

SLANZA Top of the South Chair Person's Report 2004-2005

It is my pleasure to present the 3rd annual report of the Top of the South Branch of the Canterbury Region of Aoraki SLANZA.

At present in the Top of the South we have 32 financial members, so we are definitely a growing organisation.

Another busy year for the committee. Our major event for the past year was a one day seminar held in October at the Tasman District Library. This event was our first attempt at working within a partnership and was held in conjunction with the "Friends" of the Tasman District Library. A lot of planning and organising went into this day both by the "Friends" and ourselves. A big effort was made to offer some different workshops which we hoped would offer variety to our participants. Our audience reflected quite a cross-section with interested people from the school library community plus members of the Friends of the Tasman District Library attending. Unfortunately our draw card Kate de Goldi was unable to come for personal reasons and although we were very grateful to Eiryls Hunter for standing in at the last minute a lot of our participants were disappointed and our numbers were down for that part of the day. John Dingwell and Linda Forbes were our two other presenters. John led a session on Library displays and Linda's session was on myths and legends and how they can support the curriculum. Both of these sessions were repeated from the Christchurch Powerful Partnerships Conference. Our feedback for this seminar was quite positive but several people commented that Saturdays were not good days for them. The day also ran at quite a substantial monetary loss so it was decided by the committee to look again at the types of professional development we would offer in the future.

In October last year we were asked by the SLANZA executive to host the 2006 mini-conference here in Nelson. Judi Hancock and Niki Waterhouse travelled to Nelson to discuss this with the committee. We agreed to take this task on and planning is well underway with our first keynote speaker being confirmed last week. The task is huge for a small committee but we are doing well and are getting lots of support from our community, the Executive, and our SLANZA members.

Sadly we farewelled Karen du Fresne from our committee, and from her role as National Library Adviser when she retired at the end of last year. We were delighted when Jo Williman (one of our hard working committee members) was appointed as her replacement. We look forward to the continued support and liaison that both of the National Library Advisers offer us.

This is the year of support with our major union NZEI renegotiating the "Support Staff in Schools Collective Agreement". Many of our SLANZA members will have a vested interest in these negotiations. This years re-negotiation takes place against the backdrop of NZEI's continuing campaign to convince government and the Ministry of Education of the need to change the way in which the funding of support staff jobs is delivered to

schools. SLANZA continues to, both profile the role of school library staff as a profession, and at the same time is working towards its vision to strengthen and promote the role of the school library. As it encourages schools to move towards employing professionally trained librarians our union goes into battle to negotiate conditions that provide job security, financial rewards and other issues that are part of employing and retaining the key professionals necessary for these positions. As professionals we should not have to compete with toilet paper, lawn mowing or any other jobs, which come out of the school's operational grant. Pay increases, grading definitions and improved health and safety provisions are also part of this round of negotiations.

While working with NZEI, I have had the opportunity to compare school library staff with other school support staff. This comparison has shown me what a wonderful support our SLANZA organisation has become in such a short time. We now have access to a wealth of information pertaining to school libraries. Examples of job descriptions, copies of conference papers and submissions are all available by accessing the SLANZA web site. As a group we also have buying power, which is enabling us greater discounts with several major bookshop chains, and as we continue to grow so will our lobbying power increase. This was recognised by Michael Moore in his book "stupid white men" where he states "librarians are certainly one terrorist group you don't want to mess with." Librarians yes we can achieve anything.

From these great heights I would like to thank again the special people who work away behind the scenes to make all this happen. The Executive Committee members who are always at the end of a computer or phone when we need them, our National Library staff who support us in many ways both locally and nationally. Our other library colleagues who work outside schools but help us and our students with their support and knowledge. Thankyou again to our local committee you are fantastic as always. It has been a great year and you have been good friends. I thank you in anticipation for your hard work for the following months, as we get closer to our mini-conference which is now only a year away.

Thanks to you all and happy holidays

Dinah Warren