

# READING REVOLUTION IN COUNTRY NSW

## SLIDE 1

This presentation I'll be taking you through these aspects of the whole project.

I'm not going to go into great detail about the training per se, but just touch on some aspects of it to set the scene.

The outcomes I think are more important here.

## SLIDE 2 - BACKGROUND

Assisting our readers to find a good book to read is undoubtedly a cornerstone of public library services BUT.....

For too long, it's taken a back seat as public libraries grappled with the rapid developments in information technology and the advent of the Internet.

Whilst we've continued to provide SOME Readers Advisory services in our libraries, they have often been afforded a lower priority.

SO... it was timely to bring more balance into our services to readers, to focus more strongly on readers advisory skills and activities .

AND... hopefully satisfy more of those requests that start with "can you suggest a good mystery?"

OR "I've read every Patrick O'Brien – who else writes like that?"

OR ...Even harder..."what's a good book to read?"

## **Next point**

The south-east zone of Public Libraries NSW – Country (aka CPLA) –is one of 5 country library zones in NSW and covers 22 local council areas.

The Zone includes the southern coast of NSW to the Victorian border, stretching from Wollongong to Bega, and inland to Cooma, Goulburn and up to Camden. The councils in this area deliver services in a variety of ways due to the diverse population characteristics + there are also a number of regional library services.

There are 12 central libraries, 30 branch libraries and 8 mobile libraries in the Zone serving a population of some 631,000, representing 10% of the state's population. Of that total, almost 50% of them are members of libraries in the south-east zone.

So... we knew we had a good base on which to build a substantial training program and that the benefits would be far-reaching and even beyond our zone.

### Staff participation

In late 2002, the SE Zone managers explored the feasibility of using our own staff resources to develop and prepare a Readers Advisory training program to deliver across the zone. 44 staff received the training and a total of 205 staff in the zone have benefited from this project.

### Project Brief

- Develop a train-the-trainer program for RA services.
- Training manual would be produced.
- Provide skill building training for core staff that could then facilitate RA development training throughout the zone and NSW as required.

### **SLIDE 3 - Training Objectives**

With the project we were set out to achieve the broad objectives of ...  
(Read each point as it comes thru).

### **SLIDE 4 - Training Program Pilot**

9 willing “guinea pigs” participated in a pilot to fine-tune the training, over three cold days in August - in Goulburn!!

#### **Next point - Delivery**

3 separate 3-day training courses were delivered at 3 locations within our zone.

#### **Next point - Feedback**

- Very positive – with most staff returning to their libraries fired up.
- Training other staff in-house took place and by mid- 2005 the majority of staff in our zone had gained the benefits of this training.
- But it’s ongoing – as new staff come on board.

### **SLIDE 5 - Cost and Resources**

The cost of the project came in at around \$135,000 with estimated in-kind costs at around \$86,000. Manuals were included in consultant’s costs.

## **SLIDE 6 - Measuring the Outcomes**

And now ... You all want to know – Well, did it work?

So let's have a look at some of these measures (Both quantitative and qualitative come up together).

## **SLIDE 7 - Quantitative**

### Loans

Although there had been an overall decline in book circulation across the zone of 3.29% between 2003 and 2004, 7 out of 12 libraries experienced increased loans between 2004 and 2005 when the RA training came into full effect.

In fact, between 2004 and 2005 overall loans increased by 10.8%.

The project was aimed at increasing the variety of materials read by patrons and encouraging new readers to the use of their libraries through new RA programs.

### Membership and Visits

There have been increases of 1.4% and 2% respectively in these areas across the zone.

Again, one of the aims of the project was to encourage new readers to use their libraries and the promotion of libraries and their reading resources is likely to have been a factor in this growth.

### Age of Stock

There was strong improvement in stock less than 5 years old.

Changes in collection development trends and some increased State Government funding to libraries around the same time has strengthened the ability of many libraries to improve the number and diversity of collections.

That in turn has provided newer and more resources for staff to access in terms of RA work. e.g. Bega Valley Shire Library had a cooperative grant for Adult Fiction with our neighbour Eurobodalla around the same time as the RA project and we are seeing a definite increased use of fiction and our RA work is vitalised because of the additional resources.

### Programs

Many new programs are as a direct result of the RA project – increase of 12.1% across the zone and they include new book discussion groups forming, speakers and presentations by staff to community groups around RA. One of the smaller libraries in the zone increased their library programs by a whopping 55.9%.

### Promotional activities

More than 50 promotional and RA associated activities have been listed by the zone libraries as having been implemented as a result of the project, such as:

- “Retail” style of marketing fiction - items face out, bookmarks suggesting staff pics.
- Increase in staff reading book reviews in newspapers and journals.
- Staff compiling “Readalike” brochures.
- Themed displays.
- Client reviews.
- Red dots for new books this month – popular with patrons who are convinced they’ve read everything!
- “Gold-star” bookmarks for Customers to place in books to recommend to other customers.

- Read @ Your Library month during 2005.
- Websites to reflect and promote RA in their library.
- Scanned jackets displays.
- Greater contact with local bookclubs.
- I could go on but MOST importantly...
- Staff proactive and confident in helping customers.

## **SLIDE 8 - Qualitative**

### Client Comments and Feedback

Zone libraries have reported that they've received many favourable comments about their RA services – such as:

- “Library service gets better and better.”
- “I really like the way the library is displaying their fiction now - very appealing to me.”

Positive comments from clients about the new genrey booklists

- “Fantastic – has opened up a new list of authors to read.”

### Feedback from Staff

- Training gave them valuable and usable strategies and tools to help with RA.
- Staff viewed the program as ongoing – with regular refresher courses and tips mentioned at weekly team meetings.
- A positive outcome was the proactive attitude of the staff – they really wanted to change things rather than just tick that training had been completed.
- Some staff have become much more passionate and committed to RA work.

## Collection development

Collecting information on the impact of RA regarding Collections and Collection Delivery strategies.

Staff are taking more proactive approach to their collections and more focused on promoting and marketing their resources and services to clients and the broader community.

Examples of some information gathered include:

- Purchasing multiple copies of popular titles and authors.
- New display shelving purchased to accommodate face-out presentation of stock.
- Selection staff liaise with trainers on potential additions to their collections to assist RA.
- Increased staff participation in selection at their libraries – before RA training 1 person was responsible for selecting fiction – they were considered the most knowledgeable. After RA training all staff whenever available now feeling more confident in choosing fiction because they are actively talking to their clients about what they're reading rather than calling on the same staff member all the time.
- Special RA collections have been created. Kits are held at the central and branch libraries.
- New Internet sites added to their "Our Readers" page to assist staff and customers in finding "Now read on" suggestions.
- Some libraries taking up subscriptions to online databases like "What do I read next".
- "Good Reading" magazine added to Serials lending collection.
- Successful fiction grant using RA training to support.
- ... And many more ideas that these have been implemented.

### Initiatives, suggestions, changes

Maintaining a file on these aspects of the project.

There's been a wealth and diversity of ideas, initiatives that have been undertaken in the zone.

And of course as you know librarians are always so willing to share. Just to give you some examples:

- Christmas Reads Lucky Dips – to encourage customers to read something different to broaden their reading interests.
- New Reading Group formed at one library – Rabid Readers – 10 members with monthly meetings in the library.
- Already ordinary Book Discussion Group was revitalised by using booklists that were related or similar to the book being discussed that month – sessions now more dynamic and members are returning to the group.
- Wollongong library as part of the monthly @ Your library campaign across the state promoted RA services for the month of READ @ Your Library through local newspaper and radio. The campaign featured 6 ways to find a great read.
- Talks for local community groups such as Probus, Rotary and Bookclubs provided by library staff. – Taking RA out to the community

Information already being shared on an ongoing basis across the zone using **aliaREAD** .- located at [www.alia.org.au/alianet/e-lists/](http://www.alia.org.au/alianet/e-lists/) (see the slide). This list is being moderated by a staff member at the State Library of NSW

## Survey

A survey of zone libraries was conducted in relation to new and/or expanded reading activities in their libraries. (Refer to 'Checking the Books' questionnaire by Toyne and Usherwood).

## Research

Zone research conducted by developing a questionnaire using most relevant questions – again - from “Checking the Books” by Toyne and Usherwood.

We were all asked a series of questions about:

- What we currently provided or were we considering providing?
  - ▶ Newsletters – 73% already and considering.
  - ▶ Booklists – 100%.
  - ▶ New book displays – 100%.
  - ▶ Reader reviews – 82% already and considering.
  - ▶ Web-based discussions – no one was offering – with 36% considering (some work to do there!!).
- Did we have a staff member specialising in RA services?
  - ▶ 5 out of 11 already had someone.
  - ▶ BUT.....Given the training the outcome has been that actually more staff are actively involved in RA.
- What did we consider the most effective ways to select stock?
  - ▶ Bookseller visits – **this came out as most preferred.**
  - ▶ Reader suggestions.
  - ▶ Visits to bookshops.
  - ▶ Standing Orders – **least preferred.**
- How beneficial did we regard RA services for our library?
  - ▶ 82% said it was ESSENTIAL.
  - ▶ Remaining 18% said it was **VERY IMPORTANT.**

### Monitor and analyse trends

This is to be done at 1, 2 and 3 years from implementation of the training in the zone libraries. The data and analysis will be based on those qualitative and quantitative measures.

### **FINAL SLIDE**

Most recent feedback from 3 libraries in the zone has come from:

#### Wollongong

They have introduced “rovers at their central library purely for RA assistance. RFID will be introduced next month and RA will become the major thrust of their customer services at the central library.

#### Wollondilly

Recently injected some interest and surprise for their home library customers.

A small collection with people ploughing through it at the speed of light they decided to try and broaden their reading by introducing them to non-fiction, magazines etc.

Each customer received a surprise package wrapped in brown paper and string and the word “SURPRISE” written on the pack.

Feedback from customers has been overwhelmingly positive. People now asking for material they would never have dreamed of asking for – let alone change the genre they read!

Wollondilly also has a thriving book discussion group and they colour code their new books so they're easily seen when they come off the display stand.

## Cooma

- A RA form is given if they can't be helped immediately.
- Links to RA websites from their circ. desk PCs.
- Large red dots on the spines of new fiction and biographies that stay on for 6 months.
- Displays for genre e.g. cupboard full of crime.
- Anecdotal evidence only that more and more people asking for RA assistance and staff pushing the idea of matching reading to people.

## Bega

We really pushed the idea of taking the RA out to the community and providing presentations to groups like Rotary, Probus etc. This was followed-up by people pursuing their reading at the library.

Staff photographs on bayend panels – stock has just walked out the door!

We also had a cooperative grant with Eurobodalla – with \$20,000 extra fiction we took advantage of scanning and displaying jackets + media publicity. Fiction loans

Newsletter features RA suggestions and reviews by other Council staff and readers encouraged – our GM gave us our first review to get the idea started – we were very impressed!

## **QUESTION TIME**