

# TICKING ALL THE RIGHT BOXES

**H**elping disadvantaged people to participate more fully in the information age can be difficult, even when they live in or are close to major cities. The problem is compounded, however, if they live in remote areas. But the Ideas Box, as **ELIZABETH SPENCER** explains, neatly packs a trove of useful items – such as books, magazines, laptops and tablets – into a container that can be easily shipped to remote Australian Indigenous communities.

In September last year, staff from the State Library of Western Australia delivered the Ideas Box to the Yungngora Aboriginal Community, near Fitzroy Crossing in the West Kimberley. The Ideas Box is a revolutionary portable library that provides access to information, cultural heritage and education. The project is delivered in collaboration with the Yungngora community and has enabled training and employment for two community-based Aboriginal staff members. It includes multiple forms of literacy, from books and magazines to digital cameras, laptops and tablets, as well as board games, and a TV for film screenings.

The Ideas Box is a national and international collaborative project between Bibliothèques Sans Frontières (Libraries Without Borders, or LWB), and the state libraries of Western Australia, Queensland and South Australia. The project started in 2012 when LWB – a not-for-profit international organisation based in France that aims to promote access to information and culture for vulnerable populations – worked with designer Philippe Starck on the concept of an innovative device to enable access to information for people emerging from a humanitarian crisis. The box was first installed in refugee camps in Burundi, Rwanda, Jordan and Lebanon, and since then they have been installed all over the world, including in New York and Paris, to provide information and learning access to vulnerable metropolitan populations.

LWB first presented the Ideas Box at the IFLA Conference in Lyon in 2014, where it sparked the interest and excitement among CEOs and other staff from Australian state and public libraries who had the vision to see its potential for delivery in remote Indigenous communities, which face some of the same barriers in accessing information and learning. The implementation in Australia has focused on stories, creativity, and building



Elizabeth Spencer and Senior Yungngora Community member Mavis Kennedy at the Ideas Box Launch on 14 September last year



Student at Kulkarriya Community School at the launch of the Ideas Box

literacy, digital literacy and access to cultural heritage. Community members in Western Australia and Queensland have been trained and employed to manage and evaluate access to the box and its resources.

The Ideas Box program was presented again at the recent ALIA National 2016 Conference in Adelaide by LWB and State Library of Queensland. It was extremely well received, generating a large amount of conversation throughout the week. Conference delegates were particularly interested in talking to staff from Queensland and Western Australia about the specific challenges of installing the box in remote Indigenous communities.

The WA launch took place in the grounds of the Kulkarriya Community School. It was a great success, and many community members, young and old, attended and enjoyed what the Ideas Box had to offer. The community provided a lunch, and teachers struggled to tear the younger students away from the games, iPads, books and films. The Ideas Box will remain at the Yungngora Aboriginal Community for approximately six months, followed by an evaluation of the pilot program and its potential delivery into more communities. ✳

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