Creating Libraries; Building Communities - A Showcase of Victorian Public Libraries
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FOREWORD</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTENDED PURPOSE</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Project objectives</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Project deliverables</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. METRICS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Community hub</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Lifelong learning</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Social inclusion</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. COLLECTIVE WISDOM</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Design versus functionality</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Consultation process</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Acoustic design</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Change management</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 The journey of public libraries</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 The importance of partnerships</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Accessibility</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8 Sustainability</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. MOVING FORWARD</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Library Build Assist – Library building project directory</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Victorian Public Library building project advocacy tool</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. APPENDICES</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Community hub – Case study</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Lifelong learning – Case study</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Social inclusion – Case study</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. REFERENCES</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FOREWORD

Library buildings across Victoria come in all shapes and sizes and have been part of our community landscape for over 50 years. During that time library services have revitalised and rebuilt their library branches, and for many they have had the opportunity to build new buildings for their growing and emerging communities.

Fortunately through good strategic planning and the provision of funding via a variety of sources including the Living Libraries Funding Program, there has been a wonderful injection of new library buildings in recent times. Many more are on the drawing card which is exciting for library services who need to expand and improve their service provision.

This project reinforces the value of libraries and how their design and presence in their communities can be catalysts for lifelong learning, social inclusion and the creation of community hubs.

This project will provide a launching pad for a central source of information about library buildings and design. It will be useful for library services embarking on a new project, as well as providing a platform to showcase their fabulous new buildings. It will include many essential things to remember and to consider and a great place to share reflections on the process as well as factual information.

The project will live on in the form of a wiki which will be linked from the PLVN website. It can be updated as new projects come on board capturing new and exciting new buildings and refurbishments.

I commend the wonderful tools available to all library staff and encourage you to use the advocacy tool and the wiki when forming your own plans for the next fabulous library that will appear on the Victorian landscape.

Project Sponsor

Jenny Mustey – Campaspe Library Service
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Shared Leadership Program provides an opportunity for participants to develop and practice enhanced leadership and teamwork skills. This program develops future public library leaders in further expanding upon their leadership capabilities and potential. The skills and networks acquired through the program inspire confidence to grow professionally, and allow those taking part to be better prepared to take the next step in their career.

A component of the program involves participants forming groups to complete an action learning project. This report is the result of a project proposal that was put forward by Jenny Mustey of Campaspe Library Service, the project sponsor. The project aims to showcase Victorian public library building and refurbishment projects and to develop a directory of Victorian public library building works.

Our working group has created a practical online advocacy tool to assist in obtaining future funding for library building projects and a useful reference directory for library services planning a new project.

This report provides the theory and rationale of our project with concrete examples and evidence based case studies, collective wisdom and lesson learned. The information was acquired through surveys conducted of library services who have experienced new building, refurbishments and mobile service projects.

The objective is that these online tools will be used to seek funding, generate enthusiasm and creatively inspire future Public Library building projects.

Our report provides an introduction to the project and we invite you to use the online advocacy tool and wiki directory to access more information about Victorian Public Library building projects.

Creating Libraries; Fostering Communities - A Showcase of Victorian Public Libraries team consists of:

- Jess Broom, Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation
- Kim Edgar, Geelong Regional Library Corporation
- Koula Kalaitzoglou, City of Greater Dandenong
- Micah Macri, Eastern Regional Library Service
- Sarah Mason, State Library Victoria

This project is sponsored by Jenny Mustey, Library Services Manager, Shire of Campaspe
1. INTENDED PURPOSE

1.1 Project objectives

*Creating Libraries; Fostering Communities* showcases Victorian public library building projects and the impact new library buildings, refurbishments and mobile services have had on the communities they serve.

Our project aims to highlight amazing library design and architectural beauty. Spaces and buildings that have become the centrepiece of landscape and community development.

However beyond the bricks and mortar, natural fibres, ergonomic design and sunlit spaces, our libraries are about the communities we serve, the lives we enrich and the social connections we help create.

It is the impact on the community and how these projects meet the changing needs of public libraries that we will focus on.

1.2 Project deliverables

We have created an online database to provide library services with access to a shared pool of resources and information in relation to library building projects. As well as factual information specific to each library, there is a ‘Collective Wisdom’ and a ‘Have you Considered’ page which provides feedback and advice from library services managers and staff who have gone through the building process.

Our advocacy tool has been created for library services who are lobbying for funding for improved library facilities. It highlights how funding library building projects can have a measured increase in positive outcomes for the communities that they serve, and we have defined three metrics related to what we consider to be measures of success when met by library design.

- Community Hub
- Lifelong Learning
- Social Inclusion

2. METRICS

Winston Churchill said ‘First we shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us’. This could not be truer than for libraries. Library buildings communicate something about the community and the role of the library within it. Our work is about creating a space which serves as a safe, welcoming community hub, a space that develops equal opportunities for lifelong learning, a space which encourages and sets the standard for social inclusion.
2.1 Community hub

Libraries have embraced the concept of Oldenburg’s ‘third place’ and their role to facilitate and foster broad creative interaction. Spaces where people can relax, drop in, log in, meet up, and relax with a coffee. Libraries are a place for people to belong in an environment that encourages community participation and the notion of libraries as community living rooms has placed greater emphasis on the provision of formal and informal spaces and seating.

The Victorian Public Libraries 2030: Strategic Framework (SLV, 2013, p.5) states that a prominent future social trend is ‘the desire for stable and trusted relationships with people and places of common interest’ and libraries are creating buildings to enable community connection in this way. Traditional library services remain the mainstay, however the primary purpose of public libraries is changing from being an information access point to increasingly becoming a place that acts as a community asset builder. Public libraries hold great potential for engaging people and strengthening their social capital by providing a welcoming space.

Ways of building social capital are to provide spaces that allow opportunities for bonding and bridging activity. Bonding is essentially the creation of stronger ties between people who are similar to each other. Bridging brings people together who are fundamentally different that would otherwise not share experiences with each other which then encourages the building of networks between these people.

Public libraries are hubs with flexible spaces that allow for a range of uses that support both bridging and bonding experiences for users. This supports diversity within the community and concurrently promotes community identity and cohesion.
2.2 Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is learning that is voluntarily pursued throughout life for either personal or professional reasons. In libraries we seek to provide both formal and informal learning opportunities for people to develop and improve the skills needed for employment and personal fulfilment. Based on Delors’ four pillars of learning for the future, it is learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be (Delors, 1996).

Public libraries have long been seen as the people’s university with a role in society as an institution of informal education, working with people of all ages, as well as families or intergenerational groups. Libraries are exploring, broadening and redefining the notion of lifelong learning and their role in terms of library design and services provided moving to the future. The concept of makerspaces in libraries, whether the tools are high or low tech, provide opportunities for community members to graduate from the role of content consumers to content creators.

Lifelong learning is also demonstrated through the commitment of public libraries to bridging the digital divide and providing more opportunities for adult learners to access and experience technology. The development of creative, interactive and practical programs such as conversation circles, art programs and many more also encourage and promote the notion of lifelong learning.

When designing library buildings, the spaces required to deliver these types of programs and learning opportunities are an integral part of the process and planning.
2.3 Social inclusion

Social inclusion has previously been defined as having the resources, opportunities and capabilities to:

- Learn
- Work
- Engage and
- Have a voice

Public libraries provide opportunities for people to engage in local services, participate in local, cultural, civic and recreational activities and to learn. They are also lifelines for individuals that have become isolated and disengaged from the community.

An understanding of social trends and the changing paradigm in libraries towards a more needs-based library service sees minorities and other groups that may have been previously excluded being brought in from the margins. These groups include the homeless, those with disabilities, the aged, indigenous people, those experiencing poverty, unemployment, and lack of transport. One of the ways in which libraries are adopting a more integrated approach to social inclusion is to work together with other local services which is often facilitated by new libraries being co-located with these community services. A strong focus on outreach services has also led to the engagement of previously hard to reach community members.

The population distribution of Australia in 2011 had over 85% of Australians living in urban areas, with nearly 70% living in capital cities (ABS, 2014). This makes Australia one of the most urbanised countries in the world. Libraries are forced to think of coverage in wider terms than library buildings. Another way libraries are moving towards a more needs based service is to provide a mobile library service, bringing libraries to users who find it difficult to visit a library.
3. COLLECTIVE WISDOM

The planning and functionality of a new library building or refurbishment has many layers. The results of our survey concluded there are many factors that need to be considered before, during and after a building project. Experiences, lessons learned and things to consider have been collected in our wiki. This provides a reference tool for library services looking to embark on any future library building project. We have outlined some key responses below, however a detailed list of things to consider and lessons learned can be found on our wiki – Library Build Assist.

3.1 Design versus functionality

When planning your library building project there needs to be a considered balance of design and functionality. It is suggested that a library manager or library representatives be key drivers in the project team to ensure the key functions of a library are not compromised for design.

Provide opportunities for staff to tour through the premises and consider operations and workflows well before opening.

3.2 Consultation process

Public libraries are a central community hub. When designing a new building, stakeholder consultation is a vital part of the process.

In addition to meeting regulations and best practice standards, consultation with local community groups, patrons, staff, other libraries and service providers is important. For a community to establish ownership of the new library building project, it is imperative that they are a part of the process from its inception.

3.3 Acoustic design

There are a number of acoustical issues that are important to consider during the design process. These considerations should include noise intrusion from mechanical systems and noise from exterior and interior sources. Care must be taken with the design of multipurpose spaces where the range of uses can include quiet study, group discussion and/or program delivery. It is also important to consider the location of AV equipment and any special acoustic treatment required.

3.4 Change management

The transition into a new library building has an enormous impact on staff. It is advised that additional staff requirements need to be considered and budgeted accordingly prior to opening.

Most new library buildings have a marked increase in attendance. The increased staffing needs to be included in your Business Plan in the lead up to the building project to accommodate the increasing demands.
Job descriptions may also need to be changed prior to the new project completion. Be clear in setting new role statements and lead staff through an effective change management process to support them through the transition.

Establish opportunities for staff to communicate, share experiences and provide feedback. Be open to continuous evaluation and improvement.

### 3.5 The journey of public libraries

With the introduction of RFID technology, e-books, e-magazines and e-audio, the library service has changed from a transactional based model to more community engagement, reader advisory and program delivery.

*The Victorian Public Libraries 2030: Strategic Framework* (SLV, 2013) outlines two directions for public libraries. The Creative Library and the Community Library. When planning your library building project, design flexible spaces to create opportunities for your library to provide services and deliver programming to support these strategic directions.

Adaptable meeting and program rooms, makerspaces, gallery and exhibition spaces and group study areas should all be considered.

The library design should reflect the community it serves and creating the spaces to provide opportunities for a variety of uses will maximise the reach of community engagement.

### 3.6 The importance of partnerships

In a period of financial uncertainty, the importance of partnerships and collaboration is becoming more relevant. In designing new buildings, consider the co-location with other services. Develop partnerships with local community groups and organisations which will encourage community participation, engagement and collaborative program and service delivery within the library space.

### 3.7 Accessibility

When planning a new library building, careful consideration must be made to provide a socially inclusive, accessible space.

As well as access to the building and wide entrances, libraries must consider shelving height, space to easily move around, access to technology, disability toilets, Braille internal and external signage and where applicable stairs and lifts. Safety is paramount and non-slip floor surfaces, hand rails and effective evacuation and emergency management procedures should be in place.
The library interior design can incorporate contrasting colours and flooring, sturdy furnishing to provide a safe space for all.

3.8 Sustainability

Library design is moving towards green or sustainable architectural philosophy. The principles are conserving energy, working with the climate, minimizing use of new resources and increasing the use of sustainable non-toxic building materials. Space heating, cooling, and ventilation can account for the largest amount of end-use energy consumption in commercial buildings such as libraries (Center for Climate and Energy Solutions) Sustainable library designs have the potential to reduce the use of energy and water in turn reducing operating costs.

Consider natural lighting, energy efficient lighting options, and passive solar heating. Energy efficient lighting options include movement activated lighting and light sensitive lighting.

Sustainable water use initiatives include the harvesting of rainwater, onsite processing for re-use of water as well as half-flush toilets and water saving taps.
4. MOVING FORWARD

4.1 Library Build Assist – Library building project directory

Our online database is a collection of building projects that have been completed in recent years. This resource has been created to provide library services with information regarding library building projects.

The content of this database was determined after speaking with library managers and discovering what were the most commonly asked questions by other libraries when first visiting the new library building. People wanted to know where materials were sourced, what technology was used and which architecture and design companies were used.

Visiting new public libraries around Victoria is not always possible. This site now makes a virtual visit easy and can be done from your home or office.

The site has been created using a wiki which enables the continued use and addition of updated information by other library services. It is intended that any new library building project as well as any other Victorian Public Library, will go online, register and update their information.

To take a tour of our database visit http://buildassist.wikidot.com/

4.2 Victorian Public Library building project advocacy tool

The advocacy tool can be accessed on our directory home page. This tool takes you on a tour of Victorian libraries and highlights the impact building projects have had in the three key areas of creating a community hub, opportunities for lifelong learning and encouraging social inclusion.

By scrolling over each library, you will find data sourced directly from the libraries which highlight statistics and improved outcomes in these areas. It showcases the ways in which architecture, design and layout choices, and the inclusion of furnishings and technology have impacted on the library usage and the community engagement with the library service.

The advocacy tool covers all areas of library projects including new buildings, refurbishments and mobile services.

It is intended this advocacy tool be used by library services to obtain funding for new library building projects.
5. APPENDICES

5.1 Community hub – Case study

Our work is about creating a space which serves as a safe, welcoming community hub. Some of the features of library design that are contributing to libraries being used as a community hub are:

- Café in the library space or in the same building
- Lounge spaces
- Outdoor public art display areas
- Community kitchen co-located in building
- Flexible spaces with moveable partitioning
- Dedicated children’s and/or youth areas
- Bookable meeting rooms
- Colocation with other community services
- Outdoor leisure and/or activity areas
- Design that enables strategic partnerships for programs and events

Bairnsdale Library – with outdoor screen for movie nights, and an outdoor play and learning area.

Bendigo Library – a dedicated children’s area with a cubby hole.

Library @ The Dock – has a bustling café on the ground floor.

Healesville Library – has spaces within the library has allows for collaboration between community groups.
5.2 Lifelong learning – Case study

Libraries are providing spaces that develop equal opportunities for lifelong learning for members of the community in formal and informal ways. This encourages them to play their social role at work and in the community. Some of the features that have been incorporated into library design are:

- Computer training rooms
- Quiet study rooms and open study spaces
- Wi-Fi and electrical points for devices
- Commercial kitchen co-located within same building and used for cooking classes
- Spaces that allow for flexible programming and partnering with external providers
- Children’s areas including play areas
- Reading rooms
- Provision of modern technologies
- Conference facilities
- Multimedia booths for collaborative group work
- Makerspaces

Craigieburn Library – Hume Multiversity, where users have the ability to undertake accredited higher education courses delivered via the use of videoconferencing by university providers.

Geelong Library and Heritage Centre houses Victoria’s largest regional archive. This is regionally significant resource centre for the Geelong community to be connected with their heritage.
**Echuca Library** has a meeting room with after-hours access. This has been achieved by situating the room at the front so that it may be closed off from the rest of the building.

**Dandenong Library** – flexible, bookable spaces that can be used by community groups.
5.3 Social inclusion – Case study

Social inclusion involves upholding the principles of access, equity and a space which encourages and sets the standard for social inclusion. Some of the design features demonstrating the consideration of these principles include:

- Co-location with other council and community services
- Increased space and design that allows for a range of programming provided by the library itself or other community services supporting inclusive participation
- Entry/exits that are suitable for disability access
- Accessible toilets with change facilities
- Youth and children’s zones
- Location of accessible toilets and lifts together
- Spaces that allow flexible shelving options
- Spaces that make available technology for users in disadvantaged communities

**Knox Mobile Library** – the previous vehicle was unable to attend many locations due to its impractical size and now the modern accessibility features of this mobile library provide more flexibility. There is also the ability to deliver storytime on the mobile unit.

**Melton Library** – Chill out space and games area.

**Braybrook Library** – the Braybrook community was in great need of access to technology and the library provides this support for them.
6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank those people who took time to answer the questionnaire that we created for information gathering to inform the report findings, populate the wiki with information, and allow us to put together the advocacy tool that clearly demonstrates the value of the injection of funds into libraries.

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- Nella Budicin – Melton Library Coordinator
Goldfields Library Corporation – Bendigo Branch
- Library Operations Manager – Rachel Roberts
Knox Outreach Vehicle
- Joseph Cullen – CEO at Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation
- Greg Bell – Manager Mobile Libraries at Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation
Healesville Library
- Joseph Cullen – CEO at Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation
- Sharon Waller – Healesville Library Team Leader at Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation
Hume City Council – Craigieburn Library
- Sarah Field – Library Technology Coordinator
- Mieke Mellars – Coordinator, Library Operations
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- Julia Hogarth – Literacy & Learning Library Team Leader
Bairnsdale Library
- Susan Scarr – Manager Community Programs at East Gippsland Shire Council

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7. REFERENCES


