



visiting many homes, as well as scenic and historic places. I met people from varieties of denominations, cultures, countries, and levels of both Pacific and "papalangi" society.

Overall my time in Tonga at STC Library became an amazing cultural, spiritual, professional, practical, and social experience and I encourage you to think about this volunteering option. Qualified librarians are always needed as volunteers in school libraries operated by churches, government, and private interests in Tonga and other Pacific countries.

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## Volunteers – value adding in a small library

It's possibly a bit glib to talk about the social capital a library builds in a community, but the epitome of this force for good in our community is the role played by a dedicated group of library volunteers: they enhance our services and constantly renew our faith in human nature! Our storyteller brings children and parents together for fun and learning, and our computer buddies give confidence to beginners of any age who are finding their computers a challenge.

Other volunteers are a source of reliable, long-term team members who have developed particular skills in areas such as the Home Library Service. They are also the backbone of the group that runs our regular book sales. We try to give them a variety of tasks so their work remains a bit interesting, but they tend to develop their own specialties and take pride in 'their' jobs.

Of course one of the basic tasks our volunteers perform is that of re-shelving. They take a great deal of pride in keeping our collection, and consequently the library itself, looking great. They have an accurate knowledge of what's on the shelves and so can often help our clients to find things they need. We the staff encourage our volunteers to answer questions if they can and to bring clients who need more help to our attention.

There are community libraries in small outlying townships that are facilitated by volunteer groups whose members look after small 'bulk loan' collections. They choose the items to be exchanged every three months and organise them so they are accessible for the local population. These volunteers have developed a great deal of expertise in knowing the requirements of their local community and truly add value to our library service.

About a year ago the opportunity arose for the employment of extra casual staff. Two of our long-term volunteers expressed interest, gained the positions, and have become integral members of the team. They already knew how things worked and were liked and appreciated by the permanent staff and many of the clients. They have both now begun studying by distance education: one a Certificate 3 course and the other a Library Technician course. Their enthusiasm has rejuvenated our permanent staff.

The library is often one of the first places new residents visit and if they have been involved in volunteering in a library in their previous location, they are keen to do so again. It's a great way to meet people of similar interests and to feel part of the town right from the start. As we are situated in an area where the populations of retirees and 'tree changers' are increasing, this social function is quite important. It is valuable for the new arrivals and we benefit from the services of some really talented and experienced volunteers from a fascinating range of backgrounds.



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# VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are a great asset to our small country public library and we like to think we give a bit back to them. They are also some of the most powerful advocates for all the services our library provides. We try to show our appreciation often, by publicising their contributions, giving them opportunities to meet each other, and, of course, slap-up morning teas!

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## Volunteering at Marion Library Service

Marion Library has many dedicated volunteers that contribute toward making our service a success.

We commenced using volunteers in 2003 to support the library staff in the re-shelving and processing of new books. With changes in the industry resulting in more books arriving shelf-ready, our volunteers have moved into other areas, including cleaning AV materials, processing debits, processing and repairing toys for the toy library, translating LOTE (Languages Other Than English) material for cataloguing, and preparing, researching, and cataloguing material for our local studies collection.

We also have a dedicated team of volunteers who manage the Friends of the Library. They are responsible for fundraising through selling chocolates, holding film mornings, book sales, and organising raffles. The Friends of the Library also hold informative guest speaker mornings and 'just for fun' dinners and barbeques.

The majority of our volunteers are active retirees that want to give back to the library for the wonderful service they have received over the years. Another source of volunteers is students who are studying at TAFE to become library assistants and are seeking experience in libraries to further their knowledge and increase their chances of employment. They are keen to undertake a variety of tasks. While there are no guarantees that volunteer work will lead to employment, there have been instances over the last six years where four volunteers have gained employment as either casuals or library assistants.

Volunteering at the Marion library Service is growing from our early beginnings; it is expected that it will continue in many different directions in the future. We have volunteer tutors who facilitate play reading groups, philosophy cafés, and music gigs for teens. With increased demand for programs both outreach and in-house, the Marion Library Service is looking to source volunteers who are prepared to work in fields not traditionally thought of as library.

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## A brilliant blend: volunteering at the State Library of South Australia

Our new South Australian tourism banner is *A brilliant blend* and while this phrase has its roots in our high-profile wine industry, it also fits our Volunteer Program at the State Library – 'a brilliant blend' of people, projects, and structure. The library is a volunteer-friendly environment, with a program based on policies and procedures in keeping with government direction and the National Standards for Involving Volunteers. We have

an overall program coordinator and volunteers work alongside supportive staff in a number of work teams to enhance access to our collections and to complement our customer services team.

As well as the knowledge, skills, and experience that volunteers bring to their roles, they also bring a balance of fresh ideas and maturity, of enthusiasm and wisdom. They are integral members of our library family.

The State Library has a rich history of volunteering. One of the earliest volunteers was Lucy Lockett Ayers who started assisting in the 1920s, copying an old Port Adelaide shipping register (1850 to 1857), and who continued her commitment to the library through to the 1960s. The library has benefited enormously from the work of volunteers for over three-quarters of a century and this tradition continues, with over 140 volunteers contributing approximately 13 600 hours in the last twelve months.

Currently volunteers transcribe, proofread, sort and compile documents, view and describe film content, create indexes, assist with retro-conversion and maps geo-referencing, and prepare material for digitising. They also enable us to provide services that would not otherwise be possible, including our English Language Learning and Improvement Service (ELLIS) and our ambassador/tour guide team.

In their customer service role ELLIS tutors assist clients from an ESOL background with reading, writing, pronunciation, and understanding local idioms. The latest ELLIS venture is Advanced Medical English and Communication classes designed to improve the clinical and idiomatic English of medical graduates from non-English speaking countries.

With the State Library being the most visited place in South Australia outside of the Central Market, the ambassador/tour guide role is a busy and vital one. Visitors are delighted when ambassadors meet, greet, and offer to escort them to the service, venue, or facility they require, or offer a spontaneous tour of our buildings and exhibitions. And groups are welcome to book free 'info-tainment' tours led by accredited guides. Volunteers thus help to make the State Library a familiar community place where people are encouraged to feel a sense of ownership.

The involvement of project volunteers has been transformed since those long-ago days of Lucy Lockett Ayers' painstaking hand-copying, with the focus now on volunteers helping to make material accessible online. An extension of this is working with online newspapers – an exciting new volunteer opportunity that the State Library of South Australia is keen to explore.

The National Library of Australia, in collaboration the State and Territory libraries, has begun a program to digitise out of copyright newspapers and deliver them free online with full-text searching, which is enabled by a process of electronic translation known as Optical Character Recognition (OCR). The technology is increasingly sophisticated, but cannot accurately read type that is smudged, faint, skewed, or otherwise obscured. This results in translations with incorrect characters, words, question marks, or other symbols that look like gobbledygook.



**Rob McDade, Heritage Collection Developer Officer, with volunteers Lara and Beth at work in the film room**