

# CANBERRA'S LONGEST BOOKMARK



Display of colourful knitted bookmarks

Did you participate in Canberra's National Year of Reading knitting project?

While looking for a National Year of Reading project, Dickson Library's knitting group and library staff came up with the idea for a project inspired by places like the 'biggest pineapple' and the 'biggest prawn' – Canberra's longest bookmark.

The project was developed to encourage community participation, targeting the socially isolated, to increase visits to local public libraries, and to spread the word about the National Year of Reading. The goal was to knit enough bookmarks to stretch between two library branches.

Over the year 26 500 bookmarks were knitted by about 1000 ardent local, interstate, and overseas knitters from as far away as Germany and the United Kingdom. Together, these bookmarks symbolised Canberra's longest bookmark and covered the distance of more than 4 km from Dickson Library to Civic Library.

What made this project special was that it was inter-generational and won the hearts of the young and old – grandparents and local schools participated, office workers formed knitting groups, and men learned how to knit so they could contribute. Some of these participants had never been to the library before and were pleasantly surprised by the services and collections available. Some stalwart members of the community overcame their own physical challenges like Parkinson's disease, MS, and arthritis to knit.

These diverse communities were also drawn together to socialise in the

libraries and make new friends, and language was not a barrier as needles clicked together to achieve a common goal. At Dickson Library, some of our Korean customers practising their English language skills learned to speak English as they knitted and laughed with our knitting ladies.

The bookmarks are now being turned into blankets which will be donated to the homeless and charity groups. If you are interested in helping to sew the bookmarks into blankets, please contact Elena Battey on 6205 9000.

## Interesting facts about knitting

- 367.5 kilometres of wool used in project
- The total length of all bookmarks, laid end to end is over four kilometres
- All materials – wool and needles – were donated
- Bookmarks were received from as far afield as London, Germany, New Zealand, and from all over Australia
- A creative array of bookmarks were submitted along with the regular ones, including sunglasses, a doll, embroidered bookmarks, and individually decorated bookmarks
- Over 5000 bookmarks were donated by anonymous knitters

## Did you know knitting has many benefits?

- Calms – occupies different areas of the brain while freeing up others
- Eases stress by releasing serotonin into the body



Tania McCartney (ACT National Year of Reading ambassador), Julie Long (knitter and National Year of Reading supporter), and Elena Battey (Senior Librarian, Dickson Library) look at a display of some of the donated bookmarks

- Increases communication skills
- Can help with obsessive compulsive disorder
- Mildly obsessive, so can help with other addictions
- Occupies the hands so it can assist in helping to stop smoking
- Knitting and observation of knitting has been known to help sufferers of post-traumatic stress syndrome
- Improves hand/eye co-ordination, small motor skills, and communication
- Helps children with maths, reading, concentration, control, follow-through, and a sense of mastery

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