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National Year of Reading starts here

2012 will see a whole heap of amazing, fun, reading activities taking place around Australia and online, so that people of all ages and backgrounds can discover (or rediscover) the joy of reading.

If your parents read to you when you were very young, or if you learnt to read at an early age, went to a school where reading for pleasure was encouraged and you kept reading as a young adult, then the word on the page (or the screen) will be part of your DNA.

But for 46% of the population, that's not the case.

Nearly half of Australians struggle to meet the most basic reading demands of everyday life and work. According to the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey 2006, the results of which can be viewed at www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4228.0, 46% of Australians cannot read a newspaper, follow a recipe, make sense of a timetable, or understand the instructions on a medicine bottle.

Wouldn't it be great to have something that focused everyone's attention on reading? Something that galvanised parents, teachers and students into action; something that showcased the really important role that libraries play in the school community? Well, here it is: The National Year of Reading 2012.

This idea was first discussed at the Australian Library and Information Association Public Libraries Summit in Canberra, way back in 2009. Since then it has expanded to include authors, publishers, teachers, teacher librarians, book retailers, media organisations, government and corporate partners.

Ambassadors and partners

All kinds of household names will be active in the National Year of Reading campaign – notably the ABC, Dymocks, Madman Entertainment, Scholastic and The Walt Disney Company – and in addition to Jennifer Byrne, William McInnes and Boori Monty Pryor, ambassadors and patrons will include Anita Heiss, Bryce Courtenay, Andy Griffiths, Morris Gleitzman, Susanne Gervay, Anh Do, Ted Egan, Robyn Archer, Anna Goldsworthy, Steve Parish and the Melbourne Football Club.



**National
Year of
Reading
2012**

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National Year of Reading starts here (cont.)



Authors Hazel Edwards, William McInnes and Alison Lester at Bialik College, Hawthorn, Victoria, for the soft launch of the National Year of Reading in September 2011

More than 200 writers, publishers and organisations involved in reading and literacy are partnered with the National Year of Reading – organisations such as the Centenary of Canberra, the Indigenous Literacy Foundation, the Pyjama Foundation, Speech Pathology Australia, Student Edge, Vision Australia and Writing Australia.

Funding has come from the Australian Government, the Australia Council for the Arts, the Copyright Agency Ltd, the Sidney Myer Fund and Australian libraries.

Our Story

The first public outing for the National Year of Reading was on 1 November 2011, when voting opened for the book that readers think should represent their state or territory in the National Year of Reading 'Our Story' collection.

Margaret Allen, chair of the National Year of Reading founders and State Librarian of WA, explains:

'For 2012, we're creating a collection of books which, read together, describe the Australian experience. We all know how very different it is if you're living in the city or in a remote community, in the Northern Territory or New South Wales. We're hoping that thousands of readers will take a journey around Australia through the pages of these eight books and come out of it with an even greater depth of understanding about what it means to be Australian.'

Voting closed on 6 January 2012. The list of eight winning titles will be announced on 14 February, along with the start of Australia's biggest book group. After that, existing book groups, new groups and individual readers

will be able to go online and register as a member of Our Story, joining the discussion about the chosen books.

February launch

The National Year of Reading will officially kick off on 14 February 2012 with a launch at the National Library of Australia, Canberra. The launch will be hosted by The First Tuesday Book Club's Jennifer Byrne, much loved actor and author William McInnes, and award-winning children's author Boori Monty Pryor. Events will also be held at locations around the country, including State Libraries, school libraries, public libraries, book stores and community venues.

The Reading Hour

A highlight of the campaign will be The Reading Hour, to be held on 25 August 2012. Based on Earth Hour, this event will encourage families to not only to join together for a reading session on that day but also to continue reading together for an hour or so a week – whether that's 20 minutes three times a week or 10 minutes nearly every day.

Children and young people

Another initiative for children and young people is based on Alison Lester's much-loved book *Are We There Yet?* This book will be a gift for teacher-librarians in primary schools and, for secondary schools, the theme of travel and experiencing different places around Australia has a great deal of potential.

Alison has said, 'I am absolutely stoked that *Are We There Yet?* has been chosen. It is a book that celebrates Australia and hopefully it will help get the country reading.'



Alison Lester reads *Are we there yet?* at the soft launch of the National Year of Reading

For teenage students, 'Read This', an online peer-to-peer book recommendation project, will provide the opportunity to make a book trailer for a favourite title and enter it in a competition.

The National Year of Reading team is also talking to other literacy promoters, including MS Readathon, Scholastic, and the organisers of the Premiers' Reading Challenges, in order to create opportunities for teachers and teacher-librarians to make a noise without imposing a great deal of extra work.

UK experience

The Australian National Year of Reading is based on a successful campaign in the UK in 2008, which saw:

- 6,000 National Year of Reading events registered on the website
- 2.3 million new public library members
- 12% more children from lower socio-economic groups becoming library members and a 33% increase in parents from these groups saying that they read with their children every day (20% compared with 15% previously)
- 23,000 more boys taking part in the Summer Reading Challenge.

The aim is to achieve a comparable level of activity and equally positive outcomes for Australia in 2012.

For more information about the National Year of Reading and much more detail about each of the projects, visit the [website www.love2read.org.au](http://www.love2read.org.au).



Sue McKerracher
Director, The Library Agency

If you don't have a PLN, you don't know what you're missing!

Recently I had the most thrilling experience! I met, **in person**, some members of my Personal Learning Network (PLN)!

In between shared handshakes, hugs, giggles – gasps could be heard:

'Wow – you're so tall!'
'Your hair isn't as red as I thought it'd be!'
'You're just like I imagined!'
'I can't believe I'm finally meeting you!'
'You look just like your avatar!'

So who are these people? How did they become so significant in my life? Why on earth should the bonds connecting us feel so strong? How was this train of events set in place?

When I started out on my learning journey nearly two years ago, I expected to increase my knowledge and learn some more about the technology that had baffled me for so many years. What I didn't expect was that I would have the opportunity to meet and mix – virtually – with the amazing bunch of people who are now firmly entrenched as members of my PLN.

My PLN is comprised of a range of professionals that stretch across Australia and the world, many more than the half dozen members I recently met in person. Establishing links with them has been exciting and exhilarating. Having a support group on which to lean, to question, to learn from and to share with has been not only professionally enriching, but life changing. I get so excited when I talk about the value of my PLN, and my impulse is to share my experience in the hope that it may be a source of inspiration to others to 'get out there' and start developing their own!

What is a PLN?

The simplest definition is that a PLN is a group of people with whom one connects, communicates and collaborates in the sharing and exchanging of information and ideas, and through whom one increases one's knowledge and understanding of topics of interest. Depending on your own interests, members of your PLN may be known or unknown to each other and may have a set of disparate or similar interests

or ideas. Most often, they are an extended community of people which stretches across the globe. A key feature is that members of your PLN meet your specific needs for information, knowledge and ideas.

Members of a PLN need not be constant – in fact, a PLN is nebulous. It has no structure; there is nothing definite about it. This undefined structure is indeed another of its features – albeit a hidden feature – which reveals itself more clearly as time goes by. A PLN grows and develops over an extended period of time. Members of a PLN are 'out there' wandering through cyberspace. You can expect to bump into them every now and then in any one or all of your 'communication' spots: your email inbox or any one of the range of social networking platforms in which you engage.

The communication tools used by members of a PLN make it easy to locate, connect, engage and interact with a range of peers, experts, or anyone with similar interests. PLNs enable us to engage in global learning and sharing, and to facilitate our ability to reflect on the thoughts of others as a means of bolstering our own learning.

How can a PLN differ from other support?

In short – a PLN allows you to learn **anything, anytime, anywhere** with **anybody** you choose!

You can learn **anything** you like. Rather than face the restrictions of course offerings or conference proceedings, a PLN allows you to decide for yourself what you want to learn or focus on. The choices of what you learn are, in fact, limitless. They may connect to absolutely any aspect of your job, or you may even decide that time spent pursuing an esoteric subject you've always wanted to study may just be the way you want to develop yourself, your knowledge and your skills.

You can learn **anytime** you like: day, night, weekday or weekend; working year or holiday time. The choice is yours and yours alone. The freedom to meet up with members of your PLN via any one of the social networking platforms available –

Twitter, Facebook, Google + or even via traditional email – allows you to balance the time of your learning with your many other commitments.

And just imagine having the freedom to pursue learning **anywhere** – lounging around the house on a Sunday morning in your PJs or late at night after the kids are securely tucked away in bed. Or perhaps sitting in the backyard with the family on a Sunday afternoon is a better time to pursue that new thought, idea or interaction with a mentor, an expert, or a teacher in Barcelona, Miami or Paris. Imagine attending a virtual conference where you can take part in events in Europe, Asia or the Americas. The decision is yours!

And finally, imagine the value of being able to chat or exchange ideas, thoughts and best practice with **anybody** in the world. No longer are you restricted to work colleagues in your school or your region – you can reach out to anyone in your state, your country or the world. Meet up with experts in your field, share with the principals of other schools from anywhere in the world, with professors from leading universities, or with academics who have written the books you use; the world is your oyster. Social networking platforms allow us to interact with others in ways that were unknown just a few short years ago. Taking advantage of this opportunity opens doors you could never have previously imagined.

A PLN turns each of us into active learners who decide what it is we want to learn, and when, where and how we do it. It enables us to take control of our own learning. Just like the students in our classes, we too learn best when given the opportunity to select topics that are of interest to us. Being able to select with whom to learn is far more powerful than being forced or randomly cast into a group with a set activity, topic or issue. Being able to set our own pace, to learn as quickly or as slowly as we like or need or have time for today or this week really means that we are in control of our learning and set our own limits. Being able to find other likeminded people who share your interests and to explore with and through

If you don't have a PLN, you don't know what you're missing! (cont.)

them is very satisfying. Knowing that you are contributing to the PLN of another and that others are interested in your knowledge, experience and expertise is in turn very empowering.

Getting started is the challenge

The delineating factor of my PLN was the nature of its inception. Having enrolled in an online program to develop my knowledge and use of Web 2.0 tools, I met fellow participants. As we played and experimented, explored and learned, we shared ideas and thoughts with each other through a Ning – an online platform in which people create their own social network. As the course required us to create a blog, it was not long before we started to read and then leave comments on each other's blog posts. As the course invited us to explore a range of social networking platforms, these too became locations where we could meet and mingle, chat and share, and question and support each other on our ongoing learning journey. As new communication channels became established and embedded in our daily routines, each of us saw our PLN grow in size and strength. And without a doubt, the greater the sharing, the stronger the bonds between us grew.

While I highly recommend everyone to enrol in an online learning program, as it can give the initial impetus to getting started, to focusing and to maintaining a commitment to ongoing learning, it is not, by any means, a prerequisite to developing a PLN.

Connect, communicate and collaborate with other teachers in your state, county or anywhere in the world by signing up to any one of the social networking platforms that are out there. Together with Web 2.0 tools, social networking has transformed the way in which we collect and share resources, ideas, methodologies and best practice.

Select any one of the blog publishing tools available, such as Wordpress, Edublogs or Blogger, and start publishing your own ideas and thoughts. Locate the blogs of others so that you can read and delve into their thoughts – ask other people for recommendations, and share your

recommendations with others. Use RSS feeders to help you stay abreast of new posts. And be sure to participate by leaving comments. Apart from enriching your experience, this is a way for people to build a collective store of thought and knowledge.

Explore a range of social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Google+. Select one as a way of communicating instantly and regularly with members of your PLN. Ask others for recommendations of who to follow, then look at who those people are following and start following them too. Contribute useful information and thoughts, and you will soon find that others will be keen to follow you. Also consider exploring Nings -- there are a large number of special interest Nings from which to choose, and these will provide you with an instant group of likeminded people with whom to communicate with and learn from.

Explore bookmarking tools such as Diigo or video storing tools such as VodPod, as well as book reading tools such as GoodReads. Apart from storing and sorting, these tools have social networking features that enable the sharing of both the resources and any comments made about those resources. This can be another powerful way to link with other likeminded people.

Initially, you may feel as though you are fumbling with new and unexplored tools such as Blogs, Nings and social networking tools. But one of the side benefits of a PLN is the development of a group of people with whom you can learn and develop new skills. Feeling secure and comfortable within a group will allow you the confidence to ask questions and experiment. Knowing that there is a friendly voice out there to assist you is so much better than 'going it alone'.

Tackle one new tool at a time. Start small and keep it simple. Choose that which meets your needs, the time you have available and your skill level. Take time to reflect and digest all that you experience and learn. Share your experience with others and they will value your thoughts as much as you value theirs.


So what's to be gained from a PLN?

A PLN contributes a great deal to us as individuals, as well as furthering the impetus for global learning as we link hands across the oceans. The value of a PLN is best described visually:



Diagram created by Bev Novak and appears in her blog; *NovaNews*, <http://novanews19.wordpress.com/>. Published here with permission. Further distribution with acknowledgement is permitted.

And remember! Developing a PLN is totally free. All you need to get started is a computer, internet access and a desire to learn. Be transported to a new way of learning. Feel engaged, inspired, empowered and challenged as you link up with others. Know that as you gain from your PLN others will gain from you. Never underestimate the knowledge, insights and experience you have to contribute to others. Feel empowered! Read more about PLNs from sites listed in this Scoop.it! www.scoop.it/t/personal-learning-networks.

Start developing your Personal Learning Network today and discover the joy of lifelong learning. 



Bev Novak

Bev is currently working as a Teacher librarian at Mentone Grammar, Victoria, and is a former Head of Library at two Independent Schools.

Include Bev's blog, *NovaNews*, <http://novanews19.wordpress.com/>, and Twitter, @novanews19, in your PLN.

The 2011 Horizon Report for schools

The New Media Consortium *NMC Horizon Report* series is an outcome of the NMC Horizon Project, an ongoing research effort that identifies and describes emerging technologies that are likely to have a large impact on teaching, learning, research, or creative expression within education around the globe. This volume, the *K–12 edition*, focuses on pre-tertiary education.

Each edition of the *NMC Horizon Report* introduces six emerging technologies or practices that are likely to enter mainstream use in the educational community within three adoption horizons over the next one to five years. Each report also presents critical trends and challenges that will affect teaching and learning over the same timeframe.

To identify these areas, the project has drawn on an ongoing conversation among knowledgeable persons in the fields of business, industry, and education; on published resources, current research, and practice; and on the expertise of both the NMC community and other communities.

Key trends

The following five trends have been identified as key drivers of technology adoptions for the period of 2011 through 2016.

The abundance of resources and relationships made easily accessible via the internet is increasingly challenging us to revisit our roles as educator. Institutions must consider the unique value that each resource adds to a world in which information is everywhere. In such a world, sense-making and the ability to assess the credibility of information are paramount.

As IT support becomes more and more decentralised, the technologies we use are increasingly based not on school servers, but in the cloud. Globally, in huge numbers, we are growing accustomed to a model of browser-based software that is device-independent. While some challenges still remain, specifically with notions of privacy and control, the promise of significant cost savings is an important driver in the search for solutions. The continuing acceptance and adoption of cloud-based applications and services is changing not only the ways we configure and use software and file storage, but even how we conceptualise those functions. It does not matter where our work is stored; what matters is that our

information is accessible no matter where we are or what device we choose to use.

Technology continues to profoundly affect the way we work, collaborate, communicate, and succeed. Technology skills are now critical to success in almost every arena of life. The digital divide, once seen as a factor of wealth, is now seen as a factor of education: those who have the opportunity to learn technology skills are in a better position to obtain and make use of technology than those who do not. Evolving occupations, multiple careers, and an increasingly mobile workforce contribute to this trend.

People expect to be able to work, learn and study whenever and wherever they want to. This highly ranked trend, also noted last year, continues to permeate all aspects of daily living. A faster approach is often perceived as a better approach, and as such people want easy and timely access not only to the information on the network, but to their social networks that can help them to interpret it and maximise its value. The implications for informal learning are profound, as are the notions of ‘just-in-time’ learning and ‘found’ learning, both ways of maximising the impact of learning by ensuring it is timely and efficient.

The perceived value of innovation and creativity is increasing. Innovation is valued at the highest levels of business and must be embraced in schools if students are to succeed beyond their formal education. The ways we design learning experiences must reflect the growing importance of innovation and creativity as professional skills. Innovation and creativity must not be linked only to arts subjects, either; these skills are equally important in scientific inquiry, entrepreneurship and other areas as well.

Critical challenges

Along with current trends, the advisory board notes critical challenges that schools face.

Digital media literacy continues its rise in importance as a key skill in every discipline and profession. Digital literacy is less about tools and more about thinking. The challenge is due to the fact that despite the widespread agreement on its importance, training in digital literacy skills and techniques is rare in teacher education and system-level professional development programs.

Economic pressures and new models of education are presenting unprecedented

competition to traditional models of schools. Across the board, institutions are looking for ways to control costs while still providing a high quality of service. Schools are challenged by the need to support a steady, or growing, number of students with fewer resources and staff than before. As a result, creative institutions are developing new models to serve students, such as providing open content over the network. As these pressures continue, other models may emerge that diverge from traditional ones. Simply capitalising on new technology, however, is not enough; the new models must use these tools and services to engage students on a deeper level.

The demand for personalised learning is not adequately supported by current technology or practices. The increasing demand for education that is customised to each student’s needs is driving the development of new technologies that provide more learner choice and control and allow for differentiated instruction.

A key challenge is the fundamental structure of the K–12 education establishment. As long as maintaining the basic elements of the existing system remains the focus of efforts to support education, there will be resistance to any profound change in practice. Learners have increasing opportunities to take their education into their own hands, and options like informal education, online education and home-based learning are attracting students away from traditional educational settings. If the system is to remain relevant it must adapt, but major change comes hard in education.

Many activities related to learning and education take place outside the walls of the classroom and thus are not part of our learning metrics. Students can take advantage of learning material online, through games and programs they may have on systems at home, and through their extensive, and constantly available, social networks. The experiences that happen in and around these venues are difficult to tie back to the classroom, as they tend to happen serendipitously and in response to an immediate need for knowledge.

The near-term horizon

On the near-term horizon – that is, within the next 12 months – are cloud computing and mobiles.

The 2011 Horizon Report for schools (cont.)

After attracting interest as a source of free productivity tools, cloud computing is now seen as a way to trim the costs of running district data centres, such as data storage, backups and infrastructure maintenance. Cloud-based applications and services are available to many school students today, and more schools are employing cloud-based tools all the time. Now schools are looking to outsource significant parts of their infrastructure, such as email and backups, to cloud providers.

Mobiles, especially smartphones and tablets, enable ubiquitous access to information, social networks, tools for learning and productivity, and hundreds of thousands of custom applications. Mobiles were listed in previous years because they could capture multimedia, access the internet, or geolocate. Now they are effectively specialised computers for the palm of your hand, with a huge and growing collection of software tools that make use of their accelerometers, compasses, cameras, microphones, GPS, and other sensors. Mobiles have moved to the near-term horizon this year as new, always-connected tablets such as the iPad have changed the debate around allowing personal devices on campuses.

The second adoption horizon

The second adoption horizon is set two to three years out. During this timeframe we will begin to see widespread adoptions of game-based learning and open content.

Games for education range from single-player or small-group card and board games to massive multiplayer online games and alternative reality games. While continuing

to develop in some very interesting ways, the growth of game-based learning has been constrained due to the lack of quality educational games and game platforms.

Open content is the current form of a movement that began a decade ago, when universities such as MIT began to make their course content freely available. Ten years later, schools have also begun to share a significant amount of curricula, resources and learning materials. There is a growing variety of open content from K–12 organisations and schools, and in many parts of the world, open content represents a profound shift in the way students study and learn. Far more than just a collection of free online course materials, the open content movement is increasingly a response to the rising costs of education, the desire to provide access to learning in areas where such access is difficult, and an expression of student choice about when and how to learn.

The far-term horizon

On the far-term horizon, set at four to five years away from widespread adoption, are learning analytics and personal learning environments.

Learning analytics build on the kinds of information generated by Google Analytics and other similar tools. Through the use of learning analytics, educators can study student engagement, performance, progress in practice, what is learned to revise curricula, teaching, and assessment in real time.

Personal learning environments (PLEs) refer to student-designed learning approaches that encompass different types of content,

such as videos, apps, games and social media tools, which are chosen by a student to match his or her personal learning style and pace. Despite the use of the word 'environment' in the name, the notion of a collection or a physical or online space is somewhat irrelevant to a PLE. The goal is for students to have more control over how they learn, and for teachers to set expectations that their students will be more engaged in autonomous learning.

Conclusion

Each of these technologies is described in detail in the body of the report. These sections open with a discussion of what the technology is and why it is relevant to teaching, learning, and creative inquiry. Examples of the technology in practice, especially in schools, are listed to illustrate how it is being adopted at the current time. Our research indicates that all six of these technologies, taken together, will have a significant impact on learning-focused organisations within the next five years.

L. Johnson, S. Adams and K. Haywood
NMC Horizon Report: 2011 K-12 edition
New Media Consortium, Austin, Texas

This article is adapted from sections of the report. The full report is available at www.nmc.org/pdf/2011-Horizon-Report-K12.pdf

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Connections

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Australian School Library Association Citation Award

SCIS and Education Services Australia are very proud to announce that SCIS Subscriber Support Coordinator Pru Mitchell was presented with the Australian School Library Association (ASLA) citation award at the ASLA XXII conference in Sydney on 21 October 2011.

Connections talked to Pru in order to find out more about the award, her nomination and her professional associations.

What is the ASLA citation?

The citation is conferred biennially by ASLA. In the words of the citation, it 'is presented for outstanding contribution to the national leadership of teacher librarianship'. There are several areas of eligibility, including those for which I was acknowledged: policy formulation, publication, administration, innovation and education.

What does this award mean to you?

Since the conference I have been overwhelmed by the goodwill generated by the award. I wrote quite a long personal response at the time, which is published on the ASLA website, but I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those people who have sent best wishes and who have supported me throughout my career.



Pru Mitchell at the awards ceremony in Sydney, 21 October 2011

What stands out from the citation nomination?

Overall, I am proud that I support school library staff through my contribution to professional associations and my work with SCIS. Library staff who do so much to support teachers and learners in our schools.

As part of ASLA, I have been fortunate to be involved in several key projects over the years including the project management and publication of the second edition of *Learning for the future: developing information services in schools* in 2001.

However, my particular passion and concern has been our work on teacher professional standards. Highlights of this work include the papers presented at international conferences, as well as the development and endorsement of the *Standards of professional excellence for teacher librarians* (2005).

What do you see as the role of professional associations in developing standards?

Professions Australia (1997) defines a profession as a highly disciplined, self-regulating entity whose members are well-educated and service-oriented. This certainly resonates with my experience of professional associations, where committed practitioners, researchers and academics engage in highly strategic professional work on a voluntary basis. These people work selflessly to improve outcomes for members and their students.

'A profession is a disciplined group of individuals who adhere to ethical standards and who hold themselves out as, and are accepted by the public as, possessing special knowledge and skills in a widely recognised body of learning derived from research, education and training at a high level, and who are prepared to apply this knowledge and exercise these skills in the interest of others.'

Professions Australia (1997), www.professions.com.au/defineprofession.html

Basically, professional associations are about standards. As we work towards encoding a

national description of professionalism in Australian education, it is good to see the importance of professional engagement is being recognised within the standards for teachers and leaders.

What are library associations doing about professional standards?

In New Zealand, school library staff are undertaking the professional registration and revalidation process of the Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (LIANZA).

In Australia, the ASLA Board and its partner associations have established a Policy Advisory project team to interpret the National Professional Standards for Teachers (2011) within a school library context. Material from this process will be available in draft form in 2012, and will assist teacher librarians to identify, record and publish evidence that maps to the standards in whatever form their school or system requires it. Sharing this information will help to promote a cohesive view of the work of a teacher librarian and should save time for individuals across the profession.

It is interesting that there is only one reference to professional associations in the *National Professional Standards for Teachers* (2011). According to this document, highly accomplished teachers:

'contribute to professional networks and associations and build productive links with the wider community to improve teaching and learning.'

(Professional Engagement | Standard 7 | Focus area 7.4)

Otherwise, the standards refer to participation or leadership in professional and community 'networks'.

So why have professional associations rather than networks?

I don't really believe that it is a case of one or the other. I am a strong advocate for social networking: it's a significant part of my SCIS role, as well as consuming plenty of the rest of my life, and my Personal Learning Network (PLN) is vital to me personally and professionally.

Website reviews

21things4students

www.21things4students.net/

Emanating from Michigan, this pilot program has developed resources to support educational technology for students. Topics include digital citizenship, digital footprints, personal networks, learning online and presentations. Teachers are catered for with background material and notes.

SCIS no: 1535798



1535798

The 50 best websites of 2011

www.time.com/time/specials/packages/0,28757,2087815,00.html

Time magazine has collated their top five websites, in ten categories, to present their fifty top sites from 2011. The categories include: education, games, social media, news and sports. Teacher librarians should check links prior to recommending this resource, as not all featured sites may be applicable to the school setting.

SCIS no: 1535816



1535816

Academic Earth

www.academicearth.org

Senior secondary students can access this innovative website, which offers free video courses and lectures from highly respected scholars. Content is diverse and comprehensive and includes chemistry, environmental studies, engineering, physics, media studies and political science.

SCIS no: 1535822



1535822

Australian School Library Association Citation Award (cont.)

However, I do understand the significance of a formally constituted professional association in the areas of authority, accountability, responsibility and independence, allowing the profession to build sustainable programs and policies. A national association can claim a consensus with regard to what a teacher librarian is and does, what a quality collection looks like, and what constitutes program excellence.

While informal local networks and lobby groups do great work, national professional associations like ASLA or SLANZA take responsibility for the profession as a whole and are forced to balance the interests of all regions, sectors and levels of education, and libraries that are both small and well-resourced. When organisations, the media and governments look for opinions regarding school libraries, there is great value in being 'the peak body', providing representation of, and leadership and support for, school libraries, as well as the promotion of teacher librarianship.

Having said that, there is plenty of work for professional associations to do in capitalising on the benefits of social media as a way of informing, engaging and developing the profession.


What are the benefits of belonging to a professional association?

The networks, skills and knowledge that active professional association members develop are invaluable personally and professionally. Opportunities provided by membership range from planning and

delivering professional learning activities to writing policies, publishing, advocacy, leadership and constitutional debate. All of these opportunities can enhance the professionalism of our members, directly benefiting individual teachers' work. Most importantly, professional association involvement builds professionals who are able to see a bigger picture.

For me, the rewards have been incredible not only professionally but also personally, as I have gained a range of 'flock-mates' (White 2011) who have supported my journey.

Any final comments?

Anyone who wins an award must first be nominated. I was really honoured and humbled that colleagues within ASLA saw fit to nominate me for this citation. I would like to thank the special people who took that initiative and time, and I would also like to encourage others to look out for opportunities to nominate colleagues for professional awards at all levels. The rewards of this are beneficial not only for the recipient, but also for the profession. 

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registration, www.lianza.org.nz/resources/professional-registration

National Professional Standards for teachers 2011, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, www.teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au

Professions Australia 1997, *Definition of a profession*, www.professions.com.au/defineprofession.html

White, S 2011 'Flockmates and inspiration', *Senga's Space blog*, 16 August 2011, <http://sengaw.wordpress.com/2011/08/16/flockmates-and-inspiration>

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Key school library associations

Australian School Library Association: www.asla.org.au

Australian Library & Information Association: www.alia.org.au

International Association of School Librarianship: www.iasl-online.org

Library & Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa: www.lianza.org.nz

School Library Association of New Zealand Aotearoa: www.slanza.org.nz

School Library Association of Victoria: www.slav.schools.net.au

Website reviews (cont.)

ATOM Awards

www.atomawards.org/

Conducted annually by Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM) these awards recognise excellence in film, animation, television, and multimedia created by primary, secondary and tertiary students. General educational and vocational producers are also recognised. Awards from previous years are also available.

SCIS no: 1535908



1535908

BookRabbit – a social network for books

www.bookrabbit.com

Secondary students and teachers with a love of reading and books will be charmed by this creative website. Using BookRabbit, readers can recommend and discuss books, showcase their personal bookshelves, connect with other readers, authors and publishers; add video clips, and browse new titles.

SCIS no: 1535934



1535934

Distance calculator

http://distancecalculator.globefeed.com/Country_Distance_Calculator.asp

If you ever need to calculate the distance between towns and cities in a variety of countries this website is indispensable. Maps are provided, distances calculated, important driving directions dispensed and driving time calculated. For those not inclined to drive, the location of the nearest airport is given.

SCIS no: 1535970



1535970

Encyclopedia of life

www.eol.org

An international initiative that counts Harvard University, the Smithsonian Institution and the Chinese Academy of Sciences among its global partners, this detailed encyclopedia focuses on Earth's life forms: animals, plants, fungi, protists and bacteria. Data is continually being harvested and updated.

SCIS no: 1372892



1372892

Info: ebooks

www.wheelersbooks.com.au/info/ebooks/

Although this is a commercial website, teacher librarians will gain an insight into how libraries are currently purchasing and loaning ebooks. As teacher librarians embracing emerging technologies consider their options, this site is definitely thought provoking.

SCIS no: 1536005



1536005

Isabel Allende

www.isabelallende.com/

Authors wanting a web presence need to view this stunning, informative and easily navigated website which captures the essence of author Isabel Allende. Readers will be compelled to explore her musings, biographical material and excerpts from her works.

SCIS no: 1536010



1536010

Lightning bug

www.lightningbug.com.au

The focus of this website is to encourage young adults to write using digital media such as video and photo stories, online collaborative books and audio-only narratives. Teachers are catered for with links to a variety of engaging media including FutureMe, Animoto, Voki, Sketchcast, Piknik, Storybird and Xtranormal.

SCIS no: 1536020



1536020

Mathletics

www.mathletics.com.au

Used by 3.5 million students worldwide, this engrossing Australian mathematics site, available by subscription, caters for students in Foundation to Year 12 at all levels of ability. Students can compete with others from around the world in tests of speed and skill, with results available for analysis.

SCIS no: 1370131



1370131

Netted by the Webbys

<http://netted.net/>

From the same group who present the highly regarded annual Webby Awards, this daily email offers subscribers an interesting website, application or service which the authors deem to be 'worthwhile, indispensable, or even life changing'.

SCIS no: 1536111



1536111

Right House

www.righthouse.co.nz

This NZ website offers an interesting interactive guide for reducing energy consumption at home and making new housing designs more energy-efficient. Concepts covered include geographical location, aspect, passive and active systems, lighting, heating, insulation, power generation and how to complete a house assessment.

SCIS no: 1536117



1536117

SpineOut

www.spineout.com.au/

From the publishers of *Good Reading* magazine comes an online magazine aimed specifically at a young adult readership. The magazine encourages readers to submit reviews and to 'express their ideas and thoughts and to share their creativity in words, art, film or music'.

SCIS no: 1536128



1536128



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The internet sites selected in *Website reviews* are often of a professional nature and should be initially viewed by teachers and library staff to determine suitability for students. The links, content and addresses of these sites may not be permanent.

Professional development of library technicians: the year ahead

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) Library Technicians Group of Victoria had one of its most successful years in 2011. Our program of continuing professional development events and networking opportunities proved to be very popular, and the Committee are working on plans to bring back the regular favourites in 2012, along with some exciting new events.

Our program for 2012 will begin on Saturday 4 February 2012 with *Techs on Tour – the summer prequel*. Delegates will visit two libraries, including the new Lerderderg Library in Bacchus Marsh. Lunch will also be arranged. The event is very relaxed and has proven to be a great way to start our program over the years.

In March, we hope to include the *Skool Library Trek*, an event that began in 2008. The event focuses on the work in school libraries and has included visits to sites such as the Cunningham Library at the Australian Council for Education Research, Camberwell; Aquinas College Library, Ringwood; Wooranna Park Primary School, Dandenong North; Ivanhoe Grammar's Ridgeway Campus Library; and Eltham College of Education's junior and secondary libraries. In 2012, delegates will hear about the activities associated with the National Year of Reading and then board a minibus to visit three innovative school libraries. The trek will be a wonderful chance to share new ideas and network with others working in the field.

Plans are underway for *Techs on Tour's* fifteenth year. A perennial favourite, this event is located in Melbourne's CBD and is traditionally held mid-year. The day will provide delegates with a look behind the scenes of city libraries. Over the years, delegates have visited many sites including the ABC Reference and Resource Centre, the Supreme Court Library, the Melbourne Theosophical Library and Kay Craddock – Antiquarian Bookseller. The day includes a range of tours at the State Library of Victoria as well as topical speakers.

We also hope to organise the *River of Opportunities* weekend seminar in a Victorian regional centre at some point during the year. The seminar has been held

every two years since 2000 and previous locations have included Mildura, Albury, Wagga Wagga, Canberra and Moama. The program traditionally features the presentation of a range of topical papers, library tours and mini-workshops, beginning on Saturday morning and finishing at lunchtime on Sunday. The seminar has attracted delegates from South Australia, NSW, Victoria and the Northern Territory.

During the year, the Committee will also be arranging visits to a number of libraries, exhibitions and sites of particular interest to people working in libraries. Some of the sites are closed to the public, so we are grateful to those in our network who are able to open their doors to our delegates. We also hope to arrange tours to exhibitions and talks with curators to give delegates an insight into the work associated with creating an exhibition.

We also have some events that exist purely in order to provide our members with an opportunity to network, such as our National Library Technicians' Day dinner in May, Tex and the City lunches (one per season at a restaurant in the Melbourne CBD), and other meals along the way!


In addition to state events, there is the biennial national conference for library technicians. These conferences provide a forum for professional networking and socialising among national and international participants. Delegates learn about the latest trends and developments for libraries, share expertise, hear invited eminent speakers and familiarise themselves with new products and services from the trade and publishing worlds.



Delegates meet at the national conference in Perth 2011

Victoria has a busy year scheduled for 2012! Everyone is welcome to come along and join our events, which are open to ALIA members, non-members, students and all library staff, not just library technicians. Please join us and see what ALIA involvement can offer.

Events are promoted on our Facebook page, <http://tiny.cc/wzd49>, the ALIA website www.alia.org.au/groups/libtvcic/, ALIA e-lists and in our newsletter, Incite.

We hope to see you at an event in the very near future! 



Kerrie Kelly
Secretary, ALIA
Victorian Library
Technicians
Committee



Kim Wilson
Treasurer and
Marketing/
Promotions, ALIA
Victorian Library
Technicians
Committee

The Australian Library and Information Association is comprised of groups that support library technicians nationally and in each state and territory. Visit the ALIA website to find information about our various groups: www.alia.org.au/groups/groups.html.

What is Web 3.0?:

the next generation semantic web. Part 1

In the shift to the 'Web 2.0' environment, websites acquired interactive features and were enriched by the addition of many new tools and online media through which users may add and share content. A new shift in the web, sometimes called Web 3.0, is now predicted: it is the move to a 'semantic web', in which ICT will be able to make links between different sources of content based on the meanings that the content holds for human beings. For example, within this environment a search on 'jaguar' would distinguish between the car and the animal of that name. These connections will be enabled by the embedding of a new, semantic layer of metadata into online content. For librarians the move is accompanied by the shift of cataloguing standards from the AACR2 to Resource

Description and Access (RDA), which spans print and digital media. The metadata will be recorded in a language, or ontology, that allows a machine to 'understand' semantic distinctions. The widespread use of such metadata and supporting technology will permit interoperability between resources. The move to 3.0 has been foreshadowed by the current adoption of personal learning environments, networks and web tools. This functionality allows people to learn via social connections mediated through tools such as Twitter and Yammer; to share images through Facebook or Flickr; to work across cloud computing environments through services such as Evernote, Diigo and Edmodo; and to work with augmented reality and 'mixed reality' services. The emerging Web 3.0 environment may be

understood as 'the portable, personal web, focused on the individual, on a lifestream, on consolidating content, and which is powered by widgets, drag and drop, and mashups of user engagement'. The article includes a glossary of Web 3.0 terms. A future *Scan* article by the author will examine implications of Web 3.0 for educators.

The full article by Judy O'Connell was in *Scan*, Volume 30 Number 3, August 2011; Pages 35–37. This abstract was written by the *Curriculum Leadership* team and published in Volume 9, Issue 20, September 2011.

To receive the weekly electronic journal, register at: www.curriculum.edu.au/leader/email_alert_registration,102.html. 

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To play or not to play:

social networking, games and simulations as educational tools

The article examines the use of technology tools for learning. The first is social networking technology, which characteristically involve logins, the capacity to add images and other content, automatic updates about contacts' activities, and structured connections with individual 'friends' and with groups of collaborators. The forms of collaborative work which it allows can be used to develop students' literacy, research skills, technological skills and capacity for critical analysis. Such work allows 'distributed cognition' an immense collective thinking capacity. It also develops global awareness and cross-cultural skills. Students are making widespread use of social networking services such as Facebook, MySpace, World of Warcraft and Sim City outside of school. Authors such as Klopfer describe how students' use of these services involves them in collaborative, immersive and project-based learning, of the kind that stimulates higher-order thinking. These

forms of learning are the ones needed to meet current and emerging workforce needs. Schools have approached social networking cautiously. Perceived dangers include cyber-bullying, efforts by strangers to elicit personal information, and online or direct personal contact with minors. However, 'the dangers appear to be overstated'. A 2007 survey in the USA found that the most common problems experienced by students was inappropriate images or language, problems also found with TV and popular music. Games and simulations constitute a second important form of technology that can be used for learning. Their popularity is evident in the fact that 12-year-old girls in the USA spend more time gaming than watching TV. Research to date suggests that gaming promotes rule-based learning, fast processing of information, and strategic thinking. Schools lag well behind industry, government and the military in using this technology for learning. Educators wishing

to use new technologies for student learning should consider a number of issues. One is the school culture, including the mindset of teachers and students toward this type of learning. Other issues include technical infrastructure, teachers' technological knowledge, availability of technical support, teachers' and students' familiarity with the hardware and software required, and teachers' awareness of external resources, such as relevant literature or personal contacts that could support the work.

The full article was in Briefings, Volume 15 Number 5, June 2011; Pages 1–5. This abstract was written by the *Curriculum Leadership* team and published in Volume 9, Issue 23, November 2011.

View the full article free online from www.aisq.qld.edu.au/files/files/Communications/briefings/JuneBriefings_11_A4.pdf. 

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Free tool to help with promotion

Promoting your school library to students, teachers and the school community can be fun! You can use Wordle to create eye catching patterns of words and phrases related to your school libraries, or any other topic you may want to promote.

We used the metadata from the last six issues of Connections to create this Wordle. It's easy to change styles and colour palettes to suit your needs. For example, you could match the design to the school colours, or create one for each season or school term. Include a Wordle on your website, in newsletters or on posters to promote activities.

The images you create with Wordle are yours to use as you like. The images can be saved to file, printed or saved to the Wordle gallery to share with others, or they can be pasted into an editing tool like Paint.

Wordle can be found at www.wordle.net/.



Examples of images created in Wordle with different fonts, layouts and colours

SCIS is more...

New SCIS catalogue

The SCIS library management system was upgraded to Voyager version 7 during the first week of October 2011. As part of the upgrade, both Voyager and SCISWeb were migrated to a new server operating system (Linux) with minimal disruption to customers. Our thanks go to our library system vendor Ex Libris and to Education Services Australia's IT support team, Milura, for their support with this major upgrade.

Technical infrastructure

To the SCISWeb user, the most noticeable change is the completely redesigned online catalogue interface. The new interface is much more customisable; however, the core functionality of search types and search indexes remains the same. The SCIS catalogue is now located on a separate server at <http://opac.scis.curriculum.edu.au>, which means it can function independently in the event of downtime on other SCIS services such as SCISWeb.

Search filters

The search limits available in the previous version of the online catalogue are still available for advanced searching (year, place, type, format and language), but search limits have been supplemented by the ability to filter the results following an initial search. These filters are found in the right hand column of the search results page.

Filter Your Search:

[add filter: 2010 and after](#)

[add filter: Electronic resources](#)

[add filter: Sound recordings](#)

[add filter: Videorecordings](#)

[add filter: Published in Australia](#)

[add filter: Published in New Zealand](#)

Search filters

Timeout warning

Many SCIS customers generously responded to a survey as part of the *Strategic Market Review of SCIS* conducted by LibrariesAlive! in 2010. Survey responses confirmed the

frequent timeout as one of the main sources of frustration with the previous online catalogue. The new SCIS catalogue provides a non-intrusive timeout countdown if a search session has been idle for some time, with options to continue the current session or start a new one.



Timeout warning

Persistent links

One of the really exciting features of the new architecture is that the URL of any given page can be copied and used later. Most pages can be bookmarked, and if a session has timed out, the browser's 'Back' function can be used to retrieve your results and continue searching.

Although any URL can be copied when a record is on screen, there is a shorter version that can be used to view any record if the SCIS number is known, so that a link like the following can be used: <http://opac.scis.curriculum.edu.au/vwebv/holdingsInfo?bibid=1391727>. These 'persistent links' have opened the door to social bookmarking in the SCIS catalogue. In the 'Action box' at the right hand side of every complete record display, the record can be bookmarked in your favourite social bookmarking site.

Social bookmarking in the SCIS catalogue


Accessibility and usability

There are lots of other great features in the new SCIS catalogue, such as a script which automatically strips initial articles from your search (for example, you will no longer get zero results if you do a title search for 'The wind in the willows'). Other enhancements may not be so readily apparent but are nonetheless highly significant.

The user interface was developed to comply with international industry and accessibility standards. Its 'skin' architecture lends itself to special purpose interfaces, such as mobile and multilingual versions. Plans to develop a mobile interface and a version of the interface with screen commands in MƉori are on the drawing board.

Your feedback

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to give us their thoughts on the new catalogue. While system constraints do not permit us to implement every single suggestion, we have considered your feedback carefully and will continue to make improvements where we can. Please keep the suggestions coming – just send an email to scisinfo@esa.edu.au or go to the 'Contact SCIS' page on the SCIS website at www.esa.edu.au/scis.

Acknowledgement: Screen prints were produced with the written permission of Ex Libris Ltd, based on their Voyager software, and may not be further distributed. 



Leonie Bourke
Manager, SCIS
Education Services
Australia



Pru Mitchell
SCIS Subscriber
Coordinator,
Education Services
Australia

Educational Lending Right

ELR 2011–12 school library survey data collection

We offer our sincere gratitude to the more than 370 schools Australia wide that took the time to accept our invitation to participate in the Educational Lending Right 2011–12 school library survey.

Educational Lending Right (ELR) is an Australian cultural program administered by the Office for the Arts, which is situated within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. SCIS manages the ELR school library survey on behalf of the Office for the Arts.

Schools invited to take part are directed to follow simple instructions to provide a data file report or a backup file from the school library management system. Previous participants report this to be a very quick process. The privacy of all schools is rigorously maintained: no individual libraries are identified in the final survey results, and all school data held at SCIS for the purposes of the survey is destroyed once the survey process has been completed.

The data collected is then used to calculate the number of copies of specific titles held in Australian school libraries. These book counts are the basis for payments made to Australian book creators. The payments are designed to assist book creators to continue producing Australian books.

Support to Australian book creators

Many Australian book creators have provided statements about the value of ELR. Some of these statements have been published in previous issues of *Connections* and others can be viewed online on the ELR website, www.esa.edu.au/scis/elr.html.

The common theme in these statements is that the annual payments from the Australian government, calculated from the ELR survey results, are very important when it comes to their being able to continue producing books for Australian children.

Many schools who participated reported in their feedback that they were 'happy to support Australian authors' and that participating was the 'right thing to do'. It is very encouraging to know that schools appreciate the contribution that Australian book creators make to Australian cultural development.



Marianne Musgrave wrote: Contrary to popular belief, authors aren't rich (sadly!). ELR payments are a key factor in my ability to keep working as a full time writer without having to take on unrelated work. ELR means more stories for kids.

Feedback from participants is very important

All schools who participate in the ELR school library survey are asked to provide us with feedback on their experience along with the completed survey. In 2011, we offered the two options for the feedback: a SurveyMonkey online form and a hardcopy form. Approximately 70% of respondents used the hardcopy form and returned it to us by mail. All the responses are entered into

SurveyMonkey as it offers efficiencies for analysis. We read all comments carefully, and implement improvements to our processes or information wherever possible.

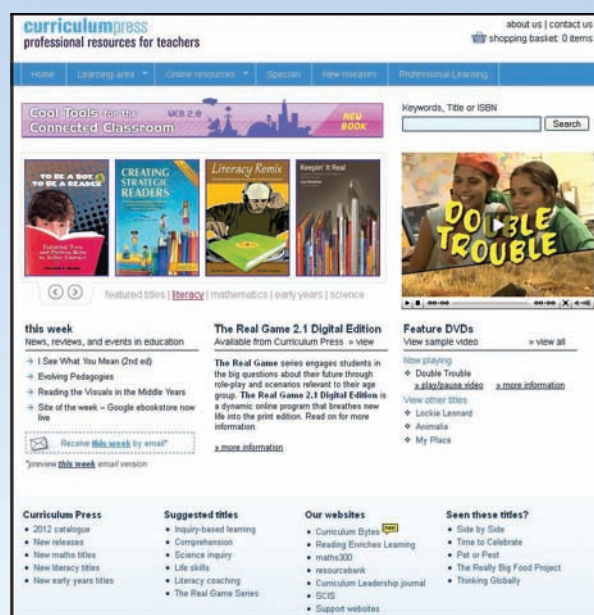
ELR behind the scenes

When all the data from participating schools is received, it is processed to ensure that it is usable and then matched to the specific titles that the Office for the Arts has identified as eligible. A final report to the Office for the Arts is compiled, which includes reporting on the survey process, communication strategy and support, and the involvement of library management system vendors.

For any survey to be successful, a great deal of careful planning and documentation needs to take place. But the most important aspect of the ELR school library survey is the response rate. Thank you to all participants – we appreciate your effort to help Australian book creators.

A thank you gift

Participating schools have been sent a \$20 gift voucher from Curriculum Press, www.curriculumpress.edu.au/. We hope that this gift may be used as part of an order for resources to support teachers and the curriculum.



Caption: Visit the Curriculum Press website to find resources

More information

More information about the ELR school library survey is available from www.esa.edu.au/scis/elr.html

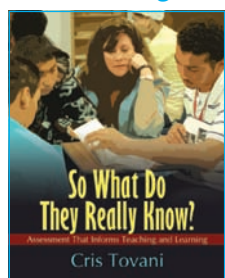


Anthea Amos
SCIS Projects &
Information Services
Coordinator
Education Services
Australia

Resources for classroom teachers

This page features highly recommended professional resources to support teaching practice. Please visit www.curriculumpress.edu.au for a full list of titles and to place your order.

So What Do They Really Know? Assessment that informs teaching and learning

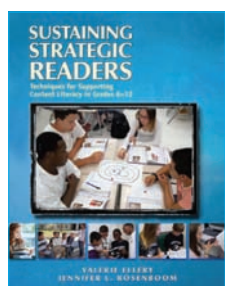


176pp
Author: Cris Tovani
Publisher: Stenhouse Publishers
RRP: \$39.95
SCIS no: 1521284
ISBN: 9781571107305
Years: F–12

So What Do They Really Know? is the latest title from the author of *Do I Really Have to Teach Reading?*, *Comprehending Content* (DVD) and *I Read It, But I Don't Get It*. In this book, Cris Tovani explores the complex issue of monitoring, assessing and grading students' thinking and performance with fairness and fidelity.

Cris describes the systems and structure that she uses in her own classroom, as well as showing teachers how to use assessments in order to monitor student growth and provide targeted feedback, thus enabling students to master content goals. She also shares ways to bring students into the assessment cycle so that they can monitor their own learning, maximising motivation and engagement.

Sustaining Strategic Readers Techniques for supporting content literacy in grades 6–12



216pp
Authors: Valerie Ellery & Jennifer Rosenboom
Publisher: International Reading Association
RRP: \$59.95
SCIS no: 1525743
ISBN: 9780872078390
Years: 6–12

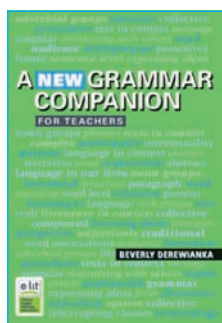
Valerie Ellery, author of *Creating Strategic Readers*, teams up with classroom teacher Jennifer Rosenboom in this new resource for teachers of Years 6 to 12. *Sustaining Strategic*

Readers provides high-quality techniques framed around the need for reading to be a social learning experience that is rich in reflection and discussion and is relevant, engaging and meaningful.

Organised so as to make planning and teaching both easy and effective, the book offers:

- highly effective strategies and techniques for teaching word study, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension skills
- embedded strategy assessments to check for understanding and collect evidence of student learning
- 'teacher talk' to help students think strategically
- ideas to engage and motivate adolescent learners
- vignettes to help teachers envision what a technique might look like when used in your content area
- key terms and guiding questions to focus your reading, study and conversation.

A New Grammar Companion for Teachers



152pp
Author: Beverly Derewianka
Publisher: Primary English Teaching Association
RRP: \$35.95
SCIS no: 1506943
ISBN: 9781875622900
Years: 1–9

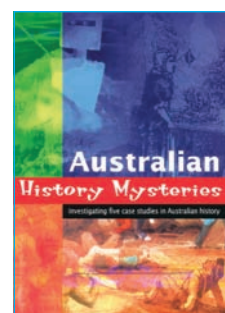
This updated edition of Beverly Derewianka's very successful *A Grammar Companion* focuses on knowledge of the English language and how it works. *A New Grammar Companion for Teachers*:

- addresses the grammar requirements within the Australian Curriculum: English with links to specific content descriptions and outcomes
- familiarises teachers with the basics of the English grammatical system
- organises grammatical categories according to how they construct meaning in context

- views grammar as a resource, or an array of possibilities, from which writers can choose in order to generate and interpret meanings
- employs standard grammatical terminology, but also uses terms which allow for a more functional interpretation.

A New Grammar Companion for Teachers is an indispensable resource, providing reassurance as you introduce students to the fascinating workings of grammar in the 21st century.

Australian History Mysteries



120pp + 28min DVD
Author: National Museum of Australia
Publisher: Ryebuck Media
RRP: \$132.00
SCIS no: 1117704
ISBN: 9781875622900
Years: 7–12

The Australian History Mysteries series uses an 'inquiry learning approach' to stimulate students' interest in and engagement with history by developing the investigative skills they need.

Australian History Mysteries contains five case studies along with teachers' guides offering classroom strategies, as well as student reproducible resources and evidence pages. The book is supported by a DVD that includes short segments and current and historical images that help to set the scene.

The five case studies are:

- Who 'discovered' Australia?
- What was the life of a female convict really like?
- The Eureka Rebellion — could you have stopped it from happening?
- What happened in a frontier conflict near Broome in 1864?
- Was Ned Kelly a hero or a villain?

The kit is further supported by educational games, available on CD-ROM, that relate to the case studies (sold separately).

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