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THE VERY BEST

FRIENDS OF
BALMAIN
LIBRARY

Past presidents of
FOBL (L-R)
Bronwyn Munro,
Annette Waterworth,
Mariella Totaro-
Genevois, (Daniel
Ferguson, FOLA),
Shirley Allen,
Jan Aitkin.



OF FRIENDS

Dr Mariella Totaro-Genevois and Balmain Friends

SEE ALSO
PAGE FIVE

"Dr Mariella Totaro-Genevois was recently awarded life membership of the Friends of Libraries Australia. President Jack Goodman presented her with this in recognition of 'her wonderful contribution over more than two decades' as a FOLA board member."

The national voice for 13 million Public Library Members

IN THIS ISSUE:

From the Executive Director	2	Focus on Friends: Mirboo North	7
AI Threat to Public Libraries	3	Focus on Friends: Wollongong City	8
The Very Best of Friends	5	Friends Around Australia	9
Libraries and AI in Public Life	6	Membership, Resources, About Us	12

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Embracing a Vision

Leadership, vision and dedication to the cause of Friends and Libraries are the hallmarks of many of our most successful Friends groups around Australia. None more so than at Balmain, the inner west suburb of Sydney. For some twenty-eight years the Friends of the Balmain Library (FOBL) have been one of the most successful and emblematic groups in Australia.



One of the clear reasons – outstanding leadership. FOLA recently recognized one of these leaders.

On Thursday 4 June, FOLA president Jack Goodman and Executive Director, Daniel Ferguson presented Dr Mariella Totaro-Genevois with a Life Membership of FOLA, for her outstanding contribution to the Friends movement over two decades, at a function held at the Balmain Library in Sydney, in the presence of another two members of the Board, Maryanne Knight and Keith Goodman.

Mariella's contribution to FOLA and Balmain Friends has displayed all the hallmarks of leadership in the Friends movement.

Leadership from our president, Jack Goodman helps our organization to confront some of the

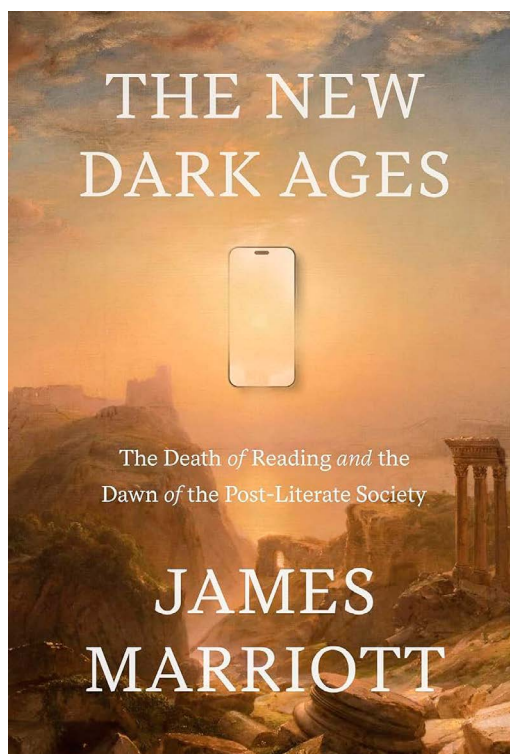


FOBL Chair, Dr Mariella Totaro-Genevois (right) pictured at a FOBL event with Kate McClymont.

serious issues confronting libraries and society in daily life. The article written by our president in this issue – *The Generative AI Threat to Public Libraries*, gives us scope to discuss these issues amongst our members. It also offers some opportunity for Friends groups to take up the challenge in their communities along with library management. Friends can perform a vital role in our society by discussing these issues.

When they embrace books on these topics, they offer a clear direction available to all Friends groups to engage.

Along with the book mentioned in the article by our president, another book to challenge us is – *The New Dark Ages* by James Marriott. The author gives an impassioned attack on the trivial culture of the screen and a defense of the written word and long-form argument.



The golden chain of knowledge linking reader to reader through the centuries is breaking for the first time since the collapse of the Western Roman Empire ushered in the Dark Ages.

“Mariella’s contribution to FOLA and Balmain Friends has displayed all the hallmarks of leadership in the Friends movement.”

“Balmain Library (FOBL) have been one of the most successful and emblematic groups in Australia.”

THE GENERATIVE AI THREAT TO PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Jack Goodman

“Libraries adapted, embracing technologies, including online services, databases and much more while also providing increasingly valuable meeting spaces for children, students and adult learners.”

More than a quarter century ago, at the dawn of the internet age, it was common for technologists to suggest that the days of the public library were numbered. Why would anyone need a physical building with stacks of books, periodicals and videos when a search engine could answer your every question while sitting in the comfort of your home?

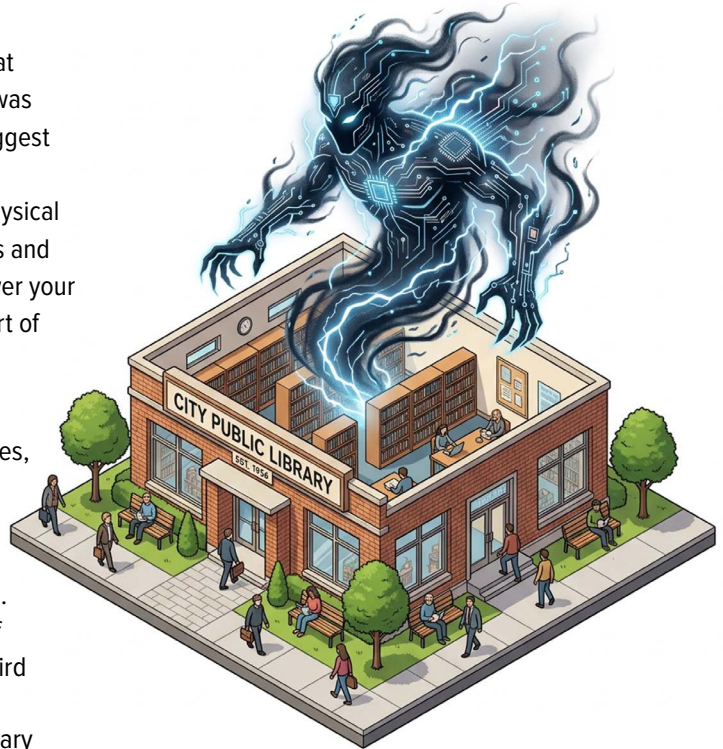
That view was quietly discredited as libraries adapted, embracing technologies, including online services, databases and much more while also providing increasingly valuable meeting spaces for children, students and adult learners. What emerged was an understanding of public libraries not just as a physical “third space” after home and school/work. We began to see that the mission of the library had always been to provide lifelong learning opportunities for the entire community, from infants and their carers through to retirees.

Learning comes first with libraries

What, then, to make of public libraries in our emerging age of generative artificial intelligence? If computers are able to produce answers to our queries that appear more articulate, grammatical and knowledgeable than most humans can produce, what’s left for institutions that are meant to be about lifelong learning?

The answer is: Everything.

It might be easy to conclude, for example, that high school students - traditionally the biggest users of public libraries as they study for high stakes end-of-year-12 exams - will turn to Gemini, Claude, or ChatGPT to answer their questions and complete all their assignments. But that would be completely mistaken. A drumbeat of emerging evidence is showing that, without proper guidance and support, using genAI more often leads to *cognitive offloading*, *cognitive atrophy*, and even *cognitive surrender* as we stop thinking for ourselves and let the machine do most, if not all, of the work.



In this emerging landscape where AI is being deployed at light speed into every corner of our education system, libraries have an essential role to play helping educate the public to engage critically and safely with this extraordinarily powerful and, arguably, dangerous technology. Historically, this has been through oft-repeated statements about the importance of reading and the role that literacy plays as the foundation for education and employment outcomes.

As it turns out, there’s a deep connection between the foundations of literacy where libraries play such a critical role and the development of critical thinking skills which commentators agree are essential for the next generation of university graduates to possess.

To understand the relationship, we can turn our attention to one of the great experts on the science of reading. Maryanne Wolf is a cognitive neuroscientist at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) who has dedicated her research to understanding how humans learned

(Continued overleaf)

“AI is being deployed at light speed into every corner of our education system”

THE GENERATIVE AI THREAT TO PUBLIC LIBRARIES

(Continued)

to read six millennia ago, and what happens to the connections inside the brain during the literacy journey from infancy through schooling and beyond. That process is essential to the development of deep thinking skills, including analytical and analogical thinking.

Being able to independently process the layers of meaning in sentences and stories, and drawing connections across disparate ideas, is the essence of ‘critical thinking’.

As Wolf makes clear in her book *Reader, Come Home: The Reading Brain in a Digital World*, the dramatic shift of attention from paper texts to digital platforms over the last 25 years has altered reading patterns. Young people’s brains have less developed deep-reading neural pathways and adults whose reading patterns have shifted experience atrophy in their capacity for critical thinking.

This explains why reading and writing (NAPLAN) scores, and university students’ reading comprehension, have been on a downward trajectory. It also explains why so many adults have experienced a loss of patience to read and think deeply about what they have read, activities which are essential to real learning.

Leading the change: the role of the library in this new AI age

What can - and should - public libraries be doing in the context of AI and in support of their mission of community lifelong learning? Two things seem to be clear.

1. Teach the tools

First, libraries can offer educational sessions regarding the latest freely available generative AI tools. In the same way that they’ve helped many thousands of Australians become computer literate, there is a huge need for AI education and literacy training. As professional knowledge workers, trained librarians are ideally suited to this type of engagement activity.

2. Protect the learning

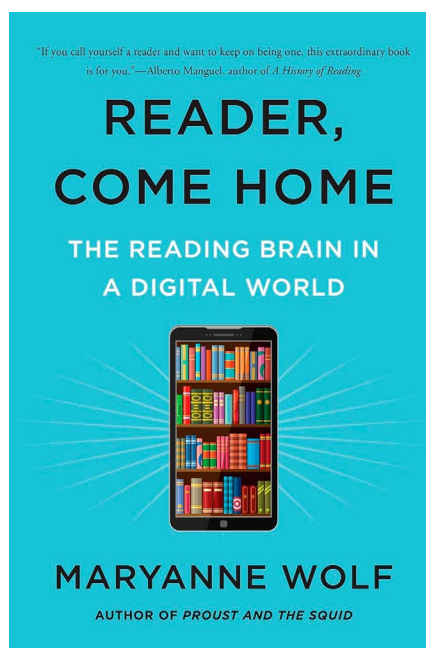
Second, libraries can and should be offering curated experiences for their communities and members to access reliable, safe and informative educational technologies. Historically libraries have developed curated collections of materials that reflect the interests and needs of their communities. When it has come to technological and educational resources, communities have relied on libraries to investigate, acquire, and provide services that help people build knowledge and skills.

In our AI age, this role is more important than ever. The most popular AI platforms are all designed to augment *productivity*, which is, more often than not, *the opposite of learning*. Indeed, it is the power of these productivity tools that leads to cognitive offloading and cognitive surrender whereby they remove all the friction that’s essential to learning.

When we remember that libraries’ mission is to provide open, community access to lifelong learning opportunities, it is clear that they’re needed now more than ever. The task of educating our communities to use AI in ways that maintain human agency and learning is enormous, and libraries have an essential role to play.

“Adults whose reading patterns have shifted experience atrophy in their capacity for critical thinking.”

“The most popular AI platforms are all designed to augment productivity, which is, more often than not, the opposite of learning.”



THE VERY BEST OF FRIENDS

Dr Mariella Totaro-Genevois and Balmain Friends



"In Balmain, Mariella has been notable in establishing many of the trailblazing projects to which this group has been in a leader."

"Mariella has co-authored several books, and was the author of Cultural and Linguistic Policy Abroad."

Mariella joined the Board of FOLA in July 2006. And for the next almost 20 years has given distinguished service to our national body and outstanding leadership as a chair of the Friends of Balmain Library. In participating in leadership of FOLA national events and travelling expensively to other states and visiting Friends, Mariella has been a valuable member of the FOLA Board.

In Balmain, Mariella has been notable in establishing many of the trailblazing projects to which this group has been in a leader. Not insignificantly the refurbishment of the Balmain Library in March 2009. Other notable initiatives have been with local schools, literary awards and special collections. Also, Balmain Friends have displayed leadership in the area of Author programs which attract a considerable audience at every event.

Mariella officiating at the awards ceremony for a children's writing competition (2010). Conceived and organised by the Friends of Balmain Library (NSW),

Mariella moved to Australia with a young family in the mid-1960's. She has a Law degree from the University of Turin, an MA Honours in Italian Studies (University of Sydney) and a PhD in European Studies (Monash University). She taught in the Department of Italian at Sydney University for 18 years and then in Romance Languages at Monash (1992-1997). Mariella has co-authored several books, and was the author of *Cultural and Linguistic Policy Abroad: The Italian Experience* (2005).

FOLA has been delighted to award this Life Membership to an outstanding Friend.



I-r Imogen Biggins, Year 5 section winner, Dr Mariella Totaro-Genevois, FOBL Chair, John Civitarese, Chair, Grants Committee, Balmain/Rozelle Community Bank

LIBRARIES AND AI IN PUBLIC LIFE

A Recap from the Obama Presidential Center



On June 25th, the Digital Public Library of America and the Chicago Public Library co-hosted **Libraries and AI in Public Life**.

The event explored AI's role in libraries and public life, featuring leaders from Chicago, New York, Cleveland and beyond discussing AI in learning, civic engagement and digital access.

Key themes included AI ethics, community impacts, innovative library programs and future directions for equitable technology-driven public services. Next steps involve integrating AI responsibly to enhance learning and civic participation.

The four panels that followed made clear this wasn't a conversation about being for or against AI, but how civic institutions shape its introduction for the public good. Panelists returned to the enduring issue of unequal access to digital technologies. AI may be widely distributed, but are still concentrated in the hands of a few large companies. Libraries should meet the moment with the same values that have guided them for generations: open access, privacy, intellectual freedom, local trust, and respect for the judgement of patrons and communities.

Key themes:

The work is already underway. San Jose Public Library recently opened an AI Centre for Civic and Social Good. Toronto Public Library's "Learn AI" initiative has certified over 1,900 people through a digital literacy cohort model. The North Liberty Library in Iowa is hosting community conversations with teens about the issues that matter to them most, including AI.

AI literacy is the new core competency for libraries. The meaning of literacy work is expanding from teaching people to use AI to helping them question it, and to building the civic capacity to participate in decisions about how it is deployed.



"Key themes included AI ethics, community impacts, innovative library programs and future directions for equitable technology-driven public services."

We need to foster and protect human connection.

Human connection is central to how people learn and grow, and several panelists named it as the thing most worth protecting as AI becomes increasingly ubiquitous.

The future is not predetermined. Libraries hold power in shaping how AI takes hold in public life.

"The meaning of literacy work is expanding from teaching people to use AI to helping them question it"

Question: Has your Friends group asked your library about conducting an event to discuss the impact of AI within the library profession and possible impacts on future directions on the library and your community.



Focus on Friends

MIRBOO NORTH LIBRARY (VIC)

"In recent years, the Friends have successfully advocated for additional opening hours."

Who are we?

The Friends of Mirboo North Library (Vic) is a local community-based organisation which provides support and assistance to library staff, helping to improve the library's service to the local community as well as providing a general forum for discussion on library matters. They are part of My Community Library and the South Gippsland Shire.

What do we do?

In recent years, the Friends have successfully advocated for additional opening hours for the library and have provided thousands of dollars each year through various fund-raising efforts to purchase new reading and educational resources for use in the library. The big screen TV, Xbox games and iPads are all proudly funded by the Friends. We enjoy supporting programs both in the library and the community like book chats in cafes, storytime in the park and the very popular pizzas for young people.

Some of our achievements

WIRELESS HEADPHONES

The Friends group recently purchased a set of 10 wireless headphones which let visitors to the library watch movies and play video games without disturbing other patrons.

LEGO KITS

The Friends group has purchased a number of Lego kits for use in the library. The purchase of these kits has allowed the library to run the popular monthly Lego Club.

FLAT SCREEN TV

The Friends' purchase of a large, flat-screen TV for the library has expanded the range of library-based activities that are possible, including movie screenings, audio-visual presentations and video games.



Who can be a member?

Individuals, families - anyone interested in their library - can join the Friends. By supporting the Friends, you are supporting the library and all its programs.

How do I join?

The Friends of Mirboo North Library always welcomes new members. If you are interested, please complete the enclosed membership form and leave it with the friendly Librarians.

"We enjoy supporting programs both in the library and the community like book chats in cafes, storytime in the park and the very popular pizzas for young people."



Focus on Friends

WOLLONGONG CITY LIBRARIES



The Friends of Wollongong City Libraries are an independent group who support and promote our libraries.

They work to encourage an interest in books, build links between the library and the community and provide practical support such as fundraising for library equipment, facilities and staff training.

They often do this by running events such as author talks and literary luncheons. Tickets to these events can be purchased by anyone, however Friends of the Library members receive a discount!

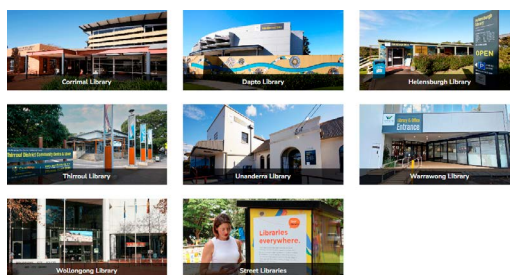
Author Talks

Wollongong City Libraries' author talks bring you face-to-face with some of Australia's leading writers to discuss their craft and inspiration, answer audience questions, and sign books. They are one of the many reasons to have a library card. Don't have one? It's free and easy to join online!

A Recent Event

Acclaimed music biographer Jeff Apter is unmissable, presented by the Friends of the Library.

Join Apter as he dives into *Reckless*, the electrifying new book on Australian Crawl, one of the nation's most iconic bands. Discover

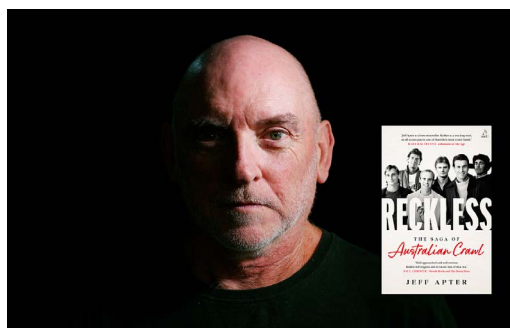


"They work to encourage an interest in books, build links between the library and the community"

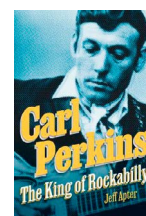
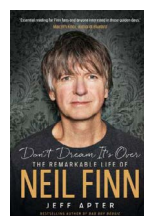
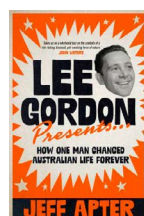
the highs of sold-out fame, the heartbreak of tragedy, and the enduring legacy behind the hits that still form the soundtrack of Australia today.

Jeff has written more than 30 biographies about the world of music and musicians.

The Friends of the Library will host this literary luncheon, providing a catered lunch, exclusive Q&A, as well as a book signing. There will also be a raffle taking place - please bring along coins or notes to take part.



"Wollongong City Libraries' author talks bring you face-to-face with some of Australia's leading writers."



Friends Around Australia



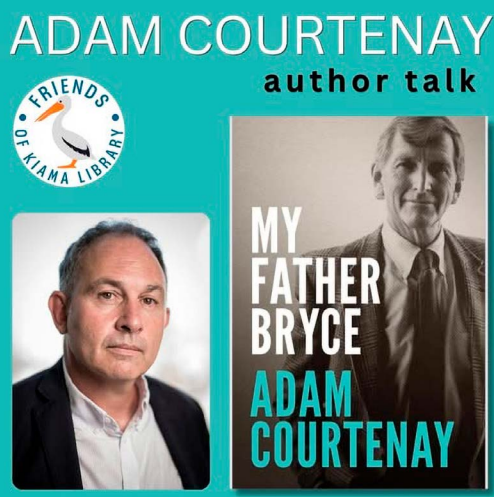
KIAMA LIBRARY (NSW)

The Friends of Kiama Library invite you to a talk with Adam Courtenay about his moving and unforgettable memoir, *My Father Bryce*.

Bryce Courtenay was one of Australia's most beloved authors. From his first book, *The Power of One*, he captivated readers. To his son, Adam, he was larger than life, mercurial, and impossible to know completely. In this bittersweet, heartfelt memoir, Adam searches for the real Bryce.

Saturday 8 August, 2pm, Kiama Library Auditorium, \$8 Friends members | \$10 guests (includes afternoon tea). Books available for purchase and signing.

"The Friends of Kiama Library invite you to a talk with Adam Courtenay about his moving and unforgettable memoir, My Father Bryce."

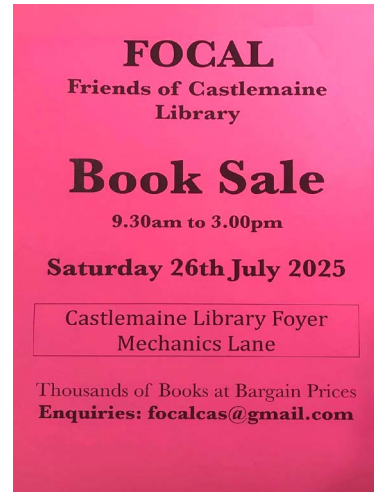


"History duo Max and John will share with us some truly interesting snippets of little known events and experiences."

ST ARNAUD (VIC)



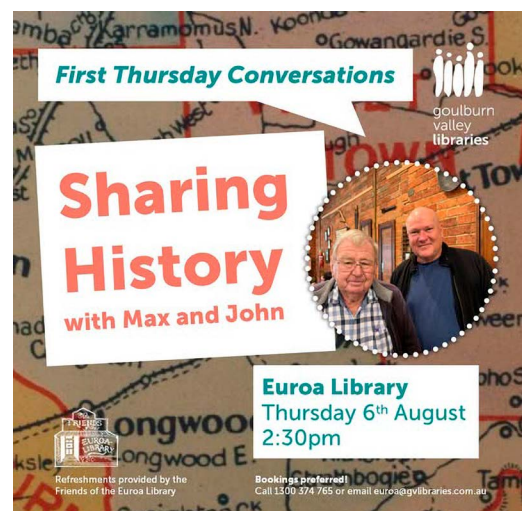
CASTLEMAINE (VIC)



EUROA (VIC)

First Thursday Conversations returns next month at the Euroa Library with Max Burnside and John Gribben!

History duo Max and John will share with us some truly interesting snippets of little known events and experiences that you are sure to enjoy. Max will bring his wealth of local history knowledge and experience, together with John they have a passion to share the real life stories of identities, drama and mystery be them a heartwarming or a sad tale.



Friends Around Australia



ALTONA, WILLIAMSTOWN & NEWPORT (VIC)

Book sales and Friends of the Libraries

Become a Friend of the Libraries

The Friends of Altona Libraries, and the Friends of Williamstown and Newport Libraries are non-profit organisations that support and assist the libraries to provide an excellent service to the local community.

Each Friends' group provides assistance to the libraries by raising funds, sponsoring events and activities, and acting as an advocate for the libraries with government and the wider community.

BYRON (NSW)

Friends of Libraries Byron Shire

4 DAY BOOK FAIR!

Fri 10 - Mon 13 July, 9am to 4pm
BYRON BAY SURF CLUB

WINGECARRIBEE (NSW)

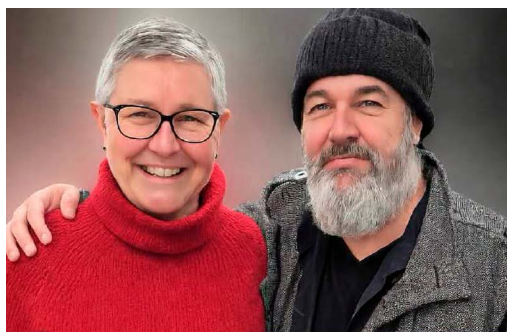
Join Angela O'Keeffe in conversation with Jude Chapman for Angela's book "Phantom Days".

ABOUT THE BOOK: At the centre of Phantom Days is Isabel, a single woman in her thirties. Before Isabel has even cracked the spine of a novel she bought on a whim ahead of an overseas trip, she senses something beginning within her.

Copies of "Phantom Days" will be available through the Bookshop Bowral.



LAUNCESTON (TAS)



Live at the Library

Free live performance
Louise Denson and
Spike Mason

Saturday 1 August 2026
from 10.30 am
Launceston Library

Come along!
No bookings required

Louise Denson (piano) and
Spike Mason (saxophone) enjoy
playing music together.

At this performance they will
play music that has been written
by themselves, music that has
been written by other people
and music that will be written in
the moment of the concert,
never heard of before and never
to be heard of again...



"Each Friends' group provides assistance to the libraries by raising funds, sponsoring events and activities, and acting as an advocate for the libraries"

VICTOR HARBOR (SA)



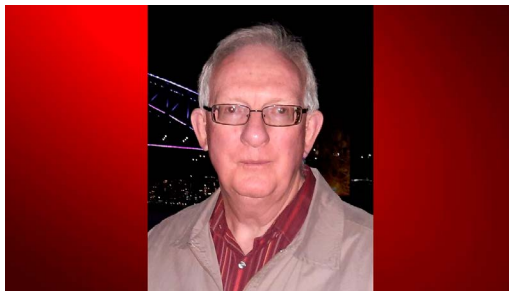
Friends of Library with a stall at Victor Central Shopping Centre

- Community support, promotion and fundraising for the City of Victor Harbor Public Library
- Provides the library with information on community needs
- Book sales
- Literary functions and activities
- Newsletter

STATE LIBRARY (SA)

Tuesday Talks happen on the first Tuesday of the month, 11am - 12 noon, and subtitled "Books in my Life." We ask our speakers to reflect upon the books that have nurtured and guided them. We convene 10 Tuesday Talks per year (none in January nor during Writers Week in March). Speakers have been known to speak of one book, or a half dozen or twenty! Tuesday Talks are entertaining, illuminating and inspiring.

"Books in My Life" A Tuesday Talk - Richard Muncey | Tuesday 1 September



STATE LIBRARY (NSW)



Hi everyone. Welcome to the Friends Room.

Want to be Friends?

Helena is here to take you on a tour of our beautiful Friends Room.

Located on the ground floor of the historic Mitchell Building, the Friends Room started its life as the original Mitchell Library Reading Room, opening to the public in 1910.

The room has retained many of its original features, including the original bookshelves that now hold 1000+ editions of the Spanish classic novel, Don Quixote.

FRASER COAST (OLD)



Friends of the Library

The Friends of the Library is a group of dedicated volunteers who value their library service and enjoy helping their community.

Being a member of Friends of the Library means you will meet other like-minded book lovers, be kept up to date with what is happening in the libraries and be involved in library events and activities.

All vacancies are currently filled. For volunteer opportunities in other areas of Council please visit Volunteers | Fraser Coast Regional Council

Please note that volunteering for Council is not recognised as a Mutual Obligation Requirement for Australian Government payments.

INVERELL (NSW)

The Friends of the Library group are having a meeting at the library tomorrow, Saturday 14th March at 10:30am.

Community members are invited to consider joining the group if you love the library and would like to know how to support our services. Come along to the meeting and meet the friendly group and find out how you can help!



GOLD COAST (OLD)

PET BASKET

RAFFLE FUNDRAISER

Support library programs, events, and community initiatives while treating your favorite furry friend.

Cat Basket

Includes cat toys, cat-themed book, pet bed, leash/collar, and cat travel bag.

ENTER HERE: <https://bit.ly/4eou4BY>

Dog Basket

Includes a ceramic dog bowl, Limited Edition Franklin Mint porcelain plate, 5 plush toys, pet bed, balls, pull toys, socks, straw bowl, 2 ball band toys, retriever coin purse, and a huge tote with dog supply pockets.

ENTER HERE: <https://bit.ly/4ef4QOz>

RAFFLE TICKETS

- 1 Ticket = \$10
- 3 Tickets = \$25
- 8 Tickets = \$50

RAFFLE DATES

STARTS: Thursday, July 9

ENDS: Thursday, July 23

All proceeds benefit the Friends of the Gold Coast Library.

Purchase tickets through BetterWorld!

Thank you for supporting our library and furry friends!

Membership Application

CATEGORIES

Membership fee incorporating
News Update

Individual	\$15	☐
FOL Group— 0-25 Members	\$25	☐
FOL Group— 25+ Members	\$50	☐
Libraries	\$105	☐

Institutions incl. Libraries with multiple Friends groups	\$105	☐
Corporations	\$105	☐
Extra copies of News Update	\$10 per annum	☐

RETURN ADDRESS

FOLA Inc.
FOLA Treasurer,
Kristina Barnett, 42 Marian Place,
Prospect SA 5082

PAYMENT DETAILS

Electronic funds transfer (preferred)
Account Name: Friends of Libraries
Australia BSB: 033-032
Account Number: 390331

Cheque/money order: payable to
Friends of Libraries Australia Inc
(Amount enclosed \$)

Return Address
FOLA Treasurer, Kristina Barnett
42 Marian Place, Prospect SA 5082

Amount enclosed \$

ADDRESS DETAILS

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

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Email:

Friends Resource Book | Daniel Ferguson

- Establishing a successful Friends group
- Keeping your Friends active
- Incorporation
- Public liability
- Library management issues
- How to
- Latest and best ideas and much more...

*The authoritative guide and source book for
Friends of Library groups in Australasia*

Order Form

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Account Name: Friends of Libraries Australia

BSB: 033-032 Account Number: 390331

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www.fola.org.au

About Us

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www.facebook.com/FOLAFriends/
friendsoflibrariesau (Instagram)
Editor: Daniel Ferguson
Email: daniel@fola.org.au
Production/Design: WorkingType Books

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