

Libraries with a difference

With the current focus on renewal, refurbishment, and replacement of school libraries in Western Australia, I recently coordinated a day bus trip for teacher librarians, librarians, library technicians, and library officers to view three outstanding refurbished libraries in the Perth metropolitan area.

The day was called: Improve Floor Space & Flexibility in the Library

Participants boarded a bus and took a tour of the very latest school libraries to:

- Meet the Changers
- Gain an insight into setting goals for library change
- See what, where and how it was all done by the "Changers"
- View the libraries in action

The first stop was to meet Sandra Naude, Head of Library at St Hilda's Anglican Girls School Library in Mosman Park. Sandra was only too happy for us to visit so she could share the innovative improvements created without the added cost of building a completely new library. Displays on feature walls used school memorabilia photographs enlarged to wallpaper size. Changes in room spaces used glass paneling.

Colour was used with great effect to create specific spaces and the existing library had been shelving refurbished. Window spaces and the external garden also reflected some of the interior colours: amazing, creative, inspiring, and of great interest to everyone.

Then we moved on to John Curtin College of the Arts in Fremantle. We were greeted by Iain Aitkinson, Head of Library. John's library is on two levels and, like most government schools, funding is challenging. Iain wanted to create a café type atmosphere in keeping with the local Fremantle flavour.

With the help of all the library staff, the shelving configuration was changed, simple, strategically-placed display shelves purchased or sourced then painted, and banners with inspirational wording highlighting the current display added.

Iain has chosen colours that reflect the local café scene for the interior walls, and purchased new soft chairs to create reading nooks. The downstairs computer section has been reorganised so students can sit at tables next to floor to ceiling windows while working on computers. Great!

Again, everyone was in awe of what had been achieved with very little money to spend, and using the interesting, or perhaps challenging, floor levels with the maximum effect.

Off we went, back on to the bus and stopped off for lunch at the Fremantle Arts Centre.

The day was cold and windy so we ate inside; the food was delicious. Talking, laughing, networking, suddenly it was time to visit the last library for the trip: Fremantle CBC Library. This library was featured in October 2009's *inCite*: "Back from the future or how to create a 21st century library". Trevanna Cooper, Teacher Librarian and Christian Thompson, Library Officer, worked together and, well, this library is stunning in its use of space, colour, and light. Everyone was inspired with this library.

Again wallpaper has been used as a feature and coloured carpet tiles, rubber floor coverings, and feature lighting help define the specific areas of the library.

Now, let us see where these creative floor space and flexibility plan success stories lead these visitors in their school libraries in renewal, refurbishment, or replacement in 2010 and on.

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