

## 14th Meeting of the Strategic Network Committee

### Minutes of the meeting of 22 October 2021

<b>Date</b>	Friday 22 October 2021
<b>Time</b>	11:00 AM to 1:00 PM
<b>Location</b>	Online via Teams
<b>Chair</b>	Cameron Morley (State Library)
<b>Members in Attendance</b>	Pam Kelly (CW Zone) Alexander Mills (CE Zone) Erin Williams (SE Zone) Melanie Gurney (Sydney North Zone) Vicki Edmunds (Sydney West Zone) Heather Davis (Sydney South Zone) Kathryn Breward (NE Zone)
<b>State Library Staff in Attendance</b>	Philippa Scarf, Ellen Forsyth, Andrea Curr, Michael Adams
<b>Apologies</b>	Robert Knight (SW Zone)
<b>Minutes</b>	Samantha Mantakoun

## Minutes

### Item 1: Preliminary Matters

**1.1** Welcome and apologies

### Item 2: Minutes, Business arising and action register

#### **2.1 Minutes from the May 2021 meeting**

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the May 2021 meeting. No comments on the minutes.

## Item 3: Priority business

### 3.1 Research Projects

#### Making Public Spaces Everyone's Business

Andrea Curr provided an overview on the peer project Making Public Spaces Everyone's Business. It was noted that there is a workshop scheduled for 15<sup>th</sup> November with the participating libraries to review lessons learned on the project.

The Public Spaces Division in the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment are working with the State Library of NSW and the Behavioural Insights Unit to conduct a research project with the outcome of increasing access to quality public space by removing the obstacles for the community to safely use and visit libraries. The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment have drafted a report with key outcomes of the project thus far. First, is showing libraries how to identify barriers and enable access for people wanting to access the library services. Second, how to design and implement the intervention unit, which is where the State Library of NSW is working with the Behavioural Insights Unit, in partaking diverse ways of looking at problems and improving services. And lastly, how to measure the effectiveness.

The highlights from participating libraries include user surveys with their clients and members, with Wagga Wagga city library surveying non-members. The predominant outcome from these surveys indicated that 80% of responders use the library to browse and borrow collection items, with the second reason to access programmes and the physical space.

The next step is calculating how to streamline the process of running interventions and reviewing customer service satisfaction so that this process can be scaled up and made available to other libraries.

#### Diverse Children's Picture Books

The State Library of NSW is working with academics from the University of NSW and the University of Sydney to explore diversity in children's picture books. The aim of the survey is to create reading lists based on picture book suggestions from library staff throughout NSW. Specifically, Australian picture books aimed at 0 to 6-year-olds that offer diverse reading experiences.

Ellen Forsyth advised that the researchers were in contact with the State Library NSW so that the current list of picture books can be updated. There is an online session scheduled for 25<sup>th</sup> November with already 61 bookings, this session covers how the books were accessed and is highly encouraged for staff to register.

Further information can be viewed here, along with the current list <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/diverse-picture-books>

#### Charles Sturt University projects

Ellen Forsyth provided a brief update on some of the CSU projects. One of the projects, '*The role of first-language reading in the wellbeing of immigrant communities*' has had a preliminary blog post published by researcher Dr Jane Garner which can be accessed here: <https://librariesresearchgroup.csu.domains/blog/2021/09/27/first-language-reading-and-the-role-of-the-public-library/>. The research involved interviewing people whose first language is not English and showcases how powerfully people connect to their first language. There will also be further information and academic publications in the future with Jane presenting her findings to libraries once she has completed a full analysis.

Additional research with CSU included a project titled '*Understanding the needs of public library users in a COVID-changed Australia*' which is being completed with four libraries, with the focus on what people missed during lockdowns. Two of these libraries are situated in Sydney during one of the hardest parts of lockdown, and two are outside of Sydney but are currently still experiencing periods of lockdown. Surveys of community members are being promoted through social media. There were quite a few criteria from CSU that had to be met regarding which libraries would best fit the survey. There is also preliminary investigation for larger research projects,

including seeing if there has been a change in the subject matter of what people have been borrowing over the last two years, and see if the impact of various disasters has changed loans. This would provide a different way of looking at library materials.

### Local Studies Audit

Ellen Forsyth shared her screen with the committee and presented the Local Studies Audit findings. 120 libraries were asked to reflect on the collection practises within the last 20 years. The top responses had been that there had been no change, with other responses saying there had been more digital collection. Responses also included collecting more information about the local Aboriginal people, bushfires and Covid-19, others have increased their oral history collecting, with the total number of analogue items collected at over 13,000.

It was noted that less than 10% of library staff allocate local studies time and 37 councils have no time allocated to local studies.

This has been shown there is a high need for local studies training which Michael and Ellen are working with public libraries at present.

Both Alex and Melanie commented that the biggest barrier in collecting and digitising local studies was that many people wanted guidance on workflows and consistent standards in digitisation.

Cameron commented that this can be turned into professional development priorities. Next steps will be to have the report findings published and distributed through zone meetings.

### **3.2 PLS Website Review**

Andrea Curr provided the committee with an update on the restructure of the PLS website. Met with the internal web working group with the current process involving prioritising and sorting out content. This website restructure has been formally recognised as a job/project within the IT team and they are using this opportunity to test out the latest version of Drupal which is the State Library's current content management system. The work being completed is done through a separate site and current work include setting up new structures. This is being completed up until December. In early 2022, design and user testing phase will be performed with public library staff to help highlight content and information in a clear and succinct way and that is relevant to the user based on research findings.

### **3.3 LIAC and Drug Info Reports**

Philippa Scarf provided highlights for the last financial year for Find Legal Access. The legal information workshop in public libraries was unable to be provided in greater numbers compared to previous years due to Covid and travel restrictions, same with the Drug Info training.

Energy was instead put into providing and partnering with Legal Aid and providing the community with legal information which was a highlight and will be carrying through to the following year. EOIs (Expression of Interest) have been sent to libraries with topics that they want to cover, Legal Aid then works with their officers across NSW to provide and promote face- to-face sessions within public libraries, promoting these as safe places for quality information. With the aim of drawing from the communities and presenting topics most relevant and interesting within that local community.

An example of a successful project was the work completed with Mid North Coast community legal centre and the disaster recover funding that they had for the bushfires and floods. The programme was facilitated between the libraries and the LGA (Local Government Areas). This has been proven to be a great way to extend and provide legal information.

There are plans to promote a social media campaign leading up to the local government elections. The campaign focussing on young people and highlighting the ramifications of not voting. The following week is the Scams

Awareness week with SL presenting an online seminar with Legal Aid, so far, there has been 47 libraries involved with this programme.

There have been considerable numbers of library staff accessing professional development during lockdown. As staff were unable to travel throughout lockdown, Michael Adams has developed an online Drug Info workshop and online course funded through NSW Health. An interactive web interface was also developed called the Drug Factfinder. This is for library staff to promote to patrons who are curious about drug and alcohol information. This is then linked through to NSW Health and where to access help. The Find Legal Answers will also be moving to the online learning platform to compliment the face-to-face workshop.

Michael shared his screen and presented a demonstration of the online learning platform. It was emphasised that this platform has been designed to complement rather than replace the in-person training. The existing training was reviewed, and elements of the Drug Info training was identified that were not covered or could be better developed within an online setting. This provided an opportunity to go in more depth than what is delivered in the face-to-face training. The main emphasis on this training was focusing on where to locate information and drawing people to things like the Drug Info Collection and what can be found online. The other focus with the portal was to make library staff more aware of the resources that is offered at the State Library, and some of the ways they can manage a Drug and Alcohol information service through public libraries. Examples were provided on ways to promote this service and in addition, to highlight some of the great work that is already done across the state and inspire more creative ideas. Thus far, there has been positive feedbacks received and numerous uptakes of the portal, with 500 sign-ups with the completion rate at 60%.

### **3.4 Professional Development Report**

Due to the success of online training demonstrated through the LIAC and Drug Info portal, a separate license was purchased to host other professional development training delivered through the State Library. Andrea shared her screen and provided a demonstration of the portal to the committee. The structure of the Professional Development portal is divided into both mini modules and short courses, with the aim of taking the current training offerings such as Collect Connect Community and Family History and introduce some of the State Library services into an online format. The content is aimed primarily for public library staff or people new to the public library network, with modules aimed to provide an overview of a subject or teach a skill within 15 minutes, and the short courses to range from between 1-2 hours. The team has been fortunate enough to be able to work closely with the developer to add interactive elements to the content, with content providing realistic scenarios for public library staff to relate to. The team is currently in the process of engaging staff from public libraries to test the portal before releasing to the wider network, with the aim to provide feedback on the course, content, and ease of use from the portal. It was reiterated that the portal would not replace the current face to face training but to complement existing training and to assist those, particularly rural and remote people, who do not have the opportunity to come to the State Library. With testing being completed in November, a soft launch to the wider public library network is scheduled on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December.

Melanie commented that she was interested to see how this sits in relation to the learning and development framework that the State Library undertook in 2014, particularly the developmental gaps that were identified around the strategic community engagement. Andrea responded that this would be covered within the mini modules. Cameron will be focussing on the learning and developing framework which would be the orientation of the State Library services for public library people and how they can use the collection and services. The new website is currently being updated to work hand in hand and provide content to address any gaps.

#### 4.1 Zone highlights from the Zone Secretaries

##### Vicki Edmunds (Sydney West Zone)

- Western Sydney libraries have continued to do home library service where they could throughout lockdown and as soon as libraries were able to be opened.
- Western Sydney libraries are also offering click and collect services, and patrons can use the library if they are fully vaccinated.
- A special celebration is being hosted tonight at Max Weber Library (22 Oct) to launch the Blacktown library community room, displaying books from every country, with the venue also used for their popular English conversation classes.

##### Alexander Mills (CE Zone)

- Libraries have responded quite differently to the COVID lockdown. Found it interesting that Singleton library started taking click and collect requests through Facebook and completed home deliveries via Facebook requests as their library membership has a strong Facebook following.
- Refreshing and reworking book club kits. Have had the same model since early 2000s, have now established a working group and how as a region, look at digital as well as physical book clubs. There has been a shift that majority of book clubs are no longer run by the library, but by the community and what that means for how the libraries build their collections and seeing how they can rotate and release book club kits.
- Newcastle region partners went to tender for the first time in 30 years for a new LMS (Library Management System). Moving to a different system, one that integrates customers and customer interactions as equal importance as collections and collection management. Optimistic to have a section focused on digital heritage management incorporated by April.
- A regional poetry scene partnership has been relaunched. The partnerships now include Central and Lower Hunter libraries, Central Coast came on board this year and there is a board of poets who are community members active in that area who work with one to two reps in each of the libraries to develop a professional development programme and poetry slam programme, which is going well.
- New community strategic plans are being developed, and plenty of library strategies are being reviewed and updated across the region in time for the council elections. The region is in the midst of looking at those, particularly here in Newcastle, we have been working the last 12 months at a cost benefit analysis with the libraries. The advantage of one library service per city within the Newcastle region, for every one dollar invested, we get \$12.60 return investment back into the community. This took into account partnerships, traditional lending, massive investment in programming, lessons, digitisations and working with Newcastle University. Now going to bid for new libraries to be built.

##### Heather Davis (Sydney South Zone)

- Things have been quiet for the last three months. There have been a few libraries throughout the early lockdown that were still offering click and collect services. As the list of LGAs (Local Government Areas) of concern kept getting bigger, and more things kept getting shutdown, and so libraries ended up being entirely closed. When the public health order allowed libraries to operate again, there were some who jumped on board to be open as quickly as possible whereas other libraries delayed things for a couple of weeks. This time around it took more time to have things prepared, and different councils had different expectations around how fast things should move.
- Libraries had launched different programmes such as calling up patrons (which was done last year), calling people over 70 on the home library service, checking and updating on people's accounts, asking if people have access to a device, whether they need help accessing online resources but also having a casual conversation and checking how people doing. This was extremely well received by the communities because in the medium to high density buildings, many people are living in small spaces and do not have the interaction where the library has been using filling those gaps.
- Few libraries continuing with the online story time and online book clubs, with a couple of libraries launching the Solus app.

- Some libraries have been struggling or having a tough time with the vaccination requirements within the team. Councillors are coming on board with everyone needing to be vaccinated within the council, and so there are few conversations happening around this and managing staff willingness for those conversations. Overall, within the Sydney region community, people are glad to be able to go back in, however there has been a couple of teething issues with having people checked in and checking vaccination status before coming in the libraries but mostly people are used to the idea and accepting.

#### Melanie Gurney (Sydney North Zone)

- A variety of operations over the last quarter across the Sydney North Zone for instance, there were limited staff as many staff were living in hot spots or LGAs of concern. Many staff had to take public transport so there was a bit of resistance for staff to travel into North Sydney library. Started a click and collect service with the few staff that were able work in the libraries and offered extra home deliveries.
- Did offer A Library to You service but this was paused due to restrictions in Parramatta, it was quite popular, delivered about 2000 items per week on a three-week roster
- Many of the staff that were at home occupied themselves in completing the Amplify commitments
- Library site renovations in North Ryde, putting a parent's room
- Willoughby has been working through processing of the collection management with James Bennett and they have been doing a few renovations for their smaller branches
- Northern Beaches council libraries service has been operating since the 28th of June. Plan to reinstate the Library to You service. Delivered from 1st of July to 11th of October and by 6th of October, delivered 73,210 items across the LGA of Northern Beaches. It was a highly popular service.
- Also created Click and Create kits for people to purchase online. People were buying the Click and Create Kits and we employed local artists to put together the kits and was well received by the arts community here.
- Hornsby library shut down in the early part of the lockdown, opened with Library to You service for eight weeks out of the Pennant hills branch. No opening date yet as large renovations are being completed at Hornsby library

#### Kathryn Breward (NE Zone)

- Mid North Coast libraries Harrington library is performing exceptionally well with the new access model. Only a small library service and when it is not staffed, the community can still come in and access the facilities, extremely excited by that project because it is working well and very much supported by the community. 20 new library members considering it is a small community, and with the self-lending technology being implemented, 25% of loans are being accessed through this.
- Inverell library highlighting a new programme that ran in term two called Mellow Mondays. Targeted years three to six in primary school students. Programme comprises of a short yoga session and mindfulness training followed by peaceful craft during which staff member read or meditation from a book, the children booked him for the whole eight-week programme, and they had a positive uptake and feedback on the whole experience
- Evans Head library with the Richmond Upper Clarence Regional service had a refurb and extension project
- Clarence regional library have had a couple of staff vacancies so some of the things that we would have liked to move forward with have been a little bit delayed
- Launched our first marketing plan at the beginning of this financial year. Proud of the marketing plan, it clearly outlines the targets market, how we are going to market the library services collection. Separate to the normal programming scheduling that is being developed, picking out the elements specifically related to our aboriginal cultural programmes, a programme in creating the aboriginal brand by aboriginal collection.
- Coffs harbour libraries and council have been focused on restructuring, and still currently building up staff numbers and library staff are working with the cultural development team and the gallery museum
- Northeast zone has had various degrees of opening and closed depending on what was happening in the areas with Covid. Quite fortunate for the region that there were not too many cases. Shut down for 4 to 6 weeks, but the service pivoted very quickly back to click and collect service. Not a large gap or delay, a week or two, the community was very appreciative that they were able to receive books during that.

## Erin Williams (SE Zone)

- Southeast libraries were closed for a period during lockdown; however, it was only for a much shorter period compared to other libraries. During the closure, click and collect were able to run from seven out of those eight weeks in lockdown.
- Bega Valley provided click and collect and home delivery service via hubs through the areas, providing click and collect service to the local post office or general stores for collection.
- Upper Lachlan shire offered printing services through their click and collect services, a service in great demand due to poor Internet connectivity and low digital literacy throughout the area.
- Goulburn Mulwaree Library's Mighty Playwrights Program won a second award for excellence from Southern Tablelands Arts. It is a program where the library works with local schools who nominate a young writer in year 4 or 5, and they come to work in the library with a professional writer, illustrator, author, or some professional background in that area, and they write a short play script. The premise is the young person has total control, the script is then passed onto the local theatre company and produced into a full-scale production. A lovely community project where the library works with local arts organisation and local schools with the library having a strong literacy focus.

Apologies – Southwest and Central West Zones

## 4.2 State Library Report

Cameron Morley informed the committee:

- A surprisingly substantial number of visitors each day of the first week that the State Library was able to reopen coming out of lockdown. Averaging about 1350 visitors each day, with yesterday's numbers reaching 1770 people. Assuming the number of visitors received, 1500 out of 1700 people may have been HSC students.
- Currently no staff or visitors are allowed on premise unless fully vaccinated.
- Mitchell reading room has been closed because it is currently being repainted. This has meant that the library has had to open other spaces usually reserved for venues or functionaries, and corridors, and place desks in corridors for the HSC kids to be accommodated as the large turnout of numbers were unexpected.
- The reading room is also going to be closed in January as that is when construction of the new auditorium will commence. This will be beneath the Mitchell reading room, where the current two levels of stack are going to be turned into the new auditorium. This will mean a larger space will be available with plans to incorporate a larger café and bookshop.
- The Library Bar will be ready in two weeks which will be on top of the Mitchell Reading room.
- Paid out the first lot of subsidies, about \$4 million have gone out to councils this week. \$25 million will be paid out in the next few weeks
- Grants applications are due next Friday. We have been running online grants sessions every week for interested libraries who want to talk about the grants, and we have also been running a lot of one-to-one sessions to help with the applications.
- Looking forward to library visits, however travel is not to be undertaken until after Christmas. Looking forward to 2022 so we can see all these libraries that have been refurbished and the general consultancy work that we do.

### Next Meeting – 2022 dates to be set

Date	20 May 2022
Time	11:00AM - 1:00PM
Location	SLNSW and online via Teams