United We Read Radio Story-time

Final Report

Prepared for United Way SA

Dr Heather Anderson

School of Communication, International Studies and Languages

University of South Australia

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The author would like to acknowledge the work of Research Assistant, Charlotte Chalklen, for conducting a preliminary literature review for this project and coordinating the project launch, interviews, media and the focus group. Katrina McLachlan should also be recognised for her work in securing excellent media coverage of this project.
Executive Summary

United We Read is an early intervention program in the disadvantaged suburbs of Elizabeth Park and Elizabeth Downs (Adelaide) that aims to build foundation literacy skills in children aged from birth to 5 years, run by United Way South Australia. The program involves a monthly literacy kit posted to each child, which includes an age appropriate storybook and parent help sheet as well as family fun events focused on building a rapport with parents as well as literacy.

This research project aims to explore how a story-time radio show might add value to the United We Read program, and investigate if such a radio show can further engage children in their love of reading, and assist parents’ involvement, regardless of their own levels of literacy. United Way SA partnered with the University of South Australia (UniSA), to produce a radio show (the United We Read Radio Story-time) that broadcasts readings of the books that coincide with those that have been distributed to the United We Read clients each month. The radio show was broadcast on Internet radio station UniCast (unicast.com.au) and community radio station PBA-FM, and nine families currently registered with the United We Read program were recruited to participate in the research program and provide feedback on the radio story-time show.

Preliminary findings from this pilot research project demonstrate that radio can be used to assist the enhancement of children’s experiences of an early intervention book-reading program, however, the medium is more successful with children over the age of three. It also appears that radio can also assist to engage parents' involvement, on a number of levels. Parents who struggle with reading aloud received direct benefits while others said it created spaces for increased one-on-one reading time with their child.

There is definitely scope for the United We Read Radio Story-time to expand nationally. United Way is a national organisation, and the United We Read book program is offered in a number of States and Territories. Further investigation is needed to consider how a national radio show could be coordinated, potentially through the Community Radio Network, which provides content to community radio stations around the country, or through existing children’s Internet radio stations.
Section One

Background information

1.1 About United We Read

United We Read is an early intervention program in disadvantaged suburbs of Adelaide that aims to build foundation literacy skills in children aged from birth to 5 years, run by United Way South Australia. The program involves a monthly literacy kit posted to each child, which includes an age appropriate storybook and parent help sheet as well as a minimum of six annual family fun events focused on building a rapport with parents as well as literacy. The program was launched in March 2014 and there nearly 400 children registered from the suburbs Elizabeth Park and Elizabeth Downs.

Elizabeth Downs and Elizabeth Park (5113) are North & North East Suburbs of Adelaide, located approximately 25 kms from the CBD, and in the federal electorate of Wakefield. In the 2011 census the population of Elizabeth Downs was 5,142 and the population of Elizabeth Park was 3,305. The median age of the people living in the two suburbs is 33 years of age, and just over 70% were born in Australia. Less than 50% of people living in Elizabeth Downs and Elizabeth Park, over the age of 15 who identify as being in the labour force, are employed full time, with nearly one third working on a part time basis. The two suburbs have an approximate unemployment rate of 14%, which is twice the South Australian average of approximately 7%. They are mainly working class suburbs with only approximately 12.5% identifying as working in professional or managerial positions. In Elizabeth Downs the median household income is $724 per week, while in Elizabeth Park, it is $695 per week. This is significantly lower in both suburbs than the South Australian median of $1073 per week.

United We Read targets the families of 0 – 5 year-old children in the Elizabeth Downs and Elizabeth Park suburbs in Playford. Latest figures from the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) show that almost a third of children in the Playford area (32.6%) are ‘developmentally vulnerable’ in one or more domain, and fare worse than state-wide and national averages in a range of domains including language and communication. When focusing in more closely on the suburbs targeted by the United We Read program, a gap is clear: for example 28.8% of children in Elizabeth Park are developmentally vulnerable in the language domain, compared to 12.5% in the Playford area, 6.8% in South Australia and 6.5%
Australia-wide. National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results for school in the suburbs targeted by the United We Read program have consistently shown to be behind national averages. For example, Elizabeth Downs Primary School performed ‘substantially below’ national comparison figures on all measures (reading, persuasive writing, spelling, grammar and punctuation, and numeracy) in years 3, 5 and 7, while Elizabeth Park Primary School was ‘substantially below’ national averages in all but one area.

1.2 About the United We Read Radio Story-time pilot project

This research project aimed to explore how a story-time radio show might add value to the United We Read program, and investigate if such a radio show can further engage children in their love of reading, and assist parents’ involvement, regardless of their own levels of literacy.

1.3 Importance of project

The association between poor literacy, youth justice, youth mental health, youth unemployment, and teenage pregnancy is widely accepted (Clark & Dugdale 2008; Putnins 1999). United We Read aims to avert these issues in children and young adults by improving school readiness.

1.4 Research Aims

This project expects to gain an understanding of the potential benefits of including radio as part of an early intervention book-reading program, including knowledge about the weaknesses and strengths of the pilot approach.

Research questions

- Can radio assist to engage parents' involvement in an early intervention book reading program?
- Can radio assist to enhance children's experience of an early intervention book reading program?
Section Two

Methodology

2.1 Introduction

United Way partnered with the University of South Australia (UniSA), through Chief Investigator, Dr Heather Anderson and UniCast (an internet radio station hosted at the School of Communication, International Studies and Languages at the UniSA), to produce a radio show that broadcasts readings of the books that coincide with those that have been distributed to the United We Read clients each month. The radio show was broadcast on UniCast (unicast.com.au) and community radio station, PBA-FM.

The research was conducted over a number of stages

1. A sample group of families who are currently registered with the United We Read program was recruited to participate in the research program.
2. Qualitative data was gathered via telephone interviews with one adult family member before the radio series began, to discuss how they currently use the program, what works best, what could be improved, and the major challenges faced with implementing the reading program.
3. The Radio Show was trialled over a ten-week period.
4. Participants were re-interviewed in relation to how the radio program affected their implementation of the reading program (what worked best, how it could be improved, major challenges). A focus group was held to gather this information, followed by individual interviews with participants unable to attend the focus group.

2.2 Stage One – Recruitment and launch

United We Read advertised the pilot project to its members and an information session was held on Thursday November 19, 2015 at the Elizabeth Rise Community Centre, for interested family members. This information session was used not only to introduce the pilot project, but also investigate the most convenient times for broadcast, which were identified as being mid-morning and Sunday afternoons, during the School Term. Those in attendance were taken through the Information Sheet and Consent Form (see Appendices One and Two) and given copies to take home and consider before signing and returning to the Chief Investigator.
While only four families registered at the information session, a final total of nine families participated in the project, one less than the target number. The children ranged in age from 5 months to 8 years, with 2 girls and 7 boys. The United We Read book program usually operates with children from 0 to 5 years of age, when they start school, however, exceptions are made. The 8-year old boy included in the participant sample group has been diagnosed with autism and an auditory processing disorder, and has the reading level of a 5 year old. One family identified as coming from a non-English speaking background.

<table>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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The *United We Read Radio Story-time* was launched at UniSA’s Magill campus on World Radio Day, Saturday February 13. Participant families were invited to attend to meet the University of South Australia staff involved in the project (Chief Investigator Heather Anderson and Research Assistant Charlotte Chalklen) as well as United Way staff, to tour the radio studio and share a picnic lunch. Three of the nine families attended the event.

The children ‘explored’ the radio panel under the guidance of Heather Anderson, speaking into the microphones and listening to themselves (live and recorded) through headphones. Each family was given a book pack, which included the twelve books to be featured in the radio series, a broadcast schedule (see Appendix Three), Information Sheet and Consent Form. If requested, families were also given a set of speakers to use when listening to Internet radio through a mobile phone or computer. The speakers were intended to take the attention away from the electronic device during the radio show, as some parents were concerned that children would be more interested in trying to play with the phone or computer than listen and read the book. The book packs and speakers were delivered to those families who could not attend the launch.
2.3 Stage Two – Initial interviews

Initial interviews were conducted, via telephone, with one member of each participant family group, during the week before the first radio show broadcast. All of the adults interviewed during this research project were the parents of the family, although there was the opportunity for other family members to be involved if they wished. Eight of the nine families were interviewed in the initial stage, with the interviews lasting an average length of 4:45 minutes, ranging between 2:25 and 10:40 minutes. These were semi-structured interviews based around the following questions:

- How families currently implement the United We Read program?
- What works best within the reading program?
- What could be improved with the reading program?
- What are the major challenges faced with implementing the reading program?

The findings of the initial interviews are discussed in Section 3.2.

2.4 Stage Three – Radio show pilot

There were ten episodes produced for the United We Read Radio Story-time, broadcast weekly from the week starting Sunday February 14, 2016 and ending the week starting Sunday April 17. The show broadcast on Sundays at 4pm and Thursdays at 11am on UniCast internet radio, and on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10:05am, on community radio station, PBA-FM which services the suburbs of Elizabeth Downs and Elizabeth Park, targeted by United We Read. Families were sent reminder texts each week, except on Sunday, approximately 30 minutes before broadcast.

The radio shows were produced by Heather Anderson using the facilities at UniCast, at UniSA’s Magill campus, and pre-recorded the week before broadcast. Each program included the same introduction and piece of theme music (“I Love Reading” by Fabulous Lemon Drops), consistent with radio programming conventions. The host, Heather Anderson, would then introduce the show, announce which book was to be read that week, and make a “shout out” to some of the children who were members of the participant families – paying special attention to anyone having a birthday during that particular week. Radio shout-outs are traditional to that media genre, and provide a connection between the listener and radio host, supporting the personal nature of radio broadcasting. At the end of each episode the host
announced the book to be read the following week, and a standard ‘outro’ finished the show. Appendix Four provides a sample script.

Most episodes showcased one book, however, on two occasions there were two books included in the broadcast, as they were shorter stories. The books were read a group of five volunteers, made up of permanent and sessional staff at UniSA. All of the ‘readers’ were female, although attempts were made to source male volunteers. Australian, British and Indian accents were represented in the volunteer cohort. Readers were primed to present the books in a lively manner, and encouraged to visit popular author and United We Read South Australian ambassador Mem Fox’s website, that provides tips on reading aloud for young children. Readers were also advised to read only the words on the pages of the book and to not improvise. This was to acknowledge that adult family members may use the radio program to support their own struggles with literacy.

The books were chosen from the United We Read collection, which are provided through a partnership with Penguin Books Australia. The Copyright Act requires a broadcaster to seek permission from the copyright owner if they wish to broadcast all or most of a literary work (whether during one broadcast, or over a period of time). Therefore, only those for which Penguin Books had broadcasting rights were included in the series. The music broadcast during the shows was covered by the broadcast licenses owned by both PBA-FM and UniCast, and the music used under the book readings was sourced from Creative Commons, which allows artists to distribute music and give permission for use with modification (i.e. edited for use as music bed).

The pilot series attracted positive media attention. The Northern Messenger (Playford Edition) ran a story, including a front-page photograph, in its Wednesday March 9, 2016 edition. Heather Anderson was interviewed on three occasions for ABC Radio during the same week, broadcast on ABC Adelaide’s “Evenings with Peter Goers” (https://soundcloud.com/drheatheranderson/interview-with-dr-heather-anderson-on-evenings-with-peter-goers-abc-adelaide) as well as regional radio stations ABC Riverland and Mallee, and ABC South East SA. UniSA also ran a story on the News section of its website (see Appendix Five for samples of media coverage).
2.5 Stage Four – Final interviews

A focus group was held at the Elizabeth Rise Community Centre, on Monday May 9, 2106 at a time convenient to most participant families, after the radio series pilot was completed. Four families (six adults in total, four mothers and two fathers) attended and the focus group ran for just over 30 minutes. A fifth participant arrived late and was interviewed individually after the focus group was completed. Two final interviews were conducted via telephone, and one was conducted in the participant’s own home. The individual final interviews ran for an average time of 5:52 minutes, ranging in length between 5:24 and 6:13 minutes. Both the focus group and the individual interviews were based around the following questions:

- How often did you get to listen?
- Which timeslot did you listen to mostly?
- Describe the process of getting ready to read? Were you prepared? Was it rushed? Did you child know that it coming up?
- What about the actual time during the story? Where were you sitting/lying? What room were you in?
- Do you think your child enjoyed the radio show? Explain
- Did YOU enjoy the radio show? Explain
- Do you think it added something to the story-time experience?
- What DIDN’T you like about the radio show – be honest!
- Do you have any suggestions for improvements?
- What about the pace of the reading? The way the stories were read?
- What DID you like the most about the show? OR what do you think worked best?
- Do you think it would be worth continuing? Why?

The findings of the focus group and final interviews are discussed in Section 3.3.
Section Three

Findings

3.1 Literature Review

Research supports several ideas underpinning the United We Read program: that reading regularly to infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers sets the foundation for literacy and academic success (eg: Bus, van Ijzendoorn & Pellegrini 1995; Senechal & LeFevre 2002; Walker, Harrison & Shahaeian 2014); that early intervention is important (Reese, Sparks & Leyva 2010 p 97; Foorman et al 2002; Sartore, Devine & Pourliakas 2016); and that one of the most effective ways to support young children’s literacy is via parents (see Brooks-Gunn, Berlin & Fulgni 2000, Senechal & Young 2008).

The benefits of reading to children are widely-accepted and have been extensively studied by educators over the past three decades, with studies confirming, for example, that reading aloud to young children contributes to their later vocabulary (Richman & Colombo 2007), their speech development and overall acquisition of literacy (Saracho & Spodek 2010). A recent analysis of a longitudinal study of Australian children examined data around 3878 children as babies, at age 2-3 and at age 6-7, concluded that cognitive self-regulation (and its associated academic and social benefits) can be enhanced by having more books in the home and reading to a child on a daily basis (Walker, Harrison & Shahaeian 2014).

The importance of family and parental involvement in children’s literacy acquisition has been highlighted by numerous studies. Parents and the home environment play a key role in learning and development and the first five years present a critical window in laying the foundations for school readiness and future learning success (Sartore, Devine & Pourliakas 2016). Parents who read storybooks help children’s language growth, emergent literacy and reading achievement (Saracho & Spodek 2010). A review of 16 family literacy interventions, representing 1,340 families, concluded that parent involvement had a positive effect upon children’s reading acquisition (Senechal & Young 2008, p 880), while earlier studies have found clear evidence of a positive association between parents’ literacy practices at home and children’s later literacy (see Scarborough & Dobrich 1994; Bus, van Ijzendoorn, & Pellegrini 1995). Adding further weight to arguments in favour of family-based literacy programs, a meta-analysis of 20 interventions representing 1,583 families showed that parent involvement has a positive effect on children’s reading acquisition (Darling & Westberg 2004).
Despite the large amount of data backing the notion that parents and family are fundamental to children’s literacy and broader development, experts in the field have highlighted that parents and families are under-tapped resources (Reece, Sparks & Leyva 2010; Brooks-Gunn, Berlin and Fuligni 2000). Furthermore, the quality of adult book reading affects their children’s language and literacy (Reece & Cox 1999) and it is not enough to simply provide access to books, particularly in cases where English is parents’ second language, or where English-speaking parents have low levels of literacy themselves. In an effort to address these issues, the United We Read program has been exploring approaches aimed at helping parents engage their children in the books provided, such as providing support material for parents to help make the most of reading, and running regular storybook sessions for families at a local community centre. Utilising radio to support literacy development is another engagement strategy being investigated.

While radio has been recognised as a useful educational tool, particularly in the developing world (see Maddison, 1971) and in prisons (see Anderson 2012), the rising interest in television and the internet has made radio-specific studies sporadic at best. Allen and Anzalone talked up the potential for radio to boost education in the 1970s, emphasising its low cost, wide reach and the fact that radio doesn’t exclude people with low literacy levels (1978 p. 207-8); meanwhile a UNESCO report provided detail on the use of broadcast media to combat illiteracy in 40 countries around the world, with the author concluding that ‘broadcasting (radio or television or both) is nowadays essential to literacy campaigns, especially in developing countries’ (Maddison, 1971, p.31).

3.2 Current use of the United We Read book program

I love it how it’s encouraging all my children, even … the older kids. To get a new book, they get so excited and then they all read to each other, and I love it that they’re all reading and getting into books and … so it’s really good to see them all reading and sharing it and, yeah, it’s nice. (Family participant, initial interview)

Half of the participant families (4) first heard of the United We Read book program through their local playgroup or kindergarten, while the others were either referred by their nurse (1), midwife (1) or through word-of-mouth more generally (3). The most popular feature of the reading program was the regular home-delivery of the books, which was met with anticipation by the children involved (with the exception of the five month old). Parents
described their children’s excitement at checking the mailbox and knowing that a parcel had arrived for them personally.

… he likes going to the letterbox, so that's a big part of the whole thing I think … everything's always for dad, for dad, for dad. So when it's one for him, it is a bit like, oh okay this is a bit different!
(Family participant, initial interview)

Other benefits of the reading program cited by participants were the school holiday activity programs and playgroup readings, the tip-sheet for parents, the high quality of the books and the fact that they were free, and therefore supporting families who might not be able to buy many books. There were very few suggestions for improvement except that more robust books may be appropriate for younger readers. A number of participants wanted the program to be available in other suburbs so that their friends could also access it, and one parent wished that more families would attend the events organised by United We Read.

Only one parent said they faced significant challenges when reading to her son, because of her own dyslexia. Her self-admitted lack of confidence in reading aloud caused her much anxiety, and she felt her son was, in turn, affected by this. She said she hoped the radio show would help her to actively read with her son, even if it was through another person’s voice.

He gets really bored with me reading, because I sound really boring, because I miss words or I misread words, and being that he’s a bit older, he needs a better voice, if that makes sense … I’m not really good at my reading, … speaking to an audience, so when it comes to reading a book, even to my son, I stutter and that sort of thing … I just get a bit anxious that I’m not going to get the right words.
(Family participant, initial interview)

The rest of the families who participated in the pilot research project said they did not face any notable challenges reading to their children. This is a weakness of the research that will be addressed further in Section 3.4. Individual smaller challenges included keeping books intact due to ‘over enthusiastic page-turning’, keeping to a routine and holding their child’s attention whilst reading. One parent said they had their own troubles with reading prior to starting high-school.
3.3 Response to United We Read Radio Story-Time

There was an overall positive response to the pilot broadcasts. All of the participant families said they were able to listen to the weekly broadcasts somewhat regularly, with the PBA-FM broadcasts being utilised much more often than those by UniCast. Only one family listened on a Sunday afternoon – this being because the child was older, and at school during the morning broadcasts. The only reason cited for missing a broadcast (mentioned by three participants) was unexpected life commitments, such as doctor appointments. One parent commented that, because the radio show was quite short, if a child needed to go to the toilet they would probably miss the whole show.

While children’s reactions to the program tended to be varied and, most-often age-related, all participant families said they would like the radio show to continue, and contributed a number of recommendations for future broadcasts, which will be discussed in Section 3.4.

3.3.1 Children’s responses to the radio show

The main problem cited with implementing the radio story-time was the difficulty in holding a child’s attention. This was more the case for younger participants, under the age of three, who, it seems, had more difficulty in associating the sounds coming from the radio with the book being read in the physical space, and consequently not paying attention to the audio being broadcast.

I think it's all about eye contact as well, because when I normally read her story she is looking at the book but she's looking at my face and how I'm saying the words, and all that type of interaction. Where there is a radio she can't see that. So it's different thing, she doesn't quite understand. (Family participant with 5 month of child, focus group)

One suggestion to assist in keeping the attention of distracted children was to involve voices that were familiar to the children, that is, to get family members to read the books for the radio show.

Another cited problem was that some children often wanted to read the book at their own pace, either not wanting to wait to turn the page, or lingering on particular pages to explore
the illustrations in more detail. Also, if a child didn’t like a particular book they were less likely to engage with the radio show.

Most families established a routine for listening to the show, which created a level of expectation as to what was about to happen, especially after a few weeks of broadcast. A few families said they read in the same place, usually on a bed or in a comfortable chair. Two participant families were blood-related, and met at ‘Nanna’s” house to read and listen together. One mother said that as soon as a certain television program on ABC 3 finished, her child knew it was time to turn off the television and tune into the radio show. All of these approaches created a routine that prepared the children to settle and read/listen. The regular theme song also acted as an important signifier.

Because we did it together at Nanna's it was, literally, all we had to say was, "We're going to go read the book at Nanna's". So, (he) knew where the books were kept and he would go get the bag and then we would head off to Nanna's … so that was enough of a trigger to get him over there because he liked doing it like that, that did work better than just us going into the bedroom…

With also having the start-up music as well, the kids knew, “oh okay we dance around for a little bit and then I've got the book that I can read next”. (Two participant families, final focus group)

One participant family usually listened to the radio show in the car, which meant that, while the child did have the book with them, the parent was not reading along during the broadcast.

Two participant families said they didn’t think their child enjoyed the radio show, because they didn’t pay attention or appear to want to listen. These were the younger children in the focus group. The other seven families all said they thought their child did enjoy the program, for a few different reasons. The main reason was that the children already enjoyed reading, and this was another opportunity to be involved in such an activity. Two parents said they believed their child enjoyed hearing a different voice, something ‘different to Mum’.

He has liked hearing it coming from another person, and I point to the words as the person’s saying it and because she’s got a better voice …
and she doesn’t make any mistakes. (Family participant, final interview).

The participant children also responded positively to hearing their names mentioned on the radio.

The day when they said her name, she talked about it for days. "They said my name on the radio." So, she was quite ecstatic, she absolutely loved that. (Family participant, focus group).

However, the youngest child was a little confused by her name being said over the airwaves, especially on one particular occasion when her name was the same as a character in the book.

To conclude, it appears that radio can be used to assist the enhancement of children's experience of an early intervention book-reading program, however, the medium is more successful with children over the age of three.

3.3.2 Adult responses to the radio show

Eight of the nine participant families said they enjoyed the United We Read Radio Story-time, and all hoped it would continue to broadcast. One participant said it wasn’t enjoyable for them as it was too challenging to get their two-year old child to listen. A few families said the main reason they liked the program was that it scheduled in more time for books in their busy lives, and that it created some one-on-one time with their child. One participant liked the fact that it ‘forced’ their child to read books different to the regular favourites, while another said the book readings were a little more animated in comparison to how they would usually read to their child. One parent who spoke English as a second language said the radio show helped her to understand the books more clearly.

I loved the reading, yeah. I loved the way it’s very clear for me. I understand all of them, … sometimes my listening is not good … but I understand the reading, the way you read yeah. I love the reading and the accent. (Family participant, final interview)

The radio show appeared to be most valuable to the participant parent with dyslexia. While she couldn’t say for certain if the radio show benefited, or was enjoyed, by her son (who has autism and an auditory processing disorder), she was very positive about the benefits to her own reading confidence.
You know how the people sit there and you’ve got to close your eyes, and you’ve got to visualise the rainforest, I can’t do that. So this kind of thing is better for me. I can actually look at the words while it’s being said. And it’s – what do you call it? - audio English lessons … if that makes sense. (Family participant, final interview)

Participant families were generally happy with the pace and style in which the books were read, and had a number of suggestions for improving the presentation of the show, which are discussed in Section 3.4. One final complaint was that, on a few occasions, the radio station broadcast the wrong book during the Tuesday time-slot. This was fixed by the time of the Thursday broadcast, but participants reported that when children did not have a copy of the book being read on the radio, then they tended to not listen to the story as attentively; it was suggested that a more animated reading style, with character voices where appropriate, would be required to engage child listeners who didn’t have a copy of the book with them (this would be the case for the majority of listeners to the PBA-FM broadcast).

To conclude, it appears that radio can also assist to engage parents' involvement, on a number of levels. Parents who struggle with reading aloud received direct benefits while others said it created spaces for increased one-on-one reading time with their child.

3.4 Limitations and recommendations for improvement

There were two significant limitations to this pilot research project. Firstly, the sample group of participant families was small, representing approximately 3% of the families enrolled in the United We Read book program. Secondly, and somewhat related to the first point, is that the participant families tended to already be quite engaged in reading to their children. This is not surprising given these were the families willing to assist United We Read with the pilot project. Sampling a larger group of families may assist in representing a more diverse cohort in any future research.

There was general agreement within the participant families that the radio show should also broadcast later in the day so that older children can listen. In fact, parents of younger children suggested their primary school-aged children would enjoy and benefit from the radio show more – even through reading to the younger family members, given the content of the books may be a little young for them personally.
There was also significant interest in delivering the program through a podcast, in addition to the radio broadcast. This would assist families who might miss an episode, or who wanted to revisit the book reading. Participants did not want the podcast to replace the regular broadcast, and would prefer it to be updated each week to avoid children fixating on particular books.

There were two distinctive trains of thought about the actual presentation style of the book readings. Participants recognised the importance of reading the book exactly as written, without additional comment (for example, about the illustrations), to assist adult readers with low literacy levels. This was certainly the case for the two participant families who did cite difficulties with their own reading. However, for participant families who already read aloud to their children on a regular basis, they felt the arbitrary nature of the book readings somewhat restrictive. Children were often frustrated at having to turn the page ‘before they were ready’. The idea was floated that each episode include two readings of the same book. The first reading would be true to the text, as was during the pilot broadcast. The second reading would discuss the plot (e.g. “I wonder what Amy will do next?”) and/or the illustrations, allowing a more in-depth exploration of the book. This order of readings would allow listeners without a copy of the book may like to tune out after the first reading. There was also a suggestion to allow a little more time to turn the page, during the recording.

The theme song was valuable as a signifier to the children that story-time was about to begin. However, the lyrics in the first verse said “I like reading books, it’s fun, I like to read them with my Mum”. This was, quite understandably, considered a little exclusionary to fathers who were playing a lead role in reading with their children.

There is definitely scope for the United We Read Radio Story-time to expand nationally. United Way is a national organisation, and the United We Read book program is offered in a number of States and Territories. Further investigation is needed to consider how a national radio show could be coordinated, potentially through the Community Radio Network, which provides content to community radio stations around the country.

There appears to be a resurgence of interest in radio as a literacy-boosting medium at a grassroots level, though little to no research exists to confirm anecdotal accounts of its efficacy. Worries about children being exposed to too much screen time, and the expansion of broadband Internet access, has seen various new children’s internet radio stations established around the world. While programming on such stations tends to be dominated by music,
some allocate timeslots to story time; for example http://www.funkykidsradio.com.au broadcasts storytelling on the hour every day from 6am-9pm, littlerockersradio.com.au has twice-daily story time broadcasts, and kinderling.com.au features a mix of music, parenting news with some short story time slots. Further investigation is also needed to examine the potential for collaboration with these children’s internet radio stations.
Section Four

4.1 Recommendations

1. A regular United We Read Radio Story-time, broadcast on PBA-FM community radio station, would complement the existing United We Read book program.

2. Broadcasting in the 11:10am timeslot was successful and allowed for one-on-one time with younger children, however a repeat in the afternoon, after school hours, would maximise listenership and allow the involvement of other family members.

3. Each episode should include two readings of the same book. The first reading would be true to the text, as was during the pilot broadcast. The second reading would discuss the plot (e.g. “I wonder what Amy will do next?”) and the illustrations, allowing a more in-depth exploration of the book. This order of readings allows listeners without a copy of the book may like to tune out after the first reading.

4. Family and friends of children enrolled in the United We Read book program could be invited to read books for the recordings, to further engage the community with the radio show and provide a level of familiarity for the children listening.

5. Readers need to consider that part of the audience will not have a copy of the book with them, and should focus on being animated during the recording.

6. More effort should be made to include male readers in the radio show.

7. A gender-inclusive theme song needs to be chosen for the radio show.

8. The potential to broadcast nationally via the Community Radio Network, and/or via an existing children’s Internet radio station should be investigated.

9. Any further research needs to include a larger sample group to provide a more diverse representation of families using the United We Read book program.
References


Anderson, H 2012, Raising the Civil Dead: Prisoners and community radio, Peter Lang AG, Switzerland.


Clark, C and Dugdale, G 2008, Literacy Changes Lives: The role of literacy in offending behaviour, National Literacy Trust, London.


http://ecl.sagepub.com/access.library.unisa.edu.au/content/10/1/97.full.pdf+html


Appendix One

Information Sheet

**Title of Project:** “United We Read Story-time Radio Show”

We would like to invite you to be a part of a research project that tests out using internet radio as a way of promoting story-time as part of the United We Read program.

**What will you be doing?**

- Listening to a 10 - 15 minute internet radio show once a week as part of story-time with your family

**How will this be done?**

- Each family will be given a set of books which will be included in the internet radio broadcasts
- Participants will listen to the internet radio series, broadcast over 12 weeks on the UniCast internet radio station, at a length of 15 minutes maximum each.

**What makes this a research project?**

- We are interested in finding out how a story-time radio show might add value to the “United We Read” early intervention book reading program.
- You’ll be interviewed by one of the researchers about your opinions on the radio series at both the start and end of the project.

**What do you need from me?**
• You need to be available to listen to the majority of the radio shows, which start broadcast at the beginning of school term 2016.

• You will also need to be available for two interviews, which can be conducted either face-to-face or by phone, to be held at the start and end of the project.

• You will need to read through the following information and make an informed decision to take part in the research project, by signing the Consent Form that comes with this information sheet.

• You don’t need to sign today – you can take the information with you and bring the signed form to the first workshop.

**The details**

**Background**

This research project aims to explore how a story-time radio show might add value to the “United We Read” early intervention book reading program, and investigate if such a radio show can further engage children in their love of reading, and assist parents’ involvement, regardless of their own levels of literacy.

**Your participation**

If you are reading this information sheet, you have been identified as a current member of the United We Read program in South Australia.

If you agree to participate in this research project you will be asked to listen to at least half of the “United We Read Story-time” radio series, broadcast over 12 weeks on the UniCast internet radio station, at a length of 15 minutes maximum each.

The project will collect data primarily through face-to-face (or telephone) interviews, which will be audio recorded. You will be asked to be interviewed twice; once before, and again at the end of, the radio series.
Interviews will be conducted by the Chief Investigator, Heather Anderson, at a time that is convenient to you. All efforts will be made to conduct a face-to-face interview either at the University of South Australia or a location of your choice. It is envisioned that interviews will be between 30 minutes and one hour in duration.

You will also be asked to participate in a focus group that will only go ahead if 50% of all participants indicate a willingness to be part of this focus group. Participants can still be a part of this research project without participating in the additional focus group.

**Consent to participate**

Your participation in the research project is voluntary. You are under no obligation to participate if you do not wish to. Participants are free to withdraw from the research project without affecting their status now or in the future. All information collected from participants who choose to withdraw from the research project will be excluded. Participants can give the researcher their intention to withdraw, either in person, in writing, email, text or phone call and may withdraw during the course of an interview.

**Risk**

Participation in this research involves no risk to you, beyond that encountered during everyday life.

**Confidentiality**

All records containing personal information will remain confidential and no information which could lead to identification of any individual will be released, unless required by law. There will be no identifying information linking participants to the data collected from them during interviews.

All records from interviews will be kept on record for the information of the researcher only. All data will be stored securely on a UniSA server with the School of Communications, International Studies and Languages Office on the Magill campus for five years before being
destroyed. As a participant, you will be provided with a summary of any research articles produced as a result of this research if you are interested in receiving them.

You may contact the Chief Investigator at any time if you have any concerns regarding the research. This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any ethical concerns about the project or questions about your rights as a participant please contact the Executive Officer of this Committee, Tel: +61 8 8302 3118; Email: vicki.allen@unisa.edu.au.

Chief Investigator:
Dr Heather Anderson, PhD
University of South Australia
Heather.Anderson@unisa.edu.au, 08 83024677
School of Communication, International Studies and Languages
Magill campus
Appendix Two

Consent Form

This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any ethical concerns about the project or questions about your rights as a participant please contact the Executive Officer of this Committee, Tel: +61 8 8302 3118; Email: Vicki.Allen@unisa.edu.au

SECTION 1: CONTACT AND PROJECT DETAILS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher's Full Name:</th>
<th>Dr Heather Anderson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact Details:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Heather.Anderson@unisa.edu.au">Heather.Anderson@unisa.edu.au</a>, 08 83024677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor's Full Name:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Details:</td>
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<td>Protocol Number:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Title:</td>
<td>United We Read Story-time Radio Show</td>
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SECTION 2: CERTIFICATION

Participant Certification

In signing this form, I confirm that:

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet, or have had Participant Information Sheet read to me, and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any time and that this will not affect my status now or in the future. If I do choose to withdraw, I understand that any information collected from me will be excluded from the research findings. I understand that I need to advise the researcher of my intention to withdraw, either in person, in writing, email, text or phone call. I also understand I may withdraw during the course of an interview.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential, unless required by law.
- I understand that the interview will be audio recorded.
- I understand that the transcripts of the audio will be stored securely on a UniSA server with the School of Communications, International Studies and Languages Office on the Magill campus, for 5 years after the research has been completed.

PLEASE TICK THIS BOX IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE A SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Participants under the age of 18 normally require parental consent to be involved in research. The consent form should allow for those under the age of 18 to agree to their involvement and for a parent to give consent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Signature</th>
<th>Printed Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Researcher Certification

I have explained the study to subject and consider that he/she understands what is involved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher Signature</th>
<th>Printed Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
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Appendix Three

Broadcast Schedule

There are two different ways you can listen to the show

- On the radio dial – Tuesday and Thursday 10:05am
- **Community radio station 5PBA-FM**, which you can find on the FM dial at 89.5FM
- Or you can listen online at http://www.pbafm.org.au/#services

AND/OR

- On the internet – Thursday 11am and Sunday 4pm
- **Unicast internet** radio at www.unicast.com.au

It's recommended you go to the website 5 minutes earlier – and select the Tune In Now option in the menu bar on the left hand side

You can also download an app to your mobile phone if you prefer to listen that way.

You can plug your speakers into your phone or your computer to take the focus away from the phone/computer

Book Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week Starting Sun</th>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 14</td>
<td>“Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley”</td>
<td>Aaron Blabey</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 21</td>
<td>“There’s a Sea in my Bedroom”</td>
<td>Margaret Wild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 28</td>
<td>“Miss Lily’s Fabulous Pink Feather Boa”</td>
<td>Margaret Wild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 6</td>
<td>“Big Rain Coming”</td>
<td>Katrina Germein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AND “Kissed by the Moon”</td>
<td>Alison Lester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 13</td>
<td>“John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat”</td>
<td>Jenny Wagner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 20</td>
<td>“Jesse”</td>
<td>Tim Winton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 27</td>
<td>“A Nice Walk in the Jungle”</td>
<td>Nan Bodsworth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 3</td>
<td>“Tiddalick: The frog who caused a flood”</td>
<td>Robert Roennfeldt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 10</td>
<td>“Me and You”</td>
<td>Genevieve Cote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AND “A Giraffe in the Bath”</td>
<td>Mem Fox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 17</td>
<td>“Big Red Hen and the Little Lost Egg”</td>
<td>Margaret Wild</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Four

Sample script

Music – Excerpt from “I love reading” by Fabulous Lemon Drops

Script – Over music bed

This is the United We Read Radio Story-time, presented by United Way SA and the University of South Australia. This is a time to have a break, and share a story with a young person, or two or three or four. If you’ve got the book, read along with us

Music fades

Hi everyone, my name’s Heather and I hope you’re having a great day so far. Today I’m going to read “Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley” but first, a quick hello to Rhys who celebrates his birthday this week – happy birthday Rhys!

OK, are you ready? Let’s Read

BOOK READING with soft music bed

Script

I love Pearl and Charlie’s friendship. Do you have any special friends?

Next week we’ll read “There’s a Sea in my Bedroom” by Margaret Wild. Talk to you then!

Music fades in

Script over music bed

You’ve been listening to the United We Read Radio Story-time, presented by United Way SA and the University of South Australia. The music you heard under the story was by The Grapes, and this is the Fabulous Lemon Drops.

Music - “I love reading” by Fabulous Lemon Drops
Appendix Five

Media Coverage

Evening Program with Peter Goers, March 8, 2016


Northern Messenger, Playford Edition, March 9, 2016, front page
LAW & ORDER

Violent rail passengers attack cops

David Naskervis
THE ADVERTISER

POLICE officers were attacked 16 times on public transport last year, latest figures show.

Among this year’s violent instances was one on a Gawler line train in January around 1.30pm when a ticket inspector called police because two men refused to buy tickets.

A male and female officer boarded the train at the Woodville station and the men became aggressive when asked to leave, forcing the officers to use their pepper spray before the men escaped on foot.

There was another incident in January when an officer had to wrestle an abusive passenger from a western suburbs train.

While the 16 assaults against male and female officers last year was less than the 23 recorded in 2014, the State Government said the level of violence was “worrying” because any attack is “unacceptable”.

Assaults on transit police have increased over the past decade.

EDUCATION

DJs joining literacy crusade

Sarah Rehweder

THE University of South Australia hopes to boost children’s literacy skills and passion for reading ahead of their primary schooling years by reading them live on radio.

Uni SA has partnered with Elizabeth Downs’ United Way South Australia to deliver a radio-based story time program for young children.

The program aims to boost early literacy skills and connect children with stories to prevent long-term reading difficulties, speech impairments and low self-esteem.

The stories, which include tales by Mem Fox, Tim Winton and Margaret Wild, are broadcast online at uni.7courier.com.au and BiaFM 98.5 three times per week.

Journalism lecturer Dr Heather Anderson said the results from the research would help determine whether a permanent radio service would help further boost the program’s success.

The program is part of broader research by the university into how reading books over the radio can add value to United Way’s reading program. The next session will air on Sunday. The book will be John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat by Jenny Wagner.

MAWSON LAKES

Fill up at any time

Sarah Rehweder

MAWSON Lakes residents will be able to boast on chicken burgers and fries, grab a coffee and fill up their cars at any time of the day when a new service station opens this month.

The On the Run service station is due to open on Elder Smith Drive at the end of the month and will feature a mini supermarket, takeaway coffee outlet, bakery and petrol station.

The 24-hour store, which cost about $5 million to build, will also feature an Oporto store, SA Lotteries, Happy Wash drive-through car wash, and a 40-litre self-serve dog wash.

Perseverance Corporation owns the 4259sq m development, which has taken eight months to build.

Michaela Webster, chief operations manager, said the “emergency supermarket” would mean and easy shopping and petrol runs to the site.

She said it would employ 15 staff when the site was complete.

“I think that the site will definitely meet the needs of the local community as well as the convenience of easy access to fuel and shopping,” she said.

“A lot of people like different times, which need to shop at night or odd times, and this provides that service for people in the area.”

And it will not only provide jobs for the local community, but will also support the growing town.”
Radio research project boosting littlies’ literacy

by Katrina McLachlan

With around one in five Australian children starting school considered to be developmentally vulnerable, an innovative UniSA research project promoting early literacy is just what the teacher ordered.

Statistics show that learning to love reading time is so important as children who don’t connect with books and stories, are at risk of slipping into long-term disadvantage.

Poor adult literacy is also commonly reported to contribute to high unemployment, lower earnings, low self-esteem, high rates of welfare dependency and substance abuse.

Developed in partnership with United Way South Australia, the United We Read Radio Story-time program is providing free books for parents to share with their children, supported by a regular story-time radio show to help boost literacy levels.

Long-time community radio presenter/producer and UniSA Journalism Lecturer, Dr Heather Anderson, says the shows are part of a broader research project exploring how radio can add value to the United We Read early intervention book reading program currently underway in Adelaide’s northern suburbs.

"The benefits of radio in encouraging and facilitating community engagement and individual empowerment are well established, as are the benefits of reading to children from a young age," Dr Anderson says.

"What we’re investigating in this research is how radio can further engage children in their love of reading and assist parents’ involvement, regardless of their own levels of literacy.

"While the internet radio station, UniCast, which operates out of the School of Communications, International Studies and Languages at UniSA, is not a community radio station as such, it recently ran a short series with young people of refugee experience which provided on-air training over a period of three months so this is UniCast’s second community engagement project."

The family story-time is being broadcast several times a week online at unicast.com.au and at PBA-FM 89.5 until the end of April with books being read including tales by Mem Fox and Tim Winton and Margaret Wild’s There’s a sea in my bedroom.

United Way South Australia Chief Executive, Greg Franks, is enthusiastic about the United We Read Radio Story-time pilot.

"Research shows that if a child is read to daily from birth and there are many books in the home, those children will not only be ready for school but get better NAPLAN results," Mr Franks says.
“We’ve seen an astonishing increase in the amount of reading in homes to children under five in our Elizabeth program and we hope the Radio Story-time pilot will help increase home reading and better prepare children for school.”

The United We Read Radio Story-time program is explicitly tied to books so that families are physically engaging with books while listening and any problems for those who may be vision-impaired are also overcome.

“This is a pilot project and the participant families have already been recruited but anyone is welcome to listen and enjoy the books,” Dr Anderson says.

“The study participants are already participating in the United We Read program in Elizabeth which involves the monthly delivery of a free, high-quality, age-appropriate book chosen by experts in childhood education, as well as a local reading group.

“The United We Read program is open to children younger than five currently living in Elizabeth Downs or Elizabeth Park but we announce each week which book is being read, so it’s possible for anyone to borrow the books in advance from a library and listen to the stories.

“Shared reading is the most commonly cited home-based literacy activity influencing a child’s reading development but parents with poor literacy skills are less likely to buy books, visit libraries or read with their children.

“The role of early literacy development in changing lives cannot be underestimated so the hope is that this radio show and our research will support the development of cost-effective strategies that produce higher reading results in school.”

United We Read Radio Story-time sessions and books:

Tuesday’s and Thursday’s at 10.05am on PBA-FM 89.7.
And Thursday’s at 11am / Sunday’s at 4pm on UNiCast.

Week Starting Sun March 6  Big Rain Coming by Katrina Germein AND Kissed by the Moon by Alison Lester

Week Starting Sun March 13  John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat by Jenny Wagner Jesse by Tim Winton

Week Starting Sun March 20  A Nice Walk in the Jungle by Nan Bodsworth

Week Starting Sun April 3  Tiddalik: The frog who caused a flood by Robert Rohmefeld

Week Starting Sun April 10  Me and You by Genevieve Cote AND A Giraffe in the Bath by Mem Fox

Week Starting Sun April 17  Big Red Hen and the Little Lost Egg by Margaret Wild