

The Street Beat bus

An outreach service project for young adults

In March 1998 the Cooloolo Shire Library Service was notified that they had received an Innovations Grant, totalling \$35 000, from the State Library Board of Queensland. The funding was for the Beat Bus project.

The Beat Bus was envisaged as a year-long project that would take information and services to disadvantaged youth and their families in rural areas of Cooloolo Shire.

The project's objectives were:

- to provide information and technologies to marginalised youth and families of outlying rural communities;
- to foster relationships between the library and the community through the use of innovative technology and networking;
- to establish working relationships with community business and youth organisations; and
- to provide a one-stop shop service delivery venue for youth and families in rural and remote areas.

The target audience was young people aged between 12 and 24 and their families. Care was taken to make the bus as non-institutionalised as possible to encourage youth who would never approach a more conventional service. It was recognised by the committee that other age groups also needed to be served, but youth were to receive priority.

As well as library resources such as CD-ROMs, videos, books, and magazines, the following services were also available from the bus: free internet access, word processing, desktop publishing, Sony Playstation, video, employment services, Centrelink, Community Health, youth development, community development, as well as sport and recreation and art groups. Also on offer were workshops covering art, computer skills, hair-care, makeup, car maintenance, literacy, job preparation, drug prevention and self-esteem.

The bus travelled to five different rural locations throughout the year and spent varying times at each, depending on timing and community interest.

The bus was regularly used in each location — with up to forty young people using the facilities a week. The most common age group to use the bus were eleven to fifteen year olds. The most popular services were the internet, CD-ROMs, video, and playstation. Organised workshops and training were not as popular as was hoped.

All the communities visited felt that their youth had benefited from having the bus. However, all communities expressed concern that once the bus had left, outreach services to their community would come to an end.

The Cooloolo Shire Library Service has benefited by an increase in membership and interest in the library by young people. Because all of the library collection held on the bus was the latest and the coolest in CDs, magazines and books, it created a lot of interest and excitement. Branch libraries are now used more by youth, and the young adult areas of the branch libraries are being revamped to cater for this interest.

A report on the project is available to other libraries. Copies are available from Vicki Shapcott, Cooloolo Shire Library Service, PO Box 155, Gympie 4570, phone 07 5482 1359, fax 07 5482 1205, or e-mail csls@spiderweb.com.au

Vicki Shapcott, Cooloolo Shire Library

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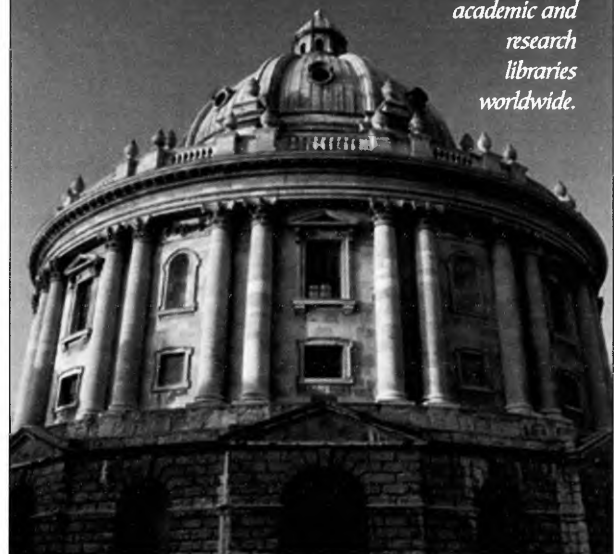
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