



which include a newsletter and monthly coffee mornings where a staff member usually gives a talk to volunteers followed by time for general discussion.

Our volunteers are rich in experience, enthusiasm, and commitment, and are integral to the culture and development of the organisation. As ambassadors of the library they display enormous passion for the collection and great dedication to their work.

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What on earth is a satellite library?

Cairns Libraries has established a unique service delivery mode to aged and isolated readers. Cairns Regional Council serves a population of 150 000 with 9% being 65 years and over.

Commencing in 2005, Cairns Libraries embarked on a partnership with a number of aged care facilities in the region to establish Satellite Libraries, so-called because they are small and revolve around our larger established libraries. These new facilities have proved to be very popular with residents and complement the Homebound Service operated by members of Friends of Cairns Libraries. Five satellite libraries are now running from aged care facilities in the Cairns Region. Each of the libraries offers a slightly different service which is dependent on the amount of care required by the residents.

With the establishment of libraries for residents unable to travel to one of the nine libraries in the Cairns Regional Council area, Cairns Libraries has been able to expand services to those in our community who have long cherished libraries and reading and fulfil its mission to build and enrich community capacity across the region.



Val Mellick (Volunteer), Val Potter (Resident), and Thelma Tregenza (FOCL) at Glenmead

Cairns Libraries would not be able to offer these enhanced library services were it not for the selfless and enthusiastic assistance of the members of Friends of Cairns Libraries. The Friends, who work at the satellite libraries, offer aid to the readers and help to search for just the right book. It is a great, fun place to be when a bevy of walking frames and wheelchairs head to the library. There is so much laughter and enjoyment.

The benefits to the members of Friends of Cairns Libraries are manifold. The ladies who work at the aged care facility libraries have a wonderful time sharing their love of literature with the residents and take time out of their busy lives to search the branch libraries for titles that will interest the residents. Friends who deliver to residents in their own homes say that they receive personal satisfaction in enabling fellow lovers of literature to continue to read and listen to books well into their twilight years.

Members of Friends of Cairns Libraries receive continued support from library management and recognition for their efforts with small gifts as well as invitations to major library receptions and author lectures. Friends feel as though they are an integral part of the library service, are on first name terms with branch librarians and library staff, and are always welcomed when they arrive for their deliveries. Indeed when a Friend has to cease deliveries because of family or job commitments both the Friend and branch staff are very disappointed.

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The necessity of volunteers

I wrote a paper in 2001 for the 11th National Library Technicians Conference (see <http://conferences.alia.org.au/libtec2001/papers/dyer.html>) as the result of an action research assignment. I am pleased to report that we have been using this volunteer program ever since in our high school library and have now gone one step further. We have initiated a volunteer library 'train the trainer' program so that our senior library monitor volunteers, who have been with us since Year 7, can be given school leadership roles as part of their volunteer library duties. In order to achieve this, the Teacher Librarian and I have trained our senior student library monitors in supervisory roles using a 'buddy system' so that they, in turn, can train our new junior library monitors. This has given them an added responsibility of service in the school and all the volunteers have taken to this concept remarkably well. This then leaves the Teacher Librarian and I to oversee the training that is being carried out, and also allows us to be free to pursue our other numerous tasks at recess and lunchtime.

The setting up of a volunteer system does take patience, and changes often need to be made in response to the different situations that arise, but in the longer term, it is a very worthwhile exercise and we have reaped many rewards. We also involve our senior volunteers in a multitude of library tasks over and above their designated core library training. Not only do they train their junior peers in circulation desk duties, shelving, shelf checking, and workroom duties, but also carry out tasks related to the process of cataloguing books, writing library reports for our school newsletter, engaging in our library cultural weeks, presenting skits and poetry for our annual Book Week celebrations, assisting students with Premier's Reading Challenge queries, and generally assisting in the smooth running of all library activities. These students are not chosen from the high academic levels of our school but from students who are dedicated to serving our community – a community of learners as leaders. They represent a vast array of nationalities and it is very encouraging to see them all working together in such an amicable environment.

We have waiting lists of students wanting to join our library volunteer community but those who are involved are very hesitant to leave, especially now that we have added another dimension to our library monitor training. Their experience is invaluable to our needs and so each person is respected for the contribution that they make. There are certain defined rules that apply to all our tasks, but policymaking has to be flexible in order to achieve the highest outcomes possible.

Our motto is 'None of us is as good as all of us' and we are indebted to our band of volunteers for their invaluable service to our school community.

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