

# Where do all the teenagers go?

WHEN MY 14-year-old son proof-read my last teenage novel, he looked up and said, 'This is exactly how I feel. Why don't other people write books like this?'

I was mildly astonished. I knew he had jumped straight from Enid Blyton to James Bond, Star Wars and Frederick Forsyth, but I had thought this was from choice. 'But there are hundreds,' I said. 'Fantastic books which have been written just for people like you.' He was unconvinced 'Okay, where? I've never seen them.'

'In the . . . oh. In the children's library.'

I understood. His face told me all I needed to know. The children's library, with its tiny chairs and delightful exhibitions is the last place he would be seen in.

It is small wonder that all he knows of adult literature is what he has to read at school, and of adult books those which are only one stage up from comics: easy escapist reading, no bad thing in itself but an impoverishment if that is all the bookshops and libraries seem to offer.

In the village library where I spent my childhood Saturday mornings there was only one room. Children's books were arrayed on one wall, adults' on the other three. Maybe there were eagle-eyed, responsible ladies watching to see that you didn't pick up anything unsuitable, but it certainly made the transition from childish reading to adult fiction very easy. And those were the days when there were few 'teenage' novels about.

Now my village has a grand new building for its library. The kids are segregated into their own little room, filled with lots of wonderful books. The teenagers are well provided for, having their own sub-segregated bookcase of 'Youth books'. But no youths, or even teenagers, are ever seen there – not beyond the age of 13 anyway. Even the section heading is off-putting. Why not, 'Books for young adults', or something even more eye-catching?

Librarians seem undecided about the age of a 'young person' as opposed to a child or an

by **Anne Ruffell**,

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adult. In one library which I use the 'youth books' are bought only if they are suitable for teenagers up to the age of 14. What happens to those books which she thinks are too 'old' for her readers?

If they are bought at all, they are absorbed into the vastness of the adult library, with no indication on them that they might be just the kind of books a young person, concerned with the difficulties of growing up, family pressures and the dawn of love, might be looking for.

In another of my favourite children's libraries, these books are marked with a yellow spot on the spine, and the age range is much wider, taking children through adolescent fiction to sensitive adult novels. Even here, though, there is a problem. My librarian said, and I am inclined to agree with her, that she cannot put a book such as *Flambards divided* on a shelf from which a 12- or 13-year-old who has enjoyed the previous three books in the series will take and read it. The young adult, for whom it was written, will never go in the

place anyway.

One of the answers could be supplied by the librarians of the adult department. Could they not provide a case, as they do with romances, science fiction, westerns and crime, especially for our in-between people? And why not a revolving stack of teenage paperbacks? Many young people will only accept these as reading for pleasure: hardbacks smack too much of school.

It may mean a certain amount of duplicate buying – not a popular thing in these days of tight budgets – but it could be of enormous encouragement to us, the writers of teenage fiction, who write these books because we care about adolescents and sympathize with their problems. Our financial rewards are pitifully small: I earned £1500 in book royalties and advances last year. But because we care, and because we think there is a need for these books, we go on writing them. We would just like the people we write them for to be aware that they are around.

It would be nice if teenage books could be marketed in places where teenagers spend their own money: in young fashion shops, record shops, even coffee bars. Failing this, you, the librarians, are the only people who can publicize to teenagers like my son that such books exist.

## Children's Book Week in WA

CHILDREN'S BOOK WEEK will be celebrated from 24 to 31 July 1982, the purpose being to promote children's literature to both adults and children. The Children's Book Council of Australia make annual awards, for the Children's Book of the Year, Children's Picture Book of the Year and an additional award this year – the Junior Medal. Books either written or illustrated by Australians are eligible, thus supporting the development of Australian children's literature.

This year's slogan for Children's Book Week is 'Branch Out With Books', a theme which will be reflected in the principal exhibition to be staged at the Perth Concert Hall

from 26 to 31 July 1982.

Various displays and activities are being prepared for this exhibition, including six school displays, storytelling in six different languages, papermaking, animated cartoons, a Puffin Club display, audio-visual presentations, The Association for the Blind stand and The Library Board of Western Australia stand.

Also on display will be entries in the Make Your Own Book Competition, The Western Australian Young Readers Book Award and this year's Australian Children's Book of the Year winner's.

Each year an Australian author or illustrator is invited to Western Australia for Children's Book Week. This year's guest is Ted Greenwood who has been sponsored by the Literature Board of Australia. Ted is an author/illustrator who has produced many entertaining children's books, and he will be making appearances at the Concert Hall and other selected venues.

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### MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCE SHARING IN SPECIAL LIBRARIES

#### 6TH NATIONAL SPECIAL LIBRARIES CONFERENCE

Parmelia Hilton International, Perth

26–29 September 1983

## CALL FOR PAPERS

This national conference will be a forum at which Special Librarians can evaluate their needs for resource sharing and the means by which worthwhile sharing can be achieved. The emphasis will be on management of resource sharing by the individual Special Librarian.

Major topics to be addressed are the need to share resources, technologies for resource sharing, evaluation of resource sharing schemes, management of resource sharing, practical experiences, and proposals for resource sharing among Australian Special Libraries.

Original papers on these topics are invited. An abstract of about 300 words should be submitted to the Chairman of the Conference Committee by 30 September 1982. Notification of acceptance will be given by 31 December 1982.

Write to: Chairman, Conference Committee, 6th National Special Libraries Conference, Mr Bruce Bott, Law Library, Supreme Court, Barrack Street, Perth WA 6000. Phone: (09) 325 9433.

## Policy change in SA

THERE HAS BEEN a change in policy by the South Australian State Reference Library. Until now, books from the reference library have been available for loan, an unusual feature. Other State reference libraries and many international libraries do not lend books from their reference collections.

This change in library policy was announced by Mr J. A. Crawford, Chairman of the Libraries Board of South Australia on 11 June. The move is seen as an important step in upgrading the reference and information services provided for the South Australian public by improving access to reference material. The Lending Services will be spending an additional \$60,000 to expand and upgrade their stocks this year.