



Autumn 2009 Newslines

ALS Library Services Pty Ltd Complete acquisitions for Public Libraries

Book Clubs around the World

In the late 1800's both men and women in the US and UK were known to get together, and complete with gloves, hats and cups of tea, enjoy the social occasion of friendship and discussion of the latest book considered appropriate for their reading.



Although men may have officially established the first known "Book Groups" (according to *The Reading Group Handbook* by Rachel Jacobsohn); women quickly followed, shifting their social activities from sewing circles and church groups to include books and reading.

As the 20th century dawned, and literacy levels increased, more readers populated the demographic and social strata and book discussion groups became a safe place to have a voice and to test political and social theories within a nurturing environment away from the family.

Book Group Resources

- **First Tuesday Book Club on ABC TV** – www.abc.net.au/tv/firsttuesday/bookclub. Hosted by Jennifer Byrne. You can download the full program if you miss a Tuesday night viewing. The web site is full of interesting information about the chosen books and some handy hints on setting up a book club
- **The Big Book Club.** Started in South Australia in 2003 after many discussions about how best to promote good books and reading throughout the year. In 2009, authors tour in 4 states - SA, WA, Queensland and New South Wales and support comes from state based media partners, local public library partners, publishers and booksellers. www.thebigbookclub.com.au.
- **A quick web search** for *book groups* or *book clubs* will bring up many local and international sites with suggestions, information and ideas for promotion and planning your next book group event. ●

"I wonder... What's in a book while it's closed... Because as soon as I open it, there's a whole story with people I don't know yet and all kinds of adventure and deeds and battles... All those things are somehow shut up in a book. But it's already there, that's the funny thing. I just wish I knew how it could be." ●

Michael Ende, *The Neverending Story*

The Science of Fiction

A group of researchers at University of Toronto have proposed that reading Fiction is a kind of simulation of the 'real' social world, and just as people's skills as pilots improve when they spend time in a flight simulator, so people's social skills should improve when they spend time reading fiction.

An article by Keith Oatley, Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Psychology at University of Toronto led the research and also wrote up a popular summary for *New Scientist Magazine* (issue 2662). They found an immediate and quantifiable beneficial effect from participants after reading fiction as opposed to non-fiction. The benefits included substantially greater empathy, and better performances on interpersonal perception tests.

Dr Oatley claims that '...fiction is a simulation that runs on the software of our minds.'

Dr Oatley claims that '...fiction is a simulation that runs on the software of our minds. And it is a particularly useful simulation because negotiating the social world effectively is extremely tricky, requiring us to weigh up myriad interacting instances of cause and effect. Just as computer simulations can help us get to grips with complex problems such as flying planes or forecasting weather, so novels, stories and dramas can help us understand the complexities of social life.' ●



Simon Says

Against my better judgement, I have recently been drawn into the world of Harry Potter fan fiction. I never believed that additional stories written by fans of the books could be worth reading, but I have been proved wrong!

The first I found was a series (two books so far) set after the original series with James Potter (Harry & Ginny's son) as the protagonist. These are very well thought out, well written and beautifully presented. You can find the first one at: www.elderscrossing.com.

The ones I am currently reading can be found at: <http://blogd.com/wp/index.php/archives/1215>. They were written before Half-Blood Prince came out and continue the story after Order of the Phoenix (though, of course, differently to Rowling's story). These are long (1200 pages each) and need a good edit, but are written with interesting detail and good plot and character development.

What these both proved to me, was that I can read on a computer screen! This was a point made very strongly in a recent ars technica article, "The once and future e-book" (<http://arstechnica.com/gadgets/news/2009/02/the-once-and-future-e-book.ars>), and I think they're right. We have a strong cultural objection to doing so, and there are ergonomic considerations to be managed, but technology has reached a point now, where it is not the issue it used to be.

If you don't believe me, find a book you like and see what happens once you are immersed in the story! ●

Sincerely,
Simon

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UK news



- Nielsen BookScan is the international sales data monitoring and analysis service for the English-language book industry worldwide, and in late 2009 will begin collecting weekly data on library loans in the UK. Participating libraries will have free access to the data, which will be useful in showing individual book borrowing by region, author or category as well as national trends.
- Reading For Life (www.readingforlife.org.uk) will use 2009 to expand on the successful 2008 Year of Reading Campaign in the UK. Publishers and government have pledged further support for national promotions which encourage children and families to have fun reading and be convinced that books have the power to transform lives.
- Harlequin Mills & Boon have a series of 8 books planned for 2009 with the Rugby Football Union as a partner. Each 'Rugby Romance' will include a 'Girl's Guide to Rugby' in the storyline as well as the usual bit of naughtiness and brooding alpha-male sporting heroes. The first title is *The Prince's Waitress Wife* by Sarah Morgan who writes in her introduction "...I'm sure women watch rugby because it's an exciting spectator sport – and, yes, women play rugby too. So all that mud, muscle and machismo is of no interest to the female sex. None at all!"
- Dorling Kindersley and the Royal Horticultural Society have planned a Bank Holiday Garden Trail of ten feature gardens in an around London to launch the new title "Encyclopedia of Garden Design". The May Bank Holiday break signals the start of summer for the UK and DK are hoping to create significant interest in the book and a competition which will run concurrently to win a garden makeover. ●

Staff Picks

Our people at ALS have amazingly varied tastes in reading, and access to almost anything they like, often before published dates. Here are a few personal comments....



Margaret on: *Jasper Jones* by Craig Silvey

(Fiction. Allen & Unwin 9781741757743) - Rhubarb, his previous was quirky and memorable - Jasper Jones evokes Australian mid-20th century country-town life in all its stultifying xenophobic glory. Unforgettable characters, a gut-wrenching coming of age journey, hilarious dialogue between two adolescent boys, a shocking death and a cricket match that will have you holding your breath.



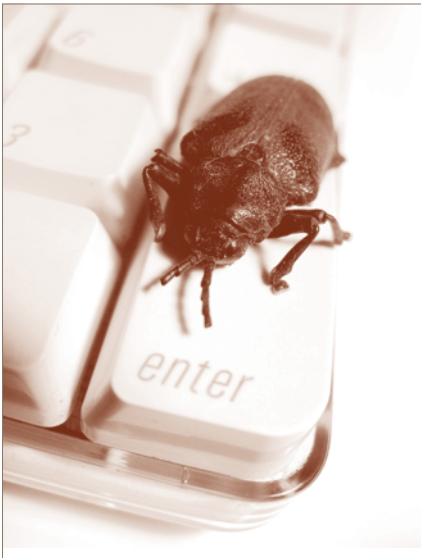
Tricia about *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins.

A wonderful human tale, well written with an effortless grace in the midst of what could be dark tale of a future where TV reality games now mean life or death on screen. I look forward to the next book in the series and more writing by Suzanne Collins.. (YA Fiction. Scholastic 9781407109084)



Alison has just read *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell.

In this fascinating book, Gladwell weaves together a series of interviews, anecdotes and true life stories to bring us, as the subtitle states, 'the story of success'. Thoroughly engaging and, at times, quite surprising, "Outliers" is well worth a read. (Business. Penguin 9780141036243) ●



Computer Viruses

On the 1st April, a slew of Computer Viruses spread around the world, maybe your machine got hit by one of these?

Adam and Eve virus: Takes a couple of bytes out of your Apple.

Airline virus: You're in Brisbane, but your data is in Singapore.

Elvis virus: Your computer gets fat, slow, and lazy and then self destructs, only to resurface at shopping malls and service stations across rural America

Government economist virus: Nothing works, but all your diagnostic software says everything is fine.

Nike virus: Just Does It!

Politically correct virus: Never calls itself a "virus", but instead refers to itself as an "electronic micro-organism". ●

Numbers About Books

"There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies and statistics"

Benjamin Disraeli

It is entirely appropriate that this quote comes from Disraeli who was British Prime Minister with the Conservative Party from Feb 1874 to 1880 and also an author. His writing output included 18 Fiction books, mostly romances and political fiction, and 7 Non-Fiction titles. Many are available through Project Gutenberg

Autumn 2009 has the global book industry in a state of change. Some of this is due to the GFC (Global Financial Crisis) as large and small publishers shed jobs and tighten budgets and print runs, other influences include the digitization of books and the marked increase of e-book readers for consumers. In Australia we are in the midst of an investigation by the Productivity Commission into copyright restrictions on the parallel importation of books. (See www.pc.gov.au and click on PROJECTS). One of the points of debate about the draft report from the Commission has been the sad lack of current quantifiable data regarding the Australian Book Industry. The ABS stopped collecting book data in 2006. The stats listed here come mostly from <http://bookstatistics.com>.

Publishing

- From 8,000 to 11,000 new publishers are established each year and apply for ISBN's
- In 2006, US publishing generated USD \$24.2 billion (approx AUD\$34,000,000,000)

- In 2006, in Australia the Publishing industry generated approx AUD\$1.26 billion of which AUD\$747 million were sales of Australian originated titles.
- Approx Titles published per year
 - o USA – 140,000
 - o Canada – 50,000
 - o Australia – 35,000
 - o China – 200,000 plus
 - o In the US approx 17 new titles are published every hour of every day.
 - o Approx 80% of all English language book sales worldwide are controlled by the Top 6 publishers.

Printing

- Average initial print run in the USA is 5,000, in UK and Australia 2,000 to 3,000
- Average print run for Lightning Source POD printer is 1.8 books

Bestsellers (or not)

- 1975: "Ragtime" by E.L Docorow sold 232,000 copies worldwide
- 2000: "The Brethren" by John Grisham sold 2.8 million copies
- 2003: Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone by JK Rowling sold 25.1 million copies
- In 2007, 40% of books on the market were unsold. Industry return rates are approx 36% for Hardcover and 25% for paperbacks. These percentages have not changed much over 20 years. ●



STAFF PROFILE

Meet Aaron, the leader of our Warehouse Team. Aaron started at ALS in 2008 bringing extensive warehouse experience in the field of graphic art supplies. He's an avid reader, mainly of biographies. Lisa his 2IC, left a large retailer to join ALS and enjoys fiction from Audrey Niffenegger to Jane Austen. These two ensure the smooth operation of receiving, unpacking and invoicing around 10,000 items per week from and to all parts of Australia, China and South Africa. ●



Tricia's Spot On Conferences

Conferences, I love them. The wonderful buzz as you approach the registration desk, find your name, check which sessions or speakers have been changed. Then the introductions as you wander, coffee in hand catching an eye here, straining to read a name tag there. Is that woman in green someone you should know, or is she just looking friendly and lost like you?

ALS commits each year to sponsoring Public Library gatherings around Australia. Fittingly, this year, many have very positive themes, combating the grey and troubled news in the daily media. At Loclib in Perth last month we enjoyed talking around the topic "Libraries Transform Communities" with some sessions being brave enough to foresee the future of community library interactions through to 2050.

In May, the South Australians get together and talk around "Building Futures" with intriguing keynotes addressing the why and how of Public Library leadership and community into the rest of the 21st century.

Townsville in October will see the combined PLA/QPLA conference titled "Change and Challenge". That will be a fitting end to a challenging year for many organisations and regions in Australia. As a supplier in the marketplace this year I look forward to accepting the challenge and being part of the change. We should never be complacent about how small changes can influence the wider world we touch. And what better place to be aware of the 'butterfly effect' than Townsville, home to the magnificent Ulysses Butterfly.



Might see you at a conference soon – I'll be the one in yellow with the coffee and the hopeful smile. ●

Controversy over Kindle 2

Kindle 2 the latest Amazon E-book reader, was released in February 2009 complete with a text-to-Speech function, allowing the reader to listen to chosen text.



In March the Authors Guild of America complained that this was an infringement on sub rights for authors and a blow to the audiobook industry (Publishers Weekly March 2/09)

In April, some 200 people with print disabilities--protested in front of the Authors Guild headquarters in New York, rallying against the Guild's attempt to get Amazon to disable the Kindle 2's text-to-speech function. The protestors, led by the National Federation of the Blind, chanted "We want e-books!" "Literacy for all of us!" and "Two, four, six, eight, the Authors Guild discriminates!"

The discussion continues! ●

2009 Diagram Prize for the Oddest Title

The 2009 winner is "The 2009-2014 World Outlook for 60-Milligram Containers of Fromage Frais". This print on demand title has garnered some controversy as bloggers complain that it is not a 'real' book. However, the rules of the competition have allowed it. The only rule strictly adhered to is that publishers are not allowed to enter their own titles. Any member of the public may put forward a title and vote accordingly on the [The Bookseller](#) site.

Bruce Robertson co-founder of the Diagram Group began the Diagram Prize in 1978 as he was filling an idle moment at the Frankfurt Book Fair. The first winner was "Proceedings of the Second International Symposium on Nude Mice."

Past winners include "Versailles: The View from Sweden," "Weeds in a Changing World," "Reusing Old Graves." People Who Don't Know They're Dead: How They Attach Themselves to Unsuspecting Bystanders and What to Do About It." ●

Q: Having trouble choosing titles and sourcing multiple copies of your next book group title?

A: Ask your favourite Library Supplier to help with current information about popular authors and perhaps reading copies of exciting new writers.

ALS is supporting Australia's **Biggest Morning Tea** for the **Cancer Council** at **10.30am on Thursday 28th May**. If you are in Adelaide, do join us for a cuppa with your gold coin donation." See www.biggestmorningtea.com.au to donate on line.