

Destination ... down the plug-hole?

...so your budget has been cut
so your staff have been retrenched
so your opening hours have been reduced
so your services are going, gone...

And then there was Australian Library Week. And with all your concerns you watched it pass you by — wringing your hands, or putting your head in the sand.

Keep your fingers crossed that you're still around next year as you have just missed a wonderful opportunity — the one time in the year when you have official sanction for a full-scale promotion! A clear benefit of Australian Library Week is that your current library users get a warm and fuzzy from being treated to some extra activities, some fun and freebies. And perhaps along the way, you may reach a few non-users who decide to become members. All good things. But the most important benefit is being overlooked.

What are you doing about your providers — what are you doing about your *library funders*? What are you doing for them which may translate into a funding advantage for your library?

Did you organise a special event and invite your: minister/department head/board of management/executive

director/whoever it is who decides your next years' budget? Did you ask them to: address the group/launch a new service/announce a new innovation/give a prize to the XXXth library user? Did you invite members of all media to record and disseminate information on the event? Did you provide good photo opportunities, make press releases, develop a catchy byline? Did you encourage all your library users to be there too, so that the funding personnel could see your power base? Did you also invite the opposition parties to show their commitment to your cause and to involve them in the positive issues about your library service?

How can you expect anyone to come to your aid at budget time — in your time of need — if you don't involve them in the positive promotion, the announcements of up-and-coming developments and the positive publicity. A positive interaction between those who make funding decisions and keen library users may make that budget cut a little more difficult to announce.

If your Australian Library Week events are a success, they will have mustered strong support for any case you may be needing to make for additional funding, more space, more staff, more technology, or more services. And ongoing personal contact with those who make funding decisions is vital to your library's future and to your job.

If you've missed the opportunity this year, start planning for Australian Library Week 1995. It will be held during the week 7-13 May 1995. Include in your promotions budget a special allocation for library week. And if you don't have a promotions budget, get one! Even if it means you and your staff putting aside a couple of dollars a week — it's worth it for your future!

Start getting ideas for promotions, include it for discussion in your staff meetings, ask your regular customers, and talk with your local media representatives — they're always looking for stories with a difference. And if your promotions budget is really tight, seek support for the provision of prizes or refreshments from appropriate local business houses. You will be surprised at what you can do.

Maybe there are some libraries who succeeded in making a big bang this year. Please write and let your colleagues know who, what, when, where, and how.

Having spent the last seven years in the retail service industry, my eyes have been opened to the need for constant promotion — to customers, to potential customers, to public servants, to politicians. You can never have enough publicity. Australian Library Week is you one big chance for promotion. It's positive, you have control over it, and like libraries, it's 'free'.

Sue Owen



National Office staff despatching ALW balloons, posters, and postcards

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