

Marion E Robertson 1954-1995

The sudden death of Marion Robertson on 30 January has been an enormous loss to the world of children's books and to the profession of librarianship, but despite her early and untimely death Marion's impact on her chosen profession will remain.

Marion was born in Port Fairy in Victoria and completed her early schooling in Port Fairy and Warrnambool. Her tertiary education was undertaken at the Australian National University in Canberra where in 1976 she graduated with majors in English literature and political science. The following year she completed her Diploma of Education from Sydney Teachers' College, graduating with a double English major.

It was in 1978 that her career in books commenced — a career that was to span the whole spectrum of work with children and young people and one that was marked by many achievements. Marion commenced her career as a library assistant at Parramatta City Library and the completion of her Graduate Diploma in Library Science at Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education launched her along the path of a number of professional appointments with Parramatta City Library over the next 16 years.

Although Marion had a well developed and well-rounded knowledge of the library and information profession generally, her greatest achievements were in the field of library work with children and young adults. At Parramatta City Library she held successively in this field the positions of Children's Circulation Librarian, Assistant Children's Librarian, Children's Librarian and Youth Services Coordinator and finally, Special Services Librarian, which included in its broader portfolio, responsibility for children's services.

Some of her major achievements whilst at Parramatta were the establishment of the Tell-a-tale Readers Theatre Group to promote children's literature, her innovative and vibrant program of outreach activities and her professional involvement with the establishment of the young adult service with the first full-time

young adult librarian in New South Wales.

Under Marion's direction the children's services at Parramatta are now firmly established in the forefront of public library services.

In parallel with her career at Parramatta City Library, Marion established herself as an author, lecturer and speaker. Marion became widely recognised as an entertaining and knowledgeable speaker and was much in demand throughout Australia at a wide variety of venues which included universities, colleges and seminars. No subject appeared too difficult for her to handle and she spoke and wrote on a great variety of topics ranging from Readers Theatre, literacy, child studies and public library and school library cooperation. In 1986 she co-authored a book on Readers theatre and in 1993 her picture book *Something green* was launched. Marion's lecturing activities included part-time employment with UTS, coordinating and teaching the unit *Target group: Children and young adults*, and lecturing to students in the Associate Diploma of Social Science — Child Studies, at Liverpool CAE.

In May 1994 Marion took up the position of National Coordinator of the Nestlé *Write Around Australia* program at the State Library of NSW and in this capacity travelled to many venues in NSW and interstate to successfully organise and coordinate programs.

One of her last roles was that of Coordinator of the Young Peoples Program for the Sydney Writers Festival at the State Library. In this, as in everything else she did, Marion applied her considerable organisational skills coupled with her high standard of professionalism and great enthusiasm.

Marion will be remembered as a loyal and supportive friend, for her integrity, her intelligence and sense of humour. Marion has touched the lives of so many — not only her friends and colleagues but also so many students and her listening and reading audiences.

Marion has certainly made her mark and she will always be remembered with great gratitude, respect and affection. ■

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