

LIBRARIES AND NEW LITERACIES

Frances (Frank) Flintoff works in the disability sector at one of Australia's almost entirely digital libraries and as Grant Writer for Street Library, a mobile library and indigenous oral history centre servicing educationally vulnerable youth in remote areas of Ghana, Mozambique, Liberia and Cameroon. She is excited by new technologies and how they can enrich the path to literacy.

Transliteracy is not a new concept for information professionals. We are becoming 'transbrarians': a cross-discipline hybrid species of new media specialists. Like our children – often fluent multi-platform users before we are – we must swiftly abandon old technology and gather new skills or fear being left behind. As the infamous Alvin Toffler/Herbert Gerjuoy mashup states, "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn".

The ways stories are told and received have changed. Instead of fighting the print vs ebook battle, we can pause to consider the possibilities of marrying multiple technologies with creative pedagogy. Language and literacy are still much-loved values but can now, as Sue Thomas wrote, be approached differently by bringing together "all literacies relevant to reading, writing, interaction and culture, both past and present".

Children walk a different path to literacy than you and I, but the end point is the same – the ability to make meanings, interact, inspire and express ourselves. Because of this new road you may find yourself bringing things into a library which traditionally haven't belonged there.

3D printers are one of my favourite non-traditional library tools. In 2013 I gave a presentation on using 3D printers to create early literacy resources for visually impaired children, and during that time supported a crowd-funded project called the Doodle3D WiFi box which enables you to draw on your iPad, press print, and your 2D sketch prints as a 3D object. It's really easy – most of the first test group were kids.

Imagine the possibilities: a storyteller, community elder or author speaks while an artist or illustrator live-sketches on an iPad, and as it happens the image is projected to a big screen. After the drawings print, a class can re-enact or add to the narrative, learning about storytelling conventions,

literary devices, structure and recall along the way. Or a large group could view a live feed to the printer, running simultaneously with the story telling – possibly a great opportunity for public art installation.

Are you into sustainability? Then you can melt down your old 3D objects back into filament with an extruder, ready to use for the next story.

This no doubt raises the issue of cost. There's no need to go large – you can work your way up. Many 3D printers are available for under \$500 USD, the Doodle3D comes in at around \$150 AUD and there are lots of filament deals around. Can't afford a new computer? How about a Raspberry Pi or a Hackintosh running Linux, or teaming up with your local hacker space or a school?

It's understandable that transliteracy and its reach over all forms of communication could be intimidating, but this is where starting small helps.

Not all libraries have to change the world at the same time, but every library will change a person's world at some point.

Making it easier for the keen and curious to explore, absorb, experiment and play is an awesome start. For me, that's what being a 21st century information professional is all about.

FRANK FLINTOFF
frankellenflintoff@gmail.com

See us at VALA 2014 Stand 16



We can solve your information problems

**MAXUS**
Delivering Information Solutions



For further information contact Maxus or your local representative

VIC	Maxus Australia	039646 1988
SA	Ibatax Consulting	088234 7113
WA	Infodata	086420 2176
NT	Peter Walton & Associates	088927 3669

maxus@maxus.net.au www.maxus.net.au