

Adaire Hannah - General report on the conference

The SLANZA national mini conference Inspiring Excellence in School Libraries held in Wellington on 20-21 July was a great success. The praise for the content, organisation, conviviality and food was fulsome. The keynote speakers, William Taylor and Kate De Goldi, set the tone for each day.

William Taylor spoke of the necessity to have literature-fiction and non-fiction-for all our students no matter how small a minority those students represent. William has written about the loneliness felt when you are different and he has had tremendous feedback over the years from individuals, who say, "you've told my story". If our libraries do not challenge students to confront their own beliefs or enable them to stand in the shoes of people very different to themselves then we cannot claim our libraries inspire excellence.

Kate De Goldi enthralled her audience with why reading a rich tapestry of books is so vital for a healthy and intelligent person. Kate used the alphabet as a framework for her speech. She spoke about the importance of stories in the lives of children. Her phenomenal knowledge of children's and young persons' literature is awe-inspiring.

Penny Moore's plenary session on the Information Literate Student was a very condensed presentation on what an information literate student would look like. Her message of how we approach information literacy and how we assess whether we are developing information literate students was very important. It is vital that all library staff, primary and secondary, librarian and teacher, are conversant with the academic research that is underpinning our practice and that we make the time to read the research of people like Penny Moore.

Karen de Fresne and Elizabeth Jones were the presenters at the National Library plenary session on Preparing the School Library for the future: guidelines and principles. They gave participants an insight into the joint National Library of NZ-Ministry of Education book *The School Library and Learning in the Information Landscape: Guidelines for New Zealand Schools* that will be published by Learning Media some time in Term 4 and mailed to every school. While this document will not require compliance with the guidelines by schools it will place school library staff in a stronger bargaining position than we currently experience. The panel of practitioners in the Voices section was well received. It included a librarian, primary and secondary teachers with library responsibility/teacher librarians and a principal.

Four panellists presented at the **SCIS** and the New Zealand Connection workshop. Tricia Nathan, from SCIS in Melbourne, demonstrated how to use SCISWeb in the school library; Bruce Moir spoke about the work he has been doing to ensure SCIS products and records can be successfully loaded into all databases used in New Zealand libraries; Janet McFadden spoke about the work she has been doing on the SCIS subject headings; and Susan Marshall

ended the session on a practical note by talking about the use of SCIS products in the Chilton St James School library.

Karen Ross, in the Writing Heroes gets kids reading workshop, explained and demonstrated the use of the new NZ Book Council website launched three days before our conference. This ever-growing site should be an essential in "the favourites" of school librarians, and teachers of English. Apart from the NZ Writers files the site gives access to the Booknotes profiles, Book Events, Book organisations, and a lovely section on Literary Tourism-book walks about the country. Karen was as always an enthusiastic speaker, fielding questions and like us, looking for new ideas.

Richard Niven interacted freely with his workshop participants on the topic of Focus on Copyright in an electronic environment. He made it clear that all schools needed to have CCL and Screens Site licences if they wanted to avoid any copyright hassles. Richard is willing to answer questions about this issue and happy for SLANZA to post the questions and answers on its web site. He listened to many of the issues raised and made notes of points on which he can make submissions to have the Copyright Act amended.

Nigel Evans' in his Engaging the reader through Newspapers workshop provided many very practical examples and samples of ways to use newspapers effectively in the library. Nigel is a passionate advocate for information, libraries and education and we hope his resignation from Newspapers in Education will not see the demise of

Paora Tibble and Apirana Taylor were the speakers in the moving and thought-provoking Engaging the Maori Reader workshop. It covered both the historical and contemporary landscape of the Maori reader. Api Taylor spoke of his own, often-difficult journey as a Maori artist and the liberation that the Canterbury Writers in Residence award had been for him. Paora Tibble is from Learning Media and spoke of the need to engage the often-non reading Maori boys within te kura kaupapa and te reo classes-hence the publication by Learning Media of Eke Panuku, a story in comic format based on the adventures of Superbat Wairangi. It's wonderful-check out your Maori department if you haven't heard of it and order copies for the library. This of course provoked a discussion on the need for a bilingual version or something similar in Pacific Island languages. Everyone from this workshop was very late for morning tea because we couldn't bear to leave.

At the **Engaging the Young Reader** the three panellists were Janice Marriott, Nikki Fraser and Bob Kerr. Janice, a well known New Zealand author, focused on the elements she considers important in a primary school library, both in the environment and book stock. Nikki, a Primary school teacher at Karori Normal School, used personal experience to stress how important reading is in a child's life. Her classroom is full of books that she uses extensively to introduce various topics and in her work with gifted students.

Author and illustrator, **Bob Kerr**, entertained us with his examination of the book, Each peach, pear, plum illustrating how brilliant it was in every aspect of what makes a "good" book.

Rachel Healy demonstrated how to access Te Puna in the Using the National Library's electronic resources workshop. She focused on basic how to skills for accessing the database. Rachel demonstrated the range of resources available on Timeframes and showed us Papers Past. Both of these databases are valuable resources for teachers and students. It is also useful to know that there is a live help desk.

Three spot prizes provided a little light entertainment during the conference. Montana Wines donated two Magnums and William Taylor drew a winners' name out of a magnificent hat on Saturday morning and Penny Moore drew the second winners name out on Sunday afternoon. Kate De Goldi pulled the book-prize winner's name out of the hat on Sunday morning. The New Zealand Book Council provided a prize of a writer's visit. Naturally there were many constructive suggestions for how to have a bigger and better conference and SLANZA conferences will get better as we increase our membership base and participation.

Several non-members were impressed enough with SLANZA that they wrote on their evaluation forms they would be joining on their return to their school. SLANZA has to continue to work hard to improve the status, qualifications, and remuneration of librarians, and to fight for adequate time allowance for teachers with library responsibility so that they are able to fulfill that role. The library staff-librarians and teachers with library responsibility-are a team. We need our librarians working with teachers and students. And we need teachers with library responsibility seeing themselves as a member of a team. Without this team ethic school libraries are weaker. There is a good reason to continue with the concept of mini national conferences in between major national conferences.

The conference fee for Inspiring Excellence in School Libraries was very low thanks to sponsors. The National Library sponsored the venue, Fuji Xerox sponsored the Registration Brochure, NZ Book Council sponsored three speakers, the Children's Bookshop sponsored a speaker, Whitcoulls sponsored the Drinks and Nibbles, and Jay Books made a donation. The low fee enabled many primary librarians and TLR/TLs to attend. This is an important consideration when planning conferences.