

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!

Val Hooper
South Burnett Libraries, Nanango Library
vhooper@southburnett.qld.gov.au

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.

Renya Spratt
Programmes and Lifelong Learning Officer
Marion Library Service
renya.spratt@marion.sa.gov.au

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



The ANDP beta site presents both an image of the newspaper page and the OCR translation and allows users to correct the OCR translation. We look forward to offering projects where volunteers pursue topics relating to our *SA Memory* website, <http://www.samemory.sa.gov.au>.

For volunteers who index hardcopy and microfilmed newspapers, this online activity will be an opportunity to move from old technologies into the digital age. And once they are bitten, they will probably be vying for ranking in the ANDP Text Correctors Hall of Fame! <http://ndpbeta.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/hallOfFame>

In keeping projects up-to-date with new technologies, the library offers a challenging and rewarding 'work place' for behind-the-scenes volunteers. In providing training for our ambassadors in the latest trends in interpretive tour guiding, and by initiating topical services our growing ELLIS client base, we ensure that volunteer involvement in these areas is also meaningful, productive, and satisfying.

Overall, our teams of committed and enthusiastic volunteers help us to provide a level of information provision and customer service that would not be possible without them. They also bring friendship and fun to their work teams and develop positive working relationships across the board. Volunteering at the State Library of South Australia has certainly come a long way since Lucy's pen and paper days!

Jo Chesher
Coordinator Volunteer Program
State Library of South Australia
chesher.jo@slsa.sa.gov.au

Fremantle City Library's volunteers

Fremantle City Library's volunteers contribute significantly to services offered, extending the life of some resources, enhancing the service provided, and completing tasks that otherwise would not be done or would significantly backlog. Volunteers contribute in four areas:

Homebound delivery

Delivery of library materials to the aged, infirm, and disabled was for many years done exclusively by library staff, however, in the past five years volunteers have helped service recipients who most need and value social contact. When making the delivery they spend time chatting, have a cup of tea or coffee, and give homebound people a service that staff members do not have time for.

Library deliveries have become a major event in some people's lives with library staff covering volunteer illness noticing better dress standards in recipients, morning tea in preparation, and disappointment on their faces when regular deliverers do not turn up. The value added to these people's lives is something the library could not do without the regular volunteers.

Local history

Three volunteers have contributed 23 hours collectively each week for a number of years and become valued members of the Local History team, without whom the quality of the service would suffer greatly. Each of them contributes different strengths.

Precise typing skills and attention to detail has earned one of the volunteers the job of interpreting and recording old rate book records. A sense of perfection and accuracy have made another the ideal person for numerous filing and sorting jobs. The third volunteer has proved to be an excellent proof-reader, scanning the daily papers for relevant articles and preparing them for filing.

None of these jobs is particularly exciting; indeed they can be quite tedious and dull. However, they provide vital groundwork without which the collection would not survive, and the time saved by staff has enabled work to begin on a number of new initiatives to move the collection into the digital age.

Library booksales

Quarterly sales of discarded stock and unneeded donations have for many years been run by a dedicated group of volunteers, each of whom contributes two hours on a Saturday to oversee the sale tables and take payment. The team is a long standing one, with one joking recently that all could apply for long service or retirement at the same time. Fortunately on occasions when none of these volunteers has been available, other library users have emerged to step into the breach. The sales could not operate without the dedication of our volunteers who drive a hard but fair bargain and do their best to maximise the library profit from each event.

Toy library

Two volunteers have assisted the toy library for many years, even before it became part of the library service. One volunteer is the weekly 'fix- it man', repairing broken toys, making parts, or using items beyond repair to salvage pieces for others. He can assemble new toys with his eyes shut, according to staff.

The other volunteer visits fortnightly, likes a challenge, and assists checking and cleaning of toys, unpacking and assembling new toys. The help with many complex or detailed tasks is invaluable as staff would not be able to achieve many of these projects in their available time.

Library and Information Managers.

Applications are now open for the postgraduate programs in Library and Information Management or Business Information Management offered by UniSA.

These programs are blurring the boundaries and will enable librarians, records managers, archivists and business information management professionals to reinvent their careers, to keep in touch with the latest digital approaches and work in a wider skilled environment.

The programs offer you the opportunity to study at your own pace: either part-time or full-time, externally online, or face to face in Adelaide.

For further details and information please email moira.lawler@unisa.edu.au or visit unisa.edu.au/bim



School of
**Computer and
 Information Science**

IAMA USA0368, CERIC OS PROVIDER NO 001218