

# Summer Reading Club: the Road Ahead

Reading campaigns run for children over the summer have long been a part of library services across Australia. Reading programs support the core values of libraries by promoting a lifelong love of reading, the development of reading interests and habits, and maintaining children's reading skills. Programs also provide the opportunity to provide the community with reading support through the delivery of booklists and the sharing of knowledge and expertise.

The Youth and Children's Inner Northern Network (YACINN) was established in late 1999 to help children's librarians in inner city and outer northern regions of Melbourne to re-establish networks with neighboring library services. YACINN has representatives from six library services: Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service, Yarra Melbourne Library Corporation, Moreland City Libraries, Moonee Valley Library Service, Hume Global Learning Village Library Service and Darebin Libraries.

The cessation of the Statewide Summer Reading Program in 1999 left a void in this area, which YACINN considered provided an ideal opportunity for a collaborative project.

The summer reading program in 2000 grew from an in-house program, which had been developed by the then Hume-Moonee Valley Library Service. Such was the success of the 'Be a Reading

Wizard' program that the YACINN team decided to investigate further opportunities. Seven successful programs have run to date (2000–2006), with the program going national for the first time in 2004.

In 2001 YACINN decided to extend the program beyond their network thereby eliminating the need for libraries to repeat planning and reinvent programs for their local service. There was a considerable financial risk in such an undertaking with the initial outlay of funds for graphic design, promotion and printing being borne by the YACINN consortium.



*Top left to right: Jane Grace (Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service), Kathryn Taylor (Hume Global Learning Village), Catherine Killmier (Yarra Libraries). Bottom left to right: Paula Smith (Moonee Valley Libraries), Margherita Barbante (Darebin Libraries) and Caz Smith (Moreland Libraries)*

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The Summer Reading Club targets children aged 5–12. Promotional packs are distributed to participating library services. Professionally produced materials have been essential to the success of the program, with the participation of authors such as Andy Griffiths, Phil Kettle, Jackie French, and in 2006 Emily Rodda provided a real bonus.

The base material provided by YACINN allows library services to create a program that met the needs of their local communities. Some library services choose to run the program in conjunction with holiday programs and others simply focus on the reading program itself.

The chief motive of the reading program is enjoyment; it offers fun and stimulating activities but also supports the core values of service to children by:

- Promoting a love of reading and the library habit;
- Positively affecting young people's reading ability, reading comprehension, writing style, vocabulary, grammar and spelling;
- Supporting young people's reading, writing and IT skills development through fun and educative activities;
- Enhancing 'information rich communities' by publishing quality information and resources; and
- Encouraging civic and social participation.

Other benefits that have been identified include:

- Children are encouraged to use libraries all year round, not just in school terms;
- Libraries can promote their core products and services;
- By combining reading with other activities, it dispels the myth that libraries are boring places and that reading is only ever done alone;
- Children are excited about leisure reading;
- Children participating in reading programs show higher levels of reading achievement, increased comprehension and vocabulary development; and
- The opportunity for library services to collaborate on a cost-effective joint project.


The program benefited by beginning almost immediately after the end of the Statewide Summer Reading Program, when support and demand was high. In 2006 the pickup rate of the program was approximately 80 per cent of library services in Victoria and five other states took up the Summer Reading Program. Success, however, is a double-edged sword. The program has been administered by YACCIN, but with the growing success and spread of the program Australia-wide, the National Summer Reading Program has grown beyond the capacity of this dedicated group.

So seven years and seven successful programs later YACINN is passing the baton to the Australian Library and Information Association: ALIA's dedicated team has the skills and infrastructure to ensure that the program continues to strengthen and develop at a national level.

As for YACINN, some of the original members — including Pam Saunders (formerly Yarra Plenty Regional Library), Paula Kelly (now SLV) and Margherita Barbante (Darebin Libraries) — have moved onto different roles and projects. Others from the original group, among them Paula Smith (Moonee Valley Library Service), Kathryn Taylor (Hume Global Learning Village), Caz Smith (Moreland Libraries) and Jane Grace (Yarra Plenty) have regrouped, recruited some new members to the team and will continue to maintain the network to ensure that local partnerships between their library services continues to grow.

On behalf of all those involved in the delivery of the Summer Reading Club over the years, I would like to thank you all for supporting the program and hope that everyone gets behind ALIA to ensure that the National Summer Reading Program continues to go from strength to strength.

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