

# SOUTHLAND DISTRICT LIBRARIES

## The year in review

The past year has rushed by, seemingly without lots of significant milestones but a good deal of consolidation in terms of working relationships, shared goals and community outcomes. Whilst our issues of physical items has remained reasonably static at most service points, visits to our branches have increased and the demands upon staff time and expertise have definitely increased.

The reciprocal membership agreement, entered into with Invercargill City, Gore and Clutha Districts, has offered a number of our residents the opportunity to utilize library services at the point most convenient for them and this has been much appreciated by those who enjoy rural living but spend their working days in Invercargill. As we have had a reciprocal agreement with Gore for many years there has been little impact in this area and with Clutha hardly any at all.

Changes in the small rural communities over the years, such as the loss of banking facilities and fuel supplies, amalgamation of schools and the closure of service outlets has forced the residents to become much more mobile. This is having some impact upon the Mobile Library and within the next quarter we are looking to review this service and see if there are better ways of providing the same, or an enhanced, level of service.

## Specific Achievements

**Babes need books too !!** : A programme designed to present all households in our area with a pack promoting not only library services, but all activities relating to literacy, has been undertaken this year. With strong local and national sponsorship we have put together a pack containing a first reader for baby, two New Zealand parents magazines, a library brochure, along with information from Plunket, SKIP, Toybox, Parents Centre, Kidstart and Southern Reap. These packages are delivered by the local midwives and hopefully we are getting one into the home of every newborn baby.

**Mobile Library Conference** : The Mobile Library Conference, held at Taupo at the end of January, was attended by one of our Bookbus Librarians and was reported to be full of activities, information and entertainment. Unfortunately we couldn't consider taking our bus as the timetable is scheduled well in advance however the North Island models on view had lots of interesting features and generated a "wish list" from our staff member. She came home full of energy and enthusiasm and lots to input into any coming changes.

**Qualifications** : We had four staff complete their Level Five Library Certificate during the past year and another who will be in the first group to apply for professional registration in July. Professional registration generated some quite heated debate amongst staff here with a feeling that those who held no qualification but had plenty of work-based skills being the poor relations in the determinations. Didn't actually move anyone to do anything about it though !!

## Other Activities

**Remuneration Project** : Our Council are undertaking a review of their entire remuneration system, in consultation with Strategic Pay, and I am on the project team supposedly to represent the interests of those employees on Individual Employment Contracts but am actually far more interested in the outcomes for Library Staff whom, I believe, often come off very fairly compared to other Council positions. It requires a review, and often rewriting, of all job descriptions and the

completion of a questionnaire by all staff members. Bonuses, incentives and superannuation are also being examined so there is likely to be some interesting changes during the year.

**Software Applications :** We have signaled an intent to upgrade our present operating system by the end of the year and, to that end, have been looking at new vendors along with Invercargill City. Although we have not discounted the possibility of upgrading with Softlink to their SQL system we are interested in seeing what else is available and if, by being hosted by someone, we could have access to greater functionality at a shared cost, this is an option.

**Alternative Accommodation :** Due to extreme pressure of work space and the need to make our service area more customer friendly we have had to move our technical services off site. Unfortunately the only available building was a block away and it isn't an ideal situation, particularly in terms of staffing and staff relationships, however if we didn't want to continue playing musical desks there was little option.

**Digital Strategy Applications :** We have been involved in two applications for funding to this fund, one with Invercargill City to fund a Regional Heritage/Archive facility and the second, to a lesser degree, with Dunedin City. Both have progressed beyond the initial application and we are hopeful for positive outcomes.

**Staff Training :** Library staff were recently involved in organizing a half day training for all Council staff, based loosely on the modules used for Library Training days. We arranged a Giant Scavenger Hunt with all the requirements based on core Council activities. Things such as finding a particular tombstone inscription, matching baby photos of councilors to their wards, photographing the executive team in a human pyramid and collecting the entire financial section of the LTTCP were included and lead to a really fun and competitive afternoon. The wider benefit was possibly raising the profiles of Library staff who are sometimes viewed as being rather dull and boring, however we have certainly changed that image.

### **Forward Looking**

The coming year may see a number of staffing changes for us as we are very much a "graying mob" down here but that is pretty much a wait and see situation. However with three staff already past 65 and another four approaching it very rapidly it could be a time of significant change. A review of our Mobile Library operations and the happenings of all branches will take place in light of changing community directions and whilst this is unlikely to bring about any reductions in service it could change the way we deliver services.

The recent Summit has highlighted to our funders the important role public libraries play in communities and the value local residents place on them. Long may these initiatives continue.

Lynda Hodge  
**Southland District Libraries**  
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