



# KEEPING YOUNG AUSTRALIANS READING

Centre for Youth Literature

November 2009



State Library  
of Victoria

# Introduction

This report was commissioned by the State Library of Victoria's Centre for Youth Literature (CYL) to provide a picture of the Australian reading landscape for professionals in the field, providing inspiration, guidance and encouragement to children and young people.

A key objective of every organisation involved in youth literature, whether commercial or public-sector, is to keep young Australians reading for pleasure. With so many other activities competing for their time and attention, there has never been a more challenging environment for authors, publishers, teachers, parents and librarians.

This report builds on the CYL's *Young Australians Reading 2001* report and shows that much has changed over the last eight years, with advances in new media, the advent of social networking, changes in publicly-funded schools and libraries, and the impact of the global financial crisis on the book trade.

On a positive note, most of the people who were interviewed for this study felt that, although the content and format may have changed over the years, young Australians today are reading just as much as they ever did, if not more.

This doesn't mean we can be complacent. In order to keep young Australians reading for pleasure, we need to maintain the momentum.

We hope this report will provide insight and practical information to encourage and support professionals in this endeavour, and to underpin bids for increased funding and resources.

*Paula Kelly*  
*Centre for Youth Literature*  
*State Library of Victoria*

*'Sometimes people say we are losing readers because of the internet but I feel people are reading more and there seems to be much more discussion about reading. In the past, you would never have queues of kids waiting outside bookshops so they could get in to buy the next instalment of their favourite series.'*

Michael Bauer  
Author

Report prepared by  
**Sue McKerracher, Empatico Pty Ltd**  
for the Centre for Youth Literature  
State Library of Victoria, November 2009

## The Centre for Youth Literature

The Centre for Youth Literature is recognised as the nation's leading organisation in its field. It was founded in 1991 by Agnes Nieuwenhuizen and moved to the State Library of Victoria in 1999, where it is now part of the Learning Services Division.

Its work is carried out almost exclusively within the state of Victoria, but the knowledge, expertise and resources it has developed are available to libraries and other institutions via the internet. In this way, and by providing advice direct to interested parties, the Centre for Youth Literature supports the development of nascent youth literature bodies in other parts of Australia. Its influence spreads not only across other states and territories, but indeed to an international audience.

The Centre for Youth Literature's goal is to keep young Australians reading for pleasure, and in order to do so, it presents professionals with information and insight; provides authors and publishers with a platform; speaks directly with young Victorians; and supports the development of dedicated youth literature bodies in other states and territories.

Centre for Youth Literature programs and events include:

- Reading Matters, a sell-out conference, with a national impact; held every other year in Melbourne, it brings professionals and young people together to hear from Australian and international authors
- [insideadog.com.au](http://insideadog.com.au), a website where young readers can find out about their favourite books, read the latest writer-in-residence blog and post their own reviews
- Read Alert, the Centre for Youth Literature's blog ([slv.vic.gov.au/readalert](http://slv.vic.gov.au/readalert))
- Booktalkers sessions for young readers and for professionals, which provide a unique blend of talks, panel sessions and performance
- Bookgig on the Road, taking writers and actors to visit schools in regional Victoria, in partnership with arts2go
- The Inky Awards, Australia's only literary awards voted for by young people
- *boys, books, blokes & bytes*, a highly successful program developed to encourage boys to read
- Workshops for teachers and teacher-librarians

The Centre for Youth Literature works in partnership with colleagues at the State Library and with many other organisations, including the Australia Council, Copyright Agency Limited, Regional Arts Victoria, *The Age*, the Children's Book Council of Australia and charitable foundations.

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# 1 Executive summary

## 1.1 Why it is important to keep young Australians reading

- By doing so, we create and develop enthusiastic and committed readers – the library borrowers and book buyers of the future.
- We continue our rich cultural heritage of storytelling through future generations.
- Reading for pleasure has significant positive outcomes for the individual and for society as a whole, and it is good for the economy.
- Today's young people are tomorrow's legislators, educators, politicians, writers, tax-payers and voters. By encouraging, persuading, inspiring young people to read for pleasure, we are helping to produce better-educated citizens, with improved employment prospects, likely to make a greater contribution to the nation's well-being and economic prosperity.
- We will be fulfilling the human capital needs of the creative industries, developing the next generation of writers and illustrators, and building their future customer base.
- We will be supporting a healthy Australian book industry, currently worth more than AU\$1.3 billion a year.

## 1.2 Barriers to reading for pleasure

Young people lead busy lives and school curricula become increasingly crowded. Even those who have been keen readers in primary school can find they lose the will to read in middle years at secondary school, with the curriculum's lack of focus on reading for pleasure and the added pressure of homework and out-of-school activities.

Time is the enemy, with young people outside school hours often spending several hours a day in front of a screen and having many other sports, music, leisure and work commitments. This does not affect keen readers, who will always make the time for books, but it does deter reluctant or uncommitted readers.

## 1.3 How we can overcome these barriers

- **Develop a reading culture at home and/or at school.** This has been proved to be the overriding factor influencing whether or not a young person will become a keen reader, but there are a number of others.
- **Further improve literacy levels.** The ability to read is fundamental to an enjoyment of books, and while 91% of Australians in Year 5 achieve the national minimum standard in literacy, for Indigenous students, the percentage falls to 63.4%, and for students in remote areas, it drops to 46.1%.

- **Be open to new formats.** Government, teachers and library professionals are expanding their definition of what is meant by 'reading' to include different formats, such as graphic novels, in recognition of the need to engage reluctant readers with exciting content, in competition with online forms of entertainment.
- **Explore the opportunities presented by new media.** The impact of the internet and new media has also led to authors, publishers, teachers and library staff becoming involved in multi-media activities, such as lively websites, blogs and book trailers, extending the life of a book beyond its covers.

#### 1.4 Trends in young people's reading

In the wake of the popular appeal of *Harry Potter* and *Twilight*, reading has become more socially acceptable and keen readers are less likely to be given a hard time by their peers.

Fiction series continue to be a winner, for publishers (ensuring an almost guaranteed commercial success) and for readers (eager for the next instalment).

Crossover novels highlight the dangers of confining a book to a particular age group, with many young adult novels achieving popular appeal with an older audience and vice versa. This in turn highlights the importance of making a wide range of reading material available to young people.

#### 1.5 Challenges for professionals

The rise in social networking means that young people are used to sharing experiences with their friends. Reading has traditionally been a solitary pursuit but we need to explore new ways of making it a collaborative exercise while also focusing on the value of personal reading and of deep engagement with a book, its characters and ideas.

Teaching and library professionals have less time to keep abreast of developments in youth literature, and they welcome support and guidance from organisations such as the Centre for Youth Literature.

Parents would also like more information about the kinds of books available, and advice about which ones to buy or borrow for younger teenagers, to encourage their reading habits.

Library staff continue to struggle to attract young people into public libraries under their own steam. Computers have helped, as have themed events, specially-designed spaces for study and relaxation, and investment in new stock, such as graphic novels.

While a major government initiative will see school library buildings upgraded, teacher-librarians and others responsible for school libraries are managing services on modest budgets, with limited numbers of staff.

The book industry has still to come to terms with e-books and what they may mean for youth literature. As this is a generation of 'digital natives' there is a feeling that this is an opportunity to engage reluctant readers, lured by the new technology.

At the same time, most people who have grown up with books believe that they will not be wiped out by e-books. There is a strong feeling that there will be room for both.

#### **Issues for authors, publishers and the book trade**

- Commercial pressure has intensified. There is greater competition in the marketplace and less opportunity for publishers to take risks
- Growth of young people's interest in graphic novels, but there is a question mark over their profitability for publishing companies because of the increased cost of production
- The success of Australian writers and illustrators in overseas markets
- Struggle to interpret what new media will mean to the book industry – are e-books the future? Will book trailers become as common as film trailers?
- Enhanced interaction with readers through websites and blogs, as well as book signings and meet-the-author sessions
- Continued debate around parallel importation restrictions, with concerns about the effect on the Australian book industry if they are lifted
- Youth literature continues to be treated as a poor relation of adult literature
- More young-adult writers, producing even better material, and creating the potential for more crossover titles
- The search for the next *Harry Potter* or *Twilight* series

#### **Issues for teachers and librarians**

- Addressing the reading drop-off point between primary school and later secondary education
- The difficulty of attracting teenagers into public libraries
- Use of the public library, not just for book borrowing, but as a community living room and internet access point
- Reduction in the numbers of teacher-librarians, particularly in primary schools
- Administration filling what little time teachers and teacher-librarians have outside class-time
- The introduction of the new national curriculum
- Effects of new media and social networking on the young reader
- The need to keep pace with and embrace new technologies

#### **Issues for young readers**

- Finding time to read among all their other education, work and leisure commitments
- The increasing focus on exams and testing
- Greater peer acceptance of reading for pleasure
- Use of new media raising content expectations and affecting attention span
- Dependence on parents to buy 'approved' books
- Social networking and the desire to collaborate with others rather than spend time alone reading
- Web 2.0 and the push to customise, personalise, remix materials (without having to worry about copyright)
- For young people from diverse cultural backgrounds, finding relevant content
- Access to books and reading for economically disadvantaged young people
- Low literacy levels among Indigenous and very remote communities
- Finding the right book at the right time and having trusted adults to recommend books

## 2 About the research

### 2.1 Why the research was commissioned

It has been eight years since the Centre for Youth Literature last reported on the reading habits and experiences of 10 to 18-year-olds. In the interim, a strategic review of the Centre in 2004 provided further insight. In 2009, we felt it was time for a reappraisal, both of the landscape for youth literature in Australia and of the role and direction of the Centre for Youth Literature.

### 2.2 How it was conducted

In April 2009, we engaged a library specialist to carry out an attitudinal piece of research, interviewing key people in the youth literature world and talking to young people and parents through focus groups. The findings were supplemented by desk research and a survey of teacher-librarians. A further breakdown of the methodology and interviewees can be found in Appendix 1.

### 2.3 Our objectives

The purpose of the research was to track the changes since the strategic review of the Centre for Youth Literature in 2004; to describe the effect of these changes on young people, their families and professionals in the field; and to discover future trends that will help inform teachers, librarians and the organisations involved in encouraging young Australians to read for pleasure.

### 2.4 The scope

We have included each element of the chain, from the author through to the young reader, via publishers, bookshops, public libraries and school libraries, with guidance from peers, parents, teachers and librarians.

All the face-to-face interviews and focus groups were carried out in Victoria, but authors, publishers and librarians from other states and territories were contacted by telephone.

While the research is based on the Victorian experience, it has relevance for young people and professionals all around Australia.

### 2.5 How it might be used

During the interview process, it became clear that library staff in particular needed facts and figures at their fingertips, in order to bid for funds and resources. More generally, the people we spoke to felt that there was a need for further advocacy, to ensure that youth literature was no longer seen to be a poor relation of adult literature.

The observations, statistics and quotes contained within this report are designed to be used for advocacy, and we have cited other reports, websites and sources of useful information, where more detail may be required.



## 3 Young Australians

- Nearly three million young people across Australia
- Leading busy lives, occupied by education, training, jobs and leisure activities
- Learning about the world, relationships and how they, as individuals, fit into society
- An increasing number staying on at school and gaining higher qualifications
- Those from Indigenous backgrounds still experiencing significant disadvantage

This study is about children from the age of 10, through to when they leave secondary school at 18 or 19, in line with the audience of the Centre for Youth Literature. The figures that follow are taken from the tables in Appendix 3.

*'Ten to 18, it's an incredibly diverse age range. There's absolutely no way you can lump it into one. Ten to 12s, 13 to 15s, 16 to 18s, they have their own very different cultures and they consume culture differently.'*

Jane Crawley,  
Manager, Arts & Culture, City of Melbourne

### 3.1 Population and distribution

There are approaching 2.9 million 10 to 19-year-old Australians. More than three quarters (77.2%) live in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland.

Between June 2007 and June 2008, the population of Australia increased by 1.7%, with the number of 10 to 14-year-olds remaining virtually static and the number of 15 to 19-year-olds increasing by 1.8%.

Young people make up approximately 13.5% of the population, with a slightly higher proportion in the Northern Territory (15.1%).

There are more boys than girls in the 10 to 19 age range, but the difference is marginal (51% compared with 49%).

### 3.2 Values, concerns and interests

So, what is it like to be a teenager in Australia? Every year, Mission Australia carries out a survey of young people to find out their interests, attitudes and concerns. More than 45,500 young people aged 11 to 24 participated in the 2008 survey.

The results mirrored those of previous years in terms of what young people value, with family relationships coming top, followed by friendships (other than family), physical and mental health, being independent, and feeling needed and valued.

Their primary sources of advice and support were friends (85.1%), parents (74.1%) and relatives or family friends (61.0%).

Two-thirds of those surveyed (67.6%) took part in sports and nearly half (46.5%) were spectators. Arts and cultural activities were enjoyed by 44.1% of respondents.

### **3.3 Participation in education, training and paid employment**

At the age of 15, most young people are in full-time education. The percentage across Australia is 97%. Falling below this are New South Wales (96.4%), South Australia (95.2%) and the Northern Territory (86.9%).

Participation rates for young Indigenous people are significantly below those from non-Indigenous backgrounds. At 15, there is a difference of some 16%. By 18, this has more than doubled, to 35%. This is a modest improvement on the results for 1996, which were 20% and 36.3% respectively.

At 18, the percentage of all young people in full-time education, training or work, or a mix of the three, is 77.5%, perhaps reflecting the gap year between school and university. Between the ages of 20 and 24, this increases to 80%.

The percentage of 20 to 24-year-olds who have completed Year 12 or equivalent, or gained a qualification at or above AQF Certificate II, has increased from 80% in 2002 to 84.2% in 2008.

## 4 Why reading for pleasure is important

- Reading for pleasure supports literacy and learning in school
- It enables young people to develop their own, better informed perspective on life
- It is a safe, inexpensive, pleasurable way to spend time
- It allows young readers to understand and empathise with the lives of those in different situations, times and cultures; to walk in the shoes of others.
- It improves educational outcomes and employment prospects
- It helps support Australia's vibrant creative industries, providing future customers, creators and employees

We instinctively understand that reading for pleasure among children and young adults is a positive thing. The 2001 *Young Australians Reading* report<sup>1</sup> shows that 'More than eight in ten adults strongly agree that it is really important for children and teenagers to read for pleasure, thus indicating that the community in general approves of reading for young people and considers it to be important'.

It is more difficult to find hard evidence of the actual benefits of reading for pleasure, but there are strong indications that it supports positive developmental, educational, social and economic outcomes.

*'It is evident from research and numerous international reading initiatives, that becoming and being a confident, committed reader has wide-ranging positive effects on the personal, intellectual, social and educational wellbeing of people from early childhood to old age. This much broader view of the place and value of reading has significant implications for the classroom and requires a radically new approach to the role of reading in schools. This should include time and opportunity for much more reading – at least five books each term!'*

Agnes Nieuwenhuizen  
Founder of the Centre for Youth Literature

### 4.1 Developmental outcomes

The State Library of Victoria's 2009 Redmond Barry Lecture featured Professor Frederick Mendelsohn, the eminent neuroscientist, talking about how the brain develops, adapts and regenerates thanks to the plasticity of its connections.

He spoke of 'neural Darwinism', explaining that, 'connections cease to function if they are not used. We only store what is needed ... the brain is pruned by use-dependent factors.'

Medical scientists have long been aware that the greatest period of

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<sup>1</sup> *Young Australians Reading 2001*, Woolcott Research for the Australia Council and Centre for Youth Literature

brain development occurs in early childhood and that by the age of six, the brain is already 95% of its adult size. It was thought that this was the foundation of the brain's architecture, but in the last 25 years, researchers have discovered that dynamic activity in the brain continues and the thickening of the thinking part of the brain doesn't peak until around 11 years of age in girls, and 12 in boys.

After this point, which occurs at about the same time as puberty, a further pruning-down process takes place. Cells and connections that are used will survive, while those that are not will be cut back.

So, if 10 to 13-year-olds are not reading for pleasure, they are likely to lose the brain connections; the hard-wiring that would have kept them reading as adults. Reading after this age could become an unnatural chore, affecting young people's ability to study at a tertiary level and perform well in the workplace.

#### **4.2 Educational outcomes**

Reading has been identified as a critical success factor for the engagement and retention of young people in educational settings. It is a strong indicator of academic achievement and it has other benefits.

The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (December 2008) says that, 'As well as knowledge and skills, a school's legacy to young people should include national values of democracy, equity and justice, and personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience and respect for others'. An important way of engendering these values is through the telling of stories.

The new national English curriculum, to be finalised by September 2010, focuses on three strands – language, literature and literacy. *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: English*, published in May 2009, encouragingly states, 'The literature strand is fundamentally about students' engagement with, and study of, literary texts of personal, cultural, social and aesthetic value. A significant feature of this strand is the attention it pays to texts that are judged to have potential for enriching students' lives and expanding the scope of their experience ... Studying literature helps shape personal, cultural and national identities ... Engaging with literary texts is worthwhile in its own right, but, importantly, it is also valuable in developing the imaginative application of ideas, flexibility of thought, ethical and critical reflection, and motivation to learn.'

#### **4.3 Social outcomes**

'Children who don't like books are deprived of one of our most powerful humanising influences. You can't beat up an old lady on the train if you have been into her life or someone like her in a story. You can't push a boatload of refugees out into the sea to drown if you survived the terrors of the torture chamber and the unforgiving ocean as a fellow-traveller – in a book,' wrote best-selling children's author Paul Jennings.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Testing Times, Knowing Readers: Unlocking the Pleasures of Reading*, Susan La Marca and Pam Macintyre, School Library Association of Victoria, 2006

We live in difficult and challenging times. Mission Australia's 2008 survey of young people found that more than one in five between the ages of 11 and 19 were concerned about body image, drugs, family conflict, suicide, personal safety, bullying or emotional abuse, physical or sexual abuse, alcohol and coping with stress. It may be difficult to talk about these topics, but by reading about them, young people can gain an understanding of the issues without first-hand experience.

*'I think reading builds my character and makes me who I am because I steal the characters' personalities from a bunch of books.'*

Henry (12)

British author Cathy Cassidy, speaking at the Reading Matters conference in 2009, said, 'We live in a really weird, slightly unbalanced society ... Children stop being children and become a little bit scary. Inside those really scary-looking teenagers there's just a child trying to work out what's going on... You can't pretend that this stuff isn't going on and maybe at the age of 10 or 12, you won't know how to process the information. In a story, it's not as scary. You can get through the most difficult times.'

Erica Wagner, Publisher of Books for Children and Teenagers at Allen & Unwin, goes further: 'Adolescence starts pretty young, but children mature at different rates. What they're reading has to be the right book at the right time. The vicarious experience is really important. It doesn't mean they are going to do these sort of things, but maybe they are. We don't publish irresponsibly, but let's tell the truth. A lot of kids are going to have difficult experiences.'

Children from migrant families, especially those speaking a Language Other Than English (LOTE) at home, can also feel removed from society, disengaged. By reading about others in a similar position, and finding material that is relevant to their experience, they can feel more connected to their new home.

Robyn Burns, Youth Services Manager, Whitehorse and Manningham Regional Library Corporation, in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, explains: 'The changing demographics are important, especially the increase in migrant families. At Box Hill, for example, you see dozens of students at the library, mostly from Chinese families. Some teenage Chinese kids aren't allowed to socialise with friends outside school. The focus is on school work. The library is a great meeting place that's accepted by families and provides kids with a space to use any way they choose.'

'There are homework clubs and things for newly-arrived migrants. Leisure reading is high at Box Hill, because we've responded with popular collections, for example Asian graphic novels. Turnover for some books is 15 times a year, which means they are barely touching the shelves.'

## 4.4 Economic outcomes

### General employment opportunities

'Performance in literacy is as strong a predictor of employment prospects as is level of overall educational qualifications,' according to the report of the International Reading Association PISA Task Force, 2003.<sup>3</sup>

By encouraging young people to read for pleasure, we are improving literacy levels, which will, in turn, better prepare school- and college-leavers for the workplace – a good outcome for individuals and for the nation. Young Australians who read for pleasure are likely to be more employable and to contribute more to the nation's economy.

### Jobs in the creative industries

The creative industries are thriving in Australia. Just over 260,000 Australians are employed in the cultural sector, some 34,000 as designers and illustrators; 20,000 as journalists, writers, authors and editors. The total number of people employed in literature-related jobs exceeds 83,000.<sup>4</sup>

This generation of teenagers reading for pleasure is the next generation of content creators, publishers, librarians and employees working behind the scenes in print and production.

### A thriving publishing sector

Around 250 Australian businesses are involved in book publishing. In 2003–04, Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that these publishers sold 128.8 million books, earning an income of AU\$1353.2 million and profit before tax of AU\$152.1 million. Export sales were worth AU\$190.5 million.<sup>5</sup>

According to the same set of statistics, the 20 largest publishers contributed AU\$369.2 million to industry value added (a measure of the value which an industry adds to the overall economy).

*'It's a good time to be a young-adult author. The global economic crisis has affected this less than other areas because kids who buy books still buy them. Book and board game sales go up in a recession because parents see them as longer-lasting forms of entertainment. You may not be able to afford a trip to Disneyland, but you can give your kids a book.'*

Lili Wilkinson  
Author and Learning Programs Officer at the Centre for Youth Literature

Within this, the market for young adult fiction is showing strong growth, with Nielsen BookScan tracking nearly AU\$42 million of young adult (YA) sales in 2008, compared with approximately AU\$14 million in 2004. This means the market for youth literature has trebled in four years.

<sup>3</sup> Policy and Practice Implications of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2000

<sup>4</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing 2001

<sup>5</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics Book Publishers Australia 2003–04, the latest available figures

State Library of Victoria Learning Services Manager Andrew Hiskens comments, 'Australia has a very creative output. Youth literature is an export business, a vibrant sector. That's been the way for quite a time, partially driven by the fact that it's easier to market youth literature, with lower price points offering better value.'

*'As a YA author, you do far more school visits and festivals, and you get to meet other writers – much more so than authors who write adult fiction. Other writers give support and share their experiences. They genuinely want to help others, encourage them to keep going, especially new writers.'*

Michael Bauer  
Author

Michael Webster, Head of Publishing Studies at RMIT, concurs, 'YA is a thriving area of publishing in Australia. If you look at the figures for general and literary fiction, 35% are Australian ISBNs, but in children's and YA non-fiction, the split is 50:50, Australian and rest of the world. Even taking out the *Twilight* series, young adult fiction is clearly outperforming the general fiction market.'

Agnes Nieuwenhuizen says, 'A significant number of Australian young adult books are translated into more than 25 languages and many Australian YA writers win international awards. Perhaps the most notable was Sonya Hartnett winning the 2008 Astrid Lindgren Prize, the richest children's/young people's award in the world.'

#### **Underpinning cultural tourism**

Australia's evolving literary scene has created a new angle for marketing the nation to international visitors. In 2004, more than half (51%) of the 670,000 international visitors who came to Victoria, travelled to Melbourne for cultural purposes.<sup>6</sup>

Factors such as Melbourne's UNESCO City of Literature status have further enhanced Australia's profile as a destination for cultural tourists.

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<sup>6</sup> Tourism Victoria 2004, Motivations and Behaviours of Interstate Cultural Visitors

## 5 HOW DO WE KEEP YOUNG AUSTRALIANS READING?

- Further improve literacy levels
- Be open-minded about the wider range of books and other formats available under the heading of youth literature
- Explore the opportunities presented by new media, especially to engage non-readers
- Support a reading culture in homes and schools, through parents, teachers and teacher-librarians

Our research identified six key factors: the ability to read; the desire to read; social acceptance of reading; the time to read; access to books, and, most important of all, a reading culture at home and/or at school.

*'The reading habit is still strong.'*

Andrew Kelly,  
Publisher, Black Dog Books

### 5.1 The ability to read

It is clear from the statistics (see tables in Appendix 3) that literacy levels vary considerably according to gender, cultural background, socio-economic factors and location.

Deputy Prime Minister and federal Education Minister Julia Gillard, in a speech given at the Brookings Institute in Washington, spoke about achieving educational equity in Australia. She was reported in *The Age*, 22 June 2009, as saying: 'Our performance at the higher levels of achievement is static or declining. And our persistent tail of low achievement, associated mostly with socio-economic disadvantage, is too long ... In a nutshell, our results could be summarised as "performing satisfactorily, but could be doing better, especially in the bottom end of the class".'

#### Gender differences

Boys are marginally less likely than girls to achieve the national minimum standard for reading at school. In Year 5, there is a variance of 3.5%, reducing to 2.8% in Year 7. This is explained by the OECD's Program for International School Assessment (PISA) report *Equally Prepared for Life? How 15-year-old boys and girls perform in school*:

'There are, indeed, functional and morphological differences between the male and female brain. The male brain is larger, for instance, but when it comes to language, the relevant areas of the brain are more strongly activated in females ...



'Male students need to be helped towards a more positive approach to reading, which requires them to see it as a useful, profitable and enjoyable activity ... This cannot be achieved simply through classroom practice, since reading is a cultural practice influenced by the social context. Promoting male reading interest therefore needs to involve the family and society more widely.'

*'I don't think the task is to turn every boy into an avid reader but the task is to try to make sure that every boy experiences a book they like. If you can do that once, you have a chance of them becoming a reader. The tragedy is when you talk to a kid who has never read a book they have enjoyed.'*

Michael Bauer

The Centre for Youth Literature's *boys, blokes, books & bytes* project showed that by reflecting boys' interests and ways of learning, and by involving male role models, it was possible to persuade adolescent boys, who were reluctant readers, to become more actively engaged in reading.

Fathers who took part in *boys, blokes, books & bytes* with their sons said, 'This is a fantastic program – I wish they had this when I was a kid,' 'We talk about books together now' and 'We now visit the library together.' Library staff were equally enthusiastic: 'We had 15 Year 9s the following day, totally engrossed in *Change the Game*. Their English teacher came looking for a camera – she couldn't believe it.'

However, there is a school of thought that says the time has come to realign the focus on boys and girls. Author Cathy Cassidy, speaking at the Centre for Youth Literature's Reading Matters conference in 2009, made the point, 'I think girls have been overshadowed in the push to get boys into reading. Let's not forget that they're there too.'

*'My son has been heavily impacted by technology and is not reading unless he has to, which doesn't mean he doesn't enjoy it, but he's not inclined to pick up a book. He's more inclined to pick up his guitar.'*

Chris, parent of a 17-year-old

*'I think my son has been very heavily impacted by technology, too, but he does continue to read, partly under duress, partly for comfort and relaxation. He tends to read authors that he knows and series that he knows. It's harder to get him interested in new things.'*

Sylvia, parent of a 15-year-old

*'My daughter was a reluctant reader, but she has been inspired by secondary school and now rather than starting lots of books and never finishing them, she starts a book and finishes it. The school librarian has had a lot to do with that.'*

Nicola, parent of a 12-year-old

### **Diverse backgrounds**

NAPLAN figures<sup>7</sup> (see tables in Appendix 3) clearly show the extent of the gulf between Indigenous and other students. In Year 5, there is a 27.6% disparity in reading performance, reducing to 22.2% by Year 9.

Approximately one in every four school-age children comes from a language background other than English (LBOTE). In Year 5, the variance between their performance and the national average is 3.5%, falling to 2.9% by Year 9.

### **Socioeconomic factors**

The OECD International Reading Association PISA Task Force report<sup>8</sup> found that, 'Student engagement in reading had a greater influence on achievement than did socioeconomic status or parental occupation'. However, the NAPLAN tables (Appendix 3) show that, in Australia, there is a substantial variation in students' reading performance between those with parents in a senior management role and those with parents not in paid work. In Year 5, 96.4% of children whose parents had successful careers achieved the national minimum standard for reading, compared with 75.1% of those with parents who were unemployed.

Parental education is also a factor, with 96.6% of students in Year 5, whose parents are degree graduates, reaching the national minimum standard for reading, compared with 80.2% of students, whose parents left school before Year 12.

### **Location**

Geography also has a big impact on reading standards. In provincial and metropolitan Australia, more than 90% of children attain the national minimum standard for reading in Year 5, compared with 79.7% in remote areas and 46.1% in very remote areas (NAPLAN tables, Appendix 3).

## **5.2 The desire to read**

According to the OECD's 2009 PISA report, *Equally Prepared for Life? How 15-year-old boys and girls perform in school*, 'Across the OECD in 2000, 46% of males read only if they had to, compared with 26% of females. In addition, 58% of males read only to obtain information that they needed, as opposed to 33% of females. Similarly, 25% of males reported that reading is one of their favourite hobbies, compared with 45% of females. Males also tend to spend much less time reading than females, with 30% of them, on average, reporting that they read for enjoyment for more than 30 minutes each day, compared with 45% of females.'

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<sup>7</sup> National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy 2008

<sup>8</sup> Policy and Practice Implications of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2000

Pam Macintyre, lecturer at the University of Melbourne and editor of *Viewpoint*, a magazine for young-adult book reviews, says, 'If you've never had the opportunity to be caught up by a book, you're not going to become a reader... I think the class novel is here to stay and it has some good aspects – kids have at least one book a year of their own. The challenge is to make studying rich and appealing, rather than just asking comprehension questions.'

Author James Moloney's view is that, 'There are young people who just enjoy reading. They have access to books and they're responsive to them. Then you have those who don't see reading as part of their lives. The act of reading doesn't always come easily and there should be more recognition of that. It takes a while to build up a decent reading speed. Some kids are put off for social reasons – maybe they're a sporty type who can't see how reading fits in. I don't think it has changed much over the 20 years I have been writing for kids.'

*'My parents were really keen for me to get a good education so I started reading early and developed a love for it.'*

Megan (13)

*'My mum gets angry if I read too much, because I read and forget about everything else. I get in trouble if I don't do my chores.'*

Gabby (13)

*'Reading is boring. There's no point in books when you have TV.'*

Jacob (13)

*'It's just a waste of time reading things that aren't even true. Reading is too quiet. You can buy so much for \$20 instead of a book.'*

Zac (13)

### Exciting new work

Persuading young people to read for pleasure relies in part on having the right materials available, and new work emerging from Australian writers and illustrators is helping to provide the momentum.

Bronwen Bennett, past president of the Children's Book Council of Australia, and owner of Show & Tell, says, 'The biggest change I've seen is that Australian creators no longer feel the need to include the obligatory gum tree or koala ... I was talking to a group of American children's literature people recently and they were surprised that Shaun Tan was Australian. The new work that is coming out is strong and confident.'

*'The evidence is in for why, at this most questioning, questing and exploratory time in their lives, teenagers are just so ready for what fiction, but also other types of literature, can offer. They are, in current parlance, "hot" for ideas and experiences and ready to revel in language. As well, at this fragile and often confusing period in their lives, stories provide a safe and stimulating way to stand in other people's shoes and try to understand those in similar or different situations or similar or very different worlds. Books can also provide quick, inexpensive and easy entertainment and intense pleasure.'*

Agnes Nieuwenhuizen

Award-winning UK young-adult writer Mal Peet was quoted in *The Age*, 6 June 2009: 'I want to entertain, but I also want to push the

barriers beyond what kids are conditioned into accepting'. He is echoed by Mike Shuttleworth, Program Manager of the Centre for Youth Literature: 'Authors want a bigger audience, a committed audience, and to be creatively challenged. They want an open, changing landscape.'

His colleague, Centre for Youth Literature Learning Programs Officer Erin Ritchie, adds, 'There's a lot more flexibility for young-adult authors. If a young-adult crime writer wants to write fantasy, they're still in the same section of the bookshelf and their fans will find them.'

Talking about genres, James Moloney says, 'We had a period when books for teenagers were very much about social issues and the pure adventure of the *Biggles* and *Nancy Drew* series went out of fashion, so kids drifted off to fantasy. Now, with the likes of Alex Rider, we have an unequivocal, unabashed return to the action hero.'

### Graphic novels

More graphic novels are appearing, and despite the debate about whether or not these are 'proper books', they are gaining support among professionals.

Michael Bauer says, 'Graphic novels are becoming more and more popular, especially with boys, and they're more accepted by teachers and teacher-librarians as a legitimate way of getting kids into reading and writing'.

Leading exponent Shaun Tan comments, 'I have seen it in the number of people turning up to talks. It's a far more mixed audience and there are more adults. I think there's more acceptance from the literary community. Illustrated books are quite extensively studied in high schools and there are dissertations on graphic novels. There are more exhibitions all over the world – I've recently been to one in Vancouver. I guess it's part of the post-modern dissolution of boundaries between popular and high culture. It's about being critical, but not judging on the basis of categories.'

*'I have fairly infrequent contact with young readers but I think of them as smart and visually literate, better at grasping complex visual things. At least, that's my hunch. There's a much greater variety of visual media than there was when I was that age. We didn't have the internet and visual literacy was more about books, films, TV. The internet has changed the way young people approach things.'*

Shaun Tan  
Author and illustrator

James Moloney explains, 'Publishers are very interested in graphic novels. They used to be dismissed as comics, but there's now a sense that they are turning respectable, with the success of manga and other stylised works. People like Neil Gaiman, who writes stories for graphic artists, are the trailblazers. Librarians have no problem recommending them to young readers, especially boys.'

Pia Butcher, Youth Services Librarian for Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation, Victoria, proves his point, 'Graphic novels are helping those teenagers who are less word-literate. They're one of the biggest trends.'

A few kilometres away, Robyn Burns, Youth Services Manager, Whitehorse and Manningham Regional Library Corporation, in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, says, 'Graphic novels are definitely big with our readers. We're starting a manga club. Kids gobble them up, just like they used to consume *Sweet Valley High*.'

Nella Pickup, Senior Librarian and Young People's Team Leader at Launceston Library, Tasmania, finds graphic novels are a good way of bringing young people into the library: 'We ran an anime workshop, where 34 kids learned to draw in that style, and we ran a session with Hillery Pastovich, from Madman, about graphic novels, which attracted 27 people despite being quite short notice'.

*Reading for Change*<sup>9</sup> supports the role of this kind of material in developing literacy skills: 'The gap in reading proficiency between those reading comics and those reading fiction is not huge. Daily engagement in reading magazines, newspapers and comics – a kind of reading that is perhaps less valued by school than fiction books – seems, at least in some cultural contexts, to be a fruitful way of becoming a proficient reader.'

'Reading practices can play an important role in reducing the gap between the reading proficiency scores of students from different socio-economic backgrounds and in reducing the gap seen between males and females.'

Allen & Unwin is one of the driving forces in the field, as Erica Wagner reveals, 'Slowly and carefully, we are building up a high quality Australian list. I don't know that there's a demand, as such, but there is a high level of interest.' At the same time, she says, 'Graphic novels are a high risk area. They take years to create, are expensive to produce and difficult for the general book trade to support in large numbers.'

### Marketing the idea

Michael Hogan, Client Services Librarian, Mildura Rural City Council Library, Victoria, explains, 'Technology and the internet have changed things in leaps and bounds in the last 10 years. Publishers and authors are able to share and disseminate information in ways that they couldn't before. They have different relationships with readers. Before, you might have a book signing. Now, you have blogs and web pages and the opportunities for direct interaction. There was always letter writing, but now it's instantaneous.'

*'I just go by the cover. If the title and the cover catch my attention, I read the blurb and then start like that.'*

Megan (13)

It's in the commercial interest of authors and publishers to market the idea of reading for pleasure to young people, but it's not done cynically. Speaking at the Reading Matters 2009 conference, Cathy Cassidy said, 'No-one is writing for a gap in the market... It's all about the right book for the right person... I have found kids all around the world connecting with my books in the same way as in the UK. Feelings are universal... "How do you know what it feels like to be me?" That's the best compliment you can ever have as a writer.'

Robin Penty, Manager, Education, Families and Young People, The Arts Centre, Melbourne, says, 'There is a lot of noise, a lot of static, competing for their attention... It's reaching them, making sure that you can break through all that noise, that once you do, it's compelling and in the language and learning styles they are currently using.'

### **5.3 Social acceptance**

#### **Peer pressure**

Our focus groups with students from Newcomb Secondary College, Geelong, and University High, Melbourne, dispelled the idea that reading was socially unacceptable for young people. Even the reluctant readers saw nothing wrong with being found with your nose in a book.

'I do read, but only if I find a good book – and I don't find very many good books, because I don't like reading,' says 12-year-old Dario.

However, there was still a feeling among teacher-librarians, public librarians and others that it was an issue, especially for boys.

Bronwen Bennett says, 'Even in 1999, people were talking about boys not being readers. I believe boys are a different sort of reader. I had a tacit agreement with some of the boys I taught that I wouldn't let on that they were readers and we worked on extending their reading out of school hours. They were worried about what their peers would think. They didn't want to be seen as 'nerdy'. What we need are strong male role models (like footballer Kevin Sheedy) saying they read five books a week!'

Christine Andell, former co-owner of the Little Bookroom, and now with the State Library of Victoria's Reader Development team, shares her concern, 'They say it's a myth that young people don't read and I agree with that, although they may choose to do it in private, so their friends don't see'.

#### **Family support**

The responses from students and parents in our focus groups showed the importance of a reading culture at home. It wasn't important for every family member to be a keen reader, but if one parent was seen to read regularly, this provided an environment of which books and reading were accepted features.

'My parents always read to me and as soon as I could read, I started reading. My dad read me *The Hobbit* when I was six,' says 13-year-old Rose.

'My dad reads a lot, but my mum doesn't. My brother used to read and that got me started but then he stopped reading and I carried on,' says Phoebe (11).

'Me and my dad often read the same books because we like the same stuff,' says Ana-Rose (13).

'My mum has a kind of sixth sense. If I start talking about one book, she'll find a whole series like it,' says Joanne (12).

'My dad is addicted to the TV and my mum is always cooking,' says reluctant reader Gaye (13).

Donna, parent of 15- and 18-year-old boys, says, 'I'm a "why do the dishes when you can read a book" kind of person, but my husband doesn't read at all, perhaps two books a year. Both my boys turned out to be keen readers in the past. Once they got to high school, both of them still enjoyed reading but it became very much a holiday pastime.'

'My husband loves really pulpy science fiction books and has a really large and precious collection, and my boy loves them too, and reads them,' says Sylvia, parent of a 15-year-old.

#### **A reading culture at school**

'I am fortunate that my children do read and they have school librarians who are quite encouraging. If she didn't have the help of the librarian, I think my daughter would struggle to find the books she'd enjoy,' says Nicola, parent of a 12-year-old.

Teacher-librarians and English teachers have an enormous influence over students' reading habits, but there was also mention of the part books can play in other subjects.

Author Michael Pryor says, 'I visit lots of schools and there are some that have a reading culture and others that would like one ... Usually there are a handful of really committed teachers and librarians ... If *all* teachers are reading, they act as powerful advocates. I was in one school where all teachers had to read fiction. It was a bit of a challenge for the maths and physics teachers, but it was a very strong message to students when they saw teachers outside the English department carrying books around.'

Sarah Mayor Cox, lecturer at La Trobe University and a leading figure in the Australian Literacy Educators' Association, adds, 'We are seeing lots of crossover and blurring of genres; more narratives in non-fiction, and "faction". There will be a place for text that would have sat within the English lesson to be looked at across different areas. I think it is fantastic because you can use text in so many ways, for example putting poetry and science together... It's putting much more research in fiction and much more creativity in non-fiction.'

Jenny Stubbs, a teacher-librarian, who is responsible for the annual Ipswich Festival of Children's Literature in Queensland, feels challenges like the state's own Readers' Cup are valuable in this area: 'Things like the Readers' Cup are useful because reading's not a cool thing to do. Kids can't usually become the hero of the school like the kids who do sport, but with this, it's the opportunity to work together as a team through reading and it's the opportunity to be a school hero of literature.'

#### 5.4 Time to read

Our focus groups with young people suggested that keen readers will find the time to read, before breakfast, on the bus to school, at bedtime, whenever they have a spare minute in the day.

The numerous demands on a young person's time mean they rarely have time to feel bored, and for reluctant readers there is not the incentive to pick up a book.

Author Libby Gleeson explains, 'I have an anxiety about parents putting pressure on kids, pushing them into activities. They're not getting bored enough to flop down in a chair and read a book like we used to do.'

Michael Pryor's view is that, 'We're competing for kids' time but that's always been an issue. Now, instead of just sport, it's sport *and* new media. We can expect kids to spend less time reading because of these competing interests. Our job is to make reading a viable alternative as a leisure pursuit. We need to keep kids interested, make reading enjoyable. I worry sometimes that there is a lingering motive that books need to be worthy and instructive, that they should teach a moral code. There is nothing that will turn kids off quicker.'

NZ author Bernard Beckett says, 'There's a potential – almost a disease – in YA literature wherein it's seen as a vehicle to preach or to explain how the world should be'.

#### Screen time

Young people lead busy lives, but what exactly do they do? Many parents are worried about the amount of screen time and recent research from the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)<sup>10</sup> gives some weight to their concerns.

It found that young people between the ages of eight and 17 spend on average just under two hours a day watching television, around 25 minutes watching DVDs or videos, and 20 to 25 minutes using console or handheld games.

*'Kids have less time to read but I would also observe anecdotally that kids have swapped one screen activity for another, so they're watching TV less and spending more time on internet-based activities such as MySpace, Facebook, downloads and so on.'*

Sarah Foster  
Publisher, Walker Books



While these times don't vary very much within age groups, there are significant variations in the amount of time spent on the computer or internet, with eight to 11-year-olds averaging 30 minutes a day, 12 to 14-year-olds, one hour and 32 minutes, and 15 to 17-year-olds, two hours and 24 minutes. This is because high school students use the internet for homework and for social networking, using sites such as MySpace, Facebook and MSN.

Together these figures suggest that 10 to 11-year-olds may be spending three and a quarter hours a day in front of a screen; 12 to 14-year-olds, four and a quarter hours, and 15 to 17-year-olds, six and a quarter hours. However, that's not all they do.

### **Cultural activities**

A 2006 Survey of Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities<sup>11</sup> showed that over a 12-month period, outside of school hours:

- 20% of children aged five to 14 played a musical instrument
- 12% had lessons or gave a dance performance
- 6% had lessons or gave a singing performance
- 4% participated in drama

Overall, participation rates increased with age, especially for playing a musical instrument, which peaked at 39% for 10-year-olds and dropped to 34% for 14-year-olds. These activities were more popular with girls than with boys, with approximately 44% of girls and 22% of boys involved in at least one of the above.

### **Sport**

An estimated 63% of children participated at least once in an organised sport outside of school hours.

- On average, 49% played or trained more than 52 times a year
- An average of six hours per school fortnight was spent participating
- Participation ranged from an average of four hours per school fortnight for those aged five to eight years, to seven hours for those aged 12 to 14 years

A gender difference was noticeable, with an overall participation rate of 69% for boys and 58% for girls.

Overall, 27% did not participate in any of the selected cultural activities or organised sport outside school hours (26% for boys, 27% for girls). Broken down by age group, this was 20% of nine to 11-year-olds and 25% of 12 to 14-year-olds.

Around 44% of children born overseas in non-English-speaking countries were non-participants, compared with 26% of children born in Australia.

## **Employment**

While leisure activities – sports, music, the internet – have traditionally been blamed for filling time that could be used for reading, almost a million teenagers (two out of three) aged 15 and over, at school or in full-time further education, have been found to have part-time jobs.<sup>12</sup>

## **Family and friends**

Mission Australia's 2008 survey of young Australians placed family relationships and friendships as the two top priorities for teenagers, which means that they want to spend time with those close to them.

Our focus groups with young people highlighted the trend towards online social networking, with most of the pupils interviewed saying they spent a significant amount of their free time on MSN, MySpace and Facebook, communicating with friends.

## **Reading in school**

If there is so little time outside school, what about reading at school? While it is encouraging to see that literature is one of the three strands underpinning the development of the new national curriculum<sup>13</sup>, there were concerns among the people interviewed that reading in schools was very dependent on the skills and enthusiasm of individual English teachers, teacher-librarians and library staff, and their willingness to work together in partnership.

Sarah Mayor Cox explains, 'If you are looking at class novels, then I think we have got a lot of work to do because most teachers say they are too busy to be able to find the time to read a wider selection of books, reflect on them and then translate that into authentic, exciting curriculum. It's a big ask.'

Pam Macintyre gives an example, 'In one primary school, the principal reads to every class for 20 minutes once a week. It's the simple things children pick up on, about how reading is valued.'

## **Time and attention span**

One response to this perceived lack of time, has been the skinny novel. Pia Butcher says, 'People are lamenting that books seem to be getting thinner and thinner but life has got busier for young people.'

Christine Andell comments, 'I am not sold on the idea that new media will give us new readers – their attention span is not being developed for the longer narrative.'

Libby Gleeson gives the contrary view, 'One of the great ironies of the publishing industry is that everyone said kids wouldn't read longer books, then along came JK Rowling. If you can make a story captivating enough, then kids will read it whatever the length.'

Joel Becker, director of the Victorian Writers' Centre says, 'My kids pick up a small book and finish it in the car on the way home, and that's not good value, but if it works to get people reading, that's fine. I find the kids I know, who like to read and are willing to read, want to read involved, complex things.'

Author Barry Jonsberg's take on children's attention span: 'A young adult readership is incredibly demanding. I pick up a book and give the author the benefit of doubt, maybe for 400 pages, but I don't think young adults do that to the same extent. They've got the TV to watch, their iPod to listen to. You've got to grab them early and hold them.'

Robin Penty says, 'Youths are very fluent with a range of new technologies and some people perceive this as a problem, that they can be in four different spaces at the same time, checking their emails, playing games, blogging, with the TV on in the background. This is presented as a problem with their attention span but maybe it's a requirement of this world and future generations will function that way.'

'We say children and youth are drawing learning towards them these days, rather than having it pushed toward or at them. It's the job of the arts and literature to help them be discerning, reflective, and in that way, focus their attention. I am intrigued by my own children's learning through a use of multiple intelligences, and impressed by it, because they can look at an activity through a whole prism of different lenses.'

'The challenge is in terms of sustaining young people's interest when they learn in grabs.'

### **5.5 Access to books**

Judith Ridge of the Children's Literature Centre, Western Sydney, says, 'We are always going to have die-hard readers and others who would rather be kicking a ball around the backyard. Access to books and authors is more valuable – authors going into schools, that's a fantastic thing, as are author events.'

*'It's still about the right book, in the right hand, at the right time.'*

Paula Kelly

Steve Grimwade, Director of the Melbourne Writers Festival, puts together the schools program for the event. His observations about youth literature: 'I think there is still the perception that anyone can write a book for young readers, forgetting that you need the skill level and knowledge base, but it has meant a bigger pool of authors trying to write for this audience and that has meant that there seem to be more good authors coming through.'

'It does seem to be a golden age for youth literature... The big successes like *Harry Potter* and *Twilight* have changed the overall figures for publishers. These successes obviously speak about volume and finances, but does it mean breadth? I suspect that we are getting more and more titles and we're getting more interesting stories. I think young-adult authors are getting more adventurous about the ways they tell their stories, and I think that those people

who sometimes act as guardians of what young people read are becoming more open-minded to all sorts of stories and characters.'

### Finding out about books

The route to market for authors and their work is primarily through bookshops and libraries, but it is not a direct route. Younger readers don't have the experience and the cash to make their own buying and borrowing decisions. They are strongly influenced by their friends' enthusiasm, advice from teachers and librarians, and the books their parents and families choose to buy for them.

The Centre for Youth Literature's *Young Australians Reading 2001* research found that the school library was the most important source of books for young people (28%), followed by bookshops (25%), the local library (22%), family (16%) and friends (8%) – see table in Appendix 3.

Agnes Nieuwenhuizen regrets what she sees as the lack of coverage of young adult and children's fiction in the mainstream media: 'If there were more reviews, this would be an excellent way for parents and keen readers to find out about books'.

Jason Steger, Literary Editor of *The Age* and a supporter of the work of the Centre for Youth Literature, still says: 'I am a little sceptical about young adult literature. If it's good enough, it should be good enough full stop. It shouldn't be limited to a certain age group.'

In order to encourage teenagers to read for pleasure, teachers, teacher-librarians, public library staff, booksellers, parents and other family members need to keep abreast of trends in youth literature and be aware of books that will appeal to individuals.

'You can't keep me out of bookstores. If I see one, you have to drag me past it.'

Gabby (13)

### Peers and parents

Michael Pryor says, 'Apart from things like *Harry Potter*, kids don't buy books, their parents do. So how do parents learn about books? It's a really important issue. They see the advertisements for the books that don't need advertising, but I am sure they don't know the breadth of what's out there.'

Bronwen Bennett adds, 'The greatest impact is peer recommendation... News about *Harry Potter* spread by word of mouth before the hype developed... Professionals are needed to educate people about titles and give parents and students information. There's a perception that the picture book is for five-year-olds. *Requiem for a Beast* exemplified the problem. Borders put it on the shelf for four- to eight-year-olds. Parents and teachers were buying it without realising it contained very challenging language.'

Paula Kelly says, 'We need to show parents that they can use books to get difficult messages across to their kids. Through stories, they can learn what someone else has gone through, coming out still intact at the other end. Authors write with compassion and understanding and it can be a great support for parents, as well as an interesting read for a teenager.'

### Series fiction

Series have always been popular with young people, providing familiar characters, developing storylines and virtually guaranteed reading pleasure. If you like the first book, you will enjoy the second, and so on.

JK Rowling's *Harry Potter* series is an obvious, and much-quoted example, but Nielsen BookScan's list of top authors of young-adult bestsellers in 2008 includes Stephanie Meyer, with the *Twilight* books; Isobelle Carmody, with the *Obernewtyn Chronicles*; and Philip Pullman, for *His Dark Materials*.

### Crossover novels

The 'crossover' novel, which appeals both to teenagers and to an adult audience, is becoming increasingly prevalent. An example from Nielsen BookScan's best-sellers list of 2008 is Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*. Isobelle Carmody's books are another case in point. Looking at figures for the top 20 books held in public lending libraries in Australia, one is aimed specifically at young adults and three are crossover titles.

#### PLR: 20 highest-scoring books 2005–08

Rank	Author	Title	Nationality	Genre
4	Matthew Reilly	<i>Seven Ancient Wonders*</i>	Australian	Thriller
6	Matthew Reilly	<i>Scarecrow*</i>	Australian	Thriller
11	Cunxin Li	<i>Mao's Last Dancer*</i>	Chinese	Biography
20	John Marsden	<i>The Night is for Hunting</i>	Australian	Thriller

Source: Public Lending Right surveys 2005–08 \* denotes crossover

However, Michael Bauer sounds a note of caution, 'Just because there is a 14-year-old narrator, it doesn't make it a young adult novel. *To Kill a Mocking Bird* is written from a child's perspective, but it's not a children's book.'

*'There are a lot of crossover books coming out, for example UQP's Brown Skin Blue, which I hope will have a double readership with both adults and young adults. There is an increasing number of books which straddle both markets. Two questions we have to ask ourselves before we label a book as a crossover are: "will this book get into schools, that is, is the content suitable for this market?" And, "will the trade accept this book into the adult market at the same time?"*

*'You can't always predict where a book will sit. We published Anatomy of Wings in Australia as an adult title and it has gone on to be published in the USA as a young adult book. The parameters are changing.'*

Kristina Schulz  
 Publisher, University of Queensland Press

## Commercial concerns

Publishers and booksellers are in business to make a profit, and some people we interviewed believed that the global financial crisis would have an effect on the availability of a wide range of books for young people.

*'We need to support the publishers in their promotion and exposure of new writers, both in terms of professional development for librarians and teacher-librarians and directly with young people.'*

Paula Kelly

'They're trying to make a lot of books mass-market and that's taking away from the quality. There's a danger that the bean counters have more say than the publishers and editors. I don't think publishers are as prepared to take risks, and that's been the case for the last three to five years ... It's not the way to discover another Shaun Tan,' comments Bronwen Bennett.

## Public library use

For keen teenage readers, with paperbacks generally in the AU\$15 to AU\$20 price range, it's simply not possible to buy all the books they want to read, which is why school and public libraries play such an important part in providing access to youth literature.

*'The Hawthorn library has a brilliant children's librarian. She is so good at recommending age-related books.'*

Lynne, parent of an 11-year-old and 14-year-old twins, all girls

'I wouldn't think of buying a book at all, I'd borrow it from a library and then think "can I live without it?" If I can't bear the thought of not having it, then I'll buy it,' says 13-year-old Megan.

According to the Australian Public Library Statistics 2005–06, there were some 1500 public library service points (1439 fixed points and 83 mobile). Nearly 10 million people, or half the population of Australia, were registered library members, and of these, 17% were junior members – see table Appendix 3.

There is no doubt that young people have been attracted to public libraries because of the introduction of computer terminals, and advances in library design, with special spaces for young people, have also played an important role. However, there are still fewer teenagers in public libraries than the library staff would like to see.

Michael Hogan says, 'Statistically, across our library service we have very good membership levels, but there has always been a bit of a fall-off in the secondary school years, flowing into early adulthood. It's a question of finding the time between school commitments and other activities. Then, many of the same items are in our collections as in the school library. We directly compete – and they have a captive audience.'

## School libraries

A report commissioned last year by the Australian School Library Association (ASLA), the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and Edith Cowan University (ECU)<sup>14</sup>, revealed the difficulties experienced by those running school libraries.

*'Every time you go into the school library, they point out if there are any new books and they tell us what they're like.'*

Steven (12)

More than half of government school libraries (54%) had to manage on an annual budget of AU\$5000 or less. Buildings were often old and investment was needed in facilities and resources. Just over 70% of the participants were teacher-librarians, with 30% being librarians, para-professionals or non-professional staff.

This reduction in the number of qualified teacher-librarians in schools is a cause for concern. Bronwen Bennett, a teacher-librarian for more than 20 years, explains, 'The students' access to informed knowledge about books is increasingly limited, with fewer specialists in school libraries and bookshops. Young readers need as much guidance as you can put in. The best element is the trust you can build up. As a professional, you look at a child and ask, "How do I get them to see themselves as a reader by Grade 6?">'

In our focus groups with students, two-thirds said their school librarian was an important source of advice about books and reading. Michael Bauer agrees: 'One of the key people in schools is the teacher-librarian – someone who revels in reading, is enthusiastic, and can recommend books because they have enjoyed them themselves'.

### 5.6 Reading culture

A reading culture at home and/or at school has been proved to be the overriding factor influencing whether or not a young person will become a keen reader.

In our focus groups with young people, 15 of the 18 keen readers came from homes where at least one parent regularly read books. Among the reluctant readers, less than a third had a parent who showed any interest in books.

'When they were younger, I read along with them, to see what they were reading. It's harder as they get older, as they read things I'm not particularly interested in,' says Donna, parent of 15- and 18-year-old boys.

*'As an author, you go to a lot of schools and libraries. Some you go into and you immediately know there is a reading culture. The library looks like a great place to be. There's a picture of the maths and phys ed teachers with a list of the books they like to read; an hour every week is given over for kids to read, with no test at the end of it. Sometimes you go into a school and it looks like the library is a place where books are held prisoner – it gets no resources, no money, no attention.'*

Michael Bauer

The Victorian Premier's Reading Challenge, along with similar high level initiatives in other states and territories, recognises the importance of reading for pleasure as part of a young person's normal experience. In 2009, Premier John Brumby gave out this message, 'Since 2005, the Challenge has helped thousands of students discover the rewards of reading. This year I hope the Challenge will motivate students who have attempted it before and inspire new students to discover the magic of books.'

It is important for government and other influencers to encourage families to make reading part of everyday life. The *Young Australians Reading* report in 2001 stated that, 'Young people who read every day are more likely to have a father who reads at least sometimes, a mother who reads all the time, and siblings and friends who read. Thus for these young people, reading is part and parcel of their everyday social set – it is not an unusual activity, but is woven into the fabric of their lives.'

A statement in the *Reading for Change* report reads, 'Fifteen-year-olds whose parents have the lowest occupational status but who are highly engaged in reading achieve better reading scores than students whose parents have high or medium occupational status but who are poorly engaged in reading.'

If there isn't a reading culture at home, it is possible for the school environment to make a difference. The International Reading Agency Task Force in 2003<sup>15</sup> advised, 'Schools should also be aware of the dangers of conditioning expectations of pupils by parental wealth, while ignoring parental occupation and the possession of cultural items. In the case of the latter, schools might have some potential control through libraries and loan schemes. Schools should work to ensure that in classrooms, school libraries, and elsewhere, students are surrounded by new, interesting and diverse reading materials, and teachers should work to facilitate access to those materials.'

However, pressures in the system are leaving professionals with little time to be creative. Mylee Joseph, Consultant, Public Library Services, at the State Library of NSW, expresses her concern: 'One of the things that worries me is that it is quite difficult for youth librarians to stay on top of youth literature. Twenty years ago, most would have been on top of it – reading a lot and discussing the books. I don't think a lot of people have that literature focus now.'

<sup>15</sup> *Reading for Change: Performance and engagement across countries. Results from PISA 2000*



### Middle years

When children move from primary to secondary school, reading for pleasure is no longer a key focus and it is at this point that many young people disengage. Reading becomes a device for learning about different subjects. At home, parents who read to their children when they were younger, no longer read to them. As *Young Australians Reading 2001* stated, 'Many no longer actively encourage reading because they feel that the skill is acquired and they can see the children reading school texts, which are considered to be sufficient'.

*'I don't think that there are fewer readers but I don't think we are seeing more readers either. With the youth market, it's always been very difficult to keep them reading after they leave primary school. That's why it's good to get them started on a book series.'*

Kristin Gill  
General Manager Education Sales & Children's Marketing, Penguin

# 6 Trends and challenges

## 6.1 Changing circumstances

The reading environment for young people is constantly evolving. There are major changes ahead, some positive, others potentially damaging.

POLITICAL	ECONOMIC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Debate about what constitutes literacy</li><li>▪ Focus on disadvantaged groups, especially Indigenous population</li><li>▪ UNESCO City of Literature status for Melbourne</li><li>▪ Introduction of national curriculum</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Families facing financial difficulties in the wake of the global economic crisis</li><li>▪ Pressure on school funding – reduction in primary school teacher-librarians and trained secondary school teacher-librarians</li><li>▪ Government investment in the fabric of schools and public buildings, but a tighter squeeze on funding for service provision</li></ul>
SOCIAL	TECHNOLOGICAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ New migrants, LOTE, multi-culturalism</li><li>▪ Indigenous communities</li><li>▪ Explosion of social networking, especially among young people</li><li>▪ New ways of communicating</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Exponential advances in information technology</li><li>▪ Rapid development of new media</li><li>▪ Divide between digital natives and digital immigrants</li><li>▪ Effect of new media on the way young people 'consume' and create</li></ul>

In our research, the most talked-about topic was the impact of new media, social networking, blogs, wikis, podcasts, webinars, web feeds, collaborative tools and multi-user virtual environments.

## 6.2 New media and social networking

Susan Hayes, Director Literature, the Australia Council, summarises the situation: 'The digital revolution is one that everyone has to be aware of – especially if you are engaging with young people'.

Emma Cochran, Program Manager arts2GO, Regional Arts Victoria, takes up the thread: 'The main thing is the prevalence of social networking. It's dominating everything young people do. It's not only the technology, but also the time it takes up in the classroom and family time. It's a whole different world, and that affects the arts. We have to find ways of integrating young people into the performance and using technology, without it taking over the art form itself.'

Michael Pryor says, 'I am an avid consumer of new media. I produce book trailers for YouTube. There's an acknowledgement that the book doesn't end with the covers. You can go online and see what else there is. It may be other kids talking about their reading. It puts kids in touch with each other and makes them feel they're not the only one in the world who likes that sort of thing.'

Mylee Joseph monitors trends and developments in new media. She says, 'There is a definite shift in thinking about books as content rather than format. This will be increasingly important with e-books (born digital) and digitisation of hard-copy books for online consumption.'

'One of the trends is the personalisation of everything – your own preferred style. California State Library, looking at identifying technology trends, call it It's All About Me – mass, personalised consumption, products and brands customised to suit the individual. For libraries, it means instead of relying on one type of resource or program, you need to provide more flexibility so young people can mash it up for themselves. It's the remix culture. For example, you might have someone who takes pictures and adds a soundtrack, or illustrates and orchestrates a poem or prose.'

Pam Macintyre makes sure student teachers appreciate the opportunities connected with new media: 'For the next generation of kids, new media is part and parcel of what they do, so we need to connect reading with it. I ask my undergraduates to create a three-minute multi-media presentation. Some just use images and music; others do voice-overs and use written text as well. They say it makes them think more deeply about their response to the book, for example, thinking about which music captures the mood. It gives us room to bring in children who are more comfortable with new media than with words on the page. They can show their depth of understanding and response through new media.'

She is also enthusiastic about the way in which children can explore exciting reading experiences: 'Just think about authors' websites. Many are wonderful. You can hear authors read an excerpt; they'll answer questions; there are games. It's a rich use of new media. It's bringing reading and new technology together and bringing in children who think reading is too passive. It's silly to see it as an either-or.'

Jane Crawley says, 'New media certainly has a big impact on how young people live. It's both a challenge and an opportunity. It's instant and there's the group collaborative nature of it. One thing children and young people aren't used to is spending time alone (outside of punishment), which mitigates against reading, so they tend towards social and collegiate art forms. They don't consume and create in the same way older people might. Even our use of media reflects our print bias, for example email. No one under 18 uses email. They do if they have to, for a job application, say, but they're not a print generation. It doesn't mean they won't write books, but they may have a different way of working in the future and it's critical for us to have an understanding of that.'

Bob Stein, Director of the Institute for the Future of the Book, told readers of *The Age* on 25 July 2009 that he had been exploring the potential for new media for 30 years: 'Readers will see the experience of reading expand to include a range of behaviours, all situated firmly within a social context. To illustrate, here's a mother in London describing her 10-year-old boy's reading behaviour: "He'll be reading a (printed) book. He'll put the book down and go to the book's website. Then he'll check what other readers are writing in the forums, and maybe leave a message himself, then return to the book. He'll put the book down again and Google a query that's occurred to him."

'I suggest that we revise our definition of reading to incorporate this range of activities, in addition to time spent absorbing the content of the printed page.'

Len Unsworth, Head of School and Professor of English and Literacies Education at the University of New England, has also done extensive research on this topic. He says, 'A significant number of teachers see the digital world and the world of books as a dichotomy. The important issue is that for a good group of avid readers, it is a whole, not a dichotomy. Children and young people don't see literature in one camp and internet use in another. From the point of view of the kids, the relationship between a literary experience and a web experience is a continuum.

'The most recent thing is "literary trips", using affordances, eg Google Earth, to track a story. They are stories built around Google Earth, tracking the physical context.

'Kafka's *Metamorphosis* was published as a graphic novel and there was an animated version, using the same drawings, but playing around with the sequencing. It's interesting to compare them with the original book. *The Little Prince* is another example. It was republished as an animated CD ROM, using the original illustrations. It's multi-versioning – positive and exciting.

'We need to think of different elements. In the film business, they pay a lot of attention to the music track. When we think about books in the future we will need to think about language, image, music, sound. It is more and more an e-world. People will want to insert a soundtrack and make composite electronic texts. I think what schooling needs to do is to be aware of the culture of blending these things.

'For authors, readers become part of the story-making. I think it is a very exciting place to be. We will be in a much better position to re-engage kids who are disengaged.'

### **6.3 The rise of e-books**

Elsewhere in the world, e-books have already made an impact. In the US, e-book sales in April 2009 were up by 228% on the same month in 2008; in June 2009, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger proposed the replacement of all school text books with e-books to save cash, and in July 2009, Barnes & Noble announced the opening of its new e-book store, featuring 700,000 titles.

'I would see within five years e-books competing with real books,' predicts Bronwen Bennett.

Jennifer Khan, Resource Management Team Leader at Melbourne City Library, believes it is vital for the library to keep pace with new technology, as its audience is primarily made up of young adults: 'Our community expects us to be engaged with new technology. They are very IT savvy.'

'We were one of the first with Blu-Ray DVDs; we are running an e-book creation workshop, but it can be difficult to keep up. We are looking into e-books but it's still at a fledgling stage.'

Michael Bauer is optimistic about the future, 'I think the more e-book technology develops and the easier and more attractive it becomes to read a book on screen, the more we will see it adopted. It's exciting to think how much publishers will be able to put into a book.'

#### 6.4 Sources of funding

Funding will always be an issue. Total government funding for cultural activities was \$5.6 billion in 2006–07, a rise of 2.6% on the previous year.

Australian Government	\$1901.0 million
State and territory governments	\$2628.8 million
Local governments	\$1083.7 million
Broadcasting and film	22%
Nature parks and reserves	21%
Libraries and archives	18%
Museums	9%
Other (including performing arts, galleries)	30%

Libraries and archives received \$1033.9 million in funding, more than half of which (\$619.7 million) came from local government, with \$385.7 million from state and territory governments, leaving \$28.5 million from the Australian Government.

The category that recorded the largest decrease in funding by state and territory governments in 2006–07, compared with the previous year, was libraries and archives, which fell by \$45.9 million (10.6%).

However, the International Reading Association PISA Task Force<sup>16</sup> found that, 'Faced with budgetary choices, schools should be aware that expenditures on learning resources are likely to be more effective in raising achievement than expenditure on buildings, provided those resources are used appropriately and effectively'.

<sup>16</sup> Policy and Practice Implications of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2000

## 7 Information sources

### Australia

Australia Council

<http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au>

Australian Booksellers Association

<http://www.aba.org.au>

Australian Publishers Association

<http://www.publishers.asn.au>

Australian School Library Association

<http://www.asla.org.au>

Australian Society of Authors

<http://www.asauthors.org>

Centre for Youth Literature

<http://slv.vic.gov.au/about/centreforyouthliterature/youthlit.html>

Children's Book Council of Australia

<http://www.cbca.org.au>

Dromkeen National Centre for Picture Book Art

<http://www.scholastic.com.au>

Express Media

<http://www.expressmedia.org.au>

Fremantle Children's Literature Centre

<http://www.fclc.com.au>

Illustrators Australia

<http://www.illustratorsaustralia.com>

Nielsen BookScan Australia

[www.nielsenbookscan.com.au](http://www.nielsenbookscan.com.au)

Public Lending Right

[www.arts.gov.au/books/lending\\_rights](http://www.arts.gov.au/books/lending_rights)

### International

Booktrust (UK)

<http://www.booktrust.org.uk>

Canadian Children's Book Centre

<http://www.bookcentre.ca>

Children's Book Council (US)

<http://www.cbcbooks.org>

EU\*READ

<http://www.euread.com>

National Centre for Research in Children's Literature (UK)

<http://www.ncrcl.ac.uk>

The Literacy Trust (UK)

<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk>

The Reading Agency (UK)

<http://www.readingagency.org.uk>

Young Adult Library Services Association (US)

<http://www.ala.org/yalsa>

# APPENDIX 1

## Methodology

### Literature review

See Appendix 2

### Focus groups

Newcomb Secondary College, Geelong, 1 June 2009

Nine keen readers, aged 11–13

Eight reluctant readers, aged 11–13

University High School, Melbourne, 23 June 2009

Nine keen readers, aged 11–13

Eight reluctant readers, aged 11–13

Group of six parents (with a total of 13 children aged between eight and 18), all living in Melbourne's inner east, 7 July 2009

### Interviews

Christine Andell	State Library of Victoria	Learning Programs Officer
Linda Angeloni	State Library of Victoria	Education Programs Manager
Michael Bauer		Author
Joel Becker	Victorian Writers' Centre	Director
Bronwen Bennett	Show & Tell Promotions	Past President Children's Book Council of Australia
Robin Burns	Whitehorse & Manningham Regional Library Corporation	Youth Services Manager
Pia Butcher	Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation	Youth Services Librarian
Emma Cochran	Regional Arts Victoria	Program Manager arts2GO
Jane Crawley	City of Melbourne Arts & Culture	Manager
Sarah Foster	Walker Books	Publisher
Kelly Gardner	State Library of Victoria	Web Manager and children's author
Kristin Gill	Penguin	General Manager Education Sales and Children's Marketing
Libby Gleeson		Author
Steve Grimwade	Melbourne Writers Festival	Director
Sue Hamilton	State Library of Victoria	Director Community Learning and public Library Partnerships
Susan Hayes	Australia Council	Director of Literature
Andrew Hiskens	State Library of Victoria	Manager, Learning Services
Michael Hogan	Mildura Rural City Council Library	Client Services Librarian
Barbara Horn	Museums Victoria	Director Operations
Barry Jonsberg		Author
Mylee Joseph	State Library of NSW	Consultant, Young People and Older Persons

Kaye Keck	Dromkeen	Director
Andrew Kelly	Black Dog Books	Publisher
Paula Kelly	State Library of Victoria	Reader Development and Onsite Learning Manager
Jennifer Khan	City Library	Resource Management Team Leader
Stuart Koop	Arts Victoria	
Jenny Lovell	Impro Melbourne	Corporate Coordinator
Lynne Makin	Upper Murray Regional Library Service	Chief Executive
Pam Macintyre	University of Melbourne	Lecturer, Language and Literacy
James Moloney		Author
Mary Manning	School Library Association of Victoria	Executive Officer
Kate Marquard	University High School	Teacher-librarian
Sarah Mayor Cox	La Trobe University	Lecturer Literacy and Children's Literature
Malcolm Neil	Australian Booksellers Association	Chief Executive Officer
Agnes Nieuwenhuizen	Centre for Youth Literature	Founder (retired)
Robin Penty	The Arts Centre	Manager, Education, Families & Young People
Nella Pickup	State Library of Tasmania	Senior Librarian
Michael Pryor		Author
Judith Ridge	Blacktown City Council	Young People's Literature Officer
Erin Ritchie	Centre for Youth Literature	Learning Programs Officer
Debra Rosenfeldt	State Library of Victoria	Manager, Public Libraries
Kristina Schulz	University of Queensland Press	Publisher
Anne-Marie Schwirtlich	State Library of Victoria	Chief Executive Officer and State Librarian
Mike Shuttleworth	Centre for Youth Literature	Program Manager
Jason Steger	<i>The Age</i>	Literary Editor
Jenny Stubbs	Ipswich District T-L Network	Coordinator
Shaun Tan		Author and illustrator
Len Unsworth	University of New England	Head of School and Professor of English and Literacies Education
Matthew van Hasselt	State Library of Victoria	Media Relations Coordinator
Michael van Leeuwen	State Library of Victoria Foundation	Director
Erica Wagner	Allen & Unwin	Publisher
Marianne Ward	Newcombe Secondary College	Teacher-librarian
Michael Webster	RMIT	Head of Publishing Studies
Lili Wilkinson	Centre for Youth Literature	Learning Programs Officer and children's author
Leonie Zito	City Library	Youth Services Librarian

*Special thanks to Nielsen Bookscan*



## APPENDIX 2

### References

- Knowing Readers:  
Unlocking the Pleasures of  
Reading  
Authors: Susan La Marca and Pam  
Macintyre  
Published by: School Library Association  
of Victoria  
Year: 2006  
ISBN 0-909978-31=X
- National Survey of Young  
Australians  
Published by: Mission Australia  
Year : 2008  
[www.missionaustralia.com.au/youthsurvey](http://www.missionaustralia.com.au/youthsurvey)
- Reading for Change:  
Performance and  
Engagement Across  
Countries, results from PISA  
2000  
Authors: Irwin Kirsch, John de Jong,  
Dominique Lafontaine, Joy McQueen,  
Juliette Mendelovits, Christian Monseur  
Published by: Organisation for Economic  
Co-operation and Development (OECD)  
Year: 2002  
<http://www.pisa.oecd.org>
- Policy and Practice  
Implications of the Program  
for International Student  
Assessment (PISA) 2000,  
Report of the International  
Reading Association PISA  
Task Force, 2003  
Task force members: Keith Topping,  
Renate Valtin, Cathy Roller, William  
Brozo, M Lourdes Dionisio  
Published by: The International Reading  
Association  
Year: 2003  
<http://www.pisa.oecd.org>
- Shape of the Australian  
Curriculum: English  
Published by: National Curriculum Board  
Year: 2009  
<http://www.acara.edu.au>
- Australian School Libraries  
Research Project: A  
Snapshot of Australian  
School Libraries Report 1  
Author: B Combes  
Published by: ASLA, ALIA, ECU  
Year: 2008  
[http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/  
ASLRP/publications.php](http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/ASLRP/publications.php)
- Use of Electronic Media and  
Communications: Early  
childhood to teenage years  
Published by: Australian Communications  
and Media Authority  
Year: 2009  
<http://www.acma.gov.au>
- Young Australians Reading  
2001  
Author: Woolcott Research Pty Ltd  
Published by: Centre for Youth Literature  
and the Australia Council  
Year: 2001  
<http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au>

# APPENDIX 3

## Tables

### 1 YOUNG AUSTRALIANS

#### Estimated resident population at 30 June 2008

Age	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	All
10-14	451882	336015	294348	100757	145736	33778	16704	21210	1400633
15-19	472073	357922	301351	107005	152217	34366	16576	24538	1466197
10-19	923955	693937	595699	207762	297953	68144	33280	45748	2866830
10-19	32.2%	24.2%	20.8%	7.2%	10.4%	2.4%	1.2%	1.6%	100%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Population by age and sex, Australian States and Territories, June 2008

#### Estimated resident population at 30 June 2008

Age	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	All
All	6967199	5297560	4279411	1601821	2163247	498163	219948	344236	21373998
10-14	6.5%	6.3%	6.9%	6.3%	6.7%	6.8%	7.6%	6.2%	6.6%
15-19	6.8%	6.8%	7.0%	6.7%	7.0%	6.9%	7.5%	7.1%	6.9%
10-19	13.3%	13.1%	13.9%	13.0%	13.7%	13.7%	15.1%	13.3%	13.5%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Population by age and sex, Australian States and Territories, June 2008

#### Estimated resident population at 30 June 2008 - male

Age	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	All
10-14	231042	172933	150787	51535	75652	17411	8741	10761	718972
15-19	242500	183591	154463	55070	78456	17700	8663	12556	753065
10-19	473542	356524	305250	106605	154108	35111	17404	23317	1472037
10-19	32.2%	24.2%	20.7%	7.2%	10.5%	2.4%	1.2%	1.6%	100%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Population by age and sex, Australian States and Territories, June 2008

**Estimated resident population at 30 June 2008 - female**

Age	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	All
10-14	220840	163082	143561	49222	70084	16367	7963	10449	681661
15-19	229573	174331	146888	51935	73761	16666	7913	11982	713132
10-19	450413	337413	290449	101157	143845	33033	15876	22431	1394793
10-19	32.3%	24.2%	20.8%	7.3%	10.3%	2.4%	1.1%	1.6%	100%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Population by age and sex, Australian States and Territories, June 2008

**Full-time participation rates of 15 to 24-year-olds in full-time education or training, in full-time work, or in both part-time work and part-time education or training**

Age	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	All
15	96.4%	98.4%	97.4%	95.2%	95.9%	100.0%	86.9%	97.9%	97.0%
16	91.6%	97.9%	95.3%	97.3%	96.2%	93.0%	84.2%	92.8%	94.8%
17	87.9%	93.8%	84.3%	89.0%	84.3%	90.8%	67.4%	93.0%	88.3%
18	73.6%	87.0%	77.5%	69.5%	75.0%	65.4%	73.0%	82.4%	77.5%
19	75.2%	79.7%	81.4%	80.5%	80.3%	73.6%	80.0%	93.7%	78.8%
20-24	80.0%	81.6%	79.4%	75.7%	80.5%	74.9%	78.4%	88.6%	80.0%

Source: National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007 based on Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Education and Work Australia, unpublished data, May 2007

**Percentage of 20 to 24-year-olds who have completed Year 12 or equivalent, or gained a qualification at AQF Certificate II or above**

Year	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	All
2002	80.7%	82.8%	79.1%	74.9%	76.3%	62.7%	80.7%	93.2%	80.0%
2008	83.4%	88.7%	84.3%	82.1%	80.0%	72.0%	64.9%	90.4%	84.2%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Education and Work Australia, May 2002; Australian Bureau of Statistics Australian Social Trends Data Cube – Education and Training June 2009

**Participation rates of Indigenous and non-Indigenous 15 to 24-year-olds**

Year	15	16	17	18	19	20-24
1996						
Indigenous	74.8%	59.1%	47.0%	36.3%	31.4%	31.2%
Non-Indigenous	94.8%	89.2%	83.3%	72.6%	70.1%	66.7%
2006						
Indigenous	79.0%	66.6%	54.6%	41.4%	37.7%	36.8%
Non-Indigenous	94.8%	91.2%	86.5%	76.4%	75.6%	74.8%

Source: National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007 based on Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing 1996 and 2006 (unpublished data)

## 2 WHY READING FOR PLEASURE IS IMPORTANT

### People employed in literature-related cultural occupations

Journalists and related professionals	2987
Editors	3851
Print journalists	5522
Television journalists	968
Radio journalists	618
Copywriters	923
Technical writers	1647
Authors and related professionals	3289
Book editors	668
Script editors	121
Librarians	10,313
Library technicians	6141
Library assistants	8398
Archivists	797
Translators	960
Desktop publishing operators	1890
Proof readers	524
Printing trades people	27,679
Printing hands	6355
Total	83,651

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001 Census of Population and Housing

## 3 HOW DO WE KEEP YOUNG AUSTRALIANS READING?

### Achievements of Year 5 students in reading – percentage at or above the national minimum standard

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	All
Boys	92.1%	92.2%	84.3%	88.8%	87.1%	88.7%	60.2%	93.5%	89.3%
Girls	95.0%	95.2%	89.6%	91.7%	91.1%	90.7%	65.1%	96.0%	92.8%
Variance	2.9%	3.0%	5.3%	2.9%	4.0%	2.0%	4.9%	2.5%	3.5%

Source: NAPLAN 2008

### Achievements of Year 7 students in reading – percentage at or above the national minimum standard

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	All
Boys	94.2%	94.7%	91.2%	92.0%	91.0%	93.0%	65.5%	95.0%	92.8%
Girls	96.7%	97.0%	94.6%	94.8%	94.5%	95.0%	69.0%	97.6%	95.6%
Variance	2.5%	2.3%	3.4%	2.8%	3.5%	2.0%	3.5%	2.6%	2.8%

Source: NAPLAN 2008

**Achievements of Year 9 students in reading – percentage at or above the national minimum standard**

	<b>NSW</b>	<b>VIC</b>	<b>QLD</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>TAS</b>	<b>NT</b>	<b>ACT</b>	<b>All</b>
Boys	93.1%	93.5%	88.6%	90.4%	90.1%	92.8%	68.5%	95.4%	91.5%
Girls	95.8%	95.8%	92.5%	92.9%	93.5%	93.2%	71.4%	97.9%	94.4%
Variance	2.7%	2.3%	3.9%	2.5%	3.4%	0.4%	2.9%	2.5%	2.9%

Source: NAPLAN 2008

**Achievements of Year 5 students in reading – percentage at or above the national minimum standard**

	<b>NSW</b>	<b>VIC</b>	<b>QLD</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>TAS</b>	<b>NT</b>	<b>ACT</b>	<b>All</b>
All	93.5%	93.7%	86.9%	89.9%	89.1%	89.7%	62.5%	94.8%	91.0%
Indigenous	77.6%	83.0%	62.9%	60.6%	51.8%	84.5%	25.8%	81.1%	63.4%
Variance	15.9%	10.7%	24.0%	29.3%	37.3%	5.2%	36.7%	13.7%	27.6%

Source: NAPLAN 2008

**Achievements of Year 7 students in reading – percentage at or above the national minimum standard**

	<b>NSW</b>	<b>VIC</b>	<b>QLD</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>TAS</b>	<b>NT</b>	<b>ACT</b>	<b>All</b>
All	95.4%	95.8%	92.9%	93.4%	92.7%	93.9%	67.1%	96.3%	94.2%
Indigenous	82.4%	85.5%	74.8%	69.6%	63.4%	89.0%	32.4%	94.3%	71.9%
Variance	13.0%	10.3%	18.1%	23.8%	29.3%	4.9%	34.7%	2.0%	22.3%

Source: NAPLAN 2008

**Achievements of Year 9 students in reading – percentage at or above the national minimum standard**

	<b>NSW</b>	<b>VIC</b>	<b>QLD</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>TAS</b>	<b>NT</b>	<b>ACT</b>	<b>All</b>
All	94.4%	94.7%	90.5%	91.7%	91.8%	93.0%	69.9%	96.6%	92.9%
Indigenous	82.3%	79.9%	70.0%	62.5%	62.8%	90.7%	37.9%	84.2%	70.7%
Variance	12.1%	14.8%	20.5%	29.2%	29.0%	2.3%	32.0%	12.4%	22.2%

Source: NAPLAN 2008

**Achievements of Year 5 students in reading – percentage at or above the national minimum standard**

	<b>NSW</b>	<b>VIC</b>	<b>QLD</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>TAS</b>	<b>NT</b>	<b>ACT</b>	<b>All</b>
All	93.5%	93.7%	86.9%	89.9%	89.1%	89.7%	62.5%	94.8%	91.0%
LBOTE	91.2%	91.9%	74.2%	81.3%	86.1%	83.8%	31.3%	88.8%	87.5%
Variance	2.3%	1.8%	12.7%	8.6%	3.0%	5.9%	31.2%	6.0%	3.5%

Source: NAPLAN 2008

**Achievements of Year 7 students in reading – percentage at or above the national minimum standard**

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	All
All	95.4%	95.8%	92.9%	93.4%	92.7%	93.9%	67.1%	96.3%	94.2%
LBOTE	94.0%	94.1%	82.4%	85.3%	90.3%	90.7%	38.2%	95.2%	90.8%
Variance	1.4%	1.7%	10.5%	8.1%	2.4%	3.2%	28.9%	1.1%	3.4%

Source: NAPLAN 2008

**Achievements of Year 9 students in reading – percentage at or above the national minimum standard**

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	All
All	94.4%	94.7%	90.5%	91.7%	91.8%	93.0%	69.9%	96.6%	92.9%
LBOTE	92.3%	92.8%	80.8%	85.0%	89.6%	87.3%	46.2%	96.6%	90.0%
Variance	2.1%	1.9%	9.7%	6.7%	2.2%	5.7%	23.7%	0.0%	2.9%

Source: NAPLAN 2008

**Achievements of Year 5 students in reading – percentage at or above the national minimum standard**

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	All
All	93.5%	93.7%	86.9%	89.9%	89.1%	89.7%	62.5%	94.8%	91.0%
Metro	93.9%	94.0%	88.5%	90.8%	91.4%	91.0%	n/a	94.8%	92.4%
Provincial	92.6%	92.8%	85.8%	89.0%	88.0%	88.7%	82.1%	n/a	90.0%
Remote	81.3%	96.0%	74.8%	89.2%	82.0%	86.2%	72.5%	n/a	79.7%
Very remote	76.7%	n/a	57.6%	54.1%	56.5%	n/a	19.1%	n/a	46.1%

Source: NAPLAN 2008 [n/a = not available/relevant]

**Achievements of Year 7 students in reading – percentage at or above the national minimum standard**

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	All
All	95.4%	95.8%	92.9%	93.4%	92.7%	93.9%	67.1%	96.3%	94.2%
Metro	95.8%	96.0%	93.9%	94.2%	94.5%	94.6%	n/a	96.3%	95.2%
Provincial	94.7%	95.3%	92.7%	92.7%	92.6%	93.5%	88.4%	n/a	93.9%
Remote	80.1%	97.9%	83.9%	91.5%	85.1%	88.4%	75.2%	n/a	83.9%
Very remote	72.2%	n/a	62.9%	51.6%	61.6%	n/a	23.5%	n/a	49.2%

Source: NAPLAN 2008 [n/a = not available/relevant]

**Achievements of Year 9 students in reading – percentage at or above the national minimum standard**

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	All
All	94.4%	94.7%	90.5%	91.7%	91.8%	93.0%	69.9%	96.6%	92.9%
Metro	94.6%	94.8%	91.4%	92.2%	93.4%	92.8%	n/a	n/a	93.7%
Provincial	94.2%	94.1%	89.7%	91.0%	91.3%	93.1%	84.4%	n/a	92.4%
Remote	76.2%	95.5%	82.8%	92.4%	81.9%	88.3%	73.7%	n/a	82.3%
Very remote	89.3%	n/a	60.3%	64.1%	59.7%	n/a	25.4%	n/a	51.3%

Source: NAPLAN 2008 [n/a = not available/relevant]

**Achievements of Year 5 students in reading – percentage at or above the national minimum standard, by parental education and occupation**

	Degree or above	Year 11 or below	Variance	Senior management	Not in paid work	Variance
All	96.6%	80.2%	16.4%	96.4%	75.1%	21.3%

Source: NAPLAN 2008

**Achievements of Year 7 students in reading – percentage at or above the national minimum standard, by parental education and occupation**

	Degree or above	Year 11 or below	Variance	Senior management	Not in paid work	Variance
All	98.0%	88.0%	10.0%	97.9%	83.3%	14.6%%

Source: NAPLAN 2008

**Achievements of Year 9 students in reading – percentage at or above the national minimum standard, by parental education and occupation**

	Degree or above	Year 11 or below	Variance	Senior management	Not in paid work	Variance
All	97.8%	86.3%	11.5%	97.6%	81.6%	16.0%

Source: NAPLAN 2008

**Main source of obtaining books for pleasure**

	<b>All</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Primary school</b>	<b>Secondary school</b>	<b>Public school</b>	<b>Private school</b>
School library	28%	30%	26%	42%	25%	27%	37%
Bookshop	25%	28%	22%	17%	25%	22%	26%
Local library	22%	19%	26%	22%	22%	26%	15%
Family	16%	16%	17%	13%	18%	16%	19%
Friends	8%	7%	9%	3%	9%	8%	4%

Source: *Young Australians Reading 2001*

**Percentage of the population who are library members (2005-2006)**

	<b>NSW</b>	<b>VIC</b>	<b>QLD</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>TAS</b>	<b>NT</b>	<b>ACT</b>	<b>All</b>
All	46%	50%	48%	59%	47%	32%	30%	52%	48%
Over 15	84%	85%	79%	79%	83%	100%	80%	87%	83%
Under 15	16%	15%	21%	21%	17%	0%	20%	13%	17%

Source: *Australian Public Libraries Statistical Report 2005-2006, Public Library Services, State Library of Queensland, September 2007*