

SLANZA 2003 Conference Report

Hi, I'm Sheryn Smith from Wairoa College in Hawke's Bay, and I'm here to tell you about the sessions I attended at Rangi Ruru. I was supposed to write 1200 words but on counting my rough draft it reached 1860, so time condenses without diminishing the great event.

Keynote Speaker 1 Monday - Tim Snyder from Colorado.

He was an inspiring speaker, and would be a great asset to have in your court. Our school is lucky to have a principal who is passionate about the library, and sees it as core to learning and literacy. Special notes I took away with me were two sayings; I intend to add to my collection of "Thoughts to Ponder".

- * Reading puts you in the action
- * Decisions determine direction
- * Decisions determine destiny

And a reminder about 'Personal Accountability'

Workshop 1 Monday - Bob Docherty, National Library, Christchurch

"Fiction for secondary schools"

What a great choice as a start to the conference. Bob, is truly a motivating speaker, it's easy to get caught up in the passion with which he speaks. I was pleased to find that I have been choosing titles that he feels are good teenage reads. Others he mentioned have given food for thought and a strong desire to try personally. He chose some of the titles specifically as options for teen males, that elusive breed, which can be extremely reluctant to pick up a book let alone diving into it. Books I have read myself are of course so much easier to recommend, and I hope I am half as inspiring to my students, although I have had students come back and ask me for another book to try, so maybe I'm on the right track.

Workshop 2 Monday - Anne Coppell, Auckland City Libraries

"Connecting with student customers"

Anne is light hearted and inspirational and we looked at how to "Get into the heads of student customers". But, lets leave the door ajar; we don't need to be permanently locked in there to be young at heart! We were split into small groups to nut out perceptions we have of "them" and of course their perceptions of "us". We can remember how we felt at that age but our aim is to change our image and that of the library.

Lets throw a spanner in their thoughts on “Librarians”, to give them a shock every now and then, keep them on their toes, and we may break the mould of their perception - bridge the gap.

Workshop 3 Monday - Dianne Vautier & Elizabeth Probert, Pakuranga College

“Student Librarians”

Ah, the long awaited workshop on “Student Librarians”, this session had a change in venue to accommodate the number that wanted to attend. Thanks committee! I trialed Student Librarians last year and was blessed with a magical bunch of angels. Yes, I do give rewards during the year (oops is that fish ‘n chips you can smell), and a certificate of appreciation (not forgetting the free pass to the countries best cinema - giant screen - intermission - perk coffee - couch). But I wanted to go further, find something they could add to their CV, concrete proof that the work they do is indispensable. Now I am armed with ideas of how I can put together a program that will show this. Wouldn't it be great to be able to offer unit standards through the work they do? Thanks Dianne.

Keynote Speaker 2 Tuesday - Penny Moore, IASL

Penny delivered an informative talk on how important it is to have good partnerships within the school library team. This is vital to enable school communities to become information literate, which in turn, helps to create an environment that will help support student learning, so students feel they can achieve anything. A good partnership must foster a sense of mutual trust, respect, and honesty. Remember to listen, keep a sense of humour, and look for the good, PRAISE OFTEN! I have always believed in the 3 R's but Penny introduced me to the powerful 3 L's - Libraries - Learning - Literacy.

Penny said we need to talk about people, not buildings and resources. And the most important fact, we DO make a difference in the lives of our students.

Workshop 1 Tuesday - Louise Robbie, Manawatu College

“Exposing yourself: Fishnet Stockings and Trumpet Blasts”

Louise's enthusiasm is a wave and it is impossible not to be swept along in the current. But what she was saying was so important to us all, that, golly give me a surfboard! Her key quote – “Get professionally self-confident and strut your stuff”. Thinking about it, I have actually blown my own trumpet too. This was only because I was so pleasantly surprised to see a clock finished by a student last year. It was gratifying to see that he had listened and took it on board, and he was not an easy chap either. An extra bonus is that the clock has been donated to the library. YES!

We shouldn't need to wave our arms about in order to be recognised as valuable members of the school community, but in some instances it maybe necessary. So be it. Louise gave us good strategies to help us become more visible.

The ones I especially liked were:

- Encouraging trainee teachers "on section". I love to help them and go all out, but I have never been brave enough to seek them out and suggest a visit to the library. I will from now on, I know I'll think of Louise every time a new one arrives.
- Compile a library handbook for new staff and deliver it to them. We can't wait for them to be brought to the library, it may get over looked. The new teachers are probably feeling a bit like a fish out of water; so throw in a life tube.
- Instruct students and teaching staff on how to utilise the OPAC fully. I'm passionate about this as it is something I have been dying to be given time to do. My INNZ demonstration went well. Keep the energy pumping Louise, and a big Thank You!

Workshop 2 Tuesday - Lesley Hooper, Statistics NZ

"Need some data..."

I regularly use the N.Z. Yearbook. Students and I alike are amazed with the help it offers for a wide range of assignments across the levels. I have to admit, I've never tried www.stats.govt.nz personally. Lesley gave us a guided tour around parts of the web site, giving hints such as book-marking new information found on the homepage for easy location when data is moved to its proper site. There's a great glossary to help students (and me) understand the technical terms that are used. I think her idea to tell teachers about the main home page and the "Schools Corner" is great. Time will have to undoubtedly have to be put aside to wander through this vast learning tool, so it can be used to everyone's best advantage.

Keynote Speaker 3 - Tuesday

Jane Edgar, Mellons Bay Schools Information Centre

This talk was directed mainly to TL's & TLR's and I can only imagine how they must have felt watching Jane make her delivery. She was very entertaining. Jane takes her role seriously while not being serious. She is a true artist and her school must buzz. More good ideas shared were newsletters (I had thought of that, but will have to make the time); book lists and a "how to" list. And above all the reminder that if we have a success at something without matching Thomas Edison's 10,000 failures then we are doing OK!

Workshop 3 Tuesday

Lois Webb & Rob Finlay, National Library, Auckland - "Strengthening School Libraries Project"

There was a bit of a whoops here, the word 'primary' was accidentally omitted in the blurb about the workshop so a few secondary folk sat through it, as we didn't want to appear rude by walking out. I have to say though, that I still took away some ideas. The Auckland schools that were part of the program were lucky. I loved the idea of cultural days, another display theme to add to my Halloween display. Hey we have to break that mould, it's a bit of fun and the kids love it.

We have a sound system being installed at my school during the holidays, for baroque music, and now I can use it another way as well- theme music on the cultural days. We were told of a school that uses drum music to draw in the crowd. Cook Island drum music.... sounds great!

It was also great to know that National Library is behind SCISWeb, because I'm trialing this year and I'm finding it invaluable.

Tuesday Nights DINNER - Famous Partnerships

What a great icebreaker the conference organisers employed. They asked us to dress up as a particular character, and got us to find our 'famous partner' when we arrived at the dinner. Our students should've seen us - so much for stereotypes!

The guest speaker was Joe Bennett; he had us in stitches and was great value. It's quite odd that after that evening when I visited bookshops all I saw were books by him. What does that say...?

Workshop 1 Wednesday - Linda Forbes, National Library

"Treasures in the 398's"

What a treat to listen to Linda. She spoke with such passion (and has so many favourites!!!) Who would've thought that the 398's could be so adaptable and I can even see a couple of teachers using certain titles as an introduction to certain units. (One's been known to use croaking frogs, wands etc., so a story....no sweat) You have to agree, that it's a great way to capture the attention of a reluctant mind. Linda showed us how the 398's could be used across the curriculum, including Art, Social Sciences, Music, Science, Textiles and even the symbolism in Mathematics. They'll no longer be limited to literary entertainment. Linda pointed out the importance of authenticity when selecting titles. Good books will have acknowledgements and notes explaining the significance of the story. I found lots of great Aboriginal art and North American totems in this section. I was recently asked for these and never thought of our mythology encyclopedia. I guess we have to remember not to limit our thinking.

Workshop 2 Wednesday - Stu Duval, Whangaporoa

“Creative ideas ‘til your brain hurts!”

What a perfect note to end the workshops. If you ever get the chance to have Stu to talk at your school, grab it and don't let go. He had us practically rolling on the floor, and pushed a few “right brain buttons”. Most of us could do well to remember to “Challenge left brain thinking, with - Why?”. I came away with heaps of ideas, as well as exercised internal organs. I loved his idea of getting away from the word “library”, and using something more creative. As I'm not a trained Librarian I feel a bit guilty at times saying I'm the Librarian, so it rather tickles my fancy to be known as “The Gatekeeper of the Labyrinth”.

Keynote Speaker 4 Wednesday - Lyn Hay, Australia

Lyn spoke of creating powerful partnerships between TL's and Principals. But it also applies to the whole Library Team. We need to remember to communicate regularly; everyone needs to be kept informed at all levels; be visible; seek alliances; have balance in the duties; lead by example and remember to appreciate what others in the team do, giving credit where credit is due. This applies to life really!

Summing up

I was really stepping out of my comfort zone attending a conference, but it was a real confidence builder. I feel privileged that I was given the opportunity to attend and came away with lots of ideas that are fun and achievable. I whole-heartedly recommend the next SLANZA conference to you all you won't be disappointed.

The conference committee are to be heartily congratulated for such an awesome job.

Many, many THANKS!!

Sheryn Smith