



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

This article was originally published in printed form. The journal began in 1973 and was titled *The Aboriginal Child at School*. In 1996 the journal was transformed to an internationally peer-reviewed publication and renamed *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*.

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along the guidelines set out, would not suit this community, mainly because of its very small size (about 300) and the short length of residence of most citizens. An alternative scheme was adopted, whereby the school takes out bulk loans from the Schools Library Board, the State Library and the Port Augusta Public Library. These stocks are periodically rotated so that there is always a new range of material available. (An important factor that could not be achieved if we purchased our own book stock, or even followed the guidelines of a 10% turnover per annum, as indicated in the School Community Library plan.)

Apart from school hours, the library is open on Wednesday evenings to allow for borrowing by townfolk. With parents coming to the school to borrow, we have had an increased response in child borrowings.

Each homestead and railway siding within the district has been invited to join the scheme. They receive two linen bags for books, so that they have a continuous supply of reading material. These books are despatched on the fortnightly mailrun for homesteads and on the train for railway workers. Currently the library has 23 town families borrowing, while 12 out-of-town groups are participants and an average weekly lending rate of 122 books, magazines and cassettes.

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ESTABLISHING A FUNCTIONAL LIBRARY

IN AN ABORIGINAL SCHOOL

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After spending five terms working in the library at Oodnadatta Special Aboriginal School, I can now say I have achieved something. However, this achievement cannot be measured by an up-to-date catalogue and an extensive picture file, for example. What I have created is a library and library borrowing scheme which works for the children in this school.

In the first instance I set about to structure the physical

layout of the library so that each section was very clearly separated. Basically, we have an Easy Fiction, Fiction and Non-fiction section. Because reading achievement in this school is limited and reading ages low, I have played up the Easy Fiction section. We have used more shelves than in any other section and each shelf is backed with brightly coloured material. We display, with covers showing, as many books as possible, and only use the very bottom shelves for storing our books. These displays are changed daily by our aides, who are now an integral part of library functioning, as I am the pre-school teacher here and I have accepted the library merely as an area of responsibility.

Because our more mature students are unsophisticated, there is little need to buy much material specifically for them, for they will read picture books with enthusiasm provided they are attractively displayed. At this time, we are cashing in on a gimmicky approach to encourage use of the library, rather than just the desire to read. The library is carpeted and curtained. We have removed a blackboard and replaced it with backed hessian, which we use for art display. We manufactured a listening-post from a high jump stand. We have removed tables and chairs and now have only a charge desk and chair and one low table for specific displays. We read on the floor. Because we have a storeroom for large audio-visual equipment, and our film projector and video are on moveable trolleys, (service trolleys) we do not use the library for these activities. This has helped us to channel the emphasis towards reading and books rather than use of the library as a general activities area.

Borrowing was a subject which had me in a quandary for a couple of terms. I personally feel all children should borrow when they wish, but I also feel very strongly that I wish to see the books again. With many children not living in conventional homes, the likelihood of receiving books back was remote. So, for a start, I relied on bulk loans to classes with the teacher, aide and class selecting the material they desired. However, this has greatly relaxed since I have come to know the children and families in this community. Some children living in town borrow books when their parents borrow on Wednesday evenings, (see article on Community Library) some borrow between 12.00 and 12.30 daily, when I am in the library. Many borrow when in the library with their class teacher but just take the book back to their room.

Because our return box is located outside the library, we have few problems with returning books direct to the shelves, and by the volume of material in this box daily, I know the library

is being used.

Because each class has an Aboriginal teacher aide, small groups of children are often removed from classes and taught in the library. We display and encourage the sale of Book Club books in the library. We house our material from the Community Library in our library and thus a great number of people have access to the books and facilities the school can offer. As a result, the community involvement in this school is outstanding, and it gives me great satisfaction to be part of it.

I hope that in some way this article may encourage other teachers (who are not really librarians) to become interested in their school library, even if it is merely a motley collection of books, and create from it a functional unit of value to teachers and students.

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"MY HOMELAND"*

My homeland centre is at Wulwulwuy. There are four tents there, a big river and some pandanus palms. Whenever we are hot, we go for a swim, sometimes we get cold, then we all run home and sit by the fire. There is fresh water in the river, and many big fish. One of my brothers caught a tortoise and one of my sisters caught a big fish which seemed to have a beard. We often go looking for honey and my mother finds the honey. We chop down the tree and get the honey. When the sun sets we all go home.

We go back to our home country on holidays and other times when we can. It is our land and we can live our way. There are many wallaby and emu and fish and trees. There is no mining at Wulwulwuy.

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* From *The Aboriginal Children's History of Australia*, published by Rigby Limited. Reproduced by permission.