

READING CAN TRANSFORM PEOPLE'S LIVES – MAKE IT HAPPEN

CityLibraries Townsville is partnering with NSW Readers Advisory Working Group for the Read Watch Play online reading group and implementing the *Book of the Month* program to promote #rwpchat and enhance staff readers' advisory (RA) competencies. This program was planned after inspirational conversations with Australian and New Zealand librarians about readers' advisory services.

"Reading can transform people's lives" (The Reading Agency, 2012, <http://readingagency.org.uk>)

I discovered this statement while researching readers' advisory services after RA was added to my position. It was a light-bulb statement as the reason readers' advisory is recognised in our standards as a core public library service. It is not borrowing books that transforms people's lives, so our ethos of community service must extend beyond the issues transaction. It is important that we know our products, know our community, and use innovative practices to get people reading.

While participating in the Love2Read online reading group, I discovered a venn diagram of past reads I have in common with others and many I didn't, and became interested in this

application of social media for the traditional book group. When Ellen Forsyth and the NSW RAWG called for partners for 2013, CityLibraries Townsville signed up. We have committed to tweet on @Townsvillelib using #rwpchat and the monthly themes, and to encourage our community to join us.

Jo Beazley (Logan Libraries) and I visited nine Auckland libraries in 2012 for our QPLA research project on "embedding readers' advisory in professional practice...". I was inspired by Central Library's *Author of the Month* display where different library professionals recommended authors and created a display of their books. By sharing the task, each staff member has an opportunity to make the connection between librarian and readers.

From training and conversations with Paul Brown (Training and Development Advisor at Auckland Libraries and Best Sellers readers' advisory consultant), I have learned of the power of displays, recommendations, programs, conversations, and staff development. A great readers' advisor will understand the purpose and philosophy of RA services and expertly apply their knowledge.

I was inspired by many Auckland ideas, but found I couldn't implement everything at once on my return, so I combined our *Read Watch Play* and *Book of the Month* responses. The display encourages participation in #rwpchat and uses the themes with a focus book highlighted as recommended by a staff member (January's #reread focus was *Pride and Prejudice*). Staff then recommend six related titles by theme and encourage people to submit recommendations in the libraries and through interaction on Facebook and Twitter. Staff readers' advisory competencies are enhanced as they use online search tools and engage with community members about their reading. Themes can also be incorporated into other reading programs.

NSW RAWG has opened the way to continue to promote reading in our communities. RA training and research has inspired me to really get to know my community's reading needs and to develop and share innovative reading programs. If you're similarly inspired, contact me – it's my favourite topic.

Read Watch Play online reading group: <http://readwatchplay.wordpress.com>

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