

Libraries Tasmania's volunteers play a vital role in helping us provide rich and varied programs and services in our communities. The generosity, skills and knowledge they share help to make a difference in the lives of many Tasmanians.

Throughout 2018/2019, Libraries Tasmania's 768 volunteers donated over 60 000 hours of their time to the Tasmanian community. This is an enormous contribution.

Every day, before the changes brought by COVID-19, our volunteers were supporting and extending the services we provide. These services included literacy and numeracy support, helping with school holiday and children's programs, and providing digital technology support. Volunteers were also helping clients access our valuable Tasmanian historical collections through the Tasmanian Archives.

Online volunteering gives volunteers the opportunity to index and transcribe our collections at a time and place that suits them, and this has continued while our physical sites are closed.

In normal circumstances, our Home Library Service volunteer couriers provide a much-loved service, delivering books and library items to community members who are unable to visit our libraries due to health or mobility issues. The support this service provides is deeply appreciated by our members and provides a much-needed service for people who are housebound, helping to support their independence.

Libraries Tasmania volunteers come from all ages, backgrounds and abilities, and each volunteer offers a unique and individual contribution to our organisation. Although we are unable to benefit from in-person volunteering in our libraries while our physical spaces are closed to the public, the contribution of our volunteers will again be vital once libraries can reopen.

Volunteering is a family affair for Mandi and Ian. Soon after they retired, the couple began volunteering at their local library because of their love of books and reading, each getting involved in different roles to match their skill sets and interests.

Mandi started at the IT Help Desk and got involved in the iPad Users' Group. Later, she worked with library staff to help those in the community who needed support with their resumes and general job seeking. This eventually led to Mandi joining the Adult Literacy Program as a volunteer literacy tutor. Mandi says it's such a thrill when someone she has helped with their resume, finds a job.

"I feel like I have made a significant difference to that person's life. It's the reason I volunteer".

Ian began his volunteering as a numeracy tutor, later teaching classes in financial literacy, having worked for over 30 years in the banking and finance sector.

"I want to help those who need it to gain an understanding of how they can control their finances and not have their finances control them."

Ian is keen to work with high schools to enable young people to get off to a good financial start, and is working on a program with the Kingston Library and students at Kingston High School to do just that.

During National Volunteer Week, Libraries Tasmania is looking forward to recognising the collective commitment and achievements of our wonderful volunteer team.

Although our celebrations will be moved online this year, it doesn't change our level of thanks and appreciation for the contribution of our volunteers, without whom we could not deliver the breadth of programs and services that we do.

If you would like more information about volunteering with Libraries Tasmania, please contact Kim at volunteercoordinator.libraries@education.tas.gov.au