Report to Principals 2011

During 2010, ISLA continued to build on our reputation for providing relevant, needs-based, practical information to assist teacher librarians to improve their teaching and management practices in Illawarra schools.

Dapto High School was once again the venue for our first Professional Development Day, on the 5th May. The day was launched somewhat controversially by Education Consultant, Mal Lee who had attracted my attention through an article published in SCIS Connections about the role of the library in 21st Century schools. He challenged us to think about the traditional role of libraries and how they did or did not fit into the current information context.

Paul MacDonald gave another outstanding presentation on the 2010 Shortlisted Books and Tohby Riddle gave us an amazing insight into the illustrations and design ideas in his books. These speakers proved, once again that the book is a long way from being dead! Once again we had a very successful partnership with the hospitality team at the school who provided us with an excellent catering service.

Our second Professional Development Day was held at the Nan Tien Temple on 28th October. This was the first time we ventured out of the school environment. The venue proved to be excellent for our needs. The seating, the availability of individual microphones for Q & A sessions, the tranquillity of the location and the in-house catering was a much appreciated experience for those who attended at such a busy time of year.

The day was led by Lizzie Chase from Library services, who introduced us to several easy-to-use Web 2.0 tools which could be used by teacher librarians to enhance their teaching of technology. Lizzie was able to provide step by step instructions which I’m sure people wanted to go back and try in their schools.

Paul MacDonald has become a fixed item on our program. As a result of his retail experience and his lecturing background, he is always aware of current issues and trends in the world of books. His presentation this time focussed on books to support topics related to the new Australian Curriculum, and “good reads” for students of all ages.

We were also given some very valuable advice on how to stay fit and healthy and ways to avoid repetitive strain injuries in the library context by local Gerringong physiotherapist, Mark Burns.

The day concluded with an outstanding presentation by illustrator, Sarah Davis on Visual Literacy. Sarah has a teaching background, which was obvious by the quality of her presentation which focussed on points to consider when teaching children about the techniques used in her books.

The feedback, together with the continuing high attendance figures, proves that we are providing the right sort of assistance and networking opportunities that teacher librarians require. These days would not be possible without the dedication, support and efforts of our ISLA executive and planning committee who volunteer their time to provide our programs.

Our conferences provide an opportunity for the host school to showcase their school and their library to a large group of people. All participants value having a whole day devoted to their professional needs and find the days informative and professionally rewarding. The skills learnt are immediately transferable into library practice. Throughout both days, there were also many opportunities for teacher librarians and library assistants to develop informal networks and share their issues and concerns with colleagues within their local area.

The Professional Learning Policy for Schools requires schools to provide for the needs of staff and regions are encouraged to “implement quality professional learning in collaborative and collegial environments”. We believe that we are able to offer teacher librarians the learning opportunities that are specific nature to our job. Our program could not have operated without the support of Principals, so on behalf of the Organising Committee, I would like to thank you for your support, and urge you to encourage your teacher librarian to once again engage in our professional learning opportunities for 201.

Margaret Cooper,
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