

Millions turn to libraries to get them through

25/5/2020

Library and Information Week (25 – 31 May 2020)

Millions of people have turned to libraries to get them through the current health crisis, with over 20,000 new members signing up online since the lockdown, according to the State Library of NSW.

NSW State Librarian John Vallance said, “the NSW Premier’s green light to libraries reopening on Monday 1 June could not have come at a better time.”

“Libraries don’t make sense without people in them, and I am pleased that we’ll be reopening the State Library’s two main reading rooms for study and computer use to begin with from 10am next Monday,” Dr Vallance said.

A reduced number of readers will be allowed in either the State Library’s Bashir Reading Room or the Mitchell Library Reading Room at any one time to maintain safe physical distancing. Readers will need to book online for one of two daily sessions offered Monday to Friday. There will also be walk-up sessions for 30- minute computer access.

“We’ll be strictly complying with NSW Health guidelines to protect the health and safety of everyone who comes through our doors,” said Dr Vallance.

Most public libraries across the state are also set to reopen on 1 June, with decisions around reopening plans to be made by individual councils.

Library staff will be spending this Library and Information Week (25 – 31 May) preparing to welcome back readers, as well as meet the thousands of new members that connected with their state or public library for the first time while in isolation.

“What has become abundantly clear over these past eight weeks is just how loved and valued libraries are, and this time apart has been tough on all of us,” said Dr Vallance.

“In saying that, libraries have risen to the challenge to engage and stimulate their communities online through the isolation period with free virtual storytime sessions, online book clubs and talks, podcasts, digital puzzles and activities, as well as connect them with a wealth of digital content.”

Media Release

Since the 23 March shutdown, the State Library has enjoyed 703,611 website visits (20% increase) and 1,500 ebooks have been downloaded (200% increase)*.

NSW public libraries have collectively processed over 800,000 loans (300% increase) and enjoyed over one million website visits (100% increase)*.

“We urge everyone to be patient as we slowly transition back to being a fully functioning library with safety plans in place to minimise the risk from COVID-19,” said Dr Vallance.

Visit the State Library website <www.sl.nsw.gov.au> and public library websites for more details on their reopening plans, as well as Library and Information Week online activities.

At 11am on Wednesday 27 May Australian Children’s Laureate Ursula Dubosarsky will read via Zoom the 2020 National Simultaneous Storytime title, *Whitney and Britney Chicken Divas* by Lucinda Gifford.

* Percentage increases are compared to the same reporting period in 2019 (23 March to 15 May).

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