



ALIA Information Online 2017 Presentation
Libraries in the Digital Age
Vicki Munro
Manager, Woollahra Libraries

In calling my paper, 'Libraries in the Digital Age', I need to be upfront and advise that I am in fact only going to provide one example of a Library and its journey into the 'Digital Age'. This example is our new Woollahra Library at Double Bay, which Woollahra Council opened on Saturday 28 May 2016.

At this time, Woollahra Libraries moved from our much loved central Library, beautifully situated on Sydney Harbour in an historic 468sqm house, into a new 2,234 sqm purpose built Library in the centre of the Double Bay Shopping centre. We also integrated our Local History Centre, previously housed separately, into the main library for the first time in twenty years. This was a major change for both the community and Library staff.

Embarking on this project, we identified that we are in a world where information and communication is going through a period of exponential and accelerating change and where the role of libraries is significantly changing as a result of this rapid growth in technology, its impact on how people access information, as well as how they work and play.

To address this change, we realised that we needed to be proactive and open to the changing direction of modern libraries and their role as a community hub, facilitating not only access to books and information but providing a space for the community to connect, learn and access new technologies. In an age where people don't need to visit a library to access information, we needed to provide a strong incentive to help get people through the doors and sign them up as members. We needed to create a space that was inviting, fun and relevant for a range of different groups within our community.

Our second challenge was finding ways to maximise the introduction and use of technology into the new Library design to meet high community expectations; improve staff efficiency and effectiveness - to meet the demands of working in a Library four times larger (over three floors), whilst still providing excellent customer service; and to ensure the new space allowed flexibility to meet an ever changing library and technological environment.

The planning and design for the new Library was a lengthy task, taking almost nine years from inception to opening. The key steps in this process included:

- 2007 : Strategic Plan "The Way Forward" - AEC Group
"A new central library of no more than 2,230sqm to be provided in the Double Bay town centre within 5 years".
- July 2010 : Design Brief for new Double Bay Library - Dr David Jones
"An innovative, state of the art building"
- June 2012: EOI for the design of the new library.
- May 2013 : Appointment of BVN Donovan Hill Architects with their winning concept *"Garden within the Library"*
- August 2014 : Library building construction



- December 2015: Library fit out
- 28 May 2016 : Opening of the new Woollahra Library at Double Bay

The key assumptions applied to the design of the new Library included:

- Our new Library was to be a 'State of the Art' facility;
- We hoped that it would be the next step in Library design and demonstrate a new vision for Libraries in the 21st century;
- It would be an effective community hub;
- We wanted to create a 'WOW' factor;
- The Library was to be a place 'beyond books' and more of an 'experience'; and
- Without an increase in staff, we needed to ensure that our approach was to do things 'smarter, not harder'.

Delivering 'Libraries in the Digital Age' is not as simple as rolling out a series of different technologies. It needs a holistic approach. It requires the provision of 'enabling' IT infrastructure and a suite of technologies which can fully integrate with each other and work together to deliver a new library service model.

Our new philosophy for the Woollahra Library at Double Bay, which has also been implemented across the two other service points of Paddington and Watson Bay Libraries, has five main tenets, discussed below.

1. Exploit all possible library self service technologies.

We introduced RFID technology and the use of self-check out kiosks on each level of the Library as well as a new automated returns unit placed in a dedicated Returns Room on Level 1.

To accompany the RFID technology, the Library has introduced 'Tap and Go' library cards and self service payments (eftpos/online payments) with each of the self-check out kiosks.

In addition to the above technological improvements, the Library has introduced a 'One Stop Shop' approach on all Library OPAC's. They display web interface tiles to allow customers to join the Library using the online membership portal, book online for PCs, meeting rooms, events and one-on-one Local History sessions. They also provide access to the Library catalogue. This service is available in the Library, via the customer's portable devices and from home.

The introduction of self service technologies across the Libraries has resulted in staff efficiencies, allowing staff to spend more time on the floor with customers and allowing our customers to feel in control and with a greater feeling of ownership of their Library.

To provide some of these tools, the Library staff have worked closely with IT vendors to deliver quality software solutions and have continued to work with them to further develop the 'out of the box' solutions to meet our Library needs and that of the changing Library world. This is an ongoing project which requires persistence, good interpersonal / communication skills and some additional funding to provide product enhancements.



2. Implementation of a concierge model

This new service model operates on each floor of the Library. Here staff are roaming on the floor and not behind large desks, but working side by side with our customers to highlight our Library collections, services and programs. The aim is for staff to approach and greet customers, rather than the other way around and provides enhanced, excellent customer service. This approach has also meant that prime Library real estate, dominated by the large information desk, is replaced with more flexible spaces.

To achieve this tenet, the Library staff carry an iPad whilst on the floor, equipped with a range of programs and apps including the Library Management System, Skype for Business and Prowl notification. The latter custom-designed app is placed on a small tablet on the Welcome desk and allows customers to 'press for assistance' if staff are not visible on the floor. Staff, who are clearly identifiable, dressed in the Library's brand colours (black, white and grey, with orange lanyard and name badge) are free to roam each Library level, shelve returned material, and answer public enquiries. The introduction of the concierge model has resulted in improvements in customer service and increased community engagement.

3. Demand driven collection

The Library has been working towards a demand driven collection across all Library service points for a number of years. We have aimed to create a 'just in time' rather than a 'just in case' collection. This has involved a number of strategies including:

- Outsourcing the selection, cataloguing and processing of new resources resulting in the prompt delivery of shelf ready resources;
- Advocating for smaller hard copy collection sizes (Woollahra Library's collection is 65,000);
- A significant increase in the range and size of digital content – the collection includes eBooks, eAudiobooks, eMusic, eMagazines and a wide range of online databases; and lastly,
- Setting performance standards for each collection area. Each collection area within the three Woollahra Libraries has a set collection size and turnover target rates.

In addition to the above strategies, the new Woollahra Library at Double Bay has introduced a Quick Browse Fiction and Non Fiction collection, available on Level 1. This collection holds popular works, bestsellers, many in multiple copies to meet high customer demand. Similar to a bookstore, it has been curated with the best titles and is suitable for the time poor or for those who just want the latest and greatest. The rest of the Adult Fiction and Non Fiction collections are situated on Level 2 and 3.



4. Digitisation of the Local History collection

One of the key actions for the move to the new Woollahra Library at Double Bay has been the re-inclusion of the Local History collection into the Library, providing a 7 day a week service. For the past 20 years, the Local History collection and staff have been housed in a separate building, away from the Library and with limited opening hours.

In returning the collection to within the Library, the Local History collection has been reviewed and in an effort to improve access to the collection, the Library has embarked on an ongoing digitisation project for the majority of the collection. Using EMu as the digital asset management system, the Library has been digitising all photographs, research files, Council minutes, maps etc. This will provide 24/7 online access. This is an ongoing project, dependent on funding.

Local History has been further promoted with a new service model and the introduction of monthly talks on historical topics of interest.

5. Provision of “ Enabling” IT infrastructure

It was necessary to advocate for the Library to move from a ‘Utility’ provider to an ‘Enabling’ resource so that the Library could have flexibility and agility to respond to new requirements and updated technology platforms. This was supported by Council’s management and IT Department. It has meant that the Library can future proof itself against further technological and Library focus changes.

The new Library now has a very fast Wi-Fi service, 24/7 access to many Library resources, including Local History and eResources, an interactive website and social media presence. It has meant that the Library will remain a relevant and desirable place to visit.

Two other key technology applications

There are two other key areas which have impacted on Woollahra Library at Double Bay as a ‘Library in the Digital Age’.

Firstly, apart from the necessary technology implemented in the new Woollahra Library from a functional and staff / customer efficiency perspective, there was also the need to introduce technology from a marketing aspect. This is where technology has played a significant role in attracting new and diverse customers into the Library. This technology was considered in the planning and design as follows:

Level 1: iPads and interactive floor projector in the Children’s area and Projector and Foxtel in the Events Space and Theatre Stairs;

Level 2: WiiU and PS4 in the Games Space and the new Microsoft Hub in the Tech Room along with 13 laptops; and

Level 3: Three Group Study Rooms with smart projector and digital screens.



These technological features have been successful in attracting businesses, both large and small, who are keen to hire the Events Space and Tech Room for meetings and functions, as well as students and young people who use the Group Study Rooms and Games Space and a wide range of new families to the new Library.

The other key use of technology has been in the promotion and marketing of the Library. In 2015 the Library, in conjunction with the Community Services Marketing team, introduced a Library Marketing Plan, which included a new brand, an annual customer satisfaction survey to advise on set benchmarks, and a range of promotional strategies including:

- Social Media - new Facebook page and Twitter account;
- Library eNewsletter and Spotlight eNewsletter; and
- Digital signage.

This has significantly increased our online community engagement.

- The Woollahra Library Facebook Page likes has increased by 282% over the last 12 months from 222 page likes to 848 page likes; and
- The number of subscribers to our Library eNewsletter has increased from 4,684 in June 2016 to 7,369, by the end of December 2016, representing an increase of 57%.

Challenges and how we responded

Designing our Library in the Digital Age has represented a major shift for Woollahra Libraries' staff and customers alike and required a significant change management process.

The following strategies were engaged to assist staff through the changes:

- Working with Council's HR department to create a staff transition plan. This involved staff identifying their concerns, training needs and opportunities in the new Library. One of the main issues was how to work in an open plan office and adopt a 'hot desking' approach. To resolve this issue, a staff team was elected to develop office rules for all staff.
- Weekly staff eNewsletter to address any staff concerns and keep communication open.
- Significant training for staff on each of the new technologies. The staff have risen far beyond any identified levels and have fully accepted, learnt and owned the new technology.

The other areas which needed to be addressed were:

- The long lead in time from library planning to completion of the project. This has meant that some of the new technology originally planned is now outdated. It has required Library staff to have flexible thinking in both design and from an operational perspective. It has also required additional budget and management support.
- Being the first to implement new technologies and technological enhancements. This positive approach to implementing new technology to improve customer experience and staff efficiencies has been time consuming and sometimes a difficult process with suppliers. It has required persistence and good



interpersonal skills. However, the outcomes will be of benefit to Woollahra Library, to the suppliers who can develop their technology to the next level and to other Libraries who will be able to implement the advanced solutions in the future.

- Challenging public perception of Libraries

The new Library design and its features have challenged people's perception of what a library should be. It has challenged the traditional view of a Library as a quiet place with many hard copy titles versus our Library which has been designed as a community space, over three levels, each with a different ambiance and purpose, allowing for fun, dynamic interaction with technology as well as a quiet place with interesting spaces to sit and explore.

- Change management from a customer's perspective

The implementation of self service technologies throughout the Library has meant that our customers needed to be trained in how to borrow, pay fines or other transactions, how to book PCs, rooms and events etc.

We resolved to introduce as many new technologies as possible in the old Library, to assist the public's transition to both a new space and different ways of operating. As a result we rolled out RFID self service kiosks several years in advance at all three Library service points, introduced online membership and the new 'Tap and Go' Library cards in the six months prior to the move as well as testing roving reference with the use of iPads.

- The need to be responsive to the public's use of the new Library

The Library design and its technological requirements were based on community consultation, best practice, a review of current trends and visits to other Libraries. It was, at the time, a best guess in how we believed our customers would use the space and the technologies. Since opening, several features have not been fully utilised as expected and Library staff are changing programming and workflows to accommodate these changes.

The success of the Woollahra Library at Double Bay

Woollahra Libraries at Double Bay has been extremely successful in its first 6 months of operation as shown by the statistics below:

	Target within the first 12 months	First 6 months of operation	Compared to the same period in the previous year
Circulation	143 loans per hour	Week days: 113 loans per hour Weekends: 208 loans per hour	44% increase
Membership	Increase to 21,000 members	19,798 members. (increase of 7,134 new members)	787% increase in new membership
Visitation	99 visits per hour	Week days: 185 visits per hour Weekends: 340 visits per hour	414% increase



So where next?

The new Woollahra Library at Double Bay is still resolving defects in the building structure, continuing to work with IT vendors to fine tune their solutions and enhance their software to ensure that it meets Woollahra Libraries requirements and provide improvements for the wider Library community.

We are also taking a flexible approach and reviewing any areas and/or Library programs which have not been as fully utilised as we envisaged.

The Library has also requested some additional staff, especially on weekends which are our busiest times and for the Room Bookings and Event set up, which has excelled initial Library expectations.

The Woollahra Library at Double Bay aims to be the next step in Library design, but we understand that all local communities are different, with their own demands and expectations. We welcome you all to visit our Library and hope that one or two ideas may assist you with your new Library design or refurbishment.