



Port Phillip Library Service

Strategic Plan

2005-08

More Australians visit libraries every year than even the cinema. It is estimated that 60 per cent of Australians use public libraries on a regular basis—some 90 million visits per annum. They are our most visited and our most valuable public institution at a local level.

(Latham 2003)

We do not assume that everyone who experiences exclusion has to be “rescued” from that experience. But we do hold the view that a responsible society will give all its members opportunities to become connected to others and to the benefits that society offers, should they wish to take advantage of them. In this, the principle of social justice is brought to life by specific actions to reduce inequalities in society. We further maintain that libraries and information services have a fundamental role to play in that provision, particularly because they operate directly at the level of people’s literacy, information literacy and communication choices which we take to be keys to inclusion.

(Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals)

This document is in two parts, a background paper followed by an outline of the proposed strategic directions for the library service over the next three years. Part A is intended to provide some context, and describes the library service as it is currently. Part B provides the strategic direction for the next three years.

Part A Where are we now? A context paper

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The purpose of this introductory paper is to provide some overarching context, and to situate Port Phillip Library Service (PPLS) in the emerging landscape of contemporary public library services – outlining some of the key current issues and likely challenges for the future.

Background

In 1999, the previous State and Local Government accountability measures of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) were repealed and replaced with the Best Value Victoria provisions. Port Phillip Library Service was among the first service units within CoPP Council to undertake a comprehensive Service Review in late 2000. The Review was rigorous, examining the broad spectrum of library service delivery and operations with a view towards effectiveness, 'value' and sustainability. The review process also involved extensive community consultation.

A number of recommendations emerged from the review, with one of the most significant actions being the formulation of a library Strategic Plan (2001-04). Other recommendations that were actioned included the investigation of co-location options with other Council functions and improved hours of access.

Following discussion with Council and the Library Advisory Committee (LAC) in late 2003/early 2004, an audit of the Strategic Plan was conducted to gauge its effectiveness and identify gaps in implementation. This included a Council report tabled in March 2004, which highlighted the following key issues for consideration in future strategic plan development:

- That gaps identified as a result of the audit of the current PPLS Strategic Plan inform the development of the next plan
- That a range of indicators, not adequately developed in the current strategic plan, be used alongside the key principles
- That these indicators focus particularly on access, collections and service delivery
- That the key principles of the current PPLS Strategic Plan remain valid as principles to inform the next planning phase. These principles are:
 - Equity in access to services
 - Responsiveness to changing community need
 - Provision of cost-efficient, quality library services
 - Commitment to the continued support and professional development of staff
- That these principles be further developed in the context of Council's commitment to the Council Plan and the Four Pillars of Sustainability model; and
- That models of library service delivery based on a range of numbers of library / service sites be considered in the planning process, using criteria, including, but not limited to: collection quality; co-located and complementary programs and facilities; geographic access and other access; opening hours and on-line services.

The model of service delivery developed for the new Plan is based on the criteria listed above.

The indicators for collection quality are:

- Size of collection –identified target is currently 242,000 items by 2013. An increase in Capital Expenditure has meant more items are being added to the collection. The target will need to be evaluated on an on-going basis to allow for shifts in acquisitions, (such as the balance of expenditure on 'shelf ready' items. This may mean fewer items added overall, but minimize delay in item availability for loan).
- Age of collection - a collection benchmark of 47% of total items aged 5 years or less has been adopted to ensure the currency and quality of items.
- 'Turn around time'- time from purchase of item to it being on shelf.
- Turnover – rate at which items are out on loan, which also impacts on items available for loan at any given time. In broad terms, the more current the collection, the greater the percentage being regularly borrowed.

Indicators for co-located and complementary services/programs:

- Increased diversity of uses linked to lifelong learning and cultural activities /increased co-location of programs

Indicators of geographic/other access:

- Number of sites maintained for online access, book drop-off and library programs,
- Increased access points for online library catalogue and Port Phillip Online
- Maintain and develop capacity for remote access (e.g. online reservations)

Indicators for opening hours:

- Targeted opening hours aligned with patterns of use and identified need
- Increased flexibility of three main sites to meet changing patterns of use and service requirements

Indicators for online services:

- Maintain Internet and online access to identified levels of speed and reliability

These indicators will be monitored and evaluated annually. The model is based on the assumption that these indicators can be refined to continue to identify service improvements based on three main sites.

Policy & legislative framework

A range of both State and Local Government legislation and other policy initiatives inform the broad context within which PPLS operates. These include (but are not limited to):

- Local Government Act
- Libraries Act
- Best Value Legislation
- Privacy Legislation
- Occupational Health & Safety Legislation
- ALIA Core Values Statement
- Growing Victoria Together (Department for Victorian Communities)

It is important to note that a lack of dialogue, both formal and informal, between local government and the state has long been identified as a barrier impeding the development of more effective public library services. At present there is no clear outline of the responsibilities for public library governance and policy:

A State/local government partnership agreement would provide the basis to promote not just a network of public libraries, but to improve library services through a coordinated framework including minimum service standards, and a statewide policy on fees and charges. The agreement would address: (a) equity in library services across the whole of the state, (b) increase the quality of library resource materials and infrastructure and (c) fund equitable proportions of library services
(Outcomes of the Library Summit, March 2004. Municipal Association of Victoria).

City of Port Phillip (CoPP) context

Port Phillip Library Service operates as a major access point for the community to connect with Council. PPLS develops and delivers services within the CoPP Council Plan framework, including the principles of Council's Same Day Service policy.

The Council Plan objectives most relevant to PPLS are around cultural vitality and social equity, in particular:

- To build tolerance and cultural richness through embracing the diversity of lifestyles, populations and values and supporting a way of life that is dynamic, creative and participatory;
- To promote connection and exchange between neighbours, friends and groups in our local communities; and
- To support community governance by promoting effective dialogue and active citizenship in the community.

Other Council policies of relevance to library services are the Community Hubs Policy, the Youth Strategy, City Arts Plan, Municipal Early Years Plan, and the Disability Action Plan.

Funding context

The plan is premised on developing and delivering services within the following environment:

State Government

- Through the Local Government Division of the Department for Victorian Communities (DVC), public libraries in Victoria receive support funding delivered through triennial service agreements. The current Port Phillip agreement is 2003/04-2005/06.
- Annual payments comprise a core-funding component, supplemented by local priorities funding.
- The PPLS grant from DVC for 2004-05 is approximately \$413,000.
- DVC also occasionally provide discrete grants, such as the current 'Public Libraries Book Bonanza 2004/05-2006/07' to support collection development. PPLS will receive a total of \$57,500 over three years. This funding will be used to supplement the library's capital expenditure on books and resources, in high-demand collection areas such as audio-visual and materials in Languages other than English (LOTE).

Local Government

- A steady shift in responsibility from state to local level over the last 30 years has resulted in a split where state government contribution has fallen to ~20% of total operational costs as opposed to 50% in the 1970's.
- At present the core operational funding for public library services (along with capital expenditure) rests with local government. In 2004/05, the library budget exceeded \$3 million, with Council's contribution being ~\$2.6 million.

Port Phillip demographic snapshot

(Figures from *Port Phillip in Profile: our city's population, neighbourhoods and people. 2003*)

- Port Phillip has increased in population by 8.4% between 1996 and 2001 – current population at 81,849
- Port Phillip is the second fastest growing municipality in the inner metro region behind the City of Melbourne
- The concentration of growth has been in neighbourhoods, particularly St. Kilda Road and Port Melbourne. A decrease in population has been evident in Elwood/Ripponlea and East St. Kilda while Middle Park, Albert Park and South Melbourne remain relatively stable
- Higher proportion of families with infants and pre-school aged children than with school aged children.
- The largest age groups in Port Phillip are those between 20-44, with 54.1% of the city's population in this group compared to 38.9% of the Melbourne statistical division (MSD).
- Decrease in those over 65 since 1996.
- Most common language spoken at home (other than English) is Greek, followed by Russian, Chinese, Italian and Polish.
- In Port Phillip there are higher proportions of adults who use computers at home than in the rest of Melbourne, e.g. 44.9% used a computer at home in the week prior to the Census and 54.5% of the CoPP population gained access to the Internet, as compared to 41.1% Internet access in the MSD.
- The highest level of computer use is among 15-19 year olds, 63.4 % of whom used a computer at home in the week before the census.
- Internet use in each neighbourhood in Port Phillip is consistently higher than computer use at home. St Kilda is the only neighbourhood with a below average home computer use, but an above average Internet use.
- Port Phillip has a high proportion of Internet users (9.6%) accessing neither from home or work, but from 'elsewhere'.
- In terms of residential mobility, there are shifts in areas like change of address, but more significantly in the large numbers of people who have moved to CoPP from outside the municipality. In 2001, 44.3% of the population had moved to Port Phillip from an address outside the municipality in the five years prior to the census, and 20.6% had moved into the city in the year before.
- A distinctive characteristic of Port Phillip's population is the very high number of people with formal post-school qualifications. 62.9% of the city's over-15 population has obtained a formal qualification. This has increased from 55.9% in 1996.

Implications

This brief demographic overview raises a number of factors that may impact on future library service delivery.

High levels of computer use and Internet access from locations other than home or work, along with large numbers of people with formal qualifications indicates a likely trend toward increased levels of remote access and targeted usage of library collections and resources.

In a similar context, demand for resources and services to support lifelong learning activities could be expected to increase.

A highly mobile population may choose to access services and information in a variety of ways, requiring a model of service delivery with a capacity to be flexible and efficient in deployment of resources. This may impact on things like the appropriateness of opening hours, and the mix of services offered at particular locations.

A number of other factors (such as higher income levels and people working in property or business services) contribute to patterns of gentrification across the municipality. Growing numbers within CoPP are increasingly time-poor with high levels of disposable income, are very selective in terms of what they want from service providers and are likely to use a range of providers to suit changing needs.

Current Port Phillip Library Service profile

Port Phillip Library Service - What does it look like?

- Inherited 5 branch structure
- Overall membership base = 52,719 (active in the last 12 months)
- CoPP has the highest population density across the state, (CoPP has 4,032 persons per km²)
- With 5 branches and current opening hours that total 215 per week library users have a higher than average ability to access library collections and services across the municipality.

Service Profile – Figures based on 2003-2004

Branch	Loans	%	New Items Allocated *	%	Visits	%	Reservations *	%	Current Members (Active last 12 months)*	%	Hours open	%	Trend
St.Kilda	614,247	63.5	12,636	56.1	299,230	53	62,826	58.3	34,121	64.7	60	27.9	↔
Albert Park	153,383	16	3,872	17.22	105,062	18.8	15,708	14.5	7,319	13.8	51	23.7	↔
Port Melbourne	101,173	10.45	2,910	12.94	68,954	17.54	12,812	11.9	7,289	13.8	48	22.3	↑
Emerald Hill	41,868	4.33	1,626	7.23	43,941	7.34	6,861	6.3	2,700	5.1	32	14.8	↑
Middle Park	23,530	2.43	783	3.48	18,012	3.27	3,861	3.5	1,014	1.9	24	11.1	↔
Home Library Service	21,345	2.2	654	2.91	No physical site	N/A	550	5.1	276	.5	N/A	N/A	↑

**Current Members:*

- Figures relate to patrons who have joined at a particular branch
- Figures would include patrons who may live in that neighborhood and those who don't
- Have been active in the last twelve months
- Continue to access services from any branch across the municipality

**Reservations:*

- Figures include items reserved within the existing collection and new items that have been acquired based on requests
- Figures also include requests for Inter Library Loans from other library services.
- Figures include reservations made via remote access and based on pick-up location of reservation.

**New Items:*

- Items added to system i.e. received and catalogued
- Allocated to each branch
- Includes periodicals and capital items
- Figures are derived from the initial allocation point of the item
- Based on summary of overall activity

Port Phillip Library Service trends

Figures from 2003/2004, and the trend for 2004/05 continue to reflect a pattern of use (loans, visits etc.) that has been noted for previous years, in summary:

- The high level of activity occurring at St.Kilda compared to other branches
- An imbalance between the percentage of new items allocated to each branch relative to percentage of loan activity
- That the number and location of library sites in relation to the size of the municipality continues to make it difficult to offer a strong and responsive collection at all sites, i.e. the strengths of a collection are dissipated when spread across a number of sites.
- Increasing number of reservations continues to reflect a trend for people to be more targeted in their usage of and access to the collection via remote access from home or work, (e.g. reservations increased by 10.4% in 2003/2004 compared to the previous year).
- That while loans increase marginally from year to year there is a more focused use of library collections, i.e. people expect to get what they want rather than spending time browsing and borrowing a number of items in the hope that they will find the information that they need
- Use of Internet PC's at each site continues to be a significant component of services offered across the branches
- The resources required to operate the two smaller sites relative to their level of activity and mirroring a service model offered by the three larger sites is disproportionate
- Loan activity from our Home Library Service continues to grow and provide a targeted delivery of service with relatively low levels of resourcing.

Key industry issues

The role of the public library

The role public libraries play in society is broad. Numerous studies have demonstrated the social and community benefits that public libraries help deliver to the community. In particular, a major local research report just published – Libraries Building Communities, February 2005, has highlighted four key areas of contribution by public libraries:

- They provide free public access to computers and information technology resources (helping to overcome the digital divide)
- By helping people locate and use information libraries help create better informed communities
- Libraries offer services and resources that help promote lifelong learning and literacy in the community, and
- They help build connections between individuals, groups and government

Furthermore, public libraries play a key role in providing users with a gateway to a world of information resources. This can be through library resource-sharing activities (such as the inter-library loan network), or increasingly via access to online/Web resources delivered by powerful new tools able to package results yielded from a diverse range of sources. There is a shift in emphasis from custodian to knowledge navigator- with library staff's role expanded to include assisting the public to access information relevant to their individual needs

Industry trends

Libraries are highly used and highly valued. Studies such as the AustraliaSCAN surveys conducted by Quantum Market Research (2003) indicate that:

- 59% of the Australian population have a library membership card, (62% in Victoria)
- Public libraries had the highest satisfaction rating of the public services queried, and the lowest dissatisfaction rate
- 89% of respondents felt that libraries were seen as a vital part of the community fabric
- There is an increasing trend toward joint-use facilities and co-location with other community service providers
- Libraries are highly valued as a community resource - even those who aren't active users feel that libraries should be maintained at whatever cost for the 'good' of the community.
- In response to shrinking community and public space Library facilities are serving a wide range of roles including meeting places, computer training facilities and welcoming quiet spaces for people to relax and reflect
- Libraries are often referred to as 'the new village green'
- Increase in community demand for direct delivery of programs aligned to development of new skills, i.e. lifelong learning
- A continued demand for traditional hard-copy formats
- A more professional approach to marketing and promotion, including sponsorships and partnerships
- Empowering the user through self service facilities and automated materials handling
- Creative solutions are needed to find the balance between the information, recreation, book and online needs of the community
- Low awareness of what libraries offer beyond the traditional associations made with them

Key findings from Port Phillip community consultation

Across September and October 2004 a range of community consultation activities were conducted to gather feedback on issues such as use and awareness of library services and suggestions for future improvement.

Discussion groups were held across the municipality including both public sessions and community reference groups. These totaled 36 participants. A library survey was also conducted in print and electronic versions that generated 385 responses (96% of respondents were members).

Focus group findings

Main reasons for use (in no necessary order):

- Most participants use more than one branch
- Recreation, reading, specific collections/interests, e.g. art, cooking, design
- Writers talks/events/activities
- Use email and Internet services
- Borrow books, browsing, placing/collecting reservations
- Take children to library (including attendance at activities such as story time sessions)
- Music, magazines and audio visual resources
- 'Drop in' visit/enjoy the space

Overview of general comments/suggestions for improvement:

- Core traditional services such as book loans and story-time activities are highly valued
- Limited awareness of the range of services and resources available, e.g. electronic databases and online information resources
- Libraries felt to play a key role as an information provider community access point
- Staff are valued and recognized for dealing with a diverse and sometimes challenging environment
- Broad potential exists for use of library space/s, e.g. mix of community activities, meeting rooms, etc
- Increasing use of and demand for audio visual resources
- Issues with reliability and speed of computers/network (particularly Port Melbourne)
- Some issues with turnaround on reservations (time it takes for items to be available on shelf), also with follow-up on overdue items
- Like availability of inter-library loans, and strong support for free reservations

Port Phillip Library survey findings

- The gender balance was predominantly female, (55% as opposed to 25% male, with 20% not indicating). This correlates with library membership.
- The age breakdown of respondents was problematic, (particularly when compared to membership), resulting in inflated representation from the 50+ categories and under-representation from our core user groups (25-49). Largest response group was the 50-69 years bracket, at 27.8%.
- Responses were fairly evenly spread in terms of people's home location (postcode)
- Majority of responses received at St Kilda (63.2%)
- Branch most frequently used (in order) – St Kilda, Port Melbourne, Albert Park, Emerald Hill and Middle Park about even.
- Expectations of what a good library should deliver (key areas): collections (64%), staff (56%), and facilities (16%). Main points noted were currency of material, audio visual rated highly, friendly staff willing to assist, availability of space.
- Areas that rated highly in terms of what people felt was important: books (91%), collection diversity (56%), comfortable/accessible spaces (44%), staff assistance (58%), web/remote access (38%), free reservations (65%) and low charges 63%
- In this context, what people felt should be the service's priorities – where we should concentrate our resources – more books (78%), virtual library services (37%), more audio visual (30%), Internet access (25%), more staff/expertise (24%)
- Reasons for mostly using the library: quick borrowing (74%), staff expertise (22%), research (23%), Internet (14%)
- In relation to how/where we could do things better, 91 people didn't respond and 75 thought 'we're great'. Possible areas for improvement were currency/popular titles (56), more staff (34), opening hours (27), wait time for reservations (23) and Internet access (18).

Key challenges for future service delivery

Emerging from the consultation above, and as identified by studies such as the Libraries Building Communities project, a number of key challenges face both Port Phillip Library Service and the public library sector if we are to remain vital and continue to make valid contributions to both our local and broader Victorian communities.

In a statewide context, Libraries Building Communities (2005) has noted the key issues for the sector as:

- Additional financial resources
- Upgraded technological capacity
- Development of stronger partnerships
- Workforce development
- Development of library infrastructure, and
- Promoting a new image for public libraries

Most of these also have resonance for Port Phillip Library Service. For PPLS to continue to deliver the quality and diversity of library services that our community both values and expects over the next 3-5 years the key challenges we need to address are:

- Stability and responsiveness of our Information Technology infrastructure. The issue in the medium term is less about volume (more PCs), more about capacity, (making sure what we already have functions at an acceptable level in terms of speed and stability). Underpinning this is a broader issue of our ability to effectively connect with the wider library community, to both benefit from and contribute to an exciting range of resource sharing initiatives.
- Developing and maintaining a sustainable model of service delivery that will enable us to function at the peak of our capacity and help set the pace for contemporary public library services, not lag behind as second best. This includes the best fit of factors such as opening hours, staff deployment and IT for effective and responsive services.
- Develop stronger community linkages – recognize that we need to broaden our reach into the community and not assume people will come to us. Allied to this is the ongoing need for communication and promotion of the range of services and resources we offer.
- Consolidation and strengthening of our resource base – current collections, better turnaround times, targeting how we use the collection to support learning and literacy outcomes.
- Maximising utilization of our space/s. Building on opportunities to broaden the mix of what people can participate in at libraries to strengthen our community development role. This might include things like support for lifelong learning activities, literary and literacy programs or events and community meeting space/s not necessarily driven by libraries.

Where to from here?

The current library Strategic Plan expired at the end of 2004. An audit of the plan raised a number of areas for consideration and further development in formulating the new Strategic Plan 2005-08 as already noted.

Part B of the Strategic Plan provides a broad strategic framework based on key themes and strategic objectives that aim to address the key issues and gaps outlined in this context paper. These themes respond to emerging trends in public library service delivery and issues more specific to Port Phillip's local context. The long-term goal is to develop a service model that will enable PPLS to continue being responsive and sustainable into the future.