

In the News

Book it!

Children enjoy reading

The Book It! program was developed in the United States as part of an overall campaign to combat child illiteracy, and was introduced into American elementary schools in 1984. In its first year of operation, the average number of books read by participating students increased by 300 per cent. Today, more than 14 million children participate in the American program, representing over half of all elementary school enrolments.

The Book It! program was introduced in Sydney in 1990 by the Australia Council, the National Book Council and the National Library of Australia as part of International Literacy Year. Based upon the American model, it was adopted by both government and non-government school teachers throughout the Sydney metropolitan area. One hundred and seventeen thousand students and 4 700 teachers participated, and the research studies conducted among the teachers included the following results:

- Average number of books read per month



Reading can be fun!

by sample primary students increased from 4 to 7 as a result of Book It!

- Sixty per cent of participating children improved their overall scholastic achievements while participating in the program.
- Seventy three per cent of children improved their oral and comprehension reading skills while participating in Book It!

Due to the success of the program in Sydney, Book It! will be launched in all primary schools throughout Australia.

Endorsed by the Australia Council, the National Book Council and the National Library of Australia, the program will seek the support of teachers, principals, parents and primary school students. Teachers will be approached to participate in April, and the 5-month program will begin on 1 June 1991.

For information about participating in the Book It! Reading Incentive Program, please call Kathy Gardener, Program Director, Book It!, telephone (02) 369 1776. □

Lucky prize winner

Thursday, 31 January, proved to be a lucky day for Erika Redgrove, Manager, Education & Research, of the University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury. Erika attended the Information Online & On Disc 91 Conference in Sydney and won a portable CD-ROM disc drive, in a competition jointly sponsored by DA Books & Journals and C.D. ROM and Associates. Jeff Leonard, Library Services Manager for DA Books, presented her with the disc drive.

Erika said that 'this is a most welcome addition to the Information Resources Centre's latest technology in information retrieval. Students really appreciate the ease and speed of searching for information from CD-ROM'.

'The university's experience is that even where they provide access to equivalent information in hard copy, such as Bibliography of Agriculture, students much prefer to search for information on compact discs. This is because the computer can search for terms almost instantaneously and can combine terms or exclude terms to ensure high precision and recall.'

Interest in the latest technology

was such that over 690 delegates attended, with exhibitions being put on by close to 40 companies. CD-ROM products have a range of ever-multiplying capabilities, with audio, colour photographs, text and graphics among others. Librarians have needed to be at the forefront of developments because new technology affects more than the provision of information — it affects the whole workflow and habits of both librarians and users of libraries. Research work has been simplified to an extraordinary degree, with the review of the literature being able to be carried out in minutes, whereas previously it could take several months of dedicated work. This leaves research workers more time to analyse previous research findings and to carry out new research. □



Scholarships for NSW teachers

Part-time opportunity welcomed

There has been a strong response to new scholarships announced last year for part-time study of the Graduate Diploma of Applied Science (Information/Teacher Librarianship). Eighty inquiries were received about the scholarships, and 35 applications came in. It is the first time scholarships have been offered for the course on a part-time basis, with 15 places offered worth \$4 500 per year for 2 years at the University of Technology (Kuring-gui). This new flexible arrangement is seen to be in line with Government policy to improve professional training opportunities for teachers.

Ten scholarships are also offered to NSW teachers to study for the diploma on a full-time basis. Teachers doing the full-time course are paid their normal salary as well as a book fee and travel allowance.

Sue Nelson

NSW Ministry of Education, Youth and Women's Affairs □

Pictured at left: Jeff Leonard (DA Books), Erika Redgrove (Manager, Education & Research, UWS Hawkesbury, centre) and Aileen Stevenson (Head, IRC, UWS Hawkesbury).