

# **Annerley Community Bookshop and Neighbourhood Centre Inc.**



Annual Report  
2015-2016



# **President's Report**

**Naomi Frampton**

## **Welcome**

Welcome Everyone and thanks again for coming to show your support and appreciation of the Bookshop. Let's start by remembering and acknowledging the Jagera and Turrbul people, the traditional custodians of the Brisbane region. As well as being a demonstration of respect it is a practice that can help to put ourselves and our presence here into some sort of perspective.

## **The bad news**

I have to begin on the dark side. A couple of weeks ago Paul and I sat and discussed the winding up of the Annerley Community Bookshop. The end of year accounts show that once again we are faced with an ever-dwindling reserve depleted by on-going losses – I'll leave Nelson with the cheerful job of explaining the detail, but the simple reality, backed up by other local traders, is that people aren't out shopping in Annerley (not even for secondhand books!). We talked about his possibilities for other employment, the impact for volunteers and the variety of people that contribute here, and the sort of planning needed for the winding-up process. By the end of the conversation I could see that we were almost bracing our muscles for the physical act of filling and carrying boxes of books. Then we parted to face our separate tasks of conveying this unhappy fact in the most cheerful and positive way possible through our end-of-year reports.

## **The motivation to keep trying**

A few days later, not a word written, I came in to see how Paul was faring. The first thing he did was to show me the Volunteer Report that Kathryn had written. I won't pre-empt it but let her speak for herself, but we both understood that it went straight to the heart of the question of the particular role that the Bookshop plays in the community. It has an outer role, obtaining and retailing secondhand books and supporting other groups and programs, which it tries to do as well as possible, but for the 40 to 50 volunteers involved in any given year, and for some of our customers as well, it serves an important community building role that is meeting fundamental human needs in the community of the modern city. My conviction continues to grow that this is of no small importance.

## **More reflections on why the Bookshop is important**

It is increasingly clear from reports coming from all parts of society, all age groups and all social strata, and from simple observation, that alongside our material affluence there is widespread emotional lack of ease expressed through stress, depression, anxiety, anger and other emotional malaise that affects all areas of life. We are very familiar with the idea that these are problems located in the individual that need to be responded to by amending the person in some way – by working harder or better, setting extraordinary goals, getting fitter, getting healthier the person must adjust to fit themselves to the norms and functions determined by society so that they can be productive, be 'lifters' and not 'leaners', to borrow a well-known insult. ( Invariably there are a range of products, from educational courses to vitamins and lycra outfits, that need to be purchased to enable this process.). This seems to be coming into relief particularly sharply at the moment as more and more people find themselves in the sections of society categorised as 'problems'. Older people, young people who don't get on in the school environment, people who speak other languages and fail to speak english in an accent that is familiar to the Australian ear, people who fail to find good jobs despite their degrees, people with 'disabilities', people who need health care, people who take drugs, smoke too much, drink too much, eat too much, spend too much or don't spend enough, people who don't care about their environment, people who are too passionate about their environment and protest all find themselves deemed 'problems' to society. I might add a new category for good measure - people who don't spend enough on secondhand books. Would all non-problematic members of society now please stand up?!

Obviously the type of problem we are varies according to perspective and we can recognise and laugh at this to some degree but the underlying message is pervasive and insidious and we are all susceptible to it; that we are not acceptable as we are and need to change. Why we should change, what we should change, how we should change are the subjects of endless discussion – the answers are being presented constantly as a mainstay of all types of media – and we don't have to look far to find the language of combat as the heroic way to deal with one's 'problems' as people bravely 'fight cancer', 'battle depression', 'struggle with addiction' and 'grapple' with the other difficulties that life presents. All of you readers here are aware of the power of language and imagery. What is the effect of this constant call to arms with all the implications of winning and losing, winners and losers, in the engagement with life's difficulties? That's a big question.

A society that is dominated by the world view that some people are productive and necessary, others unproductive and superfluous, is not safe for anybody. There is either anxiety and fear of a fall from grace or the shame of rejection as burdensome emotions. Counter to this is the view that all people are acceptable simply because they exist and the onus is on society to find their role. Supposing we were to take that view as an aim or an ideal? This brings us back to the Bookshop and its role in the community. People know where they feel safe and accepted as they are, where their contribution is valued. It is not so much places or particular types of organisation but little pockets of culture, groups of people. We seek them out as necessary to our feeling of well-being. They come in all sorts of forms from family and particular friends to community choirs, art groups, dance classes, bird watching groups, communal gardens and so on – even a community bookshop. They are characterised not so much by what they do or produce but by the values that operate and their welcoming culture. The Bookshop is serving that role for some people in this community and that makes it important. We don't know how important; what is the measure of those things? Perhaps we could try for some recognition of this special feature with a name expansion: The Annerley No Problems Community Bookshop.

## 2016

To keep it open, though, we need to make more money. That part is unavoidable and if we don't the bookshop will have to close in the coming year. This year we have continued our ongoing program of donations to correctional centre libraries and indigenous children's books to the My Mum's Voice program. We acquitted a grant for \$500 from the QUT staff community development fund to begin the sale and donation of more adult indigenous literature to prison libraries through the My People's Voice program. We also provided space for a Book Club and for a Slam Poetry group and the Yarn Jammers continued to knit and talk throughout the year. We need to thank several supporters who have continued to sponsor various sections: Cath Rafferty, Helen Abrahams, Tony Robertson, Annerley Labor and Carolyn Cullen. We also need to thank South Brisbane Rotary who made a donation of \$200 and St Bartholomews Anglican Church at Mt Gravatt who recently made a donation of \$447.00. The Theosophical Order of Service held a successful fundraiser booksale to raise funds for Women's House and the Bookshop shared money raised from the sale of books on the night. We held a winter raffle again, another lovely blanket donated by Lallene Tudehope. We also enjoyed boosted sales as a benefit of the Annerley Street Fairs, held at Christmas and in July. As an alternative to a trivia night we decided to try a fundraiser in the shop and hosted a Murder Mystery Night, with wine, cheese and music, working in conjunction with Annerley Community Plus. That was a fun event that was reasonably attended and well received and feedback has indicated that it is certainly worth building on – people are keen to come again.

## The Task Ahead

The first task for the year will be the setting of the financial goals, setting a timeline and determining the



The bookshop full of people solving the murder mystery.

thresholds – the point at which we must make the decision to close. That is for the committee. On the other side we have to renew efforts to generate ideas for getting people into the shop and alternative ways of making money – some ideas thrown up so far have been a reorganisation of the sections to allow an expansion of the fiction section and a space renting arrangement for people wanting to sell their own products. There is a definite plan to hold another Murder Night and I've had a good offer of assistance with that one. All other ideas welcome. What I must ask of volunteers however, is that if you're also keen to keep the Bookshop open I need you to make the effort to come out and support any fundraisers that we hold – come yourself, promote them through your networks and bring people along. This is the point at which our real commitment is needed.

### **And thanks**

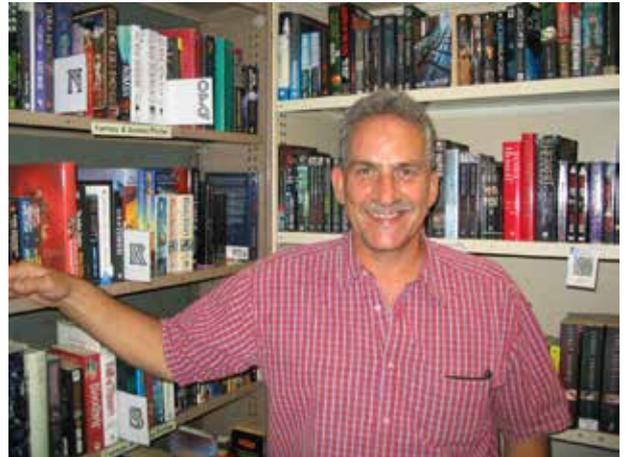
Thanks of course to all our supporters and to the volunteers. You're all acceptable just for existing and for turning up! And I must thank this wonderful committee who have been a pleasure to work with again this year – Nelson, our Treasurer, Amy the Secretary, Clare - we have toyed with the term Vice Secretary but she remains dubious. Clare has done a fantastic job with all things computer related – and for the volunteer calendars once again, as well as regularly providing sweet things for our committee meetings. And Katrin – more sweet things! Finally I must once again thank Paul who continues to be the rock of this organisation. I run out of words at this point ... his contributions are too extensive to be listed.

# Manager's Report

## Paul Hodges

I had a much longer report written but thanks to Naomi's incredible thoughts highlighting all the reasons why the bookshop is so important in supporting all of us as individuals, and Kathryn's moving volunteer's report which is to follow, and given that I know Nelson will give us a clear financial picture in his treasurer's report, I happily threw my original attempt in the bin!

What I now think is important for me to say is firstly a huge thank you to everyone who continue to give your time and commitment to keep our bookshop going – and that of course encompasses all of you, our volunteers, our committee members, stock donors and customers.



I want to echo and acknowledge the shared passion and understanding that in our community the importance of each individual 'as they are' is now paramount. That it's really fundamental to understand that no-one is good at everything, but that everyone is good at something and that's what we try to find and build on here.

I want to explain that these have always been key philosophies for the bookshop and that for the past 16 years, we have been able to provide a supportive and inclusive environment funded through the sale of donated second hand books. Most years we've made good profits and been able to put a little aside, in fact in the early years we were doing so well we were often able to donate money we had raised to other charities.

Obviously we could not have known about the radical changes that the internet would bring, changing the very fabric of our society, from the way we access information and share knowledge to the way we shop and in our case, how and what we read, and how we buy what we read.

We started with \$20.00 in the till and a handful of volunteers, last year our volunteer numbers again exceeded 50 people and we made about \$62 thousand in sales. It's worth re-stating that those sales are made with book product that would probably otherwise end up in land fill.

Last year we made about \$67 thousand so the sales have dropped about \$5 thousand and although our expenses remained fairly static at about \$67 thousand, they will inevitably rise again and even if the sales and expenses stayed the same – we still have a \$5 thousand shortfall to make up this year.

Until now we have been able to fund our shortfalls from our accumulated funds, but they are now all but gone and can only be used to bale us out (hopefully) one more time.

So our huge and immediate problem is how do we continue to fund the important 'other work' which we all agree is a fundamental part of the bookshop, and feel so strongly that we want to keep doing when our sales keep declining?

Sadly I don't have the answer. I think it's possible that a little article which Kaye shared from the Courier Mail at the end of November showing the results of a joint Deakin/ Murdoch University study probing the impact of technology on the reading culture of 500 teenagers which shows that almost all are shunning electronic reading in favour of 'old fashioned' books could be correct and that's really encouraging. We've certainly seen a lot of our younger customers returning to the bookshop over the past few years.

However, it's also just as possible, however unpalatable, that our much loved little bookshop could become as

useless to our modern 'on-line lifestyle' as the once prevalent and now extinct video rental stores.

Far reaching fundamental questions in my head include, do any of us have discretionary income to spend on books, are we too time poor to shop in bricks and mortar shops now, preferring e-tail to retail, and do any of us have the time to browse and buy serendipitously or are we mostly reading what's just been released and positively reviewed, and if so are we choosing to read that electronically or at least to order it on-line and have it delivered to us?

Do any of us use books to gain knowledge any more, or are we all googling for our non-fiction info.

Is the collective creativity and understanding of humanity destined to be stored not in a multi-floored library of vast wooden shelves – but rather on a USB stick?

Should we try saving money through our controllable expenses by moving to smaller premises to save rent, cutting back my hours or simply turning the lights and air off?

Should we try to promote ourselves better through social media or even paid advertising.

Do we try to generate more income through extended our trading hours, cutting out the volunteer discount, finding companion product to sell, seeking increased sponsorship, extra fund-raising, individual patronage or possibly grant funding.

Or does one or more of you have the perfect answer?

My final thought is this.

If we want to see the bookshop here next year, we need to do something radically different now. None of us can afford to stay silent and think someone else will fix it.

So please, if you ave a thought – share it!

Thanks guys

Paul Hodges

# Volunteer's Report

## Kathryn Stumpf

I found it challenging to write this report, not from lack of eagerness, but because I simply can't overstate how much I've enjoyed volunteering at the Annerley Community Bookshop this year.

As someone who struggles with depression and anxiety, I was quaking in my thongs when I arrived for my first shift at the bookshop in early February. However, after a gloomy 2015, I was determined to 'get out there' – to do something with my days other than binge-watch 1990s cartoons and eat excessive amounts of beef jerky.

To my chagrin, I wasn't aware of the Annerley Community Bookshop prior to trawling *Volunteering Queensland's* website. I applied for a few different positions but the first and most effusive response I received was from Paul Hodges, our dear Manager. Buoyed by his warmth and enthusiasm, I tentatively signed up to volunteer on Thursday afternoons.

As soon as I stepped into the bookshop I was blown away by its loveliness. I've long been a library-lurking bookworm, but this place – wow! Its light and character drew me in, silencing the voice of self-doubt that was urging me to turn tail and return home to *SpongeBob*.

I was greeted by Rosemary, a fellow volunteer and the best person I could imagine to teach me the ropes. As the weeks and months passed, I grew more confident entering books into the database, ringing in sales, and even interacting with customers!

Thursday afternoons quickly became a highlight of my week and, come August, I was volunteering on Thursday *and* Monday afternoons, with the occasional Saturday shift in the mix too! Working at the bookshop has really helped me come out of my shell and has renewed in me a level of self-confidence I thought I'd lost.

There are many volunteers I haven't yet had the pleasure of meeting. However, I'd like to give a special mention to those individuals of diverse ages and backgrounds who have directly contributed to my love of the bookshop: Rosemary, Jojo (now back in Germany), Nathan, Denis, Maria, Ciaron, Tennielle, Peter, and Motti.

And, of course, Paul Hodges (Manager) and Naomi Frampton (President). Together, Paul and Naomi embody the most delightful characteristics of the bookshop: liveliness, organisation, warmth, and community spirit. I'm sure everyone who's part of the bookshop family – volunteers and customers alike – would eagerly join me in extending a heartfelt 'thank you' to Paul, Naomi and the other members of the committee for all that they do.



Aside from my own positive experiences as a volunteer, I'm pleased to report that 2016 has seen a total of 51 individuals contributing their time and enthusiasm to keep the bookshop running seven days a week. Comprising the current 'corps de bookshop' are 18 men and 33 women, with our longest-serving volunteer, Wendy Stevens, notching up an impressive 16 years!

Here are some additional, fun statistics from 2016:

- 20 volunteers worked weekday shifts, while 23 worked weekend shifts.
- An eager eight volunteers took on both weekday and weekend shifts.
- Digging further into the demographics, the bookshop's volunteers comprised 13 retirees, five work-seekers, 16 students, three individuals with special needs, and 14 volunteers also working full-time.
- Basically, what an INCREDIBLE effort by all!

Before signing off, I'd like to reiterate the joy I've experienced while volunteering at the Annerley Community Bookshop. It's been a wonderful addition to my days, weeks and months, and I'd be the first to encourage anyone who's even vaguely contemplating volunteering to get on board. I can't imagine a better place to have found myself this year – figuratively and literally.

## Treasurer's Report

### Nelson Ball 2017 to ensure the Bookshop can meet its

#### Income:

- In contrast to 2015 there was a 7% decrease in revenue which equated to a reduction close to \$5,200 for the year. The significant reduction in book sale revenue is the main driver of this year significant net loss of \$3,201.

#### Cost of Sales:

- The shop does not account for the inventory of books held.
- Cost of sales has remained steady this year despite the reduction in ABE book purchases. As shown, this has been offset by the increase in the My Mums Voice initiative.

#### Expenses

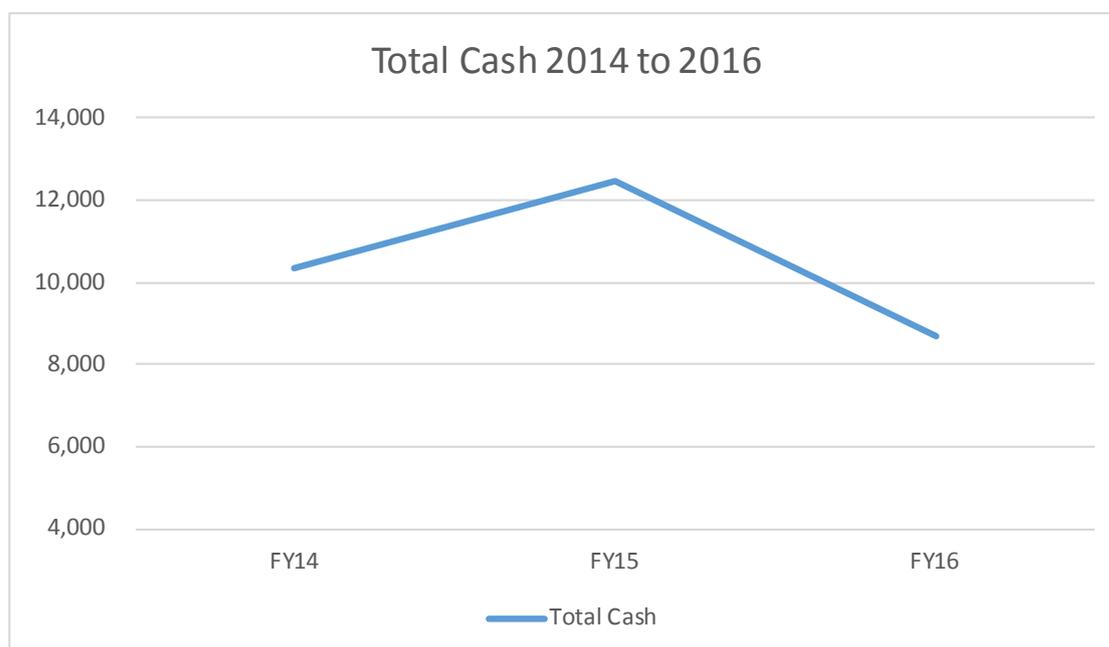
Please note that there were large movements in many material expenses during the year. These were as follows:

- Insurance increased 4% from 2015.
- Rent increased by 2% and is a significant focus moving forward.
- Some positive news is that total expenses decreased by \$1,564 when compared to 2015, which despite falling revenue has shown that controllable costs have been well managed.

The concerning point on the operations for the shop for 2016 are despite the additional grant funding of \$1,534 there is still a significant loss for 2016. This will be further represented in the following balance sheet discussion.

#### Current Assets:

- This is represented by the bank accounts for the Bookshop. As can be seen in the associated graph (excl. petty cash), there has been a significant and rather alarming reduction in cash for 2016. This reduction in cash is due to the poor sales of the shop during the period, and has therefore been required to pay for outflows such as wages and rent.
- Cash flow has always been a key factor with the Bookshop and if the same trend occurs in 2017 we will have less than \$5,000 in total cash. This would mean we are unable to pay for Pauls long service leave that is so



deserved, and well overdue might I add! Therefore, in my opinion the only way to increase our cash reserves is to try and do this through grant funding although as they aren't often granted for operating expenses, this might be very difficult.

**Non-current (fixed) assets:**

- As noted in last year's report, the \$1,034 of grant funding was to be fully expended in 2016, and these funds were put to good use and the trolleys were purchased. There was no other change apart from depreciation during 2016.

**Current Liabilities:**

- The main balance within current liabilities is Pauls' Long Service Leave for \$5,566 as well as other statutory obligations for the June period such as PAYGW tax and Superannuation.

There are concerning facets of the financial performance of the bookshop in 2016 (and into 2017) which must be monitored if we are to continue as a going concern into the future. Unfortunately, the significant reduction in revenue and cash has placed a cloud over how long the shop can keep operating. Managing our cash outflows will be key in 2017 to ensure the Bookshop can meet its obligations when they fall due and continue trading.