

Celebrating
story with young people

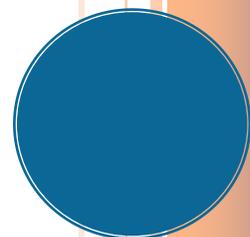
BOOK LINKS QLD INC.

2011- 2012 Report

Our goal is to establish a children's literature centre in Queensland where young people can interact with authors, illustrators and storytellers. We aim to engender a love of literature in Queensland children and young people through our projects and events.

Jenny Stubbs

8 October 2012



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THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Travelling Suitcases

The Book Links Travelling Suitcases were officially launched at The Ipswich Festival of Children's Literature in September 2011. Between October 2011 and June 2012 the 10 Book Links Travelling Suitcases 2 each for James Moloney, Michael Gerard Bauer, Narelle Oliver, Gregory Rogers and Kerry Argent were assembled and distributed to public libraries and schools in **regional areas of Queensland**. The Arts Qld Grant was acquitted at the end of April.

Feedback for the cases has been very positive. In just one visit, more than 500 children saw the Narelle Oliver case.

One complete set of cases was taken to Gladstone for the Curtis Coast Literary Carnivale in July. They were launched at the festival before being lent to schools in the region during Term 3.

"The children were enthusiastic about sharing the information found in the boxes. They pointed out the books they had read before and ones that were used in the videos. A lot of the school's copies of the books were borrowed out after the lessons, as they were on display around the library. The teachers all agreed that it was great for the children to see the author's work in this way. It was like having Narelle here for a visit." Suzanne Vanderpool, Circuit Teacher-Librarian, Mossman, Miallo, Daintree, Wonga Beach and Julatten State Schools.

National Year of Reading

Book Links hosted a number of events as part of the National Year of Reading. The first event held on Tuesday 14th February was ***Romancing the Stars***. St Finbarrs Hall was a perfect venue as thirty authors had speed dates with 50 guests, while the Sunde sisters provided entertainment. National Year of Reading Ambassador, Nick Earls launched the event and the list of Queensland books selected for ***The Big Read*** was announced.

In March, the intimate meeting space within the Queensland Writers Centre was the venue for ***The Old Masters*** event. The insight into the personal stories and writing experiences that Chair Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright managed to elicit from the guest authors David McRobbie and David Cox was both humorous and poignant.

A Day to Remember by Jackie French and Mark Wilson was launched at MacArthur Museum, Edward Street, Brisbane on Saturday 21 April. This was a perfect venue to provide the right atmosphere for such an important book. The guest speaker was Robert

Chester-Master, who was a tail-gunner on Lancasters during World War II. Mark Wilson impressed everyone with the drawing he'd done as a nine year old, and with the results he can achieve with his granddaughter's crayons. His personal connections to many of the people in the illustrations gave interesting background to the book. Jackie spoke passionately about the importance of acknowledging and remembering the contribution of Australia's armed forces personnel to the safety of other countries, and to Australia's identity since the First World War. Around 40 people attended this event and sampled the war themed food, including ANZAC biscuits made by Jackie French using her mother's very old recipe.

The launch of *The Fabulous Finola Fox* written by Carmel Bird and illustrated by Kerry Argent attracted a small but appreciative audience, including some emerging authors and illustrators to QWC. Editor Lisa Riley and designer Karen Scott from Penguin Books joined Kerry Argent to talk about how the book was made, shared anecdotes about the various stages of production and talked about how they worked together. Kerry's Travelling Suitcase, which focussed on this book, was on display.

July 23 saw the launch of the full set of five *Travelling Suitcases* at the Curtis Coast Literary Carnivale. A large audience of around 100 children and teachers exhibited a great deal of interest in the objects selected from each case to show them what delights awaited them when their schools borrowed the cases during Term 3. The launch was completed with the cutting of an ice-cream cake.

Hot on the heels of the Curtis Coast Carnivale came the *Reception at Government House* on Tuesday 24 July to celebrate Book Links contribution to The National Year of Reading, especially *The Read Up! Program* devised by Moreton Bay Regional Libraries and made available to everyone via Books Links website and blog. Book Links' patron, Her Excellency the Governor Ms Penelope Wensley gave a most inspiring speech which is now available on the website. http://www.govhouse.qld.gov.au/the_governor/120724_book_spch.aspx

The Read Up! Program has been a great success. It is a library incentive program providing certificates and other incentives to young children to become members of their local library and to borrow books. Many thanks to Pam Gravenor and Anne Spelman from Moreton Bay Regional Library Service for partnering with Book Links to make this program available to all libraries everywhere via our website and blog.

The Kids Lit Quiz came to Qld in August just in time for Book Week. Quizmaster Wayne Mills from New Zealand has been running this quiz for 20 years all over the world. The event was held for the first time in Queensland as part of the celebrations for National Year of Reading and to celebrate the *Book Week* theme *Champions Read*. The first event was held in Ipswich by The Ipswich District Teacher-Librarian Network, then in partnership with them and Moreton Regional Library Service, Book Links held a competition on Saturday 18 August at Strathpine Community Centre. Eleven teams of four from four schools competed in front of an engaged audience of parents and friends. The Book Warehouse sponsored the book prizes while the book vouchers for first and second teams came from Moreton Bay Regional Libraries and *Dymocks Books*. The winning team was Bulimba State School and second was Genesis College.

The winners of *The Big Read* were announced as part of *The Reading Hour* event run by the Children's Book Council of Australia (Qld Branch) and the State Library of Queensland on Saturday 25 August at the end of Book Week.

The winning books are:

In the Older Reader Category selected by adult readers, *Dust* by Chris Bongers, a story set in rural Qld in the 1970s. *Dust* was also a notable book in 2010 in the CBCA Book of the Year Awards and long-listed and highly commended for the Prime Ministers Literary Award.

In the Younger Reader Category selected by both adult and young readers, *Henry Hoey Hobson* by Chris Bongers, a story set in the suburbs of Brisbane. *Henry Hoey Hobson* was also shortlisted in 2011 for the CBCA Book of the Year Awards, the WA Premier's Book Awards and the Qld Premier's Literary Awards.

In the Picture Book Category selected by the young readers *Dinosaur Dreaming* written by Justin D'Ath and illustrated by Mike Spoor tells the story of dinosaur discovery in Western Queensland.

In the Picture Book Category selected by adult readers *The Flying Orchestra* by Clare McFadden is a musical journey with many recognisable scenes of Brisbane. *The Flying Orchestra* also won the 2011 Crichton Award for best new illustrator.

Chris Bongers was able to come along to accept her awards, but unfortunately the other authors and illustrators could not attend. The two picture books were read to the audience. Giant replica dinosaur fossil bones added to the interest of the children for *Dinosaur Dreaming* read by Sheryl Gwyther while everyone was carried away by the beautiful music played to accompany Sam Sochacka's reading of *The Flying Orchestra* ably accompanied by Beth Green on the CD player.

At the *Brisbane Writers Festival* Book Links once again worked with Dr Caroline Heim (Associate Lecturer in Performance Studies at QUT) to have drama students create and present a **Book Gig** of Libby Gleeson's book *Red*. It was held in The Studio, State Library of Queensland with Trish Buckley as moderator. It was a well presented gig, and students seemed to be engaged, especially at the second session. There are two levels at which a Book Gig can reach an audience. One is when students have already read the book and the performance allows them to explore it in a different way and interact with the author and actors. The other is when they have not read the book and the gig is a bit like a live trailer, encouraging the audience to read the book. From a show of hands it was obvious that the audiences fell into the latter category.

Guest Speakers

Jenny Stubbs spoke at the November meeting on Literature and Arts Centres in Australia, the UK and Ireland and Children's Literature Festivals she attended in Bath, London and Cheltenham. A display of pamphlets and programs collected at the various venues and events were on display. The materials provided further stimulus towards the Book Links goal of establishing a centre for children in Queensland.

A State of Writing

Book Links is a Partner Organisation of A State of Writing. Jenny Stubbs attended meetings during the year with the December meeting having Chris Mead from the UK as guest speaker. The concept of a Children's Literature Centre was raised at the meeting and a comment added on to the Arts Qld blog appeared later: "A children's literature centre could be a good thing for Queensland, but what would convince someone who didn't give a damn about books for kids that this could be an economical engine for improving literacy, generating social harmony, attracting a few more tourists and perhaps even some votes?" The meeting in May discussed the importance of advocacy and the need to document events and projects and collect data on attendance and outcomes of our events and programs.

Children's Literature Centre

Jenny Stubbs continued to pursue any opportunities that arose that might open a way for the concept of a Children's Literature Centre to develop. A meeting was held with Lee Fullarton from Primary Arts Network Ipswich to develop a concept plan for a centre called *The Centre for Excellence in the Arts and Literature for Children and Young People* and this was presented to Ipswich City Council. There was no positive result from this as the contact person subsequently lost their position within council.

Newsletter

It was decided to only send out occasional newsletters as the need arises, rather than regular ones and to send out additional information of interest to members in between newsletters via email. Newsletters are compiled by Jessica Miller and the first one for 2012 was sent out in April.

Online Presence

Book Links has a website **booklinks.org.au** which was set-up and is currently managed by Kerri McDonald. For the past year from 18/9/2011 to 17/9/2012 the website has had 12,394 visits with an average of 33 per day and 27,307 page views with an average of 74 page views per day.

Our blog **booklinksinc.wordpress.com** was set up by Sheryl Gwyther and is now managed by Pam Gravenor. Since September 2011 the following statistics have been recorded:

- 3,836 views all-time
- 96 views on our busiest day, February 9, 2012
- 23 *Posts*
- 24 *Comments*
- 53 shares of the site mainly via Facebook and Twitter

Our Facebook page in September 2012 had 149 likes and 49 friends.

Membership

Book Links currently has 40 financial members made up of 7 corporate and 33 personal members. Members are from a variety of professions including teacher-librarians, public librarians, professional and emerging authors and illustrators, speakers' agent, festival coordinators, academics and one book-seller. There are an additional 19 honorary members comprised of authors and illustrators who have been involved in our projects since Book Links began.

Successes

In 2011-2012 Book Links has provided inspiring and informative events, resources, information and support for:

- Teachers, teacher-librarians and public librarians who will pass on their knowledge to the children they encounter as part of their work, and expose them to resources produced by Book Links which will help engender in those children a love of literature
- Emerging writers and illustrators who were able to meet professionals in their fields and gain a greater insight into the creation of books and connect with others to form and extend networks

In 2011-2012 Book Links has provided market exposure for published Australian authors and illustrators through events held throughout the year. Book sales at each event were highly successful for the book sellers involved.

In 2011-2012 Book Links has provided three events for children that have allowed them to interact with authors and to celebrate a love of literature in this National Year of Reading.

What next?

- Turn our focus to *Book Links: The Centre for Children's Literature*.
- Develop and deliver more projects/events centered on children.
- Improve marketing and promotion to increase membership and income.
- Explore avenues for public exhibitions based on authors and illustrators works.