Smith for her essay on "the Barossa Farmers Market". A busy schedule of events for 2006 are planned at various locations — Barossa Film Club, Barossa Regional Gallery and the Brenton Langbein Theatre.

Willunga & Aldinga (SA)

2006—the year of the writer. A writers competition in story, fact or fiction with the title 'The Library Experience Never to be Forgotten'.

'Eggstraordinary' — the indefatigable organiser of book sales and raffles, Joan Sivious is at it again with an Easter raffle. The AGM was held on 13 April, a hot soup lunch in June and card game planned for 8 June.

Some figures of note — the FOL group have raised some \$44,000 since 1988!

Salisbury (SA)

Friends held a 'Show and Tell' event in March. Items brought by members included a 1915 medallion struck by the Germans to celebrate the sinking of the 'RMS Lusitania', a piece of stone from the Step Pyramid of Sakkara in Egypt, a 1342 Grote coin and a wondrous medical tool, called the Vee Dee (her Grandmother's vibrator!).



National Library of Australia (ACT)

A Winter Book Club in the Friends Lounge is planned for 22 June. The book will be *Wuthering Heights* and Dr Rich Pascal, senior lecturer in English Literature at the ANU will share his experiences of the Gothic Novel. The annual Autumn trip to Braidwood was held on 28 March, visiting a number of historical locations. In April a tour was held — 'Torchlight Tour of St John's Church Graveyard'.



Dr. Rich Pascal

Friends around Australia

News, Events & Ideas...

Thuringowa (Qld)

In March the group donated a Tasmanian Oak cabinet to the library to house Ruth Kelso's collection. Book sale preview for members was held on 7 April. For environmental reasons, no plastic bags are available, however cloth library bags will be on sale at \$1.00 each. Book prices range from 50c to \$2.

Toowoomba (Qld)

A very active group, with the President, Terry Carter reporting in the President's Address 2005 on activities during the past 12 months, including, the raising of some \$12,000 in the past financial year for the library – *what a great effort!* Some of the funds went towards – a chess set, display cabinets, book vouchers, guest speakers. Most of the money has gone to encourage reading in young people and help the disadvantaged. Toowoomba is active in encouraging the Summer Reading Programme at the library and is contributing another \$1800.

Altona (Vic)

The finishing touches are being put in place on the new \$4.2 million state of the art Altona Meadows Library and Learning Centre. Friends are tagging approximately 20,000 items with the latest Radio frequency identification technology to assist for the new self-checkout system.

The Friends also announced the 2006 booksale calendar, with sales every month on Fridays and Saturdays, along with the Big Book Sale in September.

"One machine can do the work of 50 ordinary men. No machine can do the work of one extraordinary man." – Elbert Hubbard (from Friends Booksale bookmark).

Bendigo (Vic)

The AGM reported on numerous speakers and the September event with Denise Deason's "Welcome Stranger" book launch at Bendigo

Library, the February event at Bunning's BBQ raising \$495. The group also thanked its sponsor Collins Booksellers.

Lawson (NSW)

Friends conducted a successful raffle for a Christmas cake. Megalong Books donated \$100 to assist with speaker Mary Moody.

Wentworth Falls (NSW)

Friends were reading Stories in the Park during January for infants and lower primary children. Reading encouragement awards of \$30 book vouchers were presented by the friends to a Year 4 student at each of the three local schools at a recent school presentation day.

Balmain (NSW)

The March meeting heard from Dr Bruce Storey on *Paediatrics for Beginners*. Bruce recently retired from King George Hospital for Women – part of the teaching institution for Sydney University.

The Friends are excited about the long-awaited renovations to the Library and Town Hall schedule for the latter half of 2006.

The financial target for the Friends is - \$50,000, already the Friends have raised \$43,000 which will be used for a community special purpose.

Wingecarribee (NSW)

Margaret Balderson, author and founder of Kaleidoscope was guest speaker on 22 February, along with wine and finger food. The AGM was held in March and guest speakers such as Ruth Wilson in March and Christopher Kremmer arranged for July.



Christopher Kremmer, author of 'The Carpet Wars'

"Most of the money has gone to encourage reading in young people and help the disadvantaged."

*"I never think of the future:
It comes soon enough"*

(Albert Einstein)

Wagga Wagga (NSW)

The Friends sponsored a Twilight Walk on 4 April around historical areas of Wagga Wagga. The tour was lead by a member of the National Trust of Australia.

Hastings (NSW)

Bookstart was launched in February. The Friends will be assisting the Port Macquarie-Hastings Library in preparing kits, fund raising and arranging distribution to all mothers giving birth at Port Macquarie Base Hospital. — *another vital literacy program being conducted by Friends groups around Australia!*

THE PURPOSE OF THE Friends of Port Macquarie- Hastings Library

- To maintain an association of people interested in books and libraries.
- To promote the use of Hastings Library Services and appreciation of its value as an asset to the community.
- To encourage and support the extension and improvement of library services in the Hastings.
- To assist in maintaining Hastings Library Service as a free public library.
- To support the freedom to read and access to free information for all.



Music at Port Macquarie-Hastings Library

Rae Webb

Friends of the Cooloola Shire Libraries

I read Daniel Ferguson's editorial in the summer edition of *NewsUpdate* with great interest. It was also timely, many FOL groups hold their AGM at the end of the financial year and they will be looking for office bearers.

The widely varying membership of FOLA means no ideas fit all so herewith my thoughts on "succession" as developed from my experience.

I don't think Daniel went far enough. It is not just a question of deciding on a succession. The first problem is getting people to nominate. Our groups first constitution said that all office bearers could only hold office for one year at a time. Upon incorporation the new constitution has removed that restriction but Daniel is correct, any seemingly entrenched group can easily be the kiss of death to an organisation.

The Act of Incorporation requires us to have a president, vice-president, treasurer and secretary and it is very specific how the annual elections must be held. We also have music and housebound service convenors, a publicity officer and general committee members.

At the risk of being discriminatory I think of these office bearers under two categories, 'leaders' and 'specialists'. The president and vice-president are leaders. They set the "tone" of the group. They must know the membership both as a group and as individuals. The way the group is run must reflect the wishes of the majority of the members. Any dissident voices must be listened to and accommodated where ever possible. The president is the group's link to the library manager and then the council, the vice-president gives support and back-up. The specialists, treasurer, secretary, convenors, PR officer must have the skills and the experience to carry out their tasks and advise the executive committee where necessary.

Rae Webb, continued...

Over the last few years there has been a growing reluctance to nominate as office bearers. We are fortunate in that our music and housebound convenor positions have been covered by extremely efficient and hardworking people. In filling the treasurer and secretary positions our success and the changing times have made people reluctant to nominate for these positions. All our activities are computer 'driven' and although most of our members have a PC at home operating on our FOL computer in the library is a bit daunting. The volume of correspondence and the red tape has increased out of sight. I think we have made a rod for our own backs in the way the treasurer's job has been redesigned. We started with a bank book and a cash book. Now it is all done by computer, we don't use a bank we use a credit union. In Queensland if you want to apply for a grant from a government or non-government organisation you must be incorporated and have an Australian business number. It is obviously desirable to comply with this but somebody has to do the work.

In my opinion the selection of president is the key decision. Not only must the president have the skills I have already suggested but she he must be able to maximise the efficiency of the executive committee. From time to time there is in most organisations a call for "new-blood". However, as in medicine, the "new-blood" must be compatible with that already in the system. Never, never attempt to persuade a possible candidate against their better judgement. "It doesn't take a lot of time, we will help you get started"; nonsense; it takes as much time as it takes and good candidate will tread their own path.

We have never tried to dramatically increase membership. Our policy has always been that every member must have a "job". We have introduced a "social member" category to specifically accommodate a nearly 80 year old long serving member who apologised because she wasn't as fleet of foot as she had been. The protocols for operations between our group and the local council in which we are as "unpaid employees" and "on duty" when on FOL business means we have to be careful when enrolling new members, not exclusive, but careful.

I don't know how to get people to nominate for office. I do know that to accept as a nominee somebody one has doubts about just to fill a slot is a recipe for trouble.

On the subject of a "Junior Friends" group. Like, I imagine, many others, I came back from the Adelaide conference (1998) fired with enthusiasm. After careful consideration the committee put some ideas to a general meeting where it was soundly defeated. The members didn't want the responsibility of "supervising" teenagers in the library. The children's librarian who had young daughters of her own then took it on board but in spite of her enthusiasm and hard work it didn't get off the ground.

Obviously it can work but it is not for us. The implied suggestion in the editorial that members of a Junior Group might lead to future membership of an adult group is, in my opinion, fanciful.

—If you have a view on these issues, send to FOLA for publication.

"We have introduced a "social member" category to specifically accommodate a nearly 80 year old long serving member who apologised because she wasn't as fleet of foot as she had been."

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

BUILDING STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT

From Carmel Baretta, President, Friends of Mackay Libraries.



May I take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks for the publication of an inspirational and uplifting magazine, FOLA. The Winter/Spring 2005 edition was particularly helpful to our committee. Many of the ideas shared on page 10 have already been implemented as part of our drive to increase membership and promote our Jubilee year. For example:

- We are sponsoring first prizes in all categories of Whitsunday Voices Youth Literature Awards, which will be held in conjunction with the Arts Festival on 19 July next. Four members have also agreed to act as judges for the competition.
- A guest author has been invited to attend a Cheese and Wine Evening hosted by our Committee on Tuesday 18 May at Gordon White Library, Mackay.
- Membership Certificates of 5, 10, 15 and 25 years are to be presented to our members in recognition of their contribution to 'Friends' as well as a Commemorative jubilee Bookmark for all members.
- Silver label for library card identifying 'Friends'.
- Bus tour of neighbouring libraries and museums planned.
- Profiles in local newspapers of members who have recently been honoured with life membership.

Your customers are your best advocate – try closing a branch library and you will find out just how vocal they can be.

- Value the feedback you get from customers and use it to help drive business improvements.
- Take Friends groups seriously.
- Consultation is an effective way of building community support – Deborah Jacobs of Seattle Public Library turned a community around in 4 months by listening to what they wanted from their libraries and secured a multi million redevelopment vote which had been turned down previously by the voters.
- (from a presentation by Sue Sutherland, Director of Policy and Information Democracy, National Library of New Zealand, Perth 2005).



Check it out Friends on the web

Friends of the Edmonton Public Library

<http://www.epl.ca/Friends/>



Friends of Libraries RESOURCE BOOK (2005)

**Daniel Ferguson, Friends of
Libraries Australia (FOLA)**

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book for Friends of Library groups in
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24 August AGM – Sydney
(Balmain)

11 October – Melbourne

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