



Scenario Review: The Future of Public Libraries

Building on the Bookends Scenarios

Prepared by



Scenario Review:

The Future of Public Libraries

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A critical conversation about the future of public libraries run by Oliver Freeman with:

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Alex Byrne – State Librarian & Chief Executive, State Library of NSW

Robert Darnton – Professor and Director Harvard University Library, Cambridge, US

Brian Gambles – Assistant Director, Birmingham Library, UK

Robin Hughes – Pro Chancellor, ANU, Canberra and Independent Film-Maker

The Hon. Michael Kirby – Jurist & Former Justice of the High Court of Australia

Sue McKerracher – Executive Director, ALIA, Canberra

Luke O’Sullivan – Managing Editor, Quadrapheme.com, UK

Jan Richards – Manager, Central West Libraries, Orange and Local Government representative on the Library Council of NSW

Graham Sansom – Adjunct Professor, UTS Centre for Local Government, Sydney

Anne-Marie Schwirtlich – Librarian, National Library of Australia

Frances Sims – Director, Public Library & Learning Services, State Library of NSW

Graham Smith - Chair, Public Libraries NSW

Gene Tan – Director, The National Library of Singapore

Andrew Tink – Historian and member of the Library Council of NSW

Elizabeth Weiss - Academic & Digital Publishing Director, Allen & Unwin

Robyn Williams – Science journalist and broadcaster, the Science Show, the ABC, Sydney

Briefing for Interviewees

We would love you to agree to be interviewed on the future of public libraries and to read in advance of this interview the soft copy of the Bookends Scenarios – a project that was completed five years ago by the Neville Freeman Agency for the State Library of NSW.

2014 marks the 75th anniversary of the NSW Library Act 1939. This landmark legislation led to the provision of free public library services for the people of NSW.

Seventy-five years later, public libraries are going strong, with 368 libraries across the state, 3.2 million members (44% of the population), 46 million loans per annum and over 35 million people visiting libraries each year.

The State Library of New South Wales is planning a program of events to commemorate the anniversary of the Library Act and to celebrate the growth and development of public libraries in NSW.

As part of the anniversary program the State Library is leading a research project, Building on the Bookends Scenarios, to explore possible futures of public libraries and build on the work of the Bookends Scenarios project of 2009.

You can read a copy of the 2009 Bookends Scenarios report here
<http://www.futureshouse.com/downloads/bookend.pdf>

Interviewees were given these questions to mull over

What is your headline view about the future of public libraries?

What experiences have you had that inform your headline view?

Do the bookends scenarios adequately cover the ground or are there things missing from them?

Who are the key players involved in the future of public libraries?

What do you think are the most critical influences shaping the future of public libraries?

How do your views differ from the conventional wisdom coming from others?

Who else should we be talking to?

The Scenario Review

This commentary is a distillation by Oliver Freeman of the conversations (oral and written) which were undertaken in the interviews and is not intended to reflect the views of the State Library of NSW or any other stakeholder.

What Is Your Headline View About The Future Of Public Libraries?

In the beginning was the word and the word was 'community'

The future of the public library is not the same as the future of the book. Inextricably linked as they are, the headline stories are very different.

Public libraries will continue. People are still keen to read physical books as well as e-books. The price of e-books is still comparatively high, as is the cost of purchasing paperbacks on Amazon. Importantly, libraries offer a communal, community space that is hard to replicate.

The library as the living room of the community is a concept that has grown in strength in the last five years. Provided we can evolve both locally and globally, the future of the public library in NSW seems to be assured.

The library is a place where the community comes together without a commercial or market driven reason.

Public libraries have adapted to changing community needs and that is why they continue to thrive. (Frances Sims)

There are significant generational differences relating to the use of public libraries and we are likely to see an ever-changing use of library services as people make the journey through their lives. For example, a sustained high use of children's picture books is evident among toddlers and early literacy groups with this use dropping away as kids become teenagers and fascinated with video games and social media – only for the rhythm of library use to change again when the kids become tertiary students, job seekers and parents.

The role of the library for the community as a whole is the key.

This role is undiminished by changes in the economy. Libraries provide enormous services to communities. When people need help, as in times of recession, they go to the public library to get it. And when times are good, libraries help to reduce social inequality and increase social mobility.

We need community hubs as so little is funded at that level. (Elizabeth Weiss)

This civic role is of great importance. Many baby-boomers highlight the important role of public libraries in their upbringing, but it is more than an individual service. Libraries maintain a key role in supporting and delivering civic culture - a role that includes among other things, connecting authors to readers. Ironically, this is not a role usually fulfilled by publishers who are masked from direct engagement with readers by their intermediaries – booksellers, library suppliers and the libraries themselves.

Australia's cultural and linguistic diversity is also changing the role of libraries. True multi-culturalism is expensive to manage and individuals cannot afford to manage it on their own.

Public libraries are, thus, adapting quickly to a changing role from being purveyors of information to being a richer community resource. Shellharbour City Council has, for example, grasped the nettle to use its public library to build community across a fast changing, difficult and complex demographic.

The future for the public library looks strong. (Frances Sims)

Synonymous with the idea of community is the celebration of the local. It is fitting that local government majority funds libraries in NSW as it delivers a greater synergy between the locus of value and its funding source. Nevertheless, one of the great challenges is that that funding bodies have a lesser perception of value than users. If you view libraries simply as cost centres it is really difficult then to understand their wider role and easy to propose funding cuts.

This local aspect is not necessarily diminished by globalisation, as an increasing focus is made on the role of libraries to build community-generated content such as local history.

The commitment of councils is also profound as they rate highly the role of libraries in the well being of local communities and as a source of information on State government policies and practice.

I feel very strongly that the public library should be there for all, not just for 'people like us', with no barrier to use. (Alex Byrne)

After all books are formative and we need a repository which is not influenced by the vagaries of commerce. The public library thus offers an alternative to the divisive philosophies of user pays and private ownership.

It's all about the money

Despite usage changing and increasing, library funding is always under pressure. This impact has been dramatic in the UK where the sustained attack on public sector expenditure by the current coalition government has seen widespread library closures and service reduction. The US has fared somewhat better as has Australia but the threat to public libraries is ever-present.

The current NSW funding model entails councils funding their library services with assistance from the State Government. The State Government funding is partially calculated on a per capita basis. Many councils argue that they don't have the resources to make headway on library improvements and advocate the provision of a higher proportion of funding from the

State Government. Nevertheless, library services need to be available to everyone so as we go forward we will see a greater need to improve mobile, remote and regional services.

We have got rich opportunities given the right mix between policy and funding.
(Graham Smith)

The development of digital libraries makes many challenges for libraries foremost of which are the funding the purchase of digital materials and the digitisation of analog content.

There is a tendency, as well, to see the library service as something that can be cut in times of austerity.

The public library is the last democracy in a world polarised. (Gene Tan)

Over emphasis on service provision often masks the importance of our having an informed local electorate – the democratic viewpoint is critical for the future health of our society in which the library has a formative role.

Their survival really depends upon mobilising public opinion and actually getting public authorities to support them because they deliver the goods. Those goods are not appreciated adequately by most people. (Robert Darnton)

Public Libraries in NSW have to constantly demonstrate their relevance to their funding bodies and to other sectors of the community. While visitation and loans remain high, there is the perception among non-users that the electronic world will mean the death or decline of the public library. This is reflected in local government questioning their library sub-ventions.

It is absolutely essential that the profession constantly reviews its services and assesses their relevance and is able to demonstrate the value and applicability of these services to the community. We cannot be complacent or victims or we will become irrelevant.

At the end of the day we are talking about money. (Andrew Tink)

Public libraries must continue to translate the love and trust in them into cogent arguments about relevance and value. It is sobering to ask, if the local, state and territory investment in public libraries did not exist and we wanted governments to commit to that expenditure today, how successful would we be?

If we agree that knowledge is to be shared and isn't owned by anybody and it is the government's role to promote the idea of an informed populace, there will have to be the notion of an (independent) repository which is quite separate from things that are bought and sold. If that philosophy disappears then public libraries have no future. (Angelo Loukakis)

Format wars

'Unimaginable technology' is what the future is about. How do we deal with a future which is hard to conceptualise? In 2009 'big data' and social media were only just beginning. Thinking forward is a big challenge.

Redefining the role of the library in the age of the Internet because 'the great library in the sky' is having an enormous influence on the future as it brings into focus the question as to who should be the funder of access to digital libraries and the use of digital materials?

The library experience must be as good online as it is in real life and even in the digital world we will need more physical space in the library in future rather than less, as personal living space will be at a premium. (Sue McKerracher)

The days of the book are not over – more books are published every year than the year before. The danger is that public authorities misunderstand the 'health' of the book going forward and make assumptions that digitalisation is killing off the book.

One thing we can learn from the history of books (which itself is a very recent subject) is that new media don't displace old ones! (Robert Darnton)

More than that, new media are enriching access to knowledge in a way that expands rather than diminishes the role of the library. We need more money to explore multiple formats as the idea of a single cheaper e-book replacing a traditional p-book is no longer a relevant model.

As a result we do need to see changes in business models and lending models. Public Lending Right needs to be adapted to accommodate digital use as well as traditional use.

The impact of technology as an enabler is well known - not just between media but also within them. Technologies find their own level over time.

Technological change may not be the key issue but who pulls the levers! By example, from a user's viewpoint, access to digitising and digital delivery is a key service need and on the supply side is the need for the effective management of intellectual property and the rights of copyright holders. Balancing these needs is tricky. Maybe the biggest challenge going forward is how we can get the best out of technology without over relying on commercial enterprises such as Apple, Google or Amazon and, thus, enjoy the neutral organisation of knowledge that has been a great boon in the past – libraries and the Dewey system come to mind.

Libraries have been handed an identity crisis. What's a library? Just data!! (Angelo Loukakis)

What Experiences Have You Had That Inform Your Headline View?

Mainly social

Many of our interviewees feel that the public library is the main cultural institution that must at all costs be kept in the public domain. The most valuable contribution we can make collectively as a community is the advancement of access to knowledge for everyone.

(The Mitchell Library) was a refuge from the place next door where I was a member for 19 years ... and it got me into writing history. (Andrew Tink)

Strangely even as societies become more connected technologically, they become increasingly fragmented with niche groups becoming ever more isolated and members of these groups not traversing boundaries to the other groups. This has resulted in a deepening of fault lines between groups with more and more polarised views and communities unable to reconcile their opposing views.

The experience of creating the Library of Birmingham (UK), from vision to delivery, and the experience of managing a successful first year, has conclusively shown that the public library, if appropriately transformed, is capable of delivering social capital in large volume, and of winning hearts and minds. (Brian Gambles)

A place like the library which is neutral and which embraces diversity in an inclusive way is needed more than ever. The book component is holding up well with fiction borrowings up in NSW and Internet hours going gangbusters. Book clubs are flourishing. Programs and events are becoming more popular and so are their educational roles.

As the editor of a literary journal I purchase a large number of physical books and e-books. The cost is still high for both of these where you are purchasing well-known books from established houses. I personally find it difficult and less enjoyable to read poetry and fiction on a device. I am happier to read ephemeral non fiction / informational texts. I value the library service. So does my family. I often go to the library with my nephew for instance. It is a place to look at books, without having the pressure to buy. (Luke O'Sullivan)

Lifelines

Libraries are an irreplaceable public asset. And stories told by older generations pay homage to the role of the public library.

As one of six kids and Dad a tradesman - the local library was like an Aladdin's cave. (Robin Hughes)

My father was the reference librarian in Southwark (in London) and I have been a keen library user and a strong believer in their vital contribution to society ever since. (Graham Sansom)

It was my university. (Robyn Williams)

I am not so sure you can get a completely neutral approach to information but nonetheless I think of all the wonderful librarians who helped me and that makes me realise how much I owe to them and how much I think the modern generation will miss out if it doesn't have the same facility of professional librarians helping it get access to information. (Michael Kirby)

Thus, many respondents are deeply impressed by the role played by public libraries in their childhood and young adult years. Particularly when the media were less complex than they are today and when books were relatively more expensive.

My relationship with libraries is totally different (now), partly because I have a Kindle and partly because I get lots of books sent to me. Nevertheless, the library is a most important meeting place and offers the opportunities for interaction. (Robyn Williams)

For many, public libraries were the only access to knowledge outside the school classroom – and knowledge not just for learning but also for entertainment and well being – for deep reading as well as random reading.

Sh!!!

The current emphasis on community and the third place philosophy may imperil the idea that the library or at least part of it, is a quiet place for study. There are still people who want a quiet space. Even the younger users!

Do The Bookends Scenarios Adequately Cover The Ground Or Are There Things Missing From Them?

The Bookend Scenarios cover very different views of how the world will evolve - it is a great study of the impact of technology but somehow misses the mark in many socio-political-cultural developments.

We might question whether the rise of iPad Apps which the scenarios did not envisage, may be worth considering, given that these provide a multimedia experience which takes the discussion beyond text and into a multimedia experience which cannot be replicated in a library.

The scenarios do cover the ground but they are blurring. This was always to be expected. The most accurate prediction is *How Buildings Learn* but there is a definite sense of localism creeping in today as envisaged in *Silent Spring* which we ignore at our peril - from a client and governing perspective.

The scenarios seem broad enough to be comprehensive, since inevitably what will emerge will be a 'pick and mix' set of trends and issues not all of which are predictable. The emphasis on information and entertainment in the scenarios may be deceptive - a free at point of access entertainment service is doomed as is an information service which is not available anytime anywhere.

We need to focus much more on learning as a challenging skill, to be cultivated and nurtured, and on knowledge as an outcome. (Brian Gambles)

The scenarios work well in positing possible futures and therefore challenging our assumptions, values and thinking. Funding is still happening which means the more dystopic futures like *Neuromancer* and *Silent Spring* are challenges still to come. It is in the nature of scenario work that organic futures like *How Buildings Learn* unfurl progressively but the disruptive futures will arrive unannounced from left field.

Your scenarios look like they were a lot of fun to do. (Robin Hughes)

One commentator suggested that the pace of change has been a little slower than the scenarios suggest and it is not an 'either/or' world. Elements from each of the scenarios seem to be emerging to create a different picture. The early warning indicators are very important and helpful in understanding how we are relating to our community and how the future is unfolding.

On the other hand! The scenarios have travelled remarkably well but it's all happened much faster than they suggested. There is not much missing. *How Buildings Learn* has a very strong ring of truth about it. (Alex Byrne)

Net neutrality which is touched on in the scenarios is a growing problem which will become sharper going forward as, for example, governments are concerned about security and service

providers are impressed by user pays philosophies which may increase the divide between consumers who have resources and those who don't.

Your scenarios were brave and interesting. (Sue McKerracher)

Censorship is a related issue to net neutrality and one about which the Internet's democratic founders feel negative - the philosophy that information should be free sits well beside the philosophy that it should also be unfettered.

E-lending is a big and new topic since 2009. Perhaps PLR and ELR need to be expanded to include e-books. But nobody has yet created a model which is accepted or acceptable. It is not a political priority nor is it of great commercial significance for the suppliers (publishers, authors, bloggers). Any model has to make sense of the technology so 'copy-caps' for example may be of limited value whereas 'Spotify' style subscription systems make more sense.

I am certain something like Spotify will emerge for e-books. (Ross Balharrie)

The big shift, we suspect, from 2009 to 2014 is the need for collaborative network solutions rather than 'linear' supply chain ones. The emergence of consortia reflects this. But in a virtual world where is the library located? Is it in the physical library building or does it reside on the platforms offered by players like Amazon/Kindle or Overdrive. The e-lending portal developed by the State Library reflects the need for players to share their information and their experiences relating to e-books.

Ninety per cent of libraries offer e-books these days but the collections are still relatively small. And 'in-copyright' commercial publications are an even smaller proportion of these collections.

Backing one format against the other may not be the key issue in the future. Offering the book as an app. with the user being given the ability to personalise content to 'fit' their needs rather than seeing one format as replacing another may be a better bet.

Nevertheless, a future like *Fahrenheit 451* where libraries become digital hubs and tele-centres is still a live potential. We need to stay alert as the future unfolds!

Who Are The Key Players Involved In The Future Of Public Libraries?

The people

Librarians continue to be the key players to ensure that context is given to every view, culture and development. The engagement of those with knowledge and experience in different subjects is also important - almost an expert-sourcing approach as opposed to the much vaunted crowd-sourcing based on the wisdom of crowds.

Let's not forget the public users and non-users of public library service as well as key thought-leaders in the community and the professional groups that many of them represent.

Government

Of course Local Government remains the key player but it is heavily influenced by the community and so it is essential to build strong partnerships with the other cultural partners, heritage organisations, education providers, community organisations and the media. These partners help in the development and delivery of projects and programs and are key advocates.

The two levels of government are very important and our recent history shows a lack of political engagement between the public library network and the politicians. The merger of the public library associations to form one statewide organisation in NSW is helping to counter this problem.

Cultural institutions such as libraries need support from State and local government but the understanding of the significance of the library is patchy. This may explain why as a rule library usage is up but funding is down.

The State Library

The State Library is a key player in its developmental programs, its funding and general advisory role and more specifically in helping library managers to deal with local issues. A recent situation in a public library that involved friction between young and old library users was resolved by the helpful intervention of the State Library to explore strategies to work out the problems.

We need the State Library not only to provide guidance and leadership to the public library network in NSW, but also to help shape more equitable funding arrangements so money is available where it is needed most and to provide the stimulus to develop collaborative regional library facilities.

The development of digital hubs presumes that public libraries are operating as networks with the State Library or big municipal libraries at the centre – acting as the rights negotiator on behalf of consortia with the content providers (publishers, library suppliers etc.).

The private sector

What is the role of the private sector in the future of public libraries? It doesn't seem to be obvious particularly as people request free access to information.

Public- private partnerships have a clear role to help libraries but full privatisation of library services is antithetical to their social and democratic role.

What Do You Think Are The Most Critical Influences Shaping The Future Of Public Libraries?

Things digital

Digital technology is the big influence. Depending on how the technology continues to evolve it may render libraries obsolete. Intellectual Property legislation could have an impact if it limits or tightens the availability of information. Amazon could alter the shape of the books industry.

The rise of e – is, at this time, a perception of influence rather than an actual effect (it has yet to hit critical mass). However if public libraries are to remain relevant they must embrace it without neglecting other areas.

The scenarios seem to suggest an ‘either/or’ world when the reality is that it is everything together. Digital representations are very important but people still want to see the physical object.

The Internet is a critical driver of the future but, maybe, libraries are complementary to it rather than sitting ducks to be replaced.

The role of libraries to outreach to people needing Internet guidance is one example of making Internet access available to people who are variously challenged to be able to do this as private citizens.

The library has to be into everything – multi-media, digital and analog platforms, people not like us but all of us.

As the world globalises so the local becomes more important.

Things local

The sense of library as ‘place’ - this is an international pre-occupation and our buildings and our attitudes need to adjust to it. We can capture of local memories and create stories in partnership with the community. We might also see a move to single collaborative services e.g. one card.

Things global

We may see the convergence of cultural institutions that create a more international approach to library services worldwide.

Things financial

The financial constraints of local government may, in the short-term, have negative implications for an otherwise potentially healthy long-term future - i.e. if we cut funding now, it will never grow back.

The key vulnerability is funding with as examples the threats to mobile libraries and rural library closures and the reduction in library hours.

There is a lack of understanding in local and State government as to the content of library service provision and how it is changing.

The future of public library funding is insecure because councils are under pressure to cut costs and this pressure is unlikely to diminish.

The long-term financial sustainability of local government in its service provision role and its future democratic governance role are key influences.

The over-arching question is how will local government fit into the future of federation in Australia? (Graham Sansom)

We should not downplay the role of the community in the future of public libraries. A current funding campaign has attracted 50,000 signatures in NSW for a petition to be tabled in Parliament.

Things educational

The library's future role in the education process as part of the MOOCs movement with its emphasis on free online access for online students, is of great interest.

The changing nature of school curricula with its growing reliance on online access will position libraries in a different place as students are likely to retain some reliance in the future on the printed book. The future is not all 'e'!

e-Book development is plateauing so making a call on the death of the physical book is a bit premature. But other institutions like universities and newspapers are under threat ... The (internet) revolution is very significant on many levels. Just like dominos all over the place. (Andrew Tink)

Things social

Social and demographic trends are significant and as the neo-liberal philosophies strengthen their hold, we may see a movement in prevailing social attitudes against free services and in favour of charging.

Look out for continuing changes in behaviour in seeking information; learning; and sharing knowledge and creativity.

Such changes place convenience, control and relevance at the heart of what people want - how public libraries will deliver and the experiences they will create will be critical to shaping the future.

The future holds great potential for the public library as an agent for the growth of social capital; but there are significant threats to this potential being fully realised - outdated business models,

lack of visionary, strategic and business-like leadership, fiscal challenges with the public sector, and an over-reliance on the book and electronic surrogates rather than a focus on outcomes.

The future is very much in our hands. We can retreat into a world like the *Silent Spring* scenario or we can take the future in our own hands. (Alex Byrne)

Social divisiveness is, ironically, a key driver shaping the future of libraries. The library provides an adaptive mechanism for disadvantaged people in a world where the differences between people get more marked.

Things generational

One crucial element is reading and how it is changing between different generations. Readers, for example, have different expectations for example enjoying shorter texts that demand less sustained attention.

The public librarian is in touch with readers every day whose demand profiles are changing. It is a highly variegated and dispersed public who need to harness the knowledge available through libraries and need guidance on how best to do that – in all media.

The value of access to knowledge is now open to a wider group of people than ever before and this must benefit the cause of public libraries.

Things economic

The danger in the monopolisation of content is ever present. So the aggregation of publishers can block access to literature by refusing to sell it or only by bundling content and pricing it to suit their needs rather than needs of consumers.

Whatever future planning you do the key factor has to be adaptability to a changing environment and systemic intervention that encourages to create better futures.

But the 'threat' of privatisation is always there.

Things legal

Copyright is an issue because of the tension between the globalisation of communications and the persistent localisation of practice. In addition dealing in electronic rights is very complicated and we don't see any resolution between the supply chain parties that reflects an agreed business model.

Because of anxieties about roles and responsibilities, the recent history of the relationships between libraries and content creators on matters digital has been somewhat rocky. At times a refusal to engage has been communicated when a collaborative conversation was what was needed.

As a result lending models are being changed by some publishers to provide some assurances that e-lending is not open ended but linked to copy-caps and expiry dates.

Things climatic

Weather is a driver too; people drop in for cooling or heating!

Things different!

An Open Letter from Douglas County Library in the US

This is a time of great change in the publishing world. In the print world, public libraries are volume purchasers. Across the nation, we buy about 10% of all the books produced by commercial publishers. We buy about 40% of all children's books. Because of the many millions of dollars we spend, we typically get significant publisher discounts. That's part of the cooperative purchasing value of the library, and it has benefitted both publishers and taxpayers for over a century.

Many of our patrons are also interested in e-books. But lately publishers are changing the rules. Some -- four of the "big six" -- won't sell e-books to libraries at all. The two that did, HarperCollins and Random House, unilaterally changed the terms. HarperCollins requires us to "buy" the book again after 26 checkouts. (It's really more of a license to read than a purchase.) Random House recently raised the price of a new e-book by 300%. So a fiction title might cost \$80; a non-fiction title, \$120.

That's neither sensible nor sustainable. While the Douglas County Libraries will continue to buy print copies of popular titles published by the big six, we won't be spending \$120 for a single copy of an e-book.

In a free market, companies are free to set their prices. But we are free to seek a better deal - and we've found one. Instead of passively accepting what amounts to a 33% reduction in the purchasing power of the library, we'll be extending our network of electronic publishers to include those who are more responsive to our needs and budgets.

We have now identified some 12 groups of publishers, comprising over 800 individual companies. We have purchased from them over 7,000 e-book titles, which are now available from our catalog. We are buying the titles at discount, and we actually own them. This model of distribution, created by Douglas County Libraries, is now being picked up by hundreds of libraries across the nation. And we're signing up new publishers every day.

We encourage you to explore the offerings of those organizations which, like us, are pioneers in the 21st century world of publishing. You'll find fine children's books, reputable reference works, novels, histories, and romances.

How Do Your Views Differ From The Conventional Wisdom Coming From Others?

Culture and knowledge as well as their development is a more critical factor in the future of libraries compared to the inordinate focus on technology and the media of transmission.

The replacement of the value of physical books by a purely digital alternative is not acceptable. We will always want and need to have physical repositories for information. We will see the potential for multimedia products like iPad apps to replace, as the technology improves, certain texts - probably the purely informational ones.

Libraries are part of the bigger whole. Whatever importance we assign to technological change with the current focus on e-book provision in libraries this is not the main game. A focus on product and delivery methods is secondary to a focus on the fundamental business *raison d'etre*. Socio economic movements will bring more profound changes to the library than technology.

We need to change how we shape public libraries by being ever-vigilant about the external influences.

The role of the library as a provider of books is the crucial element.

Public libraries are the most respected service provided by local councils. There is more to local council activity than roads, rates and rubbish!

Who Else Should We Be Talking To?

Key players who were contacted and have not responded to the invitation to be interviewed include The Copyright Agency, The Australian Publishers Association, James Bennett Library Suppliers, Authors, the Copyright Council and CAUL.

We did not contact online education organisations and online platform providers like EBL and OverDrive.