

	<p style="text-align: right;">Date : 08/06/2007</p> <p><b>Public Libraries and Their Communities: South Australia Reads</b></p> <p><b>Teresa Brook</b>  <b>Public Library Liaison</b>  State Library of South Australia  Public Library Services  8 Milner Street, Hindmarsh  South Australia 5007  Telephone (08) 8348 2311  Facsimile (08) 8340 2524  <a href="mailto:Brook.teresa@saugov.sa.gov.au">Brook.teresa@saugov.sa.gov.au</a></p>
<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>128-3 Division III</b>
<b>Simultaneous Interpretation:</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"> <b>WORLD LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CONGRESS: 73RD IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE AND COUNCIL</b>  19-23 August 2007, Durban, South Africa  <a href="http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla73/index.htm">http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla73/index.htm</a> </p>	

## Introduction



South Australia is one of the eight states in the country of Australia and has boundaries with other States on the west, north and east and on the south is flanked by the Southern Ocean. It has a total area of 984,377 km<sup>2</sup>, representing one eighth of the Australian continent. More than 50 per cent is pastoral land, with 6.5 per cent of the State designated as national parks and wildlife reserves. South Australia has a population of nearly 1.6 million people, with three quarters of the population residing in the capital city of Adelaide

There are 140 public library service points across regional and metropolitan South Australia, serving communities with as few as 300 residents to over 150,000 community members.

Public libraries in South Australia are supported by Public Library Services (PLS) a business unit of the State Library of South Australia. PLS provides a range of statewide services which, include contract management and consortia management, procurement of materials, free public access internet via cost effective IT network, project and program management and advocacy

## Partnerships

The Big Book Club and The Little Big Book Club would not be possible without the support of the South Australian Government, the Australia Council for the Arts, Public Libraries of South Australia through the State Library of South Australia, Local Government and The Advertiser Newspaper. The partnerships that have been developed have played a key role in the success of all the projects.

This partnership model is being extended nationally with both TBBC and TLBBC launching in Queensland in February 2007.

### **The Big Book Club**

In 2003 Public Libraries of South Australia partnered with The Big Book Club (TBBC), an independent arts organisation, to create an innovative statewide reading club. The main objectives included:

- To promote the love of reading
- Facilitate the union of communities, libraries, authors, publishers and other stakeholders
- Support emerging and established South Australia and Australian authors
- Continue to promote to all South Australians including funders and policy makers; that libraries play an essential role in the building of social capital as well as promote a socially inclusive community
- Support, encourage and impart knowledge to parents and carers on the importance of reading and reading to children from an early age.

TBBC is for all South Australians regardless of their socio economic status, age or educational background. Each month a title is chosen and South Australia is invited to read the book together. The selected author travels to metropolitan and regional South Australian public libraries to meet readers at a number of hosted events. Due to the diversity of books, the events attract a wide range of attendees and have become an opportunity for social interaction at the local community level. They have also assisted in breaking down the barriers of social isolation, as well as promoting the library as a friendly and welcoming place to go. Since establishment in April 2003 the Big Book Club has promoted and toured 60 authors and held over 200 events which has seen a total of **24,106** South Australians attend metropolitan and regional events. 14,839 metropolitan and 9,267 regional attendees

The highlights of the past three years have included

- An overwhelming 1250 attendees for world renowned environmentalist Tim Flannery in October 2005 and 1400 for Australian actor /author William McInnes in November 2005
- TBBC partnered with a national campaign *Books Alive* which toured 6 authors over a three week period –total attendance 4704

### **The Little Big Book Club**

Building on the momentum of TBBC; The Little Big Book Club (TLBBC) an early childhood literacy program for children 0-5 years of age, was established. With one million dollars in funding, from the State Government of South Australia over four years, TLBBC was launched in February 2006.

Every baby born in South Australia is eligible to receive a TLBBC pack which contains a specially commissioned book each year, It's Rhyme Time DVD and a TLBBC library bag. Its Rhyme Time DVD is a South Australian initiative, is it entertaining for children, and also provides a modeling and educative role for parents, on how to read and interact with their children. The DVD includes segments in other languages and AUSLAN translations. The DVD is considered a

valuable resource for parents, in improving literacy levels and gaining confidence to read to their children.

TLBBC pack is available from the library or the Child and Youth Health Centre this is a key strategy to connect with new parents, who may not be library users. When collecting a pack, customers are provided with information about the library and are encouraged to join the library. 17,500 babies are born in South Australia annually, after just 10 months of TLBBC being operational, 80% of the annual allocation of bags had been distributed.

To encourage reading to children each month, TLBBC selection committee chooses a book for each age group 0-2 year (pre talkers), 2-3 (talkers) and 4-5 years (pre readers). These categories have been based on the American Library Association groupings. These books are featured in media outlets, public libraries and bookstores. The aim is to assist adults and children in selecting tried and loved books for young children. To further assist in the selection of books, Public Libraries in South Australia have colour coded their children's picture book collections, with a range of colour coded stickers in TLBBC age groups.

Reading to your child is a great bonding experience, building on this interaction, a set of activity sheets including simple age appropriate craft activities are developed each month. The activity sheets are available free on the website.

A major benefit of TBBC and TLBBC for the South Australian public library network is the high profile editorial and media support. The state's daily newspaper, The Advertiser runs a monthly editorial on the selected title and events. This media coverage has ensured TBBC and TLBBC remain top of mind in the South Australian community. Since the establishment of the TBBC we have received over one million dollars in editorial and promotional exposure, with public libraries mentioned in all articles. Professional development and acknowledgement of the wide ranging skills required in public libraries have been highlighted throughout the TBBC and TLBBC initiatives. Library staff have enhanced their skills and experience in event management and media liaison skills through interaction with journalists and the organisation of events.

The establishment of business partnerships with local book sellers has provided opportunities for community members to purchase past and current titles at the TBBC events, and strengthen business in rural areas. This has been particularly welcomed in remote areas.

## **Staff Development**

An early literacy training program for staff was developed to provide programming for this new target grouping in the form of Baby Bounce and Rhyme sessions. The program received funding from the Local Government Research and Development Fund in partnership with the State Library of Western Australia. The training includes child development, connecting with communities, reading and practical workshops.

## **Baby Bounce and Rhyme**

Parents are encouraged to become members of their local library and attend Baby Bounce and Rhyme sessions. The sessions include story reading, nursery rhymes and singing and are great way of bonding with a baby as well as creating an opportunity to interact with other parents and reduce social isolation. This specifically designed program has been implemented in 53 metropolitan and regional libraries with overwhelming attendance.

The program illustrates the essential role libraries play in literacy development, the building of social capital and encouraging a socially inclusive community. It has also assisted in Libraries

developing strong relationships with Child and Youth Health and Child Care Centers as these stakeholders are the main provider of services to new parents and careers.

A survey of South Australia's public libraries shows a rise of 10.14 per cent on the borrowing of children's picture books across the state since February 2006, highlighting the positive statewide impact of TLBBC, Baby Bounce and Rhyme has had on the borrowing of Childrens Picture Books by the community.

### **TBBC Website [www.thebigbookclub.com.au](http://www.thebigbookclub.com.au)**

In 2006 TBBC and TLBBC website was launched. The website plays a key role as a portal and a source of information for books, reading, literacy, authors and events for South Australia. The site provides information about upcoming TBBC events, authors' links to booksellers, publishers, information for book clubs and reader guidance. TLBBC website offers a range of free support materials, for parents and carers and anyone interested in reading and literacy. Resources are available through the website which is updated regularly includes information on new releases, monthly selections and professionally designed activity sheets to complement the books.

The following statistics have identified the high usage the website attracts

#### *Calendar year statistics (Feb 06 – Feb 07)*

- Unique visitors: 20,113
- Visits: 33,103
- Hits: 1,286,472

In February /March 2006, when 'book club' was Googled (Australia) the first entry for The Little Big Book Club was listed on the seventh page of results as the 78<sup>th</sup> entry. In February 2007, The Little Big Book Club was listed on the first page of results as the sixth entry. (Rankings on Google are based on user behavior. Therefore high rankings indicate significant use compared to other similar sites)

### **Premiers Reading Challenge**

The Premiers Reading Challenge is open to all South Australian students and is now in its third year of running. Students from Reception (age 5) to Year 9 (Age 15) are required to read 12 books in a school year from February to September. Twelve books in the year will see a child to receive a gold medal, with silver and bronze also available. If a medal is not achieved, any reading is acknowledged. With a number of literacy and reading programs throughout South Australia, The Premier's Reading Challenge has the highest participation rate with 718 schools participating in 2006. This is 90% of all eligible schools and a record 90,915 children, which exceeded the South Australian State Strategic Plan target of 80% of schools by 2006.

Anecdotal evidence from schools reported that the Premier's Reading Challenge is having a substantial impact on the motivation for students to read more books and it is particularly encouraging boys to read. Of the 90,915 students completing the challenge, 49% are boys and 51% girls.

The benefits of the Premiers Reading Challenge:

- Raises the profile of reading, libraries and literacy in schools

- Gives students a focus for reading
- Encourage students to read more books and enjoy reading more
- Encourages boys in particular by being challenged
- Offers incentives for reluctant readers
- Builds self esteems and pride, school unity and a sense of achievement
- Increases the involvement of parents in their children's reading
- Increases library borrowing
- Assisting to make reading a socially acceptable activity both in classrooms and for leisure.

For more information regarding Premiers Reading Challenge  
<http://www.premiersreadingchallenge.edu.au>

## **Future projects**

### **The Vegemite Little Aussie Reader**

On 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2007, an agreement between TBBC Inc and Kraft was signed for the development of early literacy promotional program which includes a range of scrapbooks to be distributed through childcare centers and libraries; to document the literacy development of a child. A partnership has been negotiated with Kraft Foods under the Vegemite brand to partially fund the production of the materials proposed for The Vegemite Little Aussie Reader. Additional funds have been secured through the Australia Council for the Arts. Accredited long day care centres will be the first point of distribution however the scrapbook will also be included in the TLBBC reading pack for 2008 with an additional allocation for public libraries.

The Little Aussie Reader is a creative idea developed in South Australia using the expertise of the Department of Education and Children's Services, Child Care workers, PLS and various other professionals. It is designed to engage parents of young children and promote the importance of reading aloud in a child's development. The scrapbook is designed to reach out to segments of the community who may not use libraries on a regular basis, e.g. the children of busy working parents who utilise childcare.

There are approximately 10,050 childcare centres (6,800 accredited long day care centres) in Australia offering just over 500,000 places (Source: ABS 2001). This figure has increased significantly over the past four years with additional funding from the Federal Government. In 2002, 45% of children aged fewer than five spent some time in day care. The percentage of children in day care in 2007 is considered more likely to be around 53%.

To support and assist childcare and library staff, a free resource file will be distributed to every accredited long day care centre and public library in Australia. The file will contain background information of early childhood language and literacy development, fact sheets for parents and lesson plans based on age appropriate books.

Each month, additional resources will be offered online to add to this file.

### **Picture Book to Performance**

On 1 June 2006, Windmill Performing Arts and The Little Big Book Club announced a unique three year partnership, with the aim of promoting and developing the literacy in children in their first five years. The partnership incorporates reading, multi-media and performance literacy – a project known as Picture Book to Performance. The collaboration aims to

strengthen and promote the link between literacy and performance literacy and to nurture a state of readers and theatre-goers.

The inaugural manuscript developed for Picture Book to Performance is *Cat* by Mike Dumbleton and Craig Smith. The picture book, e-book and online games and activities were released on 1 June, 2007. The theatrical production by Windmill premiered at the State Library on 3 July.

This project is made possible by the strong commitment and partnership with the State Government of South Australia, Local Government Association, media partner The Advertiser and Australia Council for the arts.

For more information regarding TBBC and TLBBC [www.thebigbookclub.com.au](http://www.thebigbookclub.com.au)

### **Million Dollar Book Initiative**

In March 2006, The State Government pledged one million dollars to child care centres to purchase books as an early literacy initiative.

Public Library Services has provided assistance to Department of Education and Children's Services in the sourcing, purchasing and distribution of the 80,000 titles for the 700 child care centres in South Australia. Public Library Services is well positioned to assist as it manages over 5 million dollars per annum in material purchasing and material acquisition contracts for the 144 Public Libraries in regional and metropolitan South Australia. This is another example of the State Government's commitment to literacy

### **Conclusion**

These three projects, The Little Big Book Club, The Premiers Reading Challenge and The Big Book Club provide an opportunity for South Australians to engage in reading and literacy programs at any age, anywhere. The successes of the projects have paved the way for future endeavors such as The Vegemite Little Aussie Reader and Picture Book to Performance. And therefore continues to promote to all South Australians including funders and policy makers that libraries play an essential role in the building of social capital as well as promoting a socially inclusive community

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