What is Summer Reading Club?

Libraries are important partners in efforts to help children sustain learning during the summer months by offering programs that continue content and skill learning and provide motivation to read.¹ The Summer Reading Club (SRC) is a national reading program coordinated and delivered by State Library of Queensland (SLQ) in partnership with the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and state and territory public libraries. The SRC runs annually during the December / January summer holidays and is made available directly to children on-line and onsite through public libraries across Australia.

The SRC supports continued multi-literacy development in children and young people, including reading, writing, creative arts and multi-media technology skills. The SRC provides themed content and resources to enable parents, library staff and others to support the local engagement of children in an enjoyable reading program during their break from school.

How does it work?

The funding contributions of ALIA, SLQ and program sponsors enable the annual creation and delivery of a themed Summer Reading program for use by public libraries. Libraries register their participation to receive access to program materials and ongoing support in the delivery of their Summer Reading Club programs. During the summer months children and parents participate in Summer Reading Club programming across Australia, both online and in library spaces.

Engagement with libraries is central to the Summer Reading Club program.

Development of program materials at a national scale keeps library participation costs to a minimum while allowing flexibility to deliver SRC programming that is responsive to local patron needs.

Participation in the Summer Reading Club

Participation in the Summer Reading Club allows children and young people the opportunity to:

Engage
with libraries and library collections

Discover
and develop knowledge, understanding and skills related to the annual SRC theme

Enjoy
reading books and participating in activities that inspire a love of reading, literature and the library habit.

**Engage**
50% of Australian Public Library branches registered for the 2013 Summer Reading Club

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of library branches participating 2013*</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>TAS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100% of 9 branches</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>71% of 376 branches</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>80% of 376 branches</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>65% of 339 branches</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>24% of 33 branches</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>63% of 128 branches</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5% of 232 branches</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total branches per state reported by ALIA contacts via email in 2013

AUSLIB Marketing Guide to Libraries reports that there are 530 public library services in Australia. Figures reported by ALIA state representatives indicate there are 1425 library branches in operation. This year 264 library services registered 864 library branches.

In 2012 all 21 Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKC) in Queensland registered and received SRC materials. One IKC returned survey data.

Additional inquiries about the program were also received from the CAV Learning Centre in Alotau, Papua New Guinea and from St. George’s School in Duisburg, Germany.

The CAV Learning Centre registered their participation in the program and downloaded the SRC activity booklets from the website.

Rachel Lord, the school librarian at St. George’s School Duisburg, posted the following inquiry:

*I work as a School Librarian in Germany and am writing a Masters paper in Connected Learning and currently doing an assignment on setting up a learning resource using cyber learning to support it. I have just spent an hour or so pouring over your amazing Summer Reading Club website from 2012-13 and very much enjoyed it. Could I use some of the resources and links from your website. Thank you for any help you can offer.*

Rachel Lord, the school librarian at St. George’s School Duisburg, posted the following inquiry:

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**Enjoy**

Xavier Cooper, 9 NSW
34,576 children registered in the program; 4,699 registered online

This is the actual count based on the data returned from 46% of libraries.

Extrapolating this data to a 100% return estimates registration numbers would be closer to 75,000. (If 46% = 34,576 then using calculation: children registered divided by percent reported x 100 = 75,556). This demonstrates that significant numbers of children are engaging in Summer Reading Club programming and with libraries across the country during the summer months.

Anecdotal and statistical information collected through online and paper based registration and evaluation forms, and Google website analytics, have also been used in the compilation of this report.

It is fair to estimate that the reach of this program is far greater than we have been able to measure.
Discover

Participation from 17 Australian authors and illustrators

Blogs, story writing starters, code breaking activities, Choose Your Own Adventure, colouring in sheets and an array of other activities were contributed to the themed website this year. The favourite activity was the Book Rave.

In 2013, $5,550 was spent on contracting SRC creative contributors. The SRC is a great way for new and current authors and illustrators to engage with the Australian market. It would be worth exploring further the cross promotional benefits of authors and illustrators contributing their creative talents to the SRC.

531 theme specific activities were delivered in libraries, encouraging children and young people to develop knowledge, understanding and skills related to the theme of Investigation.

Libraries across the country reported they were excited to program their Summer Reading Clubs to the theme of Investigation. Children also reported they enjoyed learning new things at their libraries.

The following example is representative of how libraries helped their young patrons engage with the 2013 theme:

We are holding a spy workshop with things like investigating fingerprints, cracking codes, invisible ink and making disguises.

We have a Forensic Scientist coming in to talk to the kids (ages 8+) about how they use forensics to investigate crimes.

And we also have a “Spot That” display in our display cabinet where children can enter a competition by finding things in our display (for example, 5 things that are red, an ancient wonder, something that purrs etc). The entrants will go in the running to win a prize pack. SA libraries are also participating in a geocaching activity, and lots of our libraries have caches hidden somewhere inside and children have to follow the co-ordinates and use the clues to work out where the caches are hidden.

I think it’s a great theme!
Sarah Micke, Library Programs Officer (City of Holdfast Bay, SA)

Note: The average budget as reported by libraries in 2013 to deliver SRC programming is $783.00.

Enjoy

An estimated 13,328 website visits and 91,124 page views on the Summer Reading Club website (dashboard, program site, themed site), www.summerreadingclub.org.au

Website visits and page views are two measures that are tracked by Summer Reading Club Google Analytics profile.

A visit is defined as any activity on the site during a 30 minute period (session). A visit is ended after 30 minutes of inactivity.

Engagement with the site is recorded as page views. Page views are the number of times a page is viewed. All traffic is captured.
This year, significant structural changes were made to the website, which may explain the slight drop in visits and page views from 2012 to 2013. Over time, it is expected that the enhancements made to the site will lead to increased website traffic.

Figure 2. represents the total visits and page views to the Summer Reading Club site since 2011.

### An estimated 234,468 books were read across Australia.

This is the actual count based on the data returned from 46% of library services. We don’t know how many library branches return data to their library services. If we estimated the data based on a 100% return estimates the actual books read tally may be closer to 509,000.

This demonstrates that recreational reading is occurring across the country during the summer months supporting one fundamental driver for delivering SRCs in public libraries; sustained reading and ongoing literacy development during the summer months.

### Distribution of 848 SRC merchandise kits to libraries

Outsourcing the packing and distribution of the SRC Merchandise Kits was a great success. Money generated from the sale of the kits offsets costs for merchandise and postage.

### 472 responses to online competitions were received

The creation of the Book Raves, Competitions and Blogs tabs generated an increase of 38% to the online activities on the SRC Themed site.

A 59% increase in Book Rave submissions indicates that enhancements to the template to increase usability and access to the content were effective.

### 203 prize packs were distributed to participants entering online competitions.

This year all children who submitted a book rave or picture to the SRC online gallery received a book, a SRC bookmark, SRC stickers and a SRC tattoo.

The generosity of our sponsors also facilitated the delivery of:

- 8 iPods (1 per state) for registering online
- 33 online subscriptions to Literacy Planet
- 2 subscriptions each to online magazines; DMAG, Mania, Girl Power and Little Angel
- 16 signed copies of Julie Fison’s Hazard River series
- Multiple Mystery Book prize packs (packs included: 1-2 age appropriate books, DMAG, comic book, SRC stickers, SRC tattoo, SRC bookmark, SRC wristband)

### 2013 Statistics

When evaluating the annual growth of the Summer Reading Club, it is important to keep in mind that the data sets have changed over time. The 2013 Summer Reading Club statistics are based on information received from 46% of participating library services.

The data collected this year indicates a statistically insignificant decrease in registrations by libraries and children, which may be attributed to:

- The amalgamation or separation of library services during or prior to the SRC
- Changes in participation; Library services who reported last year may not be the same services participating or reporting in 2013
- Inability to capture 100% of all SRC activity across the country
- Changes to website
- More vigilant processes used during registration periods to avoid duplication
- More vigilant processes used in the analysis of data
- Adverse weather; impacting traffic to libraries and participation in onsite SRC programs
- Loss of Google Analytics Capture
- Appeal of 2013 theme

However, overall data continues to validate the merit of a national Summer Reading program. This report is provided to highlight key achievements and note recommendations for improvements in future iterations of the Summer Reading Club.

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The SRC has a website that you can win lots of prizes and play loads of awesome games! It’s heaps of fun! PS I think the website is very well structured and everything is really easy to find.

Sahla Hansen, 12 QLD
2013 concludes the Summer Reading Club’s third year as a national program.

Expenditure

As growth continues on a national level, the cost to produce and distribute merchandising to meet demand will impact on the budget.

Return of program participation data from libraries is essential to analysing growth and reach of the SRC. Historically return rates have been low.

Improved data collection and additional incentives to libraries may facilitate higher return of surveys.

National registrations from libraries dropped in 2013.

A review of library registration data will assist in determining which new libraries to invite to participate in the Summer Reading Club.

Data continues to demonstrate that the SRC is an effective program for engaging with children.

Participation in the Summer Reading Club, both online and in libraries reflects positive growth.

Note: The number of children participating in the Summer Reading Club is probably much higher.

The selection of books chosen were wonderful.
I cannot thank you enough.

Paula Thomson, Mackay mother of 4 SRC participants
Books read
Data collected through surveys to libraries and children continues to demonstrate that the SRC is effectively encouraging reading during the summer holidays. Children and young people have expressed their enjoyment of reading as a result of their participation in the Summer Reading Club.

Note: Actual number of books being read during the Summer Reading Club is probably much higher.

Books Read (estimated)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>Nat’l</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>277,000</td>
<td>287,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>252,000</td>
<td>252,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>227,000</td>
<td>227,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>202,000</td>
<td>202,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>177,000</td>
<td>177,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>152,000</td>
<td>152,000</td>
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Online participation
Data reflects positive trends in online participation, suggesting that activities on the site are reaching the targeted audience.

Continued enhancements to the SRC themed site are critical to maintain its relevance to children and young people accessing the site.

Libraries Branches Registered in the SRC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>Nat’l</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>277</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
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<td>177</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>152</td>
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Budget
The 2013 Summer Reading Club budget was $80,000.
Expenditure for the 2013 iteration of the SRC totalled $80,000, not including SLQ operational costs. The actual outlay to deliver the Summer Reading Club is approximately $164,000 (including a dedicated salary).

2013 SRC Budget

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Contribution Type</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>ALIA</td>
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<tr>
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<td>$111,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALIA</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
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</table>

ALIA Breakdown 2013
This contribution is provided by participating states across the country.

I found the organisation of the SRC great this year. It was really helpful getting the theme and images earlier than in the past, so we can begin to plan.

Sarah Lavelle, Hobsons Bay Libraries, VIC
Monies derived from the sale of Merchandise Kits are used to offset merchandise production, distribution and postage and handling.

In 2013, 56% of the SRC budget was allocated to the production of merchandise and distribution costs, including postage and handling.

Libraries were asked to contribute $49.50 (GST inclusive) per merchandise kit required for their program. The actual cost price per kit was $51.46 (GST inclusive) + postage. Although it is intended to keep costs to libraries at a minimum, the price per kit will be assessed annually to be inclusive of all costs associated with production and distribution.

In 2013, budget was also expended on:
- Contractors fees (Creative Contributions to SRC Themed Website)
- Website development
- Graphic design
- Development of SRC Activity Booklets
- Prize mail out

SRC Improvements 2013

Early release of programming theme and marketing materials

In response to feedback from public libraries, the 2013 program theme was planned and released earlier. The theme Investigation was announced in April 2013.

The annual suite of themed templates and graphics used by libraries to support and market their programs were available for download by September 2013.

Libraries expressed their appreciation for the earlier access to these materials.

Development of national Summer Reading Club logo

This year a national logo was developed to help establish an ongoing identity for the Summer Reading Club.

Libraries are encouraged to use the logo to promote their Summer Reading Club programs, independent of the annual theme.

Development of Summer Reading Club Program website

The Summer Reading Club website now has two separate components to cater to the different audiences accessing the site:
1. The program information portal; summerreadingclub.org.au/program-portal/
   Housing information relating to libraries and organisations delivering summer reading clubs.
2. The Club or themed activity site; summerreadingclub.org.au/welcome/
   An interactive component of the SRC website for children and young people. This site is updated each year in alignment with the annual theme.

Online registration for Libraries

This year, libraries registered online via the new Summer Reading Club program information site. Libraries were also given the option to register for 2014 and 2015 helping the SRC establish a database of registered libraries. This process will continue to be refined in ongoing iterations of the SRC.

This was our first year participating and the quality of the material supplied was excellent. The website is well produced and great for the kids to use.

Cathy Puzey, Mandurah Library, WA
Outsourced packing and distribution of Merchandise Kits

To improve delivery of merchandise kits to libraries, a printing company with distribution capabilities was engaged to print and distribute the 2013 Merchandise Kits.

Merchandise kits were mailed out in two lots due to the delayed receipt of a merchandise item for inclusion in the kits. The use of a distribution company helped to mitigate the delay in receipt of materials. This decision proved to be highly efficient and allowed better allocation of staff time in delivery and support of SRC.

Libraries received all Merchandise materials by mid-November.

SRC Recommendations 2014

To provide resources and value to public libraries across Australia and their young patrons, the SRC is committed to a process of continuous improvement which involves evaluating feedback from all sources.

In 2014 enhancements to the Summer Reading Club program will be based on these recommendations:

- Increase participation of public library services not presently registered by working with State and Public Library ALIA representatives to encourage participation in the program.
- Simplify end of program data collection process to increase program participation data return from all registered library branches.
- Establish a Google Analytics measurement plan to ensure collection of accurate data. Monitor website statistics and performance closely to verify Google Analytics plan is executed.
- Research best practice and cost of website development to ensure the Summer Reading Club theme site remains current and engaging to children and young people.
- Improve facilitation for sharing programming ideas and resources between libraries.
- Outsource the packing and distribution of SRC Merchandise Kits. Provide an option for libraries to purchase individual quantities of merchandise in addition to their kits to allow greater flexibility in their libraries.
- Continue to improve delivery timelines to libraries, with the goal for all materials to be distributed by 31 October 2014.
- ALIA to explore a sponsorship model for the SRC to engage the support of corporate and educational organisations to fund delivery, prizes and website development.
- Review relationships with current sponsors for opportunities to increase their donation/support on an annual basis.

Our team is excited and inspired, and we have an excellent platform of activities upon which to base our own summer reading program.

Louise Bauer, Sunshine Coast Libraries, QLD