

People Places

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People Places

A guide for planning public library buildings

People Places includes five sections to guide you through the planning and design of a public library building. Sections can be used independently, collectively or in sequence depending on what is appropriate for the particular project.

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About People Places

There have been a number of editions of *People Places* over the years with many people providing valuable input. All editions have been developed in close consultation with library stakeholders and practitioners involved in the planning, building and management of public libraries in NSW. The current update has been developed with input from Elton Consulting, fjmt and Neeson Murcutt Architects. fjmt were engaged for the review of the third edition of *People Places* which has been used as a basis for the online version of the publication.

[An overview of changes from the 2012 publication to the online version \[1\]](#) of *People Places* is provided for reference.

We wish to acknowledge the contribution of Dr David Jones, State Library of NSW. His extensive work on the previous editions included the development of the templates for preparing briefs for architects. These have been updated for this online version. Consultants Heather Nesbitt and Bligh Voller Nield also made significant contributions to the development of the first and second editions of the publication.

Finally we would like to thank all NSW public library staff and managers who have participated in workshops, focus groups and interviews and provided feedback for *People Places*. Their input is critical to its ongoing success.

People places: A guide for public library buildings in New South Wales
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In July 2019 [ALIA \[2\]](#) endorsed *People Places* as a national standard.

How do I use People Places

People Places will assist you with the planning and design of public library buildings.

There are five sections to guide you through the process. Sections can be used independently, collectively or in sequence depending on what is appropriate for the particular project.

It is important to remember that each library building and the service it provides is unique and should reflect the needs and aspirations of its community. The examples are not intended to be replicated in communities throughout NSW, but rather to highlight a range of approaches.

Photos for People Places

Thank you to all libraries who have allowed us to use their photos throughout this website. If you would like photos of your public library included please [email Kate O'Grady \[3\]](#). Photos should be at least 1 MB in size.

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Updated on 18 February 2021

1. <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/people-places/publication-update>
2. <https://www.alia.org.au/>
3. <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/public-library-services-contacts>

Features and considerations

Key design factors for public libraries

While the functional areas of many public libraries are similar, no two libraries are the same.

They are influenced by their social, economic and physical context, by climate, demographics and local culture, as well as changes in library services and digital technology. A range of key design issues have been identified which should be discussed and analysed during the building design process, expanding the building brief to ensure that these issues are adequately addressed before the building is complete. The building planning team will bring their expertise to the process but the library team may want to undertake further research in areas of interest to inform the planning process.

In this section

[Accessibility and approach](#)

A library must be open and accessible to the whole community. This means designing a building that promotes equity for people who are young and old, people with prams and people with disabilities.

[Acoustics](#)

Libraries are vibrant community gathering spaces, with an expanding range of uses. Thus, the design for acoustic quality needs to set the appropriate balance of activities and building zones that are acoustically connected but separate.

[Furniture and fittings](#)

Furniture selection is instrumental in creating an appropriate library environment. Furniture and fittings should be attractive, durable and comfortable, and should be selected with the characteristics of the library architecture and customers in mind.

[Identity and brand](#)

A library should be expressive of its community. It must relate to the people it serves in an inviting, non-institutional and welcoming way.

[Lighting](#)

Lighting design is as much about the quality of light (and dark) as it is about the appropriate level of light. The lighting design in a library has a huge impact not only on the functionality of the space but also on the ambience in the library.

Signage

Signage is important in libraries, especially larger ones because many people will not be used to extensive library layouts and may be confused by the wide range of books and other materials on the library shelves.

Technology

Information technology has a major impact on the shape and form of public libraries and in the ways we use them. The way technology is integrated into the building should be developed as part of a Technology Plan.

Asset management

A library building is a significant asset for council. Actively managing a building asset is essential for the efficient and sustainable operation of an organisation.

Collection layout

Many libraries are adopting techniques used by bookstores and other retailers – providing user friendly collections and engaging browsing environments, including using the right shelving arrangement and/or displays.

Flexible and multifunctional buildings

It is not possible to predict all future needs but an approach to the design that allows flexibility and adaptability will allow for easier modifications to the function of the library space.

Order and orientation

A simply laid out library where the relationship and access between spaces is clear and logical will be easier to use resulting in a better experience for both clients and staff.

Personal security

An appropriate level of security is required in all public libraries to ensure the safety of staff, users, the building and the collection.

Sustainability

Environmentally sustainable design (ESD) is about creating efficient buildings with a low environmental impact.

Accessibility and approach

Design a library building that is accessible to the whole community and promotes equity.

A library must be open and accessible to the community. This means designing a building that promotes equity for people who are young and old, people with prams and people with disabilities.

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to rethink the way services are delivered and library spaces are used. This new way should inform library building planning.

Access and flow

Access in and out of buildings has proven to be challenging for many libraries during COVID-19 restrictions. A single entrance can make it difficult to manage social distancing and customer check-in. Multiple entries allow for a separate entrance and exit. Foyers and hallways also need to be considered in terms of flow to the entrances, exits and library spaces. Wider entries and touchless doors assist with the movement of people, hygiene and social distancing.

Accessibility considerations

Number of floors

A single-level library is preferable. A well-located lift is required in multi-level buildings.

Access and approach

The entry and all parts of the library should be barrier-free, without steps or obstacles, and designed in accordance with building codes and standards. This includes ramps, door widths, door furniture, aisle widths, lifts and toilets. Luminance contrast should be designed to assist people who are vision impaired with wayfinding.

Entry

The front door, the first point of contact with the library, must be highly visible, easy to find and easy to open for all users. Electronic sliding doors are preferable, but consideration for hardware and issues relating to ease of door use, such as weight, will inform alternate designs.

Car parking

Provide specially marked car parking spaces for people with disabilities close to the entry and in compliance with standards.

Mobility

Aisle widths and corridors must accommodate wheelchairs, prams and motorised scooters with enough space for turning.

See Australian Standard 1428.1.

Furniture and equipment

These should be comfortable – provide a range of alternatives and cater for people with a disability. Counter height at service desks, readers' desks, catalogue systems and carrels must cater for wheelchair users and those in mobility scooters, with height adjustable mechanisms for knee clearance.

Adaptive technology

Provide text to speech readers and scanning equipment that produce an audio file for people with vision impairment.

Reading magnifiers

These may also be appropriate for people with low vision.

Computer equipment

Trackball-type devices should be provided for people with physical hand impairments who cannot use a mouse.

Floor coverings

Provide non slip surfaces. All flooring materials must be tested using a range of methods including ramp and pendulum testing. Note that additional trip hazards can include floor mounted items such as in-floor lighting and grilles.

See Building Code of Australia as well as Australian Standards AS/NZS 4586 & 4663.

Carpet

If used, it should be low pile with firm underlay or direct stick. Carpet squares/tiles are recommended.

Communication

Provide clear external and internal signage, ideally with versions in Braille and raised tactile format. Provide tactile ground surface indicators for way finding, and hazard warnings and hearing loops in meeting rooms and where counter staff are behind glazed screens. Audio signage may be another consideration in some locations where appropriate to assist people who are blind or vision impaired.



Sign for accessible path, Marrickville Library

Lighting

Lighting systems should provide diffuse even illumination that facilitates 400 Lux on counters and reading desks. Reading of book titles on the lower shelving requires a minimum 150 Lux at ground level within 300mm of books on shelves. Portable task light stands may also be appropriate for some people with low vision.

Shelving

Provide shelving at the appropriate height and reach for all users.

Standards

The Building Code of Australia and current Australian Standards will need to be followed in planning your building. These cover:

- accessible entry
- size of corridors
- bathroom amenities
- accessible car parking
- lift design, and
- additional requirements for accessible entry to retrofitted and refurbished buildings.

Approachability

Public libraries are a ‘democratic space’, openly inviting use by all members of the community. How the library is perceived, and how easily it is used, is critical to its success and its impact on a community.

An approachable building has:

- **considered building siting and design** and how this influences the perception of a library by various members of a community

- transparent facades providing a **direct relationship between the street or open space and the library interior**. For those unfamiliar with libraries and what they offer, external transparency allows passers-by to see inside before entering.
- **transparent work practices** which make library environments less hierarchical by breaking down the boundaries between staff and users, e.g. smaller service desks, side by side consultation, roving librarians etc.
- transparent **interiors with clear sightlines**, both vertically and horizontally, that allow library users to navigate easily, e.g. low shelves, open staircases, high viewing points, voids between floors so that all levels can be seen
- **comfortable and welcoming spaces** which offer inviting settings for reading, study, research and recreation
- **outlook** – while introverted, cloister-like space still has its merits, views and outlook greatly enhance the library experience, strengthening a library’s connection with its greater context and creating quality space within
- **access out of hours** – allowing library users access to the library beyond traditional opening hours creates greater equity of access for the library community. This may relate to the use of some library spaces, such as meeting rooms or seating areas, the use of Wi-Fi outside, or use of parts of the library collection.

Wayfinding considerations

Clear circulation

Provide logical paths of movement that are apparent even without signage. This involves well located entrances, aisles, lifts, escalators, ramps etc.

Visual themes

Distinguish between different functional areas. This is achieved by providing staged experiences rather than maintaining a uniform internal atmosphere. In recent libraries, wayfinding has been aided by variations in colour, materials, lighting, furniture, scale, etc.

Signage

Make the library easy to navigate for all people. Recent trends include the use of graphics which breaks down language barriers, dynamic electronic signage, and signage seamlessly integrated with the design of the building and the brand of the library.



Internal directional signage, Carnes Hill Library



Signs and wayfinding, Albury LibraryMuseum



Sign painted on the ground, Marrickville Library

Accessible content

Given the ever increasing and diverse range of content now provided by libraries, library design should promote and enhance the navigation of this material. Critical to this is places to access the online catalogue and digital collections throughout the library.

Digital literacy

Libraries play a pivotal role in promoting digital literacy, ensuring equitable access for people who would not usually acquire digital skills. Building design implications may include ensuring that access to technology is pervasive (terminals spread and integrated into a range of library spaces) as well as spaces for training and collaborative working.

Acoustics

Libraries are vibrant community gathering spaces, with an expanding range of uses.

A modern library often hosts multiple simultaneous activities requiring both concentration and focused thinking in tandem with large group events that are highly participatory. Thus, the design for acoustic quality needs to set the appropriate balance of activities and building zones that are acoustically connected but separate.

While it is obvious that public gathering areas must allow many forms of audible communication, this can be contrary to activities best supported by an acoustically controlled environment where solitude and reflection are possible.

A careful balance of acoustic comfort and acoustic privacy is the optimal design goal. Good planning can ensure correct placement of acoustically compatible functions.

Technical elements in acoustic design

Libraries are dynamic places where open, multi-functional and accessible areas (like reading areas, exhibition spaces and atria) are connected to each other and to private spaces (such as semi-enclosed offices, workrooms and meeting rooms).

For all these building zones, it is important to consider:

- **hearing conditions** for adequate communication between occupants
- **speech intelligibility** for communication purposes
- **privacy** from external or adjacent activity noise that interferes with concentration and conversely overhearing private conversations
- **excessive noise build-up** due to occupational noise.



Acoustic treatment, State Library of NSW



Acoustic treatment, State Library of NSW



Acoustic treatment, Marrickville Library

Acoustic design performance

Acoustic design performance can be summarised in three primary areas:

Sound isolation/sound containment

This means controlling the transfer of sound from one space to another. A high degree of sound isolation is provided by high density and airtight constructions and also by factoring the “weakest points” in the partition such as glazing and doors that can degrade an overall separation. Sound containment, and the level of background noise, also affects speech privacy between zones of activity.

Noise management

Constant and neutral noise (background noise) in a space provides a beneficial masking effect to activities that otherwise could be distracting. It is important to acoustically control the level of background noise generated by ventilation or operable facade systems relative to residual occupational noise.

Interior acoustic quality

Enclosed room acoustics is a function of room volume, the shape, and architectural finishes and features. Large areas of hard, reflective surface finishes within enclosed spaces may cause excessively high reverberance, which in turn accentuates background noise and occupational noise in the spaces. This may also result in a poor level of speech intelligibility.

For further information, refer to the Building Code of Australia and Australian Standard 2107: *Design Sound Levels and Reverberation Times for Building Interiors*. An acoustic engineer is commonly consulted during the building application phase as well as during the building design and construction.

Asset management

A library building is a significant asset for council. Actively managing a building asset is essential for the efficient and sustainable operation of an organisation.

Lifecycle costing

The importance of lifecycle costing has directly influenced a change in philosophy regarding construction cost and design excellence. Well designed, environmentally efficient buildings pay for themselves far more quickly than their alternative. The majority of the decisions influencing lifecycle costing (both capital and operational costs) are made in the early design phases.

Recurring costs

The building design influences maintenance programs, as well as patterns of use and operational characteristics which result in cost, including materials, labour, fuel, travel and transport. Effective asset management requires the assessment of these recurrent costs, which are often of major concern to councils as they represent fixed costs which are usually not covered by other outside funding sources. The ongoing costs of a building may include:

- regular building maintenance
- scheduled maintenance
- fire protection
- cleaning
- security
- air-conditioning
- graffiti removal/property maintenance due to vandalism
- building insurance
- utilities
- updating of the fitout or changes of use
- technology and equipment replacement.

Budget

It will be necessary to prepare long-term and short-term budget forecasts. To do this it is advisable to refer to council's property, maintenance and asset managers and potentially seek assistance from a professional asset management consultant. Their advice, and budget forecast reviews should be sought at key stages of the design and developed in accordance with long term asset management policies and strategies.

Maintenance

The maintenance of libraries is frequently overlooked in the design stage. By the time the building is occupied, it is often too late to make changes. Not everything can be anticipated, but

with a thorough approach to thinking through the lifetime maintenance costs and maintenance procedures, potential problems can be avoided. A maintenance plan is often requested from the design team at the end of design development and completed before handover. The process of considering the whole of life aspects of a building can also be undertaken in conjunction with the risk and opportunity assessments.

In shared facilities it is useful to establish a memorandum of understanding so that responsibility for the maintenance of shared areas is accounted for.

The following are some common maintenance and operations issues:

Access

- Through which route will large deliveries be carried from the loading dock into the library? Are doors, corridors, lifts and ramps wide enough? Are surfaces appropriate (hard wearing) in paths of travel?
- Can light fittings be accessed easily for replacement?
- Can glass be accessed internally and externally for cleaning?
- Does heavy furniture have wheels to facilitate cleaning routines?
- Are power points easy to reach?

Convenience

- Are replacement parts easy to source? Are standard fittings, e.g. lightbulbs, used?
- Will there be enough power points for the required equipment and for clients' use?

Flexibility

- Can a small portion of material be replaced if spot damage occurs? For example, carpet squares are easier to replace than standard carpet.
- Can items be reused in different locations (modularity)?
- Can windows be opened for natural ventilation if air conditioning breaks down?

Durability

- How frequently do finishes need to be replaced as a result of normal wear and tear?
- How long is the warranty on the building's materials and fixtures?
- How frequently does equipment and technology need to be updated? Can the furniture and building accommodate changes in equipment?
- Is there sufficient ventilation for enclosed electrical components – e.g. computers, PA systems, display cabinet lights, ceiling lights – to prevent overheating and burn out?

Collection layout

Many libraries are adopting techniques used by bookshops and other retailers to provide user-friendly collections and engaging browsing environments.

Attractive and user-friendly collections

Factors that affect the attractiveness of library collections include:

- organisation of the collection
- breaking up densely housed collections with seating, varied geometries and varied mood
- quality and attractiveness of shelving, shelf signage and shelf ends
- ability to display a range of differently proportioned items attractively and with ease
- density of collection (too many books can be overwhelming – face out books tend to be borrowed more)
- theming of subjects – by creating physical ‘rooms’ for specific subjects, frequently achieved with signage and interior design
- arrangement of shelves and relationship with surrounding furniture and architecture.

Shelving arrangements

Shelving arrangement has a significant influence on the appeal of library collections, the internal ambience of a library and the user experience. As with furniture, shelves can be used to define spaces and create ‘rooms’ in open plan buildings.

Shelving layouts

Radial arrangement

Creating a circular space in the centre that can be used for seating and provides users with a view of the whole collection from a single point.

Converging, off-axis or scattered arrangement

Shelves can be angled radially to converge at a single point. This can be advantageous for maintaining sight lines from a service desk or to create a focal point or hub within the library. Turning the shelves away from a perpendicular arrangement with the aisles and staggering the location of shelf ends can relieve the unrelenting pattern of collections. Shelves can also run for varying lengths creating interesting interstitial spaces, which can be used for seating or study desks.



Woollahra Library, Double Bay

Series of rooms

Shelves create semi-enclosed spaces in which furniture can be placed to offer a greater range of seating spaces and assist in browsing. Differentiation of ‘rooms’ by colour, subject etc. can assist with wayfinding.

Perimeter shelving

Shelves are primarily arranged along walls leaving free space in the centre of the room for seating or group activities. Alternatively the perimeter can provide a range of shelving and seating options, activating the edges of the building. This works well in buildings with limited outlook or in narrow rooms or corridors where the central space is a thoroughfare.

Well-designed shelving units and the display of items also significantly impact upon the attractiveness of library collections from the user’s perspective. While units may be flexible and mobile, the design of the shelf ends, top and lowest shelf, can bring a sense of permanence, even with castors below.

Shelving and shelf displays

The provision of appropriate and well-designed shelving is one of the most important components of a library building. It impacts directly upon the collections and services of the library and for users, is one of the most important features of their library visit. Good shelving will result in higher levels of resources on loan.

In most contemporary public libraries, adjustable steel shelving is a standard item although there may be times when custom-built shelving is required. The shelving can be colour coded, modular, and ‘dressed’ with end panels and canopies to enhance the appearance and to assist users in locating resources. There is an increasing trend towards shelving with no top canopy which increases the visual openness of the collection area. Conversely a fully framed aesthetic to the shelves can bring a sense of permanence even to mobile shelving (shelving on castors).



Grafton Library



Dubbo Library



Marrickville Library

Issues to consider

Shelving can be **attached** to the wall but is generally **freestanding**.

Consider **wall shelving** as custom joinery, perhaps **integrated** with display, desking and seating, to add to the architectural quality of the space.

The **recommended height** in the adult library is 1600 mm. This height for freestanding

shelving will facilitate sightlines, supervision and ease of access. In the children's area the recommended height is 1300 mm, although a maximum of 1550 mm is acceptable.

Shelving on castors can improve the flexibility of use of the collection space and enable collection areas to be easily expanded or contracted depending on use. This has become commonplace in many libraries, particularly near foyer spaces and children's areas, allowing larger group events and exhibitions to occur.

900 mm is the **usual width** for shelves, although manufacturers will also supply 600 mm and 1200 mm shelves as standard. Non-standard sizes can be specially manufactured but at an additional cost and longer delivery times.

It is preferable for the **lowest shelf** to be about 300 mm from the floor for ease of access, although this will reduce the number of shelves that can be accommodated. Alternatively, this dimension can be reduced to 100 mm if the bottom shelf is mounted at an angle so that the books are tilted back 10–20 degrees from the vertical. In this way the spines of the books will be better lit and easier to read.

Aisles between bays of shelves must be generous enough to suit all users and comply with access and mobility building standards. Where the ends of aisles allow for wheelchair turning, the minimum aisle width between shelves is 1500 mm (i.e. the clear space between facing shelves). Dead end aisles should consider a greater dimension of 1540 mm to allow for 180 degree turns.

Shelving accessories

All library shelving manufacturers offer a range of accessories, which enable their basic shelf units to be adapted to store or display other library materials. These accessories include magazine display racks, audiovisual kit shelves, newspaper displays, poster rails, CD and DVD storage, adjustable bookends and signage.

Shelves filled with books are exceptionally heavy, and the floor loading required to support them is considerably higher than normal office floor loadings. As the library's layout may change it is wise to construct all library floors with the same loading to promote flexibility.

Compactus shelving

Compactus shelving is mounted on rails allowing the shelves to be moved to provide access. Space is saved due to the elimination of permanent access aisles. Compactus shelving is not appropriate for general public access library collection shelving. It can however, successfully maximise the storage that can be provided, for instance, for the stack. Compactus storage floor loading requirements vary from one installation to another, depending on the type of shelving system, its capacity and the nature of the materials stored, but is considerably higher than normal floor loadings. A structural engineer in consultation with library/council staff must assess floor loadings.

Other types of shelving

Considerable change has occurred in the way that public libraries market themselves which includes the presentation of collections. Even the standard steel shelf can be dressed up in various ways to make the display more attractive. Apart from standard shelving, there are numerous other shelving options which can add variety or be used as feature elements. Collection items can also be displayed more prominently using techniques from bookshops and retail environments.

The following are some options for innovative shelving:

Free standing benches

Provide a convenient surface for users to browse at whilst standing. Face up displays and stacks of books, sometimes multiple copies of the same book, easily captivate people walking past. They can be effective if placed near the entrance as is often seen in bookshops. The low height retains clear sight lines.

Face-out shelving units

Often built-in as feature walls but achievable with standard shelves; sometimes extended to ceiling height for maximum visual impact (though access should be considered) works well for magazines, children's books, CDs and DVDs. Any inaccessible shelves up high could be used to display non-loan items or old issues for visual uniformity. It is possible to incorporate clear plastic lids containing a cover image, which is especially useful for magazine display.

Novelty display shelves

Custom-designed or individually sourced to provide a variety of shapes, colours and sizes. Can be fixed, on wheels, or built in as part of the architecture. Effective for the display of new books, 'great reads', quick read collections and niche collections.

End panels

Can incorporate computer terminals for catalogues – but be aware there have been some rather clumsy attempts at this. Also consider interspersing small workstations along the length of shelves.

Soft cable power

This way, lighting is provided by the shelf unit rather than from the ceiling. Particularly relevant to areas with high ceiling space.

Shelving as space dividers and space identifiers

Large pieces of free-standing joinery, which can create smaller enclosures in a large room. They can have integrated seats, openings, niches etc. and may combine both face out and spine out displays. These are often popular for children's areas, where they can be highly imaginative and playful, assisting in creating an exciting and educational space. Consider if space dividers, although large, can be relocatable or on castors as fixed furniture can limit the use of space or its rearrangement. If not on castors, consider carrying floor finishes through underneath these items to allow spaces to more easily adapt to change.



Randwick Library



Rockdale Library



Rockdale Library

Creating engaging displays

The following are some strategies for creating engaging displays.

Placement

Items displayed at eye level, near the entrance, or in areas of high traffic such as at the ends of aisles attract the most attention. Use these locations to 'sell' the items people want – popular books, new items etc. Entrances and circulation spaces are great places to put feature shelves and island benches. Aisle ends are conducive to small display units, which in various guises, can display face-out books and carry aisle signage. Integral customised display niches for end panels or perspex poster holders can provide easily changeable displays or signage relating to events.

Presentation

Differentiate special items with the targeted use of colour, signage and lighting on shelves.

Promotion

Inform library users of available resources by using posters, suspended banners, flyers, tags etc. Posters could periodically 'spotlight' various collections.

Attaching small tags or notes

Attachments like staff picks to particular books or shelves can also draw attention to them. Book reviews could also be user generated and linked to library social media sites – a great way for people to share ideas with others in the community.

Shelf signage

Shelf signage placed on top of the shelves can be highly visible. As long as shelf height is at the recommended maximum height of 1600 mm for adult collections and 1300 mm for children's collections.

Face-out shelving and display

These are often judiciously located near the main entrance, main circulation areas, or at the entry to aisles. Face-out displays of magazines, CDs, DVDs and talking books are very attractive.

Small shelving display units

These can be added to the ends of shelving aisles. In various guises these are able to display face-out books and carry aisle signage.

Consistent, well-produced signage

While adherence to a methodology of collection signage and display can be frustrating for library staff, the branding and unified appearance of graphics and fitout of a library has become increasingly important.

The professionalism of the library can be reinforced and promoted by well-considered graphics and ensuring that signage is consistent. Avoid hastily printed and ‘sticky-taped’ signage wherever possible.

Consider assistance from a graphic designer to provide a graphic handbook and a series of stationery and signage templates for future use. They are not necessarily difficult to use and contribute significantly to the library’s appearance.



Mt Druitt Library

Flexible and multifunctional buildings

Design and build flexibility into your new library building.

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to rethink the way services are delivered and library spaces are used. This new way should inform library building planning. New library buildings need to be designed for maximum flexibility to accommodate changes in service requirements, for example changing access and layout in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Flexibility

Flexibility is recommended in library design. It is easier to build flexibility into a large open space than in a building with a number of permanent rooms. Non-permanent rooms can be created in open spaces with the use of sliding doors, movable partitions and non-structural walls. Furniture placement can be used to create a sense of a room within an open space. Built-in features and fixed furniture limit flexibility and should only be used when there are no alternatives. Acoustic treatment is important when planning flexible spaces to ensure acoustic privacy. Spaces should be designed to accommodate many functions rather than single use.

Multifunction

Co-located or joint use libraries have the advantage of being in a building with additional spaces. In these circumstances the library may have access to additional spaces (for social distancing) or provide library space to other services when needed.

Layout and service requirements change so rapidly that flexibility must be designed and built into a new library building. In assessing the needs and service provision for a community, factors such as population growth, demographic changes and service delivery may result in additional space requirements or provision for expansion that must be accommodated as part of the conceptual and building design. It is not possible to predict all future needs but an approach to the design that allows flexibility and adaptability will allow for easier modifications to the function of the library space.

Consider these issues:

- **structural layouts which allow for non load-bearing walls** or demountable partitions, that can be removed or relocated with minimal disruption to the building

- **lighting choice and positioning** to allow flexibility for the relocation of shelving systems and furniture
- **a reticulated layout of mechanical and electrical services** to accommodate changes as required. Modular ceilings and ceiling tracks will allow for changes to layouts of air-conditioning grilles, light fittings and power. Some allow for easy suspension of flexible cabling and power to furniture locations. Skirting, floor boxes (designed to avoid trip hazards) and raised flooring systems allow levels of flexibility for power and data cabling. Some features such as skirting or chair rail height panels can be used to retrofit power and cabling to older buildings.

When planning for future extensions it is important to identify specific locations as part of the design process. If possible, allowance should be made for sufficient space on site for the construction of a later stage and if potentially building upward, the structure should be designed to accommodate the extra loading.

Flexible interiors

Most libraries experience fluctuating demand for space. This can occur at different times of the day, for example the after-school influx of children, different days of the week or at different times of the year, for example pre-HSC, or holiday periods with school holiday programs or a large number of tourists. This can make it difficult to plan a suitable sized library. Flexible use of space may be required to manage these changes in demand – meeting rooms that can be opened up for additional reading or Wi-Fi use, and furniture and shelving that can be moved and/or serve a number of functions.



Tocumwal Library

Many libraries find that there are an increasing number of groups wanting to use the library spaces during the evening when the library is closed. Libraries may want to consider after-hours access without staff, exploring technology options to assist in making library facilities available safely.

A flexible interior fitout allows a library to accommodate fluctuations in user numbers day to day, allowing a greater variety of activities. In the longer term, changes in collections and use, as well as significant functional changes should be easily achieved without significant impact upon the building.

Flexible interiors are characterised by:

- **flexible space dividers:** elements that facilitate changes in room size e.g. operable walls, folding doors, sliding doors, curtains
- **flexible infrastructure:** elements that allow services (lighting, ventilation, heating, cooling, power, data) to be reconfigured and accessed from any point in the building. This is relevant to both day to day control and ongoing maintenance, e.g. zoned air conditioning systems or lighting which can be controlled centrally and locally; Wi-Fi which allows access throughout the library; power which can be accessed in the centre of the library as

well as the perimeter

- **flexible furniture and finishes:** elements that can be easily moved, reused or stored away, or are multi-purpose e.g. shelving units on wheels, or furniture which can either be seating or a table
- **flexible access:** allowing out of hours events and out of hours access
- **flexible approach:** to inhabiting the space, outside areas available for different uses
- **loose joinery pieces:** flexible display for posters, books and other items, play equipment, seating benches
- **privacy screens:** curtains, screens
- **changeable display surfaces:** pinboard, whiteboard/write-on glass, magnetic walls, slatwall, digital display
- **variety of loose seating options:** sofas, chairs, bean bags, stools, armchairs, task chairs, floor cushions
- **variety of tables, preferably folding or on wheels:** single and communal study tables, modular meeting room tables, small laptop tables, coffee tables, small side tables (which can double as stools)
- **changeable floor surfaces:** rugs, carpet squares, padded surfaces for kids play areas, waterproof mats, crash mats
- **all-purpose built-in joinery along perimeter walls:** seating, benchtops, wall shelves.

Multifunctional buildings

As a community meeting space and cultural hub, a public library offers a range of spaces beyond traditional library services. While frequently the flexibility of the core library space will allow many events to occur by simply moving furniture, library briefs are expanding to accommodate a range of additional spaces including additional meeting spaces, multipurpose halls, workshops, performance areas and exhibition space. These spaces are highly popular with community groups as well as organisations and individuals keen to hire the space for classes, book launches, performances and exhibitions.

Issues to consider should include:

- spaces which accommodate a range of activities
- storage of furniture and possible storage for community group resources
- flexibility to subdivide space
- acoustics and impact on main library space
- out-of-hours access
- food catering or kitchenette facilities
- flooring that will accommodate a range of needs
- consideration of whether basic rigging, theatrical equipment, exhibition and display may be appropriate.



Author talk at Woollahra Library

External space should also be considered as a multifunctional space allowing for activities such as outdoor performances, markets and functions.

A multifunction library building can comprise a library with additional workshop, meeting and performance spaces, as mentioned above. However, a larger multifunction building is likely to include a number of different services and spaces that require extra planning and consideration.

Large multifunctional buildings

Planning a library service within a large multifunctional building requires consideration of similar issues as [planning a co-located library](#). Policy development, management, resourcing, staffing and space allocation need to be carefully planned with relevant stakeholders. Services could be provided by the library and operated by the same management team with staff diversifying their roles to cover a range of services. In contrast library services could be provided by library staff with other services provided by non-library staff. The management team could consist of separate managers for each service or could be provided by a combined library and community services (or similar) role.

When planning the spaces and location of services it is crucial to consider the way users will interact with the space and move from one space to another. The multifunctional complex will attract members of the community who were not planning to visit the library. This provides an opportunity to entice them into the library space and show them what is on offer, with the added advantage of potential new library members. Serendipitous discovery of different activities, spaces and collections can occur.



Willoughby library

Services to be offered within the building should respond to local community needs and provide the opportunity for locally based organisations to strengthen their connections with the community. Partnerships between the library and local services become easier to develop because relevant groups are already working within the same location. The combination of services and spaces will attract a broader spread of the community and increase council's ability to assist social cohesion and cross-cultural understanding.

Because of the substantial size, additional services and increased budget a large multifunctional library creates more of an opportunity for the development of an iconic building with aspirational architecture. This serves to regenerate the location, drawing more visitors to the area who activate surrounding streets and spaces through visits to shops and other nearby facilities.

The planning of the internal layout will need to consider use over different opening hours, and access to different parts of the building at different times of the day. The building might include large spaces that are not used regularly, staff can provide input on how to make best use of these spaces.

Depending on the design, acoustic treatment may be even more important than in a more traditional library. Contemporary buildings often include large open foyers, voids and mezzanine spaces that if left untreated can enable noise transfer to an extent that makes the spaces unusable. Quiet spaces with less sensory stimulation may be required.

Wayfinding and signage are extremely important in large buildings that offer a range of services to allow people to move easily through the building and find the spaces they want to access. Consideration of staff spaces and how staff from different areas interact and move from public to back of house areas and tasks is also crucial.

Furniture and fittings

Furniture selection is instrumental in creating an appropriate library environment.

Furniture and fittings should be attractive, durable and comfortable, and should be selected with the characteristics of the library architecture and customers in mind. The selection of furniture should fit with the overall design scheme, and with philosophies governing flexibility, functionality and sustainability.

Selecting furniture

A trend towards moveable furniture, which is arranged to create a space or cluster, is an effective way of giving a sense of permanency while also allowing for customers and library staff to re-organise. Furniture selection should allow for individual reading as well as collaborative, social environments. It is normal practice for the building's budget to include not only the total cost of the library building but also all built-in fittings, known as FF&E (fixtures, fittings and equipment) although this is not always the case.

If the architect's scope and building budget do not allow for this work, it is highly likely that the library staff, who are not normally trained in interior design and furniture specification, will be responsible for the fitout. This can be very stressful and may lead to false economy in terms of the final outcome. See our Checklist for Library Fitout for items included in a typical fitout.

[Checklist for Library Fitout](#)

- Shelving for different book collections
- Display shelving for new books, quick reads
- Specialist shelving for audiovisual materials, magazines and periodicals
- Study carrels/single study tables, group tables and chairs
- Lounges and comfortable chairs, bean bags, stools
- Specific furniture for children's and youth areas
- Specific furniture for specialist genre collections
- Furniture with built in power and USB connections
- Specialist storage and conservation resources for archival material
- Local studies microfiche/microfilm
- Craft and activity tables
- Computer hardware and software, specialised IT commons (specialised group learning hubs) and IT desking, computer catalogue stations
- Gaming areas
- AV listening areas and specialised furniture
- Workstations and office furniture
- Signage
- Information and other service desks, including self-service checkouts
- IT nodes such as wall or shelf mounted terminals

- Community information board/digital noticeboard
- Public art, graphic walls, interpretive display
- Room dividers in panel, sliding or curtain form
- Fire-resistant book return chute
- Audiovisual equipment
- Meeting room equipment including tables, chairs (and storage), whiteboard, kitchen equipment.

Considerations for the selection of furniture

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has forced libraries to rethink the way services are delivered and library spaces are used. This new way of thinking should inform library building planning.

Furniture and layout

Modular furniture and shelving on wheels allow for the reconfiguration of library spaces. Furniture can be used to create spaces and manage the flow of foot traffic around the library space. Consider how furniture will work during modifications, for example when needing to remove PCs and seats for social distancing curved or round tables may be more effective than rectangle tables. Furniture can be used to facilitate social distancing, for example appropriately spaced small booths or large ottomans could be designated as one per family in the children's area.

Consider furniture choices that can be used inside and outside. Unused outdoor spaces can quickly become usable if needed due to social distancing and ventilation requirements. Furniture materials and finishes that can be easily cleaned are recommended.

Storage

Storage for furniture is important, if required to remove furniture for social distancing. Space for furniture storage should be included in library building planning where possible.

While the architecture of a new or refurbished library might be excellent, without careful design the fitout can diminish the final outcome.

The design and selection of furniture and fittings is very important and some of the following issues require specific attention.

Unified with overall design

The selection of furniture and fittings must be unified with the overall design concept. Colour, texture and materiality of all furniture and fittings has an immediate impact on the overall design and should therefore be integrated into an overall concept.

Furniture supplier range

Despite their convenience, furniture suppliers are not limited to library supply catalogues. Some furniture and accessory companies supply to designers, architects, builders and the domestic, retail, commercial and hospitality trade.

Modular furniture

Modular furniture has some advantage over custom built items such as greater flexibility and reduced cost, particularly for shelving, tables and desks. The systems are generally designed to be reassembled in a number of configurations and often accommodate power and data cable management. Custom items can also be designed as an assembly of smaller items/modules which can be used in different ways.

Material choices

Colour, texture and materiality of all furniture and fittings has an immediate impact on the overall design and should therefore be integrated into an overall concept.

Stock availability

The future availability of stock should be considered in terms of replacement and new items.

Floor surfaces

Floor surfaces should be hard-wearing, easily replaced (particularly carpet), comfortable and non-slip. The choice of floor covering, as with all surfaces, will influence acoustic performance and aesthetics

Maintenance cost

The cost and ease of maintenance of all items should be considered particularly in reference to cleaning, painting and repairs.

Sustainable systems

Systems which allow for part replacement, re-upholstering, as well as recycling are a better long-term sustainable response.



Campsie
Library



Woollahra
Library



Bathurst
Library



Gordon
Library



Carnes Hill
Library



Dubbo
Library

Testing, certification and environmentally responsible selection

Testing and certification can ensure that products are not only safe, but that they will last, thus contributing to sustainability and minimising use of the earth's resources. Other environmentally

responsible choices include furniture made with sustainable timber and non-toxic materials. The following resources can help you choose appropriate furniture and fittings for your building.

Australasian Furnishing Research and Development Institute

The AFRDI is an independent not-for-profit technical organisation providing standards, testing, product certification and research for buyers and sellers of furniture.

[VISIT THE AFRDI WEBSITE \[1\]](#)

Green Star rating tool

The Green Building Council of Australia's (GBCA) Green Star rating tool includes a series of criteria for environmentally responsible selection of furniture.

[LEARN ABOUT THE GREEN STAR RATING TOOL \[2\]](#)

Service desks and self-check

Public libraries no longer require large reference, information and circulation desks, particularly with the use of RFID/self-check and roving librarians. Many are configured to be mobile and modular, on castors or wheels. Furniture and desk arrangements at library entrances have become far more flexible, welcoming and less hierarchical. There are areas for browsing, community noticeboards, reserved item pickup, newspaper lounges and cafes.

Some libraries continue to prefer a substantial service desk, particularly if there is a lower percentage of self-check and a more conservative community, while others have moved towards a modular, mobile and minimal arrangement as part of a suite of other elements. All desks, no matter what size, should allow for side by side consultation and searching with the customer.

Considerations for service desk systems

As service desks shrink, the design and location of self-check areas becomes increasingly important. Some libraries prefer to scatter self-check terminals throughout the library while others still consider the most appropriate location to be at the entry/exit, close to the service desk to provide assistance. While some library staff consider the pre-packaged self-check units to be more flexible, others view the integration of the self-check areas into the overall design to be fundamental to a unified aesthetic.

Despite these changes, the library staff must have the greatest input into the design of these items if a successful outcome is to be achieved. It is important to note that:

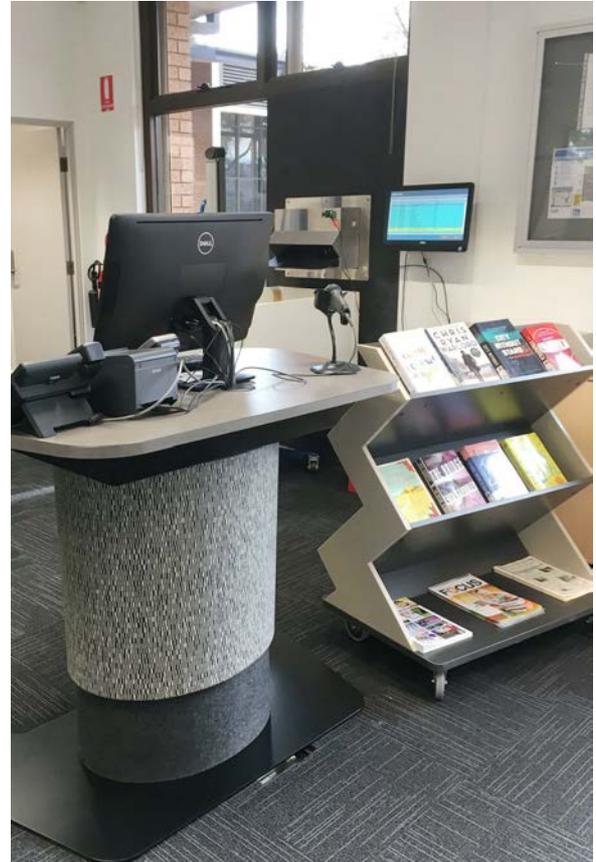
- service desk models are changing in scale and configuration to allow for **more side-by-side consultation** and to allow for a **greater proportion of roving staff**. Some staff may still stand at desks for long periods and floor finishes should be forgiving on legs.
- a **modular system** can provide flexibility for later changes, reduction or extension.
- correct **desk and counter height** are crucial and should **cater for a range of users**. Desks should be provided with a proportion of the surface at a height suitable for wheelchair users, those using mobility scooters, children and seated library staff
- general and task lighting on **dimmer switches** for control should be provided where

possible. The service area does not need to be flooded with light. High level illumination is only required to the desk surface.

- **clear sightlines to the service area** can optimise staff efficiency, client navigation, and assist in general security and safety.



Grafton Library



Dural Library



Rockdale Library

See

[LIBRARY BUILDING BRIEFS](#)

for more details on library fitout.

1. <http://furntech.org.au/>
2. <https://new.gbca.org.au/green-star/>

Identity and brand

Libraries are a focal point for the community, a place where groups and individuals meet, discuss, listen and learn.

The library building also serves an important civic function, both in terms of the service it provides and the image it conveys. A library should be expressive of its community. It must relate to the people it serves in an inviting, non-institutional and welcoming way. Creating an image and identity for your library does not need to be expensive. Primarily it is about developing an agreed vision for your library facility, through consultation and collaboration and then using this image to build a service and facility that the community knows and values.

Making libraries memorable: experience and brand

While the value of libraries in a digital world remains intact, library staff are aware of the range of competing sources of information, knowledge and recreational opportunities now available to their community. They are embracing their expanding role as community and cultural spaces, providing a broader scope of programs and public areas. To gain a competitive edge, they have embraced retail and business strategies, which focus on ensuring that library resources are easily seen and recognised, frequently used, and above all, convenient and memorable enough to attract subsequent visits.

To begin with, the act of visiting a library should be memorable. To achieve this, the library should provide an experience that is beyond the expected, fun or exciting, challenging, a wonderful place to be in, educational in unexpected ways and last in the memory. Libraries can create spaces which are experiences and learning tools in themselves. They have turned their attention to other learning environments such as museums and visitors' centres, as well as commercial and retail sectors, for inspiration. Conventional storage of books often makes way for stimulating and engaging educational settings. Library spaces actively compete for recreational time against commercial alternatives and appear compelled to set their identity and create brand awareness so that their services are recognised.

Two potential models are:

- the **museum model**: libraries act as interpretive space, enhancing the learning experience beyond traditional collections
- the **retail model**: stimulating, merchandised and branded/themed space, capable of easily evolving over time.

Museum model

Interpretive libraries, like museums, are experienced as well as visited. For many years, museums have accepted that simply storing and displaying items is not enough to guarantee visitation. Creatively designed spaces which promote user involvement and enhance the experience of learning are far more effective and popular.

The librarian who commits to interpretive space does not rely on a static environment which remains the same from the day the library opens. Flexibility remains essential, allowing the space to evolve to meet user needs. Experiences within the library will change depending on client preference. Success requires the ability to experiment and innovate, and the enthusiasm and determination of the staff to test and replace environments depending on their effectiveness.



Children's area, Rockdale Library

Creating successful interpretive space relies on a plan which identifies stories which can be told from themes of books, local or broader culture, historic and current events, exploration of user content, or the environment/cultural context. The interpretive environment can be elegantly integrated with the architecture or lean towards humour, even fantasy or kitsch.

The nature and quality of these environments varies significantly. Professional assistance can be sought from interior, graphic and exhibition designers, digital media professionals, architects and artists.

Aspiring to an interpretive environment should not be intimidating to the developers of libraries with smaller budgets and footprints. Artwork and installations can be sourced through local partnerships with schools, TAFE, universities, local history and local museum organisations and cultural/ multicultural organisations, as well as local artists and digital media enthusiasts.

Consider:

- graphic walls
- public art installations
- interpretive displays with semi-permanent exhibitions
- graphic glass and patterns either applied as film or integrated into glass structures
- suspension of banners and ceiling mounted installations
- fixed objects in children's areas (sculpture, murals, cabinets, play equipment, even fish tanks)
- interpretation of historic/cultural information including artefacts, photos and text
- projection and digital display (can be interactive)
- interactive projection floor displays
- temporary exhibition space
- altered mood (for example dark, star-lit space for story time), and changes in finishes, textures and colour between spaces.

Children's spaces can be greatly enhanced by interpretive environments, particularly if the space is shaped to the various levels of a child's learning development allowing children to explore at an age appropriate level. Consider colour, texture, and places to explore and discover.

The active involvement of users with their library environment has become commonplace. They are provided opportunity to customise and contribute to their environment, adjust the furniture, create content, such as music, art, digital media, local history, and be involved in active learning programs. Libraries can inform users on sustainable living and building design through experiencing their library.

Retail model

Libraries compete for the community's recreational time, which frequently involves trips to shopping centres, as well as electronic games and digital social networking environments. There is an expectation that environments will be stimulating, attractive and engaging. Many libraries are focusing on retailing and merchandising strategies. In particular, there is a focus on the display of the collection, creating exciting and inspiring environments as well as spaces which are easily navigated through interior design and signage.

Retail environments are increasingly sophisticated in their interior design. In environments such as shopping centres, the design frequently promotes itself as familiar or aspirational recreational space encouraging longer term stay and a sense of belonging. Activities beyond the core retail function are promoted as draw cards for clients. Libraries use similar inducements such as:

- music, AV collections and electronic games
- art collections
- recreational and cultural classes
- film nights
- book groups
- holiday programs and courses
- cafes, etc.

In offering recreational opportunities, the library can advertise its core activities as well as acting as a social hub, strengthening social cohesion and interaction. Libraries are frequently early in embracing new technology, with retail style fitouts seamlessly integrated with digital technology and audio-visual communication.

Marketing and branding

Contemporary libraries increasingly rely on their brand and branding. As the use of libraries changes, so has the perception of libraries. Marketing is critical in changing the community's perception of the role of public libraries.

The need to differentiate and highlight the unique value of a library over alternate options for people's valuable time has never been so critical. Perception of a library is developed far beyond a logo. All elements of the library, including the built



Narellan Library

environment, the facilities and programs

offered, the convenience, the interior design, furniture selection and graphics will influence the perception of users and their opinion of a library's brand.

A unified vision, if not a brand, will enhance the library visit experience. This includes changes made long after the designer has completed the initial work.

Built issues to consider:

- design excellence, iconic architecture or, at a minimum, transparent and **identifiable design**
- sophisticated and **innovative interiors** which provide contemporary, elegant and flexible approaches to signage, graphics, shelving displays, general layout and furniture
- provision and promotion of **a range of spaces**, both active and quiet
- **street presence** that is engaging and inviting (advertising interiors at night, transparent during the day), integrated with good external signage, and where necessary “Green” or ESD credentials and design
- **flexibility for events**, exhibition and performance (flexible wiring, AV points, ceiling mounting points)
- **unified visual presence** and ambience (graphics, architecture, interiors, signage, advertising)
- provision of **creative content areas** (production of digital media, AV, art, music)
- provision for **interactive digital display** and projection
- **community involvement** with library design, fitout and exhibitions
- **outdoor breakout areas** allowing a greater choice of settings and ability to host outdoor events
- modern **interpretive museum exhibition** design (particularly for local history, special collections)
- **performance opportunities**, sound, graphic walls, visual projection, sensory environments, lighting effects
- food outlets or **flexibility to eat and drink**
- **play areas** (at a minimum louder active children's areas should be available).

Libraries with a unified visual presence

Burwood Library - Prior to 2020 renovations



Glass divider with decal, Burwood Library



Glass divider with decal, Burwood Library



Indoor feature in the shape of a tree, Burwood Library

Oran Park Library



Children-sized racing rank podiums, Oran Park Library



Racing-themed feature and carpet design, Oran Park Library



Racing-themed carpet design, Oran Park Library

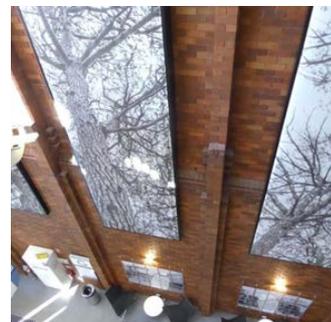
Rockdale Library



Image of trees on meeting room wall, Rockdale Library



Cityscape illustration on lightshades, Rockdale Library



Wall-height photographs of trees, Rockdale Library

Design as marketing

In recent years, many public libraries have sought to improve their marketing through the adoption of various retail strategies in their physical design such as:

- the provision of **flexible floor space** which can be used for a variety of activities and experiences including courses and events
- **weeding of collections** to allow more space for display, particularly face out shelving
- creating memorable and **exciting spaces**
- furniture and shelving which is moveable, **modular** and changeable
- exhibition/**display space** which is appropriately lit, attractive and accessible
- adopting **retail strategies**, e.g. new trends in concept stores where a range of linked products are offered, or ‘one-stop-shops’
- **in-house cafes**, restaurants and stores
- **themed areas**, with considered consistent colours, graphics, materials, fittings and fixtures
- retail-influenced **product display**, where featured products are displayed prominently.



Youth seating area, Albury LibraryMuseum

Lighting

Create inviting spaces by adjusting the quality and level of lighting.

The lighting design in a library has a huge impact not only on the functionality of the space but also on the ambience in the library. Lighting design is as much about the quality of light (and dark) as it is about the appropriate level of light.

Lighting within libraries should firstly offer a range of spaces and settings for different activities, and secondly can empower the visitor with a limited degree of personal control where the lighting conditions may be modified by the individual. In this way the lighting should complement the architecture and interior design so that themes and elements are accentuated, and the control should be intuitive to use. The aim is also to create a degree of control and flexibility between daylight and artificial lighting. Information on natural light is in the [Sustainability section](#) of People Places.

Lighting techniques

The general rule of thumb for library lighting design is to provide light of even intensity and distribution for lighting shelves and task surfaces. Conversely, flooding all interiors with light can result in a clinical and unfriendly environment. The aim should be to create comfortable and welcoming spaces.

Maximise lighting efficiency

Ceiling and wall surfaces are usually light reflecting rather than light absorbing to maximise light reflections – this does not mean that all library building surfaces should be uniformly light in colour.

Bring the light source close to where it is required

An example is task lighting. This avoids inefficient lighting of space – additional localised task lighting may be required at locations such as study desks and reading chairs.

Ensure that lighting and shelving are carefully related

This ensures that readers are not standing in their own light.

Ensure accessibility to light fittings

Not too high, easily maintained and easily cleaned.



Campsie Library

Ensure a clear maintenance regime One must be provided before the design is approved for documentation.

Choose a luminaire

A luminaire is the lamp or globe within the light fitting. Consider its energy efficiency, the hue of the projected light, the resulting colour of objects which it illuminates (colour rendering), its ability to dim if required and its availability to be replaced.

Highlight focal points

Check that focal points in the library are highlighted by lighting design, such as displays and service points.

Provide feature lighting

This adds to the visual impact of the building after dark as well as defining specific interior functions.

Adjust lighting for specific areas

Consider the level of light (or lighting control) provided to areas where projected images may be used.

Consider mood lighting effects

Consider softer lighting effects, even darker spaces, such as creating moods in story time rooms, where strong task lighting or shelf lighting is not required.

Consider lighting control

Adjust lights in various zones through lighting control systems, light sensors or simply being able to turn off lights in each space will significantly reduce power consumption and increase user comfort; ensure that lighting control systems are easy to use.

Provide flexible ceiling grids

This can offer greater flexibility in both lighting and cabling for power/communications and other functional requirements such as suspension of banners and signage.

Lighting standards

Recommended lighting standards for public libraries are as follows:

- **100 Lux:** for closed areas such as stacks. Illuminance should be measured at floor level.
- **300 Lux:** for workrooms, foyers, staff rooms, washrooms, lounges, offices. To be measured at desk height.
- **400 Lux:** for all other areas, such as public lending areas, reference sections, counters, readers advisory desks. To be measured at desk height.

A lighting engineer, who is often an integral member of the building design team, can provide specialist input. Elsewhere lighting should comply with the Building Code of Australia and

Australian Standard 1680: *Interior and workplace lighting*.

Exterior lighting

The exterior lighting of the library and its surroundings should display the building during the hours of darkness in a flattering way and accentuate the architecture. The overall effect should be considered as well as the enhancement of the public realm. A public library is used when its readers find it convenient, which in many instances means evening and after-dark.

The lighting around the library should create an inviting atmosphere where people feel safe, and with the trend towards free Wi-Fi potentially wanting to use the adjacent areas outside of library opening hours. Lighting design should assist in avoiding/mitigating unsafe areas which may lead to entrapment or property damage.



Rockdale Library

Order and orientation

Clear relationships between spaces within the library and its exterior promotes a pleasant and practical experience.

A simply laid-out library where the relationship and access between spaces is clear and logical will be easier to use. This will result in a better experience for both clients and staff. Its relationship to the exterior and its context is critical, including public open space, streets and pedestrian ways. Solar orientation should be addressed. Clear routes of travel assist in creating legibility and promote a sense of orientation. This makes things easier to find and prevents disruption between functions and additional load on staff.

Establishing orientation

Unobstructed sightlines and visual markers or alternatively colour coding and artworks can provide a means of orientation in larger buildings. For example, an artwork hanging over a service desk or a desk located near an open void/atrium between floors will allow it to be seen from greater distances.



Bathurst Library

Setting order

Equally the set out of the shelving should be clear and logical. This does not necessarily mean the shelving should be regimented but it should allow a systematic sequencing and an ordered location of types. It is not enough to rely on signage. Order comes through clarity and good design.

Functional considerations

A library must function effectively. The spaces and objects designed must respond primarily to their function and to user requirements. The best way to ensure this is through detailed research with the library staff to gain an understanding of the functions, equipment and tasks to be carried out.

Consider:

- the typical circulation of staff and clients
- the division of front of house and back of house activities
- the use, borrowing, return and reshelving of items
- the relationship of activities to the building's primary elements such as entry, views, daylight/heat load, loading area.



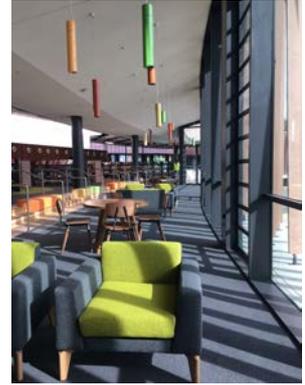
Campsie Library



Rockdale Library



Carnes Hill Library



Shellharbour Library

Personal security

Security can be incorporated into the building design without being overly intrusive.

An appropriate level of security is required in all public libraries to ensure the safety of staff, users, the building and the collection. Good security can be designed into the library from the outset through clear sightlines, good positioning of the service desk and the avoidance of blind spots. Electronic surveillance, although often necessary, can become intrusive and can affect the friendliness of the library.

Designing security

Electronic surveillance

Surveillance cameras and distress alarms should be considered where:

- the library is used for customer service activities such as rates payments or other uses involving the handling of money
- a lone staff person operates a facility
- where staff and consultants agree that additional security should be provided.

Precautions

Libraries may suffer vandalism and damage. To counter the possibility of vandalism, the following precautions can be taken:

- design the building so that there are no concealed corners with windows (particularly louvres or sliding windows) which can be broken or forced
- provide night security lighting
- provide alarms connected to any windows or doors that can be forced
- locate the library in an area where there is good passive surveillance from adjoining land uses (e.g. residents, business owners) and passing pedestrian and vehicular traffic
- reduce the amount of blank wall space, as it is attractive for graffiti, and/or use building materials which are difficult to graffiti
- consider building materials which can easily be cleaned, repainted or replaced.

Exits from the library must be limited and controlled to avoid illegal removal of library materials. Any necessary fire exits must be designed so that they cannot be used other than for the designated purpose. Similarly, the exterior of the building should be designed with clear lines of sight around the building, appropriate light levels and designed to avoid blind spots.

Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED)

Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) is the use of effective design strategies

to improve the safety and quality of urban environments. The aim of CPTED is to reduce opportunities for crime, create safe environments and increase the amenity, attractiveness and safety of cities and towns. The NSW Government's [CPTED Unit \[1\]](#) provides advice and training on matters relating to CPTED.

The CPTED guidelines are used to assess the appropriateness of proposed developments to provide a safe, crime-free environment. The guidelines were prepared in conjunction with the NSW Police.

The guidelines are in two parts: *Safer by Design Evaluation* and *CPTED Principles and strategies*. Further information can be found on the [NSW Police website \[2\]](#).

The guidelines have adopted the following design principles:

Territorial reinforcement

Areas that are well-maintained have a feeling of “ownership” and are well-used, which reduces opportunities for criminal activity. Public areas, and private areas within public spaces, need to clearly define their intended use and encourage community activity.

Surveillance

Natural and technical surveillance are important and focus on ensuring that people can see what other people are doing. There needs to be clear sightlines in public areas and from private to public areas. Effective lighting of public places and landscaping is required to prevent areas for people to hide or entrap victims. Private areas need to have well-defined, well-lit entries with incorporated safety provisions. Electronic surveillance can be used as a deterrent. It is particularly effective where cameras are visible, for broader surveillance where natural surveillance cannot be achieved and is useful as an evidence tool used by police.

Access control

Public places need to be clear in their definition of where people can and cannot go and to define private property boundaries. The use of physical barriers (fencing, walls and locked doors) and symbolic barriers (landscaping and changes in level) are important in access control. This is equally important for primary and ancillary areas (car park, garbage collection area and storage areas).

Space management

Areas need to be attractive and well-maintained with regular removal of waste, mowing, removal of graffiti, repair of vandalism and refurbishment of old equipment and furniture. It is recommended that these design principles be applied as part of the planning process for the proposed library site.



Green Square Library, image provided by City of Sydney

1. <http://www.crimeprevention.nsw.gov.au/Pages/cpd/forcouncils/envirodesign.aspx>
2. https://www.police.nsw.gov.au/safety_and_prevention/policing_in_the_community/safer_by

Signage

Library signage needs to be included in the planning process.

Sufficient funds should be allocated for signage at the preliminary costing stage and major signage elements should be planned from an early stage of design. Signage is important in libraries, especially larger ones –many people will not be used to extensive library layouts and may be confused by the wide range of books and other materials on the library shelves.

Categories of signage

Some type of signage include:

- **Street signposting:** directional signs indicating the library location from neighbouring streets.
- **Exterior identification:** consider relationship to primary address and entry, open space, other important public buildings, scale, visibility, illumination and integration with the architectural design.
- **Entrance signage:** including opening hours and returns.
- **Wayfinding signage:** various permanent sign plates to main library spaces, departments and offices.
- **Statutory signage** (required by codes and regulations): including exit signs, fire hose reels and boosters etc.

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has caused us to rethink the way services are delivered and library spaces are used. This new way of thinking should inform library building planning.

Entrance signage

Clear messaging and signage are critical. Signage at the entrance to the library should be clear and easy to update. Information might include changes to opening hours and availability of library services. Emergency information and details of community services could also be provided. Signage and messages in community languages should be included where appropriate.

- **Changeable entry and external signage:** “what’s on in the library” etc. Consider banners, digital signage, adhesive signs on glass etc.

- **Collection signage:** large signs visible from a distance allow library users to take in at a glance the various sections, collections and service desks.
- **Aisle signage:** bays of shelving in public areas will require flexible signage to indicate the contents. Some commercial library signage systems are marketed for this purpose, especially for metal shelving units. Subject headings can be placed on top of shelves, on banners or on shelf ends (either parallel or perpendicular to shelf end) or even in the flooring.
- **Shelf signage:** sliding shelf guide systems are designed to indicate the subject content of each shelf as distinct from each bay.
- **Promotional signage:** advertise library programs, services and events with thoughtfully designed seasonal flyers, posters etc. Prioritise what needs to be promoted at any one time; avoid overloading the visual environment and reinforce a theme or idea. Opportunities exist to establish partnerships with youth or community groups to design free posters for the library on a regular basis. Consider banners, end of shelf display, wall display, projection and digital screens.
- **Signage in appropriate languages:** it is essential that signage reflects the demographics of library clients. Particular consideration should be given to having signage in languages other than English to assist use of the library by non-English speaking clients.
- **Permanent signage:** can be designed to integrate a range of wider graphic elements such as historic/cultural imagery, quotations, photographs etc.

All library guides and signs, including their wording and design, should be prepared with the architect and library staff in close consultation. Other libraries and retail environments may be worth visiting for ideas in good professional signage.

External signage



Shellharbour
Library



Warren
Library



Narellan
Library



Campsie
Library



Carnes Hill
Library



Picton
Library

Internal signage



Marrickville Library



Mt Druitt Library



Windsor Library

Collection signage



Burwood Library

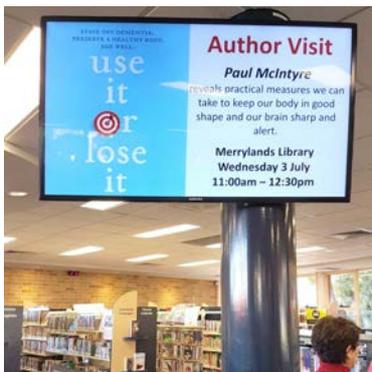


Marrickville Library



Burwood Library

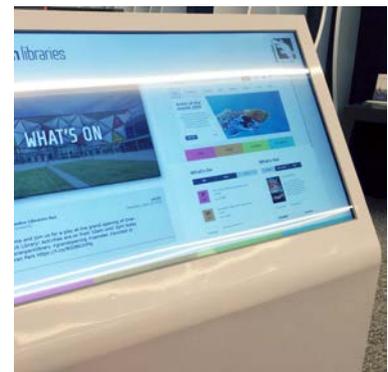
Digital signage



Guildford Library



Marrickville Library



Oran Park Library

Sustainability

Environmentally sustainable design is about creating efficient buildings with a low environmental impact.

Environmentally sustainable design (ESD)

Environmentally sustainable design (ESD) can be included in the planning of a new building as well as the refurbishment of an existing building. ESD seeks to minimise waste, reduce energy and water consumption and provide an enhanced indoor environment.

Mandatory standards

Buildings impose a significant daily load on resources as well as the very significant embodied energy resulting from their construction. Library buildings have vastly improved their incorporation of ESD principles, with some winning national and international awards for sustainability. ESD has evolved from aspiration to legislated mandatory standards.

The [National Construction Code \(NCC\) \[1\]](#) provides the minimum necessary requirements for safety, health, amenity and sustainability in the design and construction of new buildings, and new building work in existing buildings, throughout Australia. The NCC incorporates all on-site construction requirements into a single code. It covers the Building Code of Australia and the Plumbing Code of Australia and is managed by the [Australian Building Codes Board \[2\]](#).

The NCC is given legal effect by NSW legislation, which means that any technical requirements in the code are to be satisfied when undertaking building and plumbing works.

Promoting environmentally sustainable design

Libraries throughout the world have been at the forefront of educating their communities on environmentally sustainable design practices.

As publicly funded community buildings, they offer:

- broad-reaching opportunity to experience and promote environmentally sustainable design
- opportunity for the public to experience the high-quality spaces which can be offered by ESD
- opportunity to be a catalyst for environmentally sustainable



Woollahra Library at Double Bay

neighbourhoods, promoting sustainable design in the public and private realm, and sustainable practices in the community.

ESD can become a feature of the library building, highlighting the environmental initiatives as a way of promoting them to the community. Other libraries may seamlessly integrate environmental initiatives into the architecture. ‘Infomatics’ (digital feedback to inhabitants) supports sustainable behaviour via real-time monitoring and feedback. This can include the amount of energy consumed or generated, water collected, amount of oxygen in the air and the amount of carbon dioxide emitted.

Frequently, the additional capital cost associated with ESD practices is minimal and is very favourably compared with whole-of-life costs.

Benefits of environmentally sustainable design

ESD provides a range of additional benefits beyond reducing a library’s impact on the environment, which include:

- improved whole-of-life and running costs
 - healthier buildings including improved indoor air quality
 - a heightened sense of morale and well being
 - better productivity and concentration
 - lower absenteeism
 - greater value for assets and demonstration of responsible asset management
 - credibility
 - enhanced profile, marketability
 - competitive advantage
-
- potential ability to attract funding and grants.



Marrickville Library

Heating, cooling and ventilation

In most localities in New South Wales the range of external conditions will require public library buildings to be air conditioned for the comfort of users and for the conservation of library materials, however there are a range of initiatives which can augment the requirements for air conditioning.

These include:

- the **provision of fresh air to the building** when the air is cool, such as night purge or mixed mode
- **tempering the air through thermal mass**, such as thermal labyrinths where the air passes

through cool, usually underground, space reducing its temperature before being conditioned

- **energy-efficient air conditioning systems**, such as Variable Air Volume (VAV) systems, displacement (offering cool air only where needed), passive and active chilled beams (passing chilled fluid through ceiling units), occupant sensing for Carbon Dioxide levels (monitoring provision of fresh air), geothermal air conditioning, cogeneration and trigeneration (where waste energy in the form of heat is used).

The design should aim to minimise the use of energy from non-renewable resources. Wherever possible it should consider local sources of renewable energy such as solar, geothermal and wind.

Minimal and responsible use of resources

To reduce the ecological footprint, the selection of structural materials and finishes should be undertaken to maximise the use of ecologically sound materials, such as those from renewable and recycled sources and those with lower embodied energy.

The building should reduce the amount of power consumed and can even contribute to energy production. The following are issues to consider:

- the **reuse of buildings** – while many old buildings may not be appropriate for a contemporary library, renovation could be considered as an option
- **new buildings, and refurbished buildings** where possible, should provide the **flexibility to adapt over time**
- **materials which capture carbon**, such as plantation timber and bamboo products, can be used
- **reducing quantum of materials** using self-finished materials, considering if a ceiling is necessary under a slab or if the structure could perform as the final finish
- **green-accredited materials**
- **products low in volatile organic compounds (VOC)**, which are commonly found in materials such as paints, polyurethanes, particle board, adhesives - reducing VOCs will provide a much healthier indoor environment
- **recycled building materials** – if possible, reuse materials from buildings to be demolished, source recycled materials or choose products which contain a portion of recycled material
- **reduce use of medium density fibreboard (MDF)** due to noxious formaldehyde glues utilised in production
- **insulation with green products**, such as natural wool products instead of fibreglass - insulation generally significantly increases the building's thermal performance
- **energy reduction** is pivotal to many ESD measures included in building design and construction methods and long-term building operations including embodied energy, recycling, local sourcing, energy efficient lighting and air conditioning
- **energy generation**, including photovoltaic solar panels, heat exchange, cogeneration, trigeneration, solar hot water and wind power
- **be aware of the embodied energy** associated with specified materials – the energy required to construct a building, including production and transport of materials, e.g. aluminium, is very high. Seek advice on the value of specifying a material over the longer term from the building design consultant team. Embodied energy, during the construction

phase, will be the greatest proportion of energy use in the lifecycle of a building.

Natural lighting

There are few functions within a contemporary library which cannot be naturally illuminated, particularly with good thermal and indirect lighting design and UV rated glass. The benefits of natural daylight include:

- **lower energy use and costs:** more natural light means less artificial lighting
- **greater comfort levels:** natural light is associated with higher levels of comfort and improvements in productivity
- **healthier built environment:** natural daylight contributes significantly to the prevention of the 'sick building syndrome' which is found in old buildings with poor natural lighting and air quality
- **thermal comfort:** when carefully designed direct natural daylight can assist in warming buildings in winter
- **indoor planting:** natural light can promote the growth of indoor plants which improve indoor air quality and increase oxygen levels.



Glen Street Library

Clever integration of natural light is not restricted to windows. Skylights and clerestories can bring natural light deep into the building. Voids between levels can introduce light to lower levels and internal courtyards can bring both light and additional outlook to deep building footprints.

The extent of glazing will, in part, be controlled by the National Construction Code, which assesses both the heat gain and loss contributed by windows.

A range of performance glass products, which control the properties of shading and heat transmission of the glass, as well as double glazing and double skin facades can resolve many of the issues traditionally associated with glass. External shading devices are an excellent solution for controlling heat gain and direct sun access.

The benefits of natural lighting are obvious, but natural lighting provision to libraries should be designed with care to avoid:

- **solar heat gain:** especially as a result of large expanses of unshaded glass on north, east

and west facades, which will cause increased air conditioning energy costs and discomfort for occupants

- **glare:** which will cause discomfort to users. Even within newly constructed libraries, which embrace ESD, there have been issues of glare which have involved the retrofitting of blinds and shades
- **light sensitive collections and activities:** the placement of functions and activities, which by nature must avoid natural daylight, need to be considered including rare books, special collections, artworks and walls allocated for projection.

Ultimately, the design should aim to work with the natural climate factors, and energy sources, in particular solar access and summer shade.

Artificial lighting

Lighting technology is constantly changing with an aim to create better quality light sources and/or reduce the energy consumed. As a public environment, a library can act as a showcase for emerging technologies.

The use of more efficient lighting design, lighting control and technologies should be utilised to reduce the energy consumption of the building and provide a positive example to the surrounding community of how lighting energy can be used in a careful manner.



AlburyLibrary Museum

Recycling materials

Many offices and public buildings have become more sustainable with the introduction of recycling systems. Recycling systems exist in both passive and non-passive forms.

Consider:

- space for recycling of paper products, glass and plastics
- reductions of non-recyclable waste through purchasing regimes, and
- furniture and fittings which can be recycled or easily serviced/reupholstered.

Sustainable water use

Potential exists for significant reductions in both water use and higher levels of water recycling. In both existing and new library buildings, water savings are relatively easy to achieve and have the benefit of higher cost savings over the lifetime of the building. In existing libraries, everyday efficiencies can be improved through:

- regular inspection and monitoring of leaks

- installation of water efficient fixtures
- post-fitting of rainwater collection (and in some cases grey water)
- upgrades to air conditioning chillers and cooling towers, which account for about one third of water use in public and office buildings.



Marrickville Library

In new libraries, water consumption can be reduced by:

- specifying water efficient taps, toilets, urinals and showerheads
- choosing water efficient air conditioning systems
- installing a rainwater collection system
- implementing onsite stormwater detention strategies
- considering opportunities to recycle grey water, stormwater and wastewater, and
- asking your architect/landscape architects about innovative solutions such as green roofs and swales.

A holistic approach

Many of the areas discussed above are interrelated as sustainable design principles and must be embodied in a holistic response of the building to its environment. It is commonplace to have an environmental engineer as part of the consultancy team, who will guide the project's initiatives. Many local councils have policies and procedures relating to ecological sustainability.

The Green Star

The [Green Building Council of Australia \[3\]](https://ncc.abcb.gov.au/) is an independent, non-government body which promotes and recognises green building practices. [Green Star \[4\]](https://new.gbca.org.au/) is a voluntary national environmental rating system that evaluates the sustainable design, construction and operation of buildings.

1. <https://ncc.abcb.gov.au/>
2. <https://www.abcb.gov.au/>
3. <https://new.gbca.org.au/>
4. <https://new.gbca.org.au/rate/green-star/>

Technology

Information technology has a major impact on the shape and form of public libraries and in the ways we use them.

The way technology is integrated into the building should be developed as part of a technology plan. This will outline the types of services to be provided and will influence the level of technology usage in the completed building.

Integrating technology in public libraries

The debate on whether further technological advances will increase or decrease space requirements in public libraries will continue over the years, but it is evident already that the demand for access and training on computer, Internet and audiovisual facilities is creating a service requirement within libraries. Furthermore, the operations and mode of library services and use has changed significantly tending towards a collaborative and creative philosophy of learning.



Woollahra Library at Double Bay

Online information services are at the core of a library's information and reference services and to cater adequately for future demand, a library needs appropriate space. The rapid changes and developments we have seen in the information technology industry will, no doubt, continue and the design of public libraries will need to be flexible and adaptable enough to accommodate the changes and to respond to the service demands.

Technology considerations to inform design

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has forced libraries to rethink the way services are delivered and library spaces are used. This new way of thinking should inform library technology planning.

Online programs

When access to library buildings was restricted during the pandemic many library activities were transferred online. This also happened for workplaces, education and social activities. As a result, many people became more comfortable in the online

environment. Libraries reported large increases in the number of attendees at online events compared with those previously held within the library space. Online platforms allow for those who have issues with location, transport or mobility to easily access library programs and may have introduced new attendees at library programs. It is likely that the increase in use of these platforms will continue into the future. Libraries may need to consider hybrid services, combining online and onsite access to programs and events.

Technology and meeting rooms

Meeting rooms equipped with video conferencing equipment will become an important requirement for public libraries. This technology is potentially needed in every room within the library space. Libraries providing access to larger screens for online meetings and education may be appealing to customers. Demand may increase for video studios with green screen, sound proofing and video production facilities for those who need to prepare high quality videos for presentations, job applications and study.

Self-check

The move towards self-service is likely to increase to minimise interaction between staff and customers. Self-check kiosks and RFID return chutes or shelves allow customers to borrow and return library material. In times such as the COVID-19 pandemic this equipment would need to be cleaned regularly. Touchless self-check through customers' own mobile phones removes the need for interaction with library equipment. It also means customers can borrow library material anywhere within the library, without waiting in line, enabling social distancing.

The rate of technological change means that more people will require **access to up-to-date technology**. It cannot be assumed everyone will have the equipment at home or that they will be in a position to afford it, or have the time/expertise to locate and package the information in a meaningful way.

Libraries are increasingly playing a pivotal role in navigating digital information and training the community. Libraries **provide rooms suitable for IT training**, as well as IT enabled collaborative spaces and digital media suites.

Digital information is unlikely to replace hard copy entirely and in the foreseeable future there will be **dual systems**, possibly requiring more, not less space.

As the Internet continues to provide people with easy access to international information, the technology base in the library can **provide (and create) valuable localised information** specifically focused on the community, local arts and culture and local heritage.

The focus on digitising and working with the community to archive and create local

content requires space. Libraries may **provide equipment to allow this content to be recorded and stored**. Cameras, video cameras, sound recording equipment, scanners, copiers, digital media software and audiovisual facilities will require storage and access space. Information that is accessed digitally may at times need to be reproduced in hard copy format. Equipment and space will be required.

More and more people are working from home and working in smaller business environments. Libraries can **provide space for personal interaction**, meetings and seminars as well as assisting with technology.

Smart technology can also create smart buildings. It can inform and educate users on how they dwell in buildings and their environmental footprint. ‘Informatics’, the study of the intersection of place, people and technology, can inform the community about their behaviour and its impact in real time.

Service areas

Design public library spaces around community demographics and functionalities.

Libraries are living, changing places for the community.

For decades, libraries were almost exclusively a realm for people borrowing books. They are now places where people come to sit, read the newspaper, listen to music, play computer games, search the Internet and take part in a variety of programs and events. While traditional library services remain the mainstay of library activity, other activities and services are becoming increasingly popular. No activity is mutually exclusive, with visitors choosing to undertake a range of activities while in the library.

In this section

[Children](#)

The children's area in a library caters for the needs and interests of children and their caregivers.

[Youth](#)

Many libraries are responding to specific needs of youth culture by providing separate areas that allow young people to undertake a range of activities in a space designed especially for multi-tasking.

[Indigenous](#)

Public libraries play a role in the promotion and retention of Indigenous culture, with many housing specialist collections relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

[Multicultural](#)

Prominent areas for browsing and reading multicultural resources are needed, as well as meeting room and lounge areas for social contact with people of similar backgrounds and interests.

[Older people](#)

Older residents are already major users of libraries and this trend is likely to grow as the number of older residents with significant leisure time increases.

[Collections](#)

The way people use libraries is changing, not only influencing the content of collections but the way collections are presented.

Local studies

As well as collecting and archiving local history, knowledge and culture, public libraries are instrumental in assisting the community to create content.

Staff and non-public areas

Staff proximity to public areas as well as to service areas, entry and loading should be a critical element in the initial space planning of a library.

Children

The children's area in a library caters for the needs and interests of children and their care givers, acknowledging that they require different functional requirements to the rest of the library building. These relate to activities and collections, as well as different learning, developmental and socialisation behaviours to address. Extending this understanding to cater for different developmental stages, recognising that a school age child has vastly different needs to a toddler, increases a library's relevance and enjoyment for children.



Woollahra Library at Double Bay

Traditionally, these competing needs have been managed in the timing of programs, e.g. baby rhyme time during school hours, homework help after school. Management is critical given space limitations but there is great opportunity to truly inspire children to explore, interact and learn in a physical environment suitable to their age. Public libraries have traditionally played a pivotal role in early literacy, and as such the children's area should be as inspiring as possible while including quiet reading spaces and areas for interaction and noise. Some dedicated children's libraries, recognising that different age groups do not necessarily coexist happily, provide distinct areas for different age groups.

Children's experience

Library staff have sought inspiration from a range of sources to create better experiences in libraries tapping into children's inquisitive and imaginative nature. Contemporary children's library staff understand that communication through words is preceded by many other forms involving all the senses – the need to touch, experience colour, light and sound, to play, draw, and recognise symbols. Increasingly libraries are developing programs, services and collections to meet the needs of children with special needs or sensory challenges.

Flexibility

Providing flexible space for children's programs is essential. The layout of a successful children's area should be designed to cater for increases in group size by allowing activities to temporarily expand into adjacent areas that are not in high demand. Many children's areas are well served by being closely located to meeting/function spaces, group study or working tables that can be used when needed. This ensures that even a modestly sized children's area is capable of providing for more children should the need arise.

Selecting furniture on wheels, particularly shelving units, allows spaces to be quickly and easily

reconfigured. Larger pieces of joinery can also be mobile if designed safely with wheel locking. Consider weight and handling procedures for larger items. Large numbers of prams can be accommodated by moveable furniture although some libraries provide dedicated areas for pram parking, where space constrictions are not an issue.

Fixed furniture can limit the activities in children's areas. These items should be carefully considered to ensure flexibility in the longer term. Allowing the floor finish to continue under fixed items and designing large items as a series of smaller modules will allow greater potential for future reconfiguration.



Eastgardens Library

Catering for large, noisy groups

The popularity of good children's library space can lead to issues including:

- **noise** and separation from other areas – consider physical separation of space or significant acoustic absorption in building materials as well as separation by collection shelving
- activity spilling into other areas due to **lack of space** – ensure noise sensitive areas are planned away from the children's area
- **spaces which do not adequately contain small children** during story or rhyme time – consider using meeting rooms or operable walls
- **pram storage and ensuring free and safe egress** maintained from all areas – a strategy will need to be developed to manage the storage of prams ensuring fire egress paths are maintained.

Safety

It is difficult to foresee everything that may pose a hazard to children during the planning and design of a library, however, some important elements to identify include:

- any **hazards at toddler head height** such as sharp corners on tables, or holes which fingers may get trapped in
- **anything that children can climb on and fall from** including shelving units
- any **furniture which can tip over** when climbed
- location of **power points**
- any **surfaces that children can slip on** including floor lights
- **small parts**, which can become dislodged and cause a choking hazard
- locating items which are supposed to be reached at a **reachable height for children**.

Display and signage

Storytelling and communication is not only in words – consider art, toys, tactile installations, digital media and performance. Provide for adequate display of themes and children’s work through pin boards, suspension cables or projection. Cataloguing and shelf signage that includes images rather than alphanumeric characters may allow children to navigate without help.

Children's IT and electronic games

Opinion regarding children’s IT areas varies. Some libraries avoid computer use altogether believing that there is now adequate computer access in other locations. They provide a range of traditional activities in comfortable settings. In libraries providing computers and tablets for children’s use the range is from totally open access, relying on parental supervision through to controlled access. The children’s area should be designed to allow easy supervision of computer use. Like adult libraries, children’s libraries can now offer information in a range of formats. Exploring and learning can take place in digital and hardcopy formats simultaneously, suggesting that the two should be highly integrated.

Electronic games areas are met with similar varied opinion. Accepting that libraries are now recreational spaces for children has allowed some libraries to create successful and customised gaming areas. Gaming areas should function as gateways for accessing books and other educational materials or be educational in themselves.

Toy Library

Toy libraries require a significant investment of space either near the children’s area or back of house. If located near children’s areas, precautions should be made for safety if children are accessing the collection themselves, especially in terms of shelving and door selection.

When open, the toy library collection can generate large crowds, including parents/carers with prams, which should be addressed in the design and location of the toy library. Safety, in terms of tipping elements, trip hazards, floor finishes and climbing, also needs to be addressed.



Randwick toy library

Storage

Ensure provision of adequate storage for children’s activity equipment and nearby library staff preparation space which can be safely left. It may be appropriate to have storage in the children’s area, staff work area or both.

Floor coverings

Consider floor coverings which can easily be replaced when stained, such as carpet tiles. Floor coverings which allow for craft and messy activities, such as linoleum, may not be comfortable for rhyme time and floor activity. Small mats or cushions can be used for comfort.

Furniture

Chairs, tables and bookshelves should be engaging and appropriately sized for children. There should also be a variety of seating options, including comfortable floor seating such as floor cushions, padded surfaces and individual carpet pieces. Shelving can be customised to allow children to explore, crawl, climb and find their own space. It can include niches and lookouts along with space for books. Families spend significant time in the children's area so comfortable seating for adults and older children to read stories to younger children is necessary.



Campsie
Library



Campsie
Library



Marrickville
Library



Marrickville
Library



Randwick
Library



Randwick
Library

Outdoor space

A high-quality, safe, well shaded outdoor space for children to play and explore, as well as read can be an asset to a library building. It is ideal to have this directly accessible from the children's area. There is educational value in exploring play equipment, sustainable gardens, food crops, smells and senses.

Youth

Successful youth areas reflect the values and attitudes of local young people. A separate, dedicated youth space may not be appropriate for all libraries. However, a library that is relevant to local young people with suitable collections, technology and a variety of spaces is crucial in contemporary library design and planning.

Youth culture

Youth is generally defined as those aged 13–24 years old, with older youth often still dependent and engaged in further education. They are significant users of public libraries and major consumers of information technology. The education of today's youth combines individual learning, co-operative learning, research and group interaction. Thus, in addition to quiet study, students interact, discuss and develop ideas together in a co-operative manner. As a place away from home and school, libraries can act as a place of refuge for youth, to meet with friends or be by themselves. Increasingly the delineation between recreational time is blurred with study activity. The current youth generation seeks and consumes information in different ways and educational theory and practice has responded accordingly.

Spaces for multi-tasking

An important aspect of contemporary youth culture is the fluid approach to activities and proficiency with multi-tasking, meaning younger generations often like to work, chat, use technology and do numerous other things at the same time. Many libraries are responding to these specific needs by providing separate areas that allow young people to undertake a range of activities in a space designed especially for multi-tasking.

Technology

Technology is another key aspect of youth culture. Young adults are generally interested in, and quick to learn, new technology and have been key users of the increasing technological resources of libraries. Younger generations have shown to be particularly interested in audiovisual environments, which are dynamic, interactive and instantly responsive. When public libraries begin to provide these facilities, youth have been seen to be among the first to embrace them.



Woollahra Library at Double Bay

Group and individual spaces

In the broader library context, the physical outcomes of this trend are a demand for both group and individual spaces as well as noisy and quiet areas. Most afternoons in libraries, youth make use of communal study tables, lounge areas, IT areas and meeting rooms. Library infrastructure for wireless Internet and laptop use complements the existing provision of online school resources and web pages used by young people.

The design of youth areas is integral in attracting and maintaining patronage of public libraries by young people. Upgrades and new libraries typically result in an increase in visitation by young clients.

Essential design features

Location

It is advisable to locate the youth area away from the children's area as young people do not like to be viewed as children. Also consider separation from areas such as Local History which may be more quiet and contemplative spaces.

Furniture

Flexible pieces allow youth to take ownership of their immediate surroundings by rearranging and adapting furniture to suit their needs. A variety of seating options provides choice. Typical furniture for youth might include: fixed benches or seating booths along a wall, group study zones, OPAC desks, loose lounging elements such as chairs, sofas, bean bags, ottomans, and floor cushions, which can be moved around by users.



Albury Library Museum youth seating area

Fitout

A good youth area is a space that reflects the era that young people live in and can easily relate to. By employing contemporary trends in colour, patterns and textures, styles of furniture and fittings, an atmosphere can be created that is instantly recognisable as youthful, vibrant and exciting. Consider user contributions and user created content as part of design e.g. graphics, wall art and display.

Enclosure and spatial delineation

Privacy and trust are important to young people. In a successful youth area, users should not feel the overwhelming intrusion of authority. The need for adult supervision can easily be balanced with a desire for privacy by creating semi-enclosed or spatially delineated areas. This can be achieved by using elements such as low walls, semi-transparent screens or curtains, strategic placement of bookshelves or changes in floor level.

Further considerations

Integrating technology

Integrating technology such as game consoles, large screens, music players, computers and power points for laptops. Additional specialised features such as sound mixing and video editing equipment would benefit from being in a separate room.

Collections

Locating library collections for young people near the youth area is recommended. This includes graphic novels, teen magazines, gaming, and teen health/information brochures, HSC collections.

Study tables

Group study tables for students are often in high demand during after school hours. It is a good idea to have a dedicated work area for students where they are free to chat and collaborate on group projects without disturbing other library users.

Outdoor space

If available, access to a covered outdoor area with furniture options for congregating, lounging and studying.



Campsie Library

Service area

Indigenous

Public libraries need to be attractive, welcoming and relevant to all members of their community, with particular emphasis on ensuring these spaces are welcoming to Indigenous community members.

Public libraries play a role in the promotion and retention of Indigenous culture, with many housing specialist collections of books, audio-visual materials, periodicals, local history and ancestry, and artefacts relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Encouraging Indigenous users

The incorporation of Aboriginal art and cultural activities into public libraries has played a major role in encouraging Indigenous users. Some libraries report an increase in popularity for Indigenous communities as a result of the employment of Indigenous library staff.

Community consultation is key to providing valid services, spaces and material selection. The process of building relationships and ongoing collaboration and engagement with local communities can be developed through cooperation and communication with organisations such as a local Aboriginal Land Council. Some councils have Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) that guide libraries in engagement with their Indigenous communities.

[Protocols for libraries, archives and information services \[1\]](#) are published by the Australian Library and Information Association for the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library and Information Resource Network \[2\]](#) (ATSILIRN).



Green Square Library, image provided by City of Sydney



Marrickville Library

Indigenous Spaces in Library Places

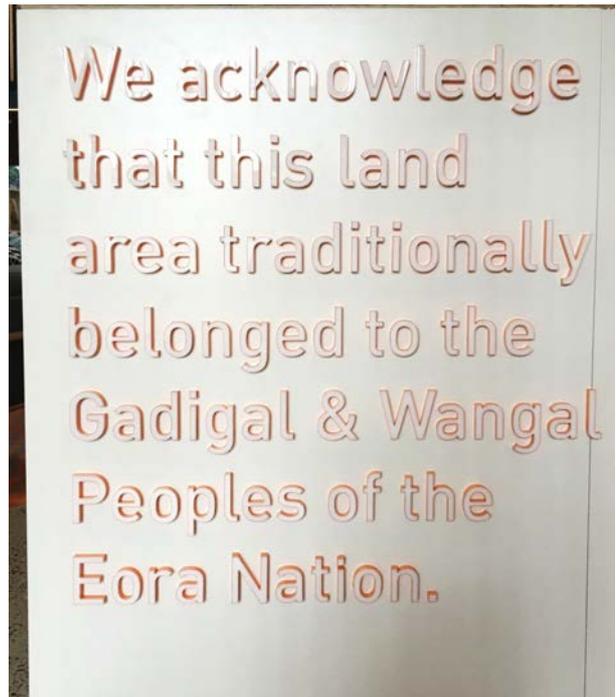
To help you create a welcoming library for the local Indigenous community the State Library's Indigenous Engagement team has created a guiding strategy [Indigenous Spaces in Library Places: Building a Vibrant Public Library Network Inclusive of Indigenous Peoples and](#)

[Communities \[3\]](#). This strategy and the associated toolkit provide guidance to the NSW public library network in enhancing services dedicated to the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. This includes recommendations to:

- **create a visible Indigenous presence in the library space** – for example, through signs (e.g. welcome or acknowledgement of the local Aboriginal community and traditional owners), Aboriginal flags, displays and artwork
- **develop collections related to Australian Indigenous history and culture** - acquiring materials written by, as well as about, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; ensure collections contain contemporary works, that represent the vibrancy and resilience of Aboriginal culture today
- **facilitate appropriate access to library archives and information resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities** which may include viewing areas for materials that may have secret, sacred or sorrow considerations
- **collaborate with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples and communities** to create and share stories including collecting local histories relating to experiences of the Indigenous community, collecting ephemera, collaborating with Indigenous artists
- **collaborate/work in partnership with the local Aboriginal community** to provide programs and events driven by the community's needs and aspirations (e.g. digital literacy, language programs, family history, etc.).



Katoomba Library



Marrickville Library

1. <https://atsilrn.aiatsis.gov.au/protocols.php>
2. <https://atsilrn.aiatsis.gov.au/index.php>
3. <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/services/indigenous-spaces-library-places>

Service area

Multicultural

Multicultural community of NSW

[Multicultural NSW \[1\]](#) reports that 1 in 5 people in NSW speak a language other than English at home and over 1 in 4 people were born overseas, 1 in 5 from a non-English speaking background. 2016 census results show an increase in those born overseas and those from non-English speaking backgrounds since the 2011 census.

In 2016–17, over a quarter of a million people settled permanently in Australia; over one third of these settled in NSW with the majority settling in the Sydney metropolitan area.

[According to the NSW government \[2\]](#), there are more than 275 languages spoken in NSW and 144 religions are practised. The top 5 languages (other than English) are Mandarin, Arabic, Cantonese, Vietnamese and Greek.

Impact on library design and function

Our multicultural society influences our libraries and their functions. The increased provision of multilingual collections, multilingual signage and English language classes is evident in many libraries across NSW. Many people from multicultural backgrounds enjoy using their local library and view it as a place for social contact with other residents from similar backgrounds and connecting with people from the broader community.



Randwick Library

The impact of multiculturalism on the physical design of the library is perhaps less evident. However there is a need to ensure that there are prominent areas for browsing and reading multicultural resources, as well as meeting room and lounge areas for social contact with people of similar backgrounds and interests. In supporting diverse cultures within a community, many successful libraries have offered areas for exhibition and events, particularly with flexibility to hold performances and festivals both inside and out.

Planning informed by local demographic data

Use of up to date local demographic data is important for library service planning. Councils should not limit this to the ABS Census data as this may not be reflective of emerging and

changing communities. The NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment provides access to [population projections and other demographics \[3\]](#). Your council might have its own sources of local data.

Multicultural resources

Library collections should represent the local community and planning for a library building should include space for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) resources and collections. These should include resources in languages other than English as well as CALD local studies collections, such as local migrant history collections and oral histories.

A number of libraries in NSW specialise in foreign language collections in response to the demographic of the local population. In some cases the popularity of the collection far outweighs the proportion of the demographic, making these libraries a destination for users from outside their local government area. In addition to books, these collections provide newspapers, magazines, exhibition material and DVDs.

Multicultural collection display

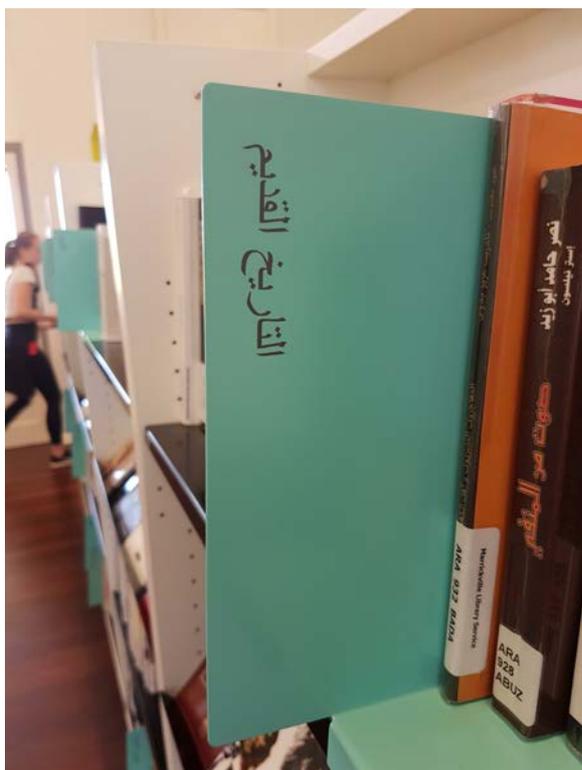


Campsie Library



Rockdale Library

Signage



Marrickville Library



Marrickville Library

State Library of NSW: Multicultural Library Services

As local government moves towards improving its support of multicultural communities, other design and service innovations will occur. The [Multicultural team \[4\]](#) at the State Library of NSW can advise on developing appropriate services. Promotional materials are also available to encourage increased visitation and borrowing.

For more information, see [Multicultural Library Services in NSW Public Libraries 2017 \[5\]](#).

1. <https://multicultural.nsw.gov.au/communities/>
2. <https://www.nsw.gov.au/about-new-south-wales/culture/>
3. <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Research-and-Demography>
4. <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/services/multicultural-services-public-libraries>
5. <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/research-multicultural-services-nsw-public-libraries>

Older people

Ageing population

The ageing of populations in Western societies is a well-documented trend. With people living longer and fewer children being born, the proportion of older residents in our community is increasing. It is estimated that by 2036, over one in five people in NSW (21%) will be aged over 65 years ([Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010 \[1\]](#)). They will not however be evenly distributed across NSW. The use of up to date local demographic data is important for library service planning. Councils should not limit this to the ABS Census data as this may not be reflective of emerging and changing communities. The NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment provides access to [population projections and other demographics \[2\]](#). Your council might have its own sources of local data.

Impact on library design and function

Older residents are already major users of libraries and this trend is likely to grow as the number of older residents with significant leisure time increases. Access to specialist collections, adult education, activities targeting seniors, increasing computer usage and browsing areas for casual users are examples of potential trends that may be experienced. Many seniors live alone and may seek social interaction by longer stays in libraries, emphasising the importance of comfortable lounge space.

Computer literacy is becoming increasingly important for all ages as services and access to information becomes electronic. Many libraries run programs on computer literacy for seniors as well as tutorials on browsing and accessing information. New retirees are likely to have more knowledge and experience in using technology and digital information and may be looking for new ways of using their recreational time. The need for library services for older residents in retirement villages and housebound services is likely to increase.



Tech Savvy Seniors at Woollahra Library

Access

As age increases the level of disability in our community increases too. Access to library buildings and services for people with a disability will become an increasingly important issue. Legislation such as the [Federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \[3\]](#) and the [National Construction Code \[4\]](#) are having a significant impact on how services are designed and provided.

Many Councils have formed Access Committees and/or have a Disability Action Plan which recommend actions for improving access to services for people with a disability.

Specific services and collections for older residents and people with a disability may also need to be considered. These may include large print books and a range of technology for accessing print and electronic resources. Designing libraries to meet the needs of our growing older population will be a major challenge in the future.

1. <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/1338.1~March+2010~Main+Features~P>
OpenDocument
2. <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Research-and-Demography>
3. <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018C00125>
4. <https://ncc.abcb.gov.au/ncc-online/ncc>

Service area

Collections

Collection development, management, display and circulation remains significant business for public libraries but there have been changes in the way people use their libraries over recent years.

This has not only influenced the content of collections but the way collections are presented. Together with electronic media and digital storage of collections, this has resulted in a decline in non-fiction borrowing and an increase in recreational collections. Some libraries have merged their reference collection into the non-fiction collection, changing a long-held tradition.

Most library services have strict policies of actively managing collections to keep them vibrant and relevant to their communities, weeding collections as needed. Many libraries are adopting techniques used by bookshops and other retailers – providing user friendly collections and engaging browsing environments.



Bathurst Library

Factors that affect the attractiveness of library collections include:

- organisation of the collection
- breaking up densely housed collections with seating, varied geometries and varied mood
- quality and attractiveness of shelving, shelf signage and shelf ends
- ability to display a range of differently proportioned items attractively and with ease
- density of collection (too many books can be overwhelming, and face out books tend to be borrowed more)
- theming of subjects by creating physical ‘rooms’ for specific subjects, frequently achieved with signage and interior design
- arrangements of shelves and relationship with surrounding furniture and architecture.

Organisation of collections

The organisation of library collections affects the ease with which library users can find material.

User friendly organisation includes:

Popular subjects

Adding extra signage to the existing Dewey classification to indicate popular subjects. Signage

can take the form of shelf signage, banners and tabs interfiled with books – e.g. 710–719 might be labelled as ‘Landscaping’, followed by 720–729 ‘Architecture’.

Co-locating subjects

Co-locating similar lifestyle topics using a discontinuous Dewey system e.g. the ‘Family’ collection might have: 610–619 ‘Health’, then 649 ‘Parenting and Childcare’, omitting the unrelated Dewey numbers in between.



At least one library has developed a system where the items in each lifestyle topic are colour-coded using the Dewey label on the spine – pink for the ‘Family’ collection, for instance. Not only does this method make it easy for library staff to see if books are out of place at a glance, it also assists users with wayfinding.

Campbelltown Library

Specialist collections

Providing specialist collections for popular subjects, including: graphic novels, gardening and cooking, artworks, romantic novels, music, AV etc. Specialist collections can also influence the design of the space in which they are housed.

Integrated collections

Current library design must address the issues of integrating traditional and digital forms of knowledge collection and dissemination, creating a ‘hybrid library’. The hybrid library comprises information being presented to users in an easily discoverable, integrated way regardless of format.

Establishing your collection size

When establishing collection size:

- recent acquisition costs per item will translate this information into a budget item for your library development project
- establish specialist genre and community language provisions
- if there is a preference for more ‘face out’ display a larger Base Area factor will need to be allowed or, alternatively, more area provided for display.

[Living Learning Libraries \[1\]](#) has further information for planning library collections.

1. <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/content/living-learning-libraries>

Service area

Local studies

Local studies collections are unique to each public library and are highly valued by the community.

As access to resources becomes seemingly ubiquitous through digital technology, libraries are strengthening support and enthusiasm for local studies collections.

As well as collecting and archiving local history, knowledge and culture, public libraries are instrumental in assisting the community to create content, allowing the local community to contribute to the development of the library and collections.

Dedicated local studies area

Designing a local studies area varies significantly from library to library. The traditional approach of physically separating this area from the main library space is still preferred by many, particularly if the collection is owned and managed by a local history organisation. This approach may also be used where there are a significant number of unique items, such as rate books or council archives. The spaces frequently avoid natural daylight to control the environment because of valuable original materials frequently found in local studies collections.



Rockdale Library

This can result in a slightly intimidating place for the wider community limiting participation with the collection. Improvements have been made in a number of instances through the use of:

- glass walls to the main space
- better display and interpretive installations
- provision of natural daylight where light control is not required, and
- merging the space with similar quiet activities such as individual study.

Open access

The opposite approach, of open access and seamless integration, has been embraced by some recent library developments. Valuable items can still be secured but particularly with the assistance of better electronic security and the digitisation of collections, the physical space of the local studies area can become far more open. Secure storage of items does not obstruct a wider use of the space or use of the space for other activities when the local studies collection is

not being used. Rather than being located in a far corner, some new local studies areas are being located near the service desk in close proximity to IT areas and copy/scan/print facilities.

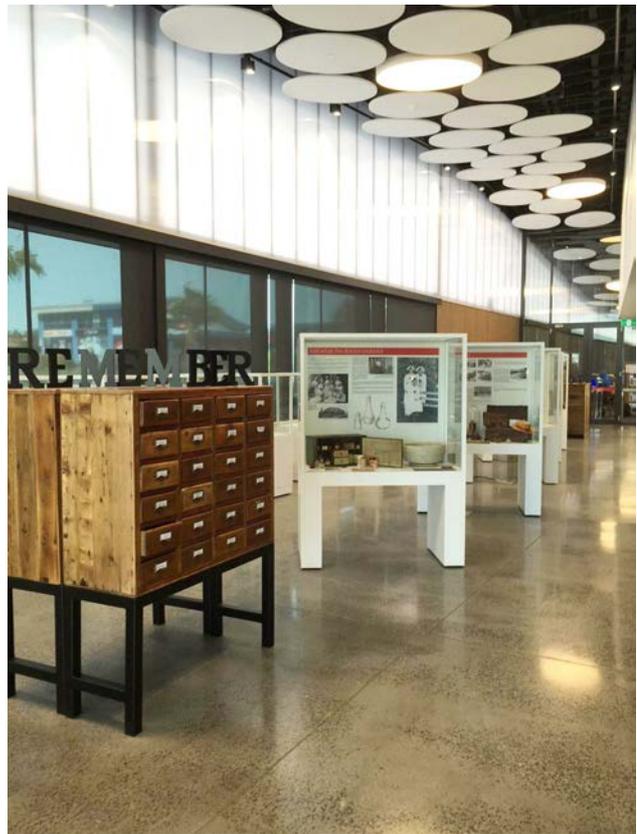
Engaging local community

Advertising the content is possible through graphics, physical displays, public art, digital imaging as well as on the library's website and via social media. Content can be supplemented by shelves dedicated to local authors, exhibitions by local artists, community groups, schools and tertiary institutions, programs, courses and presentations by residents.

Allowing the local studies area to be welcoming and IT-enabled allows more of the community to become involved.

Regardless of the approach taken, considerations in relation to the design of local studies areas include:

- potential for secure, fireproof and environmentally controlled areas or storage that can be separately locked and separately zoned for lighting and air conditioning for original materials
- lockable bookcases, flat files and map cabinets
- compact shelving requirements
- low-lit areas for preservation of material and use of microfiche
- separation from noisy and active areas if required
- display and layout areas
- repair and preservation space
- adequate space for microfiche/microfilm readers and reader printers, computers, scanners and possibly other equipment such as photographic stands
- equipment for digitisation and oral history creation, possibly in a makerspace, workshop or recording studio that is used by a range of library customers and staff.



Shellharbour Library



Campsie Library



Kogarah Library



Marrickville Library

Service area

Staff and non-public areas

Staff areas are frequently overlooked in library design or are the result of the leftover space once the public areas are planned. Their proximity to public areas as well as to service areas, entry and loading should be a critical element in the initial space planning of a library. Workflows need to be considered. How the staff areas relate to other areas of the library should directly reflect the library's preferred work method.

Small libraries

For example, in small libraries, particularly when there may only be one or two staff on roster, the need for the staff to supervise public areas and serve customers will result in a staff area which is often open or transparent to public areas. Tasks which are commonly performed in the back of house may be undertaken in full view of the public and should preferably have facilities to lock up and leave as required.

Larger libraries

Larger libraries may employ staff where the majority of their work is undertaken in a non-public space and may therefore separate their staff areas to a much greater degree. The internal planning of the staff area must also integrally relate to work processes to encourage efficient work methods and adequate space to undertake tasks.

Functions allocated to staff areas

With a growing trend towards part time and casual workers, the flexibility of work areas should not be overlooked.

The functions considered to be allocated to staff areas include:

- collection management tasks (although many libraries are outsourcing much of collection processing)
- service and program development
- administration.

Other areas include:

- storage: general collection, special collection, large items
- space for volunteers to work
- staff amenities, kitchen/lunchroom, showers, lockers
- equipment hub: copiers, scanners, printers



Woollahra Library at Double Bay

- additional IT area and IT department.

Staff area design

The following need to be considered:

Working spaces

- number of staff and part time staff – permanent workstations, hot desks, flexible desk arrangements and enclosed offices
- tasks to be undertaken including preparation, repair, scanning/copying.
- the location of work surfaces and storage/other equipment that is required nearby.

Access and storage

- space for server rooms, maintenance rooms and cleaning rooms
- proximity and ease of access to other staff facilities including locker rooms, showers, toilets and kitchen areas
- proximity to loading and home library services areas
- proximity to service desk and returns area
- storage requirement – proximity to work area, degree of environmental control
- a growing e-book collection and decreasing print collection would decrease space required for processing library material
- adequate trolley parking
- location of noticeboard
- location of CCTV station.

Collaboration spaces

- open and enclosed meeting areas which are central and welcoming
- potential to overlap meeting areas with public meeting rooms
- consider the trend towards social hubs which promote casual meeting and exchange.

Flexibility

- potential changes to service provision and processes e.g. increased outsourcing of collections procurement and management would decrease space required for these processes
- the impact of digital content and content creation and the consequent impact on work processes
- flexibility to rearrange spaces over time. As in the main library limit the intrusion of building structure and allow for flexible cabling/ lighting/air conditioning.

Environment and well-being

- supervision - overlooking of public areas
- adequate room for waste sorting
- natural daylight and outlook

- consider outdoor breakout spaces
- levels of acoustic and visual privacy
- privacy and security
- sick room – if space is adequate.

Floor plan and offices spaces

It is normal practice to provide open plan work areas for library staff, other than managers, which promote collaborative work practices and exchange. In these environments, the design of workstations and library partitions should accommodate both individual tasks and conversation. Partitions which are too high will reduce natural daylight and constrain the sense of space. Fully open plan offices, without partitions, are popular but the staff need to embrace a more active work environment and the space will normally require acoustic treatment to reduce noise intrusion.

A rule of thumb for areas:

- manager's office: 12 to 20 m²
- team leaders and area managers: 10 to 14 m²
- shared office: 8 to 10 m²
- administrative staff: 8 to 12 m²
- open plan workstations: 8 m²

Return areas

While some libraries still undertake manual processing of returned books, the use of both RFID and automatic materials sorting are prevalent.

Whether book sorting systems are automated or not, a number of critical factors remain the same:

- the out-of-hours book return chute should be in a highly accessible, public location with good security and site supervision
- this chute will normally have a scanner (scanning member card or library material) to prevent unwanted items being dropped in
- fire rating and separation of this return from other areas should be considered
- while the books from this chute are sometimes conveyed to an alternate location either by trolley or by conveyor, it is optimal to locate the returns room in close proximity to the returns chute. This can frequently clash with the transparency and welcoming character of the entry and public areas. Careful planning is required to achieve both.
- internal planning of manual returns areas should consider space for bins - empty, full and in process
- consider if books can be conveyed to staff sorting area to reduce staff travel to and from the returns area
- the layout of the returns room should consider ergonomic principals, efficiency and ease of use including distance travelled, reach and height of work surfaces
- staff should be consulted in planning the returns room
- off-the-shelf equipment such as bins and chutes are available and the input of these suppliers can be useful in the planning of the returns area.

Automated solutions

There is an ever-increasing range of technology to assist in book sorting most of which is customised to the library space and library work practices. Automated book sorting has become the next step, after self-check, to free up staff time.

Other advantages include a greater capacity for out-of-hours book drops and shorter lead times for returned books. Some issues to consider include:

- ensure that the sorting system you choose is compatible or customisable to the LMS (Library Management System)
- to achieve the best solution for your library, the supplier should become involved in the early stages both to ensure that the equipment can fit and to take advantage of the customisable options available. For example, the book sorter might be designed to sort bins geographically.
- the integration of this equipment into the building can be complicated, particularly when books are transferred between floors or from one side of the library to the other, so it must be coordinated with the architecture, building services and structure
- a number of libraries have chosen to highlight the use of sorting machine technology by using glass walls or even allowing the conveyor to pass through public areas. Given the customisable nature of these machines, this technology should not overly impact on a better architectural solution.



Oran Park Library

Storage areas are essential within a public library with each activity and service likely to generate the demand for storage. Storage areas and specific types of storage equipment are often required for:

Children's and youth activities

- located within or nearby the children's activity area
- consider large cupboards to store craft supplies, resources, toys and display boards
- a wet area with sink, water and storage is desirable
- door systems (sliding, bifold or hinged) to hide stored items and wet areas can create a higher quality environment for when these items are not in use

Multipurpose rooms

- typically need adjoining storeroom for chairs, tables, audiovisual equipment and meeting room equipment

- if the room is to be used regularly by community groups, individual lockable storage cupboards may be required for group equipment

Archives and conservation

- provision for compactus shelving may be necessary together with storage for specialist council collections, e.g. heritage items, art collections, artefacts etc.



Staff work areas

Riverina Regional Library headquarters

- storage cupboards
- bookshelves
- shelving in staff areas for stationery, resources, files and equipment

Larger back of house storage area

- typically libraries require storage for larger items which are used infrequently such as Christmas decorations and exhibition stands

Storage of users' bags

- coin-operated lockers or open pigeonholes for library users to store excess bags

Cleaner's room

- shelving and cupboards for cleaning materials and equipment

Planning

Managing the project for each phase of the building.

Plan opportunities into your library.

Planning a new library building is a complex process. It is likely to take many years from the first thought that a new library is needed to the opening of a library building. During this process there are many issues that need to be considered and many steps that need to be taken.

There will be some similarity in functional areas from one library to the next, but no two libraries are the same. The planning process is the opportunity to design a library that is unique, suits the needs of your community, can provide relevant services and reflect the identity of the local area.

The People Places website includes this Planning section, but every section has information or tools to help inform the planning and design of your new or refurbished library.

In this section

[Community needs](#)

For public libraries, the greatest emphasis remains on the services and collections provided and how it meets the needs of the surrounding community.

[Starting your library project: working group](#)

Once a library project is identified as being required and approved to commence, a project framework must be implemented.

[New building, refurbishment or mobile?](#)

How the library is built can have a substantial impact on refurbishment and operational costs, and on the future functionality and services to be provided.

[Co-location and joint use libraries](#)

Prior to determining the need for and size of a library development project, it is essential to consider whether there is a need for a co-located or joint use library.

[Developing a building brief](#)

The library brief outlines the requirements of a library service and the new/extended building.

[Understanding the building design and construction phases](#)

If the team is new to the building design process, understanding what level of information should be expected at each stage is critical.

Selecting the architect, project manager and other consultants

There are a number of ways of entering into a selection process such as a design competition, a tender process or choosing outright based on experience and reputation.

Funding and costs

The cost and ability to fund the construction and operation of a new or extended public library is one of the main concerns of local government.

Staffing requirements

Skilled and well-trained staff are key to the successful running of a library service.

Collection plan

The provision of an improved library collection is an important component of a library development project.

Developing a Local Technology Plan

Developing a technology plan is recommended to ensure that local technology needs will be met by the new library.

Workplace health and safety: risk and opportunity in design

The assessment and management of risks and opportunities is a key part of planning, design and building.

Evaluation: post construction and post occupancy

Following the completion of the building, the library is ready for occupation. Those managing the building need to have a clear understanding of how to operate it.

Community needs

What does your community need in a public library building?

This section primarily focuses on how to undertake a needs assessment for your community. It will enable you to gather the right sort of information to show why changes are needed to library services and/or buildings, how to monitor the changing needs of the community and how this may affect the provision of library services. This section also outlines the importance of collaborative planning and how it should be used to determine an overall plan for library services or a Library Development Plan for the community.

Every community is unique, and for local government the development of any type of public building must relate closely to the local community's needs, demands and aspirations. For public libraries, the greatest emphasis remains on the services and collections provided and how it meets the needs of the surrounding community. The building itself may reflect one of several service models through which a library service can be delivered. Service models include mobile libraries, specialised services for housebound, joint developments with other activities and increasingly, library websites with online resources and services. The library service needs to fit into the bigger picture of what is happening in the community and how the many opportunities available can be harnessed to add value.

It is essential to recognise that the development of public libraries, as is the case with the allocation of resources for any public facility and/or service, is an inherently political process. It involves a range of issues, for which trade-offs and compromises may need to be made. It also involves many stakeholders with particular interests and ideas. As it is a political process, the establishment of a sound planning approach and clear assessment tools will ensure that the process is well organised and informed.

So how do you determine what type of library service your community needs and how best these services can be delivered to the community?

Planning strategies developed out of a collaborative planning process, involving key stakeholders in determining how to prepare an overall development plan for library services.

[GO TO PLANNING STRATEGIES](#)

A **needs assessment** is used to determine why the community wants or needs a new/changed library service. Needs assessment is used extensively as a planning tool, particularly for community services and social planning. It has a strong basis in community consultation, socio-demographic indicators and comparison to other communities/service models.

[GO TO NEEDS ASSESSMENT](#)

Planning strategies

Collaborative planning is based on involving a range of stakeholders in the planning process. It seeks out those who have a stake or interest in the potential outcomes and ensures that their ideas and issues are addressed in the planning process.

Planning is part of good management and occurs at a range of levels in all organisations, particularly local government. Planning and community consultation are legislative requirements under the *Local Government Act 1993* and the *Local Government Amendment (Governance and Planning) Act 2016*. These regulations require the mandatory preparation of a Community Strategic Plan (CSP) and Resourcing Strategy, which must be reviewed at regular intervals.

A CSP provides an over-arching framework identifying a community's vision and main priorities. It will cover issues relating to social, environmental, economic and civic leadership, identified through consultation with the local community. Consultation will be guided by a Community Engagement Strategy. The framework encourages both the principles of social justice, so that the community's needs are met, as well as ensuring connections with other agencies and policies at state and federal level. Library service requirements should be an integral element of the CSP.

A Library Development Plan (LDP) should create strong links with local government plans and strategies. The following checklist box lists some documents you should refer to in your LDP to ensure that it is linked to other areas of local government activity and planning.

Documents to refer to in your LDP

- **Community Strategic Plan (CSP)**
An over-arching document identifying a community's vision and main priorities.

- **Delivery Program and Operational Plan**
The Delivery Program outlines what a council commits to achieve within an electoral cycle. The Operational Plan details council activities and budgets on a yearly basis.
- **Resourcing Strategy**
A long term strategy to achieve the objectives established by the Community Strategic Plan including Long Term Financial Plan, Workforce Management and Asset Management.
- **Local Environmental Plan**
Provides the legislative framework for the allocation of specific land uses throughout the community.
- **Social strategies**
Strategies related to multicultural, ageing, youth and children's issues.
- **Environmental, Waste Reduction, Public Art and Transport Policy**
- **Sections 7.11 and 7.12 (replace sections 94 and 94A) of the NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act**
Provide the legal basis on which contributions are sought from local development towards the cost of additional public infrastructure needed as a result of this development.

An LDP should be developed for one and/or all of the libraries in the service area. LDPs can be done for communities of varying sizes, including local areas, the whole local government area (LGA) or even on a regional basis. Consultation should not be limited to the LDP. It should continue into the building design phases, particularly in the early phases.

Collaborative planning may also result in links to other plans developed by agencies such as the local economic development board, university or TAFE, tourism development committees and NSW Government departments. A collaborative plan should include:

- Identification of the various stakeholders to be involved
- Type of information to be gathered and/or issues to be addressed
- Consultation approaches to be used for gathering this information
- Integration of this information into a Library Development Plan.

Public libraries already undertake planning functions as part of their responsibilities to Council. However, it is how these plans are developed and linked that is important in ensuring the right outcomes for the public library service and its community.

Needs assessment

So why does a particular community need a new library building or changed library service? This

question often becomes the basic issue in the preparation of a Library Development Plan. For many, the real distinction lies between needs and wants and the concern that provision is only based on the articulated wants of professional officers or a small vocal minority in the community. There may be a high level of community debate involved in determining whether the community really needs and not just wants a new library building.

Need is both relative and socially defined so a number of methods are provided for determining need. By using all four methods, you will have a resource of valuable information that will enable more effective collaborative planning. You should assess the need for, and size of library required using the four methods outlined below. This will provide a more complete analysis of what type of services need to be provided which can then be translated into the actual design and functional floor areas required in a new/ expanded library facility.

There are four assessment methods, detailed below.

1. Identified need

Expressed by stakeholders such as library staff, community groups and Council officers. It reflects what needs are expressed by service providers, practitioners and consumers. It is also often referred to as qualitative information. A range of consultation techniques may be used to gather this information and ensure that the extent and type of need is fully understood.

This is the need expressed by service providers, practitioners and consumers about library services and/or a new library building. Developing a consultation strategy with key stakeholders and the wider community can be a daunting task.

Before starting it is essential to work out very clearly what type of information you want to get out of the consultation process. To ensure informed comment, you need to provide participants with information. Don't ask initial vague questions like "What do you think about building a new library?" or "Do you want a new library?" without some opportunity to develop a discussion around the issue. Determine what are the physical problems and benefits of the current library; what other activities/services they would like in the library; and ideas users have on how to increase use. The [Evaluating your public library building page](#) has additional information on obtaining community feedback.

What do participants get out of the process?

It is important to remember that those involved need to gain something out of the process. At the very least, they should receive a written report outlining results. You may provide lunch/refreshments, a thank you letter and invitation to a special Council event, or a free book reservation at the library. Young people might feel more rewarded by gift vouchers or you might be able to organise a special presentation or event.

The important issue however is to ensure that you really use this information which has been given to you. Always let participants know what the information is to be used for and how they might be able to further participate in the process.

Think of which stakeholders need to be consulted and how this can best occur. Choose the most appropriate technique for each group. Consultation can be used to ascertain broad community views or the views of particular groups. It is important to remember that those consulted should reflect the range of different groups in the community.

Examples of types of consultation include:

- Community meetings
- Consultation websites with e-newsletters and discussion papers inviting feedback
- Displays and exhibitions in council facilities and public venues
- Phone surveys and phone ins
- Individual questionnaires and interviews
- Focus groups with staff, young people, older residents, parents, play groups, multicultural and Indigenous organisations, Chamber of Commerce, life-long learning organisations, community based charities etc.

2. Normative need

Based on socio-demographic information and recognised statistical indicators about library usage, provision per capita, etc. The State Library's standards and guidelines for public libraries which are based on annual statistical returns should be used in determining normative need. Needs determined in this way should be checked to ensure that they are consistent with the qualitative information gained in determining identified need.

Normative need uses socio-demographic information and recognised statistical indicators to assist in determining the need for additional library facilities. All councils in NSW operate under a framework which requires social and other strategic planning. This is often undertaken by Council's Community Services section and includes a community profile and statistical data about the local government area (LGA). Other information may also be available through planning documents from Council's Environmental Planning section including development of town centres and community/town centre zoning. You should use these documents to inform the library planning process and gather statistical information which identifies issues of importance to library planning such as:

- Size and distribution of population
- Future population growth
- Work, shopping and recreational patterns of the community
- Transport patterns and issues
- Location and size of particular target groups e.g. older residents, residents with a disability, children, young people, residents from multicultural backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander people

- Size and distribution of important indicators such as household income, English language skills, employment
- Location of other services e.g. childcare, seniors' and neighbourhood centres, educational institutions, retail precincts, recreational facilities, public buildings e.g. post offices, government agencies.

Statistical indicators highlighting the use of library services in the LGA should also be collected to inform this data. This will help to identify the extent of need and issues relating to existing library service points.

Some of this data may already be available as part of the regular statistics collected by the State Library of New South Wales and/or benchmarking data used to encourage best practice. It is important, however, to choose the data which you think is the most useful to provide realistic information in order to identify service needs. The data may also be related to the community profile data collected above, enabling the development of an individual service point/library profile.

Together, this statistical data should help to highlight the particular needs of different communities and how the existing library service point meets those needs.

3. Comparative need

Based on comparing service provision with other communities with similar socio-demographic characteristics. Many local Councils and library staff rely heavily on comparing themselves with other communities of similar size and characteristics. They often visit these library services and seek to provide service models similar to these communities. The advantage in using comparative need is that stakeholders can see the outcomes for themselves.

To some extent, comparative need can be used to compare the levels of service provision which exist within the LGA. For example, it may be considered equitable to provide libraries of similar size when serving communities with similar needs in the one LGA or region. In reality this does not often occur with communities rarely being the same.

Examples of useful data to collect

- Number, distribution and characteristics of library members
- Number and distribution of non-resident members
- Gross floor area of each existing library service point
- Distance between and transport availability for each service point
- Number of visits, circulation, size of collection per service point
- Opening hours per service point
- Existing and future plans for libraries in adjoining local government areas

However, comparative analysis does help to identify need based on trends outside the local area and to highlight what has worked in other communities. It is particularly useful for the broad range of stakeholders involved in library development projects. It illustrates the standards of provision considered reasonable in other communities and will enable stakeholders to compare their community needs with what others have provided.

For example, when considering the need for a new library, visits to other communities that have recently built new facilities will encourage informed discussion. The size of these new libraries, the communities they serve, the range of services provided and innovative approaches they may have used, can be used to compare with existing service provision in your community. You should collect this information and develop a picture of what other similar communities are providing.

This does not mean that all communities should replicate each other, but comparison provides an opportunity to use the models already adopted and working in other communities. This may be particularly useful for areas undergoing major population growth. In these cases, experience from other library services located in areas which have experienced major growth, the problems they addressed and the resultant services they have provided, will be invaluable information for developing communities. Equally, for remote communities, information from other areas on how new library buildings are providing for increased technology will be invaluable to local Councillors and community representatives.

4. Benchmark-based need

Using the [Library Building Calculator](#) provides two different approaches for determining the actual floor area of a public library, the population and service-based calculators. By using both methodologies, a target range floor area for a new library will be provided. This information should be used with the other needs assessment methods. This will provide Council with some flexibility in determining the required size of a library and enable a more local assessment of what best meets community needs.

These benchmarks are considered by the Library Council of New South Wales to provide minimum area sizes for public library buildings in NSW.

The Library Building Calculator includes two methodologies that should be used to set the parameters for determining the need for and resultant size of a new or expanded library building. They are the service based calculator and the population based calculator which are outlined below together with relevant examples to explain how they should be used in practice.

Please note: the updated Library Building Calculator includes a Renovation Calculator to help you allocate spaces when given an existing building or footprint. This is a very useful tool but not suitable for determining the optimum size for a library building.

Service based calculator

The [service based benchmark](#) is derived from the space required to provide the services and collections that will be delivered from the library building. This benchmark is considered to be the more specific of the two in defining the required size for a library.

[Download the calculator \(XLSX 54KB\) \[1\]](#)

[HOW DO I USE THE SERVICE BASED CALCULATOR? \[2\]](#)

Population based calculator

The population based benchmark provides a recommended size for a library based on the population catchment it is to service. This may be thought of as a recommended minimum size, but it should be noted that it may not reflect the size required to deliver the range of services specific to any given library. These two methodologies should be used together to provide a range of sizes for a new/ expanded library building.

[Download the calculator \(XLSX 54KB\) \[3\]](#)

[HOW DO I USE THE POPULATION BASED CALCULATOR? \[4\]](#)

The minimum recommended size for a public library building is 190 square metres gross floor area. It is important to note that a library of this size is only capable of servicing communities of fewer than 2,750 people and is only likely to accommodate a collection of 6000 books (including 2000 e-books and resources which have no space requirement), 240 periodicals, 60 audio visual items and five Public Internet Access PCs . The remaining area (115 square metres) would need to be available for reading, seating and study areas, service desks, amenities, storage and ancillary functions and a staff work area. Smaller libraries have been achieved but are frequently co-located in recreational or retail precincts where amenities, ancillary and storage areas are located elsewhere. This should be taken into consideration in the calculation.

It is particularly important for rural areas with declining or small populations, to give greater weight to the service based benchmark which focuses on providing a range of quality library services consistent with the needs of the community.

The model of one central library with several branch libraries is used as the traditional service structure for many public libraries throughout NSW. However, there are various other models used such as area/district libraries. The benchmarks can be applied to each of these service structures.

It is important to note that mobile libraries are not taken into account when assessing the catchment area of a public library building. For remote and/or isolated communities they may be an important service but typically the service points are temporary, and access is often limited to a few hours per week per location.

The service based benchmark

This method is flexible and easily tailored for local communities. It is used to determine the required size of the library based on the catchment population, future collection size and the type and range of services and core functions that the proposed library building will incorporate. These requirements are then translated into a floor area for each functional area and used cumulatively to determine the size requirement of the proposed library.

Library areas

Base area (collection area plus computer area)

The service based calculator starts with allocating 35% of the total library floor space as the base area. This is for:

- Collection (books, volumes, non print material, virtual and digital resources)
- Computers (public access terminals)

Functional and service areas

The calculator allocates 65% of the total library floor space as service and functional areas. This includes:

- Reading and study areas (tables and chairs, individual seating, group study, lounge)
- Customer service (service desk, self-check, information)
- Children and youth
- Specialist (local studies, specialist genre)
- Amenities and ancillary (toilets, plant, server, loading, maintenance areas, etc.)
- Additional service areas (cafe, exhibition room, community services, etc.)

The percentage of space allocated as base area and functional/service areas will change as you fill out the service based calculator. The calculator allows for flexibility in determining the needs of a particular library and community but it is not recommended that you deviate too far from the 35/65 ratio.

The process derives from a simple concept – that library space needs are based on a level of service provision requiring a range of materials and functional areas necessary to serve the community adequately. Each service has an identifiable spatial requirement and to a large extent all of the services are interrelated. The methodology defines a range of broad types of library space, allows a projection of future needs and provides a way to translate resulting service assumptions into spatial requirements.

The benchmark uses the overall size of the collection area and computer terminal area as a base which is considered to have a direct impact on the areas required for the other library services. It is important that the projected collection size takes account future population and likely service requirements. As with the projection of the library's service population, it is most effective to make these projections over a 10 year period based on an understanding of the community's library service patterns, priorities, and needs. Comparative statistics and published data can be used to suggest an appropriate collection size, which can be modified according to the library's rate of acquisitions and discards. Particular attention should be paid in the first instance to the standards relating to collection size based on population which are outlined in [Living Learning Libraries \[5\]](#).

The library's service emphases may also have an effect on collection size. Each library will also need to assess the impact of the growing availability of information by way of virtual and digital resources and the technology required to access them. For instance, some libraries anticipate that digital resources and the technology required to access these resources will slow the rate of growth in traditional collections or even reduce the quantities that will be needed in those traditional collections. Other libraries anticipate little effect. Still others anticipate that some parts of the collection (reference and non-fiction) will be affected substantially while other parts will be affected less dramatically. The key to this step is an understanding of local needs.

Equally, it is important to determine the proportion of the projected collection in the library at one time, while the remainder is on loan. Many libraries allow for only 65–75% of the projected collection to be on the shelf at one time and each library service should assess its own future needs.

The figures used assume an aisle width between shelves of 1500 mm and that each shelf unit is 4 shelves high.

1. https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/library_building_calculator.xlsx
2. <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/service-based-library-calculator>
3. https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/library_building_calculator.xlsx
4. <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/population-based-library-calculator>
5. <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/content/living-learning-libraries>

Starting your library project: working group

Once a library project is identified as being required and approved to commence, a project framework must be implemented.

Getting the right stakeholders involved and addressing issues early on in the process will ensure the success of your project. Key elements at this stage involve: investigating and applying for relevant funding opportunities; investigating co-location and joint-use development opportunities within your local area; developing a technology plan specifically for addressing local needs; assessing quantitative needs of the project including projected staffing, collection size and provision for library fitout.

Set up a working group

Establishing a working group for consultation in a development project is an established organisational method used by local government. When considering the provision of library services or preparing a Library Development Plan a working group can be formed to identify issues and advise council on actions to be taken.

Ideally this working group should comprise stakeholders who can contribute constructively to the process and provide a range of specialist advice.



Green Square Library (courtesy City of Sydney)

Working group representatives may include:

- nominated Project Officer/Project Manager
- Councillors and Council Directors
- Library Manager and key library staff
- Council Officers from Finance, Planning, Engineering, Information Technology, Cultural Planning and Community Services, Maintenance and Facilities Management, Sustainability Management
- community representatives
- external Project Manager

Initial work should focus on the role of the working group and the issues to be addressed. This will ensure appropriate outcomes for all involved.

The working group will most likely evolve over the life of the project, with different stakeholders involved as the process proceeds. The initial working group involved in the planning of a library

project may become smaller project management groups when the project enters the construction phase.

Appointing a project manager to deal with day to day issues and to liaise between the builder, architect and consultants is highly beneficial in many cases.

New building, refurbishment or mobile?

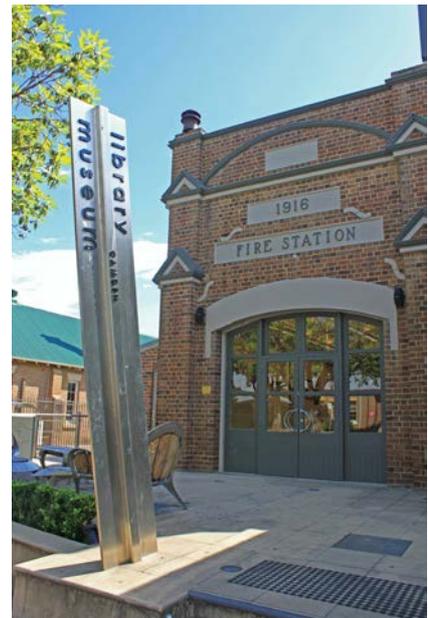
Before starting the project, determine whether a library building or a mobile library is best for your community. Consider options for refurbishment and sites for a new building.

New building or refurbishment

The choice of site may be influenced by the possibility of reusing or adapting an existing building. The prospect of utilising a refurbished building rather than a new facility may at first appear to be a more cost-effective option. However, the suitability of the building as a library can have a substantial impact on refurbishment and operational costs, and on the future functionality and services to be provided. If appropriate, reusing buildings has a substantial benefit in terms of environmentally sustainable design (ESD) as the embodied energy in constructing a new building is very significant.

Issues to consider:

- heritage value of the building – is it listed? Has it been assessed? A Statement of Heritage Significance or Conservation Management plan will be required for buildings of heritage significance which will guide how the building can be altered
- prominence, transparency and equitable access
- provision for mechanical and electrical services in existing buildings particularly those with heritage significance
- contamination and asbestos
- flexibility, adaptability and expansion capability for future modifications
- fire upgrades and compliance with the National Construction Code.
- environmental performance, maintenance and running costs
- cabling to accommodate local technology plan requirements
- floor loading able to hold significant collection loads.



Camden Library and Museum

Mobile libraries

In NSW, mobile libraries play an important role in the delivery of library services to isolated and/or remote communities. In areas of low population density or to cater for specific users (such as rural schools, retirement villages, etc.) a mobile library service may be a good option. The needs of the community should be carefully considered, including population projections and variations, when choosing between starting or continuing a mobile service or opening a new library branch. Availability of other local community facilities, such as meeting rooms and social spaces should be part of the decision making process.

Advantages of a mobile library:

- provides a close-at-hand, convenient service, especially for the less mobile such as young children and older residents;
- can effectively fill a gap between libraries and an isolated pocket of population for which a permanent building would be uneconomic
- can provide an effective interim service in developing areas where the population does not yet justify a permanent site, or where a permanent site cannot yet be identified because development plans are not far enough advanced.



Richmond Upper Clarence
Regional mobile library

Disadvantages of a mobile library:

- is not a cheap alternative to permanent buildings. The rate of depreciation is high, as are establishment and operating costs
- can at best offer a one day a week service at any one location
- has stocks which are typically small since the largest vehicle will only carry about 7,000 books
- is unlikely to provide full library services including broad collections, events and programs
- cannot provide ongoing access to library spaces such as meeting rooms, quiet reading and study areas and fully equipped technology spaces.

Co-location and joint use libraries

A co-located library has its own distinct space within a wider complex or set of buildings. A joint use library is one in which two or more distinct groups of users are served in the same library premises.

The State Library has developed [information and guidelines on co-located and joint use libraries \[1\]](#).

Establish a co-location or joint use framework

It is essential to consider whether there is a need for a co-located or joint use library as part of the process of determining the need for and size of a library building and development.

These models typically provide a community hub or community precinct, acting as a strong focal point for community activities and identity. They also provide another approach to the funding of public library developments. This approach is extensively used in Australia and overseas.

Benefits include:

- sharing of resources such as staff, space and equipment
- encouraging wider public use by providing access to a range of services at one facility - the 'one stop shop'
- creating a critical mass of visitors and a vibrant hub
- improving the cost effectiveness of the service provided while enhancing service quality
- reducing duplication of resources
- rationalisation of property portfolios
- providing specialist facilities and services e.g. specialist expertise in technology and provision of equipment
- reducing worker isolation and encouraging more coordinated service delivery
- increased hours of operation
- increased security.



Albury LibraryMuseum

In considering any co-located or joint use library, the combination of uses must equal or improve the separate entities. The potential disadvantages of co-location need to be addressed,

and strategies to overcome these disadvantages should be developed. These normally relate to the ongoing management of the facility.

Co-located libraries exist where multiple buildings or services are provided in the same or adjacent locations, or in the same or adjacent buildings. The library service is funded by local government and operates as a separate service.

Co-location typically brings together council-related services. In NSW co-located library projects have been developed with other government services, such as community health centres or employment services.

Joint use libraries comprise two or more distinct library service providers, serving their client group within the same building; the governance of which is cooperatively arranged between the separate authorities. For example, a joint use library may be developed between a local government authority and the NSW Department of Education, serving both high school students and the broader community.

Converged use comprises two or more distinct yet compatible services provided by the library and operated by the same management team. Albury's 'LibraryMuseum' consists of the combination of library and local museum. Staff members have diversified their roles to include museum curation and management.

In an environment where libraries are seeking alternative models to enhance their viability, exciting opportunities may exist to expand upon the traditional roles and functions of the library.

Identify partners

In NSW, co-location and joint use developments with public libraries have included the following uses:

- council administration centre, citizens' service centre, council chambers
- art galleries, community arts centres, theatres and exhibition areas
- community and neighbourhood centres
- youth services
- community technology centres (CTCs)
- libraries for Technical and Further Education (TAFE)
- community colleges
- university access centres
- police stations
- community health centres
- home and community care centres
- rural fire service
- state emergency services
- early childhood health centres
- long day care or occasional care
- post offices and other government agencies
- museums
- recreation and leisure centres

- shopping centres
- schools
- veterans' affairs centres
- local history organisations
- tourist information centres
- transport hubs such as a bus terminus or railway station.

Establish objectives for your project

The following objectives have been developed to guide library development projects considering co-location and joint use. They are based on consultation with stakeholders involved in existing projects and also reflect the NSW Parliament Legislative Assembly (2004); the Inquiry into the Joint Use and Co-location of Public Buildings and a submission by the State Library of New South Wales to this inquiry.

The ultimate objectives for the co-location and joint use libraries are to:

- provide an integrated and improved level of service, both collectively and as individual services, compared to stand alone facilities
- meet the individual performance standards required by the governing bodies and authorities involved
- provide a more economic use of services and resources.

A range of implications and factors will need to be considered when planning a co-located or joint use facility, as discussed below.

Motivation

Participants must be willing partners committed to working in partnership, cooperating and sharing throughout the life of the project. Negotiations can be meaningless and time-consuming without commitment to the partnership.

All services should work towards developing common goals and be willing to make financial and operational commitments to achieve these goals.

Service compatibility

Ensure compatibility of image, operating structure, and users.

The siting of the library must be carefully considered regarding its visibility and presence within the greater co-located development.

The new development should avoid ostracising any users e.g. some facilities which involve the sharing of space with older residents and youth have not been successful and have dissatisfied users.

Privacy, both visual and acoustic, can be important where a facility is to be shared between several user groups.

Common design and management goals

All involved parties should be fully consulted with decisions relating to the project.

All service providers should discuss and agree on the design and management options for the project as this may impact on the site requirements and/or building design. When planning computer technology requirements for a co-located library, systems must be in place to ensure that confidential data cannot be accessed through a shared system.

It is essential to have written agreements covering each aspect of the project.

Each service provider needs to be fully aware of its management responsibilities and that staff involved are committed to these agreements.



Swansea Library

Financial implications

All service providers must fully understand their financial obligations towards the project including both capital and recurrent costs such as building maintenance, etc.

During negotiations it may become evident that the project may not deliver major financial savings when compared to a stand-alone facility. However, an assessment of possible improved benefits unrelated to financial savings should also be considered.

Facility and operational management

A joint mission statement is required to confirm agreement between all service providers about the roles, the service and functioning of the facility.

An agreement or memorandum of understanding must be prepared detailing the operation of the facility, the responsibilities of each service provider or organisation, including building maintenance, staffing, car parking, utilities, emergency protocols, cleaning and security. This should also include procedures and responsibilities for termination of any services.

Protocols for implementing these responsibilities need to be identified together with processes for dispute resolution, e.g. who to ring for building maintenance, who is responsible for locking the building, etc. Issues such as hours of operation, security arrangements, utilities, fire and emergency procedures, maintenance and services access need to be determined. The aim is to provide coordinated services that may require new staff agreements and/or changed work programs.

Asset managers from council are typically responsible for these arrangements and should be

involved in the project planning.

These agreements should include the establishment of a board or committee of management comprising representatives from each service provider or user group. The board/ committee should meet regularly to discuss the management and operation of the facility.

Statutory zoning and building class

Where a range of uses occupy the same site, ensure that all uses are permitted under the statutory zoning requirements.

Varied use may also result in different Building Classes under the Building Code of Australia, resulting in requirements for fire isolation and impacts on fire egress/protection.

Marketing

Co-location/joint use provides the benefits of joint marketing and promotion. To the community, the facility or site should be viewed as a 'one-stop shop' and can be marketed in this manner. Combined events, information days, promotional material, signage, website and advertising can be delivered through a joint project.



Chatswood Library

For co-location planning

When considering any co-located or joint use library service, you should discuss the potential benefits and disadvantages with other libraries that have developed similar projects.

Some examples include:

- community facilities: Oran Park, Narellan, Surry Hills, Vinegar Hill and Kiama
- recreational facilities: Eaglevale and Stanhope Gardens
- shopping centres: Ryde, Five Dock and Randwick
- museums: Albury and Camden
- art galleries: Bathurst and Tamworth
- theatres: Chatswood and Glen Street
- council offices and gallery: Wagga Wagga
- council offices, service centre, community meeting spaces, museum: Shellharbour
- visitor information: Swansea

1. <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/advice-and-best-practice/library-council-guidelines/co-location-and-joint-use-libraries>

Developing a building brief

The library brief outlines the requirements of a library service and the new or extended building.

Templates

Download a template to help you write your library building brief.

[BUILDING BRIEF FOR SMALL LIBRARIES \(176 KB\)](#)

[1]

[BUILDING BRIEF FOR LARGE LIBRARIES \(250KB\)](#)

[2]

The brief will be used to inform discussion and more detailed planning with the architect and design team.

The process of writing a brief will grow out of the needs analysis and will evolve through the planning process. At the outset it is important to focus on the bigger picture and set clear and achievable targets in the form of a mission statement. The brief is much more than just the allocation of space within the building.

Examples from previous library projects may assist in understanding the content and format of architectural briefs. Architects and library staff can work together to write the library brief. Consider engaging an architect to prepare the brief as a separate exercise to the final selection of the design architect.

Spatial planning at the initial design phases will challenge and verify briefed areas, which may alter. The brief is therefore not a static document and will be read in conjunction with schematic/design development reports and space data sheets as the building phases progress.

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to rethink the way services are delivered and library spaces are used. This new way of thinking should inform library building planning including access to outdoor spaces.

Outdoor spaces and ventilation

Libraries are increasingly exploring the use of outdoor spaces. Some have outdoor reading areas while others utilise adjacent green spaces. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that outdoor spaces can provide a good alternative space for the delivery of library services. Some libraries activated spaces around their buildings with access to wi-fi and seating. Consideration must be given to fencing and safety, queuing, shade, rain shelter and social distancing even when these spaces are used on a temporary basis. Libraries can be planned with large doors leading outside that can be easily opened to extend the library space, allow people to access outdoors and increase ventilation.

Operable windows are often not included in library planning because of perceived risk to the collection. Windows that are located high on walls can be opened for natural ventilation without allowing access by customers or damaging the collection.

Hygiene

Hygiene should be considered when planning a library facility with the inclusion of surfaces that are easy to clean and hands-free use through automatic doors and sensor activated taps.

Functional area schedule

A functional area schedule provides a guide to the type of functional areas that may be included in a public library. Each area, its size and possible location within the library will vary from building to building depending on the type of services the library provides and the needs of the local community. There may be other specific functional areas required in your library building project which have emerged from analysis of the community's needs. The functional areas listed below, included in the design briefs, should be considered when planning and designing a public library building.



Campsie Library



Campsie Library



Campsie Library

Collections

- Reference collection – can be combined with non-fiction

- Fiction collection
- Non-fiction collection
- Specialist collections (Local Studies, Community Languages and Indigenous collections)
- Large print collection
- Children's collection
- Young adult collection
- Audiovisual collection
- Special genre collection, e.g. business, gardening

Reading and seating

- Newspaper and magazine lounge
- Individual study areas
- Individual seating areas including laptop use
- Lounge areas
- Group study areas
- Meeting spaces

Customer service

- Service desk
- Self-check
- Reference, information, roving service points
- Community information and display
- Council and community services
- Additional service desks – these might be needed for some libraries, for example local studies, toy library, tech help

Public access computers

- Public access computers with Internet
- OPACS

Children and youth

- Children's activity area
- Children's storytelling
- Young adult area
- Games area
- Toy library

Specialist options

- Specialist genre areas
- Specialist local and family history area
- Specialist storage and archive
- Digitisation area

- IT training room
- AV areas
- Mixing, recording and graphics studios

Staff areas

- Staff work room
- Staff work room storage
- Staff toilets, showers and lockers
- Staff kitchen and breakout area
- Staff meeting areas
- Staff outdoor area

Ancillary, circulation and amenities

- Foyer, corridors
- Additional space for vertical circulation
- Scanners, photocopiers, printers
- Toilets and parents' room
- Plant room
- Server room
- Out of hours access
- Public lockers and shelving
- Cleaner's storage
- Loading and delivery



Woollahra Library at Double Bay

Additional services

- Café
- Outdoor area/courtyard
- Community services
- Community kitchen
- Meeting rooms, lecture rooms, auditorium, multipurpose space, function room
- Exhibition and display
- Specialist work areas
- Shop
- Vending machines

1. https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/small_library_design_brief.docx
2. https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/large_library_design_brief.docx

Understanding the building design and construction phases

It is important to understand the building design phases and the information required at each stage.

The development and construction of buildings can be both a stressful and confusing process, as well as a rewarding one for clients and stakeholders.

Having developed a clear brief, which has ownership from all important user groups and stakeholders, and having selected an appropriate team, it is useful to understand how the design, documentation and procurement of the building will progress.

If the team is new to the building design process, understanding the building design phases and what level of information should be expected from both the architect and the client at each stage is critical.

Building development phases

1. Predesign

- Site feasibilities and masterplanning
- Review brief, requirements, budget and program
- Select/recommend sub-consultants and prepare design briefs for sub-consultants
- Inspect site and assess conditions
- Assess regulations and authority requirements
- Analyse functional relationships and area requirements
- Analyse adequacy of budget and program in relation to brief

Pre-design deliverables

- Preliminary envelope massing options and site constraint diagrams

2. Schematic (concept) design

- Prepare sketch drawings and diagrams and other information to adequately explain the concept
- Prepare preliminary furniture and equipment layouts
- Undertake preliminary selection of materials and finishes
- Coordinate preliminary design input from sub-consultants
- Consider structural and building services systems to be used in the project
- Prepare preliminary program
- Obtain client's approval for sketch design documents, estimates and programs
- Coordinate the preparation of preliminary estimate for the 'Cost of Works'

- Assess and advise on environmental issues in relation to site
- Analyse adequacy of budget and program in relation to brief
- Obtain client approval for concept design

Schematic design deliverables

- Site plan (usually 1:500 or 1:1000)
- Spatial relationship diagrams
- Principal floor plans (usually 1:200)
- Sections and elevations (usually 1:200)
- Project data (zoning and code considerations)
- Preliminary finishes boards/schedules
- Program and assessment of preliminary ‘Cost of Works’
- Schedule of functional areas
- May also include:
 - Preliminary 3D views
 - Schematic Design Report

3. Design development (detailed design)

- Review and update brief (this may take the form of room data sheets and client approval of schematic design report)
- Develop the approved sketch design into a final developed design including plans at each level, elevations, sections and other details sufficient to fully explain the design (note that this phase “freezes” the design so that it can be developed into construction documents)
- Prepare schedules of materials and finishes
- Prepare furniture and equipment layouts
- Coordinate and integrate information from consultants
- Prepare and report on estimate and program
- Prepare architectural component for planning approval (Development Application) and assist in the coordination of specialist consultant input – timing and requirements for submission may vary
- Assist in approval process by preparing for and attending meetings
- Obtain client’s approval of detailed design and updated estimate, budget and project program

Design development deliverables

- All floor plans (usually 1:100)
- Sections and Elevations (usually 1:100/1:200)
- Space Data Sheets
- Preliminary finishes boards/schedules
- Program and assessment of preliminary ‘Cost of Works’
- Nett Lettable Areas and Gross Floor Areas
- May also include:
 - 3D views
 - Design Development Report

Development application deliverables

- Check DA deliverables with local council
- Check with architect what is included and not included within scope such as 3D montages and shadow diagrams
- Architect will usually coordinate the making of physical models and 3D computer renderings

4. Documentation

- Confirm type of building contract to be used
 - *Note that this affects the level of documentation provided by the architect and when it is provided to the builder*
- Review detailed design against planning approval and any conditions of approval
- Review and update brief, program and budget
- Revise design to incorporate any conditions of planning consent
- Prepare and coordinate Construction Certificate documentation
- Prepare drawings, schedules and specifications sufficient to enable the tendering/construction of the building
- Coordinate and integrate information from consultants into architectural drawings and specifications
- Coordinate the preparation of a pre-tender estimate by the Quantity Surveyor and report on pre-tender estimate

Documentation deliverables

- Site plan (usually 1:500 or 1:1000)
- Floor plans (usually 1:100 or 1:200)
- Sections and elevations (usually 1:100 or 1:200)
- Detailed plans and sections (usually 1:50 or 1:20)
- Plan and section details (1:1 through to 1:20)
- Fittings and fixtures schedules
- Coordinated consultants' drawings
- Specification
- Pre-tender estimate (by Quantity Surveyor)
- Schedule of functional areas

Note that the level of tender documentation provided at this stage will depend on the form of building contract chosen

5. Contractor selection (tender)

- Assist client in choosing preferred tender process and list of building contract tenderers
- Prepare and issue tender set to all tenderers
- Respond to queries from tenderers
- Together with Quantity Surveyor, consultants and client, review and assess tenders
- Negotiate with preferred tenderer to provide an offer acceptable to the client

- Report on tenders and provide recommendation
- Assist in approval process by preparing for and attending meetings
- Obtain client's approval of detailed design and updated estimate, budget and project program

Contractor selection deliverables

- Prepare and issue tender set (see above)
- Additional information and details
- Site reports and defects schedule

6. Contract administration and post contract

Note: Some of this scope may be undertaken by a project manager.

- Prepare and issue contract documents
- Report regularly to client on time, cost and progress
- Visit the site periodically to observe the conformance with contract documentation and attend regular site meetings
- Review shop drawings and submissions provided by the building contractor
- Provide the building contractor with instructions, additional details and clarifications of the contract documents
- Coordinate services of other specialist consultants
- Assess and determine variations, extensions of time and progress claims
- Instruct the contractor on incomplete work and defects
- Assess and determine practical completion
- During defects liability period, instruct builder on defects and incomplete work
- Assess and determine final completion and issue certificate

Contract administration deliverables

- Prepare and issue contract documents
- Provide site observation reports
- Provide further details and clarification of the contract set
- Provide defects and non-compliance reports
- Issue Practical Completion Certificate
- Issue Final Completion Certificate

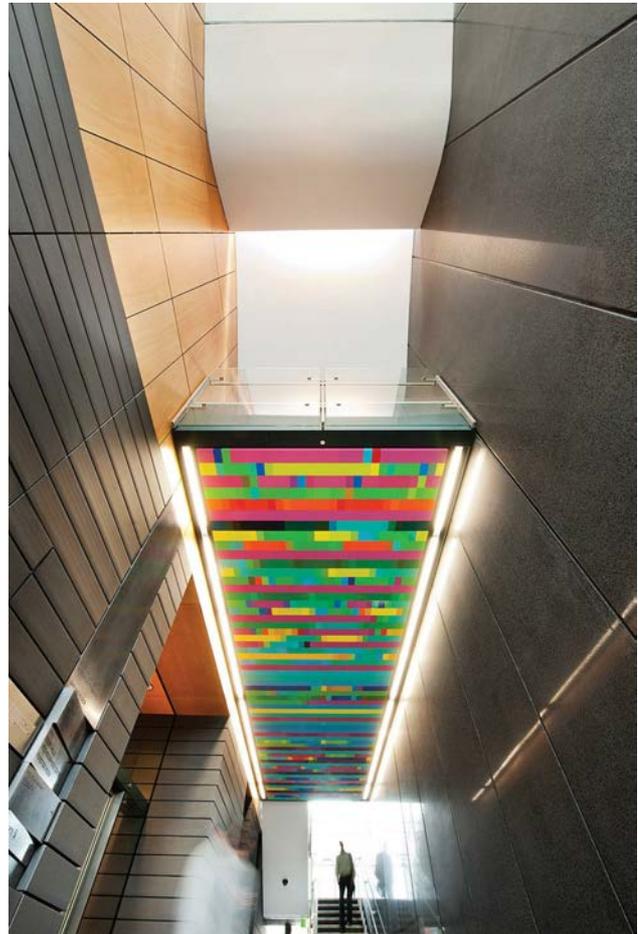
Selecting the architect, project manager and other consultants

Selecting an architect

The selection of an architect is obviously a key element in the planning and design of a library. There are a number of ways of entering into a selection process such as open or limited design competition, a tender process, calling for expressions of interest or choosing an architect outright based on experience and reputation. Each method can have advantages and pitfalls but in all cases it is imperative that the working group is confident they have engaged a professional with whom they can work collaboratively.

In almost all cases there will be a need to call for some form of tender for professional services. Local councils will have a policy and procedure for calling of tenders and the appointment of consultants.

Further advice can be sought from professional institutions such as the [Australian Institute of Architects \[1\]](#) who publish a wide range of documentation such as competition procedure and qualification based assessment of architectural practices.



Surry Hills Library

Selection criteria for assessment

These can include:

- recent relevant experience
- professional skills of nominated staff
- ability and willingness to communicate effectively
- experience in community consultation and stakeholder engagement
- design excellence awards
- proven design capability
- resource availability
- technical capability

- experience in designing sustainable buildings
- an understanding of the project
- management practices and methodologies
- quality and completeness of information supplied with the submission
- cost effectiveness and value for money
- ability to undertake value management exercises to bring the design in on budget
- quality assurance
- professional indemnity insurance.

Selecting a project manager

Also important to the process, particularly for larger projects, is the appointment of a project manager to manage the construction process. Project managers may become involved much earlier, even from the project's inception, when the project is complex. It is an equally critical component of a successful library building project, to ensure that the planned facility is completed on time, on budget and consistent with the overall vision and plan for the facility. The project manager may be from within council, or an external consultant.

The traditional role of the project manager is to administer the building contract and provide the formal channel of communication and liaison between library staff and the building contractor/architect during construction. At earlier phases the project manager can assist with initial feasibilities, consultation and management of stakeholders, development of the brief, programming, engagement of consultants and assistance with the tendering of the project.

Councils must assess whether an in-house appointee has sufficient skills, experience and time to undertake the process, though this option obviously offers a cost saving. The alternative is an external appointee who will be a further cost to the project. The latter option can provide benefits because it is possible to source a project manager who has specific previous experience and skills with public libraries, and in the administration of building contracts. Within the building industry, these types of skills are called 'value adding' and in the long run utilising a professional project manager, which costs money, may arguably be less costly than an in-house appointee who lacks the skills, and time to follow the job through thoroughly.

Other consultants

Other consultants can be engaged with recommendations from the Architect and Project Manager.

1. <https://www.architecture.com.au/explore/find-an-architect/>

Funding and costs

Identify costs

As in most public buildings, the cost and ability to fund the construction and operation of a new or extended public library is one of the main concerns of local government.

A business plan should include (as appropriate) the following cost components of a library development project:

- land
- building costs whether construction or refurbishment, including professional and building application fees
- fitout including equipment, furniture, shelving, etc.
- removal of collection, furniture and equipment
- temporary relocation of library service for extensions or rebuild on existing site
- site costs including engineering works and utilities
- car parking and landscaping
- operational costs including short and long-term maintenance
- subsequent refreshing of fitout and layout
- sustainability measures
- staffing.

Woollahra Library

Explore funding opportunities

In practice, there are many sources available to fund a library development project with local government developing many interesting funding models.

Development contributions and planning agreements

Local government areas experiencing significant population change as a result of new development can negotiate contributions from developers towards the cost of providing community facilities, such as libraries. Contributions and planning agreements are covered by the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

Co-located libraries

Sharing the cost between a range of community services can assist in the funding of library projects. [Co-location and joint use libraries](#) outlines the issues to be addressed in developing successful co-located projects.

Joint use libraries

This approach involves the development of a shared public library service between two or more distinct service providers, with funding provided by local government in addition to the joint service provider. For example, TAFE services may be interested in pooling funds with local council for a joint library service for use by their students and the broader community. Funding is being sourced from different authorities, and the development of detailed agreements on the joint use library service must be undertaken. For further information, refer to [Co-location and joint use libraries](#).

Grant programs

The State Library of New South Wales annually administers grants and subsidies programs. Funds from these programs have been used to assist in the development of many new and refurbished library buildings throughout NSW. Other State and Federal Government agencies operate grant schemes which provide funding for specific development projects. The requirements for these programs often change and it is important to consistently review the funding sources available.

Commercial development opportunities

Local government has the capacity to utilise its resources for community benefit. This may involve using existing resources more effectively or in a more commercial manner to achieve financial returns. Examples of this type of approach include:

- land swaps for more appropriate property
- refurbishing existing Council or non-Council buildings
- lease of redundant buildings
- sale of Council operational assets to fund a new library
- development of commercial spaces for lease as part of the library project
- negotiating spaces in new retail developments, sometimes in exchange for additional development area.



Campsie Library

When considering any of these approaches it is important to have specialist cost and financial planning advice and/or develop a business plan.

Make allowance for library fitout

Library fitout (primarily loose furniture and non-fixed equipment) is equally important and will be a major component of any library budget. Library furniture and equipment should be attractive, functional, comfortable and durable. Allowance should also be made in long term financial projections for the repair and replacement of furniture. It is important for the project's budget to include not only the total cost of the library building but also all built-in fittings and furniture.

Case studies and workshops point to the difficulties of library staff having to furnish a library without professional support; this should be avoided by costing the fitout from the outset of the project. The interior fitout is usually a significant task and should be unified in its appearance with the overall building design and marketing strategy. The library's budget must therefore make provision for all these items. It is normal practice to prepare a full list of all these requirements at the building design stage so that the architect can be consulted on furniture design and an agreed list of items budgeted by the local authority.

Staffing requirements

Provision must be made for staffing when planning for a new or extended library building.

Skilled and well-trained staff are key to the successful running of a library service. In addition to qualified librarians, library technicians and assistants, specialist library staff may also be required to meet the service needs identified in the planning process.

If a new library building is being planned, you should determine the required staff numbers and skills mix based on:

- comparison with similar new library projects in other communities including staffing standards set out in [Living Learning Libraries \[1\]](#)
- internal layout, number of floors, workflows and function of the building
- the potential impact of new working methods such as self-check, mobile technologies, hot desks, project/meeting space and roving reference
- potential of a joint venture project to increase non-library staff within a building and thereby reduce worker isolation and increase personal safety
- degree of technology proposed in the building
- potential increase in popularity of and visitation to the new or refurbished library as well as the programs provided.

1. <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/content/living-learning-libraries>



Woollahra Library at Double Bay

Collection plan

Establish a library collection plan.

The provision of an improved library collection is an important component of a library development project. The service provided by a public library, and the size and quality of the collection available remains critical for users, as is the provision of well-trained staff to ensure that these resources are accessible and useful.

It is essential the library collection is upgraded as part of a new building project. The community will have expectations of something new and different. An expanded collection may be required if you are extending a library or adding a new library to the existing number of service points in the community.

A number of libraries have taken the opportunity to reorganise their collection away from a traditional Dewey based layout to a subject based layout before moving into the new building. A new library is an opportunity to weed and improve a collection. If additional space is created it can be given to more lounge or study areas, or to a more generous display of books. Some libraries have reported an increase in borrowings from better displays, despite a reduced collection.

It is important to remember that the library collection not only includes book in a range of formats, but also may include audiovisual materials, magazines, periodicals, toy libraries and electronic resources.



Picton Library

Developing a local technology plan

The pace of technological change is being felt in public libraries in New South Wales. Changes in library design, function and management can be directly attributed to new technologies and this is likely to continue. The main issue for public library buildings is not only what will change, but how these changes can be accommodated.

To meet this challenge, it is important in the initial planning of a library building project to identify how technology is likely to be used. This can then be used as input into the design brief.



Woollahra Library

Considerations include:

Stakeholders

Involve relevant stakeholders in the development process. Information technology is integral to local government operations, with many councils actively involved in improving the information available both internally and to the public via technology and online services. It is imperative to involve library and council staff, particularly officers responsible for council's information technology systems.

Goals

Plans should have short and long-term goals.

Funding

Plans should have appropriate levels of capital and recurrent funding, i.e. acquisition of computers, and replacement, staff to run computer courses and develop online services, upgrades etc.

Opportunities to gain funding for technology through other government resourcing programs or partnerships with other agencies, e.g. TAFE and universities have co-located additional computer resources within public libraries.

Layout and design

The local technology plan will have significant implications for library layout and design.

Automation

Automation of library processes including technologies such as Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), Automated Loans & Returns and Automated Storage and Retrieval Systems (ASRS).

RFID tags have many advantages over the use of barcodes for item identification. Benefits include greater productivity and better collection management due to the ability to simultaneously process several items regardless of orientation.

Be aware that the transition to RFID can be time consuming and labour intensive, so it is important to understand the implications of the proposed system before commencing.

Automated loans and returns technologies are becoming increasingly common in libraries. As a consequence, library staff are able to direct their valuable time and energy towards client service.

An automated storage and retrieval system (ASRS) is an effective method of managing very large stack collections with tight spatial constraints. The technology provides dense storage of items in a climate-controlled environment with quick access via robotic delivery. The relevance of ASRS in the context of NSW public libraries is limited due to small collection size and the prevalence of open browsing collections, however, the technology is gradually being implemented in universities and may become more relevant in the public library context over time.

Self-check

Self-check terminals are used in most NSW public libraries and can operate with either a barcode or RFID system.

Many libraries have found that locating self-check terminals at or near the front desk makes it easier for staff to assist with any problems. Analysis of typical client and staff workflow and interaction should be undertaken to inform optimal location of self-check and return chute technologies.

Digital access

Many libraries are also providing quick access Internet computers for people who want brief browsing use of online information and catalogues. Often these are provided at standing-only workstations.

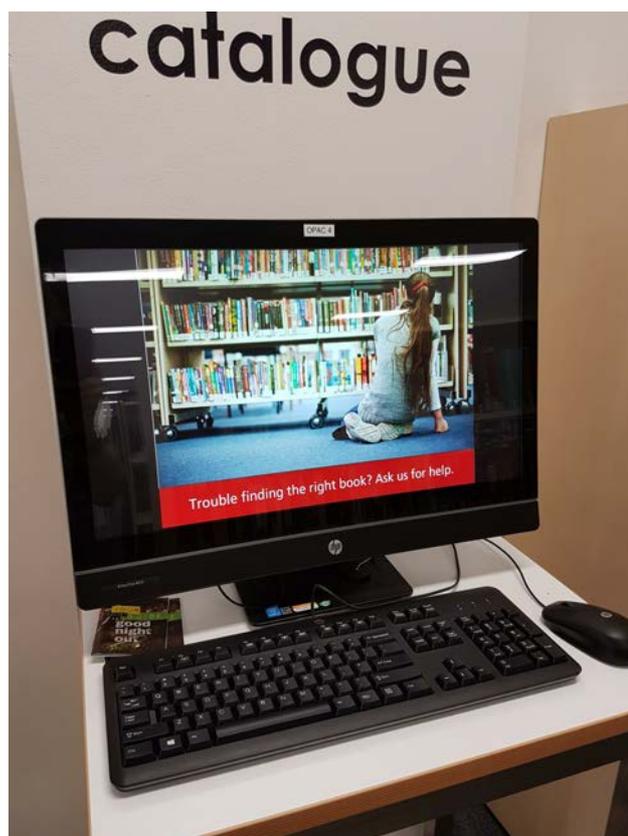
Online journals and newspapers use less storage space than the paper versions. Access through computers, tablets or electronic display terminals requires a different layout.

Checklist for a local technology plan

Developing a technology plan is recommended to ensure that local technology needs will be met by the new library. An overall technology plan should be prepared for a local government area or for a regional library service. This will cover broader issues and goals and will be quite complex. This plan should link to an individual local technology plan for each library facility or service point. The local technology plan will look at technology provision that relates to the actual design and function of a specific library building. A technology plan for a central library may be more complex than that for a branch library.

The following list provides direction for developing a Local Technology Plan but the needs and issues for each community will be different.

- **staff computers**
provision is often based on one dedicated workstation per full-time staff member
- **library management system**
to manage collections, including acquisitions, cataloguing and circulation
- **self-check equipment**
for borrowing library resources
- **telephone system**
capacity to deal with number of different lines, cordless and headset options, use of Skype and Internet-based services
- **public access computers**
including Internet and database access and Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) terminals. Based on the needs assessment approach outlined in [Community needs](#), particularly the Service Based Calculator



Dubbo Library

- **portable devices**
some libraries are addressing expanding needs for computer access through loan of in-house laptops, iPads or tablets
- **video games**
consider public access computers for computer games particularly in the children's and/or youth areas. These may also come as dedicated Playstations, Wii or Xbox consoles (subject to licence terms and conditions of the particular game).
- **appropriate furniture and equipment**
to access technology within the new library should be provided for all users, particularly for people with a disability
- **provision for bring your own device (BYOD) and wireless technology**
power outlets for laptops and mobile phones should be provided throughout the library together with provision for Wi-Fi access. People using mobile devices frequently enjoy more casual settings such as lounges. Furniture with built in power and USB connections is available.
- **tablets or end of shelf catalogue computers**

- **printer, photocopier, scanner and fax machine**
for staff and public use
- **audiovisual equipment**
CD player, DVD player, projector and other resource equipment should be provided based on the needs of community and services to be provided
- **media-specific software and hardware**
specific software and hardware relating to digital media and music
- **digital signage and display**
via projection or flat screen
- **IT-enabled collaborative workspaces**
including tablets, webcams, projectors and monitors
- **security systems**
which interface with the library management system, e.g. Radio Frequency Identification technology (RFID)
- **server room**
note that the spatial requirements can be quite large. Centralising the room to avoid long cable runs should be considered. Mechanical ventilation/air conditioning will be required.
- **flexible cabling**
to allow relocation of IT equipment
- **flexibility**
this should be incorporated into the Technology Plan to react to changes in community needs and services to be offered, potential partnerships, and local business developments.

Community needs and current technology use will help inform the technology plan. The level of community access to the internet from home should be considered. Data on the use of computers at home and use of the Internet within the local area is available in the latest [Census of Population and Housing from the Australian Bureau of Statistics \[1\]](#). Information on existing computer use in public libraries is available from the [NSW Public Library Statistics \[2\]](#). Local councils may also have data on use of online resources and other relevant information to inform the technology plan.

1. <https://www.abs.gov.au/census>
2. <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/advice-and-best-practice/public-library-statistics>

Workplace health and safety: risk and opportunity in design

Libraries must be designed to ensure the health, safety and welfare of everyone who uses the building, including staff and visitors. Many people at the extremes of childhood and old age and with varying degrees of mobility will pass in and out of the building, and their safety must be considered in the planning and design of the building.

Workplace health and safety considerations

Consider these issues:

- **stairs** should be designed so that there are no openings between the treads or at the sides of staircases through which a small child could fall. Stair treads should be of a good depth, finished in a non-slip material and with edges well-defined visually – refer to the [National Construction Code \[1\]](#)
- **balcony railings** must be of sufficient height to prevent a person from accidentally tipping over the top and should also consider the prevention of objects from falling – refer to the [National Construction Code \[2\]](#)
- **glazed features** such as glass doors and large glazed areas should be fitted with markings or ‘decals’ that are clearly visible at waist height. Refer to Australian Standard 1288: *Glass in buildings*
- **floors** with highly polished surfaces should be avoided because of the danger of slipping
- **mobile furniture**, particularly shelving should be considered in terms of their weight before moving them – consider removing books before relocation
- staff should be properly briefed on the **operation of equipment**, e.g. operable walls and partitions
- **potential trip hazards**, such as exposed cabling, inappropriate furniture and sharp edges need to be avoided.



Surry Hills Library

These issues similarly apply for staff areas with additional consideration given to:

- **appropriate work areas** with desk heights and chairs suitable for minimising work related injuries
- **trolleys for movement** of books and equipment within the library with trolleys for chair and table movement/storage if necessary

Some library staff have been proactive in ‘prototyping’ their work areas, particularly returns rooms, to ensure that it is suitable for all staff.

Reference to council’s risk assessment policy during the planning and construction stages of the library building project is recommended.

Risk and opportunity in design

The assessment and management of risks and opportunities is a key part of planning, design and building. It is related to crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) but extends to the impact of building design on safety throughout the building’s life cycle. The earlier this process is begun, the more easily changes can be integrated into the design.

Building design must take into consideration the safety of all those involved with the building from its initial stages to its final use. Some building contractors have implemented workshops and safety spreadsheets, which are live documents updated throughout the design and construction process. This allows all team members to share their knowledge to ascertain and resolve risk issues. The relationship between building design and liability is supported by legislation, including the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

1. <https://ncc.abcb.gov.au/>
2. <https://ncc.abcb.gov.au/>

Evaluation: post construction and post occupancy

Following the completion of the building, the library is ready for occupation.

Those managing the building need to have a clear understanding of how to operate it. This will usually involve building operations and maintenance manuals, as well as emergency procedures and plans of management.

Evaluating the building

Evaluation of the building's functionality may happen a number of times within its lifecycle. An initial evaluation of the building's functionality, within the first year, may be useful while contact with the building design and construction team is still fresh. Ongoing reviews will ensure that with minor amendments, the building adapts to changing service and social trends as well as demographics. In creating a stimulating user experience the layout of the building may change quite significantly, similar to a museum's permanent and temporary exhibitions.

User surveys ensure that the design and operations of the building meet clients' needs and that the library is truly a people's place. Staff from other libraries and designers may visit your building to undertake their own evaluations as part of a process of beginning the design of their new library. Their feedback can also be useful.

Library Development Plans will influence how the building is used and how well it reacts and contributes to a local area's strategic plan. Conversely post-occupancy evaluation can influence a Library Development Plan.

Defects liability period and first year

Once the builder believes that works are complete and in accordance with the contract, an occupation certificate will be sought from the building certifier, verifying that the building is suitable to be occupied. A notice of practical completion will then be issued and a final inspection undertaken. Following the inspection, a list of incomplete work and defects are prepared for the builder to address and rectify. At this point, the owner usually may take possession. The builder usually provides a handover package which contains information relating to the maintenance and operations of the building as well as warranties. On handover day, ensure that inspection reports, warranties and maintenance procedures are provided by the builder.



Gordon Library

The first year is critical as it is in this period that the majority of significant problems in new buildings will occur. Within a one-year period, the defects listed at the final inspection, plus any others arising within the first six months of this period must be rectified. This is a critical time to raise concerns regarding omissions or defects.

The first year of use will also frequently highlight functional issues relating to the building design. Areas, which had been dedicated for a particular use, may be used in unanticipated ways, or not used sufficiently. It is important to remain flexible in this period and consider whether some of these spaces, with some amendments, could be better used. Consideration of the lifecycle of the building is now important, recognising that the ongoing maintenance and operations of the building will be the greatest financial outlay for the building owners.

Building operations and management

Those managing the building need to have a clear understanding of how to operate it. This will usually involve building operations and maintenance manuals, as well as emergency procedures and plans of management.

Ideally a Building Operations and Management Manual (O&M Manual) should be drafted during the building design and construction phases. This manual will cover operating procedures, describe the building systems and planning, provide maintenance regimes and list procedures for repair and replacement.

In some instances, the operations manual will be a requirement of the building certifier to issue an Occupation Certificate (OC). The information required for an OC may include maximum number of people allowed in the space, clear fire egress widths, regime of fire equipment maintenance and hours of operation.

Maintenance and operations regimes are critical to good building design. Frequently a draft maintenance plan, including description of key building materials and equipment warranties, will be provided as part of the design development phase report. Those taking responsibility for the building's operation and management should be key stakeholders during the design and construction phases. At handover/building commissioning, the O&M Manual should be complete.

Like any product, a building may not perform optimally if incorrectly used. This is particularly true of environmental systems and building services, such as air conditioning. Understanding the regime of ongoing inspections and maintenance program is key to an efficient and safe building, as well as forecasting (and mitigating) operational costs.

Building performance monitoring

It has become commonplace for buildings to be computer modelled during the design phases. This not only provides information on its appearance and structural integrity, but also its environmental performance. The modelling allows engineers to predict a range of building performance factors such as energy consumption, water use, thermal comfort and air quality. The design however, is significantly influenced by how it is operated, as well as by other unforeseen influences such as errors in calculation and building/materials defects. Ongoing monitoring of the

building, usually through a computerised building operations system, can provide real time feedback on whether the building is performing as intended. If problems or failures are identified and rectified, a significant ongoing cost can be avoided. Other monitoring may include air quality. Research into the indoor environment indicates that improvement in air quality, oxygen level and day lighting, can significantly reduce sickness and absenteeism as well as increase concentration and morale.

Lifecycle costing

The operational costs of a building will be a significant factor in its post-occupancy evaluation but should also be considered at a much earlier stage.

Visiting and evaluating libraries

By visiting libraries as part of the library design process, library staff and building designers undertake an informal form of post occupancy evaluation. The factors which are used in assessment are similar both to a formal post occupancy evaluation and a benchmarking visit, although design may be of more interest to a building design team than operations. Visits and benchmarking exercises are a critical part of the library design process and the design team should come prepared with a checklist to critically evaluate existing libraries as well as taking the time to interview staff, maintenance personnel and clients.

Post occupancy evaluation

Post occupancy evaluation (POE) may be undertaken with a range of goals in mind. The purpose of a POE is to measure the functionality and appropriateness of a design and its performance in relation to a brief or to common standards. It may be used to optimise a building's functionality by adapting to needs. POE verifies if design criteria are correct or valid so that they may be used again as a standard. It is used to test user comfort and satisfaction, and to test the validity of new technology. It can justify a need, such as a new library, or establish best practice. The degree of investigation may vary from indicative to highly scientific.

The [Evaluating your library building \[1\] template \[2\]](#) provides a good basis from which to start your evaluation and can be expanded to include factors which are critical in your area.

End of life

The design of a building will influence its ability to be reused, extended or recycled. Buildings with simple framed structures will adapt far better to a new or expanded use than those with a greater number of load bearing walls. Some materials are far more easily recycled than others – timber is far more easily demolished or recycled than concrete. When considering a new facility, the post occupancy evaluation of the current facilities should include a benefit analysis of building reuse. This can be computer modelled by asset and engineering consultants.

1. <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/library-building-planning-tools>
2. <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/library-building-planning-tools>

Planning tools

Tools to help plan your library building

Every community is unique, and for local government the development of any type of public building must relate closely to the local community's needs, demands and aspirations.

For public libraries, the greatest emphasis remains on the services and collections provided and how a new or renovated building can meet the needs of the surrounding community.

In this section

[Library building calculator](#)

The library building calculator includes the population calculator to determine the minimum library area, the service calculator to estimate library size based on population, collection size and services to be offered, and the renovation calculator to allocate service spaces within an existing area.

[Library building brief](#)

Templates to help you outline the requirements for a library building.

[Library location](#)

Location of a public library should be based on the needs of the community.

[Evaluating your public library building](#)

Information and tools to assist in evaluating your library building's functionality. Includes a section on [customer feedback](#).

Tools

Library building calculator

The calculator helps you determine an appropriate size for your library building and includes methods to allocate space to specific service areas.

The calculator includes three sections or tabs - the population calculator, service calculator and renovation calculator.

[DOWNLOAD THE LIBRARY BUILDING CALCULATOR](#)

[1]

Population calculator

Library building size for a fluctuating population

How do you use the Library building calculator to plan a library that is the appropriate size for the community but can provide enough space for tourists or seasonal workers when the population increases dramatically?

Use the population calculator to determine the minimum recommended size for the local community (catchment) as well as a version with the population at the maximum that it reaches during tourist season or periods of seasonal work. The ideal library size is likely to be somewhere in between the two floor areas.

The service-based calculator can then be used to allocate spaces for flexible use to accommodate tourists and seasonal workers. Meeting or workshop rooms can be used by the local community for events and activities and can be opened up as sitting, reading and wi-fi space during tourist or work seasons. Outdoor spaces add to the overall floor area and can be made available for different uses throughout the year. Purchasing furniture that can be moved around, stored easily and can be used indoors and outdoors for different purposes or in different spaces in the library is also important.

The population calculator helps determine a minimum recommended library area based on population. This calculator should be used as a starting point to estimate the minimum recommended library building size for a specific population or catchment for a library branch. Use in conjunction with the Service based library calculator.

Minimum recommended library size

The minimum recommended size for a public library building is 190 square metres. It is important to note that a library of this size is only capable of servicing communities of fewer than 2,750 people.

[How to use the population calculator](#)

[DOWNLOAD THE LIBRARY BUILDING CALCULATOR](#)

[\[2\]](#)

Go to the population tab on the spreadsheet to start

The Library building calculator includes a formula tab. Do not make changes to the formula as it will affect the resulting calculations. If you accidentally make changes to the formula you will need to download a new copy of the calculator.

[Download population calculator instructions \[3\]](#)

To determine a suitable size for your library building you will need to plan for future needs of your community. A key aspect of planning is your projected population. The 10 year projected population is recommended when planning a new library building.

Resident population: enter the ten year projected population forecast for the local catchment of the proposed library. If the projected population is smaller than the current population we would recommend using the current population. Further information on calculating population catchment is below.

Calculating the projected population for your local catchment

There are two key steps in establishing the projected population of a local catchment area:

- establish the boundaries of the local catchment area
- source estimates of the projected population for this area

10 year projections of NSW populations are available through the *Projections datasets* and *Local Government factsheets* at the bottom of the [NSW Department of Planning - Projections \[4\]](#) page.

Establish your library catchment area

Single service point in an LGA

If the proposed library is the single service point in your Local Government Area (LGA) then your local catchment area will be the entire Local Government Area and you will need to use the 10 year population projection for the entire Local Government Area.

Multiple service points in one LGA

If your library service has multiple service points in one Local Government Area:

- begin with the 10 year population projection for the entire LGA
- calculate the % of the population likely to use each of the branches. The total catchment for the library service must be 100% of the population of the LGA
- take into account commercial, recreational, industrial and residential concentrations
- consider any physical barriers that may affect known traffic pathways e.g. river, motorway.

Regional Library Service across multiple LGAs

If your library is a Regional Library Service operating across multiple Local Government Areas:

- where the branch library is the only service point in an LGA catchment use the 10 year population projection for the entire LGA
- where there is more than one branch in an LGA refer to multiple service points in one LGA (above)
- when calculating the Regional Central Library catchment, begin with the 10 year population projection for all of the LGAs and the local catchment for the central library.

Non-resident workforce: you might want to consider non-resident workforce in planning your library size. This is especially important for those libraries that have a large number of non-resident members and library users. Answer yes or no to the question 'do you want to consider the non-resident workforce catchment?' Then add a figure in the 'non-resident workforce' section. If you want to clear your answer to this question click delete on your keyboard.

Central library: some central libraries require a significant work area for collection processing, staff accommodation etc. If you select yes to the question 'is this a central library with significant workroom requirements?' the tool will allocate more space to the total floor area. If you want to clear your answer to this question click delete on your keyboard.

Number of libraries undertaking central library activities: for operational or space reasons your library service might share traditional central library activities across a number of your library branches. If the activities are only at one library (your central library) leave this as one. If activities are undertaken across a number of libraries include the total number in this box.

Whole LGA population: additional space for central library needs will be added to the total library area based on the LGA population if you choose to include it.

Whole LGA non-resident workforce: you might want to consider the non-resident workforce for the whole LGA in planning your library size. This may be important for councils that believe the non-resident workforce has an impact on library service requirements and space.

Service calculator

The service based calculator allows you to tailor your library planning for your community. It will estimate the size of your library based on catchment population, collection size and the type

of services and core functions that the proposed library building will include.

[How to use the service calculator](#)

[DOWNLOAD THE LIBRARY BUILDING CALCULATOR](#) [\[5\]](#)

Go to the service tab on the spreadsheet to start

The Library building calculator includes a formula tab. Do not make changes to the formula as it will affect the resulting calculations. If you accidentally make changes to the formula you will need to download a new copy of the calculator.

[Download service calculator instructions \[6\]](#)

Follow these steps for the service based calculator, to help tailor your library size for community needs and services to be offered.

- Enter the ten year projected population forecast for the local catchment of the proposed library. For details on calculating the catchment population please see instructions for the population calculator
- Enter the total collection size and the percentage of collection in different formats. Note the percentages must add up to 100%.
- When planning a new library it is recommended that you calculate the size of the collection that will meet the needs of the community in the next 10 years. Consider: the standards for collection size in [Living Learning Libraries \[7\]](#); current and projected annual acquisitions per capita; the layout and display of the collection; community demographics; the size of each collection; the percentage of collections which will be out on loan and potential changes in service requirements.
- **Once you have filled in this top section you can change any figures in the blue shaded areas in the remaining sections of the calculator**

Base area

Collection space

The service calculator will determine the space requirement for each format and the collection as a whole. The number of items per format has been calculated based on the collection size and percentages for different formats you have added in the top section. The percentage of items out on loan defaults to 30%, adjust this to reflect your loans. This will adjust the area required to house your library collection based on the amount that is on loan. An estimate or average is fine.

Space allocation for materials

The spreadsheet calculates collection space based on the requirements below.

Format	Number of items per square metre
Books	70 to 100
Periodicals	10
non-print material (CDs, DVDs etc)	100
ebooks and eresources	0

Space for shelving is based on:

- 4 shelves per bay, for greater accessibility to resources, improved sight lines and a feeling of openness
- shelving an average of 30 volumes per shelf with a standard shelf being 900 mm long
- bays of shelving spaced at 1500 mm clear width between aisles
- bays up to 6 shelves long, maximum of 5400 mm

This configuration gives a module of 14.49 square metres containing on average 1440 volumes. This equates to approximately 100 volumes per square metre of floor area. This is a dense configuration of books and does not allow for face out display. 70 books per square metre or fewer, would be more suitable for face out display.

Computers and personal devices

The minimum recommended number of computers for a population up to 20,000 is 5. For populations above 20,000 the number of computers is calculated at 1 per 3,000 of population. It is recommended that you use the 10 year projected catchment population to calculate the required number of computers. You can add additional computers if required.

If you are planning areas for **BYOD** you can add the number required as lounge or desk spaces. This is optional.

Add the number of **self-check units** you are planning for your library.

Reading, seating & study areas

The total **recommended number of seats** is calculated based on your catchment population. You can change the calculated figure to reflect the number of seats you want to provide. This does not include the computer and BYOD spaces calculated in the Base area section (above).

In the blue section **allocate the percentage of seating** that will be desk space, lounges and group study. This must total 100%. The calculator will provide you with a recommended floor area for each seating type. You can change the allocation of space in the desired floor area section.

Other functional & service areas

Areas in this section are optional but many would be considered key services to include in a contemporary library building. You will not need to allocate space to each of the service areas. Choose the services that you will be offering in your library building.

The recommended floor area is based on your population. Use this as a starting point to **allocate space according to your community needs** and planned services.

You will notice that some areas provide a recommended floor area of 0 square metres. This is because they are not services that are offered at the majority of public libraries. Add a figure in the Desired Floor Area if this is a service you plan to provide.

Staff areas

When estimating the staff areas and workspace you will need to consider:

- current staffing levels
- [Living Learning Libraries \[8\]](#) standards for staffing
- projected future staffing requirements
- individual service area requirements e.g. children's storage needs, technical services workflows
- adoption of self service technology
- RFID workflows and sorting room requirements
- number and size of service desks
- volunteers' workspace requirements
- central library functions
- whether collections are purchased shelf ready
- housebound and mobile collection storage and sorting area

Amenities and ancillary

Amenities and ancillary includes any space required which supports the library but is not specific to a library function. These include areas such as entrances, lifts, public toilets, garbage and recycling, and loading and delivery area. This space requirement will vary significantly across different library services however it is typical for the amenities and facilities space to comprise between 20–30% of functional and service space.

Additional services

These areas provide space for the library's specific specialist services and programs. Suggested service areas have been provided in the library building calculator however each library service will offer a different range of services and programs and the space requirements for each of these areas will vary across library services.

Some important things to consider when estimating the space required for this are:

- local community demographics and needs
- the library's strategic plan
- your Council's strategic and management plan/ future service trends and changes.

Meeting spaces

The State Library recommends that you **include meeting spaces** in your library. This section allows you to allocate space depending on the types of meeting spaces and training rooms and the number of people you need to accommodate in each room. Different square metres per person will be added for the different types of meeting rooms.

In the blue section enter the **number of rooms and number of people per room**. The recommended floor area will be calculated below. You can modify the Desired Floor Area if needed.

Some important things to consider when determining the number and size of the meeting rooms to be included in the library building are:

- anticipated programs and activities
- other available space for children's activities
- technology requirements
- other meeting spaces in the community and access requirements

Some additional circulation space separated from the main library and accessible from outside may be required if the library intends to offer these spaces out of hours. Ensure that there is also adequate storage for furniture and equipment.

Recommended library floor area

Once you have filled out all appropriate services the **total recommended gross floor area** will be calculated at the bottom of the spreadsheet.

Renovation calculator

The renovation calculator helps you allocate spaces when you have an existing floor area.

[How to use the renovation calculator](#)

[DOWNLOAD THE LIBRARY BUILDING CALCULATOR \[9\]](#)

Go to the renovation tab on the spreadsheet to start

The Library building calculator includes a formula tab. Do not make changes to the formula as it will affect the resulting calculations. If you accidentally make changes to the formula you will need to download a new copy of the calculator.

[Download renovation calculator instructions \[10\]](#)

Follow these steps for the renovation calculator.

- **Enter the gross floor area** of the building or land that you have available for your library building
- Add the **10 year projected population** catchment of library users

Base area

- The recommended number of **public access computers** will be calculated based on the population. You can change this to the number of computers you will provide.
- Add in the number of spaces for **BYOD and self check units**. Please note that as you allocate more space to computers and other devices this area is taken away from the base collection area. You do have the option to add additional collection and reading spaces in *Other functional & service areas*.
- The **recommended square metres** are calculated for each service area based on your population. Enter the area that you plan to **allocate** in the blue section.
- As you move through the spreadsheet and allocate space to different services the remaining floor area will be calculated at the top of the spreadsheet and the total floor area used will be at the bottom. Modify services and areas until you have allocated all available space.

Reading, seating & study areas

- The total **recommended number of seats** is calculated based on your catchment population. You can change this in the Desired Seats section.
- In the blue section allocate the percentage of seating that will be desk space, lounges and group study. **This must total 100%**.

Other functional & service areas

- **Areas in this section are optional** but many would be considered key services to include in a contemporary library building. You will not need to allocate space to each of the service areas. Choose the services that you will be offering in your library building.
- The **recommended floor area** is based on your population. Use these as a **starting point** to allocate space according to your community needs and planned services.
- You will notice that some areas provide a recommended floor area of 0 square metres. This is because they are not services that are offered at the majority of public libraries. Add a figure in the *Desired Floor Area* if this is a service you plan to provide.

Meeting spaces

- The State Library recommends that you **include meeting spaces** in your library. This section allows you to allocate space depending on the types of meeting spaces and training rooms and the number of people you need to accommodate in each room. Different square metres per person will be added for the different types of meeting rooms.
- In the blue section select the **number of rooms and number of people** per room. The recommended floor area will be calculated below. You can modify the *Desired Floor Area* if needed.

Allocate spaces until the uncommitted floor area at the top of the spreadsheet is 0 and the total at the bottom equals your available floor area.

1. https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/library_building_calculator.xlsx
2. https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/library_building_calculator.xlsx

3. https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/population_instructions.pdf
4. <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Research-and-Demography/Population-projections/Projections>
5. https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/library_building_calculator.xlsx
6. https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/service_instructions.pdf
7. <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/content/living-learning-libraries>
8. <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/content/living-learning-libraries>
9. https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/library_building_calculator.xlsx
10. https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/renovation_instructions.pdf

Tools

Library building brief

These templates will help you write your library building brief.

The library building brief template helps you to outline the requirements of a new, extended or refurbished building. You can use the brief to inform discussion and further planning with the design team. If you have engaged an architect you can work with them to write the brief.

The brief should be prepared following community consultation and needs analysis.

Templates for library design briefs

There are two library brief templates, one for smaller libraries and one for larger libraries. These are a starting point and you may find that you want to use components of each template to help you outline the needs for your library service and building. There are sections throughout the templates for you to modify and add your own information. The Room data sheets include suggestions under some sections but many have been left blank for you to add relevant details.

[Small Library brief template \[1\]](#)

[Large Library brief template \[2\]](#)

For more information see [Developing a building brief](#).

1. https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/small_library_design_brief.docx
2. https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/large_library_design_brief.docx



Carnes Hill Library

Library location

Choosing a site for a public library

Location is a major factor for library users and a well-located library is essential to achieve increased utilisation.

The process of siting a new/extended public library needs to address a series of key criteria which are essential to the successful location of a public library. The library needs to be accessible to a broad range of users.

Factors such as high visibility, location in a main shopping area and potential for expansion are key. In many communities, local councils are looking at the value of retaining major public infrastructure to attract shoppers and visitors in city centres. Equally, private developers are often interested in accommodating a public library in a new shopping centre development as it attracts large volumes of visitors who may also shop after visiting the library.

The general location of a new/extended library is very much based on the needs of the community. A needs assessment should be undertaken to determine where the new/extended library is required and what type of services will meet the community's needs. Issues of resident and non resident characteristics; population growth projections; shopping and recreation patterns; location of schools and higher education facilities; transport patterns; and future developments are some of the factors that may be considered as part of this analysis.

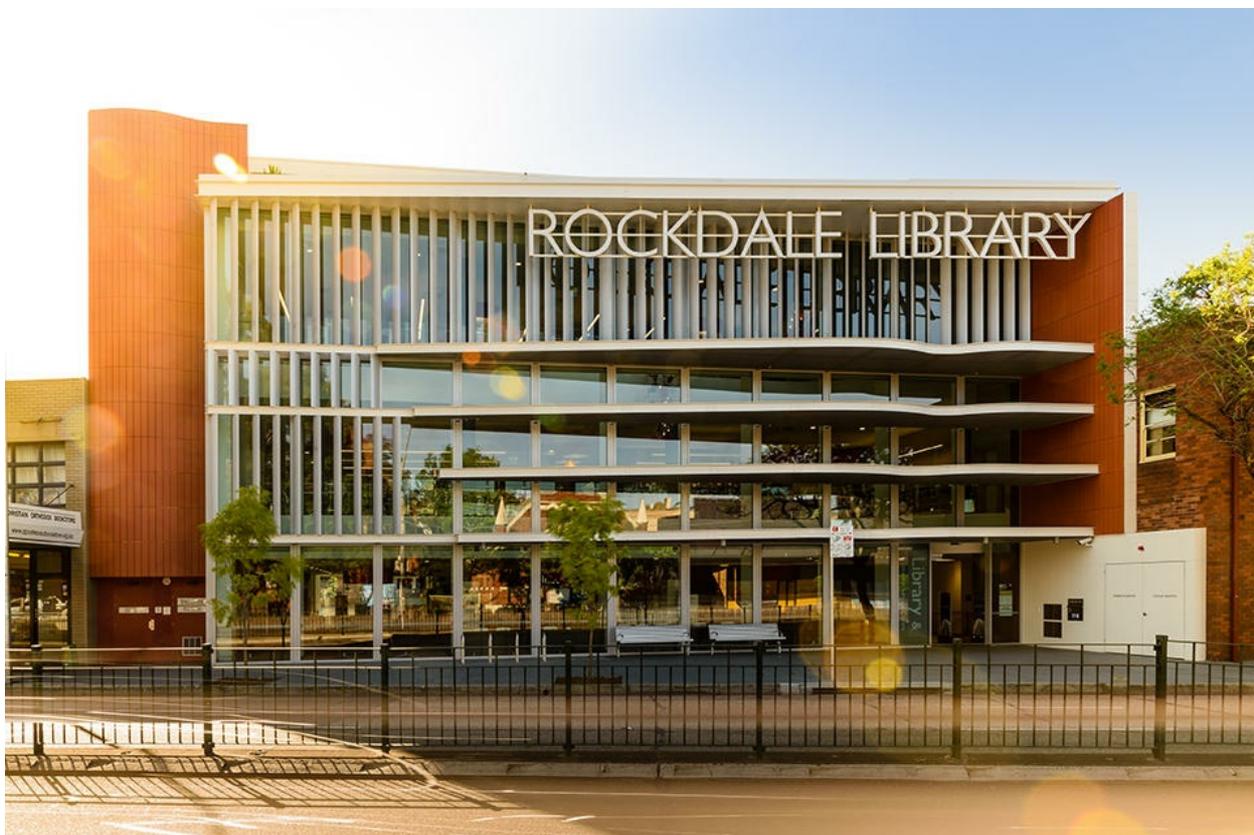
Following this analysis, a broad area or suburb will be identified in which a new/expanded library is required. From this base, several sites may be chosen and assessed in terms of their suitability. People Places recommends that, as a minimum, all of the following 12 locational criteria be considered in determining the most appropriate site for a public library.

Site criteria for a public library

- **Main street** or shopping area location
- **Highly visible** location particularly from the shopping area
- **Street frontage** with library on ground floor and not hidden from the road by trees or another building
- High level of **personal and property safety** as outlined in Safer by Design requirements
- **Fully accessible** for people with limited mobility
- Close to and/or accessible from **local schools and educational facilities**
- Potential for an **outdoor area** to be attached to the library
- Priority **pedestrian access** which is safe and attractive, particularly for older residents, children and parents with prams
- Walking distance from **public transport** which is typically 400–500 metres with minimal gradient
- Access to **convenient and safe car parking** with priority for people with a disability, older residents, parents with prams, staff and night-time users
- **Accessible for community buses, mobile libraries, deliveries** and other vehicles

- Site able to accommodate **future expansion** of the library if required.

Choosing a site can be a difficult or contentious issue. It may be appropriate to engage an independent consultant to undertake an assessment of potential sites, facilitate the process and prepare reports.



Rockdale Library

Locational matrix

The locational matrix template is a starting point to evaluate specific library sites.

[LOCAL MATRIX TEMPLATE](#)

[1]

The matrix provides example criteria and weighting to indicate importance in comparison with other criteria. Add other locational criteria specific to your community, e.g. not on flood prone land, within the cultural precinct, etc.

Give a score of between 1 and 3 for how well each site meets the criteria. Criteria may be weighted between 1 and 3 depending on their importance. For example, in a particular community, a location with adequate parking is more important than one central to the shopping precinct. As shown in the table, parking is given a weighting of 3 points while shopping precinct location has a weighting of 1 point. Site A, which has ample on-site parking would receive 9 points (i.e. 3 for its criteria weighting and 3 for the site score or $3 \times 3 = 9$). Site B, located right in

the shopping centre, would receive 3 points (i.e. 1 for its criteria weighting and 3 for its site score or $3 \times 1 = 3$).

Fictional site locations and scores have been developed as an example of how to use a locational matrix to assist in the site selection process. Using this methodology, the site with the highest total score is the most suitable for a public library. In this example; Site A is on a side street in a shopping centre, Site B is located right on the main street and Site C is behind the council administration building.

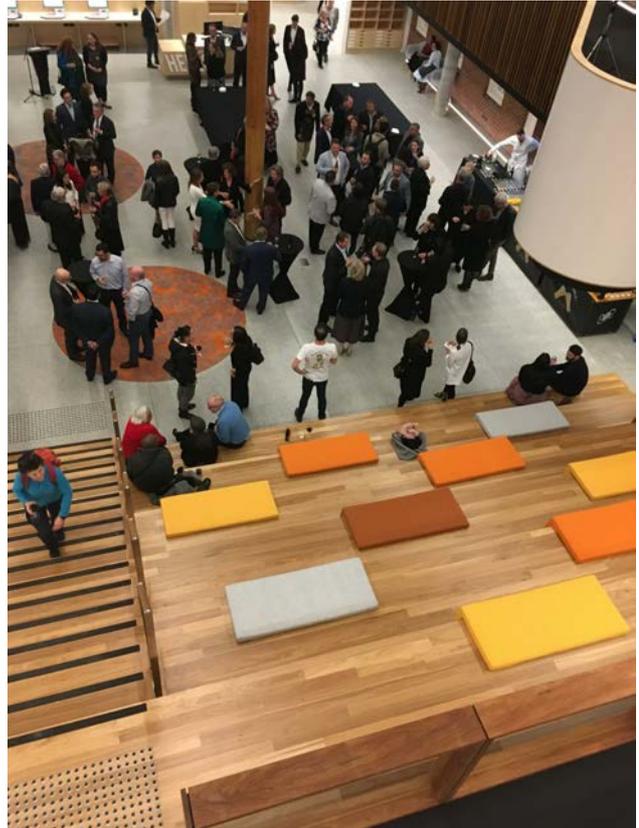
1. https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/pp_locational_matrix.xlsx

Evaluating your public library building

This Evaluating Public Library Buildings template, and supporting information, is an updated version of the former Post Occupancy Evaluation tool provided in *People Places: A Guide for Public Library Buildings in NSW*. It has been expanded to give public libraries and their staff additional tools and options to evaluate performance of the library building, services and facilities.

Like the previous post-occupancy evaluation-building appraisal and user survey tool, the questions included in this resource are based on the criteria discussed in *People Places*. However, this version expands on the previous framework to reflect on public library buildings and can be used to:

- **measure the functionality and appropriateness of a new library design** and its performance in relation to a design brief or to common standards
- **evaluate performance at the end or at key points of a building’s lifecycle**, with the outcomes used to inform a design brief for a new or upgraded facility
- **evaluate how well a library is performing post completion or over time** and to ensure the building is able to adapt to changing social and demographic change
- **conduct community engagement** to support council and library strategic planning processes.



Marrickville Library

Given the continued and increasing importance of public libraries as valued community hubs, it is fitting that the community and other important stakeholders play an important role in shaping their design, delivery and ongoing improvement.

Analysis of current library trends indicates that public libraries increasingly provide a valued ‘third place’ beyond the home and workplace. To fulfil this role—and to respond to varying community needs and remain economically viable—libraries must be flexible. Flexibility extends to program and service delivery, location and building layout. As every public library should

reflect the unique needs, demands and aspirations of its community, library staff must maintain a deep understanding of their community through regular data collection and community consultation.

Using the template

For those interested in rating their public library building, the self-guided evaluation template contains a simple scoring system that can be used to help staff benchmark against best practice or previous evaluation processes.

Library staff may wish to adapt the survey tool and modify the scoring system to support a more tailored approach to reflect specific local needs and characteristics.

The *Evaluating your public library buildings template* is provided to help you measure the impact and effectiveness of library buildings and services. The techniques and questions seek to encourage reflection and discussion of the issues that impact on library buildings design and broader library services.

The template assists you in a self-guided evaluation of the performance of your library building. You can complete all sections or just those that are relevant to your current needs. You can also use the template repeatedly over time, for example comparing your new or refurbished building to your 'old' library building.

[EVALUATING PUBLIC LIBRARY BUILDINGS TEMPLATE](#)

[1]

Evaluating Public Library Buildings - customer feedback

The next section helps you explore the perspectives of library users. It can also be used to understand the perspectives of people who do not use the library and to understand any barriers to participation.

[EVALUATING PUBLIC LIBRARY BUILDINGS - CUSTOMER FEEDBACK](#)

1. https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/evaluating_library_buildings.xlsx

Evaluating library buildings - customer feedback

The information and methods below will help you explore the perspectives of the community and library stakeholders. The focus is on libraries as people places — going beyond public library buildings — to consider how people feel about their public library service more broadly, including the programs and resources they offer.

Relevant methods

A wide range of methods can be used by councils/public libraries to obtain feedback from the people who matter most — existing and potential library users, library teams and partners. A number of methods you may wish to consider are described below.

These methods can be used to support the self-guided evaluation tool provided on the [Evaluating your public library building](#) page.

Interviews

Interviews provide an opportunity to hear from individuals one on one, in pairs or small groups. This could include key informants such as library experts, people who have been involved in the successful delivery of contemporary libraries, library users and other people who have new, interesting or not widely held ideas and perspectives to share.

Methods include:

- **Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI)**—typically five to 12 minute phone survey conducted by a professional call centre team, for instance, as part of a customer satisfaction study.
- **In-depth interviews**—typically 15 to 60 minute interview conducted by phone or face to face, appropriate for discussing complex issues and collecting detailed feedback from participants.
- **Accompanied interviews**—conducted onsite in your library or another public library building to discuss and obtain feedback on particular aspects of the building, patterns of use and or user experience. This method could also be used to test your public library website or digital presence. Participants are asked to share their perspectives in real time, as they experience the place, space or interface.

Focus groups

These small group discussions can be used for in-depth exploration of participant perspectives of your public library.

Focus groups provide an opportunity to share and test information, ideas and visual stimulus (such as image boards and graphics) through robust discussion.

- **Focus groups**—useful for targeting groups of non-users and users (i.e. in depth

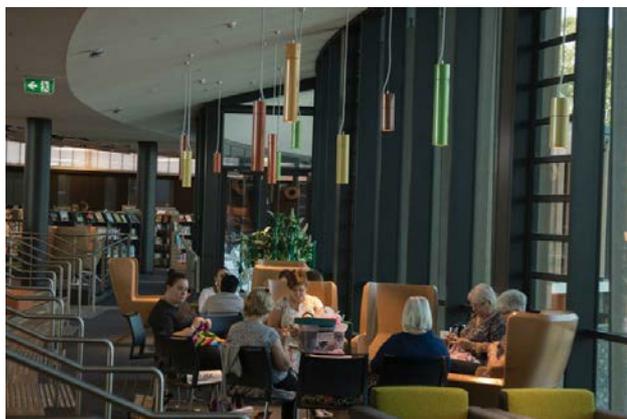
discussions with 6-8 people).

- **Mini-groups**—can be used to obtain feedback from key informants such as library staff, council staff, etc.
- **Affinity groups**—may be suitable for targeting young people, parents and children, people from a particular cultural background, particular user groups (such as members of a book club or reading circle).
- **Online focus groups or webinars**—can be useful for obtaining feedback from people who may be more comfortable participating online, or those who are located across a wide geographic area which would ordinarily make it difficult for them to come together as a group.

Ethnographic methods

These methods can be used to provide insights on people's behaviour and how they use public library spaces.

- **Observational audit**—users are observed in and around the library. Observations may be recorded using a checklist and site plan.
- **Library tour or walk-around**—the library is used as the environment for insightful conversation and discussion. Tours could be guided by the library staff or designer or they could be self-guided, with participants asked to document their experience through written feedback and or images.
- **Usability testing**—this method can be used to observe a user's experience with a digital application. It can be used to identify confusing or frustrating parts of an interface so they can be fixed and retested prior to launch. A 'think aloud' approach is often used to observe and discuss the user experience in real time. This could be used to test a library catalogue or website.



Shellharbour Library

Creative techniques

Creative techniques can be used to uncover how people feel about their public library, including things they may not necessarily share through other methods (for instance, when completing a survey). These techniques should be used sparingly and matched to the particular target audience, to encourage participation and support discussion. For instance, one to two methods (from below) could be used as part of a focus group session.

Examples of creative techniques that may be useful for your review include:

- **Diary studies or photography** used as pre-work for focus groups to document existing patterns of use and preferences

- **Interactive exercises** used as part of focus group sessions such as image cards (association with images used to evoke conversation), love letter/break up letter (participants express their positive/negative feelings about the facility through letters, revealing deep emotional connections), guided visualisation (participants imagine and then discuss their vision for the facility/place)
- **Creative techniques** used as part of a focus group, workshop or pop-up—such as collages, image boards and creative toolkits
- **Directed story telling** and **personal inventories** used as part of interviews
- **Graffiti walls** and **stickers** to gather feedback about a particular library building or space
- **Digital tools** and **social media** to find out what people think about a particular project or place.

Surveys

Surveys can be used to collect useful demographic information and feedback from public library users and non-users. Councils may conduct a regular customer satisfaction survey or library survey that could be augmented with relevant questions to support your review. Surveys can also form part of community engagement processes and can be structured to elicit information to support forward planning for new libraries, library upgrades and the broader development of library strategic plans.

Types of surveys that may be useful to support your review include:

- **Customer satisfaction survey** to test satisfaction with your library facility or wider library service. Options include:
 - [Library user survey \[1\]](#) a short survey, with a focus on public library buildings, that can be used in conjunction with the [Evaluating your library building template \[2\]](#)
 - [State Library of NSW User Satisfaction Survey \[3\]](#) is more comprehensive and includes a number of questions to test user opinions about library buildings and facilities, as well as library services more broadly. It seeks feedback from members of the community on a range of aspects of public library buildings including appeal and condition of the building, provision of areas for quiet or more noisy activities, signage and way finding, lighting, aisle width, shelf height, and ease of access. It also includes useful questions about the library's website and online catalogue.
- **One-off or point in time survey** to test current perspectives on your library.
- **Longitudinal surveys** to enable benchmarking over time (such as annual surveys).

Surveys can be conducted using a variety of modes. A summary of survey modes and related strengths and weaknesses is provided below:

Survey mode	Strengths	Weaknesses
Intercept	<p>Good for targeting library users (including specific groups)</p> <p>Completion by skilled interviewer will provide high quality data</p> <p>Video vox-pops can be used to record a selection of responses and to subsequently share ‘what we heard’</p>	<p>Resource intensive</p> <p>Generally small sample size</p> <p>Focused on existing users (unless conducted offsite e.g. in shopping centres / high traffic areas)</p> <p>Survey length must be short (maximum 5 minutes)</p>
Phone	<p>Good for targeting a mix of library users and non-users</p> <p>Can be used to reach a large sample</p> <p>Can be used to reach people across a wide geographic area</p> <p>Random sampling can be applied — providing results that are statistically representative of the wider population</p>	<p>Conducted by market research provider / Higher cost</p> <p>Completion time is generally longer than online; survey length should be short to maximise response rate (maximum 12 minutes)</p>

Survey mode	Strengths	Weaknesses
Online	<p>Good for targeting a mix of library users and non-users (particularly if the survey is widely promoted and incentivised)</p> <p>Convenient and easy for respondents to complete, particularly if survey is short (maximum 15 minutes) and mobile friendly</p> <p>Usually conducted as an opt-in sample survey available online — providing an opportunity for all members of the community to have their say</p> <p>Survey link can also be distributed to library users and the wider community using established databases</p> <p>Alternatively, survey can be conducted using an online panel (convened by council or an external panel provider)</p>	<p>Comprehension of the survey questions may be lower than for surveys administered by an interviewer</p> <p>Random sampling cannot be applied — results are not statistically representative</p>
Self-complete	<p>Useful for targeting library users (e.g. through paper or iPad survey made available in library building)</p> <p>Not resource intensive</p>	<p>Generally small sample size</p> <p>Focused on existing users / likely to hear from people who are ‘concerned’ rather than people with a broader range of perspectives</p> <p>Comprehension of the survey questions may be lower than for surveys administered by an interviewer</p>

Ongoing customer feedback

As part of an increasing focus on customer experience, organisations are employing various mechanisms to keep in touch with their customers on a regular basis. Understanding what library users are doing and how they feel about your library building and service enables you to make informed decisions.

Some methods that you may wish to consider to obtain feedback include:

- **Feedback form/box**—seeking feedback on general complaints and compliments
- **Feedback/evaluation form**—linked to specific activities such as community education activities and events
- **Talk to us sessions/open days**—to explore user perspectives in a relaxed environment; also good for welcoming new library users
- **Web analytics/collection and analysis** of internet data to monitor awareness, use and preferences in relation to your website, online resources and campaigns
- **Social media analysis/review** of factors such as follower growth, influence, reach rate, clicks back to your website or campaign, to understand the impact of your public library in the digital space, what people are saying about it and how it is being represented.

1. https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/library_user_survey.xlsx
2. https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/evaluating_library_buildings.xlsx
3. <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/library-user-satisfaction-survey>

Influence

Impacts on library function and design

The relevance of public libraries to contemporary communities is evident.

Public libraries attract high levels of use from a broad range of users from all ages and backgrounds.

In designing public infrastructure, including public libraries, it is important to consider the changing social and demographic trends evident within the community and how these may affect the provision and delivery of services to the community. The Influences section includes factors to consider when planning a new public library building and services. These are modified versions of the People Places trends. We see them as influences on library planning rather than trends because trends will change more frequently and may come and go.

Social trends are still extremely important to consider when planning a library building or service. Library organisations and other commentators regularly publish [information on trends that are affecting library services \[1\]](#). These trends are likely to have an impact on the design and function of public libraries and should be monitored by anyone considering a new or refurbished library building.

In this section

[Competition and marketing](#)

Libraries face growing competition from other information providers and must be proactive in marketing themselves.

[Connection and opportunity](#)

Digital technology is abound with collaborative, workflow and learning opportunities for public libraries.

[Library as community place](#)

Public libraries are valuable spaces as community hubs.

[Programs and partnerships](#)

Programs and partnerships provide the opportunity for libraries to strengthen communities.

[Regeneration and prosperity](#)

Public libraries can shape and drive their communities.

1. <http://www.ala.org/tools/future/trends>

Influence

Competition and marketing

The brand concept

Libraries face growing competition from other information providers and must be proactive in marketing themselves.

Libraries need to be proactive in marketing and promoting their services to ensure that they retain their ‘market niche’. Libraries are developing marketing plans and strategies to promote services and encourage clients to use library resources. These strategies are highly influenced by retail marketing as well as professional exhibition and display, which both aspire to a memorable experience – ‘the wow factor’. Advertising, improved visibility, unified branding, high quality design, library promotions, changing and professional displays and social networking sites all form part of successful libraries.



Woollahra Library at Double Bay

The growing competition from other sources of information, education and entertainment is a significant factor for public libraries. Digital communication, media and entertainment provide us with extensive information that is current, topical and easy to access. It is notable that these changes have not affected the popularity of libraries or the number of visitations.

The delivery of education services has also changed, with many institutions providing students with options for distance and open learning courses through the Internet and various adult education programs. This has reinforced the use of public libraries as a destination for study.

The brand concept

Taking a holistic approach to marketing and branding is crucial. From the planning of the building to shelf signage, everything should reflect the library’s vision or concept. The library marketing strategy and vision will impact on planning and the development of the library brief, so it is important to establish a clear plan of action before embarking on building design and ensure that the building design is integral to the ‘brand’.

Libraries generate enormous goodwill, are much loved by their communities and are ‘good news’ stories for local councils. Library staff can be encouraged to generate ideas for increasing

public awareness of what libraries have to offer at a local level. Being able to work with council communication and engagement teams to promote these good news stories through social and mainstream media channels is key.

Community and learning

Libraries provide essential digital literacy support through public Internet access, computers, online resources and training that many people need to participate in today's digital world. They support childhood and adult literacy and education through valuable programs and services at little or (usually) no cost to the user. Libraries can provide a unique 'cradle to grave' service to people of all ages and backgrounds. They will continue to bring people together and give them access to services, programs and support to improve health, quality of life and education prospects. Promotion of these programs and services and the role that libraries play in their community can be a key marketing message.

Integrity of information

In contemporary society, where information sources are so varied in origin and veracity, libraries are known as valuing the integrity of information, assisting people to identify and critically examine sources, and ensuring information is equally accessible to the full spectrum of community members. Ethics, and the lack of commercial motives, makes libraries unique and important in times where the complexity of information can be treacherous to navigate.

Measuring benefits of libraries

Being able to measure what libraries are good at, and what they have achieved, provides a solid foundation for developing compelling local library stories and demonstrating the value and benefits that they bring to communities. The State Library's [Enriching communities: the value of public libraries in NSW \[1\]](#) shows evidence of economic and social benefits of public libraries and provide tools for helping libraries calculate their own contributions.

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

Connection and opportunity

Digital technology provides opportunities for learning, collaboration and capacity building.

Digital technology is ubiquitous. The use of mobile devices, Internet and Wi-Fi sessions in NSW public libraries has increased significantly as a result. The use of digital technology for recreation and lifestyle, from social networking sites, to paying bills, job search, shopping and current affairs, is evident throughout public libraries. Wireless technology allows greater flexibility, creating multifunctional library spaces. Advances in digital technology are changing the way public libraries are used by society. New technologies in library process automation and virtual customer service are also impacting upon library design and layout.

Learning through technology

Public libraries can provide a physical environment in which the community can learn, socialise and take full advantage of the opportunities that are presented by technology. The community can trial new technologies before purchasing them or use technologies they would otherwise not access. These can include 3D printers, virtual reality wearable devices, video games and robots. Library and council staff with specialist IT knowledge are critical to the success of public libraries.

Community multimedia spaces

Library multimedia spaces can provide an effective platform for discussion, information sharing, and other group-based activities. They have the potential to not only build social capital within a geographically defined community but also to facilitate virtual interaction through the library's social networking websites. The introduction of technology-rich environments to 'living room' style libraries is a decisive strategy in bringing NSW public libraries to the forefront of information access, information sharing, learning theory and content creation in the digital age.

Digital access and inclusion

The average person in Australia is doing more online and is using an increasing number of connected devices. However, a 'digital divide' exists as some people still lack internet access due to prohibitive costs, unavailability of services, and digital illiteracy. Public libraries play a critical role in closing this 'digital divide' and increasing digital inclusion through access to Wi-Fi, computers, laptops and tablets.

Digital inclusion is about using technology to improve skills, enhance quality of life and promote social inclusion. Libraries' traditional role of promoting literacy has naturally extended to encompass digital literacy. Amongst other things, digital literacy has become a vital skill with regards to job seeking and accessing government services. Digital access and literacy can also encourage creativity and entrepreneurship and can contribute to reducing social

isolation. Libraries will play an increasingly important role, not just in ensuring equitable access to technology and learning, but in empowering people from all backgrounds and abilities to become comfortable and confident users.

The evolving technological picture will inevitably continue to influence how libraries are used and the technological infrastructure that will be required to support them. We are already seeing libraries used extensively with people bringing their own mobile or laptop devices to work, play and learn. Technology is no longer a separate part of the library offer, rather it is integral to the delivery of a comprehensive and responsive library service. With ever-evolving technology the role of library staff also needs to be continually redefined. The skills required today are substantially different than 10 years ago and will be different again in 10 years' time.

Collaboration and sharing

While technology is a key future focus this has not replaced people's desire to connect with each other in a range of both formal and informal ways. A surge in collaboration, both on a personal and organisational level can include a role for public libraries. Increasing costs of living and the associated emergence of the 'gig economy' has resulted in a decline in individual ownership of goods and a keenness for sharing. It's in this environment that a creative and collaborative culture is growing. Libraries are loaning 'non-traditional' items such as musical instruments, tools and cake tins.



Green Square Library, image provided by City of Sydney

Libraries will be increasingly called upon to facilitate and encourage creativity and collaboration by providing programs, facilities and assistance. These can include studios for rehearsing, recording and editing content; workshops to facilitate individual and group artistic development; and formal business spaces for collaborative telecommuting. By adapting and responding to the growing demand for collaborative learning environments, public libraries continue to fulfil their role as places of lifelong learning, self-improvement, development and social mobility.

Libraries and their staff can provide a vital leadership role and as well as buildings, spaces and services and activities that support the skills required to learn and work in the 21st century. Public library staff have always been problem solvers, educators, respected mentors and agile thinkers. Libraries themselves are wonderful incubators and are well positioned to provide, facilitate and create spaces where people of all ages collaborate and share.

Library as community place

Public libraries are valuable spaces as community hubs.

Libraries provide respectful, supportive and safe places where people can come together to participate in events and programs, express themselves creatively or simply just sit and ‘be’ with other people. Libraries assist social cohesion and cross-cultural understanding through enhancing positive social interaction. This can be of value to all members of the community but may be particularly helpful for vulnerable members of the community such as some older and younger people or those with a disability, itinerant workers, people newly arrived from overseas, and especially homeless people. For vulnerable groups, social capital is particularly important as it helps to build bridges of support with other members of the community and promotes inclusiveness.

Building planning for emergencies and adaptability

Libraries are safe places welcoming to all in the community with locations in metropolitan and regional areas. Libraries are often the first responders to community needs and are well positioned to provide support during times of emergency.

During the 2019/20 bushfires in NSW many people sheltered in their local public libraries as a place to connect with others, relax, stay out of the heat and use wi-fi and equipment to communicate with family, friends and service providers. In some instances, service providers set up in library meeting rooms, or the library became a bushfire command centre or evacuation site. Library buildings can be designed with flexibility and space to make this type of adaption and use easier. Even in times without emergencies people visit libraries to get away from extreme weather. We are likely to encounter more extreme weather in the future, another pandemic or another type of emergency altogether. It is important to have a flexible and adaptable library spaces to meet the needs of the community in the future.

Community living rooms

The notion of libraries as community living rooms signifies a departure from the function and atmosphere of libraries of the past. Floor space, once dominated by the collection, is converted to include comfortable areas to relax and socialise. Like public squares and street cafes, a modern

public library provides a place for people to meet and pass time, in addition to its core information services.

These libraries offer a variety of different spaces – quiet contemplative nooks, places by the window, or seats near bustling thoroughfares. As well as continuing to serve their traditional roles, libraries act as an extension of people’s recreational time. People may stay for much longer periods and therefore seek the amenity that longer stays require. No activity is mutually exclusive, with visitors choosing to undertake a range of activities whilst in the library. As library spaces become more flexible and adaptable, the number and type of uses they offer expands, attracting a greater diversity and number of users.



Gordon Library

In an increasingly complex global society there is a significant shift to recognise the value of locally-based institutions that respond to local community needs. The rise in the sharing economy is characterised by people’s enthusiasm for collaboration and building connections. Libraries are perfectly placed to act as facilitators of sharing, creativity, knowledge, innovation and social responsibility.

A trusted source

In contemporary society, where information sources are so varied in origin and veracity, libraries are known as valuing the integrity of information. Skilled staff assist people to identify and critically examine sources, and ensure information is equally accessible to all members of the community. Libraries are trusted, local civic institutions. They are non-partisan, inclusive and highly valued. Libraries share a common link and interest in the wellbeing of their local communities. People bond with libraries as children and those positive associations can form the platform for a lifelong association through adulthood and old age.

Connecting culture

Public libraries provide a community with a cultural focal point. They may collect and share information about local Indigenous people and the local community’s heritage, as well as details about local activities, community groups and cultural events.

Some libraries support and display community art projects and promote information about council and government services. Developments in user generated content provide libraries with a

platform to access, contribute to and assist in the collection of local information. Inclusion of artworks in public libraries and other public buildings, commercial developments and public open spaces, highlights the importance of this movement to connect a building with its community through culture.

Changing communities

The importance of demographic trends and local needs is well understood by library staff. Recent demographic and social changes, such as the ageing population, and increasing cultural diversity and migration (both internal and from overseas), have significant implications for planning and programming library spaces. Statistics and community mapping tools need to be analysed regularly and community consultation undertaken to monitor ongoing community changes.

Most communities are experiencing change. An increasing number of retirees are moving to coastal NSW. Decentralisation is occurring as people are leaving Sydney to regional areas where the cost of living is more affordable. Many areas in rural NSW are suffering from declining populations and a changing economic base. Services, such as banks and government offices, may close in these communities, possibly adding to the declining employment base and resident population.

Ageing population

Australia's older generation (those aged 65 and over) continues to grow and [is projected to more than double by 2057 \[1\]](#). This will have an impact on library services, with demand for certain programs and home library services increasing. Libraries may also have a role in helping the ageing population maintain their independence and physical and mental health, as well as preventing isolation and loneliness.

Urban households

In the Sydney metropolitan area apartment living is increasing, as is the number of single person households. With a trend towards an increasing number of smaller households, the risk of social isolation increases. Public libraries can offer an alternative setting for homework, study, children's playtime, general recreation and social interaction.

Virtual study and workplaces

More people are working from home, running their own business or taking advantage of flexible workplace arrangements. Some will be using, or want to use, co-working spaces. Video and teleconferencing are becoming the norm in many workplaces and these



Maitland City Library Walls that Talk exhibition

facilities are often needed by those who are not located in an established office space. People will work wherever it is convenient and where there are quiet spaces, collaboration and meeting areas, and free Wi-Fi – their local library.

Educational institutions are providing an increasingly flexible range of learning modes for both onsite and offsite students, such as online tutorials. The virtual work/studyplace is likely to be increasingly popular for employees, employers and students. Libraries need to provide learning spaces, seating and charging points, meeting and conference rooms for work, collaboration and study. ‘Space for connections’ is as important as ‘space for collections’, providing lifelong learning opportunities, creativity and collaboration.

1. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-statistics/population-groups/older-people/overview>

Influence

Programs and partnerships

Programs and partnerships provide the opportunity for libraries to strengthen communities.

The popularity of library public programs and events continues. The enthusiasm with which libraries and their staff have embraced the role that public programs play in building connected communities, is matched only by the eagerness of the community to participate. As populations grow, so will the demand for creative spaces, public programs and events, bringing together people from diverse backgrounds.



Green Square Library, image provided by City of Sydney

Libraries need to collect and analyse relevant data, such as user surveys and program evaluation forms, to identify, understand, improve and meet user needs. To continue to meet demand and ensure programs and events are tailored to community needs, it is likely that libraries will need to increase their partnership approach to programming.

Bringing new members

Programs introduce the library to potential new members. The popularity of traditional sessions like ‘Baby Rhyme Time’ continues, as do programs that promote culture and facilitate active involvement of library clients with the development of the library. For example, a library might promote a multicultural festival by holding bilingual story time sessions, cultural book exchanges or themed author talks. Youth audiences might be interested in watching or performing in band nights. ‘Click, clack and yack’ or ‘knit and natter’ sessions are popular in many libraries, bringing together a diverse range of people to knit or crochet and chat.

Promoting community involvement

Forming partnerships is another way libraries are promoting community involvement and providing a broader scope of services and information. Partnerships can include local education institutions such as TAFE, schools, community colleges, and U3A (University of the Third Age). Increasingly, the emphasis in public libraries is towards community support and therefore libraries may work with youth services, literacy foundations and retirement villages. Partnerships

can also be a cost-effective method of providing much needed resources for a public library, by pooling and sharing resources. TAFE courses are sometimes run in public library IT areas. University and TAFE students can be available to assist in IT literacy and homework help.

Co-located or joint use libraries

Partnerships can extend even further to [co-located or joint use libraries](#). A joint-use library is one where two or more distinct users are served in the same library premises, such as a combined school and public library. A co-located library has its own distinct space within a wider complex or set of buildings. It may share a foyer, meeting rooms and amenities with other tenants, however the public library functions are managed separately to the other functions within the complex.

In NSW it is increasingly common for public libraries to be co-located with other facilities such as local government service centres, community centres, museums, galleries or community health centres. This can lead to efficiencies of staffing, shared areas like foyers and meeting rooms, and savings in overheads. Increasingly, co-located libraries are the result of partnerships between local councils and developers. These sites can provide a living and learning village, a one stop-shop for learning, innovation and collaboration, socialising and rest, and business.



Youth orchestra in Tamworth Library

Flexible spaces

Space is being increasingly occupied by informal social activities as well as facilities for structured group activities. The physical implications of these programs and partnerships include an emphasis on flexible spaces. This may include meeting rooms, training rooms and multipurpose spaces that can be accessed out of library hours.

Youth and children's areas require greater flexibility to cater for large groups and diverse activities. General areas of the library, such as foyers and lounge spaces can be re-arranged for performances and displays, allowing the library to serve as a venue for events and exhibitions. Consideration should be given to acoustics, flexible ceilings and floors (wiring, display, lighting), as well as movable shelving.

The rising popularity of programs and partnerships is another indication that despite the growth of digital and online resources, the physical library is very relevant and increasingly in demand as

Regeneration and prosperity

Public libraries can shape and drive their communities.

Libraries as place makers

A library's ability to provide cohesion and identity to a community, and a democratic environment capable of welcoming the full cross section of society, has been identified as a critical factor in regenerating/developing urban and regional spaces. Libraries continue to draw a significant number of visitors who, by simply going to the library, activate surrounding spaces and streets, providing further potential benefits through visits to shops and other facilities nearby. Consequently, urban planners, local government and developers identify libraries as key anchors or place makers.

Common urban regeneration strategies include:

- **Creation or re-activation of public open spaces** and streetscape as a result of a new library
- Insertion of **iconic or 'aspirational' architecture**, which reinvigorates and challenges the identity and self-awareness of a community, and places an urban centre 'on the map'
- Transparent facades that **connect internal library activity with the street** thereby increasing public safety and surveillance
- **Co-location** with other valued community facilities to create a public hub, which is discrete from commercial pressures and reinforces a sense of support and belonging
- **Spaces which promote partnerships and programs** with other cultural and educational institutions to strengthen local learning, cultural development and identity
- **Insertion of libraries into town centres**, existing or new development, which are primarily commercially (retail and office) focused
- Spaces which promote the development and reinforcement of **community identity** through the creation and collection of local knowledge and culture.



Carnes Hill Library cafe

Drivers for socio-cultural change

Public libraries make excellent arenas for developing local culture and identity, thereby driving socio-cultural change. They have been integral in creating a brand for local areas as well as for cities.

Libraries are particularly valued in disadvantaged communities, where facilities and home environments may be inadequate. A new public library directly communicates to its community that it is valued, particularly where the facilities provided are far beyond anything experienced at home, work or school. Facilities which can stimulate socioeconomic development and promote social cohesion include:

- technologies for creative and local content, such as sound mixing and recording, graphic and design software, blogs, photo sharing, community radio
- archiving, preservation and display of local cultural items and artefacts
- loan or sale of cultural items such as musical instruments and artworks
- spaces for group discussions and talks
- technology training facilities, job search, Internet connection for small business
- spaces for exhibitions and museum collections.

Public libraries are often a catalyst for social and economic regeneration. They provide resources for skills development, literacy and digital literacy, training and lifelong learning. For many communities, the public library building is often the only civic building in the area that is publicly accessible to everyone and typically generates significant pride. It is strongly valued by the community and this is reflected in its high levels of visitation and usage.



Woollahra Library at Double Bay

Reading and references

Links to key documents are included throughout People Places. This section provides additional references and links to further reading for planning a library building.

Building planning and design

ISO/TR 11219: Information and documentation

Qualitative conditions and basic statistics for library buildings – Space, function and design

This technical report from the [International Organization of Standardization \[1\]](#) provides guidance for planning library buildings. It includes information on user areas, collection storage, floor loading, security and acoustics. The publication details storage conditions for a range of collection material, outlining temperature and humidity requirements. It also includes space requirements for collection items and shelving. The majority of specifications align with those described in People Places. Where they differ, People Places recommendations should be followed.

The publication is available for loan through the Public Library Services branch of the State Library, please contact [Kate O'Grady \[2\]](#). It can also be purchased through [Standards Australia webstore - Techstreet \[3\]](#) and [SAI Global \[4\]](#).

Designing libraries

[Designing libraries \[5\]](#) is a UK based website with information on library building projects from the United Kingdom and Ireland, as well as featured libraries and international case studies. The resources section links to library image galleries, articles and guidelines. Partners and sponsors include library organisations, architects and library suppliers.

Model programme for public libraries

The [Model programme for public libraries website \[6\]](#) was developed by the Danish [Agency for Culture and Palaces \[7\]](#). It includes sections on planning zones and spaces and how they connect, library users and the role of staff. There are a large number of case studies on the website as well as the opportunity to contribute your library as a case study.

The value handbook

Although [The value handbook \[8\]](#) was published in 2006 it includes a lot of information that is still relevant to the planning of a library building. Published by the UK Government's Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) it explores how public sector organisations can get the most from local buildings and spaces. It provides information about the benefits of good design and the types of value created by the built environment.

Publications on indyreads

[Indyreads \[9\]](#) is an ebook and eaudio platform available through NSW public libraries. It provides NSW public library members access to independent Australian and international

titles. A selection of books on library planning and design are listed below. Search indyreads for additional relevant publications.

Better Library Design: Ideas from Library Journal

2015

Editors: Rebecca T. Miller and Barbara A. Genco

Publisher: Rowman & Littlefield

ISBN: 9781442239616

Planning Optimal Library Spaces: Principles, processes and practices

2018

Authors: David R. Moore II and Eric C. Shoaf

Publisher: Rowman & Littlefield

ISBN: 9781538109410

Organizing Library Collections: Theory and Practice

2019

Author: Gretchen L. Hoffman

Publisher: Rowman & Littlefield

ISBN: 9781538108529

Library design examples

As part of the development of People Places 3rd Edition, FJMT architects compiled examples of library designs. Although these images are from 2010, they still provide some inspiration and ideas for library design.

[American Libraries \[10\]](#)

[Australian Libraries \[11\]](#)

[European Libraries \[12\]](#)

[Scandinavian Libraries \[13\]](#)

Public Library News

The summer 2017/18 edition of Public Library News was titled [Library buildings and spaces \[14\]](#). It includes articles on a range of library building and renovation projects, from brand new, large-scale civic developments to small-scale refurbishments on a tight budget. Many of the articles are based on presentations from the *Library Spaces* seminar that was held at the State Library in 2017.

Design your library

[Design your library \[15\]](#) provides details and photos of a selection of Australian library building projects. The website is coordinated by the State Library of Victoria, the Public Libraries of Victoria Network and Eastern Regional Libraries.

Library Buildings in Europe

[Library buildings in Europe \[16\]](#) has been developed by the Liber (Association of European Research Libraries) Architecture Group. Library projects include new buildings, renovations, extensions and internal refurbishments. You can browse library projects or filter by specific categories. Details of floor area, shelving capacity, seating and number of staff are provided as well as photos and project description.

Library trends and futures scenarios

Future Libraries

The [Future libraries report \[17\]](#), from Arup, discusses library trends and explores user scenarios. It brings together information from a series of workshops held in 2015 in Sydney, Melbourne, London and San Francisco. Arup is an independent firm of designers, planners, engineers, architects, consultants and technical specialists, working across the built environment.

Library of the Future

The American Library Association's Center for the Future of Libraries has developed a [collection of trends \[18\]](#) relevant to libraries and librarianship. The website is designed to help library staff understand how trends are developing and why they matter. Each trend is updated as new reports and articles are made available and new trends are added as they are developed.

Sustainability

[Good Environmental Choice Australia \(GECA\) \[19\]](#) is a not for profit organisation that creates solutions for sustainable consumption and production. GECA certified products can help you make informed purchasing decisions. The [section on green building \[20\]](#) provides information on furniture, paints and finishes, cleaning products, flooring and other building materials that have been classified as environmentally sound.

People Places - previous edition

The 2012 edition of [People Places: A guide for public library buildings in New South Wales \[21\]](#) is available as an historical reference.

1. <https://www.iso.org/>
2. <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/public-library-services-contacts>
3. <http://www.techstreet.com/sa>
4. <https://infostore.saiglobal.com/en-au/Categories/STANDARD>
5. <http://www.designinglibraries.org.uk>
6. <http://modelprogrammer.slks.dk/en/>
7. <https://english.slks.dk/>
8. <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110107183649/http://www.cabe.org.uk/files/the-value-handbook.pdf>
9. <https://indyreads.libraries.nsw.gov.au/>
10. <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/American%20Libraries.pdf>

11. https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/australian_libraries.pdf
12. https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/european_libraries.pdf
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