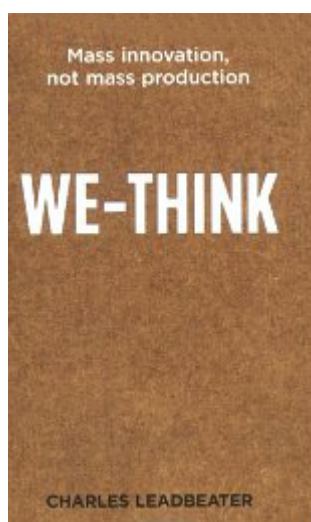# Reviews

We-Think: Mass Innovation, Not Mass Production: The Power of Mass Creativity
Leadbeater, Charles (2008)
London: Profile Books
290 page
ISBN: 9781861978929

To quotes Charles Leadbeater's own words, "This book is about how we can make the most of the web's potential to spread democracy, promote freedom, alleviate inequality and allow us to be creative together, *en masse*. ..... The web allows for a massive expansion in individual participation in culture and the economy. More people than ever will be able to take part, adding their voice, their piece of information, their idea to the mix." P.6

To get a feel for what Charles Leadbeater is on about, it might be a good idea to have a look at this YouTube video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qiP79vYsfbo or a number of the other presentations by Leadbeater on YouTube. The ideas that he presents in *We-Think* certainly deserve further reflection.

His main contention is that ideas grow by sharing and that shared intelligence leads to mass innovation and creativity. This concept certainly resonates with me as it is clearly the role of the teacher-librarian to make available and share ideas and wisdom while at the same time encouraging students to explore and create and share their new knowledge. Teacher-librarians for mass innovation and creativity – I like it!

How do some collaborations turn into 'We-Think' while others do not? Leadbeater provides some excellent examples to illustrate successful collaborations – Wikipedia is of course one – and the worm genome project is another. In the worm genome project, the more information that the original research laboratory put out to the scientific community, the more that others contributed. No-one thought that information was being hidden so they were happy to share. The community grew along with the common store of knowledge it created. (p. 63) "Innovation and creativity are not individualistic. It's really about interaction, getting people to interact with one another in the right way. Leadership is about creating an atmosphere in which people get a kick from working with one another." The successful formula therefore he argues is: core community (to get things started) + contributors + connecting + collaboration = creation. We can see applications for this formula in the wikis and blogs that teacher-librarians and teachers are using to engage and encourage students in their learning. Similarly, many SLAV members and their colleagues are establishing just this 'We-Think' model in the PLN, Personal Learning Program being conducted jointly with the State Library of Victoria.

The spread of the web means that more people than ever can have their say, post their comment, make a video, show a picture, write a song. As Leadbeater says, "the more 'I think' there is (the more content and information we create), the more we will need 'We-Think' to sort it out." What a great opportunity for teacher-librarians.

Leadbeater also talks about the social nature of thinking in a web world. He argues that thinking requires three ingredients:- participation, recognition and collaboration. In another of his writings, *What's next: 21 ideas for 21st century learning*, Leadbeater says: "Learning is most effective when it is personalised – it means something to the learner. That happens when people feel they are participants in their own learning, shaping what and how they learn, and are able to articulate its value to them. That, in turn, means that relationships that sustain learning are vital." So many positive messages here for the teacher-librarian and their role in creating and enhancing learning experiences.

In *We-Think*, Leadbeater draws on an old tradition – that sharing and mutuality can be as effective a base for productivity as private ownership. (p.49) The concept of the commons in pre-industrial society he argues, is reflected in social networking today. He does acknowledge however that all this collaboration and interaction will inevitably be more raucous and that many people have grave reservations about the growth and use of the web – for all the reasons of which we are aware. "The biggest challenge we will face will be how to retain a semblance of control when powerful technologies are seeping out of the hands of responsible institutions and professionals into society at large, possibly to groups where there is little respect for intellectual property or good governance." (p. 234) Top down control will no longer work – "we will have to encourage more self-control, so people use their growing technological power responsibly. That means, at the very least, children learning the skills and norms of media literacy and responsibility, learning to question and challenge information, as well as copy and paste it." p. 237 Self-regulation is clearly required and to assist with this self-regulation, Leadbeater suggests , we need trusted parties such as libraries – libraries which can offer a means of filtering via collaborative rating or ranking material post publication rather than the current and previous means of filtering prior to publication.

There are so many fascinating and challenging ideas in this book (which Leadbeater insists was written by himself and 257 other people from who he drew ideas and inspiration) and I found on almost every page, a new example or them to explore. The extensive notes that relate to each chapter as well as the bibliography offer very detailed acknowledgement of these 257 people and offer us the opportunity to explore their ideas and writing further.

At a time when education and teacher-librarianship in particular are changing and responding to the potential that emerging technologies provide, this book is a great read! I will finish with just one more quote from *We-Think* which not only personifies school libraries and teacher-librarianship, but reminds us of the valuable role that we have undertaken, "We are compelled to share our ideas; that is how they come to life. And when we share ideas, they multiply and grow, forming a powerfully reinforcing circle. You are not defined simply by what you own. You are also what you share. That should be our credo for the century to come." (p. 239)

Reviewed by Mary Manning
Executive Officer
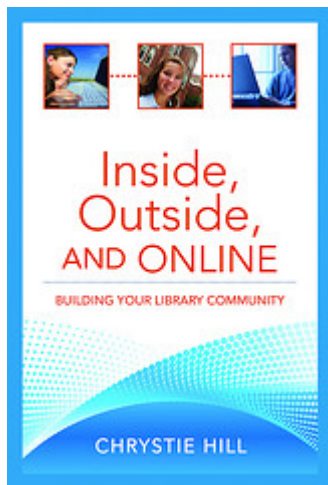**School Library Association of Victoria**

Inside, Outside, and ONLINE: Building Your Library Community
Hill, Chrystie (2009)
USA: American Library Association
ISBN: 9780838909874
175 pages

Many public libraries have successfully adopted survival strategies designed to carry them across and into the new millennium. Significantly, these have often been more related to people, communities and human relations as they have been to changing information systems and communications technologies. Public librarians have recognized, and made the most of, the unique benefit they offer their communities: the rare facility of public, social space, a forum supported by free access to documents, texts, information and communications, all further enhanced by professional services tailored precisely to the public's needs. By responding to social change and the potential of multiple communications modalities they have banished perceptions of the library as a place of cultural rectitude and instead, they have fostered library space as one of the few havens where professional service respects public autonomy. Where else, but in a public library, is it possible these days to find this combination of civic space, service and public sociality?

Chrystie Hill is dedicated to promoting the cause of this model for libraries, based as it is in beliefs about social capital theory, in the library as an institution for social good and as an enabling force for situated social networking. Her book is the product of a project set up with a colleague, Steven Cohen, to analyze just how libraries are able to facilitate community building and the development of social networks. The project involved interaction with many librarian colleagues via surveys, interviews, an online blog and a website: http://librariesbuildcommunities.org. Indeed, numerous contributions from these sources serve to richly support and generously illustrate the thrust of Hills argument throughout the book. The research never set out to produce a formula for community building, but as Hill points out, it revealed patterns which inform the basis of a theoretical and contextual framework; these also serve as headings for the substantive chapters of the book: Assess, Deliver, Engage, Iterate, Sustain. Each chapter is embellished by theory, anecdotal comment and exemplary case studies drawn from participants in the project. An Appendix comprised of selected questions and answers further documents participants' responses. Separate lists provide references informing the study as well as a selection of additional resources for the benefit of the reader. A subject and author index provides a key to the body of the text.

Whilst I tended to read this book in terms of public libraries, Hill advocates that community building applies equally to all types of libraries, including school libraries, and that community building occurs inside and outside the library as well as online. Within the Australian context, and based on personal experience of public libraries in my own state and city, I believe that that our public libraries and State Library, come closer to realizing the concept of public space as a social forum far more authentically than other civic spaces (beaches, parks, street malls, transport and city squares) whose boundaries are increasingly encroached by entrepreneurial public/private partnerships, governmental constraints and other effects of economic and social change. In relation to this, it is especially interesting to note how the meaning of the term 'community building' has been differently understood in various sectors of our profession. Across the past ecade or so, within the context of academic and school libraries, the concept of community building generally referred to 'information literate communities' or 'communities of learning'. The dynamic of this form of community building was based on the educational role of the library, involving a one-way, pedagogical thrust from library to clients, whereas Hill's more recent interpretation of community building promotes a more outward-looking, socially responsive interaction between community and library service. Bearing in mind the somewhat threatened status of many school libraries in the current economic climate, Chrystie Hill's outlook may be of value to school library profession.

Reviewed by Dr Susan Boyce
Member of the *Synergy* board

Writing and Publishing: the Librarian's Handbook
Smallwood, Carol (Editor) (2010)
USA: American Library Association
ISBN: 9780838909966)
189 pages

In terms of its prolific output and expansive scope, catering for all possible aspects of the library profession, the American Library Association surely rates as an outstanding publisher. This book is the most recent title in a new series, *ALA Guides for the Busy Librarian*. Focusing on the business of professional writing and publishing, it wraps up a dimension of librarianship, which although highly pertinent, is not often addressed so comprehensively. Carol Smallwood's editorial and authorial experience, as well as her close association with the library profession, provide her with an appropriate overview of, and insight into, the field of publishing. For the purpose of this book, she has gathered a rich compilation of advice and experience, thoughts and ideas from forty-seven published librarian-writers across school, public, academic and special libraries, as well as library and information sciences faculty, in the United States and Canada. Their offerings comprise a hardcopy social network focused on the primacy of the printed word. Topics mostly address the wide range of opportunities available to librarian-writers, but not exclusively. Many authors exceed this scope by sharing 'inside' knowledge about a variety of 'outside' genres and modes. Collectively, they perceive all librarians as potentially creative communicators, capable of finding their niche in the published world, be it in print or online – an appealing approach to prospective readers.

In calling for submissions for this collection, Smallwood informs us that she cautioned contributors with Gustave Flaubert's ultimatum: "Whenever you can shorten a sentence, do. And one always can. The best sentence? The shortest". Fortunately, all heeded this counsel; their contributions are consistently concise, none exceeding the proposed limit of two thousand words. Smallwood's editorial experience is evident in her organization of the compilation. Whereas ninety-two articles (many contributors feature several times) might sound daunting, they are grouped by topic in five organizing parts. These are clearly delineated in the Table of Contents, and also indexed by subject and author. As a result, the collection is extremely accessible, either as a consecutive read or for bite-size browsing.

Part One, *Why Write?* nominates a variety of purposes for writing, not all restricted to the professional field. Part Two, *Education of a Writer*, contains twenty-six instructive pieces from a broad range of authentic experience. These are grouped under sub-headings of getting started, writing with others, revision and lessons from publishing. Part Three, *Finding Your Niche in Print*, is the biggest section covering genre and mode: books, newsletters and newspapers, reviewing, magazine and journal articles, essays, textbook writing, children's literature and writing on specific subjects. Part Four, *Finding Your Niche Online*, is smaller, but equally

informative. Finally Part Five gives voice to experience in *Maximizing Opportunities*. This section offers a range of possibilities available to those wishing to engage with this parallel dimension of the library profession.

As exemplars, both Foreword and Afterword are authored by actively publishing author-librarians. A list of contributors, whose professional and academic credentials, as well as details of published works, attests the quality of this useful handbook. This is an inviting, readable book, full of helpful advice, encouragement and interesting possibilities – not so much from the traditional base of in-house publishing professionals, but from the experienced voices of those who are willing to share what they have learned in order to encourage others in their profession to try their hand.

Reviewed by Dr Susan Boyce
Member of *Synergy* board

Start with the Youngest: the Library for Nursery and Infant Children
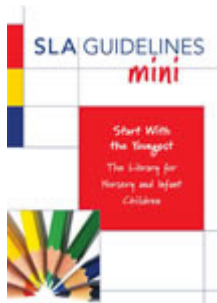Woods, Dawn (2009)
Series: SLA Guidelines *Mini*
Great Britain: School Library Association
 ISBN: 9781903446515
30 pages

As a new title in the UK School Library Association's 'mini' Guideline series, this slim A4 hand-book focuses on library services for pre-Prep to Year Two school children. It offers succinct, but persuasive, coverage of this topic in no more than thirty pages. Five brief 'chapters' serve as topical headings specifically directed at emphasizing the value of library services for the very young with a helpful 'how-to' outline for the establishment of such services. Practical information and advice about staffing, the scope of resources, selection policy and use of the library are sufficiently detailed and comprehensive in their coverage so that this mini-guideline appears to serve its purpose most satisfactorily. Although the author includes computers, audio-visual resources, games and toys as equally valuable resources as books, she conveys the importance of the printed word, in book form, as a prime artifact in the process of developing language, literacy and communication skills.

Throughout the text numerous references to authoritative reports, studies and websites relate to issues concerned with the development of learning in young children, the early years of schooling and the twin goals of literacy achievement and reading. Whilst many of the references specifically relate to the UK curriculum and context, others refer to international studies intended for more universal application. Importantly, all confirm the value of the library in the processes of early learning, and its power to impact more widely upon family and community groups. Two case studies usefully illustrate the thrust of the guideline, and several appendices recommend professional online and material resources to further support the initial chapters. So, where a school or institution has neither a librarian nor a library, is this mini-guide sufficiently informative to enable staff to set about establishing a library of their own? Well, why not? In times when teacher-librarians seem to be an increasingly scarce commodity, guides such as this provide invaluable links to professional library associations who are willing to share their expertise and influence.

Reviewed by Dr Susan Boyce
Member of the *Synergy* board

Open The Door To Inquiry: A Planning Tool for Teacher-Librarians and Teachers in Primary Schools
Hunter, Kaye (2009)
Includes CD and Poster
Victoria: School Library Association of Victoria
ISBN: 9780909978365
$60.00

This publication is directed at both teachers in classrooms and teachers in the library. It is based on a solid pedagogical framework of how children learn best and shows how inquiry-based learning sits within the framework of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards.

This resource reminds the reader of the importance of classroom teachers and teacher librarians working together to plan and implement inquiry-based units. It highlights the importance of whole school planning and gives schools the resources to ensure that this is made as easy as possible.

The WE SOLVE IT cycle of inquiry is explained in a clear and direct way, breaking it into two parts – what the learner will do and what the teachers will do.Each step in the process is clearly outlined with links being provided to other relevant resources.

Open the Door to Inquiry has been very thoughtfully produced, with the removable cover folding out to form a poster and the accompanying CD providing all the resources needed to plan, document, display and promote the students' learning. It even has the WE SOLVE IT song! The use of quotes from a variety of sources ranging from A.A. Milne to Chinese proverbs, teamed with a clear and uncluttered layout, ensures that the book is interesting and easy to use.

Open the Door to Inquiry is a valuable and informative resource for both schools using inquiry based learning and those hoping to move in that direction.

Reviewed by Catherine Farrell
Teacher-Librarian
Grange Hill Library
Genazzano FCJ College