# LIBRARIES/BUILDING/COMMUNITIES

# Report Four:
# Showcasing the Best: Volume 2

**State Library**
of Victoria

**Library Board**
of Victoria

VICLINK
victorian
public
library
and
information
network

The original *Libraries Building Communities* reports were published in 2005. The reports presented the findings of the first comprehensive Australian study of the value public libraries add to their communities. The study was designed to provide information that would assist in the planning of public library services and in advocacy efforts on behalf of public libraries. It included all 44 public library services in Victoria and drew on the views of nearly 10,000 Victorians. There are 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 of 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.

In 2006, the research continued with the *Libraries Building Communities* Library User Census and Survey Project and publication of a further two reports from this research:

• Report One: *Statewide Analysis and Comparisons*
• Report Two: *Library Services Data and Reports*

In 2007, further qualitative research was undertaken with five groups identified in the 2005 reports as 'hard to reach' for public libraries: indigenous Australians; disadvantaged young people; Horn of Africa communities; low income families; and, vulnerable learners. The outcomes of this research and ideas for engaging these groups are contained in the *Connecting with the Community* report.

In 2007, a second volume of case studies of some of the many innovative and excellent programs offered by Victorian public libraries that strengthen their communities was compiled. These are published in *Libraries Building Communities* Report Four: *Showcasing the Best, Volume 2.*

All publicly available reports related to the *Libraries Building Communities* project are available via the State Library of Victoria website: **www.slv.vic.gov.au**

# Contents

# 1  Introduction

*Australia spends about nine cents per Australian per day on its public libraries, one third of that spent by nations such as Denmark. In return, virtually all Australians have access to at least one of 1,560 public libraries, more than half have a library card and 12 million use their library. Woolworths, eat your heart out.*

BUNDY 2007

## 1.1  Rising to the challenge

When Sir Redmond Barry and other philanthropists supported the establishment of public libraries in Australia in the 1850s, they acknowledged the key role these institutions could play in social and individual improvement and the diffusion of learning. From small beginnings, Victoria now has 45 public library services and 264 branches. *Showcasing the Best: Volume 2* brings together stories of how these public libraries support their communities and the individuals in them through the sharing of information and knowledge. These stories show how today's libraries connect with their original purposes and traditions and describe the innovative ways in which they respond to the needs of a technology-driven society.

The mid to the end of the nineteenth century can be characterised as the dawn of the information age. In Australia, as in the United Kingdom, it saw a tremendous expansion in newspaper, periodical and book publishing. However, high costs, low literacy levels and long working hours for the masses, combined to ensure that access to this material was generally the preserve of the 'upper classes' and some members of the 'middle classes':

> *The members of the rich upper classes were the only people who could afford to acquire books widely, the middle classes used the subscription libraries whilst the working classes were denied access to new publications (Jones 2002).*

Restricted access to books and reading was a concern to liberal thinkers who saw the enormous educational and social opportunities offered by expanded information sources. In this context, public libraries were seen as economically useful – providing, among other benefits, a mechanism to foster reading habits in the urban working classes. Black (1996) notes that a further impetus to public library growth was derived from the rise of idealism and the desire to support institutions which would further the aesthetic, spiritual and cultural development of the individual and society.

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Along similar lines, the United Kingdom's Cultural Minister in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, David Lammy (2006) notes of the philanthropists whose generosity enabled the building of libraries across the United Kingdom:

*In an age of Empire building, the undeserving poor and hard knocks, they saw public libraries as a way to further education for the many, to build closer and fairer communities and to encourage a fairer society with opportunities for all. But these were also hard-headed men of commerce, not people given to seeing the world through rose-tinted glasses. And they saw the business case for public libraries too.*

The stage was thus set for the introduction of public libraries based on the principles of free access and being 'open to all'. Although the expansion of libraries was slower in Australia than in countries such as the United Kingdom, New Zealand and the United States of America, it now ranks in the top twelve public library nations (Bundy 2004).

The social and business case for public libraries, articulated so clearly in the nineteenth century, is still strong today – possibly even stronger. The increasingly complex nature of communities, the emphasis on lifelong learning and the demands of the knowledge economy for a skilled and informed workforce underline the importance of public libraries in our society.

Changes in technology have increased the amount of information and the speed with which it can be accessed. It has provided the opportunity for individuals to create content and share information; and for those with visual and communication disabilities, it has opened up many more possibilities for accessing information and communicating with others. Some countries, such as Singapore, have undertaken massive transformation of

their public libraries through the combined forces of IT, marketing and human resources. Behind this change has been the drive for competitive advantage and specifically the desire to be 'a learning nation' (Hallowell and Applegate 2004).

At the same time, it has been well documented that significant numbers of people are being shut out of these benefits, creating the so-called digital divide.

*Just as the art of printing was to change dramatically at the end of the eighteenth century, thus enabling the spread of the printed word to a far wider audience, so the information age presaged by the rapid development and widespread use of the Internet has taken our society to a new age. Copious amounts of digital information are available to those who can afford the technology and time to access it (Poustie 2000).*

Poor information access and lack of information retrieval and exchange skills are increasingly being recognised as factors that contribute to the concentration of disadvantage in some population groups and communities (Vinson 2007).

Though some observers predicted that the growth of the Internet would negate the need for the bricks and mortar public library, for many people the public library is increasingly becoming the place that reflects the essence of the community that they live in (Poustie 2000) and the place where they can access information and learn about technology. Within this context, libraries in our century face some very significant challenges in ensuring that everybody, whatever their culture, age, ability or background, has access to the opportunities that a good library service can offer.

At the 'grassroots', public libraries, often within tight budgets, make decisions on the services and activities

to be offered, driven largely by the needs of their communities. The case studies presented in this volume of *Showcasing the Best* provide some inspiring and thought-provoking examples of how public libraries in Victoria are rising to the challenges facing them by:

- developing new service models which better reflect the cultural and generational needs of users;

- building on library traditions by encouraging reading and the development of literacy skills;

- creating community learning facilities through partnerships with educational and community development organisations;

- supporting the design and construction of outstanding new library buildings;

- striving to make library and information services accessible to people who may not normally be able to go into their public libraries or for various reasons cannot read independently;

- creating a sense of community belonging through an understanding of local history and identity;

- engaging people's interest and involvement in the arts;

- broadening access to computer 'literacy' and information retrieval skills;

- exploiting new technologies to meet the needs of users.

These case studies will help increase awareness of how libraries across Victoria are meeting the changing needs of their communities. They showcase to external stakeholders the exceptional work done by libraries to build communities; and provide inspiration and practical know-how to staff in public libraries through examples of innovation and excellence. This will also help to reduce unnecessary duplication of effort in developing services and encourage partnership approaches between libraries considering similar initiatives.

## 1.2  Showcasing the best

Libraries Building Communities (LBC) is a Statewide Public Library Development Project of the Library Board of Victoria and the Victorian Public Library and Information Network (Viclink) which aims to convey to decision makers, and others, the breadth, depth and potential impact on the whole community of the modern public library.

In 2005, the first volume of *Showcasing the Best* was produced as one of the key research reports from the LBC project. All of these reports can be accessed via the Internet at **www.slv.vic.gov.au**. The project brought together over thirty stories that reveal the many ways in which libraries across Victoria contribute to community strengthening and social inclusiveness.

These case studies show public libraries breaking new ground, establishing new partnerships within the community, using technology to provide new services and reaching out to less privileged groups. They are well known throughout the library community for demonstrating how good ideas can be turned into action. They have also played an important role in enhancing understanding of libraries across the community and government.

The State Library of Victoria and the public library network are committed to spreading good ideas and keeping the stories of innovation at the local level alive. *Showcasing the Best: Volume 2* does this through a series of new case studies and snapshots which highlight and promote success stories from across Victorian public libraries.

There are a few differences in the way the case studies have been developed and are presented in this second volume:

- In preparing the case studies, libraries were asked to seek comment from those who had participated in their initiative – for example, community groups who had worked in partnership with libraries and users who had benefited from it. This provides a voice from outside the library and can help verify and clarify the content of the case study and give it more authority.

- Libraries were asked to identify the challenges they had faced in implementing their initiative and the solutions they found, and also describe any issues that could not be resolved and how these impacted on final outcomes.

- More detail was requested regarding *how* libraries had gone about their initiative with the intention that this will provide greater guidance to libraries looking at implementing similar initiatives.

- Greater emphasis has been placed on describing the achievements of the initiatives and their impact on the community and the lives of individuals.

## 1.3   Selection of case studies

In November 2006, all public libraries across Victoria were invited to nominate case studies for inclusion in *Showcasing the Best: Volume 2* that achieve some or all of the following:

- demonstrate imagination and innovation;

- involve libraries working in partnership with each other or other groups in the community (e.g. community organisations, business, other federal, state or local government agencies);

- contribute to equality of access (e.g. by targeting segments of the community currently not well served by public libraries);

- address issues of disadvantage within the community;

- consult and involve the end user.

To be included in the *Showcasing the Best* report, initiatives had to:

- support the community building role of public libraries in any or all of the key areas of:

  – developing social capital,

  – building individual skills, capacity and wellbeing,

  – reaching out to communities,

  – providing a gateway to information;

- be current and operating for at least twelve months up to 1 January 2007;

- have the potential to be developed and adapted elsewhere;

- have been subject to review and found to be effective.

A greater number of nominations were received in 2006 compared with 2004. This reflects the variety and depth of projects taking place at the grassroot level in libraries all over the state. The selection panel – with members drawn from the LBC Workgroup (representing the Victorian public library network) and the State Library of Victoria – met in mid-December to review these and determine which would be included in the publication. Selection was made on the base of the criteria described above. Every attempt was made to ensure that the key community building themes identified in the earlier LBC reports were covered and that there was good representation from public libraries across the state.

Successful libraries were asked to complete a pro forma describing their initiative and submit this by the end of February 2007. This material was used to develop the case studies and snapshots appearing in this publication.

## 1.4  Structure of the report

The report presents a series of detailed case studies and shorter snapshots. A small number of 'updates' describe the progress of some of the initiatives presented in the fist volume of *Showcasing the Best*.

As in the 2005 volume, these are organised around the key themes of:

- developing social capital
- building individual skills, capability and wellbeing
- reaching out to communities
- providing a gateway to information and experience.

The final section of the report draws out the links between the projects and the key lessons they offer to libraries proposing similar initiatives.

# 2 Developing social capital

*The core business of any library is still books and reading, but it's expanding fast, in a number of directions. You can go to the library to use the internet; to attend a music concert or listen to a CD; to make your own music recording or DVD animation; to have coffee and cake in a café; to look at artworks in a gallery; to join a club to help you do your homework; or find a job, or learn a language, or study a culture, or improve your computer or your tai chi skills. Phew. After all that, you might want to sit and study quietly. Or you might prefer to meet and chat with friends in the youth area. The same library can cater for both wishes.*

SULLIVAN 2005

When governments talk about the kind of communities we need for future prosperity, the words most often used are resilient, connected, informed, inclusive, creative and active. It is well recognised that communities with these characteristics can achieve better outcomes in terms of wellbeing, health, education and economic development.

The first volume of *Showcasing the Best* documented how public libraries help build the networks and relationships in communities that make them strong by providing community spaces where people from diverse backgrounds can meet, celebrating the different cultures within the community, fostering a sense of local pride and providing community information.

The case studies below build on these themes and demonstrate how libraries, through local history and arts projects, provide valuable ways to help people become part of the community and raise the profile and confidence of particular groups.

Strong communities tend to build up knowledge about themselves, their places and their spaces. One way of doing this is through documenting local history and giving voice to the memories of residents. As shown in the following case studies, local history can help us make connections between the past and the present and encourage debate about our shared identities, our common sense of belonging and our many heritages. An understanding of past struggles and achievements can strengthen a community's self-confidence and create a sense of optimism for the future. Local history can show how the different waves of migration have impacted on the community and describe the role of migrants in creating what we have today.

An appreciation of neighbourhood distinctiveness is especially important at a time when globalisation is leading to the 'graying of local color' and blurring of the unique characteristics that define localities and

continue to shape them (Montgomery 2006). The Darebin Historical Encyclopedia taps into the reservoirs of local knowledge within the communities of Northcote and Preston and opens our eyes to life in these towns for different inhabitants at different times. Through the power of telling stories and having conversations locally, projects such as this provide a source of stimulation and social contact.

Communities that create together and celebrate together tend to have better social connections. Scholars who study the emotions have found that dancing, playing music and engaging in other artistic activities bring more joy than do many other leisure activities. That joy in turn enhances our willingness to reach out and connect with others.

> *Whether visual, musical, dramatic, or literary, the arts allow us to "create together" and to discover shared understandings. The creation and presentation of art often inspires a raft of civically valuable dispositions – trust, openness, honesty, cooperativeness, tolerance, and respect. Art spaces are, at root, civic spaces. The arts are a superb means of building social capital (Putman, Feldstein & Cohen 2003).*

The arts can nurture social capital by strengthening friendships, helping communities to understand and celebrate their heritage, and providing a safe way to discuss and solve difficult social problems. Public art can inspire civic pride, thereby uniting us in our appreciation of what we have collectively produced.

In addition to providing direct access to arts and culture through their collections and services, public libraries provide venues for cultural events. These include venues for the products of creative endeavour (e.g. through

book launches, lectures and workshops) and venues and support for the creative process itself. Because they provide a space that is reassuring and does not intimidate, libraries can involve a wider audience in cultural activity.

Regular events held at the Maribyrnong Library Service celebrate the area's cultural and linguistic diversity and create greater awareness of the rich array of people living in the community. Representation of other cultures in the library acknowledges their place in the community. It allows people to reclaim and share their identity and culture. For many groups it provides a way through which their young people can maintain links to the culture of their homeland.

> *Artistic projects and rituals are often instrumental in allowing immigrants to honor their native heritage and in helping them navigate the uncertainties of life in a new country (Putman, Feldstein & Cohen 2003).*

The Koori Library Pathways Project, funded through the Libraries Building Communities Demonstration Projects, is an excellent example of a library working in partnership with the community to provide more responsive and accessible services – in this case to the Aboriginal community. This project demonstrates how libraries can support the development of more socially inclusive communities by encouraging greater understanding in the broader community of Aboriginal culture, knowledge and heritage.

## 2.1  Building local identity

### Darebin Historical Encyclopedia: Darebin Libraries

The Darebin Historical Encyclopedia website (dhe.darebin-libraries.vic.gov.au) provides easy and comprehensive access to the local history of the Northcote and Preston areas.

In providing this important service, the Historical Encyclopedia also helps to build community identity and links. As contributors share their memories and photographs, they find connections with each other and with their community's past.

The Historical Encyclopedia differs from other comparable online products, which are generally a simple catalogue of resources. In contrast, the Darebin Historical Encyclopedia provides individual entries of depth that are drawn from source material and linked with relevant photographs and/or documents.

The many diverse topics covered include life in the early days of white settlement, parks and gardens, Australian paper mills, blacksmiths and wheelwrights, and air raid shelters. Users can also search for information about service personnel using the Northcote World War I database, get back-copies of the *Northcote Leader* and read transcripts of oral histories.

In 2002, the Darebin City Council decided, for preservation reasons, to limit access to primary source material from the city's history and art collections. This raised the challenge to Darebin Libraries: how to both preserve this material and continue their long tradition of providing their community with useful access to local history information?

The potential of the Internet to provide a service beyond that of a catalogue of items was immediately obvious. Excellent family history websites such as Ancestry.com inspired the design of the Darebin Historical Encyclopedia.

Launched in April 2006, the Historical Encyclopedia caters to many different users: local and family historians, students of all ages and members of the community wanting to satisfy their curiosity about their local area.

### Resources
Darebin Libraries reconfigured its operating budget to fund the research, development and ongoing maintenance of the website. Funds were needed to scan photographs, design and build the website, and provide adequate server space to host the website and upload digital images. The Manager Information coordinated the project as part of their normal duties. Other staff and consultants were co-opted as required.

### Partnerships
Darebin Libraries approached local historians to gain access to items such as transcripts of oral histories and private research. This material has been adapted for inclusion on the site. In addition, the Preston Historical Society made available their sizeable collection of photographs for inclusion as scanned images.

Since the launch of the site, the library has built its community network and shared information and resources with many local groups, such as the Yarra Bend Trust and the Northcote Cricket Club.

### Stages of the project
The development of the Darebin Historical Encyclopedia proceeded in two stages.

Stage one established the viability of the project and included:

- an audit and cataloguing of local history material and resources conducted by an external contractor, which enabled the library to ascertain the range and extent of the collection;

- an in-house feasibility study to determine whether these resources would make the project viable and, if so, in what format they should be presented.

Stage two followed the decision to proceed, with an online solution as the preferred model. A project plan assigned staff to oversee particular project areas. The plan covered:

- research into comparable projects, exploring a wide range of alternative online options – sites hosted by libraries, local and family history societies, councils and museums as well as software packages and databases;

- formulation of a development plan to prioritise the scope of content for the website, examine funding options, identify possible users and explore the design, format and functions of the website.

As a result of the development plan, a vision for the site was articulated and the project plan extended to include:

- development of the public interface and administrative site, undertaken by external contractors;

- preparation and entry of content.

On completion of these tasks, useability testing conducted with both library staff and potential users of the site led to further refinements.

To raise awareness of the website it was launched as a public event with an open invitation to the community to attend, alongside nominated guests.

## Achievements

Access and preservation were the main drivers behind the project. The Darebin Historical Encyclopedia has answered these challenges – it offers easy and comprehensive access to over 790 entries, including scanned documents, photographs and newspaper articles, while preserving the original source materials. The resources are available to all, from anywhere at any time.

The value of the Historical Encyclopedia was recognised in the 2007 Victorian Community History Awards where it was commended in the Audio-Visual/Multimedia section.

This easy website access has created a two-way process. Visitors can contact Darebin Libraries to give feedback, provide suggestions and ask questions. Emails regularly ask for information and, in return, offer photographs and documents for inclusion on the website.

> *I have been particularly pleased that Darebin Libraries was able to help me obtain a copy of an early photo I thought was lost forever. In turn I was able to provide them with several old photos to add to the site for sharing with other past and current residents. (Robert Ellis)*

The level of interest from beyond the local area has been greater than expected. Interstate and overseas users frequently visit the website, and external websites, such as the Only Melbourne directory (**www.onlymelbourne. com.au)**, have adopted the Darebin Historical Encyclopedia as a reference point.

Benefits have not been restricted to external users. The project has been a great professional development tool for those in the Information Team. They have sharpened their research, writing and editing skills and, being involved in a project from beginning to end, have developed their project management know-how. More

generally, staff across the library now answer local history questions with greater confidence, using the Historical Encyclopedia as a source.

## Community impact

The many positive outcomes for the community include:

- increasing community connectedness as contributors share their memories and photographs with others;

- improving interest in and understanding and awareness of the history of the area and of local history in general;

- illustrating the diversity of Darebin from its earliest years;

- enabling researchers to conduct their own research, reducing their dependency on library staff;

- improving links between the library and a diverse range of groups and organisations through the exchange of information;

- providing a valuable reference tool for groups such as schools and students with projects focusing on the history of Darebin.

Additionally, the project is well regarded by the Darebin Council, and this has helped raise the profile of Darebin Libraries and its other services with them.

## Success

The success of the project is due to a number of factors:

- The project had widespread appeal and support from the highest levels of council from the beginning. The fact that it combined the histories of the former Cities of Northcote and Preston for the first time had corporate appeal.

- A clear vision and understanding of the purpose and expected outcomes were established at the beginning of the project, which guided decisions made throughout the website's development. The role of the project manager was critical in this regard.

- The online format selected was a natural vehicle for local history, combining accessibility and preservation with the capacity for future development.

However, beyond this Katrina Knox, the Manager of Darebin Libraries and Jackie Goddard, the Manager Information, note that

> *... passion is also important and passion in spades from the project manager enthused others and created the impetus to keep the project moving when road blocks were encountered.*

## Challenges

The major challenges for the project related to staff resourcing, website content and information technology, and included:

- balancing and allocating staff resources to the project while ensuring other areas of service delivery did not suffer (a continuing challenge);

- the replacement of the project manager part-way through the project;

- ensuring that items (particularly photographs) were correctly catalogued for identification and copyright purposes;

- deciding on which topics to focus on and prioritising items to be included;

- obtaining the cooperation of partners in the early stages of the project;

- negotiating a level of storage capacity to match the current and ongoing needs of the site;

- early useability issues, which were overcome with the redesign of some areas;

- translating the Darebin Libraries' vision into a reality within the constraints of the software.

When asked about what they would have done differently if they could go back in time, Jackie and Katrina comment:

*The website itself has delivered what was hoped for and as such has been successful. However, some issues and problems arose that we could have avoided with better planning. A separate IT plan within the project plan would have been advisable. While the vision for the site was very clear and translated into the overall project and development plans, this was done in a degree of isolation from IT. This resulted in misunderstandings in the early stages and in a need to redesign significant areas of the site.*

### Lessons

The advice for libraries contemplating similar projects is clear:

- Have a sure vision of the goal and aims of the project prior to the development of the project plan. Adjust the project plan as required and adjust the way the vision may be delivered – but stick to your vision!

- Properly estimate the resources required to deliver this type of project if developed in-house, and allow for slippage. The Historical Encyclopedia was launched approximately twelve months after originally planned.

*We should also have set more realistic timeframes in relation to how long the Encyclopedia would take to produce from concept to delivery. As the Encyclopedia was developed in-house and, therefore, with the need to allocate resources from other areas it, by necessity, took longer than if it had been outsourced. (Jackie Goddard and Katrina Knox)*

- Put time into getting the visual feel, design and useability of the site right – this is central to success. Useability testing is critical. It is also important that publicity materials associated with the site reflect closely the visual feel – professional designing can pay dividends.

- The open public launch was an excellent idea and created a great vibe and interest on the day. It provided great exposure – extending knowledge of the Darebin Historical Encyclopedia beyond specialist interest groups.

### Next steps

Darebin Libraries is committed to the ongoing development of the website. Maintenance and refinements continue, with new entries on topics of interest inspired by feedback from the public. Ideas for the next stage planned for 2008 are already being considered, and include increasing interactivity through blogs, wikis, podcasts and e-postcards.

## Memory Victoria:
## State Library of Victoria and the Victorian Public Library and Information Network

*A community's local history is its foundation to the past, present and future – what knits it together. (Debra Rosenfeldt, State Library of Victoria)*

A wealth of wonderful community stories lives on in local history collections across the state. To uncover and share some of these stories, Memory Victoria assists public libraries to manage these collections. This three-year initiative involves 34 Victorian public library services in partnership with the State Library of Victoria, which both funds the program and lends its expertise in heritage collections.

The program began with significance assessments of nearly sixty local history collections held by public libraries, followed by conservation workshops for the library staff responsible for their maintenance. Conservation assessments of the collections are scheduled, and in 2007–08 selected items will go 'on the road'. Historians will travel with the items to tell their stories to audiences of children and adults in schools and public libraries throughout Victoria.

## Main achievements

- Memory Victoria has assisted public libraries throughout the state to better know, understand, care for and promote their local history collections.

- Victoria is the first Australian state to conduct significance assessments of public library local history collections employing the Heritage Collections Council's guidelines, in alignment with the guidelines used by Australian museums and galleries.

- Memory Victoria strongly supports key strategies of the State Government's new Community Museums Revitalisation Strategy: 'mapping the collections' and 'telling of the stories'.

## Cataloguing the Eureka Collection and the Ballarat Genealogical Society Collection: Central Highlands Regional Library Corporation

Central Highlands Regional Library Corporation (CHRLC) is working with the Eureka Centre in Ballarat and the Ballarat Genealogical Society to make the rich collections of local historical materials held by each of these institutions more accessible to the community.

The Eureka Centre is developing a unique reference collection of materials related to life on the Victorian goldfields during the 1850s, the Eureka Rebellion and the development of Australian democracy. The collection is available to all – students, teachers, researchers and any visitors to the centre. Following an approach from the Eureka Centre, CHRLC has catalogued this material for library users, who can now search the material through the library's catalogue. CHRLC will continue to catalogue materials for the Eureka Centre as they are collected.

The Ballarat Genealogical Society houses its large collection in the Australiana Research Room at the Ballarat Library. The collection has always been catalogued, but only in a card index system. The Genealogical Society and CHRLC have now agreed to incorporate the collection into the main CHRLC electronic catalogue, using the professional expertise of a library staff member. Ballarat Genealogical Society members and public users can browse for collection items in the library's catalogue, or run a more specific search of the collection itself. The inclusion of this material in the catalogue also greatly assists the Library's reference librarians, who previously did not always remember to access this material.

## Main achievements

- Networking between and greater understanding of both the Eureka Centre and the Ballarat Genealogical Society, and the Central Highlands Regional Library Corporation.

- Greater access by both Eureka Centre staff and Ballarat Genealogical Society members to their own collections.

- Significantly increased public access to both the Eureka Centre and Ballarat Genealogical Society collections.

## Bendigo Regional Archives Centre: Goldfields Library Corporation

The rich heritage and goldfields history of central and northern Victoria will now be captured in the Bendigo Regional Archives Centre (BRAC), due to open in 2008. Local collections of historical documents, letters and immigration records relating to the settlement of the region will be housed at the BRAC in two storage facilities.

A public access and research service provided through the Bendigo Library will allow the public to use a range of documents and records, subject to privacy and confidentiality requirements.

The project is a joint initiative between the City of Greater Bendigo, the Public Record Office Victoria and

the Goldfields Library Corporation. Consultation included a broad range of community organisations and businesses throughout the region.

**Main achievements**

• Ensuring that important historical documents and permanent public records are retained locally in Bendigo and are accessible to the public.

• Providing a service that is historically rich and that complements the extensive gold and local history collections housed at the Bendigo Library.

## 2.2 Fostering local pride

### The Sir John Gorton Library, Kerang: Gannawarra Library Service
UPDATE

The story about the new Kerang Library (2003), now named the Sir John Gorton Library, captured the imagination of many readers of the first volume of *Showcasing the Best* with its image of the library as the 'lifeblood' of the community and its description of the unique features of the library building made possible through the creativity and generosity of community members.

Three years on, the library, in its prominent location at the entrance to the town, presents a vibrant and positive image of a small rural community struggling to survive the ongoing crisis of drought conditions. To local residents it is a vote of confidence in the future.

The ability to provide services more efficiently in an attractive, sociable and welcoming environment has encouraged increased membership and greater use of the full range of services the library has to offer. Inclusion of visitor and tourist information in the library's range of services actively supports the entire area's economic and promotional endeavours.

The modern, daring design, which caused so much controversy in its planning and building phase, has become a source of intense local pride and a place to which local residents bring visitors as one of the area's central attractions.

The building and the service it provides for the community have received wide recognition as an example of modern library architecture that successfully incorporates a range of benefits to meet community needs. Its unique features attract the attention of other councils and libraries intending to build, extend or refurbish their library facilities, as well as visits from architects, photographers and practitioners of building design who appreciate the building from varied perspectives.

The success of the Kerang Library has encouraged council to open an additional library branch in Quambatook, a small Mallee town on the outskirts of the shire, struggling to survive the loss of many of its services in recent years. Having its own library is a huge boost to this community's morale.

**Main achievements**

• There was an overall 40% increase in library membership.

• There is a high rate of public Internet access, especially by the youth of the area.

• Areas directed to cultural and artistic endeavours are in constant and growing demand.

• During the past year, the community meeting room and the foyer/gallery averaged 20 bookings per month.

• Programs and activities delivered by the library receive strong community support and media coverage. This indicates recognition of the library as a vital and valued resource in the local community and throughout the shire.

## Warracknabeal Library Refurbishment: Wimmera Regional Library Corporation

Warracknabeal Library, in remote western Victoria, was badly in need of a major upgrade. The dark and antiquated building was not user-friendly and did not permit access to wheelchairs, motorised scooters and prams.

The refurbishment, which was completed in May 2005, was a community effort. Twenty-eight volunteers put in two to three days' work over a weekend to pack up, move and reshelve the large collection. This help enabled the library to continue its services without disruption. A local business provided lunch on two of those three days.

Moving back, with the support of removalists, was easier, but again some ten volunteers helped to reshelve the books.

The library building now has more room, shelves have been reset to allow full access and the back wall has been replaced with a picture window and a door which allows access to the rear of the building for users from the nearby Senior Citizens, skateboard park and leisure complex.

### Main achievements
- Increased member numbers.
- Better usage of the facilities.
- More space for programs such as holiday activities for children, kindergarten visits, seniors visits and visits from museums and travelling exhibitions.

## 2.3 Nurturing creativity

### Portland Library Exhibitions Program: Glenelg Libraries

The Portland Library Exhibitions Program extends an open invitation to community members of all ages and abilities to contribute to monthly exhibitions of artworks in all media. Exhibition themes are designed to coincide with local, national and international celebrations and awareness weeks, such as Mental Health Week and Recycling Week. On occasion, workshops are held to accompany the various themes.

The exhibitions are held in the public space provided as part of the Portland Discover IT Centre. Here they create a focal point to attract interest and celebrate community creativity.

Over twelve exhibitions have been held, including:

- Double Vision: pieces of artwork from 'opportunity shops' reworked by a selection of local artists.
- Face Off: an exhibition of portraits by local people of all ages and abilities held as part of the One and All Festival 2006 to celebrate 'difference'.

The catalogues that sometimes accompany the exhibitions become a valuable community resource, and are available at the library and distributed across the community.

All community members are invited to the celebratory launches. Artworks are offered for sale with the library taking a small commission.

### Main achievements
- Increasing number of visitors to the library.
- Sharing artistic experience.
- Increasing interaction, pride, trust and coordination in the community.

## Mornington Peninsula Writers' Festival: Mornington Peninsula Library

September 2006 saw the inaugural Mornington Peninsula Writers' Festival, the only event of its kind on the Peninsula. Festival organisers – the Mornington Peninsula Library and local secondary schools – aim to build a wide audience with an annual two-day program of talks, workshops, writing competitions and readings.

The objective of the first day, which attracted over 1,500 students, was to encourage a love of literature and learning in teenagers on the Peninsula. The second day introduced people of all ages to the world of literature through meeting published authors and poets.

The festival successfully promoted the Mornington Peninsula Library; events attracted over 400 people to the library, 250 to the Peninsula Community Theatre and more to other shire venues.

### Main achievements
- Recognition of the Mornington Peninsula Library's dynamic role in enhancing community literacy and lifelong learning.

- Participation of local secondary schools in the festival by attending events and adding related components into their school curriculum.

- Partnerships between the library, schools, businesses and organisations as they continue to work together to make the festival an annual event.

## Monash Literature Festival: Monash Public Library Service

For the past eight years, the annual Monash Literature Festival has offered local people the chance to meet and be inspired by high-profile published writers and illustrators who generously share their knowledge, expertise and passion for their subjects. Participants have been able to enjoy writing workshops, cartooning workshops, poetry forums and a host of opportunities

for networking. Sessions have included everything from science fiction and researching history, to songwriting and getting published for the first time.

Established by the Monash Public Library Service in partnership with the former Monash Arts Council, the annual program for adults and young people recognises the vital role of libraries in fostering a community's cultural life and creative processes.

The festival incorporates the Monash Short Story Competition, which provides an appreciative forum for the creative endeavours of youth and adults from around the City of Monash.

### Main achievements
- Developing a culture that values reading, writing and literature in the community.

- Support from an enthusiastic and expanding community of readers and writers.

- Fostering relationships between secondary schools and the Monash Public Library Service.

## City Library zine collection, and Street Press zine skill-sharing group: Melbourne Library Service

To support its ethos of lifelong learning and to encourage independent cultural expression, City Library has established a 'zine' collection. Zines (an abbreviation of the word 'magazine') are self-published works of minority interest that most commonly take the form of small-circulation, non-commercial publications containing original or appropriated texts and images.

To launch the collection the Gallery @ City Library held an interactive zine exhibition, Wet Ink. The library encouraged patrons not only to take the zines down from the gallery wall to read them, but also donate their own zines to the library collection by pegging them straight into the exhibition itself.

In addition to the collection, City Library initiated City Library Street Press – a self-run, skill-sharing group where zine enthusiasts of all skill levels meet and workshop their creative ideas. As a part of this program, City Library allows free access to a range of publishing packages available in the computer lab, access to the Group Study Room for members to meet on a fortnightly basis, and a small amount of free printing and photocopying.

**Main achievements**

- Over the course of the exhibition, 31 zines were donated to the City Library collection.

- City Library Street Press currently has a small core group of dedicated members sharing their own skills and learning a range of new ones from the other members of the group.

### Building Ballarat's community collections: Central Highlands Regional Library Corporation

In this project a range of cultural institutions in Ballarat – museums, galleries, libraries, archives – have come together to work more closely on collection development and to increase physical and electronic access to collections. A side aim has been to build collegiate and networking ties between the institutions.

An audit of the collections held across the institutions has increased knowledge and understanding of the holdings. Although the project is 'complete' in funding terms, it continues to germinate ideas among those involved, the most recent being collaborative disaster planning.

**Main achievements**

- Increased networking.

- Greater access to collections.

### Music Sundays: Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation
UPDATE

Music Sundays at Narre Warren Library run from April to October each year. Audience numbers have remained steady since the program was profiled in the first volume of *Showcasing the Best*, and it continues to be valued by staff and regular Sunday visitors to the library.

A number of initiatives have encouraged children and young people to participate:

- Performances by young people, including a local group featuring teenagers who won the 2006 City of Casey Battle of the Bands, and a group of students from the Members of the Ranges Community Music School who are learning a variety of instruments, including guitar, violin, flute and fiddle.

- The introduction of performances for children – the first of these, Gee Whiz Kidz, consisted of a three-piece acoustic children's band playing a range of instruments from the didgeridoo to the violin. Their music is aimed at songs for two to six year olds.

An emphasis remains on use of local musicians and especially important has been the continuing relationship with BADFOLK (Berwick and District Folk Club Inc). With the motto 'Bringing people together with a love of acoustic music', this club supports a wide range of music and music lovers. The Music Sundays program uses some BADFOLK musicians, which then leads to cross-promotion. Library activities are promoted on the BADFOLK website and the library promotes the BADFOLK concerts held at their own local venue.

**Main achievements**

- Demonstrates the expanding role of the library as a community activities area and challenges the community's expectations of what a library can be.

- Customer comments have been very positive – library members come to borrow and are 'rapt' to hear live music.

## 2.4 Strengthening cultural identity and awareness

### Koori Library Pathways Project: Goulburn Valley Regional Library Corporation

The Koori Library Pathways Project is building the capacity of the Koori Resource and Information Centre (KRIC) and the Goulburn Valley Regional Library Corporation (GVRLC) to deliver accessible and responsive library and information services to the Aboriginal community in the Goulburn Valley. The impetus for the project came from Aboriginal leaders, who saw that it would benefit their community by strengthening cultural identity and building literacy, knowledge and self-esteem.

Cross-cultural awareness programs will develop skills and processes for managing information needs within the Aboriginal community, as well as make library staff aware of Aboriginal issues and equip them to guide the public to resources and information.

By sharing this information, the project also aims to preserve and safeguard local Aboriginal culture, knowledge and history, and encourage greater understanding of Aboriginal people in the broader community. Protocols will ensure that this process respects sensitivities around local Aboriginal history and protects the use of personal stories and knowledge.

The Hon. John Cain, President of the Library Board of Victoria, launched the Koori Library Pathways Project on 20 November 2006 at the Shepparton Library. The Shepparton region has Victoria's largest population of Aboriginal people outside Melbourne. A diverse audience of some 70 people heard speakers at the launch describe the project's aims and witnessed the signing of the memorandum of understanding between the Koori Resource and Information Centre and the Goulburn Valley Regional Library Corporation.

The event was well covered in the media, with two articles in the *Shepparton News*. Library staff comment:

> *Paul Briggs OAM, a leader of the community, was a most memorable speaker. Paul provided those present with an understanding of the vision of the partnership. He gave an insight into the issues facing Aboriginal people in accessing and retaining their knowledge, culture and history. He stressed the importance of working in partnership to safeguard the future of this knowledge.*

### Partnerships

The Koori Library Pathways Project took a crucial first step when the Chief Executive Officers of KRIC and GVRLC met in December 2005 and formally agreed to develop a partnership and apply for Libraries Building Communities (LBC) Demonstration Project funding from the Library Board of Victoria. The project was one of four to receive funding through this grants program in 2005–06.

As GVRLC staff note, informal chats and discussions between the library and the Aboriginal community early on paved the way for lasting relationships.

> *The friendship of neighbours, talking together on long car trips, proved to be a trigger for arranging the decisive meeting between the CEOs of the two organisations.*

The GVRLC Board has also supported the partnership by embracing the goals of the LBC program and, through this, encouraging staff to liaise more actively with the local Aboriginal community.

### Developing the grant application

Representatives from GVRLC and KRIC formed an interim steering committee to prepare the application for LBC funding. The committee consulted with the Greater Shepparton Community Building Project Coordinator, the Chief Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Community Strategic Planning and Policy Unit, and local community groups such as the Shepparton Family History Group.

Sharon Atkinson-Firebrace from KRIC provided a helpful starting point for formulating project aims with her research on library initiatives in other states.

The project plan developed as part of the funding application has become the reference point for the preparation and the monitoring of the project's work and continues to provide an indispensable tool to guide the project into the future.

### Resources

The LBC funding is supplemented by staff time and resources from GVRLC and KRIC and volunteer time from the Shepparton Region Reconciliation Group and the Shepparton Family History Group.

KRIC is employed to manage the project. The Project Work Team, with representatives from both KRIC and GVRLC, undertakes the day-to-day operation of the project and the partnership. A recent addition to the team is a young Aboriginal woman, Raquel Davis, who is employed by KRIC to work on the project one day per week.

The project's steering committee is currently made up of KRIC and GVRLC staff together with representatives from other Aboriginal organisations and the Greater Shepparton City Council.

### Achievements

Activities at the launch of the Pathways Project in November 2006 fostered some positive and practical links between GVRLC and Aboriginal groups:

• Students from the Yachad Accelerated Learning Project displayed their work on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, and a group of Gowrie Street Primary School children read their stories to guests. The school has since given copies of these stories to the library.

• Elder Aunty Irene Thomas, who was a guest at the launch, expressed great interest in the resources of the State Library of Victoria. At her suggestion, interested members of the Aboriginal community toured the State Library later in the year. Aunty Irene returned to the Shepparton Library in January 2007 to conduct an Aboriginal storytelling, which was well attended and enjoyed by all those present.

• Arising from the launch, there are plans to engage Aboriginal students from the Academy of Sport Health Education (ASHE) to document the project on film.

Much of the ongoing success of the launch and the project has been attributed to staff at KRIC, who have drawn on their networks to encourage participation from across the Aboriginal community.

One early activity has proved an important stepping stone for KRIC in recording its history. At two archiving weekends, volunteers helped sort through KRIC's resources. A consultant has now been engaged for six months to continue this work.

Preliminary work reviewing Shepparton Library's Aboriginal materials and developing collection protocols has also begun. The library has moved Aboriginal-specific literature into an easily accessible collection.

Aboriginal community members are conducting a cultural awareness program for library staff, which includes visits to the Cummeragunja and Barmah communities. This program introduces staff to the recent history of the local Koori community and involves them in a 'journey of cultural discovery'. The first workshop was held on the first of May.

A project website (**koorilibrary.8ways.net**), logo and library bag have been developed. Discussion groups are planned with local Aboriginal people and a pilot project sees the mobile library begin visits to Aboriginal groups. Members of the project team attended the 5th International Indigenous Librarians Forum in Queensland in June 2007 to talk about the Koori Library Pathways Project.

## Impact

Although the Koori Library Pathways Project is still in its infancy, its impact in the community is already starting to be felt. The partnership has been a boon for better networks and sharing knowledge and skills, and has been empowering for both partner organisations and for their staff. KRIC staff comment that through the project they have:

- broadened their networks with the Public Record Office Victoria to look at cultural preservation and conservation through documented history;

- further explored archival cataloguing and indexing, including establishing a connection with the Shepparton Family History Group;

- renewed a relationship and connection with a local media project through which volunteers Bill and Lynne Lumley scan and collate articles of interest to the Aboriginal community from the *Shepparton News.*

The very challenge of incorporating the project into the day-to-day routines of both organisations has meant that the participants feel increasingly confident that they will be capable of sustaining this work over the longer term.

GVRLC staff comment that through the project they are starting to see growing cultural awareness, and a breakdown of barriers, both personal and cultural. Having Raquel work in the library each week has led to a broadening of perspectives. For her part,

> *Raquel has told her friends that the library isn't such a boring and stuffy place as they might think. (GVRLC staff member)*

## Success

Good working relationships between KRIC and GVRLC have been vital to the project's productivity. KRIC has kept the project on task by running meetings that allow ideas to flourish but are always focused on the main goals. Respect for each other's perspective is an important ingredient. Good communication between the partners has enabled the project to evolve and meet challenges positively and creatively. Staff from KRIC comment:

> *Strong ties were developed with KRIC before the application was sent in. Thus the application was worked on jointly to meet the desired outcomes for both KRIC and GVRLC by addressing the differing needs of both.*

KRIC's expertise in management and their experience in the preparation of memoranda of understanding have also helped enormously.

> *Progress has been ensured through KRIC's exceptional work plans that continually prompt us into action and guide us forward. (GVRLC staff member)*

Other factors contributing to the success of the project include:

- establishing community ownership of the project through inclusion of the Aboriginal community in the planning and development stages;

- flexibility and enthusiasm;

- goodwill and good documentation.

## Challenges and lessons

It was originally intended that a coordinator would be employed for the Koori Library Pathways Project. When this proved difficult, KRIC took on the role. In retrospect library staff note that the expectation that they could find one person who could manage the project was unrealistic.

> *In the process of trying to find a suitable candidate, we came upon a more effective and workable arrangement to manage the project which draws on a broader range of skills and expertise and more directly engages more Aboriginal people into the project. (GVRLC staff member)*

Implementation of the project is raising some quite specific challenges in terms of information management. For instance, staff at KRIC note that the project has highlighted the complexities of copyright and privacy when archiving materials. Documentation of solutions to these issues will be of relevance to many libraries across Australia.

### Next steps

The challenge to involve Aboriginal people in library activities and services remains but the partnership with KRIC and the regular presence of KRIC staff in the library are steps forward in breaking down barriers.

Strong commitment from the GVRLC Board and KRIC to the partnership will also help ensure that the initiative continues. However, other funding will need to be sought so that activities that have begun through the project can progress.

### Celebrating Diversity @ Your Library program: Maribyrnong Library Service
UPDATE

The first volume of *Showcasing the Best* described the events held at the Maribyrnong Library Service in Melbourne's inner west to celebrate the area's cultural and linguistic diversity and create greater awareness of the rich array of people living in the community. The great success of this program has led the library to commit to running multicultural events on a monthly basis with a focus given to specific cultures and/or language group.

Since 2004, a successful pattern of events has been developed:

• Every February the Lunar New Year is celebrated to acknowledge patrons from the Vietnamese and Chinese communities. The program has regularly included the Vietnamese Buddhist Youth Association Lion Dance Group, and people have come to look forward to their return visits.

• In March, Multicultural Day is held on the third Saturday to coincide with national Living in Harmony celebrations. A series of performances from a variety

of community groups follows a food tasting from different cultures. A 'showbag' containing information in community languages, particularly relevant to new arrivals, is provided.

Other regular events throughout the year showcase Spanish, Italian, Greek, Indian, African, Eastern European, Vietnamese and Chinese cultures.

Through the Library Programs budget the Maribyrnong City Council has provided the majority of funding for these events – indicating the value placed on this library service to the community. The Victorian Multicultural Commission also provides a grant to support the events.

Particular effort is also being made to recognise and celebrate Australian Indigenous culture. The library has worked closely with the Western Suburbs Indigenous Gathering Place Association, an Aboriginal support agency collocated with the Highpoint Library, to develop an Indigenous materials collection. This was launched in July 2007. The focus on Indigenous culture will help the library to provide inclusive programs that are sensitive to the needs of Aboriginal people and will encourage them to make greater use of library services.

The new position of Multicultural Services Librarian will be vital in ensuring that this initiative continues and that library services are inclusive of all cultures. The library is fortunate in having fluent speakers of Chinese, Vietnamese, Spanish, Italian, Polish, Greek, Tamil and Amharic on staff.

### Main achievements
• Each of the Annual Multicultural Days has attracted approximately 400–500 participants.

• Newly arrived migrants benefit from feeling acknowledged and welcomed to their community through recognition of their culture.

• Promotion of cross-cultural understanding.

• Increased awareness that the library provides valuable resources to all members of the community, including minority groups.

# 3 Building individual skills, capability and wellbeing

*Libraries are a unique resource for lifelong learning. They house learning content, provide environments for learning, act as gateways to the wider world of information and learning, and provide human support for learning individuals. Their historical roots lie in provision for learners and learning. They have tremendous potential for widening access, enhancing flexible delivery, achieving equality of access, and supporting culture change.*

THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION 1998

Public libraries have been described as 'street corner universities', providing a place in which anyone can study the subject of their choice, in their own time, at their own pace (Museum, Libraries and Archives Council 2005). In particular, libraries are seen as giving a second chance to people who feel that their school has failed them – and would not want to return to formal education.

Libraries are particularly well known for helping people to develop reading, writing, listening and communication skills. Through its Literacy in the Library program, Yarra Libraries has a focus on developing a love of reading and provides a regular program of events for readers, including book groups; Gully Gardeners at Eastern Regional Libraries provides a forum for people to exchange ideas and information about gardening.

Everyone in our community requires literacy skills to participate effectively in society. An individual with a higher level of literacy is more likely to be employed, healthier and wealthier and to take a greater role in community activities than an individual with lower levels of literacy. The Australian Council for Adult Literacy notes that higher literacy skills are essential for the demands of the information economy.

*High levels of literacy increase a nation's capacity to adjust to change, improve productivity and capitalise on innovation. Literacy is a powerful determinant of a country's innovative and adaptive capacity, and future economic prosperity (Australian Council for Adult Literacy n.d.).*

As well, the changing nature of our everyday lives and the changing social environment in which we live are also making increasing demands on our literacy skills. People working in new and emerging jobs, such as the service sector and the information technology industry, require more complex skills.

In recognition of this, more and more local councils across Victoria are taking an active role in encouraging learning in the community. Public libraries are acknowledged as integral to achieving learning outcomes. In Hume City, libraries are developing learning plans that reflect the needs of each area and library staff are taking on the role of learning advocates – advising people about learning opportunities. In Altona Meadows, the library is leading development of the council's learning strategy and is working with a number of education providers to offer learning programs in the library.

Partnering with learning providers is allowing many libraries to offer their customers access to a range of learning options. The partnership developed between the West Footscray Neighbourhood House and Maribyrnong Library Service is providing opportunities for both organisations to expand and develop their respective roles as the providers of lifelong learning opportunities to the community. In Wyndham, community centres and libraries are providing the essential infrastructure for community learning. Development of a learning portal that provides information about learning events and programs is helping increase awareness of and participation in lifelong learning among the residents of Wyndham and will facilitate the growth of community learning networks.

Homework clubs run in conjunction with other community organisations are providing children and young people with the chance to build their self-confidence, open their imaginations and reach higher standards. The Homework Club run by City Library and Melbourne Citymission is designed to help tackle inequality and disadvantage.

Given that many of the resources that support career development and job search are online, libraries are especially well placed to assist people with the transition to work. Job and Career Link Centres established in Springvale and Dandenong are concentrating on helping people from non-English-speaking backgrounds and those with a disability to compile effective résumés and cover letters and improve their interview skills.

## 3.1 Encouraging learning in the community

**West Footscray Community Learning Centre: Maribyrnong Library Service**

**This new facility, which combines a library and a neighbourhood house and offers many new learning opportunities, stands like a beacon of hope in a community that is one of the most economically disadvantaged and culturally and linguistically diverse in Australia.**

**The community's involvement in the planning of the facility from the outset, together with a bold design that incorporates local artwork and reflects the proud history of this industrial suburb, have ensured that the West Footscray Community Learning Centre is widely embraced.**

The journey leading to the development of the West Footscray Community Learning Centre began in earnest in November 2001, when a report to the Maribyrnong City Council recommended closure of the West Footscray Library due to the deteriorating condition of the building and its inadequacy for delivering progressive library services.

It was plain to council that there was a strong need for a library service in the area; a community consultation process confirmed this. Feedback from a survey clearly indicated a preference for a community hub development.

> *Prior to closing, the West Footscray Library was experiencing a 15% usage increase and it was obvious the facility needed to accommodate for the growing numbers of visitors. After an assessment was completed, it was determined that a new facility would need to be built in order to provide a safe, modern and multi-functional library to fit the needs of our community (Cumming 2006).*

Arising from the consultation was the idea to collocate the library and the West Footscray Neighbourhood House, also housed in deteriorating and inadequate facilities. This move would not only satisfy the need for library services but also enhance the role and status of the neighbourhood house in meeting the growing demand for community education, social support and children's services.

### Resources

In September 2002, a progress report recommended that council support collocating the West Footscray Neighbourhood House and the West Footscray Library, and identified potential funding sources. In addition, the report suggested that proceeds from the sale of the existing West Footscray Neighbourhood House could be put towards the project costs. The total project cost was estimated to be in the order of $2.1 million.

In May 2003, the Minister for Local Government announced that council would receive the maximum Living Libraries grant of $500,000 for the West Footscray Library, and a year later then Premier Steve Bracks announced $830,000 from the Community Support Fund for the total community hub project.

Fundraising was augmented with a highly successful trivia night.

### Community Hub Working Group

The West Footscray Community Hub Working Group, established after the earlier consultation process, was another vital resource for the project. This working group consisted of West Footscray residents, neighbourhood house and library users, local traders, council officers and a local councillor.

The group has provided invaluable support and advice to the project. It has raised funds, conducted consultative forums, lobbied State Government and other relevant bodies for funding, and met for many hours. Once

architects were employed, the group provided guidance and community input into the design and construction of the centre. Through all of this work, the group has ensured that the interests of the various community users were considered.

*Having the vision to try a new model of library integrated with the neighbourhood house was innovative, but ideas are only one part. The new model represented a major change ... management genuinely welcomed, encouraged and empowered the community members of the committee to get behind the project. (Michael Dawe, resident and West Footscray Community Hub Working Group member)*

### Establishing a partnership with the Neighbourhood House

Central to the successful implementation and operation of the West Footscray Community Learning Centre has been the strong partnership between the West Footscray Neighbourhood House and Maribyrnong Library Service. This partnership supports delivery of better services and allows both organisations to develop their roles as providers of lifelong learning opportunities to the community.

During the construction phase, the neighbourhood house and council established a strong and cooperative working relationship. A memorandum of understanding outlined the relationship, respective responsibilities, and service integration and cooperation opportunities.

### Getting the design right

Following a call for tenders, architects Whitefield McQueen won the contract to design and manage the construction of the new facility.

The architects continued to consult extensively with all stakeholders throughout 2004 and 2005 as they refined the plans for construction. Regular meetings were held with the Working Group, Neighbourhood

House Committee of Management, and West Footscray library staff to consider the wishes and needs of all stakeholders.

This wide consultation has ensured that West Footscray's industrial history and landscape have inspired the centre's design. This is reflected throughout the building by the use of metal, recycled timber and unique lighting features. Local artists have been involved, particularly in the design and construction of key artistic features of the centre, such as the main entrance gate and major pieces of furniture.

### Achievements

The old West Footscray Library closed its doors in May 2005 and temporarily relocated to the Maidstone Community Centre. The new library reopened to the public on 24 October 2006 and the West Footscray Neighbourhood House moved to the first floor of the new building in November.

The new West Footscray Community Learning Centre offers many improvements on the former library and neighbourhood house:

- Improved facilities and increased floor space with a range of community meeting/training places, a toy library and occasional child care (including an outdoor area).

- A comprehensive information technology section, with 13 public access computers equipped with Internet access, word processing and database applications, desktop publishing and image editing software, and scanning facilities.

- New collections within the library including Languages Other Than English and English as a Second Language materials – more than 75% of stock was purchased in the twelve months prior to opening.

These improvements in the facility, collections and services have led to a marked increase in the use of the West Footscray Library. In the first three months of operation, there was a:

- 55% increase in loans;

- 57% increase in preschool storytime attendances;

- 118% increase in visits;

- 228% increase in new membership applications;

- 303% increase in public access computer bookings.

The project has engendered an immense sense of community pride and ownership. A community celebration and open day held at the centre just after its opening attracted approximately 400 people.

> *Our new library is just beautiful. The design, the décor, the whole layout is the best ... Congratulations to all concerned with the planning, construction and the final result, which is to say the least outstanding. (Library member feedback)*

But users are not the only ones to benefit; staff and volunteers for both the library and neighbourhood house now have significantly improved working environments and resources.

> *The new facility has enabled the West Footscray Neighbourhood House to employ more staff, increase our hours of operation, as well as services that we offer to the local culturally and linguistically diverse community. (Jodie El Tawil, Coordinator West Footscray Neighbourhood House Inc)*

> *The collocation of staff from Maribyrnong Council within the Libraries and Community Learning Centre areas, and the West Footscray Neighbourhood House, is a unique opportunity to strengthen a partnership that will undoubtedly be valuable in moving forward together to bring increased community learning opportunities for the local community. (Celeste Jennings, Coordinator Community Centres Network)*

*Co-tenancy of the Learning Centre has allowed two vital and vibrant council services to pool resources and talents of all staff, greatly magnifying and enhancing services to all our community. (Monica Lukas, Branch Librarian West Footscray Library)*

*The Learning Centre has been a new beginning for the neighbourhood house, a fresh new start with a strong partnership with the Maribyrnong City Council and the West Footscray branch library. (Jodie El Tawil, Coordinator West Footscray Neighbourhood House Inc)*

### Lessons

A number of key lessons have emerged from the project:

- Establishing a close working relationship with all stakeholders is essential for successfully implementing a project of this nature. By formalising the consultative process with the community representatives in the form of the Working Group, clear guidance was received from the community, and enabled the Working Group to be a formidable ally and great advocate in promoting the project and informing the broader community of its progress.

*The partnerships established and maintained with the West Footscray Neighbourhood House and the community stakeholders were the bedrock of the project … The very open relationships established with all stakeholders, especially the community representatives and the neighbourhood house, was a major factor in the project's success. (Michael Byrne, Manager Community Learning and Libraries)*

- Likewise, when planning a joint-use facility such as the West Footscray Community Learning Centre, cementing the relationship with the other partner is of paramount importance. A shared-use facility has the potential to create and highlight conflicting requirements. The development of a memorandum of understanding between the West Footscray Library and West Footscray Neighbourhood House was an essential process in resolving any such potential conflicts. The process of negotiating the memorandum itself forged the cooperative relationship, and the final document can be a blueprint for similar partnerships in the future.

- Acquiring the funding to proceed with the project was a major hurdle at the beginning, as Maribyrnong City Council has limited access to capital. Although the project gained Living Libraries funding in its early stages, the full vision of a joint-use community hub facility could not be realised until the Community Support Fund grant was awarded more than a year later. The perseverance and persuasiveness of council staff and community representatives was instrumental in acquiring the necessary funding.

- The Community Hub Working Group actively communicated progress of the project through their various networks and neighbourhoods. This high level of community involvement has raised the profile of the library enormously.

- Finally, the architects engaged to design and build the centre, Whitefield McQueen, not only demonstrated considerable creativity and professionalism, but were at all times responsive to the needs and desires of all stakeholders. They met regularly with the staff of both the library and neighbourhood house, as well as community representatives, and this consultative approach ensured that everyone involved developed a sense of ownership of the West Footscray Community Learning Centre.

## Gully Gardeners:
### Eastern Regional Libraries

Gully Gardeners is a forum where local gardening enthusiasts can meet to discuss ideas and information about gardening and the changing environment. Topics have included worm farms, garden design, native plants, water management in the garden and growing herbs.

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A joint project between the Ferntree Gully branch of Eastern Regional Libraries, and Coonara Community House, Gully Gardeners was launched in March 2006 at Coonara Community House by 'garden guru' and radio and television personality Jane Edmanson.

The group is relaxed and informal and gives community members an opportunity to develop social contacts with other gardeners. It also promotes the materials and services of both the library and the community house. The partnership has opened the door for future joint projects.

### Main achievements

- Creating a social network of local gardeners.

- Developing a strong partnership with the local community house.

- Increasing skills and knowledge of the individuals involved.

### Altona Meadows Library and Learning Centre: Hobsons Bay Libraries

**The Altona Meadows Library and Learning Centre opened in February 2006 as a 'one-stop learning shop'. The centre is a good example of 'joined-up' services – the library, representatives from neighbourhood houses and other community groups share reception and meeting spaces. Hobsons Bay Libraries' staff and the three neighbourhood houses work together to cross-promote programs.**

The Learning Centre:

- **consolidates support for education and lifelong learning, and focus on literacy;**

- **supports the council's vision of enhanced learning, communication and participation;**

- **raises awareness of opportunities for lifelong learning.**

**Development of a Council Community Learning Strategy over the next three years will underpin further development of the Learning Centre. The strategy will be led and auspiced by Hobsons Bay Libraries.**

With its eye-catching appearance and ceiling-to-floor windows, the Altona Meadows Library and Learning Centre has been likened to an 'ant farm' – creating a sense of looking in at a bustle of activity, welcoming people and encouraging them to ask 'What's happening in there? Can I come in?'

The design of the Learning Centre has been guided by:

- local community needs;

- best practice in disability and family access;

- green principles in terms of use of natural light and reduced energy consumption;

- innovative use of technology to enhance access and service delivery.

In the planning phase of the project, different community sectors were extensively consulted about a range of issues, including learning needs, the types of library services and classes people wanted, and opening hours. Ten focus groups and two public forums were held and a community survey received over 300 responses.

In addition, internal and external project reference groups looked at design and operational issues. The internal group comprised the project architects, the coordinator of the neighbourhood house and council staff with expertise in disability access, environment, community development and libraries. The external group comprised ward councillors and representatives from the education sector.

## Partnerships

Hobsons Bay Libraries' key partner in the development at the Centre was the Altona Green Neighbourhood House. The vision of a seamless learning environment was to encompass the best of both services. While Altona Green have since vacated the premises, three other local neighbourhood community centres have taken on the role of providing programming for the Centre. As of September 2007, Laverton Community Centre, Altona Meadows Community Centre and Louis Joel Community Centre are producing up to 20 hours per week of community programs ranging from craft to gentle exercise.

When the community comes in to the library to borrow fitness DVDs or books, the library staff and community centre representatives can cross-promote with the offer of upcoming classes in pilates, yoga or belly dancing provided by the community centres, and vice versa. The availability of library staff beyond the normal neighbourhood house opening hours to take bookings, payments and provide information about the programs has been of great benefit to all involved.

A steering committee (comprising community development officers from council, library staff and the neighbourhood house coordinators) have negotiated how the organisations will work together on a day-to-day basis and planned the programming to complement each other and not compete. The initial arrangement with one neighbourhood house had developed a licence agreement (similar to a lease but without exclusive use), updated the existing service agreement with the council, and run a program of joint marketing and promotional activities, and several team-building workshops.

The Hobsons Bay Women's Referral Service (HBWRS)[1], which refers women and families experiencing family violence to other agencies, is also a permanent tenant in the new facility. HBWRS has worked with council and library management to strike a licence agreement that enables them to offer a comfortable and non-threatening environment for their clientele at the centre.

Hobsons Bay City Council also has a formal Memorandum of Understanding with Victoria University to work in partnership to help local people return to study or commence studying. Over the past few months, the university has presented a number of career planning sessions. These have given advice to students on 'change of preferences' for tertiary courses and support in making decisions when first-round tertiary offers were released. Victoria University, local secondary schools and Hobsons Bay Libraries all worked together to ensure a great outcome for local students, who otherwise would have had to make the trip to their chosen university. Further partner programs are planned around improving early childhood literacy and preschool participation rate.

## Resources

The funds available to the project total $4.2 million – made up of $3.75 million from council, $400,000 from the State Government Living Libraries Grant, and $50,000 from the Department of Sustainability and Environment through the Greenhouse Action Fund.

Library Manager Suzanne Gately has been responsible for the planning and consultation required in the early phase of the project (assisted by the council's engineering department) and has managed the collocation and integration of services at the Learning Centre in conjunction with council's Community Development Manager.

A new position has been created in the library to manage the development of learning opportunities across Hobsons Bay but particularly at the Centre. The Community Access and Learning Co-ordinator will be responsible for harnessing learning opportunities across the local area and developing the framework for the strategy.

[1] Hobsons Bay Women's Referral Service (HBWRS) ceased operations in October 2007. However, their presence has been replaced by two different operators (one a private and the other, a government agency) who provide services for families. Social support offered is for approximately 16 hours per week.

## Achievements

The centre is five times the size of the former library and accommodates a larger collection of electronic and print resources. It has an exhibition space, an Internet lounge, an up-to-date information technology training centre, the traditional quiet study areas associated with a place of learning, and dedicated areas for children's and young adults' activities. Community and business users can select from a range of meeting spaces, which can be booked through the neighbourhood houses or Hobsons Bay Libraries.

Activities on offer are many and varied, and cater for all ages and abilities. They range from belly dancing and English language classes to yoga and e-shopping. The centre also provides information on learning providers, resources and opportunities in the local area.

Suzanne Gately comments:

> *One of the best community building support programs had been the Sudanese Women's Sewing Group. They met on a weekly basis to sew, talk, drink coffee, laugh – much as they would in their villages in Sudan. Funded by the local ward councillor they spread out their fabrics and create every Saturday afternoon.*

Victoria University has also worked with the elders of the Maori community to establish the Pacific Islanders Network Homework Help Club. The library supported this initiative by assisting with resources, offering training for both the students and volunteer tutors and providing access to photocopying.

Its location in a busy shopping precinct with lengthy 'shopping centre' opening hours has encouraged locals to use the centre. Community ownership and pride abounds. In addition to informal activities, structured, formal classes and activity groups have become well established. An example of this is the mothers group that congregates upstairs in the Exhibition Space on a regular basis to do

baby massage together to music. Library staff note that groups of teenagers and women can regularly be found studying or meeting in the many open sitting areas.

Local businesses and agencies have also made good use of the centre since it opened, and Adult Learners Australia held their Australia-wide meeting there in March 2006.

The library and learning centre facility has been an outstanding success. After the first 12 months of operation, over 220,000 people had visited and many thousands more have accessed services through the Internet. Customer numbers have increased nearly three-fold and loans two-fold. Suzanne Gately notes:

> *Usage by families at weekends is extremely high – the children are on the computers and playstation, alongside mum and dad on the Internet or at the magazines.*

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) has been implemented to the library's collection and circulation workflows. This has eased staff workloads by reducing the manual handling of materials and making stock maintenance easier. It also enables customers to checkout their own materials. Nearly 60% of all loans are issued through 3M SelfCheck and this has freed staff to help customers in a myriad of ways.

Other outcomes from the establishment of the centre include:

- improved profile of library services within community and council;

- greater recognition of the role libraries play in lifelong learning;

- happy staff who enjoy working in such a vibrant and well designed facility;

- a renewed enthusiasm among library staff for focusing on services that support the core functions of information literacy (as part of lifelong learning), literacy, advice to readers and social support.

## Lessons

The success of this initiative has been assisted by:

- wide consultation with stakeholders, including library staff and the broader community, which contributed to the design of a facility that is both functional and innovative;

- the strong project manager role of the Library Manager in budgeting (e.g. ensuring that computers and fit-out did not suffer due to building cost blowouts and ensuring the fit-out has provided the best value for money).

The main challenge has been to work with the Neighbourhood House to agree on operational processes to deliver the best service outcome to the community while leaving the autonomy of both organisations intact. Achieving this goal required more extensive negotiation than originally anticipated and ultimately was not successful. However, the outcome of the three Community Centres providing programs, while initially has been challenging is now delivering great benefits as each centre brings different strengths to the partnership.

## Next steps

The initial concept of a learning centre will be supported strongly by the recently endorsed Council Community Learning Strategy. The development of the strategy over the next three years will include wide consultation with the community on their learning needs, an audit of existing learning opportunities and providers, and an analysis of learning gaps and barriers. In addition, a community advisory group will provide linkages between the different learning providers and raise the profile of lifelong learning within council and the community.

## Learning Together Strategy: Hume Global Learning Village Library Service
### UPDATE

Since publication of their story in the first volume of *Showcasing the Best*, staff from the Hume Global Learning Village Library Service have continued to play a central role in the development of Hume City as a learning community. The *Hume Global Learning Village Learning Together Strategy* has been revised. Together with the original, the revised strategy provides a road map for the activities of the Learning Community Department, of which the libraries are an integral part.

In support of the strategy, Sunbury and Craigieburn Library Coordinators have worked in partnership with their communities to develop learning plans that respond to the needs of the area. One outcome has been the establishment of programs in the libraries and in a range of community settings that are run jointly by staff from the library and its community partners. For example, the Hmong Homework Club has been established in Craigieburn as the result of a partnership between Dianella Health Services, the Salvation Army, the Baptist Church, Craigieburn Secondary College, Hume City Council Library and the Youth Services team.

A Learning Advocates initiative has also been developed and will be implemented with funding from the Library Board of Victoria Libraries Building Communities Demonstration Projects grants program. This will see the broadening of the role of Hume Library staff from providers of resources and information, to that of proactive 'learning advocates' who can provide advice and promote learning opportunities to the community. Staff will be supported in this role through a training program, a communication package and a Community Information and Learning Database.

### Main achievements
- An increased number of learning opportunities in the Hume area.

- Strong partnerships between the libraries and a wide range of organisations in their local communities.

## Wynlearn:
## Wyndham Library Service

Wynlearn: Wyndham Libraries and Learning Portal is a website designed by the Wyndham Library Service to bring together information about local learning opportunities. It provides information about learning events and programs and has a directory of host organisations. The portal's aim is to increase awareness of and participation in lifelong learning among the residents of Wyndham.

The Learning Portal creates an opportunity for library services, community centres and other learning providers to work together, not just in a physical location, but in virtual space.

The inspiration and impetus for Wynlearn has come from a series of strategic plans that seek to foster lifelong learning in Wyndham. The *Quality Community Plan* (QCP) is Wyndham's vision for the future, based on the input of over 2,000 people. The QCP vision for education and skills development is that all its residents, irrespective of their age or income, will have access to learning opportunities that improve their employability and quality of life. As well as formal education and qualifications, this covers access to community learning activities through groups such as neighbourhood houses, community centres and adult and community education organisations.

The *Wyndham Community Learning Strategy 2005–2008*, identifies a number of challenges in making this vision reality. Wyndham residents leave school earlier and have fewer tertiary qualifications than do residents in other parts of Melbourne. They also have low participation rates in adult and community education.

The aim of the strategy is to strengthen council's commitment and leadership in community learning by building on its existing services and infrastructure that are inherently educative, and by

> *... working in cooperation with learning providers and the community to achieve goals that sustain and benefit community learning in a way that responds to global social and economic trends, but is informed by local needs and directed by local objectives (Wyndham Library Service n.d.).*

Local libraries and community centres are integral to achieving these learning outcomes. These centres will provide expanded community access to the Internet and offer programs to introduce new users to technology. In line with this, the *Wyndham Library Service Strategic Plan 2005–2020* adopts a community learning centre model where future libraries and community centres will be collocated to maximise access to technology and learning space.

The Learning Portal contributes to these community learning goals in two key areas:

• improving and coordinating access to information about learning;

• facilitating community learning networks.

### Partnerships

> *Building community learning partnerships ... is a key strategy for achieving an inclusive learning society in Australia (Kearns 2005).*

Wyndham currently has two libraries and eleven community centres. These centres offer a range of services, including courses for children, life skills and craft courses. Werribee Community Centre also provides employment-based training. Two new combined libraries and community centres are planned for Point Cook and Tarniet.

Together the community centres and libraries provide an essential infrastructure for community learning in Wyndham. Partnership between these groups has been essential for design and development of the Learning Portal. Wyndham City Council's Community Centre Officer has coordinated the participation of the community centres.

The ideas and expertise of community centre coordinators have been crucial to understanding barriers to the use of the portal as well as appreciating its possibilities. Members of the Wyndham QCP Education Committee have been briefed on the project and have contributed ideas and support. This committee acts as an umbrella action group for the Education and Skills Development Vision in the QCP, and consists of education stakeholders who, together, represent the continuum of 'cradle-to-grave' learning.

Vicnet, a division of the State Library of Victoria, is constructing and hosting the portal. The Vicnet team will also be responsible for coordinating training for all key staff and learning providers in portal usage.

### Resources

Most of the portal's funding has come through the Library Board of Victoria's Libraries Building Communities Demonstration Projects grants program. Wyndham City Council has provided all of the staff support for project management and content design, and has committed to funding a part-time position to maintain the portal.

Wyndham Library Service has coordinated the project and several staff have made major contributions. Kerri Sidorow is the overall coordinator of the project and Tom Edwards, whom Kerri describes as the project champion, has provided technical liaison with Vicnet regarding portal specifications and has worked closely with community centre coordinators.

### Achievements

An initial project plan was developed in conjunction with Vicnet to identify key milestones and a detailed timeline.

The project began with staff from Wyndham Library Service working with community centre coordinators to develop the structure of the portal database. A questionnaire sent to coordinators sought advice about current information technology capabilities and enrolment practices. Face-to-face meetings were then used to develop ideas and confirm current and future needs. Ideas included providing maps for learning locations, ensuring that the site is useable for learners with special requirements (such as language and literacy) and using a thesaurus for course subject allocation. Different login levels have been created so that community centre managers can enter course information, and teachers can create forums for their students. In response to coordinator feedback, the portal has been designed so that at a future stage it will be able to accept bookings and export user's data in the format required to apply for accredited courses. In addition, support for languages other than English is being considered for future phases of the project.

Benchmarking was conducted against Australian and international learning websites. The promotion of lifelong learning is a worldwide phenomenon and many excellent websites were found. Of particular influence were:

- EDNA (**www.edna.edu.au**), Australia's free online network for educators.

- Short Courses Victoria (**www.shortcourses.vic.gov.au**).

- Hotcourses (United Kingdom) (**www.hotcourses.com**).

Library staff worked with Vicnet to finalise the portal's structure as well as its look and 'feel'. Prior to the launch of Wynlearn (**www.wynlearn.net.au**) on 16 May 2007, testing and feedback cycles for the portal took place and providers were trained to enter learning information.

Library staff worked with council's public relations department to develop a marketing strategy, and pictures taken at local community centres feature in the graphic design.

Undertaking the portal development has been a major step for the Wyndham Library Service and is already a success in terms of:

- expanding the role and visibility of the library service;

- developing partnerships with community centres and other learning providers;

- staff development.

### Lessons

Having a strong strategic context for the Wyndham Libraries and Learning Portal has been a key factor in getting the initiative off the ground. Stakeholders could see that the portal was not a standalone project but part of a broader strategy for community learning in Wyndham. This has underpinned support from council and community learning providers and provided a sound base from which to apply for funding under the Libraries Building Communities Demonstration Projects grants program.

Building a close working relationship with Vicnet was invaluable. Vicnet's experience in building community websites, especially in the areas of functionality and accessibility, has been critically important.

It has also been important to keep key stakeholders up to date, by way of a newsletter and regular meetings. Meetings with community centre managers informed them about the portal, discussed the involvement of their coordinators in the project and gave them the opportunity to ask any questions. Presentations about the portal were also given to the Senior Management Group of the Wyndham City Council and the Wyndham Education Forum. One thing that, in hindsight, the project team would have done differently is to align

their meetings with stakeholders more closely with the project's stages of development. The QCP Education Committee meets bi-monthly and community centre managers monthly, which meant that there were sometimes significant waiting times when seeking feedback. Better aligning project development and stakeholder feedback times could have avoided delays in reporting back to the portal developers.

The process of technical planning and negotiation took longer than expected due to the unexpected complexity of designing a 'back-end' structure to support the functionality of the portal. The library project team comment:

> *Building an interactive website from the ground up is much more involved than we had originally anticipated. It's a bit like building a house with an architect rather than buying 'off the plan'. You need to decide how many rooms, whether you want air conditioning, what type of door handles and so on.*

Though this work has been difficult, one outcome is that the library staff involved in the project have learnt a lot about the challenges of designing a website that takes into account the client's perspective.

Benchmarking against existing websites with a similar mandate also proved more difficult than expected due to the ever-changing nature of the Internet. On one occasion, a site that was a key reference point for design of the portal underwent a complete overhaul of functionality and 'look and feel'. As the team notes:

> *Perhaps a more intentional process of 'staying in touch' with other sites would have assisted in us adapting to this and allowing these external initiatives to inform our project more effectively.*

In terms of challenges, the main issue has been containing ideas and making sure the original aims and objectives were met. The enthusiasm of the project team has grown as they have realised the many possibilities for the portal. They recognise that only so many ideas can be incorporated into the initial design – but have a keen eye to the future.

### English Language and Literacy Access: City of Greater Dandenong Libraries
UPDATE

The English Language and Literacy Access (ELLA) service is part of a dedicated commitment by the City of Greater Dandenong to servicing the needs of its culturally and linguistically diverse population. As noted in the first volume of *Showcasing the Best*, this local government area has the highest proportion of overseas-born residents in Victoria, more than half of whom come from a non-English-speaking background.

The English Language and Literacy Access service assists these residents to develop their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Demand for ELLA services has continued to grow since its inception in 1992. In 2006, ELLA counsellors assisted 1,800 students compared with 1,500 during the previous year. In response to users' needs, the ELLA service has been extended to offer job and career counselling support through its Job and Career Link Centres (*see page 47 in section 3.4*).

Community capacity is being enhanced for ELLA clients by:

- increasing their fluency and confidence in speaking English;

- learning the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and becoming Australian citizens;

- acquiring computer and Internet literacy skills;

- developing education, career and social participation options.

Main achievements

- ELLA is first point of contact for many new arrivals to the city and Australia. The service is well known in the community and among other agencies.

- The service is an additional way for library staff to keep in touch with community changes, and educational and employment trends.

## 3.2 Building study skills

### ConnectEd City Library and Melbourne Citymission Homework Program: Melbourne Library Service

The ConnectEd Homework Program offers free tutoring to young people who are studying for the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) or Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) or who are in the latter years of high school. The personalised service offered to students is a keynote. Each student is matched with a tutor and they negotiate the time they would like to meet at the library. Homework sessions can be held any weekday at City Library.

Three groups – City Library, Melbourne Citymission and the University of Melbourne Ambassador Program – collaborated to establish the program and are responsible for its running and management.

The program gives priority to:

- young people who are homeless or at risk of being made homeless;

- young people studying VCE who are living in accommodation away from family support, and who would benefit from additional support with their VCE studies;

- young people who do not have the finances to access paid tuition.

**Students must have a case manager to be referred to the program. Case managers can come from a range of organisations such as Melbourne Citymission and include school welfare teachers at local schools. They work as part of the communication link between tutor, student and coordinator if any issues need to be discussed.**

An important focus of City Library, a new public library located in the centre of Melbourne, is to provide services and programs for children and youth. The Carlton Homework Club has provided the model and inspiration to investigate the need for homework support in the heart of the city.

### Partnerships
The idea for the program was mooted during 2004 at the City of Melbourne Youth Services forum to see whether any agency was interested in participating. Melbourne Citymission indicated its interest to run the program and refer clients.

Melbourne Citymission youth team leaders have managed the overall program. The Youth Manager was responsible for setting up a small volunteer team from the Ambassador Program to coordinate the project; manage marketing; recruit, train and support volunteer tutors; and manage tutoring arrangements. Volunteer tutors have likewise been recruited from the University of Melbourne's Ambassador Program.

Melbourne Citymission runs induction programs for tutors and pays for police checks of all volunteer tutors. They meet regularly with the coordinating group to evaluate and plan the program, and liaise with the Youth Services Librarian at City Library.

City Library provides reserved seating and tables for tutoring once a week and offers free printing and photocopying. The Youth Services Librarian is on hand to assist with any needs.

### Resources
There is no specific grant funding for the ConnectEd Program. It is supported by Melbourne Citymission, who pay youth workers and operational expenses, and the library, which provides staff time and a small operating budget. Volunteer input is through the coordinating team and the tutors from the University of Melbourne.

City Library has a small budget for an end-of-year function to acknowledge the volunteer contribution to the program.

### Achievements
The program has been running since June 2005. During the first six months, eight students accessed the program. In 2006, 23 tutors were inducted into the program and 33 students accessed the program. In 2007, 21 tutors were recruited and 23 students were referred to the program.

The program has evolved over the period from a 'drop-in' model to 'one-on-one' tutoring. This has provided greater flexibility in meeting the needs of tutors and students with diverse commitments. Tutors send weekly reports to the coordinators.

As well as delivering a personalised service to a disadvantaged group within the youth community, this program has provided opportunities for volunteer tutors and established networks across the participating organisations that have heightened awareness of each other's services and facilities.

### Success factors
The partnership with Melbourne Citymission has provided valuable linkages, access to expertise and a vehicle through which young people in need of these services could be contacted.

> *It is through this program that disadvantaged young people have been able to gain assistance and be given the opportunity to further develop skills and knowledge, which in the past they have been unable to gain access to. (Lisa O'Brien, Youth Transitions Model Team Leader, Melbourne Citymission)*

The students have benefited from the commitment, dedication, professionalism, effectiveness, skills and reliability of the volunteer coordinating group. Nerissa Haarhoff comments:

> *These three young women have managed the program superbly. They are role models to each other as well as to the volunteer tutors.*

The commitment and skill of the university volunteers themselves have also been crucial to the program's success. City Library's location in the heart of Melbourne has proved convenient and attractive.

### Lessons
City Library has identified a number of clear lessons for others wanting to establish a similar program:

- Be clear about your target market.

- Be prepared to start small.

- Be flexible and be prepared to try different models.

- Be prepared for a lengthy timeline for the development stage.

- Get to know potential partners and have an awareness of their values and mission.

The ConnectEd Program is evaluated annually and modified when necessary and has continued to run in 2007. Melbourne Citymission intends to include the program in a research project.

## Sunshine Library Homework Club: Brimbank Libraries

The Sunshine Library Homework Club is a free tutoring service that is open to all students from Year 5 through to VCE who visit the library, irrespective of where they live.

The service is a joint venture between Brimbank Libraries and Brimbank Youth Services YMCA, and operates on an informal, drop-in basis.

The tutor is based in the Youth Services area of the library and has a table with two chairs. A pre-booked Internet terminal aids quick and easy access to the library's online resources, e-books and to the popular search engines. A qualified librarian is on hand during the sessions to help the tutor access the print reference collection and the lending collection if needed.

The selection and screening of tutors is coordinated by Brimbank Youth Services YMCA. All tutors have completed their VCE and are currently studying at TAFE or university level. They are required to have Working with Children police checks. The tutors are highly visible, wearing bright red YMCA t-shirts, which attracts interest from students using other parts of the library.

Feedback from users has been so positive that the program has been introduced at the new Sydenham Library.

### Main achievements
- A very successful partnership with Brimbank Youth Services YMCA.

- Free tutoring for students from low-income families who may not be able to afford paid tuition.

- Extending the library's information service by assisting students in an in-depth manner on a one-to-one basis during the busy after-school rush.

- Developing a mentor relationship between tutors and students, which helps build student confidence and self-esteem.

### YourTutor: homework assistance: Moonee Valley Library Service and Wimmera Regional Library Corporation

The YourTutor online service provides a quality Australian educational resource that connects students to actual tutors who provide instant help and tutoring in all main subjects. The program was developed by Tutoring Australasia and targets school children in Years 4 to 12.

Both Moonee Valley Library Service in Melbourne, and Wimmera Regional Library Corporation in Victoria's west, provide this service to students who are library members. Students can log on from home or from a designated library computer.

YourTutor provides homework assistance above and beyond what could be easily provided by staff in the local library branches. It is an important service for Moonee Valley, which has a large number of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and for the Wimmera Library, where the restrictions of time and location limit the public's access to homework and study resources.

#### Main achievements

- Providing online homework assistance via the YourTutor service, for both in-library and remote users.

- Positive feedback from the students (e.g. 'Great site, really has helped me lots' and 'My tutor helped me with all my questions, very helpful and very motivating').

## 3.3 Developing a reading culture

### Literacy in the Library: Yarra Libraries

**Carringbush Adult Education (CAE), which is housed in the Richmond branch of Yarra Libraries, is the largest provider of community education in the City of Yarra. It has a strong history of collaborating with** other locally based organisations, including neighbourhood houses, to deliver literacy and language programs.

**In recent years, CAE has focused on providing a safe community-based environment for students with little or no formal education who may be from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and have literacy problems or both. Services are provided on both the Richmond and Collingwood Housing Estates as well as in the library.**

**CAE plays a central role in promoting the library as a community resource. Students are encouraged to form personal relationships with library staff and through this develop a sense of ownership and belonging.**

CAE began its life as a special project at the then Carringbush Regional Library in 1984. It grew out of a concern of the library's director that one of the primary functions of a library – to be a place of educational value – was not being met. As he saw it, libraries should cater for adults who cannot read.

Twenty years down the track, CAE has become a Registered Training Organisation offering fully accredited courses within a community setting. From three hours a week in 1984, CAE now provides eighty hours of classes each week. These are run by qualified teachers at Richmond Library and the Belgium Avenue and Collingwood Neighbourhood Houses (which service the North Richmond and Collingwood Housing Estates).

#### Partnerships

An important premise behind the establishment of CAE was that libraries could best increase their reach into the community through targeted programming in partnership with other community organisations.

Although there have been many partnerships established to support a variety of CAE projects over the years, two are particularly enduring:

- Yarra Libraries – For CAE, being located within a library provides a welcoming and non-threatening place in which to run adult literacy classes. In 2007, the relationship remains strong and continues to evolve.

- Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House (BANH Inc) – This is a unique relationship in which two community organisations have elected to work side by side, sharing resources and focusing on what they do best. For CAE this is providing literacy and English as a second language classes with a strong community base; for BANH it is developing the community through a strong art base.

CAE also has an advisory group drawn from library representatives, students and community members.

### Resources

Originally funded through Adult Community Further Education (ACFE) grants, CAE has since accessed other sources of funding, including Commonwealth Government programs such as the Special Intervention Program and the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program.

### Achievements

Jan Hanson, one of the coordinators at CAE, summarises the organisation's achievements as:

- the cooperative and fruitful working relationships developed with other agencies;

- provision of accredited and relevant courses for residents in a relaxed community setting, which has meant people from the estates have not had to leave their suburb or attend one of the larger institutions to study English;

- being able to offer free classes to students that directly improve their access to the wider community, their job prospects or both.

*The relationship between Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House and Carringbush has been a very rewarding one for both organisations. Likewise the Carringbush relationship with the library has been an added bonus. It has been a major reason for the success in getting library services directly onto both the Collingwood and Richmond Housing Estates. It has been the conduit that has helped bring together two willing partners. It's how communities should work... (Sue Kent, Coordinator, BANH Inc)*

Over the years, CAE has responded to a wide variety of students with literacy needs. In many cases this need is complicated by other issues such as psychiatric or physical disabilities. Students from emerging communities face specific difficulties:

- The East Timorese community does not receive government support and individuals live with the constant threat of deportation. In 2006, the resurgence of violence in East Timor reawakened all of the fears and traumas for this group.

- The West Papuans, who arrived a year ago, found themselves in a world that made little sense to them. CAE responded by setting up classes for them at the Richmond Library and, probably most importantly, has encouraged their love of music through the purchase of five ukuleles. Jan Hanson comments: 'Talking or singing, it's all got the same aim. It makes it user friendly and it works.'

*Classes in the library are good because it is close to my home. They have books and videos in my language. If I could not go here I would have to go to the city. It would be hard for me to pick up my children after school... (Tuyet, English as a Second Language student, 2007)*

*The library is a good place to do classes because it feels safe. I like all of the books. They are nice but I don't read them. I do borrow the DVDs. The library people are always friendly. It's nice... (Bev, literacy student, 2006)*

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## Challenges

The CAE has had plenty of experience in both handling the challenges thrown at it and making the most of opportunities that enable it to better meet student and community needs. The following factors have worked together to make CAE a success:

- Staff are willing to work in conditions that most teachers would not, or could not, tolerate. They work for less pay than their counterparts in TAFE who teach exactly the same courses. At the same time their job is more difficult given that their students may be experiencing problems associated with deportation or trauma and torture and may need support in dealing with Centrelink and other government services. Jan Hanson is full of praise for the staff who she says 'remain positive and professional. They are fantastic!'

- CAE is able to accept change and to recognise emerging groups. This has meant changing from primarily an 'English as a first language' to an 'English as a second language' emphasis. By becoming more involved with a culturally and linguistically diverse group of students, CAE has developed and broadened its connection to the community. Change has been seen as an inevitable but positive reality.

- There is easy access to the Richmond Library and its resources, and it provides a welcoming and non-threatening setting for adult literacy classes. The warm and friendly environment ensures that students happily accept overcrowded class spaces.

- BANH Inc, the Richmond Library and CAE have a unique relationship. By working cooperatively and by seeking to look constantly outward it has been possible to expand class provision without compromising integrity. Sharing of resources has meant that it is still possible to provide free tuition to students.

In response to the question of how the initiative could have been done better, Jan Hanson quips:

*Most things could in hindsight be done better, but looking back this one feels pretty good.*

## Reading Services: Yarra Libraries

Inspired by the reader development renaissance taking place internationally – particularly in the United Kingdom and the United States of America – Yarra Libraries is focusing back on the core business of books and reading.

In 2004, Reading Services was identified as a strategic direction for the organisation with a focus on:

- excellent advice to readers about books and reading;

- increasing people's enjoyment of reading by offering expanded reading choices;

- encouraging reader-to-reader recommendations;

- promoting collections;

- providing reader-focused events and programs.

A number of initiatives have been implemented as a result and include: appointment of Australia's first 'reader-in-residence', Australian's first Readers' Day, a regular program of events for readers, book groups and an online book forum, and development of the Reading Room section of the Yarra Libraries website.

Although it targets adult readers, ideas from the project have been adopted by other sections of the library, including Children's and Youth Services and Multicultural Services. In July 2006, Yarra Libraries had its first Chinese Reading month.

*There is still a community perception that libraries are places to go to for advice about reading and to find something interesting to read – Reading Services builds on this. (Shirley Prescott, Reading Services Coordinator)*

Yarra Libraries describes its vision for Reading Services as follows:

- Our libraries are places where people are inspired to read.

- The community recognises that our libraries are places where you can get expert advice about reading.

- Staff are enthusiastic about giving this advice and sharing this knowledge. We are 'reading professionals'.

Many ideas and strategies for achieving this vision have come from the study tour of libraries in the United Kingdom undertaken by Reading Services Coordinator Shirley Prescott. Shirley was awarded the Library Board of Victoria's Margery C. Ramsay Scholarship to undertake research into reader development in 2005. Ultimately, she wants to share the information she has gathered, not only with staff at Yarra Libraries, but also with library staff across Victoria and eventually the rest of Australia.

### Resources

Money for most of the Reading Services initiatives has come from Yarra Libraries' Reading Services budget. Money from the promotions/advertising budget has been used for marketing. The Ewing Trust funded the Reader-in-Residence project officer and Readers' Day at the Fitzroy Library.

Reading Services for Yarra Libraries has a coordinator and part-time Reading Services officers. There are Reading Services contact people at the other branches who attend bi-monthly meetings but they have other roles and specialisations.

### Project initiatives

Yarra Libraries developed a three-year plan for its Reading Services Project:

- 2005–06, Year 1 – Establishment of Reading Services

- 2006–07, Year 2 – Internal focus on staff development and training

- 2007–08, Year 3 – External focus on promotion of Yarra Libraries' expertise to the wider community

The year 2005–06 was a busy one, with many reader initiatives, including:

- Joanna Kenny was appointed as Australia's first Reader-in-Residence, from February to June 2006 at the Fitzroy Library. One of her main responsibilities was organising Australia's first Readers' Day at the Fitzroy Town Hall on 24 June 2006. Sixty people attended this event.

- A number of book groups were run for adults across the region, including a group for 10–14 year old boys and their dads (Boys, Blokes and Books – *see page 59 in section 4.2*) in partnership with the State Library's Centre for Youth Literature and an online book group.

- 'Recommended reading' resources were developed, including:

  - 'If you like ... try ...' shelf talkers and 'Recommended' slips placed in books on shelves'

  - a 'We recommend' list of library staff's favourite books of the year.

- Development of the content and branding for the Reading Room section of the library website (now at **www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/library/Reading%20 Room**).

Yarra Libraries hosted the Putting Readers First seminars for Victorian public library staff in July 2006 as part of its program for staff development. The seminars were delivered by the 'guru' of reader development in the United Kingdom, Rachel Van Riel. Rachel inspired and enthused all attendees.

Reading Services staff have also developed training modules for all staff in the use of print and online resources to assist them when providing advice to library customers about books and reading. All Yarra Libraries staff including Technical Services staff have completed this training.

## Partnerships

The project has looked to the commercial sector for most of its partnerships and come up with creative approaches that benefit all parties.

Readings bookshop has donated prizes for the 'We recommend 2005' promotion and its Readers' Day. The two organisations cross-promote each other's events and Yarra Libraries were given discount rates for advertising in Readings' monthly newsletter. During February 2006, library members were offered a 10% discount on all full-priced books at Readings in Carlton.

Text Publishing has provided authors for library events. They supplied speakers for Read@yourlibrary and most of the authors for the Readers' Day. One of their senior editors ran a workshop on current trends in publishing with newspaper columnist Jane Sullivan from *The Age*. A pilot project has also been undertaken jointly with Text Publishing, which involves book group members reading and commenting on a manuscript. This helped develop the book group notes in the back of the book.

Scribe Publications also provides speakers for author events and assists in their publicity and promotion.

Yarra Libraries worked in partnership with Moreland Libraries to produce the Reading the Commonwealth list, to coincide with the Commonwealth Games in March 2006.

## Achievements

Yarra Libraries' leading role in reader development has considerably raised its profile in its community and in the library industry.

Results from the community survey carried out each year by a syndicate of Victorian libraries shows Yarra Libraries' scores have improved markedly in the areas of lending services and events and activities for adults – indicating that the Reader Services Project had had a positive impact.

> *I love the 'Recommended' bookmarks. I have such little time to find something to read for myself. This is how I choose my books now. (Busy mother at Carlton Library circulation desk with a pile of ten books, all with 'Recommended' bookmarks in them)*

> *I really like the 'If you like ... try ...' things on the shelves. I've just copied down the authors like Annie Proulx and now I'm going to read them all. (Happy Annie Proulx fan at North Fitzroy Library)*

Shirley Prescott notes that one benefit of the book groups is that

> *... members have formed strong new relationships with other members of their group. Some members of the afternoon book groups, who are mostly retirees, have even gone so far as to say that the book group has given them a whole new lease of life.*

Reading Services have also provided benefits to staff and other stakeholders. Staff have commented that they are gaining a great deal of job satisfaction from their work and enjoy focusing their attention on the readers in the community. Publishers who work with the library, including Scribe and Text Publishing, are very happy with the support and promotion given to their authors and Readings appreciates the promotion of their bookshops and the opportunity to sell books at library events.

## Key success factors

One of the main reasons Reading Services have been a success is because many staff members are passionate readers and enjoy engaging with borrowers about books.

> *As our events have now built up a strong following in the community, the time and effort staff put in to planning and organising them is rewarded with good attendance and very positive feedback. (Shirley Prescott)*

The popularity of Reading Services programs and events, and the media attention gained for the initiatives, has helped change any perceptions among staff that Reading Services is a lesser specialisation than Information Services.

> *The majority of our staff now realise that Reading Services are an excellent way to engage with our patrons, particularly at a time when our community is much more IT savvy and independent in their information searching than they were ten, or even five years ago. (Shirley Prescott)*

### Challenges

When the project first started it had a dedicated coordinator, but no Reading Services officers. This meant the implementation of programs and promotions was difficult – even though some staff were keen and very positive, they had little time to spend on yet another task.

A key challenge also came from the fact that many of the libraries staff had lost confidence in giving people advice about books and offering borrowers the chance to try something new to read. These issues are being tackled in the second stage of the project, which is focusing on staff development and training.

### Lessons

When asked to identify the key lessons from the first eighteen months of the project staff identified the following:

- Staff should have ownership of any new initiative or program. Ideas should be workshopped with them from the outset. This gives staff an opportunity to come up with new ideas, which is especially important the staff that generally don't have much opportunity to be creative.

- Use staff and their expertise. The 'We recommend' promotions have been incredibly popular with borrowers and the use of staff photographs on posters has encouraged their support for the project.

- Explain to staff why things are changing. Some staff will not feel confident about the reader-centred approach. Tell them why things need to be done differently – if circulation statistics are poor discuss these with staff, talk about performance and so on.

## 3.4  Enhancing workforce readiness

### Job and Career Link Centres: City of Greater Dandenong Libraries

Job and Career Link (JACL) Centres have been established in Springvale and Dandenong Libraries to assist people to gain employment and ultimately achieve their full potential.

Services are free of charge and include:

- advice on career paths and training;

- advice on developing a résumé;

- help with searching for a job and applying online;

- opportunities to practise interview skills.

All job seekers in the City of Greater Dandenong are eligible to use the centres but they are specifically designed to meet the needs of disadvantaged people (e.g. those from non-English-speaking backgrounds and those with a disability). Many of these people have little experience in compiling an effective résumé or covering letter and have limited interview skills.

The centres build in practical ways on the success of the Greater Dandenong Libraries' English Language and Literacy Access (ELLA) Service which assists clients from a culturally and linguistically

diverse (CALD) background to develop their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. A case study on ELLA is available in the first volume of *Showcasing the Best* and an update on this service can be found on page 39 in section 3.1 of this volume.

The Job and Career Link project was designed as a specific service response to the needs of Greater Dandenong's socially and culturally diverse population, 54% of whom were born overseas. Library staff have long been aware of the increasing demand for a job seeker service that members of this community can access. Home access to personal computers is substantially lower in the City of Greater Dandenong than in other metropolitan municipalities – and although the Springvale and Dandenong Libraries have 28 computers for public use, these are in constant demand.

Resources available at the centres include:

- dedicated computers available sixty hours per week across both libraries – these may be used for up to one hour at a time;

- access to specialised staff;

- online access to résumé samples and templates;

- mail or fax facilities for résumé or job applications;

- a small collection of reference books that can be used at the library or are available for loan.

The service is promoted extensively to ELLA clients and the general community through Centrelink, Job Network providers, community agencies and the media.

### Partnerships

The service was developed after extensive research and consultation by library staff with Centrelink and Job Network providers, Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES), the local TAFE, neighbourhood houses and other community partners that focus on the needs of the unemployed, regardless of the time spent in Australia. The library exploited these existing networks to involve key stakeholders in consultation, planning and rollout of the Job and Career Link service.

The Job and Career Link initiative is now part of an ongoing partnership between ELLA and:

- Centrelink

- Job Network agencies

- TAFE

- AMES

- Adult Community and Further Education providers.

Each partner maintains their specific role, while networking and cross-referring clients. There is ongoing weekly partner contact, and each quarter the partners meet as the English Language Action Group under ELLA's leadership.

### Resources

The Job and Career Link service was established with a grant from the Public Library Initiative Program from the Department for Victorian Communities (now Department of Planning and Community Development) for the purchase of hardware and relevant software. The service is sustained by recurrent funding from the City of Greater Dandenong. In 2005–06 the total project budget was just over $35,000.

The Job and Career Link project is managed by Ann Pan, English Language and Literacy Counsellor, who identified the services required to address the job seeker's needs. English Language and Literacy Access Counsellors and Customer Service Officers from the libraries have been trained in providing one-to-one advice in the use of computer and job-seeking resources.

## Achievements

For 2005–06 usage of the Job and Career Link service totalled 1,600 hours.

The service has a beneficial outcome for many of the people who use it. For some it means finding employment and economic security; for others it can mean a welcoming face and a link into the community.

*First let me share with you the great news that I got a job. Now let me thank you for helping me frame my resume and the covering letter to a fine way that helped me secure more interviews and finally a very good job. (Anonymous)*

*Being a new migrant I was not sure of my approach and was forever apprehensive about everything I did and was shy and hesitant to approach people as they were all strangers to me. In this unknown land you were like a lighthouse spreading warmth which gave me the confidence to approach you rather I say that you approached me initially which helped me to come back to you again. That was all I wanted... (Anonymous)*

The main impacts of the service include:

• developing in individuals the skills necessary to seek and secure employment;

• promoting the benefits of the library to non-users through the provision of practical, relevant and accessible services;

• building on existing initiatives to further break down barriers of social and economic isolation affecting the Greater Dandenong community;

• strengthening community partnerships and interagency understandings.

In the longer term, the project will strengthen the community by improving outcomes for unemployed people within the City of Greater Dandenong and developing community pride and a sense of ability to achieve.

## Key success factors

The Job and Career Link Centres are now an integral part of the Springvale and Dandenong Libraries and the ELLA program. Many factors have contributed to their success, including:

• JACL was able to build on established productive partnerships with community agencies and effective networks that meant it was easy to cross-refer clients to other programs of direct relevance.

• Promotion has been ongoing. Centrelink and Job Network agencies regularly refer clients to Job and Career Link, and each new library member is told about the service at the time of joining.

• The availability of multilingual library staff drawn from CALD backgrounds is a bonus.

• Realistic planning meant that the project was completed on budget.

## Challenges

It is becoming clear that job seekers require assistance throughout library opening hours. However, existing constraints on resources and space limit the available hours of service provided through the centres and mean that the service is confined to the library. Demand is partly the result of the increasing proportion of CALD clients who require base-level learning programs that cannot be satisfied within available state/federal-funded programs. In future years, project staff would look to provide the Job and Career Link service at other locations in Greater Dandenong.

# 4 Reaching out to communities

*We live in an information economy... where those with the knowledge lead the way and those without lag behind... Providing mediated or self-help information facilities either from the printed page or from digital sources turn[s] the information poor into the information rich.*

LAMMY 2006

The Libraries Building Communities (LBC) research shows the wide reach of Victorian public libraries into their communities, with an average of about 60% of people using library services. This includes people from all walks of life, different age groups, various professions and trades, a variety of cultural backgrounds, varying abilities, unemployed and employed.

Not surprisingly, libraries have a reputation of being 'open for all' and of reaching out to users less likely to come to the library of their own accord. These attributes reflect the strong social justice and community development principles underlying much of the work of libraries and their ongoing commitment to education and development of literacy skills across the community.

At the same time the data shows there is still much work to be done in the area of social inclusion. Despite libraries' track record, about 13% of Victorians who could benefit significantly from the use of their public libraries are not users. These are often people from disadvantaged social groups; people who face special difficulties in using the library (i.e. people who are housebound or living in remote communities); and people who do not see the library as relevant to their needs, for example due to their limited literacy skills or because the library does not reflect their culture or interests.

> *The public library's role is to make the experience available to those who are least likely to pursue their curiosity under their own steam... Libraries benefit most those people who are least able to afford books, computers and videos and those who do not have Internet access at home (Leadbeater 2003).*

Libraries have a good understanding of the many obstacles to the use of their services. These include community perceptions and images of the library, physical and environmental barriers, personal and social

factors (such as low literacy levels) and institutional barriers including the types of services on offer and the way in which these are delivered.

Many of the case studies throughout this report identify ways in which libraries work to overcome these obstacles. In this section, we look at library initiatives that have social inclusion as their main goal. These include projects that focus on inclusion of groups such as young men and people in employment who are less likely to be library users and projects that focus on 'hard to reach' groups that have particular requirements due to physical and sensory impairment or complex communication needs.

For many people, libraries represent books, computers and the written word. Meeting the needs of people who, for a variety of reasons, cannot read or who cannot easily communicate, is a challenge. This challenge is taken up in projects such as the East Gippsland Boardmaker Project, which has employed technology and graphics to offer improved communication with children and adults with complex communication needs, and the Auslan Storytime at Eastern Regional Libraries, which enables children with hearing difficulties to participate in storytime.

Projects such as Words on Wheels and Junior Friends of the Library illustrate the many different ways in which libraries promote social inclusion – not only by reaching out to users but by encouraging volunteer activity and support from the community. Volunteers contribute in many ways – through storytelling, reminiscing, fundraising, acting as library advocates and bringing new energy to their libraries. In return they report increased self-confidence, feelings of self-worth and greater connectedness to their communities.

Provision of services to people in remote communities offers many challenges for libraries. Mobile library services present a potential for serious accidents to

occur involving both the operator/drivers and the public. Practical guidelines and assessment tools developed by the Country Public Libraries Group of Victoria aim to ensure that Mobile Library service stops and the vehicles serving the community provide a hazard-free environment for users and the community. In some terrains, difficulties can be experienced in delivering online services. Libraries such as the Upper Murray Regional Library service are constantly evaluating newer and better technologies for service delivery in these areas.

The issues around libraries and social inclusion are being researched further through the Libraries Building Communities project *Connecting with the Community*. Findings from this research will be published in 2008.

## Library Express: Frankston Library Service
UPDATE

The first volume of *Showcasing the Best* told the story of a new library service operating at Frankston Railway Station. Every Tuesday and Thursday, commuters at the station are welcomed with a smile and a hello and the offer of a good book or CD to keep them company on their journey to work. The Frankston Library Service has now been providing the Library Express service to commuters for three years, and by its third year had 251 members.

Users are full of praise for the service:

*This is really unique – what a great service.*

*I've never seen anything like this before, good on the council.*

Many could not use a library if Library Express did not operate, as they are generally working when the libraries are open.

Library Express has provided the inspiration for two other library services operating at the Frankston City Council's Customer Service shops. From November 2006, collections of paperbacks and music CDs were introduced for browsing at the Seaford and Langwarrin shops, extending the library's presence in areas lacking a purpose-built library.

Main achievements
- Kim Kearsey from the library comments: 'Library Express reaches a new market and opens the doors to our library service by going out in to the community this unique way.'

- Library Express has increased membership to the library and has brought back library customers who had ceased to use the library.

- Library Express has raised the profile for the library, even among commuters who do not use the service. Annual surveys suggest that most commuters want the service to remain even if they don't currently use it.

- The library's presence at the Frankston Railway Station from 6.30a.m. has improved the feelings of safety for the community.

## 4.1 Reaching out to older people

### Words on Wheels:
### Campaspe Regional Library

The Words on Wheels (WOW) Storytellers Project is a gentle and friendly program that encourages elderly people in residential facilities to come together to share stories and memories as volunteers read stories out loud to them. New themes are introduced every month and have included School Days, Christmas and Natural Disasters.

WOW is based on the simple but clever idea of bringing together the wealth of talent of elderly residents with the skills and time of the myriad of people leaving the workforce and looking for meaningful volunteer experiences to fill their days. As Valerie Hansen, Books on Wheels Coordinator at Campaspe Regional Library, says, 'Put them together and some great things can happen.'

Improvements have been seen in the emotional wellbeing of participants and volunteers have appreciated an opportunity to expand their skills and develop their self-confidence.

The project, which started just twelve months ago in four aged care facilities in Echuca and Moama, is already seeing increased demand for its services from other facilities and home care services. There are now twenty sessions per month across the Shire.

Campaspe has a large retirement population with the elderly well catered for in several residential facilities. While visiting these facilities, the coordinator of the Books on Wheels (BOW) Home Library Service noticed that this program was not reaching all residents. Through loss of eyesight, inability to hold a book and other factors, many of the residents were just sitting around with little to fill in their time. On the other hand, BOW had an abundance of volunteers wanting to work with elderly people. By putting the two together the concept of Words On Wheels was born. Campaspe Regional Library has the BOW and WOW programs!

The assumption underlying the program is that life experience makes everyone, whether educated or not, able to grapple with imaginative and often complex narratives of fictional texts, to respond to them and to enjoy them.

Resources

The BOW service started as a project funded by a Public Library Initiative Grant through the Department for

Victorian Communities (now Department of Planning and Community Development). Council has continued to support the program by providing ongoing funding for the BOW coordinator, who also oversees the WOW project.

Volunteers can tap into the book lists and books available at the library, as well as photocopy and print material and other resources for the sessions at no charge. Library staff are always happy to help with their expertise, advice and suggestions.

### Partnerships

Crucial to WOW have been the partnerships with a range of activity coordinators at the aged care facilities, who have keenly embraced the program and seen the opportunities it offers for improving people's lives.

A number of businesses, council departments and support agencies promote the service through advertising and 'word of mouth'. Councillors and senior management are regularly briefed on the progress of the program.

The BOW coordinator has promoted the program by speaking at Rostrum, Probus and Rotary club meetings and invitations to be involved have been taken up enthusiastically.

### Achievements

*Being read to … can be as welcoming as a touch, whether or not the listeners have been readers or the words have literal meaning any longer. At an advanced age, to be touched, in any way, is often the high point of a day (Banks 1999).*

WOW is recognised as an ideal way of bringing books and reading to individuals who may not access or go into their public libraries; it is reader development in its broadest sense. Libraries know that the program

is fostering a love of reading in places that have been traditionally hard to reach.

Storytellers are encouraged to use the library to gather material from a wide range of sources to provide an enjoyable mix of fact and fiction, with emphasis on the background and interests of the group. Each month has a theme, which is repeated once a week at four different locations.

The library provides feedback and direction regarding proposed sessions and assists with providing the necessary resources. Joint planning with the coordinator allows her to step in at short notice and take a session if required.

One of the first sessions was based on the theme of School Days using the Education Department's *6th Grade Reader* 1928–1960 and facts and stories relating to the development of education in Australia. This was followed by a bush story, which encouraged residents to reminisce about their experiences – walking miles to school, camping and hiking. Every resident related to the final poem, *'My Country'* by Dorothea Mackellar, some of them reciting it in unison with the WOW storyteller.

Over time the program has been expanded to provide more sessions at different locations with new WOW storytellers. Evaluation of the program in conjunction with the activity coordinators has been built in and adjustments made on the basis of this.

WOW's first storyteller, Dianne, believes that the program's most important achievement so far is an improvement in the emotional wellbeing of both the participants and the volunteers. Attendance at each WOW session ranges from eight to twenty residents, and Dianne has observed an increase in conversation between residents as they share their life experiences prompted by the topic of the month.

> *One resident became quite excited and animated as she related her experience of an approaching bushfire. At the same session, which was on Natural Disasters, three other residents were involved or had relations who were involved with Cyclone Tracey and there was much interaction between everyone. A deeper understanding may have developed between the residents as they interact in their daily activities.*

Volunteers gain through the joy of giving their time, knowledge, empathy and experience, and through seeing the improvements they make in the lives of the elderly. The program offers a volunteering opportunity different from most by allowing participants to develop ideas and use their creativity. The possible benefits are enhanced communication, organisation, human relations and leadership skills.

### Success

The thought put into the design and delivery of the sessions by the coordinator and volunteers is the key to the success of WOW. Sessions are designed to assist residents in reading activities that offer sensory stimulation, social interaction and memory recall. Friendly discussions, usually revolving around the subjects that come up as part of the reading, are important to the sessions. Coordinator Valerie Hansen notes:

> *There can often be a therapeutic aspect to discussions that emerge, and the sessions certainly build confidence. The fact that material is read aloud in an informal setting sometimes over a cup of tea makes the activity accessible to everyone whatever their educational background.*

Other factors in the success of the program are:

• Volunteers are carefully selected to ensure they have the desirable attributes, including good communication skills, ability to plan and implement programs and activities, and sensitivity to the needs of the program. Because many residents have hearing difficulties volunteers must have loud, clear and distinctive voices.

• The coordinator supports, helps and encourages volunteers to make their volunteering experience a happy and fulfilling one.

### Challenges

The implementation of WOW has not faced any specific challenges to date; however, Valerie Hansen notes that if the program grows as expected, possible impacts will be pressure on the BOW coordinator's time management and workload, and the need to identify and train new WOW storytellers.

### Lessons

The main advice from the WOW team to other libraries looking at similar initiatives is to take time in choosing the volunteers to deliver the program and work closely with them to develop the sessions and choose the resources.

> *Don't lose sight that it is a library outreach program – so ensure that the volunteer represents the library in a positive and respectful way at all times. Don't make the sessions too heavy or highly structured; keep them fresh, alive, friendly and inviting. (Valerie Hansen)*

### Next steps

As people across the region become aware of the WOW program, demand for its services grows. Another high care facility in Moama is keen to be included in the program, and home care workers, who provide daily care for the elderly, have also contacted the library to discuss availability of the service for their clients.

Changes are expected in the WOW program as it emerges and develops. In particular, the program must continue to reflect the cultural make-up of the residential facilities involved. Evaluation of the program on a constant basis will help this to occur.

## Services to Seniors:
## Yarra Plenty Regional Library

The Aged Person's Strategic Framework developed by Yarra Plenty Regional Library articulates ways to improve library services to older people in the region. The framework:

- develops a shared vision for services to older people;

- provides clearer definition of the roles and responsibilities of branch staff, volunteers and the outreach section;

- identifies goals and priorities for providing quality library services to:

  – older people in libraries;

  – older non-English-speaking background people;

  – people in supported living accommodation;

  – housebound people.

One of the major strategies in the framework is to provide a mobile library service to people in residential accommodation. Mobile services cater for people with care needs who are no longer able to live in their own homes – about 9% of people over the age of 60 – and who may find access to library services difficult or impossible. The outreach vehicle visits 49 of these centres in the region over a three-week cycle. It is specially designed with a wheelchair lift and is stocked with material of interest to older people.

### Main achievements
- Understanding the needs of an ageing population.

- Providing resources and programs that meet those needs, particularly resources that take advantage of new technology (e.g. Playaways).

- New state-of-the-art vehicle with wheelchair access.

- Focus 55s, monthly senior activities at many branches.

## 4.2  Reaching out to young people

### Junior Friends of the Library, Alexandra: Murrindindi Library Service

*'The presence of a group of energetic young people who feel welcome adds a buzz to the library.'*

So say library staff about the Alexandra Junior Friends of the Library (JFOL), a group of highly motivated young people who meet monthly at the Alexandra Library in country Victoria to plan and implement projects for young people and families in the community. The wide-ranging activities include literacy promotion, collection improvement, children's activities and events focused on visiting authors.

The group offers its members opportunities for positive social interaction, a bit of fun and food. Library staff have noticed a marked difference in connecting with secondary schools that have JFOL members.

Alexandra Junior Friends of the Library was established in 1991 and has a healthy track record of consistent achievement. Over the past couple of years, the group has raised money to pay for many library projects, with the keen support of local people and businesses.

One of the main ideas behind JOFL is that teenagers need meaningful participation. As Libby Kotschet from the Alexandra Library notes:

*When young people have their ideas accepted, they gain pride and become aware of their place in the town – or even the universe. Each member of the Murrindindi friends group has tangible evidence of their achievements. Community involvement enabled the group to purchase a $2,000 Science and Technology encyclopedia, comfy couches, sent books to outback communities – as well as all the Tintin videos!*

## Resources

The main things needed to get the project going were a staff member to steer it and a yearly plan of activities. Combined with a sense of fun, a bit of nerve, food (this is why the group needs funds) and an Adult Friends group to manage the cash – they had a recipe for success.

*Convenors need to be flexible and stay tuned to the kids so the program is relevant to them, the plans have to be shared plans. (Libby Kotschet)*

Money has been raised from sales of secondhand books, library bags, T-shirts with logo and photos made into cards. Fundraising events include a sausage sizzle, roast potato stalls, a festival (combined with the local hospital) and trivia nights.

*Fundraising for JFOL is essential, and without our community getting behind our projects we would never be able to achieve our goals (Farrell & Matthews 1998).*

## Achievements

The JFOL group has attracted a variety of young members, some with little or no experience in the library, who have taken on leading roles to encourage others to use and enjoy books.

*The main thing we have accomplished as Junior Friends is the ability to create new friends while helping the library. The Murrindindi Junior Friends of the Library has changed our lives and when we look back we can all agree that teenagers from even a small country town can make a difference (Farrell & Matthews 1998).*

Library staff comment that JFOL meetings tend to be the fastest and frequently noisiest in the world. The following list provides a good idea of the wide range of activities enjoyed by the group:

- Halloween night
- Video and pizza nights
- Favourite Books festival
- Worst Book in the World competition
- Best Friends FOLA (Friends of Libraries Australia) award
- Archimedes Science Club
- History mystery bus tour
- Excursion to the Baillieu Library
- Summer Reading Club parties
- Shakespeare nights
- Music events
- Author visits
- Artrageous Youth Art Show
- New covers for 'mouldy' old stack books.

Establishing positions of authority and responsibility in the group appealed directly to some of the young members.

*The idea of these positions was to enable youth to experience responsibilities, which all position bearers in the JFOL throughout its history have acquired. By introducing office bearers from the initial meeting, we were determined to be recognised as a credible organisation, rather than just a short-lived youth group (Farrell & Matthews 1998).*

The Alexandra Junior Friends of the Library were joint national winners of the Friends of Libraries Australia (FOLA) Best of Friends Awards in 1997.

## Impact

The JFOL group has been a benefit to the library service, the staff and the teenagers involved.

For members it has provided community involvement, friendships, the feeling of being at home in the library and a sense of commitment and belonging. Members of the group say that JFOL has provided a welcome alternative in a distinctly sports-oriented town.

> *We have attempted to increase the standard of literacy, in an area where reading is a pastime relegated to so called 'nerds' and 'squares'(Farrell & Matthews 1998).*

For staff it has provided energy, links with community and a clearer understanding of the needs of young people.

> *Just planning a program with the group and tapping into community resources can be enlightening. (Library staff member)*

For the library it has meant an enhanced community profile – opening up the possibilities of the library.

> *The JFOL helps build a core group of people who will have a lifelong relationship between libraries and several of our first JFOL committee, now in their late twenties, tell us this.*

> *[JFOL] is a positive reflection on the library and staff when it's seen to be an active, inclusive, supportive, ok place for the young. The library may become a cool place to be. (Library staff member)*

For the community it has meant increased pride in their young people.

> *The whole town buzzed on the FOLA award. (Library staff member)*

## Lessons

Advice regarding the practical issues of running a Junior Friends group is available in *Junior Friends in Your Library, Alexandra Library Staff 1999 – A Guide to Starting and Maintaining a Group* (available from the Alexandra Library). This advice includes:

- Keep to a meeting structure. Juniors warm to it when they see that it has potential for controlling unruly elements, keeping things moving and giving everyone a say.

- Create a yearly plan that allows kids to suggest their own events and activities, and allows them ownership of the whole program – often the theme will be across all library activities.

- Activities, expectations and program needs tend to evolve with each bunch of kids. The current group is into running events for a wider age group.

- Not everyone will participate. Strengths of the group will vary: some may be into writing reviews, organising events, designing a web page, making radio ads, suggesting titles, or sitting quietly looking at their fingernails. Go with the flow of the group, keeping the library as the focus.

- Promote the group with photos, newsletters and a comments board or 'Read this' board within the library.

- Remember that teens are looking for opportunities to widen their world through experience. Try guest speakers, journalists, exchange students, tourists, non-readers.

Libby Kotschet emphasises that you should:

> *NEVER NEVER cancel. The essence of the program may need to be altered, but the event must go on. Kids love to plan and look forward to events. They put in energy convincing their parents to bring them along, don't disappoint them.*

### Challenges
The JFOL needs more press coverage.

### Next steps
Membership of JFOL numbers about twenty. There is always a prize for bringing a new member. Currently the JFOL members are working on new library cards, which have member's photos and show their role in the organisation. These cards provide access 'privileges', including priority on events and new items.

### Boys and books programs:
### State Library of Victoria and several Victorian public libraries

In 2004, the first 'Boys, Blokes and Books' book club for boys aged 10 to 14 years and their fathers (or other male carer or mother) was established in inner Melbourne. The group met eight times a year and participants brought along the books they love. Activities included guest speakers and book discussions. Sessions were timed for the early evening so dads could come after work.

The club was run for three years through a partnership between the North Fitzroy library (a branch of Yarra Libraries) and the Centre for Youth Literature at the State Library of Victoria. North Fitzroy was selected as the venue because of the imminent re-opening of Fitzroy High School, situated close by.

Inspired by the success of 'Boys, Blokes and Books', in 2006 branches of the Melton Library and Information Service, the West Gippsland Regional Library Corporation and Hobsons Bay Libraries piloted a similar program – 'Boys, Blokes, Books and Bytes' – also delivered in partnership with the State Library's Centre for Youth Literature and the Victorian Department of Education.  This program is ongoing and expanding.

This case study looks in-depth at the original 'Boys, Blokes and Books' program at North Fitzroy.

The idea for the book club grew out of three concerns:

* Older boys were being lost as readers.

* Reading was seen as nerdy and negative by many boys and their peers – the library wanted to foster an interest in and love of reading and discussing books.

* A community need to provide something for dads and sons to do together apart from cars and sport. Many of the other events at the library were female oriented.

Library staff were aware that Dads & Lads bookclubs run by British public libraries were proving effective and popular. Some research was done on the British model and this was tailored to give it an 'informal' feel for Australia. The project plan was kept broad to incorporate some flexibility into a project tackling unknown ground in Australia.

### Partnerships
'Boys, Blokes and Books' was a partnership program between North Fitzroy library and the State Library of Victoria's Centre for Youth Literature (CYL). Mike Shuttleworth from the CYL acted as facilitator of the sessions. In this role he decided on the topics, organised guests and prepared a draft text for the flyers, which was sent to the library for circulating through all of its branches. Library staff were responsible for ensuring copies of the featured title(s) or topic were available on the night, answering queries from the public and promotion, buying refreshments and setting up the venue.

Fitzroy High and North Fitzroy Primary schools were regularly sent a flyer to go in the school newsletter.

### Resources
The first year of the book club was financed through a Local Priorities Funding grant from Local Government

Victoria in the Department for Victorian Communities (now Department of Planning and Community Development). This covered the facilitator's session fee, provision of refreshments at each session, and fees for an occasional speaker. The second and third years were funded by the library as part of operational expenditure.

The club was jointly managed by a team of three – Shirley Prescott, Reading Services Coordinator; Carol Clearwater, then Team Leader at the North Fitzroy branch library; and Mike Shuttleworth from the Centre for Youth Literature. Staff from the North Fitzroy library also supported the program as part of their normal duties.

### Achievements

> *Some sessions saw three generations from one family with granddad, dad and son. Sometimes uncles came too. (Carol Clearwater)*

There was an informal review of the program at the end of the first year of operation under the Local Priorities Funding grant, to assess the viability of the project and whether to continue with it as an ongoing library-funded program. Parental and community interest in the project were encouraging, and it was felt that the project would fit into a larger program of Reading Services and reader development being undertaken at that time by the library. It was decided to continue with the project in the same format as boys were responding positively to it.

> *We were looking for quality interaction between the attendees and the facilitator, with space for each attendee to contribute and gain a sense of shared value. This is what we were getting... We hope that the boys will carry the benefits and confidence gained into the rest of their schooling and beyond. (Carol Clearwater)*

A number of library services, both Victorian and interstate, contacted the North Fitzroy library to ask about the project. The main question asked was 'what's in it for the library' in terms of hard outcomes. In summary:

- The very small North Fitzroy branch library experienced an increase in borrowing by boys aged 10 to 14 years from pretty much nil to a small but steady level.

- Older boys started coming into the library regularly during the week, where once they were rarer than a dodo.

- Community interest and satisfaction was reflected in customer service surveys and comments to staff. A number of parents expressed their appreciation for the program. One mum told Carol her son 'just lives' for the sessions. Eight sessions per year weren't enough! Another dad commented, 'This has been the best thing we've done together'. He hoped other boys and dads would continue to have access to the bookgroup.

- Boys saw their dads valuing reading and discussing books, and the library as a place of enrichment. This encourages boys to read more and also helps build relationships between boys and their fathers.

- The Council funding the program could see benefits delivered in the local community.

Library staff emphasise that most of the outcomes from the program were in the intangible social capital sphere, not the big number-crunching statistics loved by councils and library boards.

### Other impacts

On a local level, the library was very aware that parents were happy with the benefits of the project and that it had enhanced community approval. The program provided a good example of the library's engagement with the community to the Council that funds it.

For library staff there was professional and personal satisfaction in being part of a new project that was clearly valued by participants and the wider community. This helped staff to realise that working in a small branch doesn't mean you have to think small.

During the three years of the project, North Fitzroy branch received many favourable comments and publicity. Radio National approached the library about doing a profile on the book club.

### Success

Library staff have identified a number of factors which made this program a success. These include:

- having a facilitator with a good mix of skills who can establish rapport with other adult males as well as boys and sustain their trust;

- holding the sessions in the children's area of the library floor when the library was open, which meant interested adults could be onlookers observing what was happening. This is one factor in the wider community approval of the program. People could see and discuss aspects with staff;

- keeping the numbers attending relatively small – particularly as the venue was a small branch library with no separate meeting room. Usually six to eight boys plus their dads attended each session. Twelve to 16 participants in total is a good number for quality interaction. Occasionally when there were as many as 12 boys plus dads it was a real challenge to the facilitator to maintain good solid interaction;

- parental and community support;

- adequate funding.

### Challenges

A level of disappointment was initially expressed by some members of the public that the club was for boys only. However, when library staff explained the rationale – i.e. that the program was to assist boys who were not reading enough and were lagging behind in literacy in older primary years – these concerns usually dissipated.

On another level, it was challenging at times to work effectively in partnership with another organisation. It was sometimes difficult to coordinate activities and work to timelines, especially regarding production and distribution of promotional materials and session documentation and record-keeping.

### Lessons

Library staff have a number of comments about how they would do things better a second time around. These include:

- better documentation processes and agreed communication channels before starting the project;

- clearer definition of project leader role and responsibilities;

- establishing a set schedule for sessions to give staff and participants greater certainty;

- giving the library, as venue and publicity provider, full responsibility for organising the sessions.

### Next steps

Since 2006, the Melton branch of the Melton Library and Information Service, the Drouin branch of West Gippsland Regional Library Corporation and the Altona Meadows branch of Hobsons Bay Libraries have participated in a similar program. 'Boys, Blokes, Books and Bytes' is also intended to introduce boys and their male role models to books, libraries and reading.

Attractive incentives of free books, food, drink and entertainment are used to entice the invitees to come to their public library. At the library they can: take part in discussion and activity groups; talk about what they'd been reading; inspect and use the facilities of the library and access materials of interest to them. Each session revolves around an activity (e.g. quiz, author visit, tabloid sports and workshop) and discussion about the previous month's readings.

As with the original North Fitzroy library program, 'Boys, Blokes, Books and Bytes' is a partnership initiative. The State Library's Centre for Youth Literature has a core role in coordinating events across the various venues. The participating libraries provide a place, a facilitator, reading resources and food. And, the Victorian Department of Education provides introductions to local state primary and secondary schools, which provide contacts with boys who are poor or reluctant readers.

As part of the program, the CYL conducts workshops for teachers and library staff to define the project aims; and promotes use of their website, (**www.insideadog.com.au**), as a resource for boys as readers. In 2006, the CYL organised a 'Bookgig' for all participants at the State Library.

Responses have been extremely positive from boys and blokes alike, especially as many had not been to their library before. Teachers have commented favourably about behaviour change in participants in terms of their reading skills and habits. Continued involvement and extension of the project is planned.

### Drouin Sports Award:
### West Gippsland Regional Library Corporation

This program, which provides a weekly encouragement award to two of the under-14 teams of the Drouin Junior Football Club, has been developed to promote the use of the library by young teenage boys. Each encouragement award recipient receives $5 and is required to gain membership of the library and borrow two items to redeem their award.

Friends of the Drouin Library sponsored the program and the West Gippsland Regional Library Corporation (WGRLC) partnered with Drouin Football Club to promote the award to the teams.

The program aims to raise the profile of the Drouin Library within the community and to target a particular non-user group. By demonstrating the success of the program, WGRLC hopes to drive future sponsorship to

implement the strategy region-wide for teenage boys and to netball clubs to encourage membership in teenage girls.

### Main achievements
- 25% of the recipients became new members of WGRLC and have established a pattern of library usage.
- Successful strategic partnership with Friends of Drouin Library, Drouin Junior Football Club and WGRLC.
- Strengthening connections between the junior sporting fraternity and the library.

## 4.3   Reaching out to people with a communication impairment

### Boardmaker Project:
### East Gippsland Shire Library

The Boardmaker Project is the first of its kind in Australia. It supports community use of computer software to improve communication with children and adults with complex communication needs.

This software is a powerful means of enabling parents, carers, family and friends to produce picture cards or boards that help them to communicate and even share feelings with people who have little or no speech, challenging and difficult behaviours, decreased understanding of literacy concepts, and receptive and expressive language delays (including Downs Syndrome and developmental delays).

The East Gippsland Shire Library has worked with local agencies, TAFE and disability organisations to make Boardmaker software freely available in accessible and supportive community venues across the region. In a region such as East Gippsland, with limited availability of professional staff to provide communication support, this is a particularly important project.

> *... in order to live a full and healthy life, it is imperative we are able to freely communicate our feelings and desires. Communities will only be enriched and strengthened if all members are embraced and included. The Boardmaker project has the capacity to reach out and touch many people's lives in very meaningful ways. (Rural Access Project Officer 2004–06)*

People with communication impairments require the use of alternative forms of communication. One form is comics, which are picture symbols of words. Producing these comics requires the use of a software program called Boardmaker, which is expensive to access and needs specific knowledge to use.

A donation of Boardmaker, facilitated by the Rural Access Project in 2005, enabled Bairnsdale and Lakes Entrance branch libraries to provide this software to the community at no cost.

Enthusiastic feedback from the 2005 project highlighted the need to introduce Boardmaker to more isolated areas and provide ongoing support and training. In 2006, a successful application to the Library Board of Victoria's Pierre Gorman Award has enabled the program to be provided in a further six strategically chosen locations.

### Resources and partnerships

A senior library staff member manages the project as a core duty, with input from the Community Building Unit of council. The development, delivery and promotion of the project has been facilitated through the East Gippsland Shire Library, East Gippsland Shire Rural Access Project and Regional Communication Service (SCOPE).

A core group comprising representatives of East Gippsland Shire Library, Rural Access Project, Regional Communication Service (SCOPE), Gippsland Lakes Community Health and East Gippsland Institute of TAFE make up the project's steering group.

Initial donations of the software were made by the Department of Human Services and Gippsland Lakes Community Health. In addition to this, the project has involved the support and time of a diverse range of organisations from across East Gippsland:

- East Gippsland Disability Support Network supported the consultation process.

- East Gippsland Rural Access Project played a major role in establishing networks and facilities for the extended program.

- East Gippsland Shire Council has provided assistance with governance, technology, staff time and facilities. The Boardmaker software is located in shire libraries and offices at Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance, Omeo, Orbost and Paynesville.

- Online support for the project has been provided though My Connected Community, hosted by Vicnet, a division of the State Library of Victoria.

- East Gippsland Institute of TAFE provides staff expertise and time supporting the program. It has included the project in its Social Sciences curriculum. As part of their assessment, students will be required to participate in the Boardmaker support program.

- Ongoing staff time, facilities and promotion were provided by:
  - Rural Access Project
  - Regional Communication Service (SCOPE)
  - Gippsland Lakes Community Health, Disability
  - East Gippsland Institute of TAFE.

Regional service and community organisations have provided venues and facilities for the project and participated in training and promotional activities. The participating organisations are:

- Swifts Creek Community Centre
- Omeo District Health
- Orbost Community Health Service
- Nowa Nowa Community Health Centre
- Mallacoota District Health
- Cann River Community Centre.

## Achievements

The achievements of the project are many and include:

- provision of safe and supportive environments where the public can freely access Boardmaker software in community venues across East Gippsland;

- training and information sessions conducted at all sites within the first three months and attended by over 100 people;

- empowerment of the community to produce their own communication aids and behaviour intervention tools at a time and place to suit their needs;

- promotion of a better understanding and inclusion of people with communication impairments;

- establishment of a strong network of genuine partners to provide and sustain the project into the foreseeable future.

The Manager of Family, Youth and Children's Services, Gippsland Lakes Community Health, comments on the importance of access through the libraries:

> *Having the Boardmaker software available at the library during their open hours extends the GLCH service for our clients. They can access it hands on [this is not an option at the health centre] and explore new ideas and strategies without having to wait for professional assistance.*

The interest shown by other organisations and the acceptance of a paper on the project presented at the 2007 Australian Group on Severe Communication Impairment (AGOSCI) conference reflects the achievements of the Boardmaker project.

## Impact

In terms of impact on the community, Anna Cook and Denece Sippo from the East Gippsland Shire Library note:

- The project has been enthusiastically received by the community and in particular its success in engaging the Indigenous community is beyond expectation.

- Ongoing publicity and related programs with SCOPE have assisted businesses and recreational groups to recognise the advantages visual strategies have

when communicating with some of their clients and members.

- Carers are now empowered to actively participate in development of communication aids.

- There is greater understanding of the disability sector and issues faced by people with disabilities in the East Gippsland community, especially among staff in local organisations.

> *The library has a history of involvement in accessibility programs and the staff has always responded positively to them. The session 'What is Communication?' run by SCOPE provided our staff with valuable information and understanding of some of the issues faced by people with disabilities. All East Gippsland Shire Library staff have enthusiastically received this project. The extended networks developed and the positive relationships forged lay the groundwork for more joint projects in this region. (Community Information Coordinator, East Gippsland Shire Library)*

The TAFE Rural Access Project Officer notes some of the other positive impacts on participating organisations and their staff:

- enhanced opportunities to network and understand the needs of community members who are carers of those with communication impairments;

- discussion with Rural Access Project Officers across Gippsland with the view to implement the program in their own communities'

- opportunities to support other SCOPE projects and commence new ones.

## Success

Identifying partners with common goals and who are willing to share roles and knowledge has been the most important factor in making the project a success.

Finding the right partners has brought with it a commitment to 'out of hours' meetings, installations and training. It has also meant that, because partner organisations understand their community and its

characteristics, they don't hold unrealistic expectations. They recognise the long-term nature of the project – and that skills development, distance, impact of fires, floods and so on will affect progress.

All partners have a sense of ownership of the project because all are valued members of the team. Everyone receives copies of the minutes and regular updates about group activities through phone calls, emails, newsletters, network meetings and, when possible, site visits.

> *Providing face-to-face and online support has assisted us to build the confidence of all participants in the project, no matter where they were physically located or even when they needed support. (Anna Cook and Denece Sippo)*

Library staff also note the importance of:

- meshing services (e.g. different partners were used in different locations and functions were combined to minimise travel and costs);

- focusing on communities and locating the project in safe, accessible, key places;

- promoting the project through community newsletters, flyers, posters and media (including radio and television interviews) and guest speaker commitments. Visits have been made to target groups such as kindergartens and community residential units and information has been provided at relevant local seminars and exhibitions.

## Challenges

The project is the first of its kind in Australia, and being at the cutting edge has raised a number of challenges. The first of these was to find an appropriate source of funding. Receiving the Pierre Gorman Award was a major turning point. It enabled the project team to respond to the feedback received from early endeavors, increased the project viability and added credibility.

Competing demands on staff time have had to be managed. Staff have to juggle responsibilities for project management and implementation, technical assistance, communication and promotion, general support across the network and other work responsibilities.

Installing the software and providing access to the public in a number of organisations has also provided its challenges. The project team has had to be mindful of IT protocols at individual sites, while providing a useable and friendly environment.

Training and support for users has been crucial as many are not 'native' users of technology. It is expected that as their confidence and skills increase so will their uptake.

## Lessons

Over the time the project has been running, participating organisations have learnt much and have the following advice for others:

- Identify key alliances and partners. An essential partner in Victoria would be Regional Communication Services. Others could be speech pathologists in special schools, people with knowledge of adaptive technologies and specialised early intervention (autism), special schools, day training centres and health workers.

- Consider timelines carefully. We were so excited by the potential of the project we rolled it out very quickly. You either need a dedicated project officer or longer timelines if you are to adequately allow for competing interests to be considered.

- Obtain the services of a dedicated project officer if you can – who can progress work on the project, provide research, maintain enthusiasm and develop the service model.

- Include a more formal component to the community consultation process (e.g. a focus group).

- Make sure the support network is trained and in place before rolling out the project to the community. This would also assist in maintaining the initial enthusiasm.

- Run 'Show and Share' sessions early in the project to help build confidence and provide informal hands-on learning.

- Establish stronger links with local specialist schools and day care centres and use these as places where strategies can be put in place and observed by new users.

- Develop a sustainability plan.

### Next steps

The early focus of the project has been on identified target groups. In 2007, plans involve including businesses and working with them to identify ways in which they can better interact with people who have a communication need. Cafés, for example, may be able to produce visual menus.

The project team also plans to continue to promote the project as a means of raising the profile of visual strategies in the community and demonstrating their relevance to the way of life, and social inclusion of, people with disabilities.

Staff at the East Gippsland Shire Library are happy to act as mentors to other communities interested in establishing their own Boardmaker Project. They invite you to support them in their endeavor to have the Boardmaker program made available by online subscription.

### Auslan storytime:
### Eastern Regional Libraries

Auslan Storytime takes place at the Croydon Library once a month when Jenny, an Auslan storyteller from the Monnington Centre, and who is deaf herself, attends the storytime session and signs the stories and songs for the small number of children who are deaf.

It has been an interesting experience for everyone involved. All the children have quickly grown accustomed to the signing and those who are deaf are well accepted into the group. Although the storytime presenter has found more preparation is needed than expected, she has enjoyed working with Jenny and seeing the reactions of the children.

The Monnington Centre has had excellent reports back from the parents involved. The library intends to continue the program next year.

The program has been funded by a small grant from the Maroondah City Council.

### Main achievements

- Including children who are deaf in the storytime program.

- Developing a strong partnership with the Monnington Centre.

- Providing an opportunity for library staff to work with the Auslan storyteller and the deaf community.

## 4.4 Reaching out to people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background

### Chinese Read and Chat Group:
### Eastern Regional Libraries

The Chinese Read and Chat Group aims to help people from the growing Chinese community in the Knox area to use library services more confidently and to make social contacts.

Sessions are held every month with a Chinese-speaking member of staff. The group can browse the Chinese materials and discuss what they are reading. They can enjoy a chat over tea and coffee and get answers to any library queries they might have.

Talks have also been conducted on Saturday mornings covering topics such as healthy eating, buying and renting houses, and shopping. Speakers have been drawn from the Knox Community Health Service, Centrelink and Consumer Affairs.

### Main achievements

- More confident use of libraries and community services by the Knox Chinese community.

- Developing new social connections within the community.

- Promoting the role of the library in social inclusion and community strengthening.

## 4.5 Reaching out to people in remote communities

### Mobile Library Sites: Safer and Better: Country Public Libraries Group of Victoria*

The Country Public Libraries Group of Victoria has produced a series of practical guidelines and assessment tools to assist public library services with the safe operation and upgrading of mobile library sites and mobile library vehicles.

The aim is to ensure that mobile library service stops and the vehicles serving the community provide a hazard-free environment for users, meet community expectations and minimise potential occupational health and safety risks. The target group includes mobile library managers, drivers/operators, designers and financial stakeholders.

Implementing these guidelines will allow mobile library services to work towards best practice in occupational health and safety.

In the late 1990s, many organisations became more aware of their occupational health and safety (OH&S) responsibilities. Mobile libraries carry the potential for serious accidents that may involve both the drivers/operators and the public. Large semi-trailers operating in many different settings, from isolated townships in the mountains to dense urban environments, highlighted the necessity to develop better procedures and practices to improve risk management.

The development of guidelines was the topic of many a mobile library conference held across the eastern seaboard from 2002 to 2005. According to IFLA's mobile library representative, these guidelines are a world first.

In response to this, the Country Public Libraries Group (CPLG), an organisation made up of library manager/Chief Executive Officer representatives from 19 country library services in Victoria, initiated a project in early 2005 to develop a set of best practice guidelines and design concepts for public libraries to adopt in order to minimise potential OH&S risks.

A project brief was prepared by Bruce Myers (Swan Hill Regional Library Service) and Russ Elwin (Wimmera Regional Library Corporation) based on the comments and feedback from members. The project commenced in June 2005 with the intention to conclude in time for the annual mobile library conference that September.

### Resources

CPLG allocated $27,000 from its project savings to fund the project and engaged ARK Consulting Group Pty Ltd (ARK), now known as WSP Environmental, a management consultancy that provides practical, business-focused solutions to risk management issues. The three ARK consultants involved in this project had a health and safety background with particular emphasis on ergonomics and traffic management.

Decision making was delegated to the CPLG executive of which two members, John Murrell and Bruce Myers, formed the project management committee. Recognising the issue as being one not only involving country services, Greg Bell, the Mobile Library Coordinator for Eastern Regional Libraries, was invited to join the group.

### Partnerships

Mobile library operators from around Australia were invited to submit ideas and issues for consideration via a website developed for the project. This website now acts as a forum on mobile library matters. It is hosted by Upper Murray Regional Library.

### Achievements

The project methodology has involved:

- group discussion with mobile library operators concerning OH&S issues;

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* Note: It is anticipated that in 2008 the Victorian Public Library and Information Network (Viclink) and the Victorian Country Public Libraries Group will be reconstituted and renamed Public Libraries Victoria.

- assessments of vehicles by all the consultants;

- development of draft guidelines;

- circulation and testing by the CPLG project team and representative stakeholders nationally.

Key issues identified through the project include:

- site quality (e.g. access difficulties, location of power boxes, poor amenities, slope of road);

- library design (each time a new vehicle is designed, 'the wheel is recreated');

- setting up for use (e.g. use of ladders, working with electricity, storage of crates, manual handling of steps, rails, capsule);

- library use (e.g. working alone, handling cash, repetitive shoulder movements for many tasks).

A CD of the guidelines and assessment tools includes:

- 'Design guidelines for mobile libraries' – these provide guidance on the construction and modification of mobile libraries, and represent world's best practice in the production of mobile library vehicles.

- 'Site risk assessment tool' – using a risk assessment process, this checklist guides mobile library personnel in determining if an allocated library location is suitable.

- 'OH&S inspection checklist' – provides details on how to conduct an audit to ensure compliance with OH&S legislation, and to identify any hazards.

- 'OH&S guidelines for operators' – highlights the potential hazards within the workplace and what can be done to prevent injury to the operator and the general public.

- 'Task analysis for mobile libraries' – setting out task steps and actions to be undertaken, potential issues and risks to be reviewed and current control strategies.

Libraries are now using the guidelines to improve sites for mobile library users and operators. Daily checklists are helping to ensure that vehicles are 'eyeballed' prior to leaving the depot each morning.

Benefits for staff include a better understanding of OH&S issues relating to vehicle operation and management and the physical requirements of driving such vehicles and managing the related tasks (capsule operation, rounds box lifting, etc.). Exercises for mobile drivers are included in the 'Warming up for work in a mobile library' section and have been demonstrated at conferences.

## Keys to success

The keys to success identified by the project team include:

- a dedicated project team willing to work on the ground with the consultant;

- engaging a consultant with extensive OH&S experience at a local government level;

- a willingness of mobile library stakeholders to share their information and ideas with others;

- involvement of the Eastern Regional Libraries assisted with the travel budget of the consultant by making it possible to visit different mobile libraries within a reasonable travel distance from Melbourne.

## Challenges

To make the project achievable there had to be some limits on the methodology adopted:

- Rigid vehicles and buses were not assessed.

- Site assessments and vehicle inspections were focused on outer eastern Melbourne vehicles (although discussions were held with other areas and photos reviewed of alternative vehicles).

- Due to time restrictions, there has not been 'road testing' of the guidelines.

## Next steps

Adoption of the guidelines by libraries over time will improve the physical infrastructure for library users.

The guidelines are a living document: feedback is sought via the website (**www.mobilelibraries.com.au**).

## Mobile library service:
## Upper Murray Regional Library
### UPDATE

The Upper Murray Regional Library continues to provide library and information services to remote and rural communities, including online access to information using innovative technologies. The original technology behind the online access, featured in the first volume of *Showcasing the Best*, has been replaced with other satellite and Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) technologies, which are cheaper to run. The library is constantly evaluating newer and better technologies for service delivery.

# 5 Providing a gateway to information and experience

*The future of libraries is being shaped today by emerging technology that is transforming the way information is created and disseminated. … The mantra will be: 'Everything, everywhere, when I want it, the way I want it.*

OUTSELL 2004

Our ability to access and use the information available to us through various media such as the Internet is a critical element of participation in the social, civic and economic life of the community. Vinson (2007) has identified the disadvantaging impacts of poor information retrieval and exchange skills in neighbourhoods across Australia. Others have noted the importance of local information in creating a sense of connectedness and belonging to a community and have observed that the demand for this type of information seems to be growing.

Within this context, public libraries stand at the forefront in helping their communities gain better access to all types of information. The skills of librarians in helping people identify their information needs, find and evaluate information sources, access information and develop their own information skills are unique to the library profession and are highly valued in the community.

Data collected for the original Libraries Building Communities research identifies as one of the key strengths of libraries their willingness and ability to 'embrace new ways of doing things' and in particular to adopt new technologies that allow quicker and easier access to information (State Library of Victoria 2005).

LibraryLink Victoria is a good example of libraries drawing on new technology to offer better customer service. This web-based resource provides a gateway to the collections of all Victorian public libraries and Victorian-based universities. It will allow library users to search and place online requests for books and other materials from their homes, in schools and anywhere they have access to the Internet. Introduction of wireless technology in Darebin Libraries and Yarra Plenty Regional Library allows library patrons to use their own personal equipment such as laptops to access the Internet while at the library. This has the advantage of freeing up use of the library's computers for people without their own equipment.

Increasingly, libraries are using web-based technologies not just to engage their users but to help them create content in areas such as local history and local writing. Sharing of information that is produced locally and which captures the spirit of the local community contributes to the development of more connected and inclusive neighbourhoods.

Social networking tools available through Web 2.0 are encouraging the growth of online communities where people can chat or ask questions. Writers such as Charles Lyons (2007) see a greater role for libraries

> *...as contributors of content to the existing communities; as facilitators encouraging participation by the community in these resources; as marketers raising awareness of these resources; as trainers for local residents in how to use them; and, even as creators and maintainers of their own locally-focused online communities.*

Through this, he argues libraries can strive to create virtual communities that supplement their often already strong physical presence.

At Yarra Plenty Regional Library it is recognised that if librarians are to embrace the ideas and practices behind Web 2.0 they need to be familiar and comfortable with the new ways of engaging and helping users find information, gather knowledge and create content. Yarra Plenty's Library 2.0 training program is designed to make staff feel confident with social networking tools.

## 5.1 Providing a gateway to information

### LibraryLink Victoria: Victorian Public Library and Information Network*

LibraryLink Victoria (www.llv.net.au) is a web-based gateway to the information riches of Victorian public libraries. In a single 'federated' search, users can locate books, CDs, DVDs, journal articles and other items available for loan from public libraries throughout Victoria using the Internet from anywhere – home, school, the office or an Internet café.

There is no longer a need to drive from one library to another in search of chosen items. Instead, users are able to find where the item is held and have it sent to their local library for collection.

LibraryLink Victoria is a work in progress. On completion it will include all Victorian public library catalogues, Victorian university catalogues, selected State Library catalogues, selected databases and online websites.

Developments in technology mean that simultaneous searching of multiple collections and resources through a single interface is now possible. For some people in the library world this represents the biggest improvement in library useability since the switch from card catalogues and printed indexes to online catalogues and databases.

LibraryLink Victoria is drawing on this technology to make it simple and trouble-free for library users in Victoria to find the resources they are looking for. It is expected that the greatest achievement of the project will be to give users access to previously inaccessible reference material from sources other than their own home library catalogue.

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\* Note: It is anticipated that in 2008 the Victorian Public Library and Information Network (Viclink) and the Victorian Country Public Libraries Group will be reconstituted and renamed Public Libraries Victoria.

### Partnerships

LibraryLink Victoria has been a joint initiative between:

*   Victorian Public Library and Information Network (Viclink), the peak body for Victoria's public libraries – which has overall responsibility for the project and has acted as an agent for public libraries.

*   Department for Victorian Communities (now Department for Planning and Community Development) – which provided the funding for the implementation of the project in 2006–07.

*   Library Board of Victoria – which has funded the project management over two years and all other costs of the project in 2007–08.

*   OCLC PICA – the provider and manager of the software and services used for the project.

Public libraries have provided input through their representatives on the Steering Committee and the User Group.

### Resources

The Department for Victorian Communities and the Library Board of Victoria have supported the development, implementation, staff training and all other costs of the first two years (approximately $0.8 million). Public libraries will support ongoing costs.

The project has been managed by a contracted project manager.

### Project activities

Choosing appropriate software has been a crucial part of getting the project right. After careful investigation of practical options, the software products ZPORTAL and VDX were selected. ZPORTAL software provides federated searching capabilities, and the VDX product allows library staff to offer easy access to interlibrary loans. Prior to LibraryLink Victoria, the VDX software was already being used by a group of libraries in north-eastern Victoria.

Other project activities have included:

*   management of 'train the trainer' training provided by OCLC PICA, for identified public library staff;

*   connection of participating public libraries to the central web-based system managed by OCLC PICA;

*   development of a suitable marketing plan aimed at educating library users and staff in the system's capabilities;

*   establishment of a user group, consisting of staff representatives from public libraries, responsible for reviewing, developing and recommending operational matters for consideration by the Steering Committee;

*   development of a method for allocating ongoing costs among participating public libraries;

*   development of a software and services contract between Viclink and OCLC PICA;

*   development of a Viclink back-to-back agreement between Viclink and the participating public libraries, where Viclink acts as an agent for public libraries.

### Achievements

Although LibraryLink Victoria is still relatively new, its achievements have been significant: most public libraries have received initial training and technical configurations are being finalised; many are using LibraryLink Victoria and promoting it to their communities; and, a marketing plan is being implemented.

It is too early to say what the impact will be for the community. It is likely, however, the Victorian community will welcome the ease with which they can search LibraryLink Victoria to locate authoritative information. Early indicators from those libraries that have made LibraryLink Victoria's federated searching capabilities available to their users are that usage will be high and that library users will value the capabilities of this software.

### Issues

As noted above, it is highly likely that provision of seamless access to all Victorian public library catalogues and other resources will affect lending and interlibrary loans policies and procedures. Work has begun to develop a common set of principles that can be adopted across the state.

Introducing new technical approaches to certain library functions needs to be handled in a 'non threatening' way for some members of staff. Unless change is managed in a professional and inclusive manner, the benefits it brings may be marginalised.

### Success factors

Library staff who have been involved in the implementation process have been very cooperative and can see the benefits that will accrue – to both library users and staff – once the project is complete.

Developing trusting relationships between a variety of stakeholders, sometimes with differing agendas, has been of paramount importance.

Having a dedicated and committed project manager has helped to provide a focal point for the project and to resolve any outstanding matters.

### Challenges

For a variety of reasons, all valid at the time, the implementation of LibraryLink Victoria commenced before a number of management tools could be put in place (i.e. detailed business case, technology plan, project plan, marketing plan and communications plan). These tools have been developed progressively, a process that has been more difficult to complete than would have been the case if they had been in place before the project commenced.

### Next steps

LibraryLink Victoria provides the basic technology infrastructure on which additional federated searching functionalities may be readily added for use by library patrons.

Open access to a range of resources may have a large impact on the delivery of services for public libraries. Continued monitoring and management by the user group will need to be funded and supported for this project to be successful.

## 5.2 Exploiting technology

### WiFi Hotspots:
### Darebin Libraries and Yarra Plenty Regional Library

Many public library services across Victoria now provide free access to the Internet using wireless technology (WiFi). This means that people can bring their own IT equipment, such as a laptop computer, to the library and connect to the Internet. Darebin Libraries and Yarra Plenty Regional Library were two of the first libraries to offer this service.

Introduction of WiFi Hotspots at Darebin Libraries commenced with a trial at the Preston branch in August 2006, followed by an informal review of the service and a staged rollout to the other three branches by mid-2007. Users are constrained by the same rules as users of Darebin Libraries 'static' computers and access is limited to library opening hours. Authentication is provided by an access control system that is not linked to the library management system.

WiFi Hotspots are available at all branches of the Yarra Plenty Regional Library. The two primary pieces of equipment supporting WiFi at Yarra Plenty are a BlueSecure 2100 Controller, which handles all WiFi traffic from all branches and does authentication

before allowing Internet access to the library user; and, BlueSecure 1500 Access Point, which ensures coverage throughout each branch. The Bluesocket equipment is purchased through SirsiDynix and supported in Australia by No Wires Allowed.

### Main achievements

- Increased free access to the Internet for library users with their own IT equipment, with a very high level of take-up. Some of these users may simply prefer to use their own equipment in the library, while others may not be able to afford the cost of ongoing Internet access at home.

- Release of library computers for people who do not have their own IT equipment.

- Increased Internet access achieved for library users at minimal infrastructure and Internet traffic costs.

## 5.3 Building library capabilities

### Staff development: Library 2.0: Yarra Plenty Regional Library

Social networking tools are becoming increasingly popular through Web 2.0. Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL) Library 2.0 Training Program is designed to make staff feel confident with using these tools in the public library environment.

The Library 2.0 program began in October 2006 with the participation of staff in the '23 Things' Program, an online program developed by the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County in the United States. This encouraged staff to play with 23 different types of Web 2.0 technology to gain a basic understanding of what it was all about.

Participation was open to all staff and their progress through the program was recorded via a staff tracking log. Staff were given a star for each exercise they completed. By the end of the program, YPRL had recorded 1,400 stars, representing 1,400 new learning units the organisation had grown by.

The success of the '23 Things' Program has had two significant spin-offs:

- Funded by the Library Board of Victoria, YPRL has administered the program for 1,000 Victorian public library staff drawn from 44 public library services. This has resulted in a major lift in the library skill-base across the state.

- YPRL has developed its own training program, Library Worker 2.0. It is based around five themes that YPRL staff believe sum up Library 2.0: enabling learning, getting information, creating content, celebrating culture and leading the organisation.

### Main achievements

- Ensuring staff are familiar and confident with Web 2.0 technologies to assist library users.

- Ensuring staff have the skills and encouragement to apply Web 2.0 technologies in the public library environment.

- Showing staff that online learning is a fun and engaging way to learn.

### Strategic Planning: Yarra Plenty Regional Library

Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL) has developed a number of strategic frameworks to take the library service forward for the next three to five years. The purpose of these is to build a shared vision for the future by:

- describing what the library is already doing – including some best practice examples;

- describing the environment the library is working in;

- developing goals and priorities;

- identifying the resources required to achieve these.

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The strategies are written as a 'living' document inclusive of ideas and feedback from the community, users and non-users of the library services, and library staff. The combined input is the key to the success in the planning and update of the strategies.

To gather feedback from various stakeholders, a half-day forum is held with attendees from relevant departments of member councils, representatives from neighbouring libraries and other relevant local organisations. The purpose is to identify current services in and identify what enhancements could be made to the services delivered by YPRL. Parents and youth are also consulted, through face-to-face discussion groups and written surveys. This feedback often forms part of the action plan. Throughout the process library staff are also consulted.

Once the strategy for a particular area is drafted, a copy is distributed to all key stakeholders, including staff, for further feedback. Once complete, the final draft is presented to the Library Board for approval.

As shown in the diagram, when completed the strategic landscape will consist of a number of components.

A number of the frameworks have already been developed. Others will be completed in 2007–08.

**Main achievements**
- Building and strengthening partnerships with community groups through the consultative processes.
- Articulating clear and achievable goals and priorities that are signed off by the Library Board and actioned through the annual Library Business Plan.
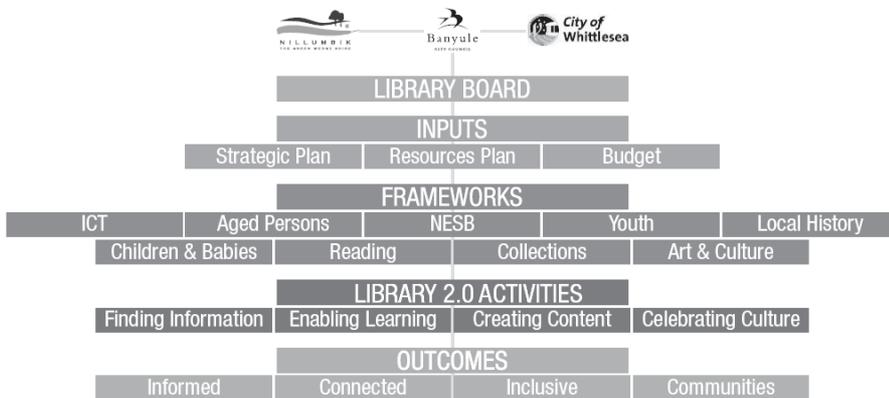
# 6  Conclusion

*The difference between a good library and an outstanding one is generally not the amount of technology on offer nor the built environment. It's not even the range of content available for users. The big difference is the dedication and commitment of the individuals and teams who drive new ideas and initiatives.*

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The strong principles guiding the development of public libraries in the eighteenth century still hold firm today and, as shown in this report, provide a guiding force for projects and initiatives undertaken by modern libraries. Crucially, these emphasise the need for a service that is socially inclusive and free to all, a service that helps people to develop the foundation skills needed to access and make use of information, and a service that helps build stronger communities.

The much discussed Library 2.0 provides a modern day take on these principles – reflecting changed economic, political and social conditions and trends in technology – but with undeniable links to the past. One of the strengths of Library 2.0 lies in its power to remind a new generation of librarians of these basic values and ensure they are embedded in new service models.

Case studies in the report indicate that this is what is happening. They show libraries:

- partnering with other community groups to deliver services that meet the learning and information needs of residents more effectively;

- reaching out to new users and aiming to better serve current users;

- developing service models that better recognise the needs of the distinct cultural groups within the community;

- encouraging greater user participation in the development of library services;

- creating online presences which build strong virtual communities that parallel libraries' physical presence in the community;

- recognising the power of users as creators of information.

At the heart of the success of these projects are the people who work in libraries and their community partners. Library staff have the capacity to identify the needs within their communities, develop programs to meet these needs, and the energy and commitment to implement them. Libraries are equally comfortable playing a support role for local initiatives through groups such as neighbourhood houses. Volunteers from the community support libraries through the delivery of services, by sharing their thoughts and ideas and contributing materials and crafts, all of which makes libraries a true community space.

This is not to downplay the importance of other factors in the success of libraries. As with the first volume of *Showcasing the Best*, this report shows how new library buildings and redevelopment of existing libraries can provide a drawcard for users – old and new. Alan Bundy (2004) has noted how attractive new libraries invariably draw 15–50% greater use and also provide an environment in which library staff are happier to work. He explains this is due to

> *... the growth in consultation with stakeholders. It also reflects architects and consultants with library experience who are responsive to the aspirations of librarians for attractive, flexible and efficient library buildings (Bundy 2004).*

He observes the increased attention to distinctive spaces for user groups, retailing approaches to ambience, interior design, furniture, lighting, signage, pervasive IT and eating and drinking facilities. The new West Footscray and Altona Meadows libraries provide excellent examples of changing practice in the design and construction of new libraries – and tellingly demonstrate the impact of new facilities on library usage.

Nor can we ignore the transforming powers of new technology on public libraries and the services they offer. These impacts are many and complex and need to be further teased out and understood. From the case studies, we can see technology:

- offering greater opportunities to provide services to people with communication and physical disabilities;

- being used by libraries to empower users to become the creators of information through online communities, blogs, podcasts and e-postcards;

- facilitating access to local history in a way that links source documents with photos and oral histories;

- providing easy access to the wealth of resources available in public libraries through web-based resources such as LibraryLink Victoria;

- enhancing access to the Internet at little extra cost through the adoption of wireless technology.

The case studies show libraries at their innovative best – often working outside their natural comfort zone and setting 'stretch' goals for themselves. As the studies show, success has not always been achieved without a struggle. Through the case studies, libraries share some of the following lessons and suggestions:

- Obtain the cooperation of partners in the early stages of the project, ensure there are mechanisms for good communication and be respectful of each other's perspectives.

- Consider whether any formal arrangements such as a memorandum of understanding would be helpful for specifying roles and responsibilities.

- Involve users in defining requirements and testing products.

- Properly estimate the resources required to deliver your project and allow for slippage.

- Invest the necessary time and energy to search out and secure the resources you require for your initiative.

- Select volunteers carefully and ensure you provide them with the support and encouragement they need.

- Research similar projects and benchmark against them.

- Build on the interests and passions of your staff – they are the creative forces behind many library projects.

- Be clear about the role technology will play in the delivery of your initiative – be aware of any constraints it imposes and make sure it isn't managed in isolation from the rest of the project.

- Identify any specific challenges for your project whether these relate to information management, relationships or resources and manage them.

- Put in place tools and processes that will allow you to evaluate the success of your project and provide convincing data to stakeholders.

- Make sure there is good exposure for your project's achievements – celebrate with those who have participated.

Volume 2 of *Showcasing the Best* is an important resource for library staff across Victoria. It provides details of the types of innovative projects being undertaken across the state, evidence of success and advice for those wishing to undertake similar projects. It shows the potential for libraries to work in strategic partnerships at the local level to achieve many of the goals of local, state and federal government – and the capacity of libraries to encourage voluntary input from across their communities.

The report also provides an advocacy tool through which libraries and their supporters can continue to promote greater awareness of public libraries and the value they add to their community.

The stories in the report show increasing awareness of and support for library initiatives from local councils, and mounting expectation that libraries will provide

leadership for the development and implementation of council strategies – especially in the areas of community and lifelong learning.

The challenge now is to spread the story of library successes further and to work to ensure that more councils, and the State and Commonwealth Governments, properly recognise the vital contribution libraries make to their communities. Our aim is that each year will see growing support for libraries with more stories to tell of innovation and success and that competition to appear in the *Showcasing the Best* series will grow in intensity.

> *Excellence must be the base line for our free public libraries (Lammy 2005).*

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