

# MAKING READING VISUAL

**S**tudents make connections to reading in many diverse ways. It was with this in mind that the ALIA Schools annual conference on literature looked at many of the ways in which our students engage in the story in its many forms, from oral storytelling to graphic novels.

Anne E Stewart did not so much tell stories at our conference, as talk about why storytelling is essential to engagement with literature. She emphasised the importance of the oral tradition in many cultures, for example to Indigenous Australians, in the traditions of Timor Leste, China, and European cultures. She emphasised the importance of making connections with students regarding their own cultures and that of our original inhabitants.

Making the story visual for many students makes it easier to engage with the written text and encouraged the idea of visualising the story as it unravels. Anne demonstrated this technique with the audience using a traditional European folk tale.

Sarah Howell, a Melbourne based graphic novelist, talked about the development of the graphic novel in Australia and overseas. She explained this is a burgeoning area, which engages students from primary age through to adult. The scene of zines, comics and graphic novels is very active in Melbourne and Australia, with many of our graphic novelists being translated into other markets, such as the large French market and the commercial US market. Sarah mentioned many local projects, such as the Graphic Novels Melbourne DVD and a wonderful Indigenous project, Neomad ([vimeo.com/47348199](http://vimeo.com/47348199)).

Sarah's own enterprise, Squish Face Studios, is based in Northcote and is active in encouraging young people in developing the talents of young students with holiday cartooning classes and other events. Her current project is a biography of Dame Enid Lyons, a formidable woman and an untold Australian story. She amused the group by drawing us a picture of the Dame.

All the teacher librarians then got down to workshopping ideas for how the current crop of Children's Book Council of Australia recommended titles can be actively promoted within classes at all levels from primary right through to upper secondary, using language, related texts, thematic study and display.

Reading is alive, but the story is central to young people's engagement with books. Using graphic novels and oral story telling enhance this reading experience.

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## ANOTHER FIRST FOR HUME CITY COUNCIL

Following on from the announcement of Craigieburn Library's success as IFLA's Public Library of the Year in August, Hume Libraries is now Australia's first library to achieve eSmart status.

The achievement was announced at Hume Libraries' Global Learning Centre, where the Craigieburn Library is also located, during a special event designed to demonstrate ways in which libraries can help all members of their communities embrace technology in a smart, safe and responsible way.

eSmart Libraries is a world-leading system designed to help communities manage cybersafety and deal with cyberbullying and bullying. It was launched by former Prime Minister Julia Gillard in 2012.

The Alannah and Madeline Foundation and Telstra Foundation are partners in the \$8 million program in collaboration with Australia's public library network. Since the launch two years ago, a third of Australia's 1,500 public libraries have registered to be part of the program.

Watch out for an in-depth feature on Craigieburn Library and the Global Learning Centre in the January/February 2015 issue of *INCITE*.

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