It's been an eventful few months in NSW public libraries.

In this blog post we hear from selected libraries across NSW about some of their recent events and programs.

Wollongong City Libraries' Comic Gong 2019

*Sarah Howes, Wollongong City Libraries*

Comic Gong 2019 marked the seventh Wollongong City Libraries' comic and pop culture festival, attracting over 11,000 people across four locations in the heart of Wollongong. The Cosplay Competitions were by far the most popular activity, with hundreds of people checking out the home-made costumes. Other popular activities were medieval sword fighting, pinball and arcade games, face painting, board gaming, circus workshops and live music.

This year we introduced a quiet space to allow people to take a break from the crowds. As a result, Comic Gong was more accessible, allowing participants to enjoy the whole day. Comic Gong is loved not only by the library staff
who work hard putting it together, but by our attendees, activity providers and artists.

One artist said "Always my favourite day of the year, and this didn't disappoint."

Planning for Comic Gong 2020 is already underway - lock in Saturday 16 May 2020!

**Celebrating Diversity**

*Sharon Tollard, Lithgow Library Learning Centre*

Lithgow Library in celebration of International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia & Transphobia, hosted a specially sparkly afternoon tea! The event in its third year continues to grow a crowd, attracting over 50 attendees. Lithgow Library hosts [IDAHOBIT](#) celebrations to demonstrate to the wider community our inclusivity and welcoming environment. Our participants were entranced by our community choir and engaged by our speakers from the LBGTQI community. Our speakers included Tyson Arapeli from ACON, Jono Lwellyn from Pink Mountains Youth and Bec Baxter from Generous Space.

**An enchanted evening**

*Jann Debenham, Canterbury Bankstown Library Service*
...Magical ...brilliant – words used by the more than 30 people who attended Bankstown Library’s celebration of the Lebanese poet Khalil Gibran on 2 May in the library’s stunning reading garden. The opening drums and loud performance by Assur Kings Entertainment captivated all.

Moving readings of Gibran's poems on friendship, marriage and children, were delivered by Professor Emile Chidiac (in English) and radio host Suzan Hourani (in Arabic). The library team organised an outdoor screen, laptop and projector for music, words and images of Gibran's work.

Through a partnership with Bankstown Youth and Development Service, Glen Kalem of the Khalil Gibran Collective brought items in for display - first editions of Gibran, a US Army publication of The Prophet for soldiers, and reproductions of Gibran's dreamy paintings. No-one wanted the evening to end. Definitely a team effort with customers asking for more.

Greta Migrant Camp celebrations at Cessnock Library

*Kimberly O'Sullivan, Cessnock City Library*

2019 is the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Greta Migrant Camp (1949-1960) and Cessnock Library has
been leading the [celebrations](#) for this significant local anniversary. On 9 May we hosted a sold-out talk by former Newcastle Herald journalist, Alek Schulha, who held everyone spell-bound. Alek was born at the camp and for decades has been collecting the stories of and researching the lives of newly arrived post-WWII migrants who called the Greta Migrant Camp home. His research has even taken him back to Europe and as far as China.

Alek brought a precious family momento to the talk, which he used as an effective prop, his family’s trunk they brought to Australia. This contained all their possessions for a new life in a new country. For the audience it was a night of joy (and tears) and the Library received wonderful feedback for our event.

Tiny Doors

*David Murray, Northern Beaches Library Service*

In 2018 the ‘Hunt was on’ for Northern Beaches Libraries as we engaged with young people in a street art project called [Tiny Doors](#). A grant-funded initiative, Tiny Doors offered a dynamic opportunity to facilitate a youth-led, community art project. Tiny Doors is the biggest youth-led project delivered on the Beaches with participation from over 80 young people. Participants worked with local artists and professional mentors to design and build 32 literary themed pocket-sized doors for the local community. A street art project not just for artists!
Participants were able to get involved in marketing, developing merchandise and writing press releases while a group of committed young people developed a website that has had over 33,000 hits! Guide maps are available at branches of the Northern Beaches Library Service with several thousand already distributed to guide our ‘hunters’. The Hunt goes on in 2019.

Great Books Festival

Debbie Horgan, MidCoast Libraries

We all know Library and Information Week is the perfect time to celebrate everything books and reading, and the Great Books Festival gives MidCoast Libraries the chance to do this in a really big way! This year over 1500 primary and high school students in the enormous MidCoast region had the opportunity to meet with, listen to, talk to, learn from, and enjoy their time with two award-winning and much-loved authors, Anna Fienberg and Leila Rudge, who travelled around the area giving presentations - sharing their stories and experiences. What a road trip!

Due to popular demand the festival ran for 5 days with 13 schools, from Tea Gardens in the South to Taree in the north, participating. Anna and Leila were delighted with the enthusiastic welcome they received from the students. In return, the children gained an insight into the magic of how stories become the books we love.

Lake Mac Libraries' festival of words

Gillian Wilson, Lake Mac Libraries

Bestselling crime author Candice Fox and award-winning novelist Wendy James headlined an exciting new Lake Macquarie writers’ festival held on 25 May at Toronto Library. Write Here! [6] featured a day of workshops and author talks, where some of the best in the business shed light on how ideas become words, and how those words become stories. It was a wonderful opportunity to hear first-hand from some of Australia’s most accomplished writers about how they create their work, and how they get published. The festival kicked off early with a 7.30am ‘Writing Gym’ session, hosted by Hunter Writers’ Centre Director Karen Crofts. The festival also featured two exclusive ‘Ask An Author’ sessions, Zine writing, publishing pathways, writing for children and the importance of research in novels. Authors Barry Maitland, Renee Price, Kaz Delaney, Monique McDonell, Janette Paul, Jess Black, Paul Russell and Amanda Hampson also highlighted at the event.

Speaking of a love for learning…

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Darryl Kane, Central Coast Library Service

The focus for Central Coast Council’s Library Service is to cultivate a love for lifelong learning and knowledge, and our Speakers Program is a key component in achieving this. Thanks to thorough planning, we developed a year-long suite of events that enabled the programming of large scale events with presenters from different genres and backgrounds. This approach appeals to a wider range of community interests and achieved attendance figures into the thousands.

We also provided a platform for local talent to be discovered and recognised, holding the first Poetry Competition for our region. Our latest event hosted comedian, author and mathematician Adam Spencer (closely followed by Jennifer Byrne in June) and generated interest from local media and members of all ages, helping to positively promote libraries and engaged with them in a way that inspires the use of our services.

Find out more

- Keep in touch with what’s happening in NSW public libraries through our In the Libraries enewsletter [7].


Links