

# Genazzano Library at a distance

By Michelle Frazzetto, Rose Richiuti and Julia Petricevic

It feels as distant as a dream now, but towards the end of Term 1, our school made the decision to transition to a Learning at a Distance program, with all teaching for Term 2 intended to be delivered online. For our library team, we had two challenges – how to continue to deliver our reading programs online and also how to plan and program LitFest, our two-week literature festival, that was scheduled for the end of Term 2?

Genazzano FCJ College is an Early Learning to Year 12 Catholic school for girls in Kew. We are very fortunate to have a Bring your own device (BYOD) program in place, so every student had a laptop or could be provided with a laptop. In addition, our school has had a Learning Management System (LMS) in place for the last several years, making the transition to online learning easier. Still, the transition to online learning involved continual changes and significant upskilling to use different online platforms and technologies to deliver our programs.

## Moving programs online

### ROAD: wide-reading program Year 5 to Year 10

ROAD (Reading Opens All Doors) is a wide-reading program for students in Year 5 to Year 10. Once a fortnight they come to the library for book recommendations and promotion, browsing, borrowing and reading. During our Learning at a Distance program, we continued to run these classes, using Zoom and our school's LMS.

We were fortunate in that we were already very active in engaging students in this online platform. Each year level had a group page to link to relevant resources and enable a blog chat. Each student had a personal eportfolio to record what they read, what they wanted to read and reflect on their reading.

Students were still able to share peer recommendations via Zoom. Using Zoom required training in how to use the platform, as well as learning how to best engage the students on the fly – Zoom meetings were limited to 20 minutes at



Ursula Dubosarsky addresses students who were short-listed for the short story competition.

most and the use of breakout rooms was effective in helping to facilitate more discussion. Students were also encouraged to post reviews through the class page and regularly reminded to update their ePortfolio, therefore providing a voice to those less inclined to share with a larger group.

Furthermore, we were able to use Zoom to continue to run our Book Clubs – this proved to be very popular with the students. They seemed to really open up a lot more freely and appreciated being able to connect and chat about books with a like-minded group of passionate readers.

Traditionally, through ROAD, different book genres or themes are presented to students and they are encouraged to borrow featured books. We had to think creatively about how to still achieve this aim. We

were still able to present different genres and themes throughout the sessions using the screen sharing and whiteboard function of Zoom, as well as using tools such as Kahoot, PowerPoint or Google Slides to engage students. We ensured any promoted books were available though SORA, our ebook and audiobook borrowing platform.

In order to avoid ‘Zoom fatigue’, we developed a task that allowed students to work independently. We recorded videos using Screencastify, demonstrating how to use our online subscription research databases, such as Britannica, World Book and EBSCO. These videos were paired with a checklist, requiring students to indicate if they watched the demonstration video, if they had used the database before, what they found useful and decide at what point

during the research process they would use the database.

**Information Literacy: Prep to Year 4**

Like the rest of the classroom curriculum, specialist classes were to keep running via our Learning at a Distance program. The challenge then became how could we continue to engage our younger students in regular reading for pleasure routines as well as providing them with alternatives for accessing stories and relevant and engaging online resources.

The details of each lesson, which included Learning Intentions, Success Criteria and Activities were posted daily on the class homepage and linked to their Info Lit subject page. Online resources such as Story Box Library and Kids News were helpful in



Guess the title of these YA Books! (Year 8-10)  
Write your answer next to the emoji pictures.

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If you need some hints, the books' authors are listed here in no particular order; Lynette Noni, Mark Haddon, Gloria Chao, LJ Smith, Truman Capote, William Golding, Jenny Han, John Green, Shakespeare, M.R Carey, Jandy Nelson, Lisa Fuller, Jennifer Niven, Alice Oseman, Harper Lee.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ CLASS: \_\_\_\_\_

allowing students to read and listen to age-appropriate stories and information.

### **LitFest: online and back at school**

At the end of Term 2, our school celebrates LitFest, a two week celebration of books and reading, involving all students from Prep to Year 12 in workshops, performances and special events. We had to adjust our expectations for what we could deliver and try to make the most of what we could offer. Special events that required gatherings of groups of people were cancelled, as were performances that had been booked, and when we returned to school no outside visitors were allowed on campus.

Our Literature Festival usually involves various competitions that students can enter when physically in the library. While the competitions devised for this year were designed to be delivered completely online, they were easily adapted to hard copy forms when we were back on site.

### **Reading Challenges**

Students across all year levels were encouraged to participate in a reading challenge called Book Bingo. This was adapted from a previous competition, Game of Loans, where students complete a range of reading activities, this time aiming to complete challenges in rows of five, like Bingo. The game had two versions, one slightly smaller for younger students – Tic Tac Toe Read. This provided a fun incentive for students to read over the learning at a distance period. Students could email completed forms to the library, then when we returned to school, they could complete a paper copy.

### **Short story competitions**

Students in Year 4 to Year 10 were encouraged to enter the short story competition. Entries were to be submitted by

email. It was interesting to see how the pandemic crept into some of the students' writing; this is a quote from a Year 5 student's story: "For the last wish, I killed all of the viruses, so everyone can live happily ever after and see their loved ones again".

Traditionally, students who submitted an entry were shortlisted and invited to our showpiece event, the LitFest Dinner. This year, we invited the current Australian Children's Laureate, Ursula Dubosarsky, to deliver a short speech and announce the winners of the short story competition – via Zoom! This was organised through her speaking representative, The Children's Bookshop.

We invited the short-listed students to the library to watch together on our big screen, but also gave them the option to tune in via the Zoom link if they preferred. It was a real boon to have Ursula speak, considering she lives in Sydney and otherwise would have been unavailable to us.

She was fantastic. She spoke clearly and passionately about writing and reading and the importance of libraries, and managed to engage her audience in this unusual situation.

### **Take a look at my reading nook**

Students were encouraged to take a photo of their special reading space during lockdown. If they did not have one, they were encouraged to create one. Photos were emailed to the library and placed on display. This provided a lovely connection for coming back to school. It was heartwarming to see students scanning the display board for their photo, and to see staff and students stopping to admire the display.

### **Mystery Reader**

Students were given the challenge of listening to mystery staff members reading

an excerpt from a book. They were then asked to guess who they thought the reader would be. This competition catered for students from P-12.

### **Emoji Pictionary**

Emoji pictionary sheets were developed for different age groups and were very much enjoyed – students had to look at the emojis and guess what book title they referred to. A version for staff proved popular too!

### **Where in Genazzano is the Green Sheep?**

Students were presented with a number of riddles to unravel and guess where on campus the Green Sheep had been.

### **Fairytales Word Find**

An old time favourite proved popular with even the senior girls.

### **Prefect Storytime**

Earlier in the term, we had recorded our Head of Junior School reading Chicken Divas for National Simultaneous Storytime and shared it on our College LMS. From that success, we decided to organise a daily story for LitFest. The College prefects took turns reading a picture book story during lunchtime in our Junior School library. We filmed it, and posted it on our LMS so it could be enjoyed by all staff, students and parents. It was a really lovely way to connect with our community and share the joy of reading stories out loud.

### **Zoom workshops with Nova Weetman**

All students in Year 7 and 8 participated in a Zoom workshop with author, Nova Weetman. She was fantastic – so engaging, interactive and warm – and was able to corral the end of term energy into a productive workshop. This workshop was organised

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*longer hours to help so I guess I miss her company and her cheerful mood.*

*Literally just going out of the house ANYWHERE – I have a lot of energy so I like going places and not going anywhere is hard for me.*

*Online school is definitely not for me as I just can't concentrate at home and my eyes are sore from looking at a screen all day.*

I gave them about 20 minutes to complete this task before getting them back online to do the second part. This is where Padlet came in. Students shared what books they have read or audio books they have listened to over the holidays. They put their books on this sharing platform for the class to see and it made a great discussion focal point.

I was able to ask students to tell me more about the books, what they liked about them, whether they liked the book better than the movie, and so on. Students continued to add books/audiobooks they have read/listened to onto their class Padlet page until physical classes resumed. It's also been a place for them to record their books for the reading challenge without having access to their journals which is at school.

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**I've always wanted to make the reading program more 'holistic' rather than just one dimensional so this was a great opportunity.**

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I uploaded instructions and documents into a folder called 'Reading Lesson' in the files of each class's general page. I shared my screen to show students how to access these documents and how to create a post on Padlet. I stayed online throughout the allocated class time in case students had



questions to ask me either through the 'chat' function or verbally with their microphone on.

One student posted on Padlet how much he loved Fleur Ferris's book *Found* and I shared that with her on Twitter and she was thrilled to have a boy rate her book 5/5! I then shared Fleur's response with the student and he in turn was thrilled! It's wonderful when books and reading connect you with people and make people happy!

So that basically wrapped up my first fortnight of online reading lessons, as I plan for the next round which will look at the Benefits of Reading and working with students to create a mind map of the benefits as they see them. While we need to adapt to changes and current situation, I'm looking forward to delivering the rest of my reading lessons face to face and being able to see the whole class reading silently in front of me. It's such a beautiful sight!

*Reina Phung is a teacher-librarian at Ivanhoe Grammar School.*

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through Booked Out Speakers Agency. It required a lot of set up, to allow a non-school email address into our Zoom meeting, and helping teachers connect their laptops to the whiteboard screens via an HDMI cable – but it was well worth it. Afterwards, students raced to the library to borrow Nova's books, or gleefully declared they were going to continue to develop their stories over the holidays.

## Moving forward

Transitioning to Learning at a Distance and then back to school was challenging, but our library team learnt valuable skills and had opportunities to use online technology to do things in different ways. We will continue to record instructional videos, expand the scope of visiting authors via Zoom and use our school's Learning Management System to help students connect and reflect on their reading.

To return to the short story from one of our Year 5 students, and to finish with this sweet pearl of wisdom, "I woke up and found that it was a dream, but I believe that as long as everyone tries hard, we can make anything come true. Everything is possible".

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Go to <https://slav.wildapricot.org/event-3847191>