Online offerings from the SLV

By Heath Graham

The State Library of Victoria has recently redeveloped two major websites of special interest to a school audience: the young readers' website 'Inside a Dog' and the research skills and history site 'Ergo'.

Inside a Dog http://www.insideadog.com.au/

'Inside a Dog' was founded in 2006 as a project of the Centre for Youth Literature http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/learn/centre-youth-literature to promote young adult literature, highlighting Australian writers and their work, alongside the best of the international scene. The site has, since that time, established a strong reputation both nationally and internationally in the field. 'Inside a Dog' has a strong user base amongst teenage readers, who submit reviews of books they have read and also continues to host the established news blog http://www.insideadog.com.au/blog/Blog.

At the helm is the new CYL Program Coordinator Adele Walsh. The equally popular Writer in Residence http://www.insideadog.com.au/blog/Residence feature, which allows readers to interact and join in a discussion with a new YA author every month, is also to be found on the site.

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The Inky Awards http://www.insideadog.com.au/page/inkys are annual, reader-voted awards that allow young people to vote for their favourite local and overseas book. Linked to this award is the Inkys Creative Reading Prize, awarded to students for a creative response to literature. The new version of the 'Inside a Dog' site adds greater functionality to help readers to share what they enjoy and enable them to discover new reading experiences.

One major new feature of the site is the addition of book clubs http://www.insideadog.com.au/book-clubs/all. Fans of a particular author, genre, or series can now start a club and find other like-minded readers to share ideas, post reviews, or show off their fan art. Book clubs can be either open membership, allowing any of the site's users from around the world to join and contribute, or closed, requiring permission from the club's creator to join. Closed book clubs can provide a safe environment for students to interact online. Forums http://www.insideadog.com.au/forums/forums allow a larger discussion of ideas around YA literature.

Each site member has their own page http://www.insideadog.com.au/members, listing reviews they have written, their favourite and recommended books, and the book clubs they are members of. Member information is available only to registered site users.

In addition to individual pages for members, each book reviewed on the site has its own page http://www.insideadog.com.au/books. Book pages list all reviews of the book, along with any additional content supplied by publishers, including sample chapters, book trailers, and audio snippets. Further reading suggestions can be found by following genre links or by seeing what other books have been read by other users who have read this book.

Recognising the popularity of the site with educators, the revamped site has curriculum-linked teaching resources http://www.insideadog.com.au/teachers. This area of the site offers supporting materials for the use of book clubs in the classroom, guidance on writing book reviews, and assistance with exploring the use of new media to support creative responses to literature. It also includes information for teachers on copyright and using online resources in the classroom.

In less than a month since the re-launch, 'Inside a Dog' has added nearly 300 new book reviews, and clocked up 800 members. As the size of this community grows, the site will continue to become a more powerful and useful resource for young readers, teachers and teacher-librarians.

Ergo http://ergo.slv.vic.gov.au/

Ergo is a web presence initiated to provide greater online access to the services, collections and information at the State Library of Victoria. Designed for secondary students and their teachers, Ergo not only teaches students research skills but also provides an entry point to the vast range of resources at the Library.

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The **Learn skills** http://ergo.slv.vic.gov.au/learn-skills section of the site is based on the SLAV's 'six steps to research' as featured on the *Making a Difference* CD-ROM. This section provides simple step-by-step tips and advice on critical literacy skills from locating information and assessing sources to compiling bibliographies. The section also covers essay writing and study tips.

The **Explore history** http://ergo.slv.vic.gov.au/explore-history section showcases original documents, photographs, maps, newspapers and other items in the State Library of Victoria's collection. This section is arranged thematically and is aligned with the Victorian Essential Learning Standards. Topics covered include crime, founding of Melbourne, colonial Victoria, exploration, the gold rush, rights, and Victoria in the world wars.

Ergo's redesign has been more of an evolution than a revolution, focusing on upgrading the structure and features while retaining the basic site design. Changes have included viewing images, tagging, and external links.

A major focus of the redevelopment has been making digitised images of resources more readily available. The Explore History section contains over 800 digitised resources from the SLV collection, including diaries, newspapers, photographs and original artwork. Each image has a page containing a brief description, full bibliographic reference and a zoom feature to allow close-up viewing. Images may also be printed for educational use. Many images have been rescanned at a higher resolution, and newspaper extracts now include the full page the article appeared on to provide historical context.

Tagging provides a new way to locate and cross-reference information within Ergo. Tags can draw out common themes and ideas explored across multiple sections, such as women's issues, indigenous Victorians, economics, and technology.

External links allow Ergo to become a launching point as much as a destination. Curated links from reputable sources provide supplementary information, further reading or additional depth. Sites referred to include the Australian Dictionary of Biography, Screen Online, Trove, the Public Records Office, and various university departments. There are also links to other relevant resources on the SLV website, such as the La Trobe Journal, exhibition material and further digitised content.

Ergo and Inside a Dog are rich resources for use in the classroom and beyond, produced by the Learning Services team at the State Library of Victoria. The Library runs many education programs, both onsite at the Library and offsite across Victoria, for students, teachers and the public. For more details about learning at the Library, please visit this site < http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/learn/>.

Heath Graham is the Learning Programs Officer - Online Education at the State Library of Victoria (SLV). He can be contacted at hgraham@slv.vic.gov.au.