

Sneaks comes Down Under!

Or at least, is holding out a paw to his Aussie mates...

The Baltimore County Public Library puts on a summer reading program each year. The star of the program is *Sneaks*, the Library Cat. Each summer Sneaks has a new adventure which acts as a vehicle to encourage children to read for fun. The club is designed for children through to age 13 and is strongly supported by both public and private schools.

There is no fixed number of books the children are required to read, but weekly visits to the library to select new materials are encouraged by incentives such as activity sheets, coupons for various activities, programs, etc.

This summer, from 21 June-21 August, Sneaks will come to Australia at the request of his koala pal Sydney, who needs his help to solve the mystery of who is leaving a trail of books over the country-

side. The core of the program is a booklet which contains a reading log and activities etc., in keeping with the theme.

During the past eight years, the program has become such a success that the Library expects to surpass last year's record number of more than 25 000 participants. Because of the sheer numbers, this year they will again be using student volunteers from grades 7 and 8 to sign up children, stamp booklets and distribute handouts each week. In the fall, upon the children's return, schools give certificates and otherwise recognise both participants and volunteers.

The librarian, Paula Drnec-Thompson, would be glad to have some contact with interested school or public librarians in Australia, particularly with information about potential pen-pals to



whom the American children might write directly if they so choose.

She would also like to make available to Baltimore teachers persons in Australia whom they could contact to have an exchange between classes or schools, much the same as the 'sister city' project. And of course she would be happy to answer any questions and to hear from her counterparts.

If you would like to share in this activity, please contact her directly: Paula Drnec-Thompson, Baltimore County Public Library, 1716 Merritt Boulevard, Dundalk MD21222-3295 USA.

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