

The value and impact of Australian public libraries

A summary of studies and reports since 2010

CREATIVE SPACES

Impact of Libraries as Creative Spaces

Digital Media Research Centre QUT commissioned by the State Library of Queensland, 2016

Ready access to information through digital media has challenged the perceived societal roles of public libraries. Since the mid 1990s, libraries have reoriented themselves towards public participation beyond lending and reading. Libraries now offer an increasing range of community-focused creative activities. Library spaces are transforming. In addition to housing archival and loan materials, desks and reading spaces, libraries are becoming even more flexible and activity-oriented. Given these transformations, understanding and demonstrating the new contributions public libraries make to their communities is critical. In 2015, the State Library of Queensland (SLQ) commissioned researchers at the Digital Media Research Centre at Queensland University of Technology (QUT) to explore the impact of libraries as creative spaces.

<http://plconnect.slq.qld.gov.au/manage/research/libraries-as-creative-spaces>

Creative Industries Strategy Paper

Public Libraries Victoria Network, 2015

This submission presents 10 themes, from fostering creative excellence to increasing tourism, each demonstrating the contribution of Victorian public libraries to the creative industries.

https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/1f8737_8113ba8b9f94467383a35b2b168f2806.pdf

Creative Communities The cultural benefits of Victoria's public libraries

Project Sisu commissioned by the State Library of Victoria and Public Libraries Victoria Network, 2014

The study records the breadth and depth of cultural activities occurring in Victorian public libraries. These activities are explicitly cultural in the sense of artistic endeavours of various kinds, and are implicitly cultural in the sense that they help animate the cultural life of communities across the state. People are using space in libraries to: learn new crafts, exhibit artworks, compose music, celebrate diverse cultures through song, dance and festivals, generate multimedia works using the library's original collections, draw, paint, build and perform.

<http://plvn.net.au/sites/default/files/Creative%20Communities%20FINAL%20REPORT%20med-res.pdf>

A place to make, hack, and learn: makerspaces in Australian public libraries.

Slatter, Diane & Howard, Zaana (2013) *The Australian Library Journal*, 62(4), pp. 272-284.

This study investigated the current state of makerspaces in Australian public libraries. Findings revealed the substantive benefits of these spaces, including enhanced community engagement, development of a new form of 'library as third place', and transforming the library's image from one of consumption to one of creation. Additionally the study highlighted significant challenges to

creating these spaces, including budgetary constraints, resistance to change within organisations, and proving the relevance of such spaces within a library context. The study provides suggestions to overcoming these obstacles and provides areas for further research in the area, including larger studies across a broader geographic area and further investigation and follow-up into upcoming programs within existing makerspaces.

<https://eprints.qut.edu.au/73071/1/73071.pdf>

DIGITAL SPACES

The intrinsic value of libraries as public spaces: Technology and digital services reflect the changing role of libraries

Report commissioned by Civica Group Ltd, research through University of Technology Sydney, 2016

Public libraries are thriving and, by embracing digital technologies, library memberships continue to grow in line with and in some cases ahead of population growth. The library has evolved into a hub around which the community grows, learns and communicates. It provides the space and the intellectual glue to allow communities, close knit urban and sparsely spread rural, to cohere and interact. This report looks at key issues which will need to be addressed to ensure libraries remain a central part of community life.

<https://www.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/Civica%2BIntrinsic%2Bvalue%2Bof%2Blibraries%2Breport.pdf>

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The local library across the digital and physical city: opportunities for economic development.

Houghton, Kirralie, Miller, Evonne, & Foth, Marcus (2014) *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance*, 15, pp. 39-60.

This paper considers the role of the public library as a community hub, engagement space, and entrepreneurial incubator in the context of the city, city governance, and local government planning. It considers this role from the perspective of library experts and their future visions for libraries in a networked knowledge economy. Fourteen qualitative interviews with library experts informed the study which investigates how the relationship between digital technology and the physical library space can potentially support the community to develop innovative, collaborative environments for transitioning to a digital future.

<https://eprints.qut.edu.au/66194/2/66194.pdf>

FUTURE LIBRARIES

Future of Libraries

Arup, 2017

Report produced by Arup looking at the shifting role of libraries in social infrastructure. The report was based on consultation with library operators, policy makers, urban designers, planners, architects and library funders in Australia, the UK, Italy, Hong Kong, Singapore and the US. The report followed on from *Future Libraries*, published by Arup in 2015.

<http://www.driversofchange.com/projects/future-of-libraries/>

Connecting Communities Vision for Northern Territory Public Libraries 2017-2023

Northern Territory Library based on KPMG consultation, published 2017

In 2016 the Northern Territory Government undertook a community consultation process to find out what Territorians wanted from their public library services. The result is a report which identifies the value that public libraries provide to their communities in terms of literacy and lifelong learning, informed and connected citizens, digital inclusion, personal development and wellbeing, stronger and more creative communities, economic and workforce development.

https://dte.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/427482/connected-communities-vision-for-nt-public-libraries-2017-2023.pdf

Advancing Queensland's Public Libraries: A Research Report for State Library of Queensland

PwC Chair in Digital Economy at QUT, supported by State Library of Queensland Vision 2017 funding, 2016

This research set out to identify (1) the common goal that Queensland public libraries are working towards, (2) the enablers and barriers in reaching that goal and (3) the role of State Library of Queensland (SLQ) in the transformation. Fourteen public libraries across Queensland were studied, of which eight included extensive interviews with library staff, visitors and non-visitors, local government representatives, and other relevant community groups. The results indicate that the role of libraries has been expanding to include the facilitation of access to new technology and community exchange, teaching creativity, stimulating people to connect to each other and the world, and having fun!

http://plconnect.slq.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/343002/SLQ_Report_final.pdf

Public Libraries in a Digital Culture

Research Unit in Public Cultures at The University of Melbourne with State Library of Queensland, 2015

Libraries have long been a foundation for a literate society, and thus an important platform for democratic participation. Digital technologies have radically transformed processes of storing and distributing information and human stories, such that the volume of online information now exceeds that in every physical library in the world. Consequently, libraries are adapting to support new forms of literacy and a new kind of public sphere emerging in the wake of a digital culture. For Queensland libraries, the effects of a digital culture are visible in statistics showing that membership figures remain steady even as the number of physical items circulated by libraries has declined (State Library of Queensland 2014b). Library participation is increasingly being driven by a wide range of 'non-traditional' services, resources and activities that now form an integral part of the library's institutional function.

http://arts.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1867865/PublicLibrariesinaDigitalCulture.pdf

ALIA Future of the Library and Information Science Profession: Public Libraries

Australian Library and Information Association, 2014

This report was the result of a year-long consultation to address the changing environment, digital disruption, LIS education and workplace skills. Twelve themes emerged specific to public libraries.

https://www.alia.org.au/sites/default/files/ALIA-Future-of-the-LIS-Profession-04-Public_0.pdf

Building on the bookends scenarios

Neville Freeman Agency commissioned by the State Library of NSW, 2014

This report culminates in a set of 75 strategies that have been developed to represent each year since the passage of the NSW Library Act in 1939. We show who the players might be to implement

each of them – a list that includes the local, State and Commonwealth associations working in the sector. The strategies are clustered according to a set of strategic domains that indicate where we have the capacity to influence the environment in which we operate. We have identified among the strategies a ‘top 10’ which we believe will make a real difference. Not just for library clients but also in the effectiveness of the public library network in NSW to be greater than the sum of its parts.

<http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/building-bookends-scenarios>

The continuing relevance of the library as a third place for users and non-users of IT: the case of Canada Bay

Houghton, Kirralie, Foth, Marcus, & Miller, Evonne (2013) *Australian Library Journal*, 62(1), pp. 27-39.

The purpose of this paper is to consider how libraries support the development of community networks both physically and digitally. The paper establishes the value of libraries in the digital age, and recommends that libraries actively seek ways to develop links between the non-technology users and activity on the Internet. It addresses the need to reach these types of non-technology users in different ways. Further, it suggests that libraries utilise their positioning as ‘third places’ to create broader community networks, to support local communities beyond existing users and beyond the library precinct.

https://eprints.qut.edu.au/56428/1/ALJ_Feb_2013_Houghton_Foth_Miller.pdf

Victorian Public Libraries 2030 Strategic Framework

Chasing Sunrises commissioned by the State Library of Victoria and Public Libraries Victoria Network, 2013

The purpose of the project was to develop a strategic framework for Victorian public libraries. Two scenarios depicting future Victorian lifestyles were created as a way to explore how community attitudes, behaviours, wants and needs might be different in 2030. The Creative and Community scenarios identified the emergence of five prominent social trends that have significance for the evolution of Victorian public libraries.

http://plvn.net.au/sites/default/files/20130527%20FINAL%20VPL2030%20Full%20Report_web.pdf

INTERNET ACCESS

ALIA Internet access in public libraries survey

Australian Library and Information Association, 2013

The 2013 survey was the seventh in a series of reports, the first published in 2002, which together provide the most comprehensive indication of how public library internet services have been managed, delivered and used throughout Australia over the past decade.

<https://www.alia.org.au/sites/default/files/publishing/ALIA%20Internet%20Access%20in%20Public%20Libraries%20Survey%202013%20FINALweb.pdf>

Internet and PC usage in Victorian Public Libraries

I&J Management Services commissioned by the State Library of Victoria and Public Libraries Victoria Network, 2012

The study found that libraries are a vital safety net in providing universal access to computers and the internet. While libraries currently represent an untapped resource for the 21% of the population who do not access the internet, 12% of the Victorians who did access the internet in 2010–11 – or more than 400,000 people aged 15 years and over – did so at a public library. For the most part these people did not go to the library so that they could access specialist information or databases.

They used the internet and computers to do exactly the sort of things that most Victorians do every day.

http://plvn.net.au/sites/default/files/InternetPCUsage_SUMMARY.pdf

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Dollars Sense and Public Libraries: The landmark study of the socio-economic value of Victorian public libraries

SGS Economics and Planning commissioned by the State Library of Victoria and Public Libraries Victoria Network, 2011

Dollars, Sense and Public Libraries was a major three-year project to assess the economic value of public libraries in Victoria. The results were described in this topline summary, behind which lies a full technical report running to several hundred pages. The technical report is available from the State Library of Victoria website www.slv.vic.gov.au.

https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/1f8737_c6767e33c1b147beb6187e39eb7e3b63.pdf

The Library Dividend – socio-economic value of Queensland public libraries

SGS Economics and Planning commissioned by the State Library of Queensland, 2011

The Library Dividend was a major independent study of the socio-economic contribution of Queensland's public libraries. The study was commissioned by State Library of Queensland in 2011 and was funded by the Expanding Horizons Public Library Grant as a state-wide research project. The aim of the study was to expand the understanding of the value of public libraries to the community, prove that public libraries contribute economic benefit to the community, and provide Queensland public libraries with data to build a stronger case in securing their future funding.

<http://plconnect.slq.qld.gov.au/manage/research/the-library-dividend>

National welfare and economic contributions of public libraries

SGS Economics and Planning commissioned by ALIA, 2013

On behalf of a consortium of state and territory libraries, the Australia Library and Information Association (ALIA) commissioned SGS Economics and Planning Pty Ltd (SGS) to generate estimates of the contributions that public libraries make to Australian community welfare and Australian economic activity.

<https://www.alia.org.au/sites/default/files/Contribution%20of%20Australian%20Public%20Libraries%20Report.pdf>

OLDER REPORTS

Libraries Building Communities

New Focus Research Strategy and Implementation and I&J Management Services commissioned by the State Library of Victoria, 2005

The Libraries Building Communities project was the first comprehensive Australian study of the value that public libraries add to their communities. The study shows that libraries and librarians make a fundamental contribution to our communities in four key areas: they provide free public access to computer and information technology resources; by helping people locate information they create better informed communities; they run programs that promote lifelong learning and literacy in the community; and they build connections between individuals, groups and government.

http://www2.slv.vic.gov.au/about/information/publications/policies_reports/plu_lbc.html

Enriching communities: The value of public libraries in NSW

J L Management Services commissioned by the Library Council of NSW, 2008

Enriching Communities, provides clear evidence of the contribution and value of NSW public libraries in terms of the triple bottom line, or economic, environmental and social impact. The research explored the ways in which New South Wales public libraries sustain the community in social, cultural and environmental terms. The study also found that public libraries contribute positively in terms of economic value, benefit and activity. NSW public libraries generated at least \$4.24 of economic value for each dollar expended, and \$2.82 of economic activity for each dollar expended.

<http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/enriching-communities-value-public-libraries-nsw>

Bookends scenarios

Neville Freeman Agency commissioned by the State Library of NSW, 2009

It was the aim of this project to explore how the future of NSW public libraries might unfold over the next twenty years. The scenarios are intended to enable consideration of the types of roles, products and services that will be offered, delivered and accessed through the NSW Public Library Network in 2030. The purpose of building the scenarios was not to build an accurate view of the future of public libraries but to stimulate reflection and thought on what might be the key elements and variables of our future and how we might influence and shape this future. From the discussions and workshops held with over 150 public library staff from all levels and age ranges, four possible scenarios have been distilled which represent different directions for NSW public libraries. All four scenarios identify new opportunities and unforeseen risks associated with the future environment in which public libraries operate.

http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/bookends_scenarios.pdf

Document published on the ALIA website July 2017

<https://www.alia.org.au/node/184/public-libraries>