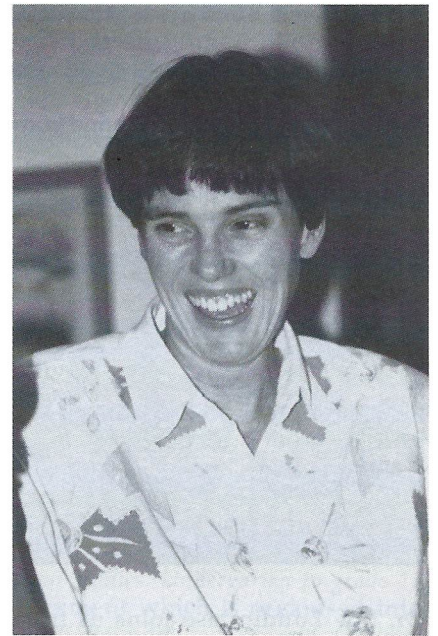


Profile

Karen Bonanno

If one had to find a teacher librarian with a multi-schizophrenic career history then look no further than the Queensland kid from the bush, Karen Bonanno. Karen was one of the first graduates from the Griffith University School of Humanities and Mount Gravatt Teachers' College in 1978. She found that a degree with a major in Film and TV studies and a minor in Italian were ample qualifications for a period of unemployment in the job market of that time. Undeterred, by day she sought work opportunities and by night studied librarianship at the Queensland Institute of Technology – now the Queensland University of Technology.



Karen Bonanno

In 1979 an Agricultural College was opened at Dalby in South Western Queensland, and by March Karen had obtained a position there as a Library/Media Officer on the strength of her 3 months library studies and the degree major in Film and TV studies. In quick succession she began her trek back to Central Queensland via Rockhampton Girls' Grammar and Mackay North State High School.

We are told she made three applications to be trained as a teacher librarian and rumour has it that she agreed to move to Dysart on the condition the region would release her to go on the full time course being offered at that time. If this is not an apocryphal story, then the 6 monthly interviews over the period – and the advocacy in between – that led to her becoming a *proper* teacher librarian would make interesting reading, considering the personalities of the Regional Inspector, the Principal and Karen herself.

She returned to Dysart a fully fledged teacher librarian, met a fellow called Sam Bonanno and in 1984 assumed added responsibilities as Acting Deputy Principal. Still with itchy feet and a burning desire to influence the quality of education, Karen accepted a position as Head of Resources at Sunnybank High School in Brisbane. Sadly, the kid from the bush decided that Brisbane

was not for her – her health and heart belonged in Central Queensland.

After a time as teacher librarian at Kingaroy SHS, she married Sam at the end of 1988 and at last found a use for that degree minor in Italian. Sam's work took them to the mining community of Blackwater in Central Queensland where Karen took a position as teacher librarian at the high school.

Karen's real influence on the profession of teacher librarianship began in 1990 when she became Vice President of the School Library Association of Queensland (SLAQ) and since then has been deeply involved in every aspect of the Association in Queensland and at a national level. She has held positions as President of SLAQ, Vice President, President and past-President of the Australian School Library Association (ASLA). Demonstrating her hands on approach to all facets of the Association she has been Project Officer for a number of ASLA publications one of which, the CDROM *Teaching Information Skills*, won a Commendation for Professional Development awarded by the International Association of School Librarianship. She has also been the ASLA Web site manager since 1997. The quality of the ASLA Web site www.asla.org.au is a reflection of her

own Web site www.kb.com.au considered to be exceptionally informative and user-friendly for teacher librarians. She has provided enormous input into state conferences as a sponsor and onto the state, national and international stage as a presenter of visionary and provocative papers. To the basic administration of both Associations she has brought a professional business focus in regard to the structure and framework under which they operate.

In the last few years, always looking for a new challenge, plagued by chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia, Karen has been moving out of the comfort zone of education into the field of alternative health care. She is now a qualified Bowen Therapist and after some soul searching is opening her Bowen Therapy practice in Mackay in April on a part time basis.

Until October, however, we still have her firmly within our grasp as Convenor of the ASLA XVII Conference, an event she is running with the same business rigour as she conducts her own firm of Karen Bonanno & Associates. She is even finding time to present two papers, and who else but Karen would offer one entitled *Battery hen or free-range chooks: challenging the expectations*. A pre-requisite for participants is attendance at the film *Chicken Run*. Her next challenge may be to discover the link between Bowen Therapy and teacher librarianship – one wonders what the title will be for that presentation at ASLA 2003.

Sally Fraser