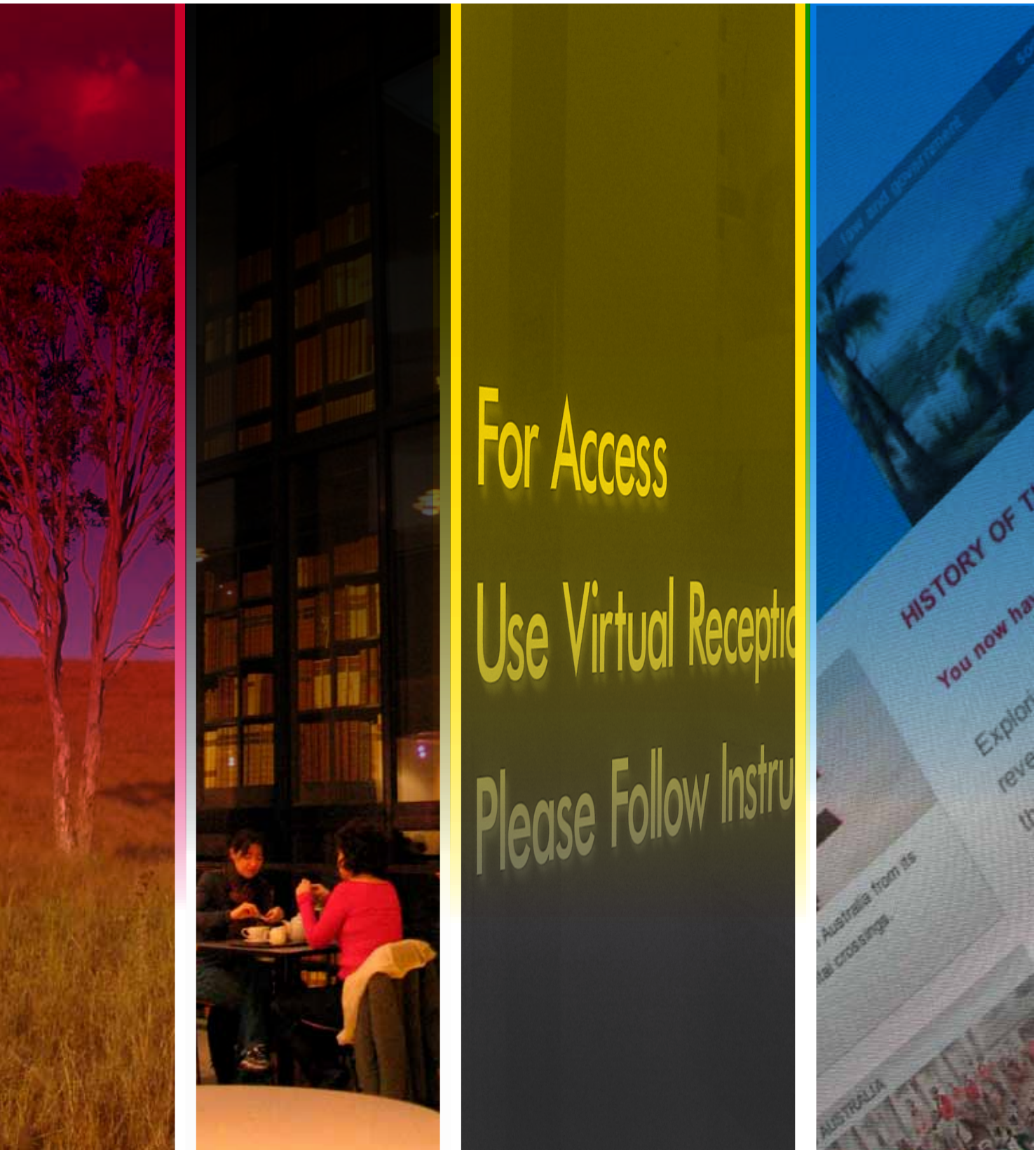
THE

Bookends Scenarios

STATE LIBRARY™
NEW SOUTH WALES

Alternative futures for the Public Library Network in NSW in 2030



Google
e-Books
Twitter
mobile phones
Facebook
globalisation
single person households
resource shortages
the economy
immigration
funding
copyright
ageing
urbanisation
fertility rates
digitisation
MySpace
energy
consumerism
water
virtualisation
employment
media formats
open source
Library Act
Harry Potter
Generation Y
staff shortages
personalisation
climate change
...

STATE LIBRARY™
NEW SOUTH WALES

A project exploring the possible futures
for NSW public libraries in the year 2030

THE
Bookends Scenarios

A project of the Library Council
of New South Wales in association
with the Neville Freeman Agency

This project was commissioned by the State Library of NSW on the recommendation of the NSW Public Library Research Committee for the Library Council of New South Wales.

The project was undertaken by Oliver Freeman and Richard Watson from The Neville Freeman Agency Pty Ltd

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Prepared by
Neville Freeman Agency

'I have always imagined that Paradise

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Ellen Forsyth	State Library of New South Wales (joined the Committee to coordinate this project)
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Preface

The State Library of NSW and public libraries across NSW have shown remarkable abilities to reinvent themselves and remain relevant to community needs over many years. Public libraries in this State are being used at levels higher than ever before, with trends in visits, internet use and use of collections growing year on year.

The State Library has undertaken a process of self-examination over the past three years, and we are working to a new vision, mission and strategy map.

—

OUR MISSION

To strengthen the community by being the trusted provider of quality information services by:

- providing equitable access to contemporary and historical knowledge
- collecting and preserving Australia's heritage
- promoting our role as a cultural destination
- collaborating with the NSW public library network

—

OUR VISION

For the community, we aspire to be a Library that is:

- a pre-eminent and welcoming cultural destination
- acknowledged for excellent client service and staff expertise
- an innovative gateway to information and cultural enrichment
- recognised for a unique and accessible collection
- an active advocate for the NSW public library network
- a proactive partner in knowledge creation

This process is ongoing and has realigned the State Library to face a future where the physical, virtual, recreational, informational, and educational business worlds are increasingly merging, and our role as a library facilitating access for the public is becoming increasingly complex.

But are past trends an indicator of our future use and relevance?

The NSW Public Library Network Research Committee, which is convened by the State Library, asked this question in 2008, and this project *Future Scenarios for NSW public libraries* was born. The Neville Freeman Agency was appointed to conduct the research which explores scenarios that NSW public libraries may be facing in the year 2030.

The project has been remarkable in that over 150 public and State Library staff at all levels, across a range of ages, have participated in the workshops and interviews that have shaped the timelines, scenarios and suggested responses.

This engaging document provides a framework for the NSW public library network to monitor trends and developments in society that will inevitably have an impact on our future services and customers. I encourage you to re-visit the document regularly and incorporate future thinking into your day-to-day work.

—

REGINA SUTTON
State Librarian and Chief Executive

REGINA SUTTON

will be a kind of Library'

Jorge Luis Borges

Introduction

NSW Public libraries have always played a significant role in supporting the information, education, cultural and recreational needs of local communities. However contemporary public libraries operate in an environment that is vastly different to that of their predecessors. Library services, technology tools, collection formats and community needs are diverse and continue to evolve at a rapid pace. Trends are readily discernible in hindsight, especially the rapid growth in library usage in NSW over the past 5 years. The future however is a different story.

It was, therefore, the aim of this project to explore how the future of NSW public libraries might unfold over the next twenty years. The scenarios are intended to enable consideration of the types of roles, products and services that will be offered, delivered and accessed through the NSW Public Library Network in 2030.

The purpose of building the scenarios was not to build an accurate view of the future of public libraries but to stimulate reflection and thought on what might be the key elements and variables of our future and how we might influence and shape this future. The process prompts us to broaden our thinking about some of the things that are happening in our wider environment that may deeply impact on the future of the Public Library Network in NSW and, by so doing, has provoked a lively and divergent discussion about the possible shape the future of public libraries over the next 20 years.

From the discussions and workshops held with over 150 public library staff from all levels and age ranges, four possible scenarios have been distilled which represent different directions for NSW public libraries. Readers will note that some aspects of the scenarios may already be emerging, many aspects are interdependent and interconnected and some appear more probable and plausible than others. All four scenarios identify new opportunities and unforseen risks associated with the future environment in which public libraries operate.

There is great value in analysing these scenarios and the elements of their potential development, so libraries can plan both at a philosophical and practical level.

The Bookends Scenarios will support NSW public libraries in planning for the future needs of clients, and help to identify opportunities and gaps in terms of competencies, resourcing levels and service models – at the same time assist in developing strategies to ensure the longer term sustainability of the public library network.

—

FRANCES SIMS
Director
Public Library and Community Learning Services
State Library of NSW

‘During the pauses in our conversation we both noticed what an endless length of time went by before another minute had passed and how alarming seemed the movement of that hand, which resembled a sword of justice, even though we were expecting it every time it jerked forward, slicing off the next one-sixtieth of an hour from the future and coming to a halt with such a quiver one’s heart almost stopped.’

Austerlitz by W G Sebald

‘If your seeing is perfect and complete at the right scale of observation, there is immediate understanding.’ Pierre Wack

PART

Scenario Learning

Scenario learning is a process which, through imagination and analysis, broadens the traditional approaches to developing strategy by looking at the complexity of future environments with which an organisation might need to engage in order to be sustainable into the future and to continue to flourish.

Scenario learning engages with the future by moving strategic conversations away from an immediate focus, to a more distant future. It is not a way of predicting the future. It allows those who participate in the process to step away from an examination of individual influences and events and concentrate instead on the bigger picture of the world that the confluence of these influences and events creates.

Scenario learning is a process which changes the way each of us sees the world – a process that broadens our perceptions and sharpens our foresights. It is collective, reflexive, experiential and systemic. It is **collective** because it is undertaken by groups who come together to develop strategies for their organisation, company, profession or institution in a manner that draws upon and nurtures ‘social learning’ – working together.

It is **reflexive** because of the significance of the impacts of the way people see the world, at each stage of the process, and the explicit focus on different levels of learning or cognition that help to reveal the nature of these ‘world views’. It is **experiential** because the process is designed to progress from experiences (real and imagined) through activities of thinking (assimilation) and planning (convergence) to actions for strategic change that are considered to be both desirable and feasible (accommodation).

It is **systemic** because of the realisation of the significance of the interdependencies between the organisation under review (the ‘system of interest’) and the dynamic world (the ‘environment of influences’) in which that organisation has to operate. It is also profoundly systemic in its embrace of interactions between different people working together and the resulting interactions between different views of the world, opinions, knowledge, emotions, motivations, and so on.

Scenarios are considered by many to be more practical and more useful than most other processes of planning for the future – especially when a diverse group of people come together.

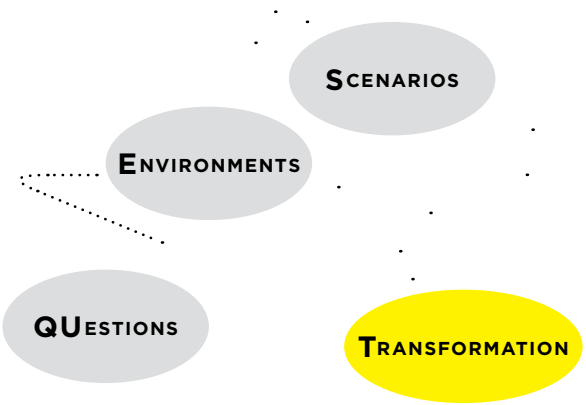
ONE

The Scenario Process

OVERVIEW OF SCENARIO LEARNING LOGIC

THE NFA SCENARIO PLANNING QUEST™

The scenario building process consists of four major cycles or episodes:



Episode 1 QUESTIONS: designing a set of Framing Questions to focus the strategic enquiry on a particular set of key issues and concerns

Episode 2 ENVIRONMENTS: identifying and assessing the major trends and key influences of change whose combinations are shaping future environments

Episode 3 SCENARIOS: crafting a set of differentiated scenario worlds in order to identify new opportunities and unforeseen risks associated with present and future environments

Episode 4 TRANSFORMATION: incorporating findings into strategic and operational plans that make explicit the innovation, adaptation and intervention needed in order to achieve desirable and feasible outcomes

‘Strategic planning offers the opportunity to bring all concerned with a common future, together. Scenario building is an excellent tool for planning as it encourages thinking things out before focussing ... on the desired outcomes.’ Independent School Principal, Australia

As the scenario process unfolds, three recurring themes are evident:

1 The events and experiences that cause most surprise are almost always a consequence of unexpected permutations, and convergence between influences whose interrelatedness is rarely appreciated. The development of foresight relies on the appreciation of this interplay – which leads to what is often termed ‘emergence’. The whole, it is said, is greater than the sum of its parts and the challenge here is to be prepared for emergent happenings and to be capable of dealing with them.
2 At least some of the emergent influences will come from places beyond the organisation under review. Local communities, breaking technology and the environment are among the ‘external’ features. While many leaders are highly skilled in defining the interrelationships between familiar variables, such as demographics, socioeconomics, personal achievement and resource allocation, they often struggle when other more global and complex ‘contextual’ variables, such as environmental degradation, stateless terrorism, attitudes to religion and urban tribalism, are added to the mix.
3 Organisations benefit from a disciplined way of exploring these more complex environmental variables by studying their implications and sustaining ‘strategic conversations’ – which lead to shared understanding about new opportunities for action. The key point is that scenario learning is significant for its ability to promote strategic conversations which result in ‘practical’ action, not for its ability to predict the future.

THE PURPOSE OF BUILDING SCENARIOS

The purpose of building scenarios is not to get the future right but to stimulate reflection and debate on how strategically to shape the future together.

At the end of the scenario planning process the scenarios and their key messages are captured in a scenario report and through face-to-face presentations.

The scenarios and key findings are used not only as a means to provide context in which strategy is tested and refined but also as a means for communication and wide engagement.

They are, thus, used to provide context for discussion forums and in stimulating debate by their creators with colleagues and stakeholders of their organisation or group.

Building the Bookends Scenarios

The Bookends Scenarios were built over a four month period in the middle of 2009. The process started with the design of framing questions to inform the process as to the purpose for which the scenarios would be built.

> What professional skills and attitudes will public library staff in NSW be demonstrating in 2030 in order to be successful in the alternative futures in which they might operate?
>
> Where will the leadership and funding that drives this success come from?

With this purpose in place, participants engaged with the scenario building process using the QUEST methodology outlined above.

Stage 1 – **QUESTIONS**: exploring the major issues faced by the public library network in NSW, by interviewing 16 city and country library managers and, to provide a counterpoint, senior executives at the State and National libraries. They were asked these questions:

—

1 THE BIG PICTURE

What are the things happening now in the larger environment that have the potential to make a major difference over the next 15 to 25 years?

—

2 SURPRISES

With respect to your work for the Public Library Network in NSW ('PLNSW') have there been any events or issues which have come as a complete surprise to you?

—

3 TRENDS IN THE FIELD

What do you think are the five most exciting future prospects for PLNSW?

—

4 WHAT KEEPS YOU AWAKE AT NIGHT?

From your own perspective, what are the three to five things that worry you most about the future for PLNSW and why?

—

5 STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

Innovative strategies sometimes call for unusual affiliations. What are the major unexpected alliances, partnerships and conversations that could advance PLNSW's future?

—

6 MISSING 'INFRASTRUCTURE'

Most fields require a solid infrastructure of information technology, communication channels, incentives, revenue models, and other underlying support. In thinking about PLNSW are there key pieces of infrastructure that seem to be missing?

—

7 BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD …

What major constraints, internal or external, are you experiencing that limit what you can achieve?

—

8 NOW OR NEVER

What critical decisions have to be made soon? What forks in the road are coming up?

—

9 MY WAY

What core values would you like to see driving the development of PLNSW into the future?

—

10 RIP

If you were looking back on your time in your profession, what lasting contribution do you hope to have made?

This activity generated the Issues Report, a significant input for Stage 3 (below).

Stage 2 – **ENVIRONMENTS**: identifying and assessing the major trends, critical uncertainties, predetermined elements and wild cards whose combinations are shaping future environments.

The second input for Stage 3 is the generation of ideas about the ways in which the world in which public libraries in NSW might change in the future. To kick-start the process, participants at the first Futures Forum in May took a look at how the environment of this world had changed since 1980. We then created a Thought Starters report for participants at the June Futures Forum to use as a prompt to help them think more laterally about the future to the year 2030.

Stage 3 – **SCENARIOS**: creating a set of differentiated scenario worlds in order to identify new opportunities and unforeseen risks associated with these future environments.

Participants at the two Futures Forums were invited to think about possible alternative futures and created first cut or indicative scenarios. These were then used as inputs for the ten-strong scenario building team to use as a basis for developing four more robust futures that would become the prototypes for the final set.

Richard Watson then took this critical data and using his creative skills, shaped them, with help from Oliver Freeman, into the four scenario worlds which have become the Bookends Scenarios for this project.

Stage 4 – **STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION**: using scenarios as propositions or contexts in which to test an organisation's mission, strategic priorities, objectives and plans and in refining strategic direction.

This final step was undertaken at the Strategy Workshop held in August. Using the almost-complete scenario set, participants identified the strategic domains relevant to the NSW Public Library Network, the challenges they offered and the strategies they would recommend in each of the four alternative futures.

These outputs have provided the input for the 'scenarios to strategy' section in this report which has been written up by Oliver Freeman, with help from Richard Watson, on behalf of the Network.

What Created the World We Live in Today?

Participants at the first Futures Forum created this history of key events for NSW public libraries.

2009

- Regional cooperation
- Public Libraries – Country/Public Libraries – Metro (shared conference)
- SS ROC (Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils) – shared library services initiative
- NSW country public librarian elected ALIA president 2009
- Overdrive in two libraries
- Superannuation changes affect council budgets
- Unemployment
- Economic decline and meltdown
- $9 million for country public libraries from State Government
- Recession 2008/09
- Library visits grow by 17% over the last 5 years
- Council expenditure on public libraries drops

2008

- Oil = $150 per barrel
- Blurb software
- Global financial crisis
- Ageing population exploding
- New evidence based Library Standards and Guidelines for NSW
- Increase in petrol prices
- Print on demand
- Statewide Web 2.0 training for libraries
- Senate Committee on National Broadband Network

2007

- Cheap laptops
- Regional and Rural Taskforce 2007/08
- Parry Report on Library Funding
- Playaways talking book format
- Local Government Procurement
- Work/life balance
- Global positioning systems
- Reality television
- WiFi

2006

- Gaming in libraries
- Ageing population
- Baby Boomers begin to retire
- Senate Inquiry into the Online Environment
- Kevin Hennah 2006 – Library Layouts 'look and feel'
- Maternity leave provisions
- Digitisation
- Water tanks and solar power policies
- China Oil
- Intellectual Property
- Era 2006 (the shared e-resource model via the National Library)

2005

- Amendment Library Regulation 2005
- iTunes launch 2004/05
- YouTube
- Satellite in mobile libraries
- PlayStations in libraries
- Napster closed down
- Book Club boom begins
- Library visits/loans still increasing
- End of Carr Government
- Filtering
- @ Your Library 'Green' Bags

2004

- Global Warming becoming visible
- Cassettes out
- Flickr starts
- *The Da Vinci Code* published
- @ Your Library 2004 (campaign for statewide branding)
- Online tutoring
- Web 2.0
- Senate committee on Broadband

2003

- SMS overdues
- Borders arrives (and Café)
- Council amalgamations

2002

- Library education shrinking
- Broadband WiFi accelerate
- Bookshop Café
- Library Café
- Eating and drinking in libraries more prevalent

2001

- Networking the Nation Report
- Outsourcing
- John Stanley retailing strategy for libraries

2000

- New public library building boom
- Most libraries have websites
- DVDs
- *People Places* first published (NSW library building guidelines)
- Napster online file sharing
- Mobile phones take off
- Millennium Bug 2000
- Social Capital Report – libraries a safe place to go
- RFID (Radio Frequency Identification)
- Lifelong learning
- Broadband
- Y2K
- Picture Australia
- Libraries Australia
- Library managers no longer had to be a Librarian under NSW legislation

1999

- Audio books
- Amazon.com
- Online learning

1998

- e-Books launched
- Ageing population increases
- Google
- NSW.net – State Library connects council libraries to Internet
- Council amalgamations in Victoria
- University of NSW closes Library School
- Talking book CD format
- OH&S
- Triple bottom line

1997
- Copyright Act Technology Amendments
- PCs widespread in libraries
- *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* published

1996
- Outsourcing
- Online databases
- Ageing workforce
- Traditional book market confirmed subject to the 30-day rule (making Australia a closed market)

1995
- Formation of Regional Library Managers' Group
- Innovations Fund – Keating
- Information literacy (education role)
- Information overload
- NSW.net seed funding from State Government
- Metropolitan Public Library Association started (previously was Metropolitan Chiefs Association)
- Council amalgamations
- AUSTLII online law started
- Mental Health Report changes approaches to mental health care
- Mobile phones
- *Navigating the economy of knowledge: a national survey of users and non-users of state and public libraries*

1994
- OH&S becoming a significant issue
- Digital cameras
- Email
- Self checkout units in libraries grow in popularity
- State Library of NSW website
- Mosaic browser
- First council website online
- Internet

1993
- Customer focus
- Information superhighway
- Local Government Act 1993

1992
- Pittwater Council secedes from Warringah
- Copyright
- Disability Discrimination Act

1991
- State Government increases library funding and applies new formula

1990
- PCs take off
- Legal Information Access Centre started
- HECS introduced
- Colleges become Universities
- Travel boom
- Aurora leadership course for librarians
- Greater levels of (and diversity within) multicultural students

1980s
- Card catalogues decline
- NSW Country Public Library Association founded
- Computers in libraries more common
- OPAC (online public access catalogues)
- Keating's Redfern Speech
- Second State Library building opened
- Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* published and earns a Fatwa for those involved
- Boom in family histories interest
- Family History Service established as a Bicentenary project at the State Library
- Stock market crash
- Fax machines
- Word processing
- No smoking in libraries
- Ilanet/Ilamail launched
- Increased education standards
- More kids stay to Year 12 then go to University
- Library software
- First EFTPOS cards
- Mobile phones
- VHS vs BETA
- Job share
- State Library of NSW Catalogue goes electronic
- Personal computers
- AARNET
- Automated library systems
- Local Government investment in libraries increases in proportion to State Government investment
- Oil crisis
- Barcodes
- Apples and PCs
- Automatic checkouts

1970s
- Equal pay for men and women
- Free education
- Commonwealth Government sacked
- *A Clockwork Orange* movie of the 1962 book, hits the screens
- *Future Shock* by Alvin Toffler published
- Voting age reduced from 21 to 18
- First oil crisis
- Environment Legislation
- *The Female Eunuch* by Germaine Greer published
- Bionic ear invented
- Dialog databases
- Horton Report on Australian public libraries

1940—1970
- Most councils adopt the Library Act and establish free libraries
- Reciprocal library membership in NSW

1900—1939
- Library Act 1939
- Munn-Pitt Report into Australian public libraries
- Only two free public libraries in NSW

The Issues Report

Generated by the Stage One interviews

BIG PICTURE OBSERVATIONS AND CHALLENGES

1 The content creation and delivery revolution is the biggest challenge for all for us. It is not clear that librarians want to improve their skills so as to align their professional attributes to these changing behaviours and needs. And yet customers expect them to be able to engage with e-tools and widgets as they do. If information is free, then librarians need to demonstrate their value-add.
2 Local government amalgamations are going to impact our funding; more radically we will need to anticipate possible changes in the Australian government structure.

> Gen Xers are often coming in and saying they have never used a library before!

3 The rise of social networking is significant. It is driving a declining trust in institutions but in the future it may become fragmented. As more people live alone then the library is a place to go and socialise – the concept of the 'third' place – a place which is safe and free to access –gains momentum.
4 A US think-tank says that web use is rising by 60% per year, an increase that "will inevitably" lead to 'brownouts' (frozen computers, data transmission delays). Unless a solution is found, the internet could become too unreliable a tool for business and would be little more than a toy.
5 Democratisation of information – blogs and wikis – is challenging our old-school bureaucratic background; as is the convergence of technology platforms (consoles/keyboards/mobile).

THE PROFESSION

1 We are 20 years behind the times. We still live in a hierarchical command and control culture when the world is demanding collaboration and networked interaction. We need to be more agile in service provision. None of this will happen until the curricula of training change.
2 We are so far behind parts of Europe and the US – not just in the library area but in the take-up of social networking which has been explosive elsewhere. We are still talking about the same things we were talking about 10 years ago – there is a need for a new agenda; we are insular. Our staff is very backroom oriented, meek, mild and conservative and we are not leaders.
3 The silo mentality is still very strong despite the advantages of working together; we are politically very naïve and lack good management training.
4 Staying relevant – we need to be more dynamic; keeping up with change. How do libraries keep their place as information providers? What is our global role and relevance? It's now or never for our professional associations (four voluntary bodies at the moment) – rationalisation needed PDQ. And certainly the Metropolitan and Country associations should merge.
5 Staff need to be more savvy as multiculturalism puts pressure on us and we handle the rollercoaster nature of demand.
6 The big issue is the lack of younger people coming into the profession and a lack of professional standards and 'cutting edge' technical awareness. And if we don't get the kids in now, as users, we will not have a user group in 20 years' time. Attracting new talent is the key.

> I have been surprised by the resilience of printed books but is a tipping point about to hit us? The persistence of the Book as a platform may reflect the slow pace of fast change. It may be some time before the real impact of Web 2.0 and the semantic web hits us.

OPPORTUNITIES

1 Providing access to original materials by harnessing digitisation schemes is a major reason for being. Grant funding is available for these activities and public libraries could be more aggressive about grant seeking.
2 Opening up access to a global array of databases is an exciting challenge. Our thinking needs to change so that our physical and local presence does not continue to be a barrier to our global and virtual role. The future is all about open source library systems and online access and delivery.
3 Helping users improve the way they use the internet and be more responsive to the changing needs of our community.
4 We need to expand the idea of our core business – it needs to be broader than simply the access of information – the 'third place' again; for kids – even for men!
5 Librarians need to be facilitators and conduits – and to learn not to try and do everything themselves.
6 Digitisation of local resources is a key opportunity and we need to get the library service out of the building to where the people are in online data services.
7 Aggregation of the professional bodies is essential – perhaps reinvention of the profession is what is really needed?
8 How do we change mental attitudes to get a customer-focused approach – loving books is no longer enough.

FUNDING

1 Where will the money come from and how do we deal with competition for funding?
2 Our problem is survival with shrinking budgets and increased workloads.
3 Councils see us as a cash drain – how do we deal with this in times of hardship?
4 Funding allocation is a problem – we are so dependent on local funding.

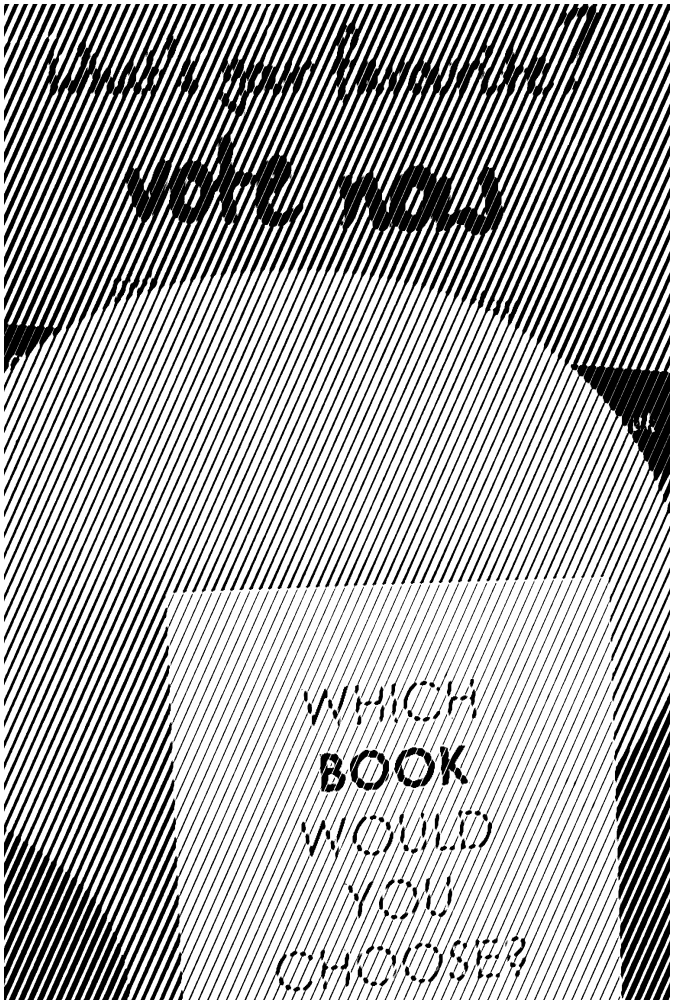
ACCESS AND RELATIONSHIPS

1 There is a needless duplication of work by maintaining our specific catalogues in our own way – these tasks need to be done globally and be interoperable.
2 The current generation of library management systems don't cut the mustard; they need to be more like Google/Amazon.
3 The growing volume of web information is challenging because of its questionable integrity and authority.
4 Schools are important and we need to 'outreach' to them, but it is surprising how little effort is made to link up with schools as this can provide an experience for students which can make them lifelong customers of libraries. At the same time, schools seem reluctant to work with us, so it is a two-way problem.
5 There are mixed views about the potential for corporations to be real partners with libraries and a surprising lack of activity with corporate partners. They are unlikely to be money providers.
6 But others say we have to build corporate partnerships as funding will dry up; these relationships should be driven centrally at the highest level, at the State Library level.

> 'Reading is not an anthropological invariant removed from history. The men and women of western Europe have not always read in the same fashion. Several models have governed their practices, and several revolutions in reading have changed their actions and their habits.'
>
> Guglielmo Cavallo and Robert Chartier,
> *History of Reading in the West*

Thought Starters

Here is a selection from the Thought Starters Report – the major influences changing our world.



ENVIRONMENT

CLIMATE CHANGE

'We're in a giant car heading towards a brick wall and everyone's arguing where they're going to sit.' DAVID SUZUKI.

WATER

'Humans have fought for oil and grain, and the final source (of conflict) in the 21st Century will be water.' AKIO SHIBATA, DIRECTOR, MARUBENI RESEARCH INSTITUTE (JAPAN)

ENERGY/OIL

'We are not good at recognizing distant threats even if their probability is 100%. Society ignoring [peak oil] is like the people of Pompeii ignoring the rumblings below Vesuvius.' JAMES SCHLESINGER, FORMER US ENERGY SECRETARY

PANDEMICS

Does the fear of health pandemics make the library an unsafe place to be? The 'biblionic' plague beckons!

SOCIETY

AGEING

'Population ageing is not a crisis... an ageing population stems from a series of highly desirable outcomes: improving life expectancy, greater female participation in the labour force and higher levels of education.' MARK BURFORD, PUBLIC SERVANT, VICTORIA

URBANISATION

Some time in 2006, more than half of the world's population was, for the first time in history, living in a town or a city. If there was further movement towards big cities in Australia what would the consequences be for service provision in rural areas? An urban scientist has predicted a billion squatters worldwide by 2025. Will Australia share in this global slumdog problem or develop in splendid isolation?

HOUSEHOLDS

Australian households are getting smaller (whiles houses are getting larger!) and fewer and fewer households include children. In 2001, the largest household type consisted of a couple with children. By 2020 the dominant family type in Australia will be couples *without* kids. Divorce rates are currently 33 percent and between 1986 and 2001 the incidence of single-parent families increased by 53 percent. Look out for the significant increase in single-occupancy dwellings by 2030.

> 'Teenagers are consuming more media, but in entirely different ways and are almost certainly not prepared to pay for it.'
>
> Morgan Stanley, *How Teenagers Consume Media*

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

'Boomers wanted to have it all and Y-ers wanted to have it all right now.' JUDITH IRELAND, ONLINE OPINION

Young people are behaving differently and yet there is very little for us to go on.

'It appears they have adopted a viewing rather than a reading behaviour... perhaps viewing is replacing reading.' (DAVE NICHOLAS, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON AND ONE OF THE AUTHORS OF THE GOOGLE GENERATION REPORT).

And watch out for 'screenagers'!

EDUCATION

Libraries appear to have an intimate connection with education – especially public education – because they share similar goals concerning social inclusion and lifelong learning. Having said this, some libraries appear to have difficulty establishing close working relationships with schools (primary schools predominantly). Moreover, both professions seem to have trouble attracting staff. What is causing this and will it continue? What else can the profession do to engage with students of all ages, sexes and ethnicities?

MULTICULTURALISM

The cultural diversity of Australia's population of 21 million is the result of a history of migration from countries around the world. What are the future library needs of immigrants across all age groups, ethnicities and income levels? And will the levels of immigration be controllable or are the current concerns about boat people the tip of the iceberg?

OBESITY

'An escalating global epidemic of overweight and obesity – "globesity" – is taking over many parts of the world. If immediate action is not taken, millions will suffer from an array of serious health disorders.' WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION

MAINSTREAM VERSUS SOCIAL MEDIA (PAPER VERSUS PIXELS)

Are the downward trends for printed materials predetermined or will there be a push back against the trends?

MEDIA FORMATS AND SHIFTING

Through the mechanisms of time shifting, place shifting and format shifting, some media content is now becoming user-controlled. How will the new consumer-as-creator archetype impact on the provision of future library services?

POLITICS

THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY

According to Vincent Cable, a new organising principle is emerging in politics. Politics used to be about Left and Right but now identity is shaping the landscape of political ideas and parties. This is giving rise to a new set of issues associated with cultural values and national, racial and religious identity that do not comfortably fit within the traditional Left/Right paradigm.

LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

'I came to comprehend too, that there are few other federations in the world today in which there is such a huge mismatch between the federal government's dominance of revenue raising and the states' responsibility for providing services.' PETER SHERGOLD, FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVANT

INFRASTRUCTURE SPENDING

Will the Australian government, at local, state and federal levels, continue to support infrastructure investment (e.g. libraries) or will projects be increasingly farmed out to private consortia and public–private partnerships?

PERSONALISATION

Personalisation and the concept of choice have the potential to reorganise the way public services such as public transport, public education and public libraries are delivered. Personalisation could range from a more customer friendly interface with existing systems (open source library systems?) to a more direct say over how money is spent, to active participation in design and provision where users of public services become co-designers and co-producers.

THE END OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

Last but not least is the idea that mobile technology has the capacity to change the way we engage with the political system. Direct voting and political association are set to change the need for my representation in Canberra, Sydney or the local town hall of the suburb where I live.

ECONOMICS

GROWTH

Until 18 months ago the Australian economy was still in good shape and only a handful of people challenged the view of the 'long boom'. However, things have changed – and fast. Now, as we prepare this report we learn things are not so bad after all. Fed up yet? Is there a new economic currency in sight which is based on the commodification of things like happiness, sustainability and social equity?

EMPLOYMENT

If the recession is not as bad as we feared, Australia is facing a long-term skills shortage. This is being caused by the lack of foresight in our social planning, an ageing society, declining fertility and perhaps by the fact that highly skilled jobs (and workers) are becoming increasingly mobile. Solutions, in the short term, include retraining, outsourcing and immigration. They also include more casual work, more part-time work, more automation, more outsourcing and more re-hiring of retirees. What might the role of the library network look like in this arena?

JOBS

What does the future of work look like in a general sense? We will probably see more open and collaborative ways of working. There will be a shift from tight and formal hierarchies to looser and more fluid networks. Alliances will increase. Job mobility (and promiscuity) will rise.

THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

As Australia continues to move from a manufacturing and service economy to a knowledge-based economy there will be a demand for different sets of skills, and education will come under pressure from the business community to provide the 'right' sort of workers for future employment.

CULTURE

POPULAR CULTURE

The democratisation of the media is being driven by technology and is dramatically changing media literacy. Wikis, blogs, tweets, mobiles – we are at the beginning of the most significant changes to the dynamics of media since the invention of the printing press. But where will it take us and just how will it change the role of libraries?

VALUES

Do Australians have a set of shared values? What of 'mateship', 'the Aussie battler', 'a fair go', and the 'spirit of the Australian digger'? How do these values relate to libraries?

RISK AVERSION

As individuals we are becoming more risk averse. Consequently, a precautionary principle is being applied across areas as diverse as social policy and education through to science and business. Libraries are obviously at risk from this risk aversion and the litigious culture it breeds.

INWARD FOCUS

'We have turned the focus inward, and concentrated on things that seemed to be within our control: backyards, home renovations, our children's schools, and our next holiday. This shift has been reflected in a corresponding shift in our TV program preferences: we have gradually lost interest in current affairs, and developed a voracious appetite for so-called 'lifestyle' programs.'

HUGH MACKAY

CONSUMERISM

Consumerism is a significant feature of Australian culture, which has led Clive Hamilton and Richard Dennis at the Australia Institute to diagnose the nation as suffering from affluenza. How does an 'ownership culture' relate to ideas such as 'free' and 'borrowing' that have been the bedrock of library culture for so long? Could our current ownership obsession ever be reversed?

DOWNSHIFTING

A recent Australia Institute study found that nearly of a quarter of Australian adults have downshifted. They have voluntarily taken a drop in income other than through retirement. Downshifting is being joined by voluntary salary cutting of people in their current jobs in order to ride out the recession.

> 'The hand that signed the paper felled a city'
>
> Dylan Thomas

TECHNOLOGY

THE INTERNET

'YouTube was responsible for more internet traffic in 2006 than the whole of the internet was in 2000.'
THE ECONOMIST.

Around 60 percent of Australians have a connection to the internet at home and three quarters of users access the internet daily.

We are also beginning to use the internet for more specialised purposes. In terms of the future, the internet will develop in a number of ways. It will become faster, mobile (wireless) access will spread and we will see the development of things such as verbal search, picture search and perhaps a fully sensory internet (touch, smell and so on – yes really!).

What are the implication of all this for public libraries? Will all libraries eventually become virtual?

WEB 2.0

One of the most profound trends is Web 2.0, which is not so much a technology but more a way of thinking about what the internet is for. Web 2.0 is about cooperation and collaboration and the internet itself is essentially turning into a giant conversation. It is unclear at this stage what a Web 3.0 might look like but developments such as the semantic web, cloud computing and so on clearly have the potential to disrupt existing models of thinking.

E-BOOKS

Paper books are not usually thought of as technology but this is because of their familiarity and ubiquity. The question is therefore not whether e-books will exist in the future but what form they will take and whether they will be widely adopted. Is there a tipping point for eBooks and if so what are the implications for public libraries?

OTHER DIGITAL MEDIA

What are the longer-term consequences of digitalised media for the public library network? Moreover, will local councils continue to fight against open access to certain websites and downloads in a library context or will this issue be resolved once a new generation of librarians takes charge?

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Around 80 percent of Australians aged 16 years and over use a mobile phone. Across the world, in both rich and poor countries, mobile phone sales are booming. Indeed, they are increasing at more than twice the rate of global GDP growth. India is attracting 2.5 million new subscribers each month and subscription rates in Western Europe are expected to reach a penetration rate of 96.8 percent. Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) – making phone calls over the internet – is also becoming increasingly commonplace. Should libraries encourage the use of mobiles? How could libraries use mobiles to connect with their local communities in the future?

BIOTECHNOLOGY

Developments in biotechnology are changing our approaches to health, agriculture, industry and the natural environment. In the health arena, biotechnology is increasing our capacity for more predictive diagnostics, preventive interventions and more personalised healthcare. In primary production we can use biotechnology to produce pharmaceutical proteins in livestock and plants. Industrial bio-processing technologies use micro-organisms and enzymes for products such as detergents and some pharmaceuticals. Large-scale bio-processing capability for energy derived from renewable products, such as woody biomass, is also envisaged. This would be supported with the emergence of bio-refineries that are analogous to today's petrochemical refineries. Are there any implications for libraries here?

NANOSCIENCE

'This is the new manufacturing frontier – the microscopic world of nanotechnology that is ushering in the next industrial revolution. It has been predicted in the US that nanotechnology will be the basis for new products and services worth more than US$1 trillion in global products and services by 2013.'
HELEN EVA, CSIRO

ROBOTICS

Are we on the cusp of robots becoming very common? Some people think so.

COPYRIGHT

Copyright is not exactly a technology issue but technology has caused the idea of copyright to be re-evaluated. Is the idea of exclusive rights now outdated and if so what new model will emerge? Libraries are built upon the idea of free access but does free access necessarily deny copyright as a property right? And if copyright is no longer a property right, what kind of right is it? The right to income? The right to publish?

Futures Forum – Workshop 1

The first get-together which focused exclusively on the scenario building process was held in Sydney in June 2009, at The Mint in Macquarie Street.

Forty-four participants from the NSW Public Library Network attended the one-day session. Its aim was to create from the Issues and Thought Starter Reports a richer picture of the key influences changing the environment in which public libraries in NSW operate.

They are reported for each sub-group – who chose their working name.

KEY INFLUENCES IDENTIFIED BY THE TEAMS

THE FACTORY
- Change in the role of government
- Paper availability
- Technology terrorism
- Technology costs
- Value placed on information
- Fee for service/equity and access
- Library income
- Communication

THE INFORMERS
- Funding
- Climate change
- Health of the population
- Social equity
- Infrastructure spending
- Employment
- Consumerism
- Interoperability

COLLABARRARIANS
- Funding
- Workplace changes
- Copyright issues
- Media formats
- Government trends/directions
- Relevance (of usage, services)
- Privatisation

YGN
- Funding
- Technology change
- Staffing
- Third place – service delivery/ socialisation/space to be/role of public library
- Governance
- Sustainability
- Copyright
- Access and equity

THE NAMELESS ONES
- Funding
- Fluctuating economies
- Connectivity – 'broadband' access, speed, portability
- Communication
- Cooperative services (regionalisation)
- Culture of Immediacy
- Climate change
- Water

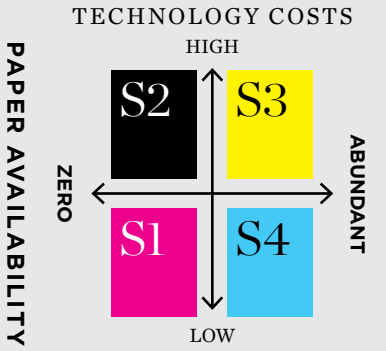
BLACK AND BLUE
- Funding
- Sustainability
- Community connectivity
- Digital preservation/digitisation
- Employment/multi-skilling
- Pandemics
- Alternative energy sources/natural resources
- Government

MENTOS AS ANYTHING
- Library Act – supporting legislation
- Funding
- Competition
- Government support
- Skilled staff
- Optical fibre

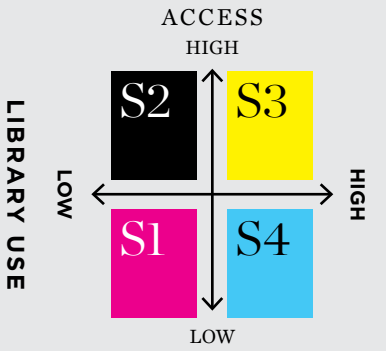
THREE MUSKETEERS
- Corporate ownership/Info
- Climate change
- Resource scarcity
- Level of Government abolished
- Decline of F/T employment
- Economic Downturn
- Sustainable/Green business
- Inequitable access

From their analysis of influences, the groups created these seven indicative scenario sets. The process involves selecting two influences which are quite different from each other and which appear to be the most important and most uncertain for the future of public libraries when compared with the other influences.

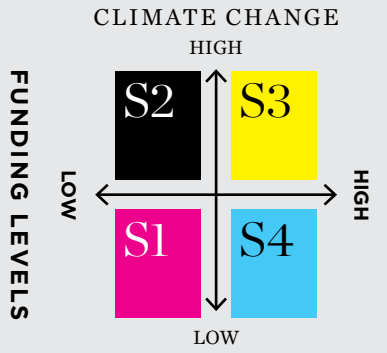
SCENARIO MATRIX FROM THE FACTORY



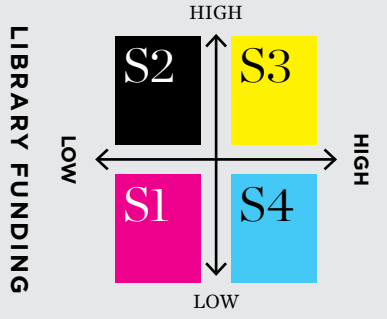
SCENARIO MATRIX FROM YGN



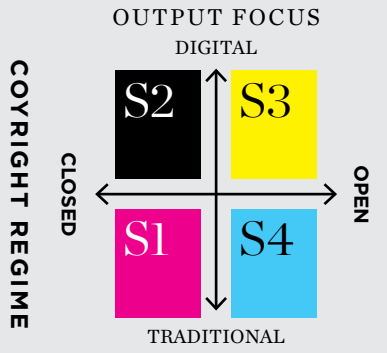
SCENARIO MATRIX FROM THE NAMELESS ONES



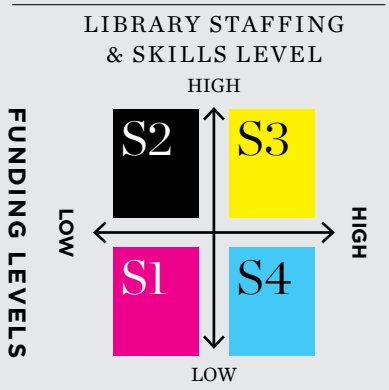
SCENARIO MATRIX FROM THE INFORMERS



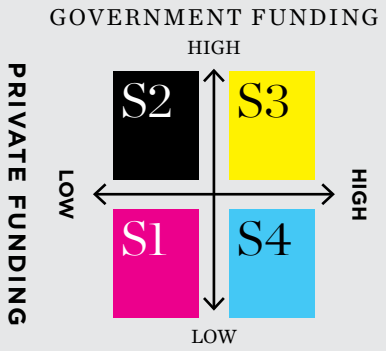
SCENARIO MATRIX FROM COLLABARRARIANS



SCENARIO MATRIX FROM BLACK AND BLUE



SCENARIO MATRIX FROM MENTOS AS ANYTHING



‘Scenarios are stories. They are works of art, rather than scientific analyses. The reliability of (their content) is less important than the types of conversations and decisions they spark.’

Arie de Geus, *The Living Company*

PART

The Matrix

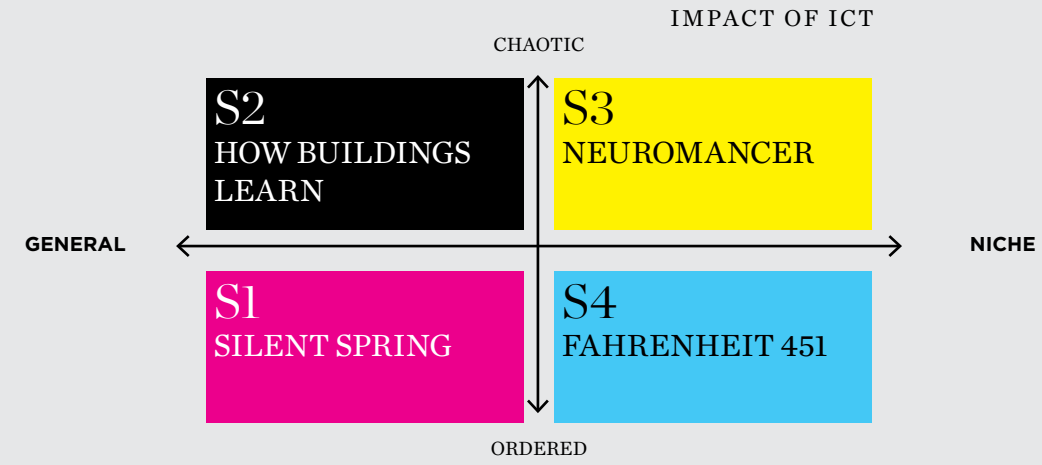
The work done at the Futures Forum became a significant input for the scenario building team to help it define a matrix of the most important and uncertain influences which are changing the environment in which public libraries operate out to the year 2030.

The development process eventually settled on two influences. The first is the vertical axis which focuses on the impact of ICT on the environment; running from chaotic mayhem at one extreme to orderly at the other. The second considers the way users value libraries running horizontally from the high valuation of the library as a physical place to a low valuation at the other. From place to space, perhaps.

TWO

The Bookends Scenarios

PUBLIC LIBRARIES SCENARIO MATRIX



THE SCENARIO BUILDING TEAM

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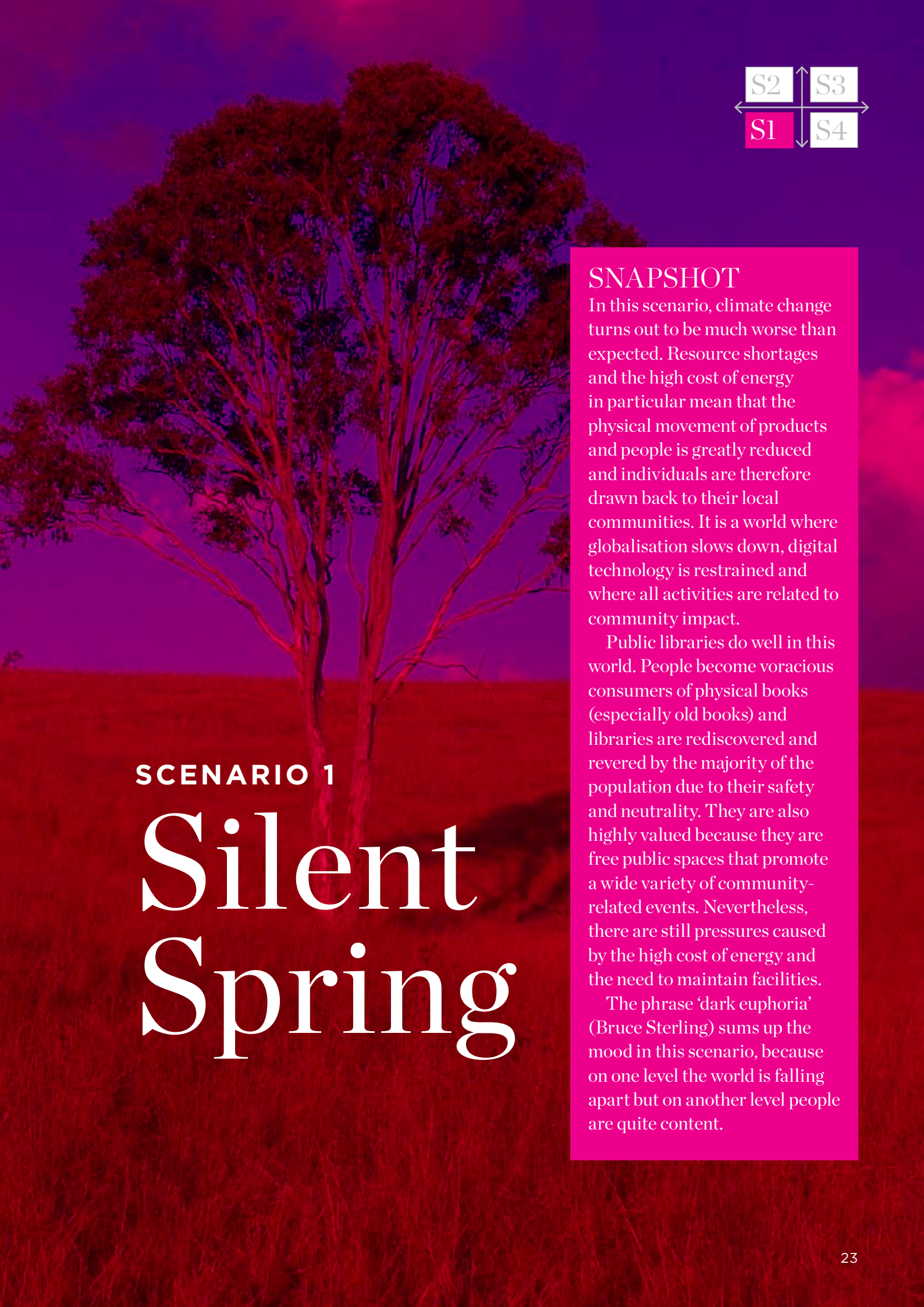
LINDA BATHUR
Waverley Library

MICHELLE MASHMAN
Canterbury City Library

ROSS BALHARRIE
Manly Library

Table of Characteristics

Scenario number **Scenario name**	1 Silent Spring	2 How Buildings Learn	3 Neuromancer	4 Fahrenheit 451
Value placed on physical libraries	high and general	medium and niche	niche and high	niche
Impact of technology change	community	market-driven	anarchic	individualised
Key social dynamic	sustainability	innovation	anxiety	digitalisation
Society	survivalist	collaborative	bewildered	virtual
Economy	regulated	public/private mix	open and chaotic	free markets
Technology	push-back	coveted	mayhem	saviour
Energy	energy efficiency	shift to re-newables	price spikes	clean tech breakthroughs
Environment	sustainability	technology solutions	resource shortages	sidelined
Government	local emphasis	smaller	ungovernable	e-gov/politics 3.0
Information supply	controlled	co-created	overwhelming	managed
Information trust	trust in local	info savvy users	growing cynicism	smart filters
Work	localised	freelance/contract	digital warriors	digital nomads
Space needs	focus on home	need for third spaces	safety/comfort	telepresence
Books	honoured	equal status	niche player	e-platforms
Family life	extended	social networks	hectic households	fragmented
Leisure	rediscovered/local	collaborative	online/escapism	in short supply
Cities	green	reinvented	shift away from	racial tensions
Media formats	stable	more digital	total chaos	digital/virtual
Education	protected/ traditional	lifelong learning	just-in-time learning	e-learning
Transport	public/local	smart transport	market pricing/ chaotic	unnecessary
Social equity	cohesive	polarised	pluralistic	divided
Library network	local focus	polarised	uncompetitive	virtual/global
Funding	low (gov)	high (private)	erratic (gov)	low (gov)
Copyright	open	in transition	unclear	closed
Staffing	low/multi-skilled	low/specialist	status quo	automated/virtual
Library services	stretched	extended	safe haven	digital focus
Library buildings	green	modernised	merged	virtual
Pricing	free	free and user pays	free	subscription and user pays
Library use	medium	high	low	low
Key library user needs	refuge/local info	info facilitation	respite	convenience



SCENARIO 1

Silent Spring

SNAPSHOT

In this scenario, climate change turns out to be much worse than expected. Resource shortages and the high cost of energy in particular mean that the physical movement of products and people is greatly reduced and individuals are therefore drawn back to their local communities. It is a world where globalisation slows down, digital technology is restrained and where all activities are related to community impact.

Public libraries do well in this world. People become voracious consumers of physical books (especially old books) and libraries are rediscovered and revered by the majority of the population due to their safety and neutrality. They are also highly valued because they are free public spaces that promote a wide variety of community-related events. Nevertheless, there are still pressures caused by the high cost of energy and the need to maintain facilities.

The phrase 'dark euphoria' (Bruce Sterling) sums up the mood in this scenario, because on one level the world is falling apart but on another level people are quite content.

SILENT SPRING

Scenario 1 – Overview

This is a world of distant thunder, where people have become alarmed about the health of the planet, especially the destructive effects of free market-led global growth and rampant consumerism. Following a series of highly destructive weather events, financial catastrophes and pandemics, people turn against the globalists, the techno-futurists and the multinationals to look for simpler and more sustainable solutions closer to home. This is a world of strong family ties where people trust each other. It is also a world where people are drawn to things that don't change, where free public spaces that are open to old and young alike are valued and protected.

Hence the idea of local living gains momentum, which, ironically, becomes a global movement. 'Slowcalisation' some call it. The leaders of the campaign then merge their ideas with those of a number of other like-minded movements, including Slow Cities and the Fair Trade Alliance. The Commonsense Revolution is born.

This is a sustainable world of switching things off, living on less and doing without certain things. It is intensely local, fiercely authentic, more emotional, less rational, more reflective and multi-sensorial. Climate change and resource shortages mean that energy efficiency is a key priority and local governments fund small grassroots campaigns to persuade people to generate their own power and recycle their own water. Grants also encourage people to grow their own food and large areas of publicly owned land are given over to city farms and village growing cooperatives. Cheap recyclable housing kits, which anyone can erect, come on the market with sustainability as the driving force.

Alternative energy is the key feature of this world, although most of the solutions remain fairly low-tech. Power generation shifts to local networks to avoid losses due to transmission and most homes, offices and public buildings increasingly generate some of the power they require through a mixture of solar and wind power.

Use of fossil fuels is significant for many decades (especially for transportation and manufacturing) but the mixture of high prices and green taxation means that the days of oil, coal and gas are numbered. However, at a domestic level, change takes hold far sooner. The use of electrical goods declines and there is a slow but significant drift back towards analogue and human-powered technologies due to reliability and cost considerations. Hence, $2,000 tumble dryers are thrown out and recycled in favour of $20 washing lines. Cars are replaced with scooters and bicycles, people make and mend their own clothes and children start walking to school again.

Use of the internet, social networks and virtual worlds also declines, partly due to cost. This doesn't mean that all technology is rejected, simply that people think carefully about what they need and try to achieve some level of balance by weighing up the personal against the collective disadvantages. Technology is balanced against overall human needs. Nevertheless, terms such as 'e-scape' and 'e-scapees' become commonplace in the local media.

The only exception to the widespread rejection of electronics is the mobile phone. The use of mobiles increases for a number of years but eventually starts to fall off following a number of research studies linking mobile phone use to cancer. Local governments then start to ban the use of mobiles in government buildings such as schools, hospitals and libraries. Mobiles are becoming the cigarettes of the new millennium.

To begin with, this provokes a number of mobile phone uprisings, especially from young users, but eventually people accept the ruling and divert their calls to landline telephones instead. This coincidentally proves to be an extremely good idea because landlines turn out to be far more resilient against power blackouts and phone viruses.

Work, too, is localised. There are still people that travel vast distances to work by public transport and there are those that travel the world in search of meaningful employment or escape. But by and large, people shift their employment needs and leisure diversions to things that are more local. Work–life balance remains a key part of this equation, with many people giving up a proportion of their income in return for less travel and less stress. This means there is a gradual drift away from the big cities towards smaller towns and villages, although some people, especially singles, are still attracted to major urban areas, which are now more ordered, calmer and greener than they were in 2009.

In terms of information, things start to change here too. The production of new information declines substantially due to the slow shift away from the internet and digital devices. There is also a noticeable shift by consumers of information towards quality sources. In most instances, trusted sources are fairly local, although a handful of well-established global 'infotainment' brands and academic information publishers do extremely well.

The movement towards safe sources also benefits physical books. eBooks are widely rejected due to concerns about sustainability but also because there is a feeling that digital devices like these benefit nobody over the longer term. For example, a series of scientific studies demonstrates that the repeated use of mobile devices during the early part of the 21st Century led to a decline in empathy due to a focus on the self and also a reduction in overall intelligence due to a lack of contextual understanding.

People also believe that eBooks accelerate the outsourcing of the human mind and users underestimate the literal and figurative weight that is part of the analogue reading experience.

Physical books (including old and second-hand books) therefore make a rather unexpected re-appearance and physical libraries do well because they are perceived as important pillars of the local community where people can physically interact and converse. Thus, libraries are transformed into local information hubs, dispensing vital community information and also providing a physical refuge where individuals and groups can seek protection as well as knowledge.

Government funding for libraries remains low in this world, partly because economic growth is now restrained, but also because environmental security and the health of the ageing population remain higher priorities. A new Libraries Act also signals a shift towards the introduction of more user-pays services and an end to what some library users consider 'restrictive' practices. Staffing is therefore tight but libraries cope with surging user demand by recruiting multi-skilled personnel and also by enticing retired knowledge workers to work part-time.

It is not all good news though. Libraries struggle to maintain old buildings, which are regularly attacked by the increasingly wild weather and there is also pressure from local government to make the buildings as green as possible and to add as many government services as physically possible.

EARLY WARNING INDICATORS

- Reports show that effects of climate change are far worse than expected
- Articles about individuals unplugging from technology
- Research proving that digital media and social networks damage kids' brains
- Evidence of swings back to local community
- Tightening restrictions around the use of resources, especially electricity/water
- Strong demand for survivalist products, literature and events
- Politicians linking libraries with words such as 'community' and 'social justice'
- Evidence showing shift away from foreign outsourcing and foreign call centres
- Government banning, or severely limiting, the use of technology in some areas
- Surveys showing librarians amongst "most trusted" members of society
- Climate change causing mass movements of people from one country to another
- Research revealing that people are using libraries purely for safety or security
- Public libraries banning the use of mobile communication/media devices
- Collection strategies shifting towards the local environment/climate change
- Politicians starting to emphasise value of human beings over technology
- People starting to grow vegetables and flowers on unused urban land
- Libraries start to lend things other than media (e.g. experts, money etc.)
- Persistence and volatility of global recession
- Local chambers of commerce promote 'green and local' job opportunities
- Growth of local markets
- Bartering, garage sales, clothing swaps – practice increase
- Fall in price of coastal real estate
- People start wearing T-shirts with slogans such as "Expect Less"

TYPICAL QUESTIONS PEOPLE MIGHT ASK PUBLIC LIBRARIANS IN THIS WORLD

Do you have any books about growing your own food?

Can someone tell me how to unsubscribe from a social network?

Do you have any studies about the effects of computers on kids' brains?

Do you have a list of local flood engineers that don't cost a fortune?

Can I borrow someone who can show me how to erect some solar panels?

Note: This timeline is an attempt to show how the scenario could develop between now and the year 2030. It is not intended as a set of individual predictions.

SILENT SPRING

Timeline

2010

- Library visits up 4.25% over previous year and 17.5% over past five years
- New strain of influenza emerges and kills 25,000 in China alone
- The Murray River records lowest ever flow of 88 gigalitres in January 2010
- Collapse of Macquarie Bank sparks dancing protests against globalisation
- Study finds that attention spans have declined to two minutes for teens
- Local newspapers resist widespread shift to e-news
- Report claims that the average avatar uses more energy than the average German
- Online banking accounts tumble in favour of local branches
- The local living movement starts in Parkes and spreads throughout NSW
- Launch of *Local Living* magazine. First print run is 100,000 copies

2011

- American Express loses major class action in US
- Biofuel production blamed for the starvation of 150,000 children in India
- Australia records driest year on record
- Widespread flooding in USA
- Commonwealth Bank opens series of kiosk branches inside public libraries
- Climate change and work–life balance key issues in Australian federal election
- Slow Cities movement signs up councils across Europe
- A number of towns in Australia ban traffic between 2pm and 6pm at weekends
- Sony successfully sued in France for peddling addictive video games
- *Local Living* circulation now at 200,000 copies per month

2012

- Felix Dennis buys *Local Living* magazine. US edition sells 950,000 in first month
- CSIRO unveils nano 'wallpaper' for use on roofs and sides of houses
- Water restrictions re-introduced and made permanent in most Australian cities
- New-build swimming pools banned whilst existing pools attract pool tax
- Google zeitgeist announces that 'sustainability' was 8th most popular search in 2011
- Washing machine and dryer sales tumble by 50% year on year
- Amazon withdraws Kindle 3 from sale in Australia
- Global boycott of plastic packaging extends to plastic toys
- Robotic pets the biggest flop of Christmas 2012
- Bob Dylan's *Shelter from the Storm* is re-released on vinyl

2013

- People start to fill in swimming pools to grow vegetables
- Launch of the Analogue Coalition to protect physical books, magazines and letter writing
- Study by the Australia Institute claims that 40% of households have downshifted
- Article in newspaper claims that second-hand bookshops opening at rate of ten a week
- Survival store opens next door to the Apple store in George Street, Sydney
- IAG refuse to insure any real estate situated within 5 km of the coast
- Boom in sale of domestic security products
- Dick Smith launches Battler's Bank
- European Union collapses in face of rising nationalist sentiment
- Oil now at $160 a barrel and rising
- Continued boycott of plastic toys knocks 30% of Hasbro's share price in US
- Public libraries launch a series of services aimed at helping people find jobs

2014

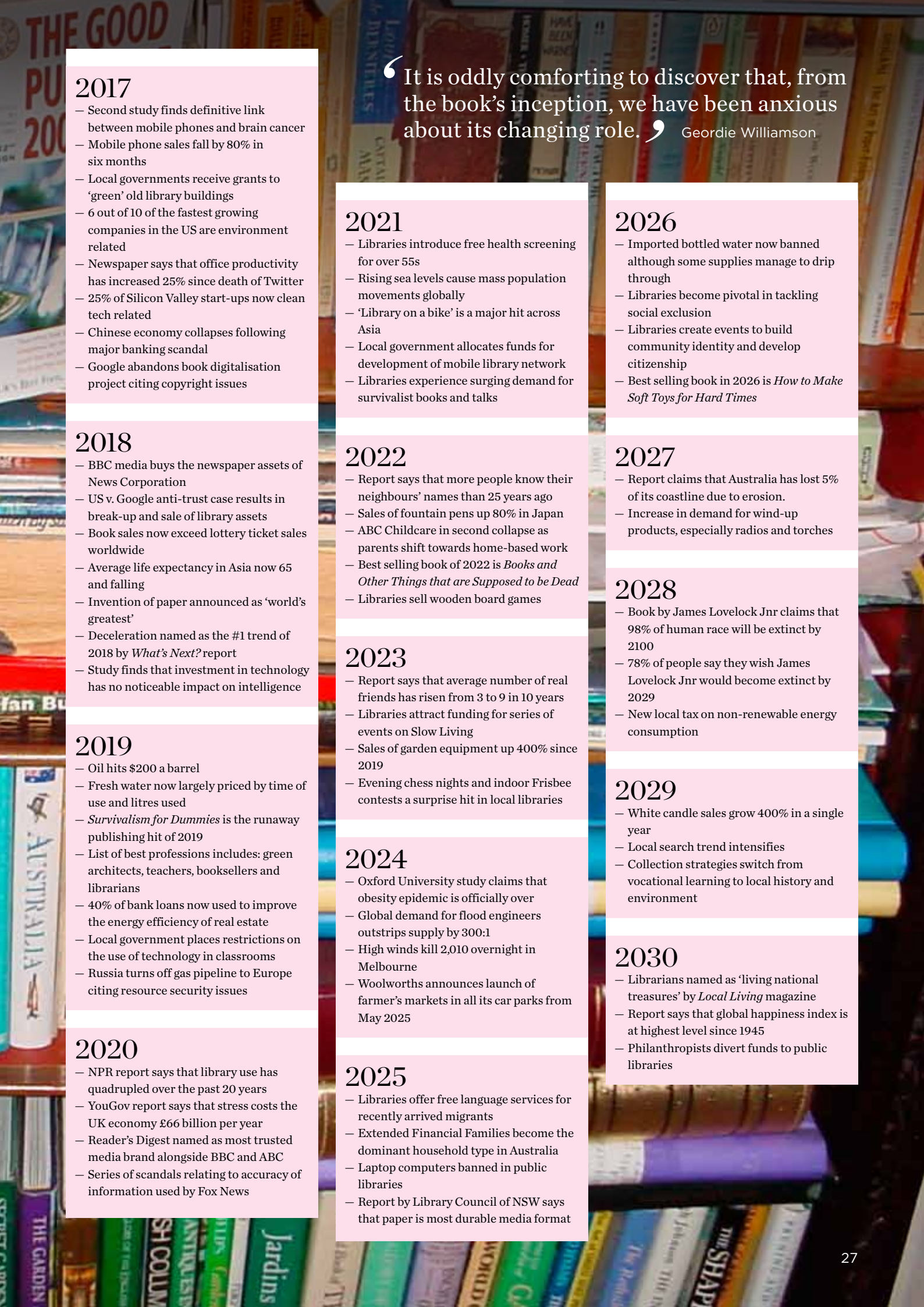
- McDonald's announce that their menu is now 100% local and organic
- Car sales down 20% with the exception of electric runabouts
- First Apple store burnt down. Slogan on pavement outside reads *people not machines*
- Major shift towards home-based leisure announced by Mintel Research
- 85% of adults in Australia claim they would like to be a public servant
- Number of robots in domestic service worldwide drops from 4 million to 657,000
- 30% of children now either walk or cycle to schools (up from 9% in 2007)
- Chinese economy turns inwards after GDP growth slips to 4%
- Wikipedia starts to publish physical encyclopaedias

2015

- Local governments announce library grants for citizen-preservation of local history
- Sales of Dutch bicycles increase four-fold in six months
- Government announces that the weight of the average child has fallen by 5%
- Report says that walking speeds in major cities have fallen by 5% in 5 years
- 90% of ocean fish still below sustainable levels
- 76% of young adults now a member of at least one single issue action group
- Volume of traffic on UK roads drops by 30%
- PEW report claims that 76% of Americans have nil or negative net worth
- Insurance on property now represents 25% of global GDP

2016

- Study shows link between mobile phone use and childhood leukaemia
- Local governments ban use of mobile phones in schools and hospitals
- Mobile phone ban extended to all government buildings including public libraries
- Teens gather outside schools to protest against mobile phone bans
- Police able to fine parents that place computers in children's bedrooms
- Penn State University says average person has 50 hours of free time per week
- 33% of Chinese patent applications are to do with bicycles or e-scooters



> It is oddly comforting to discover that, from the book's inception, we have been anxious about its changing role. Geordie Williamson

2017
- Second study finds definitive link between mobile phones and brain cancer
- Mobile phone sales fall by 80% in six months
- Local governments receive grants to 'green' old library buildings
- 6 out of 10 of the fastest growing companies in the US are environment related
- Newspaper says that office productivity has increased 25% since death of Twitter
- 25% of Silicon Valley start-ups now clean tech related
- Chinese economy collapses following major banking scandal
- Google abandons book digitalisation project citing copyright issues

2018
- BBC media buys the newspaper assets of News Corporation
- US v. Google anti-trust case results in break-up and sale of library assets
- Book sales now exceed lottery ticket sales worldwide
- Average life expectancy in Asia now 65 and falling
- Invention of paper announced as 'world's greatest'
- Deceleration named as the #1 trend of 2018 by *What's Next?* report
- Study finds that investment in technology has no noticeable impact on intelligence

2019
- Oil hits $200 a barrel
- Fresh water now largely priced by time of use and litres used
- *Survivalism for Dummies* is the runaway publishing hit of 2019
- List of best professions includes: green architects, teachers, booksellers and librarians
- 40% of bank loans now used to improve the energy efficiency of real estate
- Local government places restrictions on the use of technology in classrooms
- Russia turns off gas pipeline to Europe citing resource security issues

2020
- NPR report says that library use has quadrupled over the past 20 years
- YouGov report says that stress costs the UK economy £66 billion per year
- Reader's Digest named as most trusted media brand alongside BBC and ABC
- Series of scandals relating to accuracy of information used by Fox News

2021
- Libraries introduce free health screening for over 55s
- Rising sea levels cause mass population movements globally
- 'Library on a bike' is a major hit across Asia
- Local government allocates funds for development of mobile library network
- Libraries experience surging demand for survivalist books and talks

2022
- Report says that more people know their neighbours' names than 25 years ago
- Sales of fountain pens up 80% in Japan
- ABC Childcare in second collapse as parents shift towards home-based work
- Best selling book of 2022 is *Books and Other Things that are Supposed to be Dead*
- Libraries sell wooden board games

2023
- Report says that average number of real friends has risen from 3 to 9 in 10 years
- Libraries attract funding for series of events on Slow Living
- Sales of garden equipment up 400% since 2019
- Evening chess nights and indoor Frisbee contests a surprise hit in local libraries

2024
- Oxford University study claims that obesity epidemic is officially over
- Global demand for flood engineers outstrips supply by 300:1
- High winds kill 2,010 overnight in Melbourne
- Woolworths announces launch of farmer's markets in all its car parks from May 2025

2025
- Libraries offer free language services for recently arrived migrants
- Extended Financial Families become the dominant household type in Australia
- Laptop computers banned in public libraries
- Report by Library Council of NSW says that paper is most durable media format

2026
- Imported bottled water now banned although some supplies manage to drip through
- Libraries become pivotal in tackling social exclusion
- Libraries create events to build community identity and develop citizenship
- Best selling book in 2026 is *How to Make Soft Toys for Hard Times*

2027
- Report claims that Australia has lost 5% of its coastline due to erosion.
- Increase in demand for wind-up products, especially radios and torches

2028
- Book by James Lovelock Jnr claims that 98% of human race will be extinct by 2100
- 78% of people say they wish James Lovelock Jnr would become extinct by 2029
- New local tax on non-renewable energy consumption

2029
- White candle sales grow 400% in a single year
- Local search trend intensifies
- Collection strategies switch from vocational learning to local history and environment

2030
- Librarians named as 'living national treasures' by *Local Living* magazine
- Report says that global happiness index is at highest level since 1945
- Philanthropists divert funds to public libraries

Cameo

30 March 2030

Dear Ms Jamison,

I am writing to express my gratitude to you for your help in finding me a job in the local library. At my age, I had almost given up hope of finding a new job, let alone one that I will enjoy. I know it is only 3 days a week and doesn't pay much but to be honest it is the companionship that means the most to me. That and the fact that I can pass on my knowledge about green buildings to a new generation.

The most amazing thing is that I didn't even realise that you needed people like me in the library. If it weren't for the fact that the mobile library stopped in my street last week none of this would have happened at all. I wandered in to see what you had this month and noticed that almost all of the books on growing your own fruit were a bit moth-eaten. I rushed back home, put a pile of my own gardening books in a canvas bag, and passed them on to the driver. He then remarked that the main library was looking for people like me that could provide talks on a range of issues relating to sustainability and I was hooked.

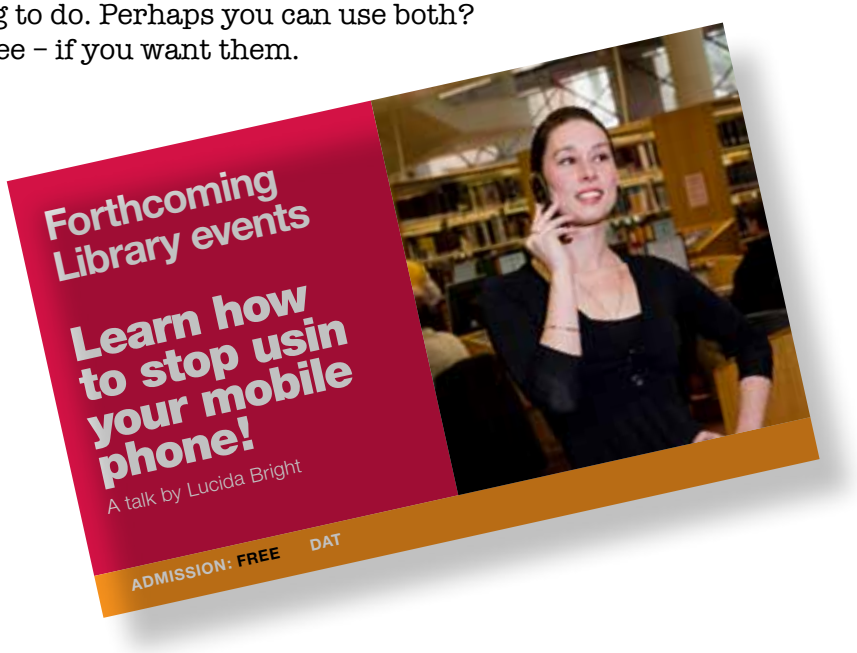
I jumped in and came back to the library and that's how I came to meet you. You were so kind. I know staffing levels are a big issue and you are all very busy but gave me your time freely.

I will see you again on Monday but in the meantime I have a little surprise for you. Before I retired the first time I set up and ran a company that developed some of the early smart shacks. I still have a warehouse full of green building materials sitting out in the country and I also have a few old mates that are also looking for something to do. Perhaps you can use both?
They are all yours – for free – if you want them.

Yours sincerely,

Alfred Hilton.

PS – Great idea putting the new police station inside the new library.
PPS – I've been thinking. It's not about the information per se. It's about the interaction of information AND people.



S2 S3 S1 S4

SNAPSHOT

In this world, technology creates a fast, globalised world where digital services and virtual presence are commonplace. Overall, the mood is fairly optimistic, but digitalisation and connectivity soon create too much information and format instability, so there is a slight feeling of unease amongst the general population.

Physical books are in slight decline in this world although library services are expanding. The reason for this is that public libraries now take on a wide range of e-government services and are important as drop-in centres for information and advice relating to everything from education and childcare to immigration.

In this scenario, libraries have also mutated into urban hubs and hangouts; vibrant meeting places for people and information that house cafés, shops, gyms, crèches, theatres, galleries and various cultural activities and events.

SCENARIO 2

How Buildings Learn

Scenario 2 – Overview

In the beginning was the word and the word was good. But in the 1990s words became art supplies. Visual thinking had emerged as the hallmark of a new culture and the purveyors of mere words began to struggle. This is a fast-paced world where innovation drives the supply of an endless variety of novel products and services.

Attention spans drop, demand for snack-sized information grows (a vicious circle) and employment increasingly shifts to virtual, mobile and networked models where people can work where, when and with whom they like. Demand for vocational information increases but so too does demand for escapism and distraction.

On many levels it is a harmonious world but change is so endemic that nobody is quite sure how long anything will last or whether it is worth investing in one new idea versus another. Customers are now the co-creators of many of the things that they consume, including entertainment and information.

In this sense, it is more democratic than 2009. Individuals that did not previously have a voice are now creating and distributing ideas. It is a world where content consumers feed off content producers and vice versa. Individuals and institutions are highly networked and highly collaborative and public library users have developed the ability to shift effortlessly across multiple formats and modes of information.

Technology, as you'd expect, is highly coveted, whether it is the latest phone, the latest hybrid vehicle or the latest energy dashboard. It is a world of smart science and engineering; genetics, robotics and nanotechnology.

Clean technology is huge as is planetary engineering, which solves some but not all of the problems relating to climate change. The internet and virtual worlds are also big, very big, although most people now connect to online sources of information and entertainment via mobile phones not fixed devices like PCs or TVs. Online video is very popular, as is the spoken word but text-based information and entertainment is in decline. Hence, sales of physical books, newspapers and magazine are all falling.

As it turns out, this is not a flat world, as predicted by Thomas Friedman, but a very spiky one, as prophesied by Richard Florida. Global cities like Sydney and San Francisco attract entrepreneurs and innovators but other areas, especially rural areas, struggle to attract or retain creative talent. This polarisation is very evident within public libraries, with the very best urban libraries attracting the very best library talent from around the world, whereas second and third tier libraries struggle to compete. As a result, library funding and library services are effectively split into two.

Flagship libraries (generally, but not exclusively, located in urban centres) modernise and extend their services and start to provide services to other libraries for a fee. Funding for digital and lifelong learning is available from a variety of commercial sources and this inevitably leads to the development of a range of user-pays and subscription services, which in turn reduce access and equity in some areas.

Ironically, whilst online learning, social networks and virtual worlds proliferate, physical libraries and physical artefacts do not die. Far from it. The sheer volume of fast-paced, byte-sized information that is now readily available creates a significant demand for the very opposite.

Many people, particularly parents with small children and seniors, now place a high value upon physical media and physical spaces (especially known library and information brands). This is partly because the flood of new information and new information providers means that many people are unsure about the reliability of material. With fiction, general non-fiction and entertainment this usually doesn't matter but with hard news, academic and work-related information this has become an issue.

This is partly because physical objects and environments (including people) are regarded as having greater resilience and trustworthiness but it is also because physical things are attractive due to familiarity and aesthetics. In other words, after several decades of digital living it suddenly dawns on people that something is missing in their lives – and this thing turns out to be physical things: people, physical places and physical objects.

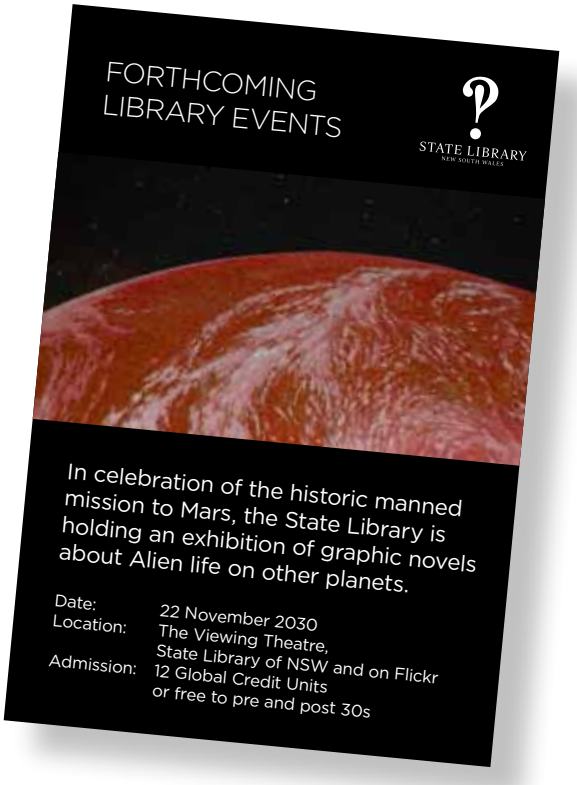
Libraries thus evolve into venues for the physical interaction between people and ideas – a strange mixture of slow analogue thinking spaces and fast 'spot knowledge' centres. Other services are then added, ranging from cafés, restaurants and childcare crèches to employment and immigration centres. Public libraries then develop a series of joint ventures including help kiosks in shopping centres, airports and hospitals and cerebral workout centres in hospitals.

Librarians also transform into highly valued knowledge assistants and navigators, adept both at sifting information (recommending certain sources or content over and above others) and at contextualising information and knowledge. Librarians also become content creators. Local history is not only archived but is created and shaped locally and librarians facilitate the open cataloguing of much material.

This local content is also turned into highly profitable live events, many of which prove far more popular than the static collections from whence they came.

Local and State governments still provide funding to libraries, but this does not generally cover basic running costs. Hence libraries start to introduce a range of premium (paid) services, although, again, this raises all kinds of issues relating to access and equity. This ultimately leads to a new Libraries Act, which on the one hand widens library access but also creates a series of new pay-as-you-go library services.

Media formats themselves are still in a state of flux and this adds to costs, as does the constant churn of new eBook titles, vocational courses and staff turnover.



EARLY WARNING INDICATORS

- Federal and State governments link Library Act to 'Smart Country' strategy
- Library users co-create significant amount of library content including catalogues
- Digital information increasingly tagged with reliability rankings or indicators
- Majority of library enquiries now relate to digital services
- Libraries start offering fee-based services for job-hunting, CV preparation etc.
- Libraries experience major rise in demand for daily workspace
- Significant increase in sales and visibility of graphic novels
- Continued decline in reading along with shift towards multi-sensory communication
- Libraries invest significant resources in gaming
- Libraries allow use of personal communication devices in all areas
- Public libraries becoming anchor tenants in major retail developments
- Number of coffees consumed in public libraries exceeds book loans for the first time
- Libraries become local innovation hubs for SMEs
- Libraries re-brand themselves as knowledge centres and discovery stores
- Emergence of quiet spaces in libraries where the user pays
- Libraries start selling T-shirts with slogans such as "Library Geek"

TYPICAL QUESTIONS PEOPLE MIGHT ASK PUBLIC LIBRARIANS IN THIS WORLD

Can I sit at a desk for the day? How about the whole week?

Do you stock the US physical edition of *Wired* magazine?

Can you help me to write a biography for a job interview?

What's the best book on semantic computing?

Can I borrow someone that can show me how change my ringtone?

Where are the gaming consoles?

Note: This timeline is an attempt to show how the scenario could develop between now and the year 2030. It is not intended as a set of individual predictions.

HOW BUILDINGS LEARN

Timeline

2010

- Library loans up 0.18% over previous year and 6.11% over past five years
- Kevin Rudd announces major Oz innovation funding
- Apple launch iPad
- Apple voted world's coolest brand by Arnholt cool brands survey
- Libraries move towards open catalogues
- Libraries install 24/7 drive-thru book return chutes
- Samsung launch solar powered g-phone called the Solo
- Steve Jobs claims that reading is no longer important
- Libraries shift emphasis from distributing information to editing and creating it
- IBM reveals that there are now one billion transistors for every person on the planet

2011

- Library users create 25% of library content
- Government survey reveals that 90% of employees work for small and medium sized firms
- State funding for libraries now below that of public toilets
- Survey says that 90% of 12–16 year-olds now own a mobile phone
- Libraries become hyper-local news aggregators
- Libraries announce universal fee WiFi in an attempt to compete with McDonald's
- Free phone charging points in public libraries are an unexpected hit

2012

- Schools pay students to run IT support within schools
- Survey reveals that average person now has 120 digital friends
- Library collections polarised between vocational learning and escapist fiction
- Dymocks announces that 8 of the 10 best selling books in 2011 were TV related
- Sales of paper, pencils and pens continue to decline
- Librarians become facilitators for user-generated media content

2013

- Due to litigation schools announce that all lessons will be videotaped
- IBM announces $200 million library sponsorship deal
- Library events generate more visits and revenue than loans
- Siemens announce 'global nervous system' based on wireless sensors
- Singapore government completes universal free WiFi initiative
- Public libraries increasingly promote themselves as cultural destinations

2014

- Information increasingly ranked according to reliability
- Libraries introduce free-to-fee sliding scale of payments for information
- All NSW government services now accessible through virtualgov.com.au
- McDonald's persuaded to give away snack-sized books with Happy Meals
- UK's new Poet Laureate announces that all of her poems will be written in txt
- Urban libraries roll out RFID on all books and other physical artefacts

2015

- Libraries announce that they will no longer retain physical copies of new books
- State Library creates replica of Clive James's library to mixed reviews
- Government mandates that all library managers blog at least once a day
- Survey reveals major split between urban and rural library funding in NSW
- Federal government rolls out national broadband strategy
- Flagship urban libraries start to twin and resource share with rural libraries

2016

- Sony launches the long awaited 'Readman' digital reading glasses
- Mayhem as Google announces that Project Gutenberg only accessible from g-phones
- Westfield launches Book Butler services in all its shopping centres
- Sydney Water charges customers $25 for paper bills
- Librarians transition from analogue gatekeeper to digital guides
- News Corp announces funding for the promotion of reading and informal learning
- Government's smart library service comes to a halt due to lack of funding
- Libraries offer evening dance classes

2017

- All school lessons for Years 5 to 12 now available as downloads
- ABC introduce pay-per-view for all programming
- Survey by Westpac says that 90% of 18–25 year-olds have never written a cheque
- Virtual book club meetings pull in 750,000 people per week across NSW
- Study reveals that successful libraries are all defined by three things; what's there, who's there and what's going on there
- Massage services offered in libraries

> "As an unintended consequence, Google will enjoy what can only be called a monopoly—a monopoly of a new kind, not of railroads or steel but of access to information." Robert Darnton

2018
- NSW Public Library Network announces that visits are down 10% on 2015
- The Ideas Store @ Surry Hills Public Library voted Australia's best retailer
- 26 libraries across NSW close due to lack of funds in their local councils
- Libraries become cornerstone of new cultural preservation industry
- Bottom falls out of the antiques market.

2019
- Libraries become favoured meeting places for teenagers and seniors
- Libraries offer yoga and meditation classes
- seek.com.au announces funding for job kiosks in libraries
- SMH survey says that people spend an average of 65 days per year in virtual worlds
- Information bartering and swap meets emerge
- Libraries start to charge users to charge mobile devices

2020
- Secure data back-up services prove an unexpected revenue generator for libraries
- Blacktown library re-brands its librarians as 'information engineers'
- Paper use now down by 300% since 2009
- Information mediators revealed as the most in-demand profession by *BRW* magazine
- Survey says the average home contains 8 phones, 6 computers, 2 TVs and 9 books
- Top selling book of the decade is *Cerebral Whiteout* by Susan Greenfield

2021
- Rural libraries set up innovation spaces in conjunction with CSIRO
- Libraries offer drop in technology advice and repair
- 45% of employees no longer have physical place of work to go to each morning
- Library survey reveals that most popular services are phone charging and toilets
- Top selling book is *I Want it Now* by Paris Hilton

2022
- Peak oil crisis and plastics shortage creates further confusion over media formats
- Survey reveals that 90% of people never switch their mobiles off
- Hyatt Hotels offer 'information breaks' to escape constant digital connectedness
- Increasing polarisation between technology haves and have nots
- All school examinations now digital

2023
- Libraries start to charge clients that use a desk for more than three hours.
- Over 55s exempted from 3-hour rule following 'grey protests'
- Art Gallery of NSW creates digital collection and sells 50% of its physical collection

2024
- Libraries shift towards the provision of recreational services
- With the exception of flagship libraries, buildings become increasingly dilapidated
- Low funding in most libraries increases wait times to 30 minutes for simple queries
- MIT study says that the average person now has to remember 36 passwords
- The internet is now 10,000 days old

2025
- Art Gallery of NSW merges with State Library and move into single building
- Libraries introduce staff selections: subjective listings of favourite information
- Apple announces that its iBooks store now contains 122,430,055 titles
- Facebook is now bigger than America, with a population of 456 million

2026
- Libraries start selling book collections to pay energy bills
- Building maintenance costs soar by 200% since 2015 due to climate change
- Most popular eBook of 2026 is *Slow* by Penny Wong
- 4.8 billion people now own mobile phones

2027
- Librarian that burnt books to heat the local library over winter is dismissed
- Apple says its new iPhone can hold 136,000 books

2028
- Libraries widen their local influence with the introduction of information evenings
- Google buys the BBC

2029
- Average eBook now just 100 pages in length
- Spam declared world's #1 issue

2030
- National Australia Bank offers technology loans to finance e-education requirements
- Some libraries merge with churches

Cameo

29 June 2030

Hi Peter,

You won't guess where I am. I'm in the library. I can't remember the last time I was here. I guess you could say that my patronage is long overdue! It must be at least twenty years since I stepped into this place. You wouldn't recognise it. The building is extraordinary. It's huge. Almost the entire length of the main street. You can't miss it either (although I somehow did for a couple of decades). It has transparent walls and the entire roof is an energy garden, covered with solar panels, windmills and water gathering dishes. It looks a bit like the Teletubby house if you remember that.

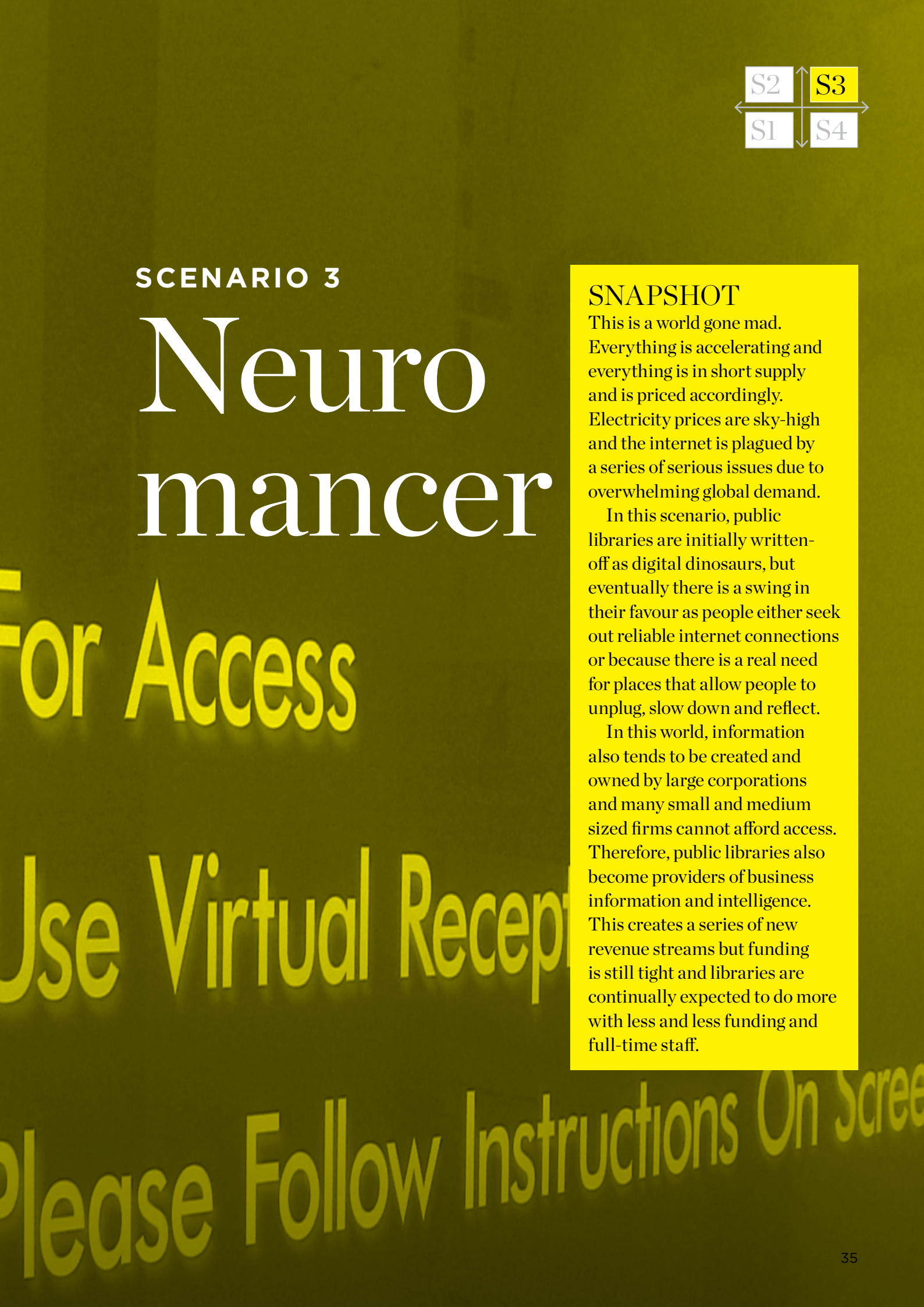
Anyway, I walked past the security guard looking for the service desk and found out that there wasn't one. Instead it's been replaced with a series of holographic research assistants that already know what you're interested in doing based upon previous library visits and retail purchases. I thought I'd beaten the system by not being in a library in this country for so long but apparently not. The system is linked to libraries, digital purchases and GPS data trials around the world and it pulled out my entire global browsing and purchasing history in a flash. I guess I haven't changed that much after all. There aren't any librarians around either. Apparently they are now all information assistants and you can call one up by pressing one of the customer service buttons on each desk. A bit like the old call buttons on aircraft.

Anyway, I pressed the button and someone called Oliver showed up. He was about twenty and was wearing an orange T-shirt with the word "explainer" printed on the front. I thought this was kinda cool so I asked him where I could get a decent cup of coffee. He gave me a rather disapproving look and beamed me a set of instructions to get me to something called the wet reading room on the third floor. He also kindly explained to me how to access these directions.

I was climbing the stairs on the way there – past the local history creation room and the assisted technology learning centre – when I accidentally came across an analogue sign for something called the quiet room. Somewhat intrigued, I wandered in. It was totally fantastic. A tranquil analogue oasis less than two minutes away from the noisy chaos outside. I tried to call you immediately but my phone didn't work in this zone due to a kind of signal blocking wallpaper or something. Anyway, this forced me to sit quietly and actually read the first thing that caught my eye. It was a copy of a magazine called *TimeIn* and I noticed that the library is hosting a debate on slow thinking next Thursday. It starts at 8.30pm although I rather got the impression that this was an objective rather than a definitive time. Do you want to come?

Best wishes,

Richard.
PS – I wrote this whilst trying out an e-jacket in the try before you buy room.
PPS – Kevin Kelly was right. Work inhabits places but people inhabit spaces.

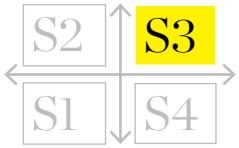


SNAPSHOT

This is a world gone mad. Everything is accelerating and everything is in short supply and is priced accordingly. Electricity prices are sky-high and the internet is plagued by a series of serious issues due to overwhelming global demand.

In this scenario, public libraries are initially written-off as digital dinosaurs, but eventually there is a swing in their favour as people either seek out reliable internet connections or because there is a real need for places that allow people to unplug, slow down and reflect.

In this world, information also tends to be created and owned by large corporations and many small and medium sized firms cannot afford access. Therefore, public libraries also become providers of business information and intelligence. This creates a series of new revenue streams but funding is still tight and libraries are continually expected to do more with less and less funding and full-time staff.



NEUROMANCER

Scenario 3 – Overview

This is a world of bewilderment. An anarchic world where nobody is quite sure what's going to happen next. It is very much an event-orientated world where the latest gadget, real estate boom, health scare or terrorist attack causes individuals and institutions to wildly overreact. Nobody knows the stability or direction of anything.

A key social dynamic in this world is generational change long after the baby boomers left town. It is a world of digital natives and digital immigrants. Generation Y is now approaching formal retirement although most don't give up work due to a combination of debt and the need for physical contact with other people. Generation Z (sometimes known as iGen) is very much in charge although the continued presence of Gen Y and Gen X creates all kinds of cultural issues, especially in workplace environments. But everyone is trepidatious about the pre-teen intellectuals who are getting ready to blow the place apart when they come into adult play. 'Genarchists' as they have been labelled.

The economy is very much a re-run of the first decade of the 21st Century. GDP growth is surging ahead, especially in the Middle East, Asia and parts of South America and this causes runaway inflation, real estate bubbles, environmental degradation and resource shortages. Everything from people and water to tranquillity and certainty seems to be in very short supply.

The high level of global connectivity has fuelled a rapid expansion of knowledge content (as it is now known) and this just adds to the level of anxiety. Knowledge goes out of date faster than mobile communication devices and the sheer volume of content (much of it now co-created) means that information trust is at an all-time low.

Technology is also chaotic with new formats and standards being created daily. This media mayhem should create an opportunity for public libraries and public librarians but unfortunately most people dismiss both as relics of a bygone age.

Corporations with almost unlimited budgets start to buy up existing information resources and fund the creation of private information. Copyright therefore becomes closed and individuals and institutions are forced to pay for access to the most reliable and useful information, either through annual subscriptions or via ad hoc pay-per-view micropayments.

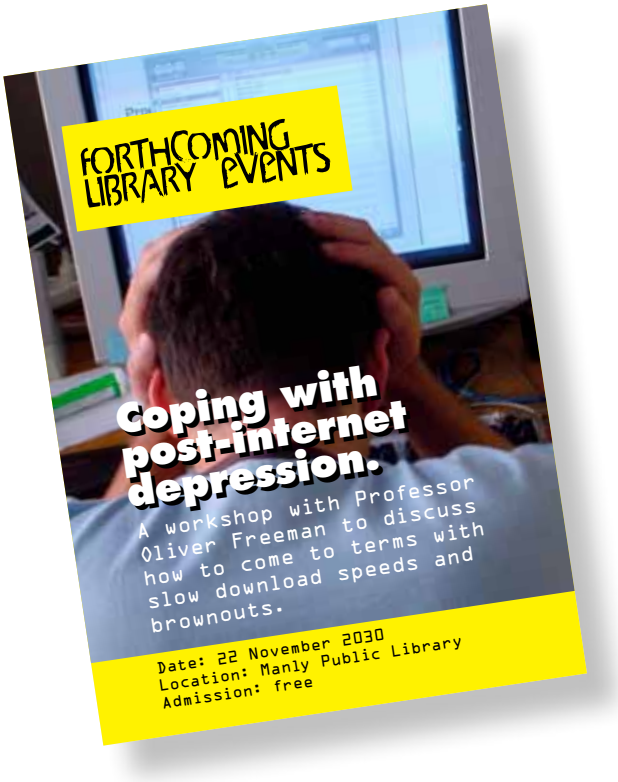
The high price of energy, together with the widespread adoption of digital lifestyles, also creates a series of problems with regard to the electricity supply. New storage (battery) technologies partly solve this problem but power blackouts become common, especially in urban areas. Consequently, some people seek to back-up their lifestyles with a variety of old-fashioned products. These range from candles and bicycles to notepaper and analogue telephones. Some schools even go as far as buying old textbooks in case eBooks become temporarily unreadable.

To make matters worse, the internet is plagued by a number of separate issues. Internet traffic has exploded. The number of users has gone through the roof but so too has bandwidth demand due to the shift away from text towards audio and video.

Internet brownouts eventually become such a problem that the government acts to limit demand. Priority access is given to essential public services, followed by large companies and lastly households. In some cases this means that the internet is not available at all between certain hours, whereas in other instances data transmission speeds relate directly to user type. Fortunately, public libraries are defined as an essential public service and they are given 24/7 access to the fastest wireless connections. They are also given access to additional funds if they agree to provide a range of e-government services.

Another problem is that the shift in skills has left public libraries out in the wilderness. Librarians tend to be older and whilst their skill set matches that of older users they are totally at odds with the younger generation, especially when it comes to communication.

To begin with, it seems certain that libraries are destined to digital oblivion, especially since government funding is rationalised and the profession fails to attract staff due to ongoing image problems. However, there is a small silver lining behind the large digital cloud. Smaller and medium sized firms that cannot afford premium priced information and do not trust online information providers start to send their staff to public libraries to get vital business information. This coincides with a small rise in the number of visits made by freelance workers and this all results in people lobbying private employers to support the local public library network.



Hence funding from private sources increases slightly and this enables public libraries to maintain their range of online and virtual services, which now includes technology support. In a surprise move some public libraries then set up commercial services to compete with the high-end commercial information services and this generates a reasonable level of revenue for investment back into the network. Nevertheless, a combination of staff shortages, resource scarcity and funding cuts mean that most libraries struggle to maintain vibrancy.

Eventually, corporations and governments start to realise that there is nothing more ephemeral than digital memory but by then it is too late.

EARLY WARNING INDICATORS

- Continual emergence of new media formats creates media mayhem
- Research revealing that people are using libraries to escape from the chaos outside
- Surveys reveal a growing level of cynicism about the trustworthiness of information
- Local government forces the merger of community and cultural institutions to save money
- Generational change creates significant tensions within the workplace
- Surveys revealing that people are living in a state of constant anxiety
- Endless mergers of local governments and local library services
- Library usage figures show constant decline in library visits and time spent
- People constantly losing information due to device redundancy or replacement
- People using public libraries purely as refuge or respite from digital world
- Corporations buying up information services and closing open copyright
- Corporations attempting to buy public libraries and public library assets
- Rising levels of pessimism about the future amongst general population
- Power blackouts
- Internet brownouts (kids start saying they can't do their homework because the web is down)
- Media companies charging for content especially archive and search
- People start wearing T-shirts with slogans such as "Don't Panic" and "Don't Tell Me To Be Calm"

TYPICAL QUESTIONS PEOPLE MIGHT ASK PUBLIC LIBRARIANS IN THIS WORLD

Can I sit here for a while? I need to calm down.

How reliable is your internet connection?

Can you back up the contacts on my phone for me? Really? What does it cost?

What formats do you have Harry Potter in? Will any of them sync with an iPad?

My boss wants a report on carbon-neutral footwear companies. Can you help?

Note: This timeline is an attempt to show how the scenario could develop between now and the year 2030. It is not intended as a set of individual predictions.

NEUROMANCER

Timeline

2010

— Internet hours in libraries up 59.5% over past 5 years but book loans static
— Collapse of Barclay's Bank in UK sparks widespread investor panic
— ANZ Bank share price collapses due to unfounded rumours
— China declares that it has hit peak water and starts to import water
— Australian government starts to outsource back-office library services
— Libraries ban the use of stepladders and staplers citing health and safety concerns

2011

— Market for premium-priced information emerges online
— Google introduces human search operatives as part of subscription package
— Report claims widespread use of screens is damaging children's eyesight (report is largely ignored until it is released online)
— First Mac virus causes widespread havoc

2012

— Changing market for information creates various new jobs and opportunities
— Report says that 'recreational' library visits up 16% in five years to 2009
— Same report says that 'information' trips to libraries down by 55%
— New York Times acquired by News Corp
— First global mobile phone virus emerges (causes widespread chaos)
— Global shortage of Sony e-readers caused by plastics shortage
— Several rural library services forced to merge
— Widespread local council amalgamation in NSW

2013

— Closed copyright increases, most valuable information now owned by corporations
— Library decline now hits 20% per annum
— NSW State Government collapses for second time in two years
— IBM announces that henceforth it is closing its HQ in favour of a virtual headquarters
— Survey says that 66% of adults (and 12% of kids) do not trust online information
— Video showing death of Paris Hilton in Hilton Paris causes internet to crash globally

2014

— Peak oil hits – price increases from $150 to $175 per barrel in a single day
— First major internet brownout in China causes widespread chaos
— Library staffing levels slightly improve due to bookshop diaspora
— 90% of kids in the US have a TV and computer in their bedroom
— Mayor in large metropolitan area forces public libraries to house a coffee house chain
— Households start to back-up digital lifestyles with various analogue products

2015

— First major internet brownout in USA
— Surging world commodity prices sparks energy terrorism
— Schools ban use of mobile phones and iPods in playgrounds
— Skilled labour shortage results in open immigration policy
— Widespread chaos as government census crashes
— Life becomes increasingly virtual
— Article in Sydney Morning Herald highlights growth in vinyl record shops
— Local government chaos as regions amalgamated
— Reports says that the average father spends six minutes per day talking to his children

2016

— Oil now at $200 per barrel (peak oil is here)
— Peak Oil for Dummies announced as the best selling book of 2015
— Work becomes more mobile and less dominated by physical presence
— Increase in freelance and flexible working conditions
— Libraries forced to extend opening hours as they become workplaces for many
— Government announces new tax on website content
— Government funding of libraries hits an all-time low
— Widespread public protests concerning library funding
— Price of water rises from $1 per litre to $2 per litre

2017

— Workers become increasingly responsible for their own training
— Austrade says information becoming increasingly vital to exports
— Libraries witness massive demand for desk space from mobile workers
— Libraries unsuccessfully start to charge for desk space
— The ABC charges for premium content online
— Report says that 78% of office workers now eat lunch at their desk
— Federal Government announces major distance learning program

> Simplicity lies at the other side of complexity
>
> James O'Toole

2018
- Study announces that librarians ranked #3 for trust behind nurses and teachers
- Government's just-in-time learning initiative ends in complete chaos
- Teacher fired for banning eBooks is reinstated amidst parent outrage
- Widespread chaos as research study unable to agree on resilience of media formats
- Peak water crisis in most major cities in Asia-Pacific region
- Energy use reaches all-time high; electricity shortages start
- Shortages of key raw materials limits growth of technology

2019
- Government regulates internet use
- Libraries made exempt from internet restrictions
- Librarians become increasingly multi-skilled and technology savvy
- Rationalisation of government towards e-services
- New Libraries Act puts pressure on free services
- Widespread adoption of some user-pays services in local libraries

2020
- Growth in automated information back-up services
- Racial tensions result in first ever library shooting in NSW
- Government funding announced for improved library security
- Water shortages become commonplace in Australia
- Electricity shortages still a major issue

2021
- Widespread adoption of user-pays and subscription services by news media
- Libraries follow suit although some librarians refuse to implement the idea
- Free content on internet limited to headlines and user-generated content

2022
- Libraries set up user committees to advise on collection strategies and services

2023
- Government funding for public libraries unchanged in 10 years
- Public outrage over threat to libraries results in local business support
- Income inequality causes a series of riots in city centres
- Government announces self-sufficiency strategy

2024
- Group of disenchanted librarians establish 'library tents' in rural towns
- Google opens a series of physical information stores (i.e. libraries) in major cities

2025
- Additional lifestyle services added to libraries including gyms and restaurants
- Literary lunches and Dickens after Dark both surprise hits at the State Library of NSW

2026
- Nothing much happens. Just the usual series of chaotic events and funding cuts

2027
- 18-month heatwave and power cuts in NSW cause widespread damage to old digital manuscripts and paper collections

2028
- All public libraries equipped with back-up power generators

2029
- Libraries attempt to sell off the least popular 80% of collections but fail to find bidders

2030
- State Library announces scenario project looking at the future of libraries in 2060

NEUROMANCER

Cameo

hi jonno,

bumped into rosso at the wknd. asked him what he was doin. he said he was FUBAR. I said he should get a job. theyre looking for people down the local public library. he said YYSW. I said no really. TPTB told me. you don't need no advanced degree or anything if yer going good with the tech. aparently they have a need for peeple wot can understand what the kids are asking 4 IYKWIM. Its all that vitual stuff. They got it by the trickload but dunno how to use halvf of it. LOL. Im finking of applying for something meself. actually IMO that place is a little bit special. I mean it don't cost nothing to go in there and you can hang all day if you want. Nice and quiet. No troubke from nobody. I thought to myself IHFTP. IAE you should get down there cos they have a some cool old stuff. You know books and stuff. You can borrow soe of them too. Got to run. Trying to by a hydrogen scooter. Saw one on murray.com. bloody bargin if u ask me.

anyway, EOL.

BBFN & l8rs,

danno
;-}

Ps also bumped into rego – he says 'hi'.

S2 S3
S1 S4

SCENARIO 4

Fahrenheit 451

SNAPSHOT

This world is a screenager's paradise. It is fast-paced, global and screen-based. Digitalisation has fundamentally changed the way that people consume information and entertainment, but it has also changed the way that people think. This is a post-literate world where physical books are almost dead and public libraries focus on digital collections and virtual services.

In this scenario, books take up very little physical space so more space is given over to internet access, digital books and various other forms of digital entertainment. Public libraries blur the boundaries with other retailers of information and entertainment and also house mental health gyms, technology advice desks, download centres and screening rooms.

Despite all this, public libraries struggle to survive due to a combination of ongoing funding cuts, low public usage and global competition.

FAHRENHEIT 451

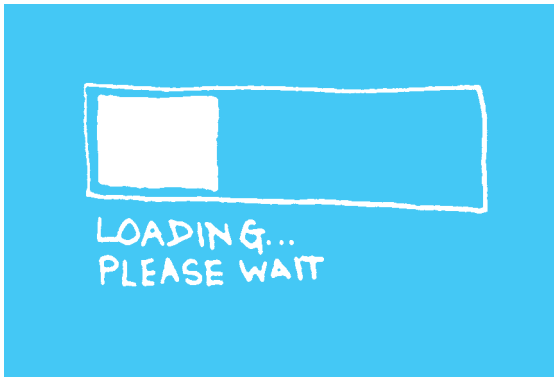
Scenario 4 – Overview

This is a world of restless hypertext and universal access. Global economic growth, primarily driven by Asia, results in an expansion of digital connectivity and an explosion of digitalised information. It is a fast-paced world of global markets and seemingly endless technological innovation.

Life is good for most people, although rapid economic growth creates a number of problems ranging from surging energy prices to unaffordable real estate. The price of oil soon rises to an all-time high and there are shortages of everything from water, wheat and plastic to copper, lithium and cadmium. This initially creates various manufacturing and supply problems and leads to unrest in some regions, especially areas where the price of food staples is high. However, most of these issues are soon solved through energy innovation and the adoption of virtual products and services.

One serious cloud on the horizon is ageing, which results in skills shortages in most regions. This is particularly true in industries such as information technology, education, healthcare and security. Most governments ultimately solve this through automation, outsourcing or by importing skilled labour but there are still problems.

The first two solutions cause demonstrations and boycotts, while the third (immigration) sparks racial tensions. This is especially true in poorer areas and violence in the streets spills over into government offices, schools, hospitals and even libraries.



As for books, things have changed quite fundamentally. e-books have proven to be very popular and are now mandatory within secondary and tertiary education. Public libraries therefore house collections of work-related or vocational e-books that can be downloaded for free onto a variety of mobile devices. This situation obviously creates ongoing copyright problems, although the invention of 'read-once' eBooks and the 'buy for life' iBook service partly solves some of the most immediate issues.

The biggest problem for libraries, apart from funding, is relevance. People have universal access to information at home and at work and can buy or borrow digital books cheaply from a variety of online services at the click of a mouse.

Public libraries attempt to compete by extending opening hours and by introducing a number of leisure-related services ranging from healthcare screening and technology tuition to childcare and mental health workouts. Libraries also double as third spaces, providing free workspace to digital nomads and silver surfers that have nowhere else to go. Nevertheless, none of these developments really have much of an impact and don't provide compelling leverage for enhanced funding

Public libraries still loan their physical books to older users but no longer buy new ones. Physical books have become items of historical record much like newspapers and magazines. In terms of collections, most resources are now devoted to either the creation of local information or the acquisition of eBooks and e-learning materials and most library requests and library visits now occur online or virtually.

EARLY WARNING INDICATORS

- Public libraries start to offshore call centres and back-office operations
- Public libraries forced to sell off valuable real estate and physical artefacts
- Librarians becoming brokers for a range of e-information providers
- Continued rise in virtual leisure and online living
- Major clean technology breakthrough(s) reducing pressure on fossil fuels
- Companies start to move HQs into virtual worlds
- Telepresence widely used for meetings and family reunions
- Sales of physical books plummeting downwards
- Widespread adoption of e-books in education
- e-learning and distance learning becomes popular, especially with foreign students
- Increasing use of automated and virtual systems in public libraries
- Emergence of user-pays and subscription services in public libraries
- Inner city council announcing its new library will contain no physical books
- Sale of e-books exceeds physical books in volume and value
- Popular T-shirts include "Internet Addict", "As Seen on YouTube" and "Virtually Famous"

TYPICAL QUESTIONS PEOPLE MIGHT ASK PUBLIC LIBRARIANS IN THIS WORLD

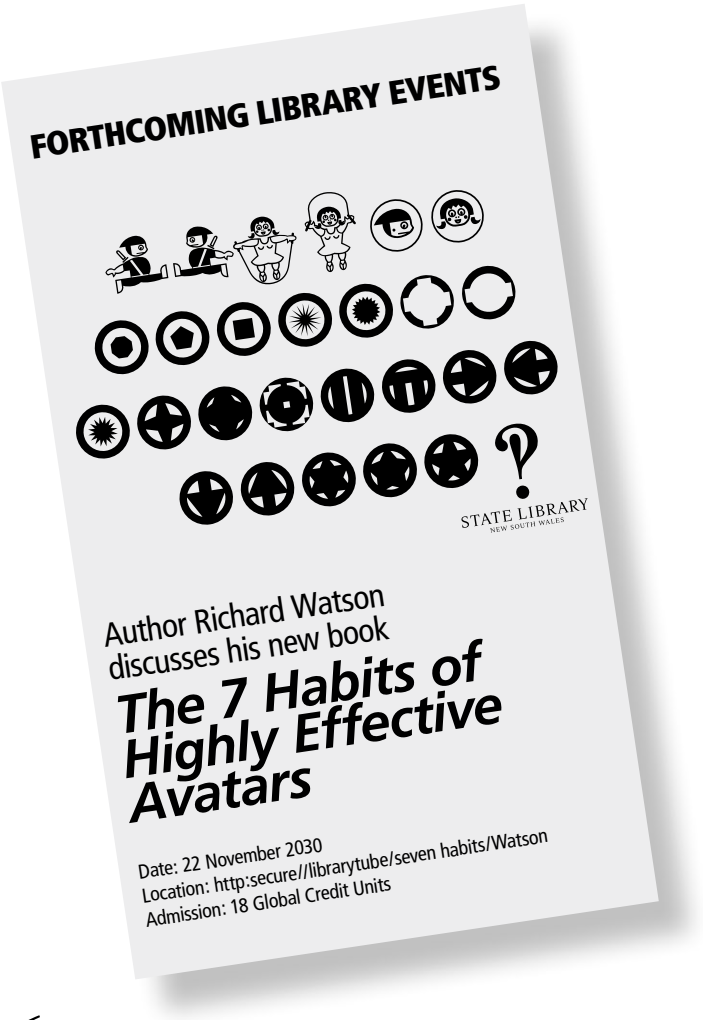
How long has this library been here?

Can you get that any faster?

Do you have any examples of old technologies? You know, like books or stamps?

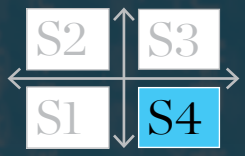
What happened to my browsing history?

How can it possibly be overdue when it's a digital file?



"It should be stamped out ...the computer is not for library use; that all the promises offered in its name are completely fraudulent; and that not only is it extremely expensive compared to other methods at this time, but that it will become increasingly expensive in the future; that it has been wrapped so completely in an aura of unreason that fine intelligences are completely uprooted when talking about it; that its use in a library weakens the library as a whole by draining off large sums of money for a small return; and that it should be stamped out."

Ellsworth Mason, "Along the Academic Way," Library Journal, May 15, 1971



Note: This timeline is an attempt to show how the scenario could develop between now and the year 2030. It is not intended as a set of individual predictions.

FAHRENHEIT 451

Timeline

2010

- Launch of Kindle in Australia starts to revolutionise reading habits
- Bookshops go out of business at a rate of 50 per week in Australia
- Apple launches iBooks store in US with provocative 'burning books' advertisement
- Announcement that 6 out of 10 best selling books in Japan in 2009 were mobile downloads
- Announcement that best selling book of 2009 was a cookbook
- News Corp starts to charge for all online content

2011

- Global growth returns
- Oil price hits $120 per barrel
- China buys up vast stocks of Lithium from Bolivia
- Food inflation returns due to widespread adoption of biofuels
- Publication of a series of books by technology futurists saying "I told you so"
- National campaign using games and music in an attempt to get teens to visit libraries

2012

- Amount of new information produced annually reaches epidemic proportions
- Newspaper article says that only 10% of products sold in Borders are books
- Hottest summer on record in most countries
- Sales of print books continue to decline
- Libraries stop lending films and music due to online competition
- Inflation hits 10% or above in the majority of countries
- Google buys Stanford's map shop in London's Covent Garden

2013

- Series of scandals surrounding circulation of false health information
- All public libraries now offer some form of online virtual collection
- Banks no longer offer paper statements
- e-books become mandatory in universities
- Libraries become storage areas housing 'digital originals' (i.e. books)
- Cyber attack on Australian Federal government results in loss of 45 million e-records
- Major government investments in solar energy and water recycling
- Digital publishing outstrips print format
- Video Ezy goes bust
- Report claims that 30% of 5 to 8 year-olds have never read a physical book
- Paper use falls by 33% in offices globally in a single year

2014

- 50% increase in sales of Toyota Prius
- Libraries experiment with pay-per-view downloads
- Claim that the average person now walks around with 10 batteries on his/her person
- Libraries offer e-tax return guidance and advice service
- Library network unsuccessfully launches @home book delivery with Australia Post
- YouGov survey says that the average household contains 10 books (8 are cookbooks)

2015

- Launch of 3-D TV by Foxtel
- Sony introduce e-paper in Officeworks
- Government urbanisation strategy focuses on high-density living
- Creation of single library association
- Boom in serious media titles
- Widespread adoption of RFID in public libraries
- Wearable computers now widely available
- Michael Dell donates $100 million for the establishment of the Michael Dell Virtual Library with its server in Malaysia

2016

- Libraries expand range of e-government services
- Report says that average walking speed in 20 cities worldwide is up 25% on 2009
- Government runs commercial to reduce noise in open-plan offices
- Government introduces a series of laws relating to internet filtering and censorship
- Libraries introduce cross-format media-on-demand vending machines
- Supermarkets offer e-book download service
- e-tax returns now mandatory

2017

- 5.5 billion people now own mobile phones. 70% are now internet connected.
- Libraries respond to demand for workspaces with introduction of hot desks
- Libraries offer before and after work childcare
- Libraries start to sell iPhones and Sony e-readers
- Recruitment and CV services available in libraries
- All books, documents and artefacts in libraries now geo-tagged
- The content creation industry continues to consolidate
- Major retrospective of computer graphics 1980–2015 at the National Gallery

2018

- Series of clean technology breakthroughs result in oil falling to under $100 a barrel
- Most library catalogues are open source
- Librarians start to recommend specific titles as being better than others
- Survey claims that 25% of adults no longer read anything in physical format

> 80% of the cost of a book has nothing to do with the content
>
> Gerd Leonhard

2019
- Libraries as physical spaces highly valued by public
- 50% of e-book and e-zine sales now made through supermarkets
- Library shelves fully digitalised and contain scannable user recommendations
- Best selling book of 2019 is The Kingdom of Infinite Cyberspace
- eBay offers first editions of digital books for sale

2020
- Libraries offer mental health workouts for senior citizens
- Government funds study looking at reasons behind declining attention spans
- All libraries now have cafés
- MIT Media lab demonstrates new 5-D e-paper
- Oil falls to $50 a barrel
- Subscription-only public libraries reappear after an 80-year absence!

2021
- Localisation trend intensifies, especially with local search, local maps and local news
- Collection strategies focus on local history and vocation-based materials
- Libraries become the largest buyer of physical newspapers and periodicals
- Google announces that it is no longer interested in digitising the world's libraries

2022
- Local community movement starts and rapidly spreads around NSW
- Philanthropists divert resources away from art galleries to libraries
- Libraries offer courses in DIY book publishing

2023
- All libraries equipped with nano solar power
- Copyright Agency approves 'book for life' download service

2024
- Wave of cultural consolidation with libraries merging with museums and art galleries
- Typical library opening hours now 8.30am to 11.00pm
- Library network announces major tie-up with school library network

2025
- 18 regional library services compressed into just 6 in NSW
- Library of the future is built incorporating an art gallery, concert hall and museum
- Steve Jobs announces that his memoir will be available only as an iBook download
- 70% of the global population now has internet access

2026
- Librarians now widely known as information evangelists
- Open libraries catalogues now commonplace
- English now the third most popular language on the web behind Chinese and Spanish

2027
- Public libraries install media-on-demand vending machines
- Libraries offer business news and intelligence service
- Libraries sell anti-virus software
- UNESCO joins with the US Library of Congress to launch the updated version of the World Digital Library

2028
- Information now ranked according to source credibility rather than incoming links
- Department of Media and Sport announces that libraries will focus on sports history

2029
- Internet addiction now a globally recognised condition
- Libraries offer evening courses in linear reading
- Libraries offer school study spaces and homework classes

2030
- Physical books become luxury items alongside newspaper and magazines
- 85% of public libraries now virtual. Physical buildings used for storage only

FAHRENHEIT 451

Cameo

4 July 2030

Dear Lyn,

Great news about the hydrogen powered iPhone. Can't wait to get my one. I walked past the old library yesterday. It looks, well, old. I popped in but there wasn't much there. I think Woolworths probably has a better selection of e-books. I had a quick look at the virtual collection but again most of it seemed to be stuff that's on Google.

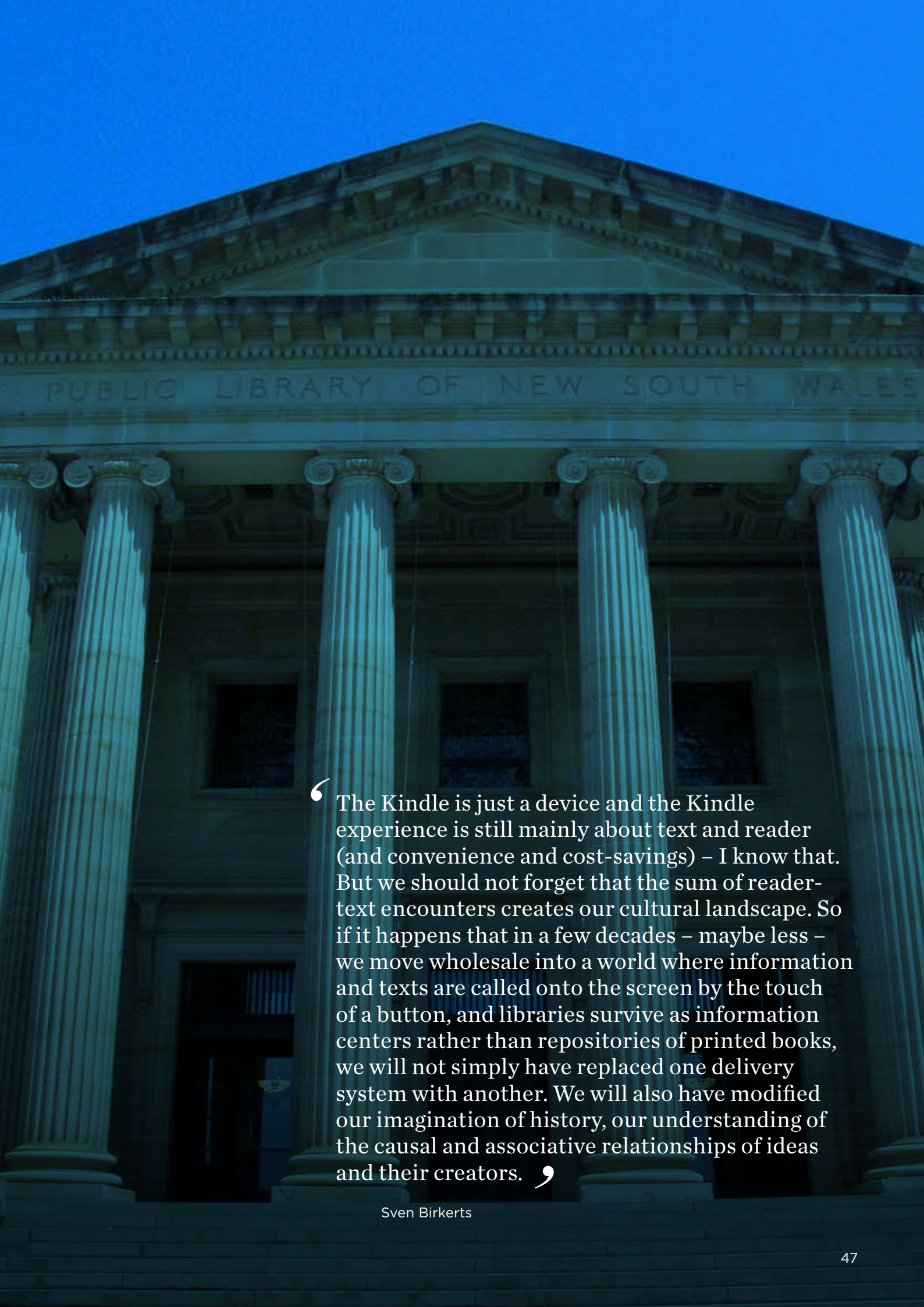
Having said this the space was quite restful – largely because there was almost nobody in it. Couldn't see any physical books. They all seem to have disappeared. It doesn't bother me really although I sometimes wonder what we've lost by keeping the words and throwing away the books. Somehow an e-book isn't quite the same. There's not the lovely sense of progression as you flick through a book on an iPhone. It just doesn't have the weight somehow either.

I also found recently that e-books are rather claustrophobic. An infinite universe of pixels. It's a bit like music. An old vinyl library was a personal history collection up there for all to see. Digital music collections just aren't the same and neither are e-libraries (libraries to go!). Both offer a kind of digital distraction, which we can't see. In fact I often wonder if we aren't outsourcing our brains without realising it.

Anyway, that thought has made me quite depressed. I'm off to the chocolate shop for a box of medicinal confectionery.

All the best,

Kathy



> ‘The Kindle is just a device and the Kindle experience is still mainly about text and reader (and convenience and cost-savings) – I know that. But we should not forget that the sum of reader-text encounters creates our cultural landscape. So if it happens that in a few decades – maybe less – we move wholesale into a world where information and texts are called onto the screen by the touch of a button, and libraries survive as information centers rather than repositories of printed books, we will not simply have replaced one delivery system with another. We will also have modified our imagination of history, our understanding of the causal and associative relationships of ideas and their creators.’
>
> Sven Birkerts

‘Vellum has yielded to linen and wood-pulp, which in turn are yielding pixels; and hand-lettering has yielded to the printing press, which in turn is yielding to code. Human civilisation is a thing of innovation and metamorphosis, not stasis. Now, as ever, we get the books our times demand.’ Matthew Battles

PART T

We have now created four alternative futures which challenge us with regard to the simple question: What would we be doing in each of these imagined worlds to answer the framing questions?

> What professional skills and attitudes will public library staff in NSW be demonstrating in 2030 in order to be successful in the alternative futures in which they might operate?
>
> Where will the leadership and funding that drives this success come from?

So what are the strategic implications of these futures? Are these implications ‘universal’ or specific to one future environment rather than another? And, finally, we come back to the present and identify both the adaptive and generative strategies which we must consider implementing today.

To make this happen, participants were asked to imagine that it is the year 2030 and to identify those strategies which would align the NSW Public Library Network with the defining characteristics of each imagined world.

Three of the four scenario worlds suggest that future changes to society will produce environments that are less harmonious than now. Only in Silent Spring with its community-based approach to sustainability and social ethics is there less division – but at a cost as this world is one with a chronically poor and highly regulated economic outlook.

The public role of libraries changes accordingly. It is most significant in Silent Spring confirming the value of (local) libraries as community hubs but in Neuromancer – the world in which the anarchic impact of technology has created a world of virtual cyber mayhem – libraries struggle to create order from chaos.

The need to align the source and amount of funding with perceived social value looks like the dominant strategic demand from the work done by the Public Library Network in NSW.

The world of How Buildings Learn is much more ordered and resembles the world of the China-driven Long Boom (1992–2007) with an emphasis on creativity, individualism and the concomitants of a smart planet. Libraries do well but in competition with private providers. Their physical presence is valued but this attribute disappears in Fahrenheit 451

Lessons from the four scenario worlds indicate that to avoid a scenario that is at odds with our desired future world, it will be important for government policy-makers, library managers and program planners and those implementing actions that will have a bearing on the future of society, to take into account the longer-term implications of their actions and their inaction.

Aligning funding with perceived social value looks like the dominant strategic outcome from the work done by the Public Library Network in NSW.

Some of the possible implications and learnings from across the four scenario worlds are briefly discussed below in relation to the strategic domains.

THREE

Learning from the Future

– a free market-driven world in which digitalisation dominates all forms of media.

In all the futures, the public funding of libraries is a problem. It's either low or erratic or both, and only one future – How Buildings Learn – sees private funding contributing significantly. The search for new money, productivity and cost saving seems to be ever present in every future.

The lack of connection between the social value given to libraries and levels of funding is a perplexing dilemma. In Silent Spring where the social value is highest, libraries do not have the resources to provide their users with rich and stimulating services as the extremes of climate change and global recession have sapped resources and placed society in the middle of a continuing crisis.

The implications are indicative only and are not meant to be anything other than ideas to provoke further thinking about what might be needed in order to ensure that local councils and libraries are working in ways that contribute positively towards building a prosperous and harmonious society in the future.

Our response to alternative futures is always of two kinds – how do we adapt to the conditions in which we are asked to operate and, of most importance, what can we do to create a better future for our clients and other stakeholders?

The Strategic Domains

Like all human endeavours, learning from the future requires a framework. The framing questions have helped us design the scenarios by focusing our attention on changes in the environment which might be relevant to them.

We now need a set of strategic domains within which to address the strategic implications of the worlds and from which we can identify priorities for action today.

These are the domains which were agreed at the strategy workshop in August.

No domain is mutually exclusive. Taken together, they define for the NSW Public Library Network those areas where strategic choices have to be made and include within each a subset of topics which may need to be addressed.

These sub-topics are shown as 'Strategy Clouds' in the discussion which follows.

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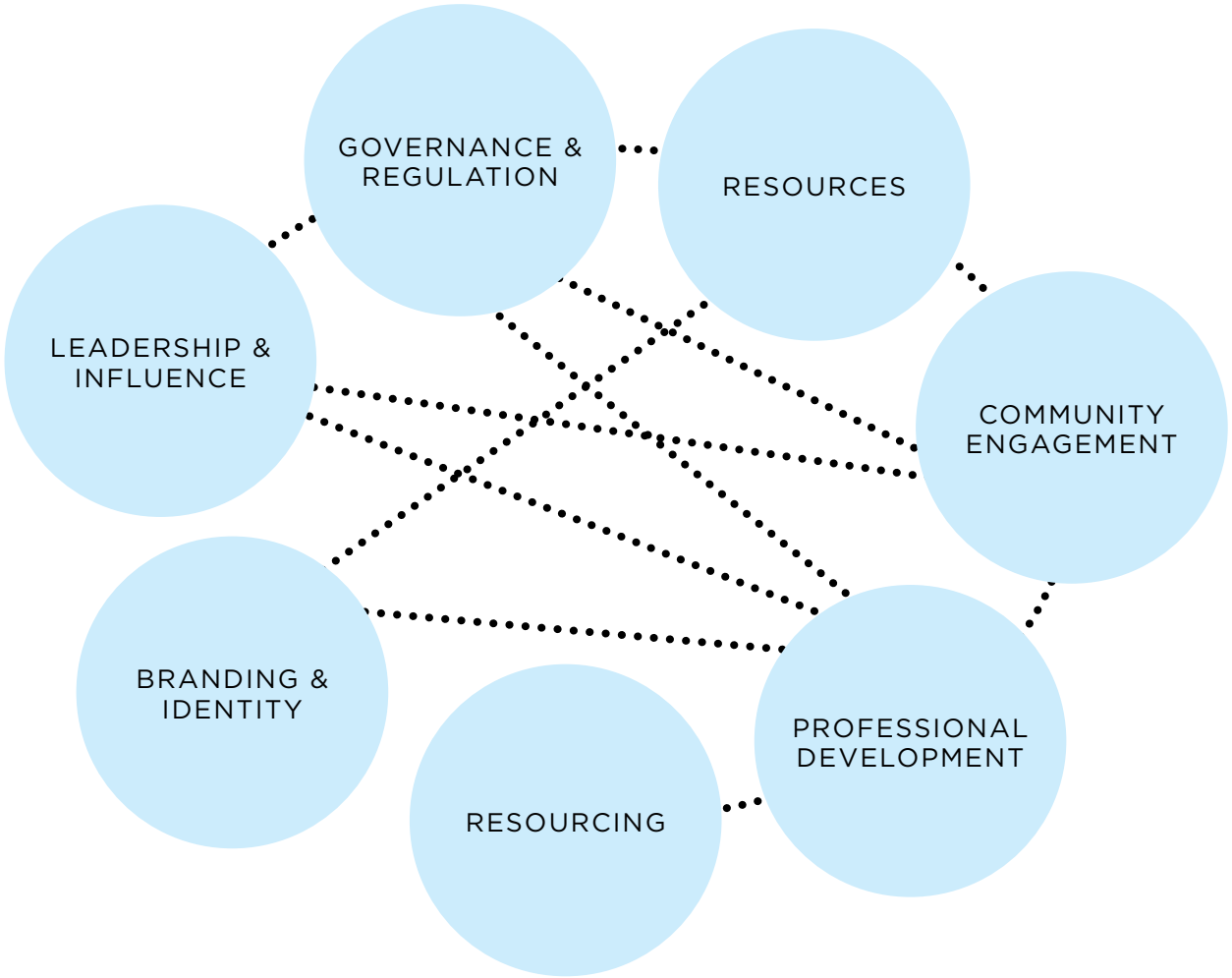
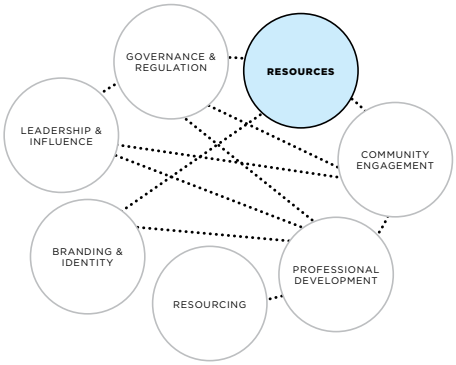
THE SEVEN STRATEGIC DOMAINS





—
DOMAIN 1

—
STRATEGY CLOUD - RESOURCES

FIVE RESOURCES CHALLENGES FOR 2010

- ☐ **PROVISION OF FEDERATED SEARCHING CAPABILITY**
- ☐ **ATTRACT GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR ESSENTIAL SERVICES FROM STATE AND FEDERAL**
- ☐ **FOCUS ON NEEDS CREATED BY GENERATIONAL CHANGE**
- ☐ **LIBERATE THE USE BEING MADE OF LIBRARY SPACES**
- ☐ **THINK LOCALLY, ACT LOCALLY**

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RESOURCES

Resources lead the strategy debate for any organisation; what we have and the 'offer' which we are making to our customers. Access is critical and all libraries will, in all futures, need to open up their databases on all platforms.

In counterpoint, one of the most significant changes affecting resources is the emphasis on the 'local'. The local is spinning free from the globalisation of the last 20 years and is highly relevant in different ways in the future worlds with the possible exception of Neuromancer.

In 2030, libraries are self-publishing unique local materials in all imagined futures and offering print-on-demand facilities in Silent Spring and How Buildings Learn. In these two worlds, libraries are also offering locally packaged regulatory and corporate information. In Neuromancer, nobody cares that much but in Fahrenheit 451 digital delivery of local materials is valued.

The demand for local book groups and related advisory services is strong especially in Silent Spring, How Buildings Learn and even Fahrenheit 451.

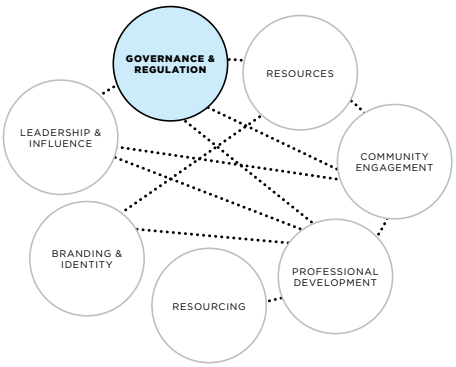
Physical library spaces and collections are highly valued in Silent Spring and to a lesser extent in How Buildings Learn and in all worlds the pressure is on to rationalise the use of space and its related infrastructure.

The focus on e-based communication processes including the provision of e-government services, is a winner in all scenarios, despite the focus on local needs and issues in Silent Spring and How Buildings Learn.

And in the worlds of Silent Spring and How Buildings Learn the demand for authentication of data is high.

Generational change is driving a universal need for libraries to provide multiple platforms for its content. This is a virtual necessity which is accompanied by a physical need for libraries to provide multifunctional social spaces. Everything everywhere – all the time!

Literacy skills are changing. Whereas in times gone by their lack was linked to socioeconomic factors, in the new worlds of 2030, the impact of online platforms and mobile devices has generated a new dynamic based on cognitive development and communications. Libraries promote reading and 'traditional' adult skills.



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DOMAIN 2

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STRATEGY CLOUD - GOVERNANCE AND REGULATION

FIVE GOVERNANCE AND REGULATORY CHALLENGES FOR 2010

- ☐ **CORE FREE SERVICES V. REVENUE OPPORTUNITIES UNDER LEGISLATION**
- ☐ **DUE RECOMPENSE FOR PROVIDING GOVERNMENT SERVICES**
- ☐ **STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY**
- ☐ **COORDINATION OF EFFORTS ACROSS THREE TIERS OF GOVERNMENT**
- ☐ **ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING 'WITH ONE VOICE'**

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GOVERNANCE AND REGULATION

The strategy workshop suggested that the tensions between the national, the regional and the local on matters to do with governance and regulation are as evident as they are in the other strategic domains. A National Library Act is of no consequence in Neuromancer – despite getting the full monty in the other futures.

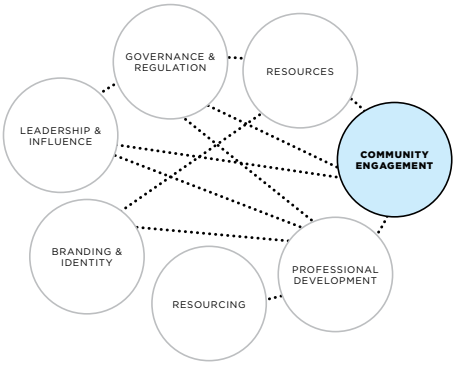
The pursuit of national standards is highly important in How Buildings Learn while the support for one and only one national association for public libraries is missing in Silent Spring and Neuromancer.

The surprise package here is the status of 'no-brainer' given to the establishing of a fee structure for service provision. Even in Silent Spring. Is this a defensive posture or a genuine acknowledgement that 'the time has come' for public libraries to celebrate the pluralistic and capitalistic nature of our democracy? On the question of government funding, libraries will need to tap into state funding where possible.

ICT is a significant challenge. Libraries have a universal need to globalise the way their local councils see the world and to help them develop a national focus.

This strategic option is ranked closely with the need to lobby government to maintain prioritised free connectivity access.

The team also identified the need for libraries to align themselves with government objectives, initiatives and strategies. This option may need contextualising against the desire of libraries to provide leadership in ways in which they can create a better future for their users. And in all futures, spokespersons for library professionals need to raise their political and lobbying skills if they are to compete with other pressure groups.



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DOMAIN 3

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The "Shush!" days are over! Making connections with users, stakeholders and the broader community and engaging them in the work of the library will become increasingly important to counter scenarios where society becomes highly fragmented along socioeconomic and/or technology lines.

Community needs must be assessed as an ongoing priority along with ITC literacy programs. Library users expect librarians to use e-tools as they do. "People like us!" is the engagement metaphor in Silent Spring and Fahrenheit 451.

And in these two futures the pressure is on for libraries to be community hubs that engage with special interest communities such as migrants, indigenous people and the 'have nots' – particularly in remote areas and especially by creating programs that address basic skills (including digital skills) and adult literacy.

Libraries need to know their users very well as the strength of these relationships is critical for understanding user needs and building trust and partnerships with them.

The strategy workshop group voted 3 to 1* that the most important aspect of a library's future role about which they felt passionate was the development of the library as a local community and social networking hub.

We thus expect public libraries in NSW to be very active in contributing to community building and strengthening community participation.

The question remains: "How?" One strategy is for libraries to host websites for local community groups.

The development of fee-based services, already raised by the governance group, features strongly in How Buildings Learn and Fahrenheit 451 and was eclipsed by the option to promote the library as a trusted brand – rated 'high' in every conceivable future. It is, of course, arguable that if you have to promote trust then that may make you untrustworthy; perhaps the focus is rather on acting in a trustworthy way so that the brand value is emergent rather than claimed.

Community engagement includes engagement with the corporate sector. This is most important in How Buildings Learn and only slightly less so in Neuromancer. In Silent Spring engagement is channelled by utilising community skills and interests. But engagement with education and schools is even more important than with corporations.

The second standout option after promoting trust is sustainability. The view of the team is that the sustainable development of libraries is of the highest importance in all futures – despite it being a somewhat vexed pursuit in the Neuromancer world.

FIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CHALLENGES FOR 2010

- ☐ **UTILISING COMMUNITY SKILLS AND INTERESTS**
- ☐ **PROMOTING THE TRUST ELEMENT IN THE LIBRARY BRAND**
- ☐ **CONDUCT COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENTS**
- ☐ **DEVELOP INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAMS**
- ☐ **ENSURING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARIES**

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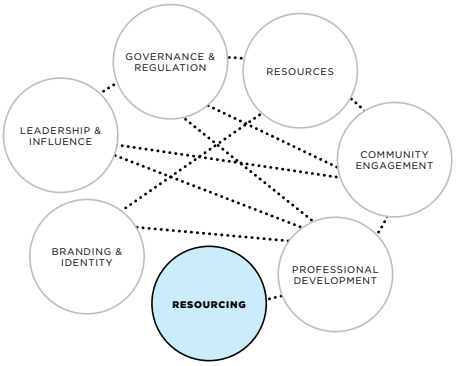
STRATEGY CLOUD - COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



DOMAIN 4

STRATEGY CLOUD - RESOURCING

FIVE RESOURCING CHALLENGES FOR 2010

- ☐ WORK ON SIMPLIFYING DELIVERY SYSTEMS
- ☐ REDUCE STAFF LEVELS
- ☐ SEEK PARTNER FUNDING
- ☐ INTEGRATE LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
- ☐ FOCUS ON LOCAL HISTORY AND ENVIRONMENT

RESOURCING

The complex issue of resourcing the services provided by public libraries is at heart a funding issue. The ubiquity of the funding problem is enough for hope to have 'grown grey hairs'. Its significance is never overestimated nor far from the matter at hand.

Libraries have to demonstrate their relevance, and in the imagined future worlds that relevance is never constant. The 'year in year out' funding cuts are taking libraries to the point of no return and it is the threat as much as the actuality of charging for services which may sharpen the minds of policy makers as to what they should be doing in these futures.

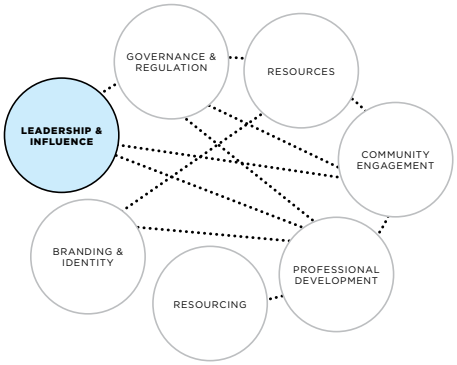
In How Buildings Learn and Fahrenheit 451, some library services are charged – the degree depending on the underlying social value placed on free access. The latter is clearly contestable in all futures, driving the lack of alignment already mentioned between library funding and library value.

At the strategy workshop the only no-brainer option surfaced by the resourcing group was the need to develop simple delivery systems. Changing the managing systems was suggested in Silent Spring which alone lends itself to a cooperative or even voluntary approach. All futures will benefit from economies of scale which can be achieved by creating purchasing collectives – particularly for ICT.

The team responded positively to the idea of integrating community and library services in all worlds except for Neuromancer.

And the relevance of a local focus with the delivery of content on local history and the local environment is also noted for all futures except Neuromancer.

Keeping staff levels low is an option in most futures as is the need to seek co-funding partners, and, above all, is the need for a new collaborative culture to supplant the silos of yesteryear.



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DOMAIN 5

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LEADERSHIP AND INFLUENCE

Librarians tend to have a more negative view than the general public of their status in society. This can, at times, lead to the feeling that they deserve more respect from without. But the social role played by public libraries is the key. "Ask not" as JFK said, "what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country".

Thus, it is what libraries do that is paramount. And in the four scenarios no one is suggesting that libraries are replaced by online delivery or Google will supplant the role of the librarian – even if in Neuromancer it is line ball. It is suggested that the role of the library in society will remain important – despite the changing context in which that role is fulfilled.

Each of the scenarios presents a challenge for the leadership of public libraries. The leadership of the library in Silent Spring and How Buildings Learn through collaboration with users and other stakeholders is responsible for building local culture. In Neuromancer, the library becomes an island of sanity in an anxious world while in Fahrenheit 451 the local library is a digital node in a global and virtual network.

In principle, all communities should have a library that can meet the informational and entertainment needs of its users. If the diminishing of the library depicted in Neuromancer is to be avoided, library managers in leadership roles will need to be strong advocates for focusing on users' needs.

A leadership network involving leaders from across the State of NSW is one way of facilitating communication between leaders and building leadership collegiality.

The universal strategy ('no brainer') as far as these futures is concerned is the need for leaders to influence across the state how online services are delivered by rising above the local differences between councils and looking for common platforms. Google is Google wherever you are. The same cannot be said, yet, for online library services.

Diversifying the skill mix of staff is a second 'no brainer'. In any of the scenarios, this is a sharply defined necessity.

This strategic domain gets involved with the ability of library leaders to create better futures; to generate changes which are seen to be desirable. Thus, a high emphasis is placed on lobbying government to keep access free and eliminate user-pays models. Library leaders may also promote social stability and wellness in chaotic worlds like Neuromancer or ones where resources are scarce as in Silent Spring.

FIVE LEADERSHIP AND INFLUENCE CHALLENGES FOR 2010

- ☐ **DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS WITH SCHOOLS AND SOCIAL PROVIDERS**
- ☐ **RATIONALISE THE DELIVERY OF ONLINE SERVICES**
- ☐ **CREATE YOUR LIBRARY AS A SOCIAL NETWORKING HUB**
- ☐ **LOBBY GOVERNMENT ON FREE ACCESS**
- ☐ **PROMOTE SOCIAL STABILITY**

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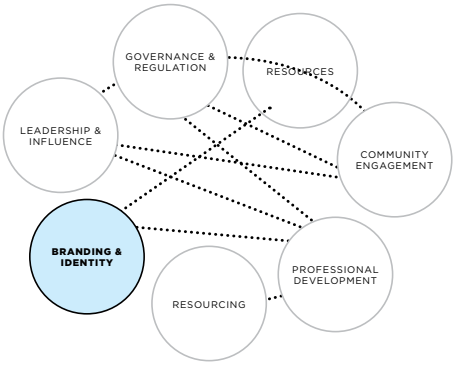
STRATEGY CLOUD - LEADERSHIP AND INFLUENCE



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DOMAIN 6

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STRATEGY CLOUD - BRANDING AND IDENTITY

FIVE BRANDING AND IDENTITY CHALLENGES FOR 2010

- ☐ **PROMOTE THE LIBRARY AS A COMMUNITY HUB**
- ☐ **FOCUS ON A NICHE MARKET**
- ☐ **CREATE NATIONAL STANDARDS**
- ☐ **PROMOTE 'MY LOCAL'**
- ☐ **ASSESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR A NATIONAL IMAGE**

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BRANDING AND IDENTITY

Wisdom about branding and identity is often seen as being the province of specialist consultants from the marketing, advertising and PR industries. But in truth, nobody knows better about a brand than its creators, curators and managers.

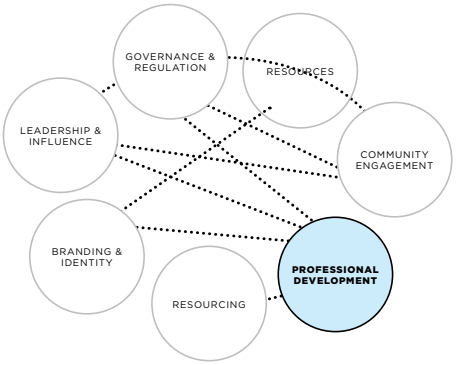
At its heart is the answer to the question: how do we add value? And in so doing what is the social need which we fulfil? Positive answers to these two questions will deliver social relevance.

The strategy team recognised the relevance of value-adding by suggesting the no brainer option for all public libraries is the acceptance that they are a niche market. They cannot compete with the mass market power of Google, Yahoo, Amazon, Twitter, Face-book, Flickr and the like. Nor can they build databases like Wikipedia and YouTube. But what they can do is to respond to the changing environment and the activities of the mass market providers, by focusing on the local, the slow, the 'third' place in an inexpensive playground and learning centre for consumers as citizens to enjoy and participate in their local community.

Once again the strategy for public libraries to promote local history and culture is dominant in Silent Spring and How Buildings Learn and it is only in Fahrenheit 451 that we see the need for a national image for libraries.

The promotion of professional skills is also paramount in all futures but Fahrenheit 451 and a second no brainer emerges with the need for the library to act as the hub for an online community of (mainly local) interest. The ideal of 'my local' is particularly strong in Silent Spring and How Buildings Learn.

Balancing local service with a national image is also needed to improve the persuasive power of the 'library' brand.



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DOMAIN 7

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The proper training and development of professional librarians is an important professional and policy objective, recognising the social role of quality librarianship in many of the futures we have imagined.

These suggestions have implications for the way professional learning is conducted and the factors that are considered when hiring librarians and when reviewing staff performance

In their technological role, libraries in all futures are the providers of access to tools and widgets which enable users to explore the possibilities of technology, to experiment and have a 'look see.'

Equally ubiquitous is the need for library professionals to develop new specialised skills – as curators, futurists, marketers and so on. By improving the professional skills of librarians, new talent will be attracted into the profession which – by the same process – needs to broaden its capabilities in a fast-changing world.

The strategy workshop also suggested that in How Buildings Learn and Fahrenheit 451 there is demand for libraries to develop technology programs around healthcare and to develop video conferencing skills.

FIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES FOR 2010

- ☐ TRAIN STAFF AS DIGITAL BROKERS
- ☐ DEVELOP SPECIALIST SKILLS
- ☐ USE EMBEDDED TECHNOLOGY AS A TRAINING TOOL
- ☐ REVIEW LIBRARY COURSES TO ENSURE RELEVANCE TO THE ENVIRONMENT
- ☐ SUPPORT USER EXPERIMENTATION WITH AND SAMPLING OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES

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STRATEGY CLOUD -
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Wild cards

Scenarios are built on interconnections between uncertainties. But there are low probability, high-impact events (the GFC and Swine Flu pandemic being recent instances) that are highly dramatic and sometimes have totally unexpected consequences. In some extreme instances these wild cards are so extreme and unexpected that they can break long-established trend lines or destroy scenarios.

Here are some examples of potential wild cards for public libraries.

CHINESE ECONOMIC COLLAPSE

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
Increased cost of books and other media

US ECONOMIC COLLAPSE

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
Slowdown in digital innovation

GLOBAL FINANCIAL COLLAPSE

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
Surge in demand for borrowing

GLOBAL PANDEMIC

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
People avoid physical objects and busy spaces

ENERGY PRICE SPIKE

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
Massive rise in heating/cooling costs

OIL HITS $150 SOONER THAN EXPECTED

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
People reduce reliance on cars/travel less

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE ATTACK

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
Temporary loss of internet, power, water etc

RAPID INCREASE IN CYBER-CRIME

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
People afraid to use online services

TERRORIST ATTACK IN AUSTRALIA

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
People no longer feel safe in public spaces

ROGUE MAYOR

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
Removal of local library funding

DECREASED APPETITE FOR RISK

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
Massive litigation costs/removal of services

MAJOR GLOBAL CONFLICT

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
Ethnic violence on public library property

EMF RADIATION

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
Banning of mobile phones/mobile devices

RADICAL GREENING

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
Public pressure not to transport people/books

MASS-MIGRATION INTO AUSTRALIA

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
English no-longer a first language in some areas

SEVERE WATER SHORTAGE

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
Restrictions on paper manufacturing

NEW SPIRITUAL PARADIGM

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
Re-definition of societal values and ambition

GLOBAL COOLING

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
Ice age creates agricultural and economic havoc

GLOBAL COOLING 2

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
Reversal of sustainability agenda

COLLAPSE OF LITERACY

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
Collection strategies shift to multi media

GOOGLE OPENS FREE LIBRARY NETWORK

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
Shift away from information/ entertainment

GOVERNMENT WITHDRAWS ALL FUNDING

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
Shift towards commercial sponsorship/services

SUCCESS OF FAR-RIGHT/ LEFT PARTY

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
Burning of books/libraries

ROGUE LIBRARIAN

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE
Damage to systems, damage to reputation

PARTICIPANTS

Thank you to the following public library and local council staff who participated in one or more of the project workshops.

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Lynn Regan
Lynn Bonomini
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Margaret Redrup May
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Susanna Waller
Therese Scott
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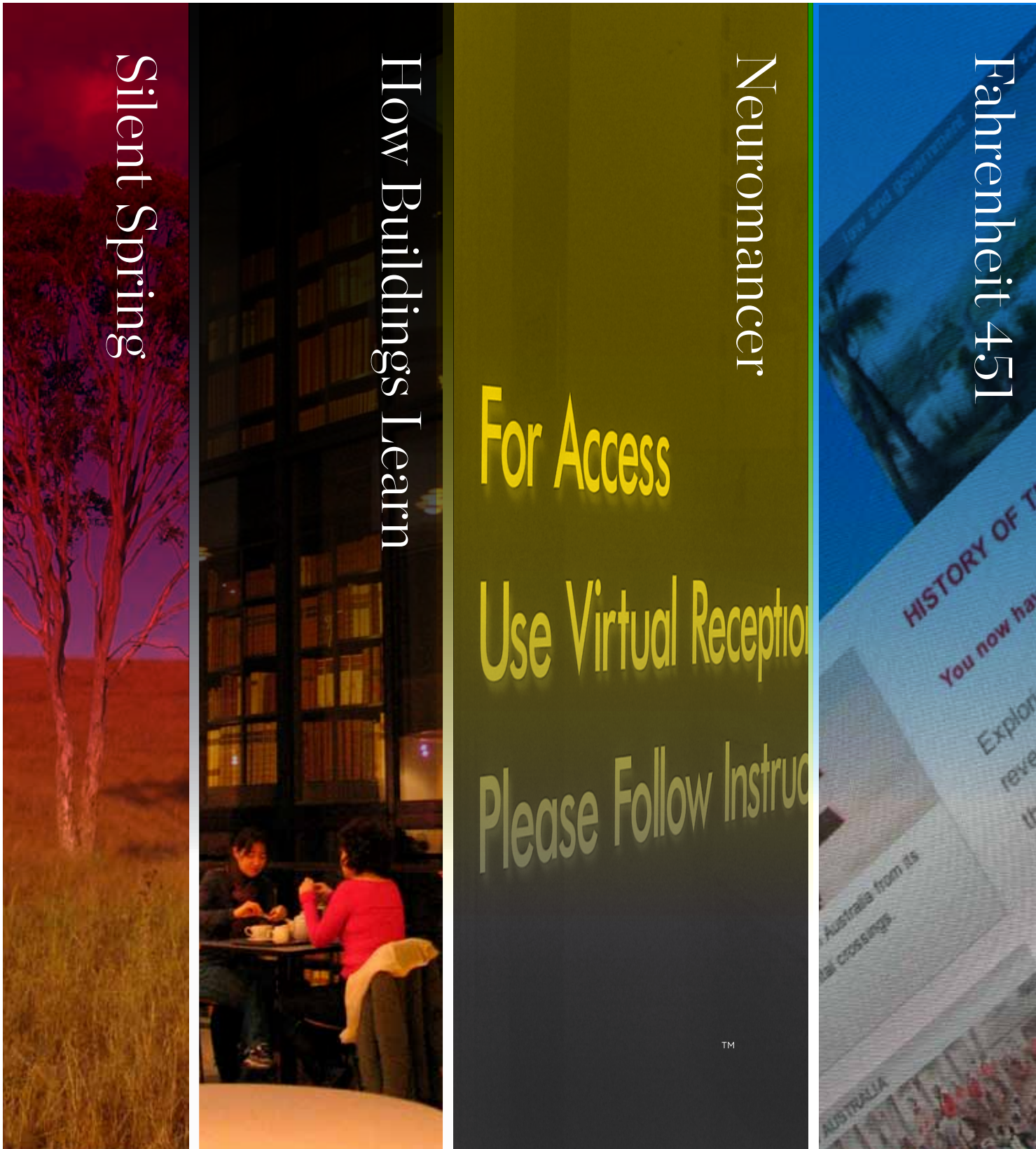
Next Steps

The basis for ongoing dialog about the future is in monitoring the early warning signs and devising strategies for addressing the challenges identified in the seven strategic domains.

With this in mind, the State Library of New South Wales will work with the NSW public libraries in 2010 and beyond.

‘ The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn. ’ Alvin Toffler