

NANCY BOOKER

HONOUR LECTURE

1998

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Thankyou for the great honour of inviting me to deliver the 1998 Nancy Booker Lecture . I have seen this event advertised for some years but it was usually on a week night and I rationalised that a late night made getting up for work on the next day a monumental effort and I was not anxious to travel home late on the trains and it seemed to be always on the night that I have my Guide meetings and I didn't know anyone personally who was going and I invented several other equally weak excuses with the end result that to my shame , I have never attended this event before. So, when I was invited to speak this year I was highly honoured and readily agreed and then I nearly had a stroke from nervousness just thinking about it ! Once again my mouth had run away ahead of my brain ! Who exactly was Nancy Booker ? Why was there a lecture name after her ? Who comes to listen to such a lecture ? What kind of standard is set each year ? What will everyone expect ? How many people come ? Have I got enough interesting things to say or will people snore in their chairs ? So, now I offer you this time together with some trepidation, feeling that there have been some very worthy people associated with this evening starting from Nancy Booker herself and ending with all the hard-working professionals of now, who give their best to keep the principles and ideals alive that were initiated all those years ago.

To read the story of two people in recent history whose tales have crossed my path is to feel personally humbled and professionally very proud . In 1996 I was awarded an inaugural ALIA Award , the Marjorie Cotton Award for Children's Librarianship. This was a momentous occasion for me and it has had a profound effect on the detail of my life - I have to say that at its most basic level I am now about 10 times busier than I was before ! Most of this is a great pleasure and this intense level of professional activity will continue at least until the end of this year I should think and I will tell you more about the immediate project a little later. It was a long and tortuous process for C.Y.S.S. to get the award accepted in the first place and I remember many CYSS AGMs where Sue Parkinson gave her report of the latest drafts of the terms of reference and progress with the ALIA Executive and I felt that though it was an important focus of attention for the profession , it seemed that the barriers were too high to scale. However persistence paid off (and this is one of my favourite sayings !) and suddenly the award was accepted and was to be launched.

This Award was not something one could apply for but a person had to be nominated and as I was flying about the office of Gosford City Library one day at typical tornado pace , Jenny Gleeson mentioned that she was going to nominate me . Well that was a very nice compliment and I thought if it only took one second to sign my name on the form , then I would agree ! Can you imagine my surprise some months later to be informed that I was the winner of the award - astounding news !. I asked a few questions in the time leading up to the presentation at the National ALIA Conference in September, about just who Marjorie Cotton was but only had a most sketchy picture by that time. However, obviously she had been a most worthy person to have an award named after her and at the presentation I was handed a citation that gave some further background coverage of the significance of her contribution to Children's Librarianship . So , like a jigsaw, I was getting the whole picture of a piece of history.

Two more surprises were in store in this saga - nothing is as simple as it seems, is it ! A month or two after the award I received a book through the post to the library and the sender was Marjorie Cotton Isherwood of Mollymook - what a coincidence I thought, receiving a book sample from someone with the name of Marjorie Cotton on the label . Its not a very common name after all.

You've guessed , I'm sure . The parcel and the letter it contained were from Marjorie Cotton herself and a most wonderful, warm, irreverent, feisty, critical, lively letter is was too from a lady who is quite an advanced age by now. She simply wanted to congratulate me and assure me that she was not dead and to add a few very important details to the list of accomplishments that she had been credited with in the citation. Since then we have exchanged quite a few letters and talked together on the phone quite a few times and I hope that one day soon we will be able to meet because I know that we are going to like one

another immensely. She still exudes the enthusiasm and cheerfulness that were her trademark in her working years and she is very modest about her achievements so that most of what I know about her 'moving and shaking' actually comes from other sources. She claims that Nancy Booker pushed her all the way - Nancy was, according to Marjorie, the visionary who was totally unafraid of past traditions and bureaucracy and she pursued the priorities as she saw them with single-minded zeal and Marjorie was happy to apply her energy and skills at the practical level. She often had to give Storytelling demonstrations and conduct Children's activities at Mosman for dignitaries that Nancy Booker dragged over hoping to make a point. Marjorie said that one occasion she, Marjorie, was living in a private hotel and there was only one hall telephone for all the guests to use. This didn't bother Nancy Booker one bit - she used to ring up Marjorie at any time of the day or night and often talked for two hours or more and when Marjorie would protest that she really had to get off the phone, Nancy just stated that the business that they were discussing was just SO important that everyone else would have to wait! Despite the modesty of Marjorie Cotton and her assertion that she was just one of many, there are many people who know that she made a considerable contribution to the children's library scene as we know it today. Administrators did not want to take children's work seriously in the library world. They did not believe that specialised training was necessary. They did not understand the world of children's literature. The people who gradually changed their minds were the people like Marjorie Cotton at the practical and energetic level and Nancy Booker from the organisational and professional training level. These were 'movers and shakers' in their time and we build on that foundation now.

A second big surprise arrived in the same week as Marjorie Cotton's first parcel and letter. It was another letter telling me that I had won the 1996 ALIA Travel Grant for undertaking a professional project and enclosed was a \$5000 cheque. This was a grant offered to members of ALIA annually and candidates apply by lodging a submission detailing a proposal - what a wonderful opportunity to follow a professional dream! I will expand more on this later too but suffice here to say that this has turned my life around a second time and if I thought I was busy before, I was to learn the meaning of moving into another orbit to get everything done!

In a way I think of the Marjorie Cotton Award and the Travel Grant in the same basket of goodies. They were no way dependent on or related to, each other (except by their attachment to ALIA) but they are both based on my commitment to the best, the most lively, the most professional, the most supportive, the most innovative, the best prepared children's and young adult library service possible and the search for new programs, approaches, methods, marketing, organisation, etc that works to reach out to children and teenagers in our communities. In the award I was offered recognition for innovations and outreach over the seven service points of our library service and into the schools and communities beyond while the travel grant enabled me to follow a dream of finding out how other libraries, especially those in Canada and USA, programmed for their communities so that I could offer other professionals here some new ideas for application in their communities throughout Australia. In the end it is hard to separate these two missions and the inputs required.

Now I have come to a night devoted in name to another pioneer of the provision of library services to children and young adults - Nancy Booker. Like my experience with Marjorie Cotton, I have started on the path with very little knowledge but it has been an interesting journey of discovery.

The first source which gave me some idea of the importance of Nancy Booker was from a tribute to her originally published in 'Children's Libraries Newsletter' (a forerunner of 'Orana') in August 1966. It was written to recognise her contribution to the development of the Children's Section of the then Library Association of Australia, the forerunner of ALIA. In 1946 a School Library Committee was set up and Nancy Booker was the Convenor. Interestingly, Marjorie Cotton was also on this inaugural pioneer committee! They compiled Bulletins on professional issues with a very practical slant and these were quite successful throughout Australia and NZ and were one of the first attempts to link children's librarians through this means. The professional body of Librarians at the time was the Australian Institute of Librarians and at their Sydney Conference in 1947 there is recorded that there was a meeting of the

Discussion Group of School and Children's Libraries and Nancy Booker was the Chairman. They carried the motion :

That with a view to helping to arrive at standards for school libraries in Australia and a basis of co-operation with children's libraries, a committee be formed in each State similar to the School Library Committee at present existing in NSW but including representatives of children's library services and that at the next general conference the deliberations and recommendations of these committees be considered to endeavour to arrive at desirable standards for library work with children in Australia.

By 1950 the NSW Branch of the Library Association of Australia had appointed a School and Children's Committee, led by Nancy Booker and she and her committee began exerting pressure to have a section formally recognised. From what I have learned, pressure from Nancy Booker would be considerable and relentless pressure indeed ! This was a lady with a very strong personality and iron hard convictions ! The Committee worked intensely and in 1951 proposed a training course for children's work in public libraries. This was radical stuff at the time. The sustained effort and untiring zeal in this direction saw a 5 day course launched at Mosman Municipal Library with 36 students attending and this was a landmark which we should all applaud today. We have moved a long way since then but it started there. In the time since those days, the present arrangement of Children's and Youth Services Section and the Schools Section have developed and they now contribute to the life and professional health of librarians who serve children and young adults in each State in a way that would have pleased Nancy Booker I am sure. There is no doubt that her strength and purpose provided the impetus for the establishment of our professional link through the NSW Sections and that she influenced the way that people thought about the training of Children's Librarians. She ran courses in Children's Literature at WEA classes throughout the 1950s and professionals and members of the community and teachers enjoyed her knowledge, enthusiasm for her subject and her true appreciation of the importance of children's literature.

The biographies show that Nancy Booker was descended from one of Chatswood's first settlers and that she grew up in that area attending Chatswood Public School North Sydney Girls High and Sydney University. She worked as a library assistant at Sydney Teacher's College from 1925-1939 and then worked at Armidale Teacher's College from 1940-1942. On returning to Sydney she took charge of the Teacher's College Library for the period 1942 to 1953 followed by her time as a lecturer in School Library Practice 1954-1958. Her knowledge of children's books and their history was legendary and her influence in spreading an appreciation of children's literature incalculable. Further career changes saw her entering the halls of Sydney University as Senior Cataloguer in 1959 and from there she took leave to work with UNESCO in Paris 1961-1962 as a Documentalist and then resumed her work as a Cataloguer-Librarian until 1966. Then she turned her considerable talent toward the area of private education and became a School Library Consultant to private schools. This potted version does not indicate the degree of commitment and dedication, the energy, the vision and the organisation which she applied to this area she loved with a passion.

Following some wonderfully interesting phone calls to the professional friends of Nancy Booker I have found a few insights into the person who was Nancy Booker that can help us to round out the picture of this high achiever. Nancy is soon to be 92 but the level of respect and friendship with which her friends speak, has not dimmed with the years. As mentioned before, she had no time for bureaucracy and traditional hierarchies if they had outlived their usefulness. She had a tremendous capacity for work and combined an incredible eye for detail with a vision of the 'big picture'. She was described by one former student as the best trainer that a new, young, new librarian could possibly have with tireless and indefatigable attention to clear communication at every level and thorough attention to every possible problem. This was a lady who certainly 'moved and shook' things wherever she went and her attention to the need for a formal section in ALIA devoted to children's and young adult needs received the same attention as everything else she did. Well done, Nancy Booker ! As Children's Librarians, this is where our modern foundations stones were laid.

The Nancy Booker Lecture was instituted by the NSW Group of the Children's Library Service as a forum for Children's and Youth Librarians and others concerned with the promotion of high quality children's literature and professional development in the field of Children's and Youth Librarianship. The inaugural lecture was delivered by Nancy Booker herself on 21st March at the Annual One - Day Conference held by the group.

So, where has my professional development taken me in recent years? The Marjorie Cotton Award was presented in September 1996 and then I took up the Travel Grant in June of last year 1997. The following two months were the most impressive and enjoyable professional experience imaginable. There had been intense preparation in the 6 months before going sorting out the best libraries to visit, sorting out what was possible in some sort of itinerary, sorting out if fitting it all in would be possible, writing to all the contact places to glean details of their programming, sorting out a million and one versions of the travel plan, and so on. The direction of this research was investigation of children's and young adult programming in public libraries and applications of Family Literacy. From my original Internet explorations there were something like 350 replies that resembled in the end a giant sized roll of toilet paper. These were waded through and assessed and after 6 months I had firm arrangements with 21 libraries and over the 8 weeks of travel the list expanded to one-day visits to 32 libraries. Approximately 1 month was spent in Canada and 1 month in The States including Alaska and every point of contact was productive and welcoming, interesting and useful and a sheer pleasure! The early spade work paid off - I arrived on a library doorstep as arranged, at 9 o'clock in the morning and it was straight to work. Hardly any introductions were required for we had corresponded so much that they almost knew me and certainly they knew what I was looking for. They had all the printed matter they could assemble ready, appointments timetabled for the day and lunch ordered and there was not a wasted minute. By the time I left at the end of the day I had a mass of printed matter brochures, pamphlets, miles of notes I had scribbled, a reel of film to develop and a professional colleague's friendship to treasure for the future. There was a generous sharing of resources, experience, time and expertise at every place and each of the 32 libraries had a great deal to offer.

So what are some of the major differences I encountered? I am not sure which literary analogy fits - Alice in Wonderland, Dorothy in Oz or Pandora with her box but every location provided me with a stimulating sample of something different, a new idea, a unique program, an exciting arrangement of the library with lively decorations and fittings, an eye-catching display or brochure, a stimulating way of looking at things or a very well set out manual. Some libraries in Canada were suffering from very stringent budget cuts but others seemed as if they had access to the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow! However, in every case, the spirit of commitment and the dedication to innovation in the development of the best possible service to children and young adults was alive and well and our common links in these terms assured a most warm and productive time together. Of course, everything was different from my experience in Australia - everything is different from Province to Province in Canada and from State to State in America! The sources of finance vary the allocation within budgets vary, the importance and level of priority of the children's service varies, the responsibilities of Children's or Youth Librarians vary, the scope of their service varies, their physical arrangements in buildings and equipment vary, their communities vary (enormously) and so on. Naturally, the children's service does not operate in a microcosm, separate from the whole library and so some of my observations relate to more than just a children's service alone.

These observations are in no particular order.

One outstanding but intangible feature which was lovely to bask in was the general respect and importance ascribed to the public library by the surrounding community. It was considered to be one of the important public buildings and services in their community. It was listed on the town tourist brochure as one of the interesting places to visit. It attracted an aura of pride when it was mentioned in casual conversation in a coffee shop in town. People, including many teenagers, volunteer to work there regularly and they treasure the reference that will be available for their resume because it shows that they have been reliable and serious about performing an important civic duty for the health of their community. University students apply for Summer Holiday employment in libraries and many work there for about 8 weeks performing a valuable role in preparing and implementing Summer Reading Programs and holiday events. The State

subsidises employment of students for the Summer so the library can apply for a subsidy and offer employment for that period and the students rate this employment highly. It seems that the library system in both Canada and the States enjoys a higher status than in Australia. The Mayor of Chicago is quoted as saying that the three most important public works responsibilities in a city neighbourhood (read 'suburb') are their schools , their parks and gardens and their public library. I wonder if our politicians feel the same way ?

A second feature that was different, not in its nature for I know that there are small examples in Australia, but in its scale of application, relates to the matter of partnerships between the libraries and their communities. The one State authority in a County is mostly responsible for the public libraries , the schools and the parks and often there is very close liaison between these. They are often located quite close to each other and so physically they can interact more than we often can (because ours are under different authorities, they often have no related planning development or consideration). The Heads of each of these sectors, alongside the Heads of Drainage and the Heads of Roads and Traffic , the Head of Public Buildings and other such departments, meet regularly within their State authority and so there is opportunity for better and more detailed discussion of plans programs, problems, interaction, budgeting, staffing, restructuring and the resultant total conduct of the City or County benefits from this level of cohesion and decision making. If there is a big celebration in the area, then every Head of Department is involved and has a part to play. If there is restructuring then every Department knows what is happening to every other Department and is part of the total effort. The result is that the Library is seen as part of the essential fibre of the community and involved at every level . At the grass roots level, it means that there is a community network that can be called on for many library purposes. In many libraries, the programming of continuous weekly or monthly programs or the conduct of single events leans heavily on contacts made through other members of the network and through them, contact with community groups. Many libraries have regular garden club meetings in the library and these people often look after beautiful gardens around the library with the Parks and Gardens Department supplying the soil, fertiliser and plants. Other libraries are the home for the local Geographical Society, for Music Ensemble groups, for art groups, for Traveller Talks, for single mothers groups, for ethnic groups and so on. These often have a loose attachment to some other sector of the State authority but it has moved beyond that to use a community facility as a comfortable home base from time to time. There is no thought of charging non-profit making community groups for the use of this facility for the State sees the library facility as belonging to the community in the first place. There is no dictum of 'user pays' or 'value added' and how nice that is ! The library itself offers many programs and events such as huge Summer Reading Programs, holiday activities, weekly Storytimes for babies and toddlers and pre-schoolers, adult literary discussion groups, one-to-one literacy tutoring, small group after-school homework tutoring, Teen Clubs or Youth Advisory Boards , Friends of the Library, Volunteers Groups and Volunteers Groups and the like but the link with community groups was another thing altogether. Most Australian Libraries could not claim this intensity or the variety of interaction with their local community . A unique relationship was that between the Chicago Public Library and the network of City Museums. The Museums gave the library a given number of free family passes for its exhibitions and these were accessioned the same as a book item and people could borrow these and take their family to the Museum at no cost - they could be reserved the same as a book and had the same overdue charges the same as a book if not returned on time. Special exhibitions generally last about 6 months so this was essentially a circulating item for 6 months - some books don't even last that long ! This was exceptionally popular amongst the poor families in Chicago who could not afford to take the whole family to the museum and it has been a wonderful way to introduce many new families to the other free services of the library. This was being extended to Theatre passes and Art gallery passes and other such events which had a fairly long term season and a connection with the cultural life of the city.

The importance given to promotions and promotional material for Library events was another interesting difference. Many libraries had their own promotions staff and often also a graphic artist on staff so that every poster , every brochure, every pamphlet every flier , every public document and manual was professionally done with some cohesive features that identified it with the library and at a very high level of professional presentation . The promotions person was responsible for all the public relations networking of the library, invitation lists to launches, media releases, photography and reporting, weekly columns in the

local papers, interviews and reviews on radio and T.V., organisational detail of any public event, hiring of equipment and performers for any event and so on. Obviously the local Authorities realise that the role of putting the activities and functions of the library under the spotlight for the local community is a vital one if there is to be a productive use of this great resource and so they are willing to allocate the dollars for the salary of specialised staff for the purposes of competitively presenting art work on posters and handouts and proactively advertising the service at all levels of the community and media. I was truly envious as I realised the possibilities of this for children's work and calculated the thousands of hours I spend performing this function at a comparatively amateurish level. The Toronto network of libraries in Ontario, Canada, has a regular monthly T.V. Program in which library staff feature - they contribute Storytimes, Booktalks, participate in panels about Young Adult Literature, debate contentious issues, review short-listed titles, run puppet shows and the like. I have not heard of a similar promotion in Australia I'm afraid. We are a service that has to face a great deal of sophisticated competition and all the marketing devices used by our competitors are in fact at our disposal too if someone is brave enough to suggest that the dollar costs for staff with expertise are worthwhile in terms of outcomes. This can be very hard to measure when a service is involved but it seems that some libraries in the States definitely think the cost is worth it. Even the promotional materials used in the Summer Reading Programs for children and young adults are bigger, better and brighter - t-shirts with professionally designed themed logos, sweatshirts with logos, 'fridge magnets, pencils with the theme, bookmarks, reading lists all with professional art-work, carry bags with the logo and theme, posters and fliers and recording logs for the program, coffee mugs and plastic drinking cups with the theme and logo, frizbees and peaked caps with the logo and so on. These are gimmicks and incentives and the purists worry that this is not what reading is about and libraries don't need to go into that kind of thing but we do if we want to be competitive. There are a great number of things for kids to do with their time and we have a commitment to help them find that coming to the library and discovery fun things there to do is a worthwhile thing to do - and if it takes a 'fridge magnet as a little incentive to get them in the door then that is what we've got to do !

Programs were alive and well in Canada and the States. Many Libraries in Australia are very active in this area as well and the differences are mainly in the matter of detail or scale. All the libraries visited were very heavily involved in the annual Summer Reading Program which ran every year for 2 months. This was, on the whole, run from the central State office with an advisory committee of practicing librarians and the quality of planning, the originality, the support for librarians in their libraries with a very professional manual and the quality of art work and merchandising was simply outstanding. Some States or Provinces required that the Libraries in the end cover the costs of this while others subsidised the program up to about half the cost. The cost in total could be up to \$30,000 not including staff time for a State or Province. Essentially the Summer Reading Programs had a great deal in common although every State and Province had a different theme each year. They all had a theme or catch-phrase to tie the program to and an appropriate piece of art work that appeared as a kind of logo on everything. They all had a reading program of some sort with incentives which could be earned or won either throughout the program or at the end. And they all had a program of special events which were scattered throughout the 8 week period. Some of these may be at a cost (professional puppet show, clowning workshop or an author visit - in some States the State paid for author tours to visit libraries while in others it was up to libraries to invite an author and participants paid to recoup some of the cost), some may be sessions provided free from supporters in the community (local museum, Spinners and Weavers, origami expert, National Parks wildlife worker, etc...) and other sessions may be conducted by the library staff (crossword mania, library scavenger hunts, making and playing junk instruments, no-cook food-fests, Booktalks, Technology Discovery Tours, Internet Cafes, puppetry, etc). Other programs conducted at the library were generally suspended over this 8 week period but in several libraries the Summer Reading Program had provision for all ages from 0-99years and there were age - appropriate incentives or lucky draw prizes and events throughout the time for everyone. This seemed a wonderful way to unite the whole Library Staff in a big promotional event that was aimed at the whole community and from that point of view I thought it deserved some serious consideration. For the remaining 9 or 10 months of the year other regular programs were offered. Storytimes were offered in much the same way as we do but they were often segregated into narrower age groups - Lapsits or Babytime for 0-2 two olds, Toddler Programs for 2 and 3 year olds and Pre-school Storytime for 4 year olds. A common Storytime that had an indefinite age - grouping was the 'P.J. Club' - a Storytime probably pitched at 5-8 year

olds who come in their pyjamas at 6 or 7 pm for Storyreading and quieter activities and some country libraries offer a Family Storytime for all ages from babies to Grandads once a week , so that is the other end of the spectrum ! Several Libraries employ a Literacy Librarian and this person has close liaison with other Government agencies and with schools and from these , community members are referred to the Literacy Librarian who arranges one-to-one tutoring with a panel of literacy volunteers. The Literacy Librarian often also runs less intensive classes for groups throughout the year. Many Libraries have Homework Centres for after-school assistance and University students, retired teachers or the like are employed to be the homework tutors for 3 or 4 hours each day. Most libraries have Kid's Clubs of one sort or another which meet weekly for a variety of activities which are literature and language based and many also have Teen Clubs or Youth Advisory Boards which vary a great deal in their approach. For the latter, the bigger libraries have a Young Adult Librarian on the staff who is responsible for programming and outreach to teenagers. How many Young Adult Librarians do you know in Australia ? In Cleveland and Farmington there was a competitive program that ran over the Summer but was not part of the SRP, and that was the 'Battle of the Books'. Teams of kids of 4 from grades 5-8 read a prescribed list of books and at the end of the season there was a competitive play-off with one team emerging the winner of 'The Battle'. A typical 'Battle' could have 20 teams . This was quite a lot of work for the tutor of the team throughout the Summer and the coordinators of the 'Battle' but sometimes volunteers undertook these tasks . So there are many programs operating to offer a lively, proactive, interesting, relevant service to the community of a library. There are hundreds more but you get the idea and we'll leave this wonderful part of our job here !

Staffing was quite an eye opener ! All places I visited had a Children's Librarian except for some of the smaller Branch Libraries in Virginia where a member of the Branch staff assumed that responsibility to run Storytime and the Summer Reading Program and the like. Some of the Children's Librarians were also Young Adult Librarians but many libraries had a separate Young Adult Librarian and some had a half-time Young Adult Librarian where the other half of the job was on the reference desk. Elgin, about an hour's drive from Chicago with a population of about 100,000 had a single regional library and they had 20 on the children's and young adult staff - 6 qualified Children's Librarians and 14 assistant staff. Unbelievable but true ! There was an overall Children's Co-ordinator and then 5 other children's librarians for different age groups - Babies and Toddlers, Pre-schoolers, Lower Primary, Middle School and Teens. What high quality, focussed, relevant and specialised service these librarians could give in terms of collection development and programming and of course it would require a very high level of co-operation and co-ordination and many events would be whole group efforts (like the Summer Reading Program) but it just takes your breath away to think of that input ! This same library had also one and a half people employed as a graphic artist and a public relations /promotions person. They were certainly going to impact on their community ! Another interesting angle on staffing was in Cuyahoga County in Cleveland - every Librarian in their system had a Masters Degree ! This does not necessarily imply superior quality but it does have a certain ring to it ! Several Libraries had Literacy Librarians . One library I visited had a Children's Program Librarian (Half-time) - now what a wonderful position that would be ! This person ran all the regular Storytimes and Kid's Clubs and visits from schools and child care centres and that kind of thing and conducted the Summer Reading Program and any other holiday activities. I have already mentioned that University students were employed for the 8 weeks of the Summer to help with Programs (or anything else). They were often Library Science students but not always.

The facilities for children's and young adult programs and events were a mixture . Many buildings were very old and under historical preservation orders and the modern needs of adequate natural light and electric wires by the mile and computer cabling everywhere and study desks and neon lighting and lifts or moving footways for the disabled and parents with prams were proving to be a logistical and economic nightmare. In the Enoch Pratt Library in Baltimore, the interior could only be furnished in keeping with the old woodwork and stained glass and so all the new furnishings had to be hand-made with suitable carved decoration and they cost a fortune. Chicago Public Library looks like a very old, solid , traditional building which fills a whole block of the city from the outside , but inside it is incredibly light and modern with spacious marble stairways and open plan design and so modern needs have been able to be incorporated. The Library at Louisa, Virginia was an old Scout Hall but it has become a cosy Branch Library complete with Scout carvings on the exposed beams in the ceiling and a beautiful open fireplace for sitting around for

a nice long session of reading or storytelling. But there was one aspect of most of the larger libraries that made a huge difference to the operation of a children's and young adult service : they had a Children's Activity Room. This meant that they did not have to run their programmed sessions or events in the middle of the library . They could make as much noise as they liked, they could hop about like a frog, have music blaring out to march to, sing songs , cheer with a victor in a story and boo the villain, clap and stamp , paint and play with dough, blow bubbles with detergent, have a party , watch a video, take part in a puppet show, do face painting , listen to an author ... do what they liked ! They disturbed no-one so browsers and readers in the library did not have to look disapproving and they could concentrate on the session in hand because there were no distractions. What marvellous rooms these were - everyone should have one !!! Most libraries visited had an activity room that was typically off to one side from the children's library and was multi-purpose for children's and teen activities, meetings and seminars, small presentations to staff and so on. They were very simply furnished with sometimes a stage, sometimes tables which folded flat on to the wall, sometimes with free-standing tables and stackable chairs (low level and adult size) and a smooth floor for easy care. In some there was a wall of built-in cupboards which housed all the Storytime needs and projectors and screens and that kind of equipment and around the walls there was a surface that was suitable for projection , whiteboard writing and pinboard surfaces for display purposes.

So these and more were tantalising glimpses of things which were new and exciting and stimulating to think about . Some of the things on my new , revised wish-list would need the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow to achieve but others offer a new approach or a new perspective or a different vision and are quite achievable. One of my common sayings is 'persistence pays off' and sometimes I've only achieved something because I haven't let the idea go - I've hung on like a terrier with a bone and eventually, if I've believed in it enough, it has been achieved. Another Heather saying is '... I can do that !' . This one gets me into lots of trouble because I see something which has a literary application or offers an encouragement to come and sample at the library or contains something I think will appeal to children in a library setting and I immediately think ' YES ! ' . No matter that it is a huge undertaking, requires a lifetime of work, the talent of a genius and lots of space, material and money ! I simply think that I will scale it down a little and scrounge here and there and modify it a bit and we'll have a great program. I have a great idea for a session based on the Story of the Nutcracker after I heard of a very sophisticated event conducted by the Art Gallery in Toronto - I've got that one tucked away for next Christmas - maybe !

This leads me to tell you about the plans for the near future. There will be a manual released hopefully by mid-June called "...I Can Do That !" which will contain a thousand and one program ideas for Children's and Young Adult Librarians for children of all ages in all sized libraries . It will offer ideas for weekly programs, single events, Summer Reading Programs, Family Literacy and other occasions. It will not be an A-Z of how to do these programs in detail for the variables forced upon each library (mainly staffing, space and money) mean that each library has to make its own adaptations but it will offer ideas and the bones of programs and maybe stimulate the tired and flagging spirits of hard working staff who feel that they have tried everything they know . The manual is a little behind schedule because since I returned in September I have written a report to ALIA, written 2 periodical articles, prepared 3 workshop papers and presentations for conferences, delivered a presentation to Councillors , prepared this paper and started a course of study as well as launching our biggest Summer Reading Program ever for our library and handling all the usual things a busy Children's Librarian does. However it is galloping along nicely and we have set out target dates for each stage so I will try to keep to those. I hope I will be able to let you know through 'Orana' and our other networking mechanisms when it will be available. It will be sold at a cost recovery price so hopefully that will not be beyond any library's budget.

Another recent development has sent me spiralling off into another orbit of thought and preparation because I was recently invited to conduct a Poster Workshop at the forthcoming IFLA Conference (International Federation of Library Associations) scheduled for August in Amsterdam. This involves setting up a visual display on my topic and having available professional handouts (if possible in three languages !) and then being available at three separate sessions to discuss the projects and the experience that I have had with them. The topic relates to the programs that we conduct at Gosford City Library in literacy. I describe them as being on three levels. The first kind are the library based programs which include Storytimes,

Summer Reading Programs, the programmed events of BookWeek and the author visit, events of Library Week , single programs conducted for Y.A.s on an irregular basis and those kinds of outreach. The second tier of programs which encourage literacy are those which we are able to offer because of generous sponsorship. We have had several which the State Library has funded over the years but the most recent major sponsored program has been the 'Readers Digest Get Ahead Program' which has been a wonderful family literacy program collaboratively devised and a great success from every point of view and we are at present about to launch the second year of that three year funded plan. The third tier of our literacy outreach relates to a partnership with the Central Coast Community College which focuses on speakers of languages other than English and the format for this is a weekly schedule of English classes in the library with written and oral skill practice. So, now there is another exciting project to rattle around in the back of the brain ! This will take from now till August to organise but it will be the best display I can assemble and the clearest picture I can convey of a multi-faceted approach to literacy in a public library setting.

And what do I see in the big picture for the future ? Lots and lots of new program ideas that make the library an attractive, active, relevant place for children and teenagers. I see a new Regional Library for Gosford in which I hope to be able to offer some good ideas for productive space for service to children and young adults. I see such a proliferation of high quality literature for children and young adults on the market that it will be hard to get around to reading it all . I see an on-going shortage of funding and so an increasing need for using imagination and invention to offer good quality service to children and toens . I see an ever-increasing provision of technological aids to research , the nature of which threatens the world of children's literature in the sense that it offers such an immediate , arresting and compulsive appeal for a 1998 world and the cost of which engulfs us as we cope with juggling library book budgets and increasingly expensive books. I see that we will continue doing more and more with less and less and in some ways that is discouraging but there are also more aids to help us , more sources of ideas , good supportive links and professional networking , good access to Journal and Periodical literature to keep us up-to-date , better training of children's staff , active sections such as CYSS, CBC, School Librarians Associations, Young Adult Network, State Library Consultants and so forth.

I feel optimistic about the children's library service. I think we are very privileged to work in such a needed, vibrant, exciting, rewarding area that offers scope and opportunity for all our imagination, energy , creativity and independence and I can't imagine why people don't kill for my job !

Thankyou.

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