LIBRARIES/BUILDING/COMMUNITIES

Report Four: Showcasing the Best

State Library
of Victoria

Library Board
of Victoria

VICLINK

Libraries Building Communities is the first comprehensive Australian study of the value public libraries add to their communities. It includes all 44 public library services in Victoria and draws on the views and ideas of nearly 10,000 people.

The research aims to increase community awareness of the range of public library services and show government how public libraries can help achieve governmental policy goals. For library staff it:
- presents clear new data on the contribution libraries make to their communities;
- provides case studies that show how Victorian public libraries lead in innovation;
- identifies groups that are not currently well served by their libraries, and offers solutions;
- builds awareness of the critical social capital and community building role of public libraries.

Findings are presented in four reports with an *Executive Summary*:
- Report One: *Setting the Scene* covers the concept of community building, the Victorian Government's policy agenda, the Victorian public library network, project methodology, and relevant research.
- Report Two: *Logging the Benefits* outlines community views on the role and benefits of public libraries.
- Report Three: *Bridging the Gaps* provides socio-demographic profiles of library users and non-users and strategies for bridging the perceived gaps in public library service delivery.
- Report Four: *Showcasing the Best* gives over thirty examples of innovation and excellence in Victorian public libraries.

Contents

1 Introduction

Libraries are responsive to the needs of communities but they need to be 'ahead of the game' – they need to keep pace with the changing demographic.

Libraries deliver on their potential as community catalysts when they actively and imaginatively seek out the views of users and, crucially, non-users, and translate those views into new services. Successful library services invariably work in a network of alliances and partnerships with schools, social services, the police, museums and leisure services.

1.1 Innovation in public libraries

Many of us have fond memories from our childhood of trips to the local library with our parents – the excitement of borrowing a book, of meeting friends or just keeping warm. Today's children are just as likely to be borrowing a video or DVD, accessing the Internet or attending a computer class. These dramatic developments have been fueled by the information revolution; libraries now have the opportunity to harness new technologies to deliver services inconceivable a few years ago.

Public libraries are also responding to economic and social developments that have led to changes in the needs and expectations of their communities, and the individuals in them. Many have faced challenges as their communities have been under stress from industry restructuring and other social and demographic changes over an extended period. In some cases, this has seen loss of services and the closure of local businesses – accompanied by unemployment, especially among young people. It may be that the library is the only public institution remaining. Meanwhile, other communities are benefiting from population growth and increasing employment but may be experiencing pressures on the physical and social infrastructure required to support this. These developments are altering how libraries deliver information and interact with their communities.

While one of the important characteristics of public libraries is the way they are able to anticipate and respond positively to the changes in their environment, the stories of innovation at the local level often remain hidden. A recent report from the United Kingdom[1] notes:

The mechanisms for identifying, distilling and disseminating good practice are weak compared with some other public services. Libraries need more effective machinery for identifying and correcting failure and finding and spreading good ideas. Without that, innovations will be trapped in pockets.

1 Department for Culture, Media and Sport, UK (2004) *Framework for the Future: Libraries, Learning and Information in the Next Decade*, DCMS.

Similarly, Prue Digby, Executive Director, Local Government and Regional Services, Department for Victorian Communities, told public library staff at their 2003 retreat at Glen Erin:

> *I am certain that there are examples of public libraries working with local communities to provide 'joined-up' services. A challenge for you all is to make these examples better known and to offer your expertise to work with other areas of councils in developing services further.*

Showcasing the Best brings together 34 stories that demonstrate the innovative ways that public libraries in Victoria are meeting the needs of their communities.

These case studies:

- showcase Victorian initiatives that reveal how public libraries in Victoria are at the forefront in innovation;

- describe the approaches that have been used by libraries, the outcomes they have achieved, the benefits that have arisen for the community, and the key lessons for the library service.

The target audience for the report includes:

- Victorian public library staff;

- elected representatives and senior officers and bureaucrats in local and state government;

- the library industry Australia-wide;

- the community sector Australia-wide.

The case studies are intended to provide inspiration and to give people a stronger sense of what libraries can achieve for their communities given the right resources and support. The report does not suggest that 'one model fits all' (i.e. that what has worked in one area can be adopted wholesale in another) but is intended to help

local libraries look at different models of how they can work with their communities.

While these case studies only provide a partial story of innovative developments across Victoria, it is the intention of the public library network and the State Library of Victoria that these will be built on over time so that lessons of experience can continue to be shared more broadly.

1.2 Selection of case studies

The best practice case studies included in this report were chosen to demonstrate how libraries are contributing to building their communities in a diverse range of ways. In many instances there are other comparable projects happening across Victoria with similar outcomes for their communities. For example, mobile library services and services for the housebound are offered by many public libraries. The examples that are showcased in this report have been selected because they are considered to be outstanding, either exemplary in every way, or offering a particularly innovative approach. They are at the forefront in redefining the ways in which services can be delivered.

All public library services across Victoria were invited to nominate case studies for the report and were specifically asked to consider innovations that demonstrate:

- how libraries form strategic partnerships with their local councils and communities (e.g. schools, neighbourhood houses) in order to deliver benefit to the community;

- the benefits of strategic partnering with other organisations;

- the types of strategies and approaches being used by libraries to promote social engagement.

Final decisions on which case studies would be included in the report were taken by a small committee of public and State Library staff. Initiatives were included only if they:

• were well established;

• had been subject to evaluation, formal or informal, and had been found to be effective;

• had the potential to be replicated elsewhere – i.e. the principles of the project could be applied to other settings and environments and are not exclusive to the project itself.

It was also seen as important to showcase the full range of activities and services offered by public libraries in Victoria and to ensure that a representative cross-section of public libraries was included (large and small, corporations and single council services, metropolitan and rural).

Each library service with a case study in the final selection was contacted to verify that their information was 'correct' and to supply further information about the initiative.

1.3 Structure of the report

The following section of the report presents 34 case studies organised under four key themes:

• Developing social capital

• Building individual skills, capacity and wellbeing

• Reaching out to communities

• Providing a gateway to information.

Most of the case studies could fit under more than one heading but have been allocated to the category to which they most closely fit. A checklist has been

used at the end of each case study to highlight how the practice contributes to community building. The checklist includes:

• Developing social networks

• Promoting social inclusion

• Working in strategic partnerships

• Nurturing community organisations

• Encouraging active citizenship

• Developing community capacity

• Promoting health and wellbeing

• Supporting community revitalisation.

The final section of the report draws together the findings from the case studies and makes observations regarding current trends in Victorian public libraries and areas in which the contribution to communities could potentially grow in the future.

LIBRARIES DEVELOPING SOCIAL CAPITAL: THE NEW KERANG LIBRARY   SOURCE: KRISTIAN GEHRADTE PHOTOGRAPY & DESIGN

2 Developing social capital

The notion of the Library beyond the purely functional is one that is widespread. The Library is clearly seen as an important contributor to the creation and maintenance of local communities.

2.1 Creating civic pride and identity

Gannawarra Library Service: the new Kerang Library

The new library in Kerang is located on the main road into the township, and was designed as a landmark building around the historic water tower on the site. The water tower in itself is highly symbolic. It is the only tall structure in an otherwise flat landscape and therefore forms a point from which people can orient themselves. The association with water, the lifeblood of the community, also says something about how the community sees the library. It is a life force in Kerang.

The architect's brief was for a design that would complement the water tower and, in addition to library facilities, provide areas that would benefit and support the wider community. Early stages of planning identified community needs that, if met by the design of the library, could deliver reciprocal benefits to the library as a vital and dynamic presence in the community. Local librarians were able to add to the design their own observation of what had worked and not worked in the old library. Draft plans were put on display and attracted huge interest from residents.

Multi-purpose areas have been designed to provide maximum value for space, and these can be used outside library opening hours. They include a community meeting room, a community gallery in the foyer and a genealogy research room. The strong colours used in the interior of the library – purple, violet, grape and gold – create a vibrant, warm and welcoming ambience.

The finished building boasts a number of unique features created and donated by community members. Paving on the path leading to the library is inscribed with the names of community members who contributed to the building. The beautiful banners at the entrance to the library, designed and hand-quilted by local women, bear the words 'knowledge', 'enthusiasm', 'resilience',

'acceptance', 'neighbours' and 'generosity' – words that sum up the community values that made the new library possible. The magnificent benchtop on the circulation desk, and the coffee tables, have been handcrafted from wood donated by local farmers.

Since the library opened in August 2003 demand for service has been rising. Over a period of eleven months membership has increased by nearly 40% (from an already high base), book circulation by 12%, interlibrary loans by 50% and Internet usage by 12%. The librarians report spending more time on customer service as they implement their philosophy of 'no customer kept waiting'.

Kerang Library's vital role in its community was recently recognised with an award in the statewide competition for the Year of the Built Environment. Community members voted the library 'My Favourite Place'.

Development of the new Kerang Library could not have happened without funding from Living Libraries, the Public Library Infrastructure Program. This is a $12 million state government program aimed at modernising public library buildings in Victoria. The fund recognises that many of the State's current library buildings are out of date or inappropriate for delivering 21st century library services to Victorian communities.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	√
Promoting social inclusion	√
Working in strategic partnerships	
Nurturing community organisations	
Encouraging active citizenship	
Developing community capacity	
Promoting health and wellbeing	
Supporting community revitalisation	√

Yarra-Melbourne Regional Library Corporation: City Library

The City Library is the first free public lending library in central Melbourne for 34 years. Located in a cleverly designed period building with a very modern feel, it provides a welcoming and warm space, which invites people to stay and linger. If they want to have coffee and lunch, there is a link with the Journal Café, which fronts the street. As noted in *The Australian* newspaper (11 June 2004): 'Its clean lines, red leather couches and stainless steel tables are more akin to a trendy bookshop than an institution of scholarly contemplation.'

The library features seminar and meeting rooms, an art gallery, 29 computers with Internet access, self-checkout machines, facilities for listening to music and a collection of 90,000 items, including a wonderful range of CDs and DVDs. A clever way of ensuring that this collection is relevant to people's interests has been to invite local celebrities to recommend their favorite books, CDs, videos and magazines for the collection.

Library Manager Peter Fraser comments: 'As centres of stimulation and learning, libraries should be a key part of living and working in the city.' One user from a nearby designer boutique told *The Australian* (11 June 2004) that an important feature of the library is that '… it is integrated with the city streetscape, rather than out in the suburbs, which makes it hard to ignore it'.

The City Library was formed through a partnership between the City of Melbourne and the CAE (formerly Council for Adult Education) in 2004. The library is managed by Yarra-Melbourne Regional Library Corporation and is a vibrant addition to its network of inner city public libraries.

Community building principles	
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Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service: the new Mill Park Library

Mill Park Library, which opened in June 2001, is one of Victoria's largest public libraries and the first to be built on the concept of a hybrid digital–print library. As well as offering a print collection of 78,000 volumes, including Italian and Chinese materials, the library has 31 public access workstations with high speed Internet connection.

The library serves a population of approximately 50,000 in one of Australia's highest growth areas; it has about 250,000 visitors each year. Built by the City of Whittlesea and managed by the Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service, it is located at 394 Plenty Road, Mill Park.

Visually stunning, the building's tinted glass, curved roof, columns and shape compel people to look closer. Its cement-clad iron pillars angle towards the sky and support an overhang at the western entrance which shades the building from the afternoon sun. Inside, ducts are concealed in internal columns, which bounce light off the ceiling on to the open expanses below. Panes of tinted glass filter sunlight into a golden hue.

Special facilities of the library include:

- a flexible multimedia centre, opening directly into the library so that it can be used for both training and general access;

- a local studies room, with a collection supported by the Federal Centenary of Federation Fund, and including archival storage for paper-based materials and digital storage for accessibility;

- a silent reading and study room;

- a designated youth area with six workstations, as well as print-based material.

The Mill Park Library was awarded the Victorian Engineering Excellence Award in October 2003. The judges rated the public library the best of more than ten urban and regional infrastructure projects, worth up to $10 million. They said the designers applied leading edge engineering innovations and steel to dramatic effect. It was noted that these features, coupled with inclined fascia lines and extensive tapering bronze glass panels, have produced a structure that will remain modern and functional for many years to come.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	
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Developing community capacity	
Promoting health and wellbeing	
Supporting community revitalisation	√

2.2 Encouraging social interaction

Hobsons Bay Libraries – Altona Library: program for mothers and babies

The Altona Library of the Hobsons Bay Libraries initiated a new mothers' group, which was initially designed to inform mothers of the support and activities available to them through the library. It was also intended to provide a network of support by building relationships between new mothers and providing a source of information about becoming a mother.

This initiative has been very successful, with many of these mothers becoming library members, attending activities and meeting regularly at the library. A staff member who attended one of the Libraries Building Communities (LBC) focus group sessions noted that one mothers' group is still meeting four years after its inception and that good friendships have been made and strong support networks established. Staff have received comments from many mothers who believe that this library-based mothers' group provides invaluable support, gets them out of the house, alleviates loneliness and helps them establish friendships.

Community building principles	
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Promoting health and wellbeing	√
Supporting community revitalisation	

2.3 Linking to the arts and heritage

Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation – Narre Warren Library: Music Sundays

Narre Warren is at the centre of a corridor on the fringes of Melbourne that is experiencing rapid population growth. Ten to twelve thousand new residents settle in the estates around the area each year. Many find travel to the city, or even neighbouring cultural venues, difficult or inconvenient.

In response to this, the library has initiated the Music Sundays program, which provides high calibre, live musical entertainment in a range of styles. It is held on the last Sunday of each month, from April through to October. The program targets families, older people and 30-plus singles who enjoy music, and those who are socially isolated and economically disadvantaged.

The Adult Services Librarian organises the program for the year, and library staff are responsible for the design and production of publicity brochures. Staff are rostered on to help set up the area on the day. The library has a database of performers selected over the years, some initially from the Casey Arts Directory, and every attempt is made to include local musicians. Professional rates are paid to the musicians. Music Sundays are promoted in the library's monthly newsletter and publicity is included in all local papers.

The success of the event is measured in terms of audience figures, increased number of visits to the library and audience reaction and feedback. The evidence is that those who attend enjoy the music and the variety of performers. They also appreciate that the event is free, there is no need to book and it happens in a place where they are comfortable. Music Sundays attract many families who visit the library together and offers something that all ages can enjoy.

Last year a total of 320 people were counted in the audience at the Music Sundays; many others enjoyed the music as they were selecting their books, CDs and other items at the library. About a quarter of the audience have become regular attendees.

While some may not see Music Sundays as a core library service, the Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation believes it meets their stated aims: the program attracts new users and increases frequency of usage and enjoyment while visiting the library. Library staff say it provides an experience of the library as a 'community loungeroom', something that people can share together, which may be unexpected but demonstrates that the library is more than a storehouse of books and information.

The advice provided by the Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation to others contemplating a similar initiative is:

- 'Start small but give it a try!'

- Make sure the performers are booked – payment helps secure their commitment.

- Take account of the niche you are targeting and any alternative cultural opportunities that may exist in your community.

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Yarra-Melbourne Regional Library Corporation – Richmond Library: The Australian Women's Art Register

The Australian Women's Art Register is a resource of national significance. It is an archive and repository of slides, published material and other written sources, documenting Australian women artists, their art practice, images and writings. Established by artists in 1975, the register records and promotes the work of Australian-based women. The earliest images date from 1840.

A diverse range of media and art disciplines – including craft, design, photography and installation – is represented in the archive, as well as various styles from the Victorian period. The register contains over 20,000 slides and 1,300 information folders as well as publications, articles, statistical information and research papers.

All Australian-based women artists are welcome to join and submit images. It is used by artists, curators, teachers, students, researchers, designers and the general public. The register is located at the Richmond Library, part of the Yarra-Melbourne Regional Library in Melbourne. It is run by a committee of management and is supported by volunteers.

The archivist and volunteers maintain the ever-growing collection of over 20,000 slides, documentation folders, books, journals and catalogues representing over 200 artists. The material is available for loan Australia-wide, to all members. Those unable to visit the collection can arrange interstate loans by telephone or mail and material will be posted to them. The Australian Women's Art Register publishes a bulletin featuring articles, reviews and professional opportunities.

Educational slide kits have been produced for Australian schools and tertiary institutions. Images and resource material provide positive role models for female students and promote the arts as a viable career choice for girls.

Among the special events organised by the register were Can't See For Lookin', an exhibition of Victorian-based Koori women artists at the National Gallery of Victoria; a gala luncheon for women artists at the National Gallery of Victoria; seminars on various subjects, including introductory sessions on French Feminist Theory and Imaging Lesbians; Annual International Women's Day Exhibitions in conjunction with the Women's Gallery, Melbourne and, since 1997, the Cowwarr Art Space, Cowwarr, Gippsland.

Richmond Library actively supports the register by collecting and maintaining books, catalogues and videos on Australian and international women artists.

The collection can be viewed during library opening hours.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	√
Promoting social inclusion	√
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Nurturing community organisations	√
Encouraging active citizenship	
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Supporting community revitalisation	

Information for this case study was taken from the Australian Women's Art Register website: http://www.yarranet.net.au/womar/womar1.htm.

Monash Public Library Service – Wheelers Hill Library: collocation of two cultural institutions

The Wheelers Hill Library and Monash Gallery of Art (MGA) extension project has been the major cultural infrastructure project for the City of Monash in recent years. The project commenced in 1999 with the development of a site master plan and concept plan for the new library, café and gallery extension, together with a design plan for a 22-lot residential estate. The innovative integration of residential development with public open space, sensitive landscape design and high quality civic buildings has ensured that a harmonious and environmentally sustainable development has been created for future generations to enjoy.

Project architects Cox Sanderson Ness, designers of national award-winning architectural projects, have created a sensitive, environmentally friendly design. The integrity of the original gallery, which was designed by renowned architect Harry Seidler, has been reflected in the design of the new development.

The development provides a great opportunity for cooperative activities between the Monash Public Library Service and the gallery, as well as a meeting place for the community. The new library features a meeting room that seats 80 people, expanded Internet access and study space, a new junior literacy and multimedia collection, an expanded Chinese language collection and the MGA book collection.

The MGA exhibition space has increased from one gallery to three, enabling a greatly expanded program of exhibitions, which range from historical to contemporary and local to international in diverse forms of media. Specialising in Australian photography, the MGA's collection is one of the nation's finest. A program of artist and curator talks, education programs and activities supports the exhibition program. The new Café@MGA is a great local café and community meeting place. Patrons

can also get takeaway food, and are welcome to take coffee and a snack into the library to read the paper.

As opportunities arise, advantage is taken of the collocation of these two valued cultural institutions. To date, this has included production of library booklists to support current gallery exhibitions, database training by library services staff for gallery volunteers and literary talks themed to current exhibitions.

With views over an ornamental pond to the Dandenongs in the east, the library is both a peaceful space for study and a vibrant location for events and activities such as local bookclubs, community groups, and Monash Arts Council and Monash Literature Festival events. Since completion of the project in 2002, over 120,000 people have visited Wheelers Hill Library each year, and over 50,000 people each year have visited the Monash Gallery of Art. It is expected that this number will continue to grow as the community continues to support and enjoy the activities and services provided at this unique cultural complex – a centre for ideas, inspiration and creativity.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	
Promoting social inclusion	
Working in strategic partnerships	√
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Encouraging active citizenship	
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Supporting community revitalisation	√

2.4 Celebrating diversity

Maribyrnong Library Service: celebrating the cultural and linguistic diversity of the community

Braybrook and Maidstone lie to the west of Maribyrnong City. The two communities have a dynamic and diverse social, cultural and economic mix. Both have a strong sense of pride and have identified the need to overcome the label of disadvantage that has been applied in recent years, and encourage greater participation in community activity and decision making.

Funding for a community partnerships and leadership project titled Reaching Out Linking In came from the Commonwealth's Family and Community Services Department with support from Maribyrnong City Council. The project aimed to strengthen and provide strategic direction for agency and community partnerships, and develop community capacity by identifying and training community leaders.

As part of this initiative, the library service led a project titled Armchair Travel. The main aims were to celebrate the cultural and linguistic diversity of the community and create a greater awareness of the rich array of people and cultures represented in the Maidstone and Braybrook areas, through a series of showcase events. The project actively encouraged a sense of cultural pride.

This project was developed in consultation with members of the relevant cultural groups. Key cultural organisations and individuals within the local community were involved in the planning and provision of activities.

Two major events were held as part of the project.

In March 2003, Out of East Africa, a Horn of Africa cultural event, was held and comprised traditional storytelling and craft for children; an art and craft exhibition; a display of new library books and audiovisual items about the Horn of Africa region; a display of traditional costume; Ethiopian, Eritrean, Sudanese and Somali cultural performances; as well as food and a traditional coffee ceremony.

In June 2003 the library held Văn Hóa Vietnam, which comprised a traditional Vietnamese cooking workshop for adults; traditional stories, crafts and games for children; language and literature discussion by a local Vietnamese academic; food; and dancing and singing performances by local community groups and schools.

Over 350 people, including many children and teenagers, attended each event.

The main outcomes have been:

- strengthened partnership between community leaders, community groups, individuals and council;

- active community participation in planning and implementation;

- bringing together cultures that in the course of daily life would not come together;

- high participation rate from people of many backgrounds;

- improved collection development for the library;

- promotion of the library service to traditional non-users.

Funding for the Reaching Out Linking In project has ended, but due to the success of the Armchair Travel project the library now has in place a Celebrating Diversity@your Library program, which involves holding multicultural events on a monthly basis with a focus on a specific culture or language group. This rolling program

of events is funded by the Maribyrnong City Council. Two examples of events follow.

Over 600 people enjoyed lively entertainment and tasted delicious food at the first Annual Multicultural Day, 20 March 2004. Launched by Wurundjeri community member Norm Hunter with a traditional Welcome to Country ceremony and performance, the day also featured performances from a variety of community groups.

During September 2004 the library service and the Victorian Chapter of the Vietnamese Community in Australia worked together to provide an exquisite exhibition of lanterns, a series of lantern making workshops, and 'moon cake' making demonstrations and sampling as part of the Vietnamese Mid-Autumn (Moon Lantern) Festival. Over 250 people enjoyed participating in various parts of the program, held over three weeks. Three workshops for children, parents and carers were held at the Footscray Library. More than 160 paper lanterns were made, many of which were carried at the festival in Footscray on 26 September, where over 3,000 people attended.

Celebrations are planned for the Greek, Spanish, Croatian, Serbian, Macedonian and Italian cultures.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	√
Promoting social inclusion	√
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Promoting health and wellbeing	√
Supporting community revitalisation	

2.5 Supporting Indigenous communities

Goulburn Valley Regional Library Corporation – Shepparton Library

The regional centre of Shepparton has the largest Koori population outside metropolitan Melbourne. The library has been an active supporter of Reconciliation in Action, a community building project that is seeking to address issues of racism and Indigenous disadvantage to create an environment that values and celebrates Indigenous participation in the local community. By providing a venue for learning circles, workshops, regular monthly meetings, frequent displays and NAIDOC Week events, the Shepparton Library has been helping the project fulfil its goals of community building. (The Indigenous women attending these evening meetings have often brought in their children. The children now remember these meetings as happy times in the library.)

The library has also been a consistent supporter of the Shepparton Region Reconciliation Group since its inception in 1998. As part of the group's successful application for a two-year community building project, the Goulburn Valley Regional Library gave organisational support, with the commitment to provide the venue for meetings and displays and an offer of further support through the building of resources. In so doing the library joined with local organisations and other council services in the backing of the project. The library has a representative on the reference group that meets regularly with the project workers.

During the 2004 National Reconciliation Week, the Shepparton Library displayed a range of Indigenous posters and advertised the various reconciliation activities being held in Shepparton, Mooroopna and Melbourne.

By contributing short reviews of books, tapes, videos and articles by staff to the Reconciliation Group newsletter, the library is able to disseminate a greater awareness of public library resources – especially among the local Koori population.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	
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2.6 Joining-up services

Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation – Mount Evelyn Library: Careers Resource Centre

Mount Evelyn is a residential and rural suburb in the Yarra Ranges, east of Melbourne, with a population of about 9,000 people. It retains a village atmosphere with well-treed blocks and large areas of remnant native vegetation. The topography of the area serves as a physical barrier to the increasing urbanisation seen in nearby suburbs.

Mount Evelyn prides itself on its people and its strong sense of community. Residents have a say in the area's development through the Mount Evelyn Township Improvement Committee, which is made up of representatives of all the major community groups in town.

The joint work undertaken by the Mount Evelyn Library and the local organisation Morrison House is a good example of the positive community development outcomes that can be achieved when two local groups work towards shared goals.

Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation has seven libraries within the Shire of Yarra Ranges, one of which is Mount Evelyn Library. The library is located in the centre of the town, in the former station master's house, on the now disued Lilydale–Warburton railway line. The line has been converted to a Rail Trail, which is used extensively by local people and visitors. Each week 450 people access the library.

Morrison House is located a short distance out of the town centre, close to the local secondary school campus. It has grown and developed from a small drop-in style community house to a busy community centre. Adult and community education as well as childcare services are provided to the local community. Through Morrison House, the community of Mount Evelyn has launched its own Learning Town initiative in partnership with the Shire of Yarra Ranges.

As part of its emphasis on helping residents develop lifelong learning plans, Morrison House approached the library with the idea of locating a Careers Resource Centre within the library and community room complex. As the library building is not large, space was an issue, but, after discussion, a small area of the building was allocated to the centre. Council funding provided some furniture and shelving. The centre is staffed by a careers counsellor from Morrison House for four hours per week. Clients are mainly local people, often adults wanting to return to work or change careers. Bookings are taken by library staff who have developed a close working relationship with the careers counsellor. Each week six people visit the careers counsellor, who is booked up for the next few months.

The Morrison House Careers Resource Centre has proved to have benefits for all stakeholders. It has increased the number of people coming into the library and has attracted people who may have previously been 'reluctant' library users. The community has benefited from the availability of the centre at their doorstep, and it is a good example of the rewards that can flow from the collocation of services.

The partnership has continued to grow. Eastern Regional Libraries now has staff representation on the township development group, in the area of education and lifelong learning. Through this group, library staff have met local traders and other community leaders. Local people now see the library as a focal point in the town.

The latest development in the partnership has been an extension to Mount Evelyn Library to form an interactive exhibition space and café. Morrison House applied for funding that was matched by the Shire of Yarra Ranges; the space is now up and running with the café soon to follow. Local artists will be able to exhibit work here while the Exhibitions Coordinator will organise interactive exhibitions and workshops in which the community can participate. A bonus will be joint library and gallery activities and events for the community.

Community building principles	
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Supporting community revitalisation	

Mitchell Library Service – Kilmore Library: one-stop-info-shop

As noted in *The Age*, 20 July 2004: 'Victoria's oldest inland town, Kilmore was the first overnight stop on the Cobb and Co coach route to Sydney. Thousands of hopefuls passed through Kilmore on their way to the central goldfields – but there has always been, and still are, good reasons to stop for a while.' And one of these is the Kilmore Library – situated in the heart of the town.

Kilmore Library, serving a community of 4,000 people, provides an inspiring example of how a public library can take the lead in fostering cooperation across local services drawn from council, state government, and the private and educational sectors.

When the library opened eight years ago it provided service 23 hours a week; today it is open 7 days a week and its hours have increased to 58. The Toy Library and TAFE (Tertiary and Further Education) centre were already negotiated partners. The library has since added new partnerships and is now acting as an agency for VicRoads, V/Line, DX Mail, U3A, and a local funeral business. It provides visitor information, and is able to issue shooting and boating licences.

Among the most important links forged by the library are those with the education sector – including connections to the area's new secondary school. TAFE classes and other educational services are available at the library.

Understanding customer needs is the core consideration driving service development at Kilmore Library. Staff say they sympathise with customers' frustration at being sent from office to office, phone extension to extension or building to building when they seek to make a transaction with government. This led staff to look more closely at what their different users require and to consider how local organisations could make their services accessible through the library. In summary they found that:

- visitors want the person, a map and a story;
- delivery people want directions;
- 16 year olds want to get a driving licence;
- shooters want to get a shooting licence;
- older people in particular want to buy their train tickets;
- VicRoads wants access to EFTPOS;
- V/Line wants to offer seat booking;
- DX just needs access.

Talking about the philosophy behind the service, Library Manager Chris Payne observed: 'Joined-up government is a buzz word today, but what does it mean? To me it means cooperation, resource sharing, going that extra mile to provide services that are desired and seem obvious to the customer to get from one place to another.'

The benefits of providing a 'one-stop-info-shop' for services are many and include:

- Getting people back into the library – people who would not normally come in. They see that the library is a pleasurable place to be;
- Bringing back civic pride;
- Consolidating the library's position in the community. People would rally if anyone tried to cut funding to the library.

The Kilmore Library has won a local government award for its approach to multiple service delivery.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	
Promoting social inclusion	
Working in strategic partnerships	√
Nurturing community organisations	√
Encouraging active citizenship	
Developing community capacity	
Promoting health and wellbeing	
Supporting community revitalisation	√
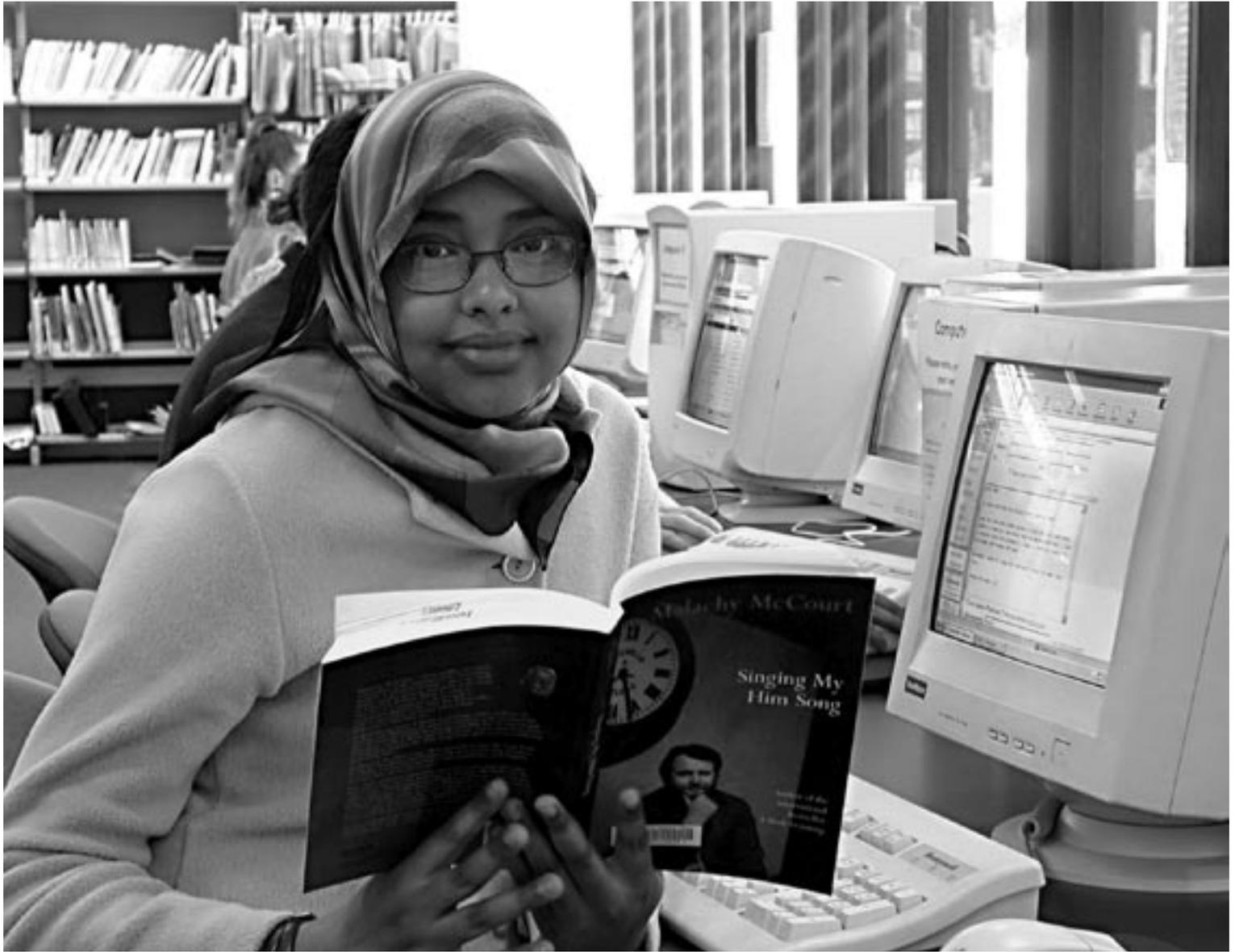
LIBRARIES BUILDING INDIVIDUAL SKILLS, CAPABILITY AND WELLBEING: YARRA-MELBOURNE REGIONAL LIBRARY CORPORATION HOMEWORK PROGRAMS

3 Building individual skills, capability and wellbeing

One great advantage of public libraries is their neutrality within communities. They are public spaces that offer a place to learn on one's own about any subject and without review by an authority figure.

3.1 Bridging the digital divide

Glenelg Regional Library Corporation – Portland Library: Televillage Project

The Glenelg Shire in south-western Victoria has made it a priority to develop the information, communication and technology capability and connectivity of its residents, local businesses and organisations, both as a means of gaining a competitive edge and increasing the opportunities for telecommuting – allowing people to live and work locally.

The redeveloped Portland Library complex (DiscoverIT Centre) supports this goal by providing access to a range of learning, teaching and recreation experiences around the themes of information technology and multimedia, alongside more traditional library resources. The 'telecentre', which is part of the complex, houses high-end computer systems and software, enabling local residents to create videos, DVD animations and movies, music recordings, digital art and desktop publishing.

A special feature of the complex is the technology-focused business incubation units – these can cater for up to three start-up enterprises for periods of up to twelve months. It is expected that the incubation process will enable Portland and the Glenelg Shire to become a regional centre for innovation and excellence in information technology and communications.

In addition to the landmark DiscoverIT facility, the broader shire will become part of a virtual network, with small telecentres located in Casterton, Dartmoor, Heywood and Nelson – offering access to information and communication technology (ICT) resources, education and training. Where possible, these centres will be collocated with public library branches.

Worldwide, many projects have developed around the theme of 'televillage' and have a commitment to

using ICT to enhance lifestyle, business, education and the community's connectivity and interaction with the world. Some key benefits of televillages include increasing the percentage of people able to easily access online facilities, assisting the uptake of e-business and showcasing local content and ICT initiatives.

Glenelg Shire is one of the first two areas in Victoria (the other is in Ballarat) to trial the idea of a televillage. As noted by Adele Kenneally, Chief Executive Officer of the Glenelg Regional Library Corporation, televillage projects across the world have all developed their own special characteristics as they respond to the specific needs of their communities. In Portland, the consultants to the project soon discovered a strong desire among local residents for a 'community hub' – incorporating training rooms, meeting facilities, public gallery space and public access to online services. This became known as a 'telecentre'.

This desire is reflected in the design of the new complex, which offers public space for cultural programs, communal gatherings and outreach activities; and provides options for intimacy and privacy as well as areas where people can connect with other people and ideas and share human experience. The building façade has been re-created to provide an attractive and welcoming vista, with street presence that aims to enhance the civic precinct and the public function.

By bringing so many residents, organisations and businesses together in the one place, the new complex plays an important role in promoting effective partnerships and collaborative arrangements. It has strengthened the relationship between the library and the Glenelg Shire business community – supplying information and support and contributing to the economic life of the community.

A committee of voluntary community representatives has been established to steer the Televillage Project and provide the interface between the project and the Glenelg Council. This committee is an independent incorporated body with members from a variety of backgrounds, and is known as Glenelg Community Technology Incorporated. The committee seeks to ensure that the televillage activities are developed in keeping with the business, educational, recreational and information needs and desires of the Glenelg Shire community.

The Glenelg Shire portal project also encourages community groups to have an online presence and become part of the televillage by maintaining local web pages as part of their town's portal (akin to an online one-stop website for visitors and locals). Further information can be obtained from the website: http://www.portlandnow.net.au/gcti/.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	√
Promoting social inclusion	
Working in strategic partnerships	√
Nurturing community organisations	
Encouraging active citizenship	
Developing community capacity	√
Promoting health and wellbeing	
Supporting community revitalisation	√

Bayside Library Service – Brighton Library: Computer Club for Seniors

The Computer Club meets at the Brighton branch of the Bayside Library Service twice a week, providing an opportunity for seniors to share ideas and ask questions about any computer problems they have. The club is run by the members and there is a minimal membership cost.

The club provides a relaxed atmosphere which encourages people to build their confidence and mix with others who have a similar degree of computer competence. In Australia today, elderly people are the largest purchasers of computers but tend to have the lowest level of understanding. The computer club gives them an opportunity to learn at their own pace in an encouraging, relaxed atmosphere.

An important element in the success of this program has been fostering the skills and confidence of the members to run the meetings by themselves. Initially, there was a staff member on call to help the members but now it is totally self-run. There is also the restriction that members must be able to show that they have undertaken a computer class, either through Bayside or externally. This is to ensure that members are helping each other rather than some solely teaching others.

The club meets two afternoons a week in the training room at Brighton Library. The size of the room is the biggest limitation to the growth of the computer club. The idea was developed because the largest demographic of people taking the computer classes at Bayside were seniors who were at a loss as to who to consult when they ran into problems after they completed computer courses. Many had also had the experience of asking a younger relative for help and had found it embarrassing.

The program helps to include a segment of the community that is generally being left behind in the information technology sphere. Encouraging people to develop computer skills helps them to help themselves, and helps them to develop social networks. It also enables the library to offer them more services.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	√
Promoting social inclusion	√
Working in strategic partnerships	
Nurturing community organisations	√
Encouraging active citizenship	
Developing community capacity	√
Promoting health and wellbeing	
Supporting community revitalisation	

Moonee Valley Library Service – Flemington Library: promoting computer literacy

Flemington is a culturally diverse community with a high proportion of members from language backgrounds other than English, and varying degrees of language and literacy proficiency. Many have limited economic resources and restricted access to information and communication technologies. They are generally unable to afford mainstream user-pays services.

The Flemington Reading and Writing Program (FRWP), a not-for-profit community-based provider of community education, and the Flemington Library are working in partnership to meet the further education and learning needs of the community. Community building and community education are goals of both organisations.

The program has developed from teaching literacy to also promoting computer literacy. Classes are conducted at the Flemington Neighbourhood House and the Flemington Library five days a week. Since 1993

the FRWP has been conducting computer classes in a computer laboratory it established in the library. Teachers are funded through the FRWP.

These classes have been very successful, with high retention rates of students, who begin by learning English and then move though the computer classes to other programs where, for example, they may write their own stories on the Internet. Students are able to learn at their own pace. A high social value attaches to the classes and they are very popular with seniors wanting to pick up email and Internet skills.

The partnership between the Flemington Library and the FRWP is mutually beneficial since the language and literacy classes encourage participants to access library resources. Similarly, library users are made aware of the availability of English, literacy and computer classes in the building. The FRWP has provided training to library staff in Microsoft® Word and Microsoft® Excel software packages. The library staff also have access to the computer resources and have conducted Internet classes for patrons of the Flemington Library.

It has recently been announced that a Learning Shopfront will be set up next to the Flemington Library as a classroom for young people. This facility will be used by the FRWP as part of the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) program Learning on Track. Location next to the library will ensure that VCAL students have easy access to library resources.

The establishment of the Learning Shopfront is being supported by a grant from the Victorian Government's Public Libraries Initiative Grants program, which is designed to enhance the community role of libraries and the ways they work with other organisations in the community.

The combined skills of the Flemington Library staff and FRWP staff, as well as the material resources of the

respective organisations, provide a valuable service to the Flemington community and have the potential to build stronger community links through future collaborative projects with local education networks.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	
Promoting social inclusion	√
Working in strategic partnerships	√
Nurturing community organisations	√
Encouraging active citizenship	
Developing community capacity	√
Promoting health and wellbeing	
Supporting community revitalisation	

3.2 Supporting lifelong learning

Hume Global Learning Village Library Service: developing Hume as a learning community

The new Hume Global Learning Centre, opened by the Victorian Premier Steve Bracks in March 2003, is part of a bold strategy established by Hume City Council to address issues of social and economic disadvantage in Hume City. It is based on the premise that learning, education and information are core determinants of economic and social wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.

To address issues of disadvantage the council has formed the Hume Global Learning Village, a network of more than 200 organisations that have a role in learning and education in Hume City. Through the village, the council has decided to take a leadership role in the education agenda in its municipality, something that has traditionally not been the case with local councils in Victoria.

The village brings together a consortium of formal and informal learning providers in the area, including the Global Learning Centre, schools, neighbourhood houses, the local TAFE, universities, community groups such as the historical society and many others. Social support and local training and employment programs are given access. The centre also offers a significant meeting place for residents, community groups and businesses to share ideas and learn from one another.

Some of the features of the centre are:

- a computer and Internet centre;

- state-of-the art multimedia equipment;

- an 'infotainment' area and café;

- a comprehensive resource area including a library, historic record centre, reading and study areas and a multilingual collection;

- a training facility for further education and employment;

- a cultural exhibition centre.

The Global Learning Centre is an outstanding example of the many libraries that provide wide-ranging learning programs for adults. As part of this initiative, the council has decided to emphasise the role of the library personnel as facilitators of learning in the community, using the library's collections as a resource base. From hosting training and learning programs in libraries, to taking an active role in educating parents about the importance of reading to babies, the libraries are taking a proactive, educative role.

The Age Library (in the Hume Global Learning Centre) has approximately 31,500 people visit per month; over 50 children regularly attend pre-school story time; and the Vietnamese and Arabic collections in the library had a turnover rate of 4.5 in the first six weeks of opening.

The Global Learning Centre is the result of state and local governments working in partnership with the community, including business and philanthropic interest groups. Funding for the project came from Hume City Council, the State Government's Community Support Fund and donations from local private sector groups *The Age*, Ford and VisyCare.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	√
Promoting social inclusion	√
Working in strategic partnerships	√
Nurturing community organisations	√
Encouraging active citizenship	√
Developing community capacity	√
Promoting health and wellbeing	√
Supporting community revitalisation	√

Yarra-Melbourne Regional Library Corporation: homework programs

Yarra-Melbourne Regional Library Corporation runs a number of homework programs for young people at its libraries. These vary in approach, content and delivery according to community needs and established partnerships with key community providers.

The Youthlink Homework Program has been running at Carlton Library for four years in its current form. The aim of the program is to provide homework support for 12–18 year olds. The target group is disadvantaged young people from Carlton, including the South Carlton Housing Estates. Thirteen tutors participated in the program in 2003, covering maths, science, English and Studies of Society and Environment as the main subject areas. A project coordinator liaises with library staff to seek grant opportunities and to oversee the program. Demand

for the service is high from VCE students, including a group of students recently arrived from Horn of Africa countries. On average, eight students use computers each session and an average of six students request tutoring. The 2004 program ran in partnership with Carlton and Parkville Youth Services. This is expected to lead to increased sustainability for the project and growth for the future.

The Homework Group @ North Melbourne is aimed at students from a Somali background aged 8–18 years. Volunteer tutors can help with homework and school assignments. The program is run in conjunction with the MacKillop Family Service, United Somali Women's Organisation of Victoria and the library service.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence Homework Centre is based in the Fitzroy Library and is open 4–6 p.m., Monday to Thursday. It provides free academic and personal support to secondary school students, with a particular focus on students from non-English-speaking backgrounds and those who lack space or resources at home. Students can receive assistance in all VCE subjects; they work independently or in small groups. The library offers a relaxed and supportive environment, which is well resourced with computers, printers and photocopiers. This program differs from the other two in that the tutors are paid.

The success of the homework programs depends upon:

- strong partnerships with relevant community providers in education;
- sustainable funding;
- effective project coordination;
- library commitment to provide expertise, support and resources.

The library is seeking a more coordinated approach to homework programs within the area and has set up a forum of those currently involved in running programs to ensure positive collaboration and to maximise funding opportunities.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	√
Promoting social inclusion	
Working in strategic partnerships	√
Nurturing community organisations	
Encouraging active citizenship	
Developing community capacity	√
Promoting health and wellbeing	
Supporting community revitalisation	

City of Greater Dandenong Libraries: literacy classes for the CALD community

The City of Greater Dandenong is a diverse community with just over half its residents born overseas – coming from any of 140 countries. This is the highest proportion of overseas-born residents in a Victorian community and the fourth highest in Australia. The city is now recognised as a premier destination for newly arrived migrants.

A significant proportion (just under 50%) of overseas-born residents come from non-English-speaking backgrounds and, according to the 2001 Census, many have limited fluency in English.

The English Language and Literacy Access (ELLA) service has been run through the City of Greater Dandenong Libraries since 1992 with the aim of assisting clients to develop their speaking, listening, reading and writing

skills. As further assistance to its clients, ELLA is now offering citizenship classes to teach them about their rights and responsibilities as citizens. In the last four years ELLA has assisted 5,771 clients.

ELLA is staffed by qualified English as a second language (ESL) teachers who carefully assess clients' English language and literacy skills before recommending suitable courses. These courses are designed to take into account clients' working hours, childcare needs, transport constraints and financial situation. Computer-assisted English language learning programs are also available through the Open Learning Centres at Springvale and Dandenong libraries.

ELLA provides the first introduction to computers for the great majority of its clients and has increasingly become a referral centre for computer classes and lifelong learning. ELLA works closely with local organisations, including community houses, the Adult Multicultural Education Service, local TAFE colleges and private training providers. Centrelink and job network providers send their clients to the libraries for assessment and classes.

Internet training through ELLA enables clients to carry out research, use interactive English sites, read their own language newspapers, listen to the news in their own language, and send email. As an adjunct to ELLA, the libraries provide access to WebZones, which offer free Internet, email and word processing services. Complementary training, on topics such as 'Introduction to Internet banking', can be provided by library staff.

The low level of computer ownership by households in Greater Dandenong (33%, compared with the national average of 45%) make the computer services offered by the local libraries especially important to residents – and this is reflected in the increasing demand for them. More

than 4,800 people access the computers each month. A Skillsnet grant to the libraries in 2003–05 will enable them to extend access to computer classes.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	
Promoting social inclusion	√
Working in strategic partnerships	√
Nurturing community organisations	
Encouraging active citizenship	√
Developing community capacity	√
Promoting health and wellbeing	
Supporting community revitalisation	

3.3 Developing a reading culture

Moreland City Libraries: encouraging the community to 'read more'

Moreland is a highly diverse community in urban Melbourne. Nearly half the population speak a language other than English, with the major language groups being Italian, Arabic, Turkish, Greek and Chinese. Half the population receive welfare benefits or are classified as working poor.

The Moreland Reading Project (MRP), initially developed in 2000 and inspired by the National Reading Campaigns in Britain, seeks to develop a culture that values and acknowledges the importance of reading.

The MRP also aims to contribute to celebrating Moreland's identity, showcasing the life experiences of its residents and fostering community development. It features a thematic calendar of free activities highlighting the message that reading is one of the great pleasures

of life. Reading is explored in its broadest sense and includes a range of languages and formats, including screen-based and talking books. From topical and informative to escapist and experimental, a broad range of activities is included to appeal to all sections of Moreland's diverse community. These include talks, demonstrations and workshops on many topics, as well as book launches in English and other languages, walks around Moreland landmarks, theatre performances and colourful cultural activities.

Many speakers are drawn from the Moreland community to foster local networks and community capacity building. An annual Made in Moreland theme further showcases individuals in the community as does a special Made in Moreland sticker highlighting all books, videos, talking books and music CDs by local authors and artists. Bi-monthly activities are organised by staff 'theme teams' across the library. This gives staff the opportunity to expand their skills and use their imagination and creativity in a way that is not often possible within their existing job roles.

Specific examples of activities include:

- a panel of residents from varied cultural backgrounds and ages ranging from 16 to 60 years, speaking about their lives and experiences of first coming to Australia;

- a demonstration in the middle of the Brunswick Library by the local bocce club;

- a walking tour of the Fawkner Cemetery;

- a local bonsai expert speaking about bonsai gardening;

- a talk by a nurse from Glenroy on her time spent in East Timor as an aid worker;

- an annual concert in the library featuring a range of Moreland-based bands;

- talks by local author Shane Maloney on his books and writing;

- a dance and music demonstration by the local Sinhalese community;

- the annual Valentine's Day 'Have a blind date with a book' where borrowers receive chocolates and a 'surprise' book wrapped in paper to conceal its author and title until the borrower arrives home.

Apart from thematic activities, a BookStart Kit is distributed to every newborn baby in Moreland in cooperation with the Maternal and Child Health Centres. Adapted from the UK model to target local needs, the program encourages parents to read to their babies and foster early literacy development. The kit contains a board book, booklets giving advice on developing children's reading skills from an early age and recommended board books for babies, as well as information on parenting resources – all packaged in a calico library bag. Where possible, a bilingual board book is provided for speakers of languages other than English. To reinforce the message in the BookStart Kit, children's service staff provide regular talks to new parents' groups and rhyme time sessions for babies under 18 months. The sessions provide the opportunity for parents to engage and connect socially with other parents, and act as a catalyst for the establishment of informal support networks. This function is invaluable given the social isolation often encountered by first-time parents.

There are also book groups for primary aged children, youth and adults, bibliotherapies, reader-to-reader book review systems, and reading and writing competitions with themes such as 'Books that changed my life'. Competitions are not based on literary merit but are used as a means for individuals to share their stories with others.

The MRP also provides a focus for community groups, organisations and individuals to promote their own reading and writing related activities. Neighbourhood houses, theatre groups, local historical societies,

Moreland's Adult Education Centre and other council departments are some of the groups who have linked to the project.

A key goal of the project has been to promote community development, social engagement and social cohesion. All MRP events are free and open to everyone. Refreshments are served after each event to give people the opportunity to mingle with others. The activities have a dual role of providing both information and opportunities for social inclusion and social connectedness. The program fosters a sense of community and a sense of belonging which improve community wellbeing and develop social capital.

The library notes that the key features that have made the project a success include:

- planning the project carefully and defining the broad desirable outcomes;

- involving and enthusing all library staff in the project – letting them suggest the details of implementation and feel ownership of the project – and providing positive feedback;

- gaining council support;

- being flexible (e.g. redirecting resources from one area to another if needed);

- developing consistently high standards for the writing and printing of publicity material and the organisation of events, and providing adequate resources (e.g. staff, printing costs) to ensure that these standards are met;

- consulting with the community to ensure that the project meets a range of needs (e.g. is varied, accessible and not too highbrow) and involves community groups in its various stages.

Their advice to others contemplating similar initiatives is that:

- at least initially you need some key influential staff to 'drive' the concept;

- you need to promote the project constantly including in the staff newsletters and at team meetings;

- be realistic about the staff resources that will be required.

This project was awarded the 2000 Australian Libraries and Information Association Award for Innovation in Public Libraries.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	√
Promoting social inclusion	√
Working in strategic partnerships	√
Nurturing community organisations	√
Encouraging active citizenship	
Developing community capacity	√
Promoting health and wellbeing	√
Supporting community revitalisation	√

Darebin Libraries: making literacy and learning fun

The Sponge Club, launched in June 2003 by the local mayor, was the result of over two years' work that grew from the recognition by Darebin Libraries that it was time to develop a new way to connect with children in the 7–12 year age groups. The aim was to shift children's programs from what had been a range of ad hoc activities and events to a cohesive program delivered through the use of both traditional and non-traditional media.

The Sponge Club is not just a kids' page or homework club; it creates both a physical world at the library and a virtual world at http://www.spongeclub.com. The club is formed around eight characters, four children and four mythical characters, who come to life when they are released from books in the library. The children – DD Franks, Crimson Rasjic, Regan Lee and Bruno Franks – are partnered with the four mythical characters – Kilamanjaro (an elephant), Swift (a dolphin), Zed X (an alien) and Drakis (a dragon). These partnerships connect the characters to the land, sea, space and the world. As well, each child has a distinct personality – the aim of which is to reflect the diversity of the Darebin community.

All members receive a membership card and a starter kit, which includes an A4 sheet introducing the Sponge Club, a colour-in sheet, a bookmark featuring the Sponge Club characters, details of meeting dates and promotional fliers including holiday programs, special events and competitions.

A range of merchandise has been developed to support the Sponge Club, including:

• posters

• bookmarks

• colour-in sheets

• fridge magnets

• Lanyards (on sale for $3.50, designed to hold Sponge Club membership cards).

Development of a website to support the Sponge Club was seen as an integral part of the project. Through this site children are able to learn about the characters and communicate with them, email ideas, participate in activities and enter competitions. Embracing technology was seen as essential to ensure that children would see the Sponge Club as relevant to them, using media they were comfortable and familiar with.

However, it was seen as equally important that the club have a presence in the library and be open to children without Internet access. To achieve this, one-hour meetings are held monthly (including school holidays) at each of the Darebin libraries with activities that, while they focus on learning and literacy, are also designed to ensure that the participants have fun.

The Sponge Club has enabled Darebin Libraries to expand beyond the library walls and into children's homes, creating a whole new way of communicating with children in the community. Membership of the Sponge Club is open to all children aged between 7 and 12 years and, as of 30 April 2004, numbered 888. Combined average attendance at the four Darebin libraries is 50 per meeting.

The commitment both in financial and human resource terms in developing and delivering the Sponge Club has ensured that the library sees this not as a short-term project, but rather as a long-term, evolving one. Library staff are committed to looking at new opportunities to ensure that the program remains fresh – the website is currently being revamped.

Advice to other libraries considering a similar initiative is:

• Ensure that the program is delivered in a fun way. This makes selling the concept to kids easier.

• Emphasise the 'kids only' aspect, with cards and the like that only kids are able to access.

• Ensure time for detailed and careful planning. This results in a program that is fully developed when launched, not a piecemeal affair that needs immediate remedial attention.

• Be clear about the aims and expected outcomes for all those involved in developing the program.

• Provide quality products and items that kids will want to own. Darebin Libraries found that the expense of

working with a design company to develop the Sponge Club characters and design the range of promotional and merchandising products was rewarded.

- Make sure you have an appropriate group of staff who can undertake continuous maintenance and updating of the website.

- Continually test and examine each element of your program to ensure that it is meeting expectations and can be refreshed where necessary.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	
Promoting social inclusion	√
Working in strategic partnerships	
Nurturing community organisations	
Encouraging active citizenship	
Developing community capacity	√
Promoting health and wellbeing	√
Supporting community revitalisation	

Bayside Library Service: bookclub packs

For an annual fee bookclubs can become group members of the Bayside Library Service, giving them access to 'packs' that include multiple copies of the same book, notes and question sheets that have been prepared by library staff. A library staff member coordinates which bookclub has which pack at any given time.

In two years membership has grown from ten to twenty-seven private groups – plus four clubs run by a library staff member and open to any individual wanting to join a bookclub.

Library staff became aware of the need for such a service through library members who were attempting to coordinate bookclub reading lists and obtain multiple copies of specific books.

Starting the Bayside Bookclub Packs has expanded the library membership base by reaching people who may not necessarily have thought of using their library. Whereas five out of ten members of a club were previously using the library, now all ten are.

The private groups are very diverse in their make-up, ranging from retirees, to students, to professionals. Generally they benefit people who are already socially active. However, by also offering individuals the opportunity to join the library-based bookclubs, Bayside is promoting social inclusion.

The popularity of this program means that demand is currently growing exponentially – and this year many bookclubs have had to be turned away. Currently there are 50 packs and these are constantly being added to. Groups that have used the service for a few years are working their way through the packs – hence it is imperative to keep adding new titles. An issue for the library is finding the resources required to support the program, which takes considerable staff time in preparing notes and coordination.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	√
Promoting social inclusion	√
Working in strategic partnerships	
Nurturing community organisations	√
Encouraging active citizenship	
Developing community capacity	
Promoting health and wellbeing	
Supporting community revitalisation	

Mornington Peninsula Library – Hastings Library: Babies Love Books Too

Twelve months of careful research and planning are behind the establishment of a program in Hastings on the Mornington Peninsula that aims to promote different ways of using books to support interaction and language development in babies and toddlers.

Research has found that reading aloud to babies significantly assists early language development, facilitates cognitive development, fosters the ability to concentrate for lengthy periods, and enriches the development of imagination and problem-solving skills. It also strengthens the bond between parent and child, which has been shown to improve children's educational progress and promote their self-esteem and emotional wellbeing.

The research also clearly shows that poor communication and illiteracy correlate with a variety of youth problems, such as unemployment, low income, poor self-esteem, delinquency and poor attitude to learning.

The inspiration for the Mornington Peninsula program came from Zita Canning, a speech pathologist with Peninsula Community Health Service, following her attendance at a national speech pathology conference early in 2001, where she heard about the Babies Like Books Too project from Noarlunga Health Services in South Australia.

There are several key components to the program:

- A calico book bag, which includes a baby board book and literature from the maternal and child health nurse, is given to all children born in the Western Port area of the Mornington Peninsula at the time of their four-month consultation. Families receive a second baby book when they attend for their baby's hearing assessment at eight months.

- The baby book collection at the Hastings Library has been expanded and pre-loved baby book rummage boxes have been set up at Maternal and Child Health Centres and other suitable places in the community.

The program is seen as meeting specific needs of the community in Hastings, which has a higher proportion of children and young people than the Melbourne metropolitan area, a higher rate of unemployment and proportionately more part-time workers and lower household incomes. Facilities and services are unevenly distributed and access to them is made more difficult because of limited public transport.

The program is delivered through a partnership between Peninsula Community Health Service, the Mornington Peninsula Shire Maternal and Child Health Services and the Hastings Library. Telstra Foundation has provided funding, and the art work for an information flier and colourful calico book bag were donated by Terry Denton, a well-known children's illustrator.

Development of the program involved discussion with new parents, maternal and child health nurses, retailers and other groups about how to best promote different ways of using books with babies and toddlers. The program will be evaluated against its objectives using focus group discussions and a short questionnaire to recipients of the books.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	
Promoting social inclusion	
Working in strategic partnerships	√
Nurturing community organisations	
Encouraging active citizenship	
Developing community capacity	√
Promoting health and wellbeing	√
Supporting community revitalisation	

Yarra-Melbourne Regional Library Corporation: Teen Library Club

The Teen Library Club (TLC) is a book group for 12–16 year olds which began in 2001 as a result of the recognition that many young people stop reading for pleasure once they start high school. The TLC provides teenagers with a venue where they can talk enthusiastically about books with others who love reading. This has proved to be very important to the group, who say that they are often embarrassed to talk about books in front of their peers as it is seen as 'uncool'.

The TLC meets once a month for an hour. Members:

- get first pick of any new young adult material – books, CDs, videos and DVDs;
- select young adult materials for the library;
- plan special events;
- share ideas about what to read next.

Over time, TLC has evolved into something much more than a book group. The members act as a youth advisory board for the library when it is planning programs, contribute ideas for young adults' holiday activities and participate in events. Some have read excerpts from books at book launches or helped with catering. More recently, the group has had input into the redesign of the youth web pages – Youthlounge. Photographs of some of the members are featured on the site.

Members of the TLC recently provided emerging author Sarah Boland with feedback on her draft manuscript of *To Love Veronica Bee*. Many of their suggestions and ideas were incorporated by Sarah in the final copy and she adopted the first names of some members for characters in the story. The feedback session was filmed and a documentary featuring the TLC and Carlton Library has been produced.

The TLC is an innovative project with sustained success. It has been beneficial to Yarra-Melbourne libraries and their communities by positively engaging young people and giving them a sense of belonging at the library.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	√
Promoting social inclusion	
Working in strategic partnerships	
Nurturing community organisations	
Encouraging active citizenship	
Developing community capacity	√
Promoting health and wellbeing	
Supporting community revitalisation	

Youth and Children's Inner Northern Network: Summer Reading Program

The Youth and Children's Inner Northern Network (YACINN) was established in late 1999 to help children's librarians in the inner city and outer northern region of Melbourne re-establish networks with neighbouring library services. YACINN consists of representatives from six library services: Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service, Yarra-Melbourne Regional Library Corporation, Moreland City Libraries, Moonee Valley Library Service, Hume Global Learning Village Library Service and Darebin Libraries. An important objective of the group was to identify projects that neighbouring libraries could collaborate on.

An ideal opportunity for a collaborative project came in the form of the Summer Reading Program. Aimed at primary school aged children, summer reading programs had been provided over an extended period in Victoria. Their cessation in 1999 left a void in most libraries' program of activities for children in this age group.

The Summer Reading Program Be a Reading Wizard held in 2000 grew from a highly successful in-house program, which had been developed by the then Hume-Moonee Valley Library Service.

Five programs have been run to date:

2000:   Be a Reading Wizard

2001:   Summer Readers = Adventure Seekers

2002:   Ride the Reading Wave

2003:   Get Caught Reading

2004:   Reading Rulz!

The Summer Reading Program operates by distributing packs to participating library services. These packs consist of large full-colour posters, 'giveaways' such as stickers and bookmarks for program participants, and a basic handbook on library services. The handbook includes booklists and activities related to that year's theme.

While the chief motivator of participation in the reading program is enjoyment, the program also offers fun and stimulating activities, and supports core library service values for children by:

- promoting a love of reading and 'the library habit';
- positively affecting young people's reading ability, reading comprehension, writing style, vocabulary, grammar and spelling;

- supporting young people's reading, writing and ICT skill development through fun and educational activities;
- enhancing 'information rich communities' by publishing quality information and resources;
- encouraging civic and social participation.

By providing the base material for the program, YACINN has empowered library services to create a program that meets the needs of their local communities. Some library services choose to run the program in conjunction with holiday programs; others simply focus on the reading program itself.

Since 2001 the Summer Reading Program has been extended to other public libraries in Victoria, thereby eliminating duplicate effort. In 2003 the take-up rate of the program was approximately 80% of library services in Victoria.

A number of factors have helped make this project a success:

- the high level of demand that already existed for such a program;
- use of professionally produced materials;
- participation of authors.

When asked what, on reflection, they would have done differently, project leaders noted:

- Long-term planning would have benefited the program and would have also provided a strategy for expansion. As the program was originally a collaborative project between YACINN libraries, the growth of the project was not carefully planned. It has indeed been a good idea that has simply grown.
- Ongoing feedback and reporting from participating libraries was not conducted in the first years of

the project, and what could have been a valuable contribution to the program from participants has not been available. Feedback is now being collected.

They also note that, despite numerous attempts, it has not been possible to attract corporate sponsorship of the project. Accordingly, they suggest that libraries considering a similar initiative do not base the success of their program on attracting sponsorship.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	
Promoting social inclusion	√
Working in strategic partnerships	√
Nurturing community organisations	
Encouraging active citizenship	
Developing community capacity	√
Promoting health and wellbeing	
Supporting community revitalisation	

3.4 Enhancing workforce readiness

City of Boroondara Library Service – Hawthorn Library: Career Link

Hawthorn Community House and Hawthorn Library are working together to provide Career Link, a career information program, for local residents.

People are able to book into a half-hour career information session with a counsellor from Hawthorn Community House. The library coordinates the sessions and helps those attending to tap into library and community resources that will assist in their career and course planning. At the counselling sessions information about the library is given out, which includes lists of resources and books. Targeted Internet demonstrations

and library tours are offered and speakers have presented on issues such as choosing a career. A folder containing booklists and relevant Internet sites is kept at the information desk. About 30 people benefited from the individual career sessions in the period from February to June 2004. The program is being promoted in the *Boroondara Bulletin* and other media and venues.

The library sees this initiative as an important step in developing partnerships with other community organisations. Collaboration with the Community House on Career Link has helped to identify other ways in which the two organisations can work together.

The program started as a pilot project in February 2004. Its success means that it is likely to continue. Plans for the service include running sessions on how to use the Internet to search for jobs and find career information and building up the publicity around the program.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	
Promoting social inclusion	
Working in strategic partnerships	√
Nurturing community organisations	
Encouraging active citizenship	
Developing community capacity	√
Promoting health and wellbeing	
Supporting community revitalisation	

LIBRARIES REACHING OUT TO COMMUNITIES: THE YARRA RANGES MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICE

4 Reaching out to communities

... libraries are not only acting as a communal gathering place, where many diverse members of society can feel relaxed in each other's company, some are also acting as outreach centres. The invitation to participation is an important part of the construction of social capital.

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY AND THE STATE LIBRARY OF NEW SOUTH WALES (2000) *A SAFE PLACE TO GO: LIBRARIES AND SOCIAL CAPITAL*, UTS AND SLNSW (HTTP://WWW.SL.NSW.GOV.AU).

4.1 Reaching out to the housebound

City of Boroondara Library Service: home library service

The City of Boroondara Library Service holds to the principle that people who are housebound or living in institutional settings such as nursing homes should be able to access the same services as those who are able to walk in the library door.

Considerable resources have been invested in the Boroondara home library service, with each of its five library branches having qualified librarians responsible for coordination. Apart from book selection, the 'home library staff' librarians are responsible for liaising with the recipients of the service, developing and managing reading profiles, organising delivery rosters and recruiting and training volunteers and supporting them in their work.

Library staff deliver books and other materials to institutions, and volunteers do deliveries to people in their homes. Every month services are provided to approximately 51 institutions and 252 individuals. Users can access a wide range of resources through the service; books, talking books, videos and magazines are probably the most popular.

The service has approximately 100 registered volunteers. Many of these started off as borrowers at the library and over time have become increasingly involved in its activities. The training and induction they receive encourages them to spend time with recipients of the service discussing books and exchanging ideas. Important social connections and real friendships have built up through this service.

Volunteers with an intellectual disability provide delivery services for two of the Boroondara libraries. The volunteers are drawn from the Naroo Learning Centre in

Kew and Rochester Further Education Service in Balwyn. This program helps home library staff by providing extra deliverers and also gives the volunteers a meaningful task and a connection to the local community. The Rochester Further Education Service has used data on the home library routes and drop-off points as a case study to teach their clients spreadsheet and other computer-related skills.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	
Promoting social inclusion	√
Working in strategic partnerships	√
Nurturing community organisations	
Encouraging active citizenship	
Developing community capacity	√
Promoting health and wellbeing	
Supporting community revitalisation	

4.2 Reaching out to people in detention centres

Maribyrnong Library Service: Maribyrnong Detention Centre, library outreach service

The Maribyrnong Detention Centre, currently managed by 'Group 4', is located in the northern part of the Maribyrnong municipality. There are approximately 80 asylum seekers, including children, detained at this centre at any given time. Maribyrnong City Council is a strong supporter of the release of suitable asylum seekers into the community and has taken a strong advocacy role on this matter, including making representation to the Commonwealth Government.

In February 2002 council adopted an action plan in support of asylum seekers. This detailed a range of practical support measures to be provided to detainees and advocacy actions to be undertaken within the community. Practical support has taken the form of provision of information and health services, access to recreational opportunities, participation in the detainee visitor program and access to local schools in the area. Information has been provided to the general community dispelling myths surrounding asylum seekers.

The Maribyrnong Library Service visits the detention centre on a monthly basis to provide reading materials in English and other relevant languages including Vietnamese, Farsi, Chinese, Greek, Serbian, Hungarian, Khmer, Macedonian, Indonesian, Punjabi, Tamil, Sinhalese and Swahili. As it is not possible to provide material in all these languages from the Maribyrnong Library Service, the public library network in Victoria is generously supporting the service by loaning relevant materials from their collections to Maribyrnong.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	
Promoting social inclusion	√
Working in strategic partnerships	√
Nurturing community organisations	
Encouraging active citizenship	
Developing community capacity	
Promoting health and wellbeing	
Supporting community revitalisation	

4.3 Reaching out to people living in remote areas

Upper Murray Regional Library: mobile library service

The Upper Murray Regional Library (UMRL) covers an area of 28,000 square kilometres on both sides of the Murray River and spans two states – Victoria and New South Wales. The topography of the region ranges from the Great Dividing Range to the inland plains, and covers all types of terrain. Weather conditions can vary from snow in winter to bushfires in the summer months. This is a difficult environment for mobile communications and therefore difficult for the delivery of online information services.

For many years, the challenge of providing services to the small areas in the region without a branch library – these can be two hours or more from the nearest large centre – has been taken up by two custom-built vehicles equipped with books and information technology.

These services, though, have faced two major problems:

- equity of access – the mobile libraries could not provide online access to information.

- occupational health and safety – staff driving the mobile libraries were not able to contact the administration centre and they could not be contacted due to the lack of telephone coverage in the area.

When the new chief executive officer commenced work at the UMRL in 1998 these issues were put squarely on the agenda and a search commenced to find a telecommunications solution that would:

- operate in all terrain – from alpine areas to plains;

- operate in all weather conditions – from below zero to over 40 degrees;

- operate from a mobile (moving) vehicle;

- be reliable;

- be easy for staff to operate – including minimal set-up/shut-down procedures at each location;

- meet occupational health and safety legislative requirements.

The complexity of this task is underlined by the fact that some of the small hamlets served by the mobile library did not (and some still do not) have television reception. Telephone and data lines were also not available and microwave was not regarded as feasible.

After three years of intensive research the Land Mobile Capsat Messenger system (a broadband, two-way mobile satellite system) was identified as a potential solution. The result is that today the UMRL mobile libraries are able to provide users with live online access to the regional library system and free public Internet access at any of their locations. The new system has enabled equitable access to the Internet and regional library services in remote areas where little or no access was previously available.

Staff at the UMRL comment that an important factor in the smooth running of the project was the collaborative approach of the suppliers and the enthusiasm they showed at being part of a world-first pilot.

Over the last few years, new telecommunication solutions, and the existence of a variety of competitive suppliers, have provided opportunities for the UMRL to achieve sustainable overhead costs for providing these online services – enabling their continuation.

The experience of the UMRL has led to the documentation of a best practice model that is available to assist other libraries and assorted mobile services looking to implement similar systems in Australia and worldwide.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	
Promoting social inclusion	√
Working in strategic partnerships	√
Nurturing community organisations	
Encouraging active citizenship	
Developing community capacity	√
Promoting health and wellbeing	
Supporting community revitalisation	

4.4 Reaching out to commuters

Frankston Library Service: lending books to commuters

Frankston Library Service launched Victoria's first book lending service for commuters from Frankston Railway Station on 17 February 2004.

The service, called Frankston Library Express, enables commuters travelling on the Frankston line to browse and borrow books Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6.30 a.m. to 8.30 a.m. This service was begun after a need was identified (i.e. time-poor commuters, facing a one-hour journey to the city and unable to attend a library service point within operating hours). Library staff attended the station from 6.30 a.m. to 8.30 a.m. for two weeks before the launch and 29 new members joined the library before the launch day. In its first two months the service attracted nearly 50 new members and a number of inactive members have reactivated their memberships.

The initial collection consists of 300 titles and will be expanded as demand grows. The titles are all current popular fiction and non-fiction.

The service uses a desk that can be quickly assembled and disassembled. Books are shelved on trolleys that can be wheeled away. Station staff have provided a locked storage area for the library materials. As there is no power to the site a laptop is used with offline circulation software.

A staff member has been recruited to conduct the service and another staff member has volunteered to participate as a backup for the service.

Frankston Library Express has been made possible by the cooperation of Frankston Railway Station staff. It has been funded by Frankston City Council and a Beyond the Branches grant from the State Government.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	
Promoting social inclusion	
Working in strategic partnerships	
Nurturing community organisations	
Encouraging active citizenship	
Developing community capacity	√
Promoting health and wellbeing	√
Supporting community revitalisation	

4.5 Reaching out to people who are blind, visually impaired and print-disabled

The National Information Library Service: LibTel and TNN delivering content over the phone

The National Information Library Service aims to provide library materials in alternative formats (e.g. Braille and audio) to members of the community who are blind, visually impaired and print-disabled, on a national basis.

As with the general population, the National Information Library Service's clients need timely access to comprehensive and authoritative information. While many expect information to be available at their desktops and through the Internet, not all the information they are seeking is currently available through this medium, nor do all the National Information Library Service's clients have access to it. This underlines the importance of the service's continued efforts to evaluate the best mix of resources and services to promote information delivery. An important part of this range is the use of interactive voice response or telephone-based services.

LibTel is the National Information Library Service library catalogue that is accessible to clients by telephone. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, LibTel facilitates independent access to the library's entire collection of Braille, 2-track and 4-track audio books and audio-described videos. The system allows searches by title, author name or subject. User numbers and PINs enable clients to place requests and reservations, as well as check the progress of their requests. The system does not assume prior computer knowledge; the user needs only to have used a telephone before.

In strengthening our communities, it is important that all citizens have access to the daily news so that they are aware of the political, economic and cultural events that are shaping the world and our nation, and can participate in informed discussion and debate. Today's News Now (TNN) is a telephone-based newspaper service offering access to the current day's newspapers from 6.00 a.m. The TNN service offers a wide selection of major Australian newspapers, including *The Age* and the *Herald Sun*.

Together the LibTel and TNN services enable greater participation in social, learning, recreational, cultural and civic activities. Removing the barrier of intermediation enables print-disabled members of the community to browse the library catalogue at their discretion, and meet their information needs independently of others; while TNN enables readers to access daily news in a timely and, most importantly, a structured manner.

Currently, the only Victorian LibTel and TNN server is located in Melbourne. While users within the Melbourne metropolitan area are able to access the service for the cost of a local call, users in regional areas incur a toll charge. The library hopes to extend local call coverage to other areas of Victoria in the future with the proposed Wired for Sound project.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	
Promoting social inclusion	√
Working in strategic partnerships	
Nurturing community organisations	
Encouraging active citizenship	√
Developing community capacity	√
Promoting health and wellbeing	
Supporting community revitalisation	

LIBRARIES PROVIDING A GATEWAY TO INFORMATION: PORT PHILLIP LIBRARY SERVICE INTERNET ACCESS

5 Providing a gateway to information

*The best public libraries
… understand that digital
technology has the power to
create a new or more highly
evolved kind of community
agency.*

Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service: Information Australia portal

Information Australia is a web-based portal aimed at increasing access to resources held in Australian libraries and cultural institutions. From a single search platform, library members are able to search the Australian Bibliographic Database (Kinetica), Picture Australia and the Australian Public Affairs Database. Resources can then be downloaded, if available online in full text, or requested via an online inter-library loan request module.

The portal is being developed as a collaborative pilot project coordinated by the National Library of Australia with participation from five public libraries around Australia:

• Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service (Victoria);

• Brisbane City Council Library Service (Queensland);

• Thuringowa Library Service (Queensland);

• Northern Regional Library Service (Moree, New South Wales);

• Southern Tablelands Regional Library Service (Goulburn, New South Wales).

Access to the portal is available within the library and remotely to library members of participating pilot project libraries.

The key benefits identified for Yarra Plenty from the project are that it:

• broadens the scope of the Yarra Plenty service by allowing library members access to library holdings around Australia from a single search and to request their own inter-library loans from the comfort of their home or workplace on an around-the-clock basis;

• enables Yarra Plenty library staff to provide a simpler, more informed search of resources not available within the library's own collection, inform library members

of their whereabouts and place inter-library loans instantaneously. This in itself is resulting in better customer service for members visiting the library;

• provides working partnerships between Yarra Plenty and the National Library, enabling easier public access to, and awareness of, the wealth of information housed at our national repository.

The cost to Yarra Plenty Regional Library has been minimal. The National Library has picked up much of the expense as they have made inter-library loans and document delivery from National Library resources free for the duration of the trial. This was done so a better sense of the needs of library members could be evaluated.

Yarra Plenty has found that the number of inter-library loans that members are ordering has increased dramatically. However, the workflow for the Inter-Library Loans Officer has changed and no more time is being taken to process the extra requests.

One of the Information Australia project objectives is to evaluate the services and the information needs of Australians, and from this develop a business model applicable to a range of public libraries.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	
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Supporting community revitalisation	

Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation: the world's first global email reference service

Five libraries from Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada have come together to provide a reference service that allows patrons to ask questions of librarians via email at any time of the day or night. The questions may be of a general nature, about the library service, help with homework or specific research. The librarians answer the questions using many resources: books, databases, websites or other sources. Guidelines are in place to ensure that the quality of the answers is maintained and the amount of help provided is reasonable. The Global Librarian service is available to anyone entitled to receive the public library services of any of the partnership members.

The Global Librarian partnership was established by Vaughan Public Libraries, Ontario, Canada, in June 2002 along with Surrey Public Library, British Columbia, Canada and the Southampton City Council Libraries, United Kingdom. These libraries share a common vision: to maximise the Internet's potential for providing high-quality public library services to the library's community of users. Eastern Regional Libraries was invited to become a foundation partner of the Global Librarian partnership in August 2002 and became an active partner at the end of November 2002.

The coverage provided by the five library services, all in different time zones, means that the information service can be provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Any questions are guaranteed to be answered within ten hours, although in practice the majority of questions are actually answered sooner.

During the planning phase of the project, selected staff from Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation received training in the operation of the service. This involved learning about the other partners' library practices, their local community characteristics, and the educational, regional and national contexts in which the other local

libraries operate. Common protocols and procedures have been adopted to ensure that patrons receive the same standard of response they would receive in their local branches.

Other similar services are now being offered by various partnerships of libraries around the world, but Global Librarian was the first email service to operate. The others offer a live, online reference service but they are all limited in some way – for example, in terms of availability and amount of help they offer.

The Global Librarian service can be accessed through the Ask-a-Librarian link on the Eastern Regional Libraries website (http://www.erl.vic.gov.au). Detailed information about the service can be found here.

Community building principles	
Developing social networks	
Promoting social inclusion	
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The Gulliver Consortium: a library on your desktop

The Gulliver Consortium, which manages the selection and cooperative purchasing of online databases for Victorian public libraries, is an outstanding example of public libraries collaborating to provide better customer services. Gulliver is a consortium of 46 public libraries – mostly Victorian but now including three New Zealand public libraries. By working together public libraries are able to offer users entrée to a collection of databases

that have over 21,000 resources, including full-text journals, books, newspapers and pictures. These databases can be accessed at nearly every public library in Victoria or by library users at home using their library membership number to log on.

An important outcome of this initiative is that it ensures statewide access to a core level of materials and information services for users regardless of geographic location, the size of library services or mode of library delivery.

The Gulliver Consortium was formed in 1998 by Viclink (the peak body for Victorian public librarians) with Victorian statewide funding (through the State Library). A major motivator for its establishment was the fact that most public libraries find the cost of individual subscription to online databases prohibitive. When funding expired in June 2001 it was agreed that the benefits from the consortium were so significant that all efforts must be made to keep it going. After Viclink consulted with members of the consortium it was agreed to continue Gulliver with funding solely from library budgets. Gulliver has now been operating independently of State Library funding for over three years.

The consortium has been careful to select electronic databases that will meet library and user needs – applying specific evaluation criteria in each of the areas of content, statistical and technical features and vendor viability. Currently three databases (from two vendors) have been chosen as the core products for Gulliver. These include Thomson Gale Corporation's Infotrac Onefile database and the Health and Wellness Centre. EBSCO's ANZ Reference Centre was chosen to complement these databases by offering access to Australian newspapers and other publications.

For the libraries involved in Gulliver the journey over the last six years has been an exciting one and has enabled them to see how the power of working together can assist in providing better services to their users.

The immediate benefit of consortia for the public library sector has been to increase its purchasing power. Libraries have also found the negotiating strength that comes from being in a consortium useful as they present their concerns relating to ownership and access to electronic resources to publishers and online service providers, as well as dealing with other issues such as network and distribution, copyright and authentication.

By ensuring that relevant online resources are more accessible, Gulliver supports the State Government's initiatives that aim to ensure effective use of online technologies across the State. The State Government has recognised the importance of Gulliver by providing a grant of $200,000 to acquire additional online databases for public libraries through the consortium purchasing arrangements.

In July 2002, the Bibliographic Resources under a Consortia Environment (BRUCE) was launched with membership open to any library (though in practice most members are public libraries). This has enabled libraries to subscribe to databases outside the Gulliver core.

Community building principles	
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HotTopics: the librarian as net navigator

Who better than a librarian to guide users through the maze of online information on a topic important to them? This is exactly what the HotTopics current affairs website does. Covering topics as diverse as housing affordability, live sheep exports and capital punishment, this website provides easy access to well-organised and current online information and links maintained by librarians from across the State.

In effect the HotTopics concept is the online version of the newspaper clippings and ephemera 'vertical file' for current information that many libraries traditionally maintained. It provides the community with authoritative current affairs information and enhances the role of the librarian as information deliverer in the networked information environment.

An important feature of the site is the effort that is put into assuring the quality of the information and links on it. Over 60 library staff from across Victoria contribute to this process, managing and seeking authoritative online information on particular topics.

The HotTopics database currently has information on 180 topics with a strong Australian and Victorian flavour. Over 12,000 links have been followed from the HotTopics database since June 2003; the most popular topics have been the war on Iraq, asylum seekers, bushfires, water usage and bouncers/crowd controllers.

HotTopics had its genesis in the work done by several libraries across Victoria who had set up 'current events' and 'hot topics' on their own websites. Over time it became clear that in many cases these sites were maintaining identical or similar topics – representing a significant duplication of work, time and energy. Collaboration across libraries was seen as an opportunity to cover more topics and put more effort into managing the quality of information.

HotTopics was set up as a pilot program in 1998 using a small grant of about $20,000 from the Department of Infrastructure and with the help of five library services: Eastern Regional, Kingston, Port Phillip, Casey-Cardinia and Boroondara. In 2000 HotTopics was moved to VICNET at the State Library of Victoria to form part of the Victoria's Virtual Library site. VICNET has continued the responsibility for maintaining the site via the Public Libraries Unit.

The key learning from this initiative is that in the networked information environment no one library can do everything and the best way forward is to work together collaboratively with shared aims and vision. And the advice to other Victorian or Australian libraries planning to do something similar? 'Don't – contribute to this one and we will contribute to something you want to do.'

The HotTopics site can be accessed through Victoria's Virtual Library site: http://www.libraries.vic.gov.au.

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The National Information Library Service: Print Alternative Information Service of Australia

The Print Alternative Information Service of Australia (PAISA) is a free service available to the clients of the National Information Library Service for people who are blind, visually impaired and print-disabled. It offers quick answers to recreational and other queries. Clients can access the service by telephoning the Member Liaison department at the National Information Library Service for basic queries that take between 5 and 15 minutes to answer. More complex queries are forwarded to the Senior Reference Librarian. The answer is researched and provided to the client in their preferred format: audio, e-text, large print or Braille, usually within 48 hours. Clients are encouraged to take advantage of e-delivery options such as email and disk as the turnaround time is significantly faster than for formats such as audio or Braille.

A number of sources such as the Internet, Encyclopedia Britannica, Kinetica, EBSCO Databases, Proquest Databases and Gale Databases are used to answer queries. All Member Liaison staff have received additional training in the use of these resources, as well as reference interview skills. Examples of material frequently requested under the PAISA guidelines include recipes, brief biographies, book reviews, poems and encyclopedia entries.

The PAISA service is not designed to answer queries that involve provision of extensive amounts of material – PAISA queries generally amount to no more than five print pages of Braille, large or standard print, 45 minutes of audio or 200 KB on disk or email. The National Information Library Service can also cater for queries that require more extensive information.

Some queries may be referred to other organisations or services if it is felt they require specific expertise (e.g. in the area of health advice). Member Liaison staff are equipped to easily refer queries to the preferred information provider.

Community building principles	
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6 Conclusion

A robust, publicly funded library and information sector is essential to ensure equitable access to the full range of human expression.

AUSTRALIAN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION ASSOCIATION (2002) SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE INQUIRY INTO THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT.

The case studies included in this report bear witness to the many different ways in which libraries in Victoria are contributing to community strengthening and social inclusiveness. A great strength of the libraries who contributed these stories is that they are locally based and through their regular contact with residents have been able to identify and respond to emerging needs. Just as no community in Victoria looks the same as another, no public library looks the same as another.

The agility of public libraries in responding to local needs is a reflection of the skills and talents of the librarians involved. The many attributes that contribute to their capacity for building their communities emerge from these case studies. They include awareness of generational, social and economic changes taking place and the impact these have on the services people need; sensitivity to the needs of users and non-users; tolerance for diversity of opinion; facilitation skills; familiarity and comfort with new technology; and a willingness to work in partnership with other community organisations – and to acknowledge the contribution of others.

Consideration of these case studies shows how libraries are moving with the times and provides some insight into the evolving role of the public library in strengthening communities:

- Events and displays at public libraries are an important means for creating greater awareness and understanding of the rich array of people and cultures within the community. At Moreland City Libraries a broad range of activities is offered to appeal to all sections of this diverse community. Activities include talks, demonstrations and workshops on many topics, walks around Moreland landmarks, theatre performances and colourful cultural activities. Many speakers are drawn from the Moreland community to foster local networks and community capacity building.

- Libraries provide a friendly environment in which residents can develop the 'foundation skills' that are necessary for participation in the economic, social and cultural life of the community. This includes supporting the development of basic literacy, homework and computer skills. Darebin Libraries has established a Sponge Club, which has both a physical and virtual presence as a way of making literacy and learning fun for children aged between 7 and 12 years; Yarra-Melbourne Regional Library Corporation runs a number of homework programs for young people at its libraries and The Age Library (in the Hume Global Learning Centre) has taken the concept of libraries to the next level and is using library personnel as facilitators of learning in the community.

- Public libraries can play a critical role in connecting people, organisations and services and can foster a sense of community belonging. By bringing many residents, organisations and businesses together in the one place, the redeveloped Portland Library complex promotes effective partnerships and collaborative arrangements. It has strengthened the relationship between the library and the Glenelg Shire business community – supplying business with information, access to technology and other supports – and through this contributing to the economic life of the community.

- New and renovated public libraries are being sensitively designed to reflect the needs of the 21st century and beyond. The input of librarians and the community to planning new libraries is an essential factor for success. Librarians can bring to the design knowledge of what works and what doesn't. Community involvement helps create ownership. The library at Kerang is an excellent example of how input from the community has created a unique structure in which residents can take great pride. The development of the Wheelers Hill Library and surrounds shows a concern for sustainability and harmony between the natural and built environment.

- Libraries serve as an important community and cultural resource and contribute to the idea that 'this community is a good place to be'. Music Sundays at Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation provide high calibre, live musical entertainment in a range of styles. This helps attract new users and enhances the enjoyment of visiting the library. The Australian Women's Art Register, managed through Yarra-Melbourne Regional Library Corporation, documents the art practice, images and writings of Australian women artists. It has provided positive role models for female students and promoted the arts as a viable career choice for girls.

- Creation of flexible spaces within libraries means that different user requirements can be met. The new Mill Park Library provides a silent reading and study room and a designated youth area. Other libraries offer multi-purpose areas, which can be used by the community outside opening hours. These offer the community a vibrant setting for local events, meetings and activities such as bookclubs.

- New technologies are being exploited by public libraries to benefit users and the broader community. At the Upper Murray Regional Library Service adoption of satellite technology means that the mobile libraries are able to provide users with online access to the regional library system and free public Internet access. Libraries are also having great success in getting to segments of the community generally left behind in the ICT sphere. The Computer Club for Seniors at the Bayside Library Service provides an opportunity for seniors to learn about computers at their own pace in an encouraging, relaxed atmosphere. In the Greater Dandenong area, where there are low levels of computer ownership, local libraries have become a valued resource in helping diffuse new technology more widely and equitably.

- Libraries are working in partnership to increase the efficiency and decrease the cost of information delivery. The Gulliver Consortium has allowed Victorian public libraries to partner together to offer users access to a collection of databases that have over 21,000 resources, including full-text journals, books, newspapers and pictures. Without this consortium, many public libraries would have found the cost of individual subscription to online databases prohibitive.

- Public libraries are forging new alliances and partnerships with many organisations that have not, until now, been central to their operations. Libraries are collaborating with community organisations and agencies, schools and others to provide new services and increase public access to information. These collaborations have helped libraries establish new constituencies and build wider support. The Kilmore Library is recognised for taking the lead in fostering cooperation across a broad range of sectors including government, private and educational sectors in order to offer their users access to a 'one-stop-info-shop'.

- Victorian libraries have placed a lot of importance on the delivery of library services outside the library walls (e.g. in high rise flats, in institutions and in remote areas) and delivering library services through new delivery points. Asylum seekers at the Maribyrnong Detention Centre now have access to better information and resources through monthly visits from the Maribyrnong Library, which provides reading materials in English and other relevant languages.

- Victorian libraries reach out to people who face specific barriers in accessing information and resources for recreation. For example, the National Information Library Service offers a telephone service to people who are blind, visually impaired and print-disabled, which offers quick answers to recreational and other queries.

The stories in this report leave no doubt about the great potential of public libraries to play an enhanced role in strengthening their communities. They are intended to provide inspiration to other libraries and to highlight to policy makers and the broader population the value of libraries to local residents and the community at large.

It is intended that the case studies will be added to over time. This will be facilitated by the development of a Libraries Building Communities website. As people start to use the case studies, feedback will be sought on what they have found useful or not so useful and the additional types of information they require (e.g. comments from residents who have participated in the innovative activities). It is expected that the methodology for compiling case studies will be enhanced through this process.

While the case studies may serve to stimulate thinking, the concern remains that limitations on current project funding, including its short-term nature, will mean that many of the initiatives described in this report may not have an extended life. Other libraries may find encouragement from the stories reported here but be restricted in their activities by access to the resources and time to do this kind of work. Further consideration should be given to how we can move from the case studies and innovations in particular libraries to embedding effective practice more broadly across the library system.

> *Library Services have become increasingly adept at finding short-term funding for projects. However, there is clearly a basic issue of how important developments in library provision ... can be properly sustained in the longer term, so that the potential that libraries have to be powerful resources in communities can be fully realised. (The Library Association, UK[2])*

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2   The Library Association, UK (1999) *Report of the Policy Advisory Group on Social Exclusion*.