

# LIBRARIES/BUILDING/COMMUNITIES

THE VITAL CONTRIBUTION OF VICTORIA'S PUBLIC LIBRARIES - A RESEARCH REPORT  
FOR THE LIBRARY BOARD OF VICTORIA AND THE VICTORIAN PUBLIC LIBRARY NETWORK

## Library User Census and Survey Project 2006 Report 1: Statewide Analysis and Comparisons



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

- Report One: *Setting the Scene* covers the concept of community building, the Victorian Government's policy agenda, the Victorian public library network, project methodology and relevant research.
- Report Two: *Logging the Benefits* outlines community views on the role and benefits of public libraries.
- Report Three: *Bridging the Gaps* provides socio-demographic profiles of library users and non-users and strategies of bridging the perceived gaps in public library service delivery.
- Report Four: *Showcasing the Best* gives over thirty examples of innovation and excellence in Victorian public libraries.

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

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

The original series of reports and Report One: *Statewide Analysis and Comparisons* from the 2006 research are available via the State Library of Victoria website: [www.slv.vic.gov.au](http://www.slv.vic.gov.au)

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# 1 Executive summary

*The Libraries Building Communities project is a major initiative of the Library Board of Victoria and the Victorian Public Library Network which seeks to: demonstrate to government, the community and other library stakeholders the scale and distinctive contribution of public libraries to the social and economic well being of individuals and the communities in which they live; and provide information that can be used by libraries to get a better sense of their service performance and make informed decisions about future priorities.*

Over a two-year period, from 2003-04, the *Libraries Building Communities* (LBC) research collected and analysed the views and opinions of nearly 10,000 community members. It included an online survey of library users, case studies of community building activities in Victorian public libraries and the views of community leaders and library users on the future role of public libraries.

In 2006, the *Libraries Building Communities* project is built on the findings from this research in two main ways. Firstly, through the *Library User Census and Survey* project which has collected extensive data from library users and provides a more systematic evidence base at a statewide and library service level concerning the users, uses and benefits of library services. Secondly, through the funding of four demonstration projects across the State that support the community building role of public libraries and involve significant and innovative partnership projects between public libraries and other government departments and/or community agencies.

Key findings from the *Library User Census and Survey* project are presented in the following report. Brief descriptions are also provided of the demonstration projects to illustrate how public libraries continue to develop innovative practices for meeting the needs of their communities. A more detailed set of data for library services and branches is provided in a separate report. There are a number of distinguishing features of the 2006 Library Census and Survey which ensure that these add significantly to the capacity of libraries to better understand their existing user base, potential users, libraries performance and challenges for the future:

- They comprehensively canvass public library users across the state and include all 45 library services. They are the only user surveys that give a truly 'statewide' picture of library services in Victoria and provide data that allows library services to 'benchmark' their performance against each other.

- Additional questions were included in the Survey to provide information about children's use of libraries and the educational qualifications of library users. Open-ended questions included in the Survey provided an opportunity for library users to describe in their own words how library services impact on their lives and some of the ways in which they think services could be improved.
- Library Census and Survey data was collected to ensure that where possible it is consistent with data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census of Population and Housing 2001 and comparison can be made between the characteristics of library users and the Victorian population and communities served by each library.
- The magnitude of the response to the Census and Survey means that they provide a statistically reliable picture of who uses library services at the statewide and library service level (and for some library branches).
- Response to the Survey indicates strong representation of different age groups, cultural backgrounds, family types and people from rural, regional and metropolitan areas. Special efforts were made by libraries to ensure that the Library Survey was completed by representative groups of library users.

Findings from the project show that libraries attract a wide group of users from different walks of life who use libraries for a great variety of reasons. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) users, especially those from a Vietnamese or Chinese background, are well represented amongst the users of many library services. There is a strong correlation between having a high proportion of CALD speaking people in a library service area and having a high proportion of CALD library users. Different types of families (couples with and without children, single people and sole parents) are also well represented amongst library users – with a higher proportion of users who are couples without

children – reflecting the fact that libraries draw a higher proportion of users from the older age group. People who are unemployed and those not in the labour force are well represented amongst library users.

As with the 2003 Online Survey, the main reason for using libraries was to borrow books. However, libraries also provide access to computers/internet services and equipment such as photocopiers, provide help finding information and offer a quiet place to read or work (this was especially important for users from the CALD community). A significant proportion of users (about 10%) attend activities at their library such as cultural events, exhibitions/displays and talks/lectures. Libraries support their communities by encouraging social interaction and engagement across differing social and cultural groups. They offer an important means by which communities share information regarding local activities and government services. Libraries are regarded by their users as a safe place.

Many people access library services on a regular basis – almost half visit on a weekly basis – and while most do this through a visit to the library, many use the library website as a way to find out what services their library has to offer, search databases and reserve books.

Data on the benefits of library services shows how libraries change and enrich the lives of their users and reflects three themes in particular: enhanced enjoyment of life, expanding horizons and interests, and encouragement to read more. In relation to children, the data indicates that about one-quarter of library users bring children with them to use the library services and attend activities. Most frequently mentioned were 'loan of books' and 'story time/reading clubs'. A large proportion of library users said libraries were very important for improving children's literacy skills and providing support with school projects.

A key strength of public libraries across Victoria is that they do not provide a 'one size fits all' response to people's information needs but are responsive to the specific needs of their communities. Results from the Library Census and Survey highlight the enormous variation across libraries in terms of their user base, the types of services offered and the ways in which they add benefits to their community. This reflects the fact that library services are operating in diverse communities of very different sizes and geographical spread, different demographic structures and different economic and social conditions. It also reflects the fact that libraries have very different levels of funding and staffing which impact on the ways they can meet their community's needs.

As well as providing strong statistical and qualitative information that tells us more about what libraries do and who they service, the Library Census and Survey also poses a number of questions and highlights potential challenges for libraries. In particular, the data highlights that:

- The overall representation of young people aged 15 to 24 years amongst library users is low statewide in comparison to their representation in the population. On the other hand, the proportion of library users aged 65 years plus is 50% higher than their representation in the population.
- People from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background represent only 1% of respondents to both the Library Census and Survey. There are only three libraries where the proportion of Indigenous users is above 1%. While ABS Census data indicates a similarly low proportion of Indigenous people in Victoria, it is generally considered that these figures are an underestimate of the true figure.

- Library Survey respondents tend to have higher educational qualifications than the general population – about one-third have a degree or higher degree compared with 12% of the Victorian population. Consistent with findings from the 2003 Online Survey, they include a greater proportion of people classified as 'professionals, managers or administrators' and 'clerical, service and sales workers' and a lower proportion of 'trades people' and 'labourers' (this also partly reflects the larger proportion of women using the library).
- While satisfaction with library services and staff is high overall, library services located in rural areas tend to have higher ratings than their metropolitan and regional counterparts. These are often libraries with lower levels of per capita funding.

While the data highlights these issues, and may suggest areas in which library performance could be improved, they require further discussion and interpretation by library management, staff and policy makers familiar with the library system and its strategic policy and decision-making frameworks.

## 2 Introduction

The *Libraries Building Communities* project undertaken by the Library Board of Victoria, State Library of Victoria and the Victorian Public Library Network was a groundbreaking piece of work that provided strong empirical evidence of the contribution public libraries make to their communities. Over the period 2003-04, the LBC research collected and analysed the views and opinions of nearly 10,000 community members concerning the benefits provided by public libraries to their communities and the individuals living in them. This included an online survey completed by just over 8,000 library users from across all Victorian public library services. Reports from the project have served to heighten awareness of the role of public libraries – especially in relation to community strengthening – amongst politicians, senior policy makers, the media and community leaders. Data from the project has fed into the planning and advocacy activities of public libraries.

The success of the LBC research, and the fact that it has provided useful and practical information for public libraries, has helped to build support for continuation of this work. Funding has been provided for a three year program of research through the Library Board of Victoria and the Victorian Public Library Network that aims for ‘increased community and government understanding of and engagement with libraries’ (*Framework for Collaborative Action*, 2004) and collection of information that will enhance public library understanding of its existing user base and potential users.

As part of this research program, further data has been collected in 2006 about the characteristics of library users and the benefits they get from their library. This data was collected through a *Library Census*, a very short survey aimed at collecting baseline information about the demographic profile of library users, and a *Library Survey* which was longer and explored more detailed issues related to library use, satisfaction and benefits. Information collected included the characteristics of users, usage patterns, satisfaction with services, the benefits individuals get from using library services and the value of libraries to their communities.

The key purpose of the Census was to ensure that libraries have a statistically reliable picture of who uses their services at the statewide and library service level. While the response to the 2003 Online Survey had been good, there was some concern that specific groups of library users were under-represented. This included the elderly, the very young, the computer-illiterate, people with low literacy levels and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse library users. Low participation by these groups had made it difficult to draw firm conclusions about the library user population. The Library Census was specifically designed and implemented with the aim of including all groups of the population – it was kept short (it only took two minutes to complete), it was paper-based (rather than online), it was translated into several community languages and library staff played a very significant role in encouraging participation.

The result was over 33,000 responses to the Census with a strong representation of different age groups, cultural backgrounds, family types and people from rural, regional and metropolitan areas. Data from the Census provides an extensive and significant base from which to validly assess the demographic and usage characteristics of library users at the statewide level and for many library services (and library branches).

The Library Survey built on and refined the survey tool used in the 2003 research. As with the 2003 online survey, the Library Survey could be completed online but was also widely available in paper-based format. Public libraries felt that it was especially important to allow users to fill in a paper-based survey to ensure that those without computer-based skills were not excluded.

The major differences between the 2003 and 2006 Surveys were that in 2006:

- a section was included on children's use of libraries;
- data was collected regarding the educational qualifications of library users;
- carefully framed questions were used to capture information on how libraries provide benefits to their users and their communities;
- questions were included which gave respondents an opportunity to comment on their satisfaction with services and the value they get from them (there were between 4,000 and 10,000 responses to each of these questions);
- strategies were adopted by local libraries to ensure that 'hard to reach' groups were encouraged to participate.

The magnitude of the response to the Library Survey (almost 13,000 completed surveys), means that it provides a comprehensive database which can also be used to produce statistically valid analysis on the use of Victorian public libraries, and in most cases on use within library services. Library users who responded to the Library Survey had similar characteristics to those responding to the Library Census in terms of age, gender, languages spoken at home and family type. This allays any concerns that the Survey may have been biased towards specific groups in the community. In particular, it demonstrates strong participation by people from CALD backgrounds.

Data from the Library Census and Survey has been collected in such a way to ensure that it is, where possible, consistent with data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census of Population and Housing 2001. This enables comparisons to be made between the characteristics of library users and the Victorian population and communities served by each library. This analysis also provides insights into those who are not using public libraries.

Again, where possible, data collected in the 2006 Library Census and Survey has been kept consistent with the 2003 Library Survey to allow comparisons to be made between the two. These comparisons are drawn out in the body of the report.

Together, the Library Census and Survey means that Victoria has the most comprehensive and high quality database on library users and library usage nationally, and probably internationally. Data is available on demographic characteristics of users, usage patterns and the value of library services to individuals and the community. While other user surveys are conducted in libraries across Victoria, the LBC Library Census and Library Survey are the only surveys in which all library services participate. The data collected provides a truly statewide picture of public libraries, which enables most libraries to benchmark their data with other services or with data from across Victoria.

In addition to the extensive databases provided by this research, public libraries now have in the Library Census and Survey well-tested data collection tools that may be used by public libraries in the future to provide a longitudinal perspective on public libraries, their user base and their role in community building.

## 2.1 Structure of the report

The report provides results from the Library Census and Survey for Victorian libraries as a whole and makes comparisons with ABS Census statistics and the 2003 Survey. The key sections of the report cover:

- the profile of library users;
- the main uses of libraries;
- satisfaction with library staff and services;
- children's use of libraries;
- the value of libraries to their communities.

The report highlights variations between libraries and provides quotes from the 'open-ended' questions included in the Survey regarding how libraries add value to the lives of individuals and communities. Especially important, the report contains comments made by respondents whose first language is not English and who had completed the translated versions of the Library Survey. In 2003, very little qualitative data from CALD respondents to the survey had been available. In 2006, this has been made possible through the volunteer effort of staff from public libraries and the State Library of Victoria who did these translations on a volunteer basis. Where the quotes are from CALD respondents, this is identified in the text as it is felt important that readers understand this context.

The analysis in this report is a summary of the data available from the Library Survey and Census. This data is both complex and rich in content and will be an important source of information for library services in their planning and advocacy work. A more detailed compendium of tables for library services and branches has been provided in a separate report to the Library Board of Victoria and Victorian Public Library Network.

A copy of the Library Survey and Library Census are included as attachments to this report. The copies include a summary of statewide results against each question.

# 3 Background - response to the Library Census and Survey

## 3.1 The Census

- There were a total of 33,996 responses to the Library Census, captured over a two week period in April 2006 (Table 1). This represented approximately 1.3 % of registered library users<sup>1</sup>.
- The number of responses by library service varied from a high of 2,340 at Eastern to a low of 46 at Glenelg. Twelve library services had over 1,000 responses.
- The highest response rate from a library service was 4.6% at Gannawarra. Seventeen library services had a response rate of over 2% of registered users.
- The lowest response rate was 0.2%. Four library services had a response rate below 0.5%.
- Where the response rate to the Library Census or Survey dropped below 100 responses or 0.5% of registered users in a library service, the statistical validity of the data is influenced and the data should be interpreted with caution<sup>2</sup>.
- The same proportion of males and females took part in the Library Census and Survey.
- Most libraries had a significantly better response to the Survey in 2006 compared with 2003 – with some libraries more than tripling their 2003 response. However, there were 15 library services that had a lower response in 2006.
- Response rates for some libraries were lower than expected due to these libraries having undertaken a customer survey for local purposes just prior to the Library Survey going into the field. Others found that library users were not keen to complete the Survey having completed the Census only weeks earlier. The timing of the Library Census and Survey in future years will require attention.

## 3.2 The Survey

- A total of 12,927 library users responded to the Survey over a four week period in May 2006. This represents 0.5% of registered users. Over 1% of users responded at fourteen library services. Table 1 shows the variation in response rates.
- Nineteen percent of respondents to the Survey were from a CALD background (compared with 22% in the Library Census – see Table 3). The CALD participation in the survey was much higher than expected – this will be analysed further by CALD group and by library service. This reflects a significant effort by libraries to ensure the survey was inclusive.

1 *Annual Survey of Victorian Public Libraries (2004-2005)*.

2 Response numbers and/or rates for the Library Census were too low to provide statistically valid data for Frankston, Geelong and Whitehorse Manningham library services. Response numbers and/or rates for the Library Survey were too low to provide statistically valid data for Brimbank, Frankston, Geelong, Kingston, Mornington Peninsula, Murrindindi, and Upper Murray library services.

**TABLE 1: RESPONSE TO THE LIBRARY CENSUS AND SURVEY BY LIBRARY SERVICE**

Library service	Reg- istered users	Library Census		Library Survey		Ratio Census: Survey	Library Survey 2003	Change 2006 to 2003
		No. responses	% Registered users	No. responses	% Registered users			
Bayside	35,656	1,295	3.6%	320	0.9%	4.0	311	9
Boroondara	100,339	704	0.7%	303	0.3%	2.3	358	- 55
Brimbank	57,828	628	1.1%	60	0.1%	10.5	33	27
Campaspe	15,190	596	3.9%	376	2.5%	1.6	168	208
Casey-Cardinia	123,359	1,217	1.0%	229	0.2%	5.3	130	99
Central Highlands	75,851	597	0.8%	227	0.3%	2.6	297	- 70
Corangamite	27,733	701	2.5%	227	0.8%	3.1	323	- 96
Darebin	76,057	922	1.2%	540	0.7%	1.7	758	- 218
East Gippsland	14,779	446	3.0%	310	2.1%	1.4	90	37
Eastern	191,586	2,340	1.2%	128	0.1%	18.3	104	24
Frankston	52,953	149	0.3%	46	0.1%	3.2	197	- 151
Gannawarra	4,528	209	4.6%	116	2.6%	1.8	37	79
Geelong	85,370	570	0.7%	73	0.1%	7.8	118	- 45
Glen Eira	121,719	918	0.8%	280	0.2%	3.3	62	218
Glenelg	15,911	46	0.3%	74	0.5%	0.6	118	- 44
Goldfields	61,563	1,735	2.8%	760	1.2%	2.3	680	80
Goulburn Valley	40,639	1,417	3.5%	493	1.2%	2.9	49	444
Greater Dandenong	95,750	1,752	1.8%	381	0.4%	4.6	644	- 263
High Country	27,750	763	2.7%	558	2.0%	1.4	171	387
Hobsons Bay	52,141	1,008	1.9%	182	0.3%	5.5	52	130
Hume	55,179	655	1.2%	539	1.0%	1.2	278	261
Kingston	83,937	1,092	1.3%	60	0.1%	18.2	262	- 202
Latrobe	28,155	203	0.7%	111	0.4%	1.8	94	17
Maribyrnong	33,455	839	2.5%	636	1.9%	1.3	234	402
Melbourne City	23,414	574	2.5%	75	0.3%	7.7	**	**
Melton	18,096	516	2.9%	194	1.1%	2.7	52	142
Mildura	23,382	318	1.4%	109	0.5%	2.9	282	- 173
Mitchell	21,678	517	2.4%	217	1.0%	2.4	22	195
Monash	104,259	1,561	1.5%	1064	1.0%	1.5	472	592
Moonee Valley	55,677	647	1.2%	687	1.2%	0.9	415	272
Moreland	70,985	1,341	1.9%	501	0.7%	2.7	577	- 76
Mornington Peninsula	52,648	680	1.3%	19	0.0%	35.8	358	- 339
Murrindindi	7,259	125	1.7%	1	0.0%	125.0	62	- 61
Port Phillip	41,846	457	1.1%	129	0.3%	3.5	77	52
Stonnington	49,951	1,096	2.2%	294	0.6%	3.7	25	269
Swan Hill	10,861	232	2.1%	75	0.7%	3.1	10	65
Upper Murray	101,952	479	0.5%	22	0.0%	21.8	51	- 29
Vision Australia	†	20	†	25	†	0.8	†	†
Wellington	21,813	664	3.0%	641	2.9%	1.0	7	634
West Gippsland	33,342	941	2.8%	486	1.5%	1.9	14	472
Whitehorse Manningham	110,492	199	0.2%	220	0.2%	0.9	135	85
Wimmera	24,173	574	2.4%	308	1.3%	1.9	37	271
Wyndham	49,816	438	0.9%	379	0.8%	1.2	32	347
Yarra Plenty	156,363	1,132	0.7%	173	0.1%	6.5	64	109
Yarra-Melbourne	65,358	598	0.9%	116	0.2%	5.2	291	- 175
Other	†	85	†	163	†	0.5	51	112
<b>Victoria</b>	<b>2,520,793</b>	<b>33,996</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>12,927</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>8602</b>	<b>4,325</b>

 Data on registered users is from the Department for Victorian Communities *Annual Survey of Victorian Public Libraries*.

† Not known.

\*\* Did not partake in the 2003 Survey.

## 4 Profile of library users

Data from the Library Census provides an extensive and quality database that can be used to describe the characteristics of library users across the state and, in most instances, for library services. A clear picture can be developed of library users by: gender, age, Indigenous status, language spoken at home, and family type. This information is complemented by findings from the Library Survey which collected detailed data on additional user characteristics including employment status, educational attainment and occupational status. While the number of users responding to the Library Survey was, as expected, lower than for the Library Census, the response is high enough to offer statistically valid information, statewide, and for all except seven library services.

The close correspondence between the demographic characteristics of persons responding to the Census and Survey in terms of key variables such as gender, age and CALD background, provides further evidence of the reliability of the two data sets, especially as the data was collected using different methodologies.

### 4.1 Gender

#### Census

- Statewide, 68% of Library Census respondents were female and 32% were male. This compares with 51% female and 49% male in the Victorian population. The higher proportion of females reflects the higher proportion of library users from older age groups (see Table 2), which includes a higher proportion of women, and also mothers bringing children to the library.
- The proportion of male library users varies across library services from a maximum of 50% at the Melbourne City Library to a low of 25% at some metropolitan and rural services. This indicates that libraries are operating in vastly different communities and drawing their users from very different bases.

<sup>3</sup> The age group 0 to 14 years was not included in this calculation as the Library Census was not designed to capture information from this group.

#### Survey

- As with the Library Census, 68% of respondents to the Library Survey were female.
- Nine libraries had a significantly higher proportion of females completing the Survey compared with the Census (i.e. the proportion of females completing the Survey was higher by 5 percentage points or more). Three libraries had a significantly higher proportion of males completing the Survey compared with the Census (i.e. the proportion of males completing the Survey was higher by 5 percentage points or more).

### 4.2 Age groups

#### Census

- Table 2 shows the proportion of Library Census and Survey respondents by age group for those aged 15 years and over<sup>3</sup> and compares this with data on age groups for the overall Victorian population (ABS Census of Population and Housing 2001). A comparison of data from the Library Census and Survey is also shown in Figure 1.

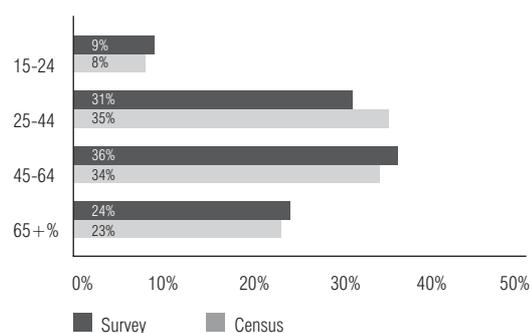
TABLE 2: COMPARISON OF AGE GROUPS FOR LIBRARY CENSUS AND SURVEY WITH ABS CENSUS

Age group	Library Census	Library Survey	Victorian population
15-24	8%	9%	17%
25-44	35%	31%	38%
45-64	34%	35%	29%
65+	23%	24%	16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

NB – this table shows the percentage of people in each age group as a proportion of the population 15 years and over

- The Library Census indicates that people aged 45 to 64 years and those aged 65 plus are more highly represented amongst users than their representation in the population. Overall, 16% of adults in Victoria are aged 65 plus compared with 23% of library users. Twenty-nine percent were aged 45 to 64 years compared to 34% of library users.
- An indicator of how well each age group is represented amongst library users is provided by comparing the proportion they represent of library users to their representation in the overall population. This was 1.5 for people aged 65 years plus i.e. the proportion of library users was 50% higher than their representation in the population.
- Similarly, the ratio for people aged 15 to 24 years was 0.5 (only half of their representation in the population), aged 25 to 44 years 0.9 (just below their representation in the population) and 45 to 64 years 1.2 (just over their representation in the population).
- The more detailed data in the separate report on library services and branches shows data for each library service and compares the proportions of users in each age group to the proportion living in the local area.
- Six library services have at least double the proportion of library users aged 65 or more than there is in their local population. For example, in one library service (Melton), 22% of library users are 65 plus compared with 7% of the population. There are eight library services where the proportion of library users 65 years plus is lower than their representation in the population – but these differences are not large.

FIGURE 1: AGE OF LIBRARY USERS



- The overall representation of young people aged 15 to 24 years is low statewide in comparison to their representation in the population. However, there are six libraries where the proportion of library users is over two-thirds of their representation in the population. Greater Dandenong has the strongest representation of young people – 19% of the adult population is in this age group compared to 17% of library users.

### Survey

- Table 2 and Figure 1 provide a comparison of the age profile for respondents to the Library Census and Survey. It shows a close alignment between these – the main difference being a slightly lower proportion of people aged 25 to 44 years responding to the Survey and slightly higher proportions of those aged 15 to 24, 45 to 64 and 65 plus.
- Both the Library Census and Survey show a higher proportion of library users in the older age group than the 2003 Survey. The 2006 Survey provides a truer picture of the use of library services by this older group than the 2003 Survey. In 2006, more libraries encouraged people to complete a paper-based survey if they were not comfortable with the online version – this data was then entered by library staff. In 2003, the use of paper-based surveys was more limited.

### 4.3 Respondents from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background

- One percent of respondents to both the Library Census and Survey were from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background. This aligns with 1% of the Victorian population who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (ABS Census)<sup>4</sup>.
- Three libraries had more than 1% of users from an Indigenous background – with one having a maximum of 3% of users.

#### Koori Library Pathways – Libraries Building Communities – Demonstration Project

As with many community-based services, a major challenge for Victorian public libraries is to develop services which are more responsive to the needs of the Indigenous population. In recognition of this, the Goulburn Valley Regional Library Corporation has recently been funded through the Libraries Building Communities Demonstration Projects grants program to work in partnership with the Koori Resource Information Centre (KRIC) to deliver accessible and responsive library services to the local Indigenous community. A key aim is to connect the community to local Indigenous information and knowledge.

### 4.4 Users from a CALD background

#### Census

- Of the respondents to the Library Census, 22% spoke a language other than English at home – this compares with 25% of the overall population in Victoria (ABS Census of Population and Housing).
- Table 3 provides data on the proportion of Library Census respondents from a CALD background along with comparative data on the proportion of the population from such backgrounds (from ABS Census).
- The last row of Table 3 shows the ratio of CALD library users compared to their representation in the local population. It indicates that people from a CALD background are reasonably well represented amongst library users.

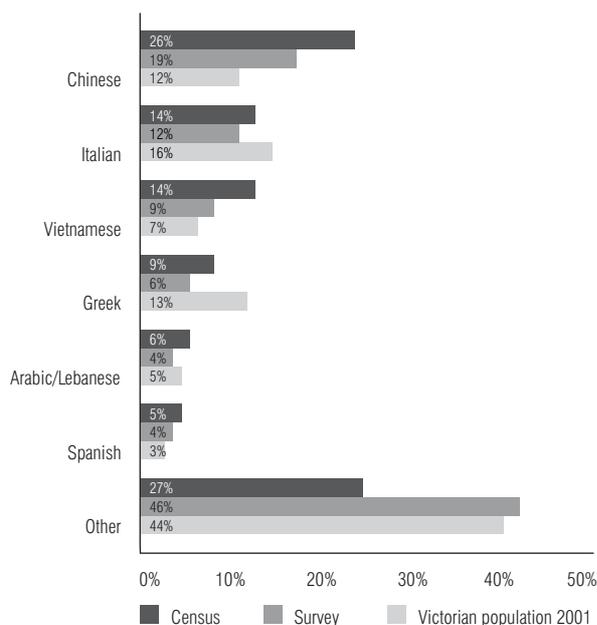
**TABLE 3: COMPARISON % CALD FOR LIBRARY CENSUS AND SURVEY WITH ABS CENSUS**

Source	Proportion
Library Census	22%
Library Survey	19%
Victorian population	25%
Ratio – Library Census to Victorian population	0.9

- The more detailed data in the separate report on library services and branches shows nine library services where the proportion of library users from a CALD background is higher than their representation in the local population.
- These tables also show a strong correlation between having a high proportion of CALD speaking people in a library service area and a high proportion of CALD library users. For example, in Greater Dandenong 58% of the population is from a CALD background compared with 62% of library users from this background. For Victoria overall, the respective figures are 25% and 22%.

<sup>4</sup> Census data is generally regarded as underestimating the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

**FIGURE 2: PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS FROM CALD BACKGROUNDS**



**Library Survey**

*I am still a single, and a migrant. Library a good place to spend time to be with other people. To improve my English by scanning newspapers, etc. to get rid of loneliness. (Vietnamese respondent)*

- Nineteen percent of respondents to the Survey were from a CALD background (compared with 22% in the Library Census). This suggests that the CALD participation in the Survey has been much higher than expected and can be attributed to two main factors: translation of the Survey into key community languages and the specific efforts and strategies of library staff to encourage participation by people from a CALD background.

*Footscray is sort of place with a lot Vietnamese around and I'm also Vietnamese; here I can find the books and things with my own language – Vietnamese so that I think this library is the great library of mine. (Vietnamese respondent)*

- Table 4 and Figure 2 show the response to the Census and Survey by language spoken at home other than English and compares this to figures from the ABS Census. Both the Census and Survey indicate a proportionately higher rate of library use for some CALD groups than others. For example, the usage rate for people from the Chinese, Vietnamese and Spanish speaking communities was considerably higher than their representation in the Victorian population. For others, representation was lower – especially the Greek-speaking community. The Arabic/Lebanese community was well represented in the Library Census but not as well represented in the Library Survey. The more detailed data in the separate report on library services and branches shows library usage by key language groups for each library service. They also show a strong pattern of usage by the Chinese and Vietnamese communities.

**TABLE 4: PROPORTION OF PEOPLE SPEAKING LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH – LIBRARY CENSUS AND SURVEY AND ABS CENSUS**

Language group	Library Census	Library Survey	Victorian population – ABS Census
Italian	14%	12%	16%
Greek	9%	6%	13%
Chinese	25%	19%	12%
Vietnamese	14%	9%	7%
Arabic/Lebanese	6%	4%	5%
Spanish	5%	4%	3%
Other	27%	46%	44%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

- These differences between CALD groups may be explained by a number of factors, e.g. libraries placing special emphasis on providing services to new migrant groups and differences in awareness of library services across cultural groups. It might also indicate that the approaches used by library services to encourage participation of CALD groups in the Library Survey and Census were more effective for people from the Chinese and Vietnamese communities.

*The library is a place where I don't feel lonely, it exposes me to many different issues and topics of study, there are many useful books that were not available to me when I was younger. The internet is another useful tool that available to me that I did not have when I was younger. (Vietnamese respondent)*

- The lower proportion of library users from the Italian and Greek community may indicate that as some migrant groups age, their participation in the library falls with one factor being the lack of materials (e.g. large print books) suitable to their needs.

## 4.5 Family type

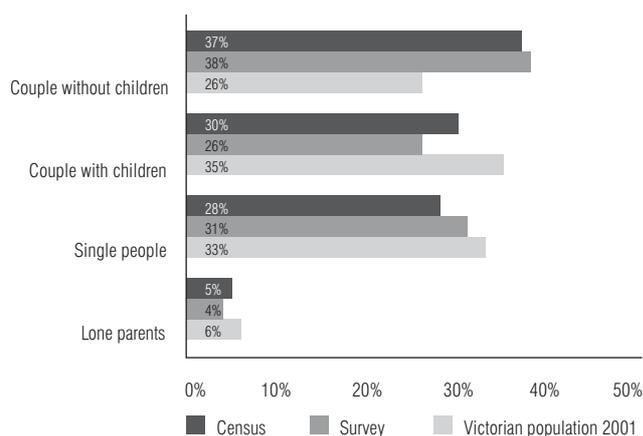
### Census

- Of the library users who were not children or dependent students, 37% were couples without children, 30% were couples with children, 5% were lone parents and 28% were single people. Comparable figures for the Victorian population show that 26% of adults lived in couple families without children, 35% were couples with children, 6% were lone parents and 33% were single people. This indicates that in relation to the Victorian population overall, a greater proportion of library users are couples without children (also reflecting that a greater proportion of people over 65 years use the library).

**TABLE 5: COMPARISON OF LIBRARY USERS BY FAMILY TYPE – LIBRARY CENSUS AND SURVEY AND ABS CENSUS**

Family type	Library Census	Library Survey	ABS Census 2001
Couple without children	37%	38%	26%
Couple with children	30%	26%	35%
Lone parents	5%	4%	6%
Single people	28%	31%	33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

FIGURE 3: LIBRARY USERS BY FAMILY TYPE



### Library Survey

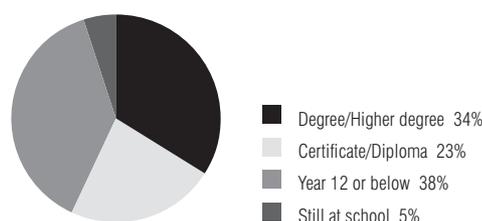
- As Table 5 and Figure 3 show, the Library Survey data aligns closely with that from the Library Census. The main differences are that a slightly lower proportion of couples with children and single parents completed the Survey while a higher proportion of single people did so. This may reflect that families with children tend to be ‘time poor’ and are less likely to have time to complete the Survey. The Survey may thus underestimate the number of families with children using public libraries.
- Library Survey data also indicates that about 40% of single people using libraries (not including children and dependent students) were widowed, divorced or separated – this compares with 56% of single people in these categories in the Victorian population.

## 4.6 Education, occupation and employment

The Library Survey collected greater detail than the Library Census on the educational, occupational and employment status of library users. This shows that:

- Respondents to the Library Survey tended to have higher educational qualifications than the general population. Thirty-four percent had a degree or higher degree, considerably above the 12% for the Victorian population. The proportion who had completed a Certificate or Diploma was 23%, about the same as for the population overall.
- The highest proportion of users with a degree or higher degree was at the Melbourne City Library (70%), while the lowest was at Gannawarra.
- The highest educational qualification for about 60% of Victorians is Year 12 or below; this compares with 43% of Library Survey respondents. However, there are three libraries who had 60% of users whose highest qualification was Year 12 or below and 13 library services had half or more of their users from this group.

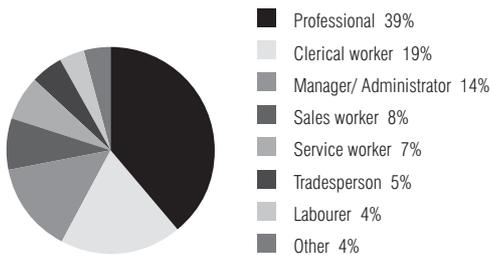
FIGURE 4: LIBRARY USERS BY HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION – LIBRARY SURVEY



- This higher level of educational attainment was reflected in the occupational status of people responding to the Survey – 53% classified themselves as professionals, managers or administrators, while 34% said they were clerical, service and sales workers, 5% said they were trades people and 4% labourers (4% other). As a base for comparison in the 2001

ABS Census: 40% of Victorians classified themselves as professionals, managers or administrators; 29% were clerical, service and sales workers; 12% were tradespeople, and 8% were labourers (10% other). Amongst library users there is a much higher proportion of professionals, managers or administrators and clerical, service and sales workers than in the population and a lower proportion of tradespeople and labourers (this also partly reflects the larger proportion of women using the library).

**FIGURE 5: LIBRARY USERS BY OCCUPATION – LIBRARY SURVEY**



- A similar finding came out of the 2003 survey. It was noted then that the proportion of tradespeople and labourers who use the library is well below their representation in the community. However, this is not true for all libraries, a small number have good representation of this section of the population.
- In terms of employment status, 44% of respondents were employed, 6% unemployed and 50% not in the labour force. This compares with figures for the Victorian population of 59% employed, 4% unemployed and 36% not in the labour force. The unemployed and people not in the labour force are well represented amongst library users.

- The proportion of unemployed library users at Greater Dandenong Library Service is 12%. Twenty-six library services have more than 4% of users who are unemployed. The data for individual library services indicates a relationship between proportion of library users who are unemployed and the proportion of unemployed people in the local area.
- The Library Survey shows that of those not in the labour force; 60% were retired; 24% were homemakers, 10% were students and 3% other.

#### **Info Skills on the Move – Libraries Building Communities – Demonstration Project**

The Upper Murray Regional Library has been funded to work with segments of its community not readily able to access mainstream library and information services: middle years school students, seniors, other educational institutions and the business community, and the Koori community. It provides a mobile homework/training centre and volunteer team to work with these groups to develop their information seeking skills. The library is working on this project in partnership with the new Wodonga Middle Years College and Learning City Albury Wodonga.

## **4.7 Access to the Internet**

- Three quarters of library users had Internet access away from the library. Just less than half of these people had access at home, about 20% at work and about 10% at school, TAFE or university.

# 5 The main uses of libraries

## 5.1 Visiting the library

### Accessing library services

The first question in the Survey explored how people accessed library services – respondents could give multiple responses. The majority accessed services by visiting the library (94%) or through the library website (23%)<sup>5</sup>. A smaller percentage used the home library service (2%) or the mobile library service (5%).

### Frequency of visits to the library

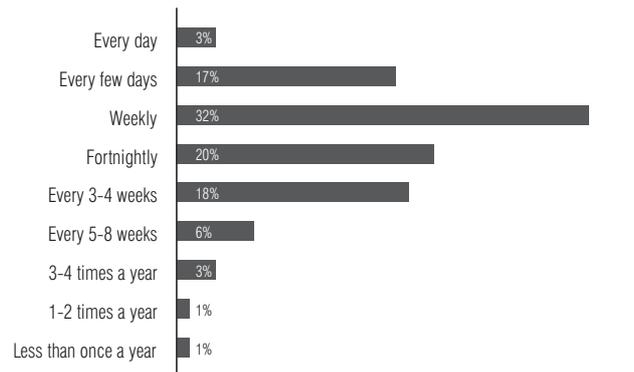
The data from the Library Survey highlights the great regularity with which some users visit the library – almost a half are visiting on a weekly basis (Figure 6). Data from the 2006 Survey suggests an even higher frequency of visits than the 2003 Telephone Survey (Table 6). It is possible that this data is influenced by the survey data collection strategy which provided a three week window in which people could complete the Survey. It is also probable that the type of people inclined to complete the Survey were more likely to be frequent visitors.

**TABLE 6: FREQUENCY OF LIBRARY USE – LIBRARY SURVEY**

Frequency of visits	2006 Library Survey	2003 Telephone Survey	
		Metro	Non-metro
Every few days	20%	5%	0
Weekly	32%	21%	15%
Fortnightly	20%	22%	13%
Every 3-4 weeks	18%	18%	21%
Every 5-8 weeks	6%	13%	15%
3-4 times a year	3%	8%	17%
1-2 times a year	1%	11%	12%
Less than once a year	1%	3%	6%

<sup>5</sup> Note comments in section 5.2 and Table 12 which indicate an even higher proportion of users accessing library services through the website.

**FIGURE 6: FREQUENCY OF LIBRARY USE – LIBRARY SURVEY**



Data from the 2003 Online Survey was collected according to different categories, but this also showed that about a half the users visit on a weekly basis (see page 19, *Libraries Building Communities Report 2: Logging the Benefits*).

### Duration of use

About 60% of the Library Survey respondents had been using the library for over five years. Altogether 80% had been using it for over two years. An important implication for this study is that the information supplied by users has been informed by a strong knowledge of, and familiarity with, library services. This is especially important in relation to questions asked regarding satisfaction with library services and benefits of libraries to their communities (see Sections 6 and 8 of this report). Table 7 also suggests that libraries are attracting plenty of new users.

**TABLE 7: DURATION OF LIBRARY USE – LIBRARY SURVEY**

Duration	%
First time user	2%
Less than 12 months	10%
12 months to 2 years	10%
Between 2 and 5 years	19%
Over 5 years	59%

## Travel to the library

- Respondents could provide multiple responses to the question of how they travelled to the library – reflecting that a combination of modes of travel can be used, e.g. public transport plus walking. Most people used a car to get to the library (73%), a third walked and about 10% used public transport. Almost 90% said they thought the library was easy to get to.

## Visiting with friends

- The Library Census found that 38% of library users visit the library at some time with another person. Again figures vary across library service – while at a small number of library services more than half their users are accompanied by another person this is less than one-quarter at others.
- The question in the Library Survey was worded a bit differently – asking respondents who they come to the library with most of the time. Not surprisingly the proportion who visited with other people was a bit lower than the Census figure. Twenty-eight percent said they mostly visited with others – mainly with children or a spouse or partner.

## 5.2 The reasons people use libraries

### Library Census

- The Library Census asked people to nominate the *main* reasons they use the library. Table 8 shows the response. Borrowing books was the main purpose people used libraries – 93% indicated they used the library for this reason. Other reasons were mentioned a lot less frequently – use of computers was mentioned by 21% of respondents.

**TABLE 8: REASONS FOR USING THE LIBRARY – LIBRARY CENSUS**

Reason for using the library	% of respondents
Borrow books	93%
Use computers	21%
Attend activities	5%
Attend events	4%
Read/study/ work	17%
Children's services	14%
Other	4%

- The more detailed data in the separate report on library services and branches shows how the reasons for using libraries varies between services.
  - > While 96% of users at a number of library service gave borrowing books as a reason for visiting the library, this was identified by only 88% at one library service (Goulburn Valley). Library services with a smaller proportion of people saying they borrowed books had a greater proportion saying they used computers at the library.
  - > The proportion identifying computer use varied from a high of 33% (Mitchell) and 30% (Greater Dandenong) to a minimum of 12% at Moonee Valley. Factors that may impact on this include access to Internet at home or work and access and availability to computers at the library.
  - > The maximum figure for attending activities at the library was 22% of users (Casey-Cardinia) – with a minimum of 1% (Central Highlands).
  - > Similarly, figures for attending library events varied from 26% (Casey-Cardinia) to 1% at Wyndham.
  - > Using the library as a place for reading and study was as high as 35% at one library service but went down to a minimum of 8%.
  - > Use of children's services ranged from 30% (Melton) to 0% – thirty-seven library services had more than 10% of respondents using children's services.

**TABLE 9: REASONS FOR USING THE LIBRARY – MALES/ FEMALES – LIBRARY CENSUS**

	Male	Female	Total
Borrow books	90%	95%	94%
Use computers	27%	19%	22%
Attend activities	3%	5%	5%
Attend events	3%	5%	4%
Quiet place	21%	15%	17%
Children's services	8%	17%	14%

- Table 9 shows some difference in the way males and females use libraries. Males are more likely to be using computers or looking for a quiet place to read or work. Females are more likely to be borrowing books or attending the library so their children can use its services.
- Usage patterns also vary by age. As Table 10 shows, younger people are much more likely to be using computers and looking for a quiet place to read or work. Users aged 0 to 14 years and those aged 25 to 44 years are more likely to attend library activities – probably reflecting families attending these as a group.

**TABLE 10: REASONS FOR USING THE LIBRARY – AGE – LIBRARY CENSUS**

	0-14	15-24	25-44	45-64	65+
Borrow books	90%	85%	94%	95%	95%
Use computers	34%	42%	25%	19%	8%
Attend activities	7%	2%	6%	3%	4%
Attend events	4%	2%	3%	5%	5%
Quiet place	24%	36%	16%	15%	13%
Children's services	16%	4%	30%	8%	4%

- People from a CALD background are far more likely to visit the library to use its computers or use children's services. A much higher proportion, nearly twice that of people who speak English only, use the library for a quiet place to read or work.

**TABLE 11: REASONS FOR USING THE LIBRARY – CALD AND ENGLISH SPEAKING – LIBRARY CENSUS**

	CALD	English speaking only
Borrow books	91%	95%
Use computers	31%	19%
Attend activities	6%	4%
Attend events	4%	4%
Quiet place	27%	14%
Children's services	19%	13%

### Library Survey

- Data from the Library Survey also identifies the reasons respondents were using the library. This question was worded differently to the question in the Library Census which asked people about the *main* services they used. It asked respondents to identify services they have *used in the last twelve months*. The Library Survey also provided a more detailed list of services for people to respond to. The responses to the two questions are thus not directly comparable.
- Again borrowing books is the most frequently mentioned reason for visiting the library – identified by 92% of respondents. Other types of loans were also mentioned by about 50% of users. This is similar to the 2003 findings which showed 95% of people borrowing books; 63% borrowing audio visual material and 53% borrowing magazines. Nearly a half of respondents said library staff helped them find information.
- Obtaining community information was mentioned as a reason for using the library by 21% of respondents and information about government by 23%. This compares with 36% using community information in 2003 – note however, that in 2003 information about government was not included in the list of services provided by libraries and was most probably included as part of community information by survey respondents.

*The building the library is situated in has a couple of large rooms that are utilised by various community and outside community organisations and there are notice boards that have details of all these activities for people to know what's going on. Also the recent Travelling Exhibitions from the State Library was extremely interesting and popular and hopefully there will be more of these in the future. My husband, my son and I found the people from the State Library to be very pleasant and extremely informative and look forward to attending more of these and perhaps other types of events in the future.*

**TABLE 12: REASONS FOR USING LIBRARY SERVICES – LIBRARY SURVEY**

Loans		Services		Event and programs	
Books	92%	Help finding information	46%	Homework and school support	8%
CDs, DVDs and videos	60%	Local and family history resources	10%	Book clubs/reading groups	4%
Magazines, newspapers	45%	Community information	21%	Language and literacy programs	2%
Loans from other libraries	4%	Information about government	23%	Club activities	1%
Facilities/resources		Reference material	23%	Computer/Internet training	4%
Meeting rooms	6%	Information services for small business	3%	Writers' workshops	2%
Place to read/study/work	24%	Interpreting services	1%	Cultural events	7%
Equipment e.g. photocopier	33%	Library website	33%	Exhibitions/displays	11%
Computers/Internet	37%	Home Library Service	4%	Talks/lectures	8%
Adaptive technology	2%	Mobile Library Service	6%	Special events	7%
Online data bases	17%			Other	1%

- Over a third of respondents said they had used computers/Internet services and the library website. The data indicates a growth in the use of the library websites between 2003 and 2006. A small proportion, 4%, had used computer training at the library.
- There are a significant proportion of users (around about 10%) who attend activities at their library such as cultural events, exhibitions/displays and talks/lectures.

#### **Wyndham Libraries and Learning Portal – Libraries Building Communities – Demonstration Project**

Wyndham City Council Library Service has been funded to develop a virtual focal point (a website) for libraries and learning in Wyndham. Through this it will increase awareness of and participation in learning programs. The Wyndham Community Learning Portal will make available both data relating to learning events/programs held in the local area and a directory of host organisations.

# 6 Satisfaction with library staff and services

The Library Survey asked a number of specific questions about respondent’s satisfaction with the library, its service and staff.

## 6.1 Overall satisfaction

- Overall satisfaction with the service provided by public libraries was ranked very highly. On a scale of ‘not satisfied’ (1) to ‘very satisfied’ (5), libraries across Victoria ranked at 4.5. Sixty-one percent of respondents said they were ‘very satisfied’.
- The average score for satisfaction across library services varied from a minimum of 4.1 to a maximum of 4.9.
- Table 13 shows how respondents ranked their library on a number of issues.

**TABLE 13: OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH LIBRARY SERVICES – LIBRARY SURVEY**

Library issue	Average rating
Responding to users’ requests	4.5
Ease of finding books and information	4.3
Usefulness of the library website	4.2
Opening hours	4.2
‘Look and feel’ of the library building	4.2
Availability of parking	3.9
Charging policy	3.9

- The greatest variation between library services was on physical and location issues such as ‘parking’ (a minimum of 2.3 at one library and maximum of 4.3) ‘look and feel of the library’ ( a minimum of 3.3 at one library and maximum of 4.6).

## 6.2 Satisfaction with staff

*You are free to voice you opinions, make any suggestions, and they listen to you and take it into account.  
(Vietnamese respondent)*

*The staff there is kind and patient. I don't really know how to use the computer but they teach me with patience, I am very thankful to them. They are very kind to us and the service is great. Very good, very good! (Chinese respondent)*

Overall, libraries ranked very highly in terms of satisfaction with staff. Variation across library services was only small and did not drop below 3.2. It was a maximum of 4.9 at Gannawarra.

**TABLE 14: SATISFACTION WITH STAFF – LIBRARY SURVEY**

Library issue	Average rating
Are courteous and helpful	4.7
Respond to library users in a professional manner	4.6
Are knowledgeable and competent	4.6
Provide useful assistance	4.6
Go out of their way to be of help	4.5
Expand my use of library services	4.3

*Coming to the library, I am able to converse to the staff in my first language which makes it a lot easier to renew books, and it's easy over the phone too. The staff are excellent and helpful. (Vietnamese respondent)*

*Staff always polite to everyone but have good rapport/patience with some who appear to be regular users and who have mental disabilities or who are ‘loners’; always helpful.*

*The staff are friendly, it's not the “SSHHHH QUIET PLEASE” place anymore. There is a bunch of activity in there and it's not just the “dorks” that use the library anymore. Teenagers even use its facilities now!*

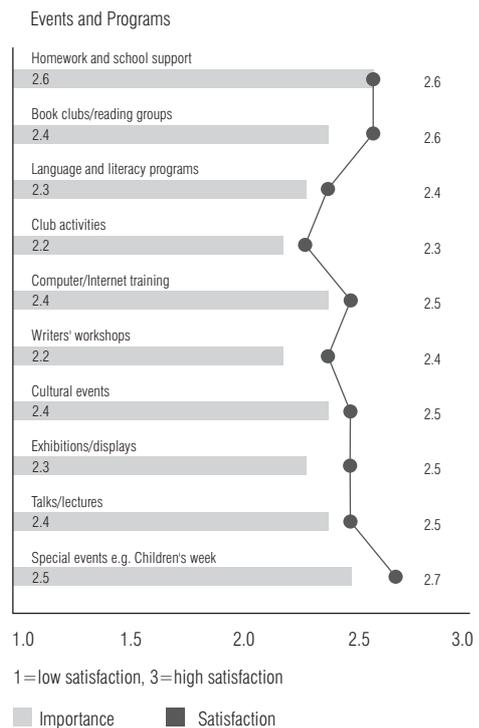
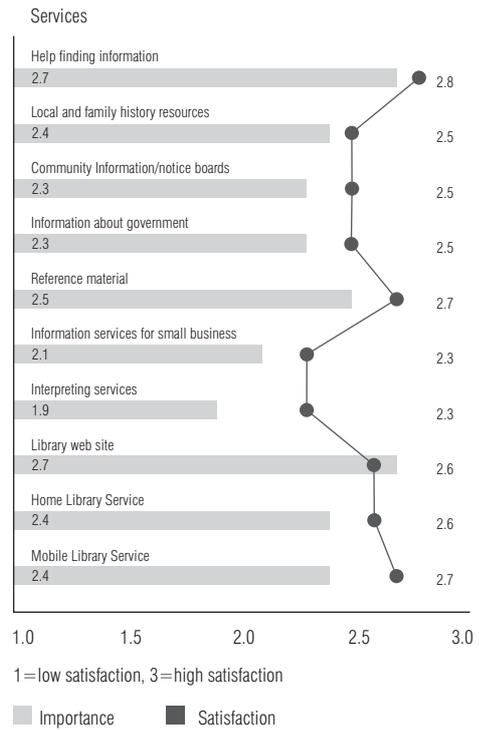
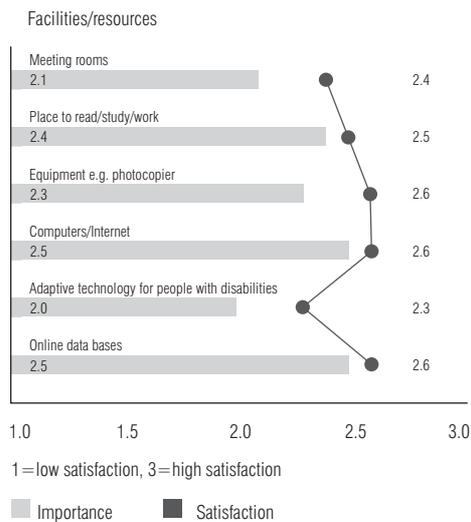
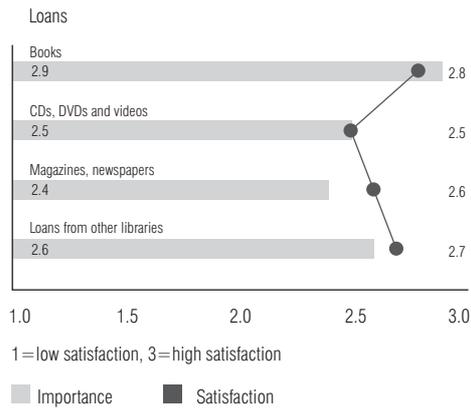
### **Learning Advocates in the Community – Libraries Building Communities – Demonstration Project**

Hume Global Learning Village Library Service has been funded to undertake a project which will further develop Hume City as a Learning Community by broadening the role of library staff from providers of resources and information, to that of pro-active Learning Advocates who can advise, refer and promote learning opportunities to the community. A training program, a communication package and a Community Information and Learning Database will support the Learning Advocates. The project also reaches more extensively into the community by training Council's frontline community service staff, members of the Hume Global Learning Village and professionals who work in the community as learning advocates and in the use of the Community Information and Learning Database.

## **6.3 Satisfaction with services**

- Respondents to the Survey were asked to rate their satisfaction with the library services they used on a scale from low (1) to high (3). As shown in Figure 7 satisfaction with 'books' and 'help finding information' rated the highest at 2.76 and 2.77 respectively (rounded to 2.8). 'Adaptive technology' and 'information services for small business' ranked the lowest at 2.32 and 2.26 respectively (rounded to 2.3).
- As with the 2003 Survey, a strong signal of the satisfaction with libraries was that 78% (82% in 2003) suggested to a friend or family member that they use library services.
- Respondents were also asked to rate the importance of library services to them on the same scale. The most highly rated were 'books' (2.9), 'help finding information' (2.7) and 'the library website' (2.7). Books had also been identified as the most important service in the 2003 Survey.
- Analysis of the gap between the importance assigned to a service and user satisfaction with it was used to identify instances where library performance exceeds expectation and where it does not meet expectation (Figure 7). The only services where satisfaction level is below importance are 'book loans' and 'the library website'. This is consistent with findings from the 2003 Survey. For all other services, satisfaction is above or very near to the importance assigned to it.

**FIGURE 7: GAP BETWEEN THE LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE USERS ASSIGN TO LIBRARY SERVICES AND SATISFACTION WITH THESE SERVICES – LIBRARY SURVEY**



# 7 Children's use of libraries

*Encourages young readers by having lots of pre-school activities such as story mornings. Lots of displays prepared by local primary school classes to involve future readers.*

*I like to browse a little, find what I'm looking for and check out but every time I'm there I notice people using the computers, school kids in uniforms and others sitting quietly to read. Obviously the library makes a difference in the lives of these people. Where would they go without a local library? Also our library has been active with National Youth Week as well, so it must be making some impact on kids which I think is probably very important.*

- About one-quarter of Library Survey respondents said they brought children with them to the library so they could use its services. The age of these children was fairly evenly distributed across the age range 0 to 13 years – with a slightly higher proportion in the age range 0 to 4 years.
- The services most used by children were ‘loan of books’ and ‘story time/reading clubs’.

*The library is great for families who don't have lots of books at home. I know families where the parents don't read much, but will still make an effort to take their children to the preschool story times.*

- In terms of importance of services, 85% of respondents rated ‘books’ as of high importance and just over 60% rated each of ‘story time/reading clubs’, ‘Computer/Internet’ and ‘place to study/read’ as of high importance.
- As with services provided to adults, satisfaction with all services except ‘loan of books’ ranked above its rate of importance.
- Seventy-two percent of respondents rated libraries as very important for improving children’s literacy skills and 57% as very important for providing support with school projects. Only 20% said libraries were very important as a place to make friends.

*There are many programs for the children, like story-time. The library is very children/youth friendly, ideal for students to study individually or in groups. It's an important learning environment. (Vietnamese respondent)*

# 8 How libraries add value to their communities

*A free public library service is a common good like access to free good quality drinking water. Old or young, rich or poor, fifth generation Australian or immigrant or refugee – all are equal in the library queue. Given that libraries are supported by public funds not just rates, and accessible not just to ratepayers in a given municipality, it is especially good that commuters like myself can borrow while in the city.*

## 8.1 Social interactions at the library

*Watching the types of different people who come [to the library] I think it gives people a sense of being a part of a community even if they don't speak to each other. It gives all people a place to go to be quiet and read but not be on their own. It can connect people through these things.*

- One issue that came out of the 2003 Survey was the considerable level of interaction between users and between users and library staff. The 2006 Survey investigated this issue further by looking at the frequency of these interactions.

**TABLE 15: ACTIVITIES PEOPLE UNDERTAKE AT THE LIBRARY – LIBRARY SURVEY**

Activity	Never	Occasionally	Frequently
Talk with library staff	5%	52%	43%
Ask staff for help	5%	69%	26%
See people you know	23%	52%	25%
Meet new people	50%	40%	10%
Talk with other library users	35%	51%	14%
Talk with people from outside your usual social circle	39%	48%	13%

- Ninety-five percent of users said when at the library they talked to library staff either frequently or occasionally – this compares with 71% in 2003.
- Seventy-seven percent said they see people they know – compared with 43% in 2003. Sixty-one percent talked with people from outside their usual social circle. In 2003, 22% said they talked with people who would not normally be their friend.

*The library has provided the framework to begin a reading club and we have made new and interesting friends with members of the community that we would otherwise never have met. The library is a service that is provided for all members of the community regardless of age, gender or need.*

*It gives us a reason to go out of the house and see people and mix rather than becoming house bound.*

- This data supports the argument made in the *Libraries Building Communities* reports that libraries have an important role in encouraging social interaction and engagement across differing social and cultural groups.

## 8.2 Benefits to the community

- The Library Survey asked library users to respond to a number of specific statements to find out the ways in which they saw their library adding value to the community (Table 16). They were asked to rate their library on a scale from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5).
- What stands out is the large number of respondents who view the library as a safe place (echoing findings from the New South Wales study *A Safe Place to Go*) and who believe it attracts users from all walks of life. This latter finding is consistent with the *Libraries Building Communities Report 2: Logging the Benefits* which quotes community leaders as saying that 'public libraries are there for all'.

TABLE 16: PLACE OF THE LIBRARY IN THE COMMUNITY – LIBRARY SURVEY

Library issue	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly agree 5	Average	Don't know
Has a reputation for being a safe place	0%	1%	7%	24%	57%	4.5	11%
Provides information I can't get elsewhere	2%	5%	20%	29%	36%	4.0	8%
Is a hub for community activities and connections	2%	7%	25%	25%	22%	3.7	19%
Attracts users from all walks of life	1%	2%	13%	29%	44%	4.3	11%
Is a good place to find out what is going on in the community	2%	7%	24%	27%	25%	3.8	15%
Is a good place to find out about Council or other government services	3%	8%	22%	24%	21%	3.7	22%
I can always find what I want at the library	3%	9%	27%	33%	25%	3.7	3%

- Nearly 60% of users agreed or strongly agreed that they can always get the information they want at the library and that it provides information they cannot get elsewhere.
- More than half said they agreed or strongly agreed that the library is a good place to find out what is going on in the community and just under a half that it was a hub for community activities and connections.
- Forty-five percent of users agreed or strongly agreed that the library is a good place to find out about government services. The average rating at 3.7 (out of a possible 5) indicates a well above average response.

*Opportunities to learn and read for free (except for rates of course). Safe spaces for kids to read and play. Don't know what we would do without the library. A source of information and a place to go out with the family without it costing the earth.*

*A great meeting place for people. Offers a range of other language and other culture material.*

*Allows all nationalities to obtain information – be it personal or business related – in a nice atmosphere*

*When I go to the library, there are always a lot of people there from English and non-English speaking backgrounds and a lot of children. I think my library contributes to my community by being inclusive and accepting of all people including disadvantaged people.*

*Close to the markets, close to the shops, when I go to the library it opens me up to many things, there are so many resources available, and it doesn't cost any money. The displays are always very pretty, especially around Christmas. There's abundant information about other countries and cultures. If I am depressed or dealing with grief I am able to borrow books to help me. Examples: 'Coi chet – chet roi di ve dau?' etc.*

*Access to information and encouragement to read and learn and for people without a computer a chance to use another information and communication service.*

*Access to reading materials and videos and DVDs that some users would probably not have the funds to purchase.*

*I have access to a wide variety of information that I would otherwise have to purchase (and hence probably wouldn't). It has helped me enormously throughout*

*my pregnancy and now a new baby with regards to researching and borrowing books and cds.*

*They communicate relevant issues to the public; provide the facilities to enable people to have meetings, offer many programs so one can ask questions. There are resources for leisure, research, and study. (Vietnamese respondent)*

*Community ownership has developed in regard to the mobile library, and its staff.*

*Being a small community it is helpful to have a library locally. I meet people at the library I don't see other times. It is a great resource, research facility.*

*It is not only a meeting point but it is a place we can pass on news of activities in the town through the staff.*

*It is an important part of the community and particularly in offering reading options to the less well off members of the community. I also see it as an important resource for newly arrived members of the community particularly recent refugees who have settled in the area.*

*The library is like a dear dependable friend who is always there when you need it. It is the hub around which people flow for many and varied reasons.*

*I think it acts as a meeting point for students, families and community groups and provides information relevant to the community regarding services etc. I really believe that the library fosters the ideal of life long learning and is constantly encouraging patrons to discover and learn new things.*

*It is a hub integrated into service provision in a very lively town. Some of its foyer visual arts exhibits are breathtaking in artistic merit and social commentary in a highly critical town for both art and justice concerns. Well done.*

*WOW! It's one of Foster's social focus locations and the place where people say, "yes, leave a copy of [whatever e.g. show grounds management plan] so everyone can have a look at it."*

*Always has available local newspapers, magazines etc, notices about upcoming events in the area, local adult education course guides available.*

*Gives a central community information centre, other than the council offices which may be intimidating to some people. I have used the library for 39 years.*

*Better quality of life, provides more communication between people and to understand the city council more. (Chinese respondent)*

*The library is part of the community and provides information to the users about the kind of services available to them. (Spanish respondent)*

## 8.3 Benefits to the individual

*It's full of kids doing projects, and elderly people out and about choosing books, and people who can't speak English very well using the newspapers to improve their English skills. It's a hub for bookworms like me. It's part of the education system, offering a wealth of opportunities to people who may not have the money to access them otherwise. It changes people's lives for the better.*

*When I have free time and feeling depressed, the library is a place of comfort and solace that I can go to forget my stress and worries. (Vietnamese respondent)*

- Respondents to the Survey were provided with a list of potential benefits from using the library and asked to rate these from 'not at all' (1) to 'very much' (5).
- As shown in Table 17, 72% of users said libraries made their life more enjoyable, 59% said they were introduced to new topics of interest and 63% that the library encouraged them to read more.

- A much smaller proportion 10% said the library had a key role in helping them get a job. This probably reflects that while some services have placed importance on providing this type of service it is not offered consistently across all libraries.

*The power and love of language and learning.*

*They communicate relevant issues to the public; provide the facilities to enable people to have meetings, offer many programs so one can ask questions. There are resources for leisure, research, and study. (Vietnamese respondent)*

*The City Library is an essential part of a vibrant city. It provides a wonderful service for those of us who work in the city and city residents. It is an oasis in the city - somewhere you can go and sit and read and enjoy without shopping or paying at a cafe. It is relaxing and enlightening – A trip to the library makes me feel rested and revived.*

TABLE 17: BENEFITS OF THE LIBRARY TO INDIVIDUALS – LIBRARY SURVEY

Library issue	Not at all 1	2	3	4	Very much 5	Average	Don't know
Encouraged me to read more	8%	5%	15%	24%	39%	3.9	9%
Introduced me to new topics of interest	7%	7%	18%	28%	31%	3.8	9%
Built my confidence	17%	12%	22%	14%	13%	2.9	22%
Helped me understand different cultures and perspectives	13%	13%	22%	18%	15%	3.1	19%
Helped me to develop better learning habits and skills	15%	12%	21%	17%	15%	3.1	21%
Improved my computer/Internet skills	24%	12%	15%	12%	13%	2.7	24%
Provided me with an easy access point to Council's services	17%	13%	19%	13%	11%	2.8	27%
Helped me get a job	41%	7%	7%	4%	6%	1.9	35%
Made my life more enjoyable	4%	3%	13%	25%	47%	4.2	7%

# Attachment A

## Library Users Survey

### Survey Report – Statewide Summary

#### About your library

**1. How do you usually access services from the public library?** (Multiple responses allowed)

- 94% By visiting the library
- 2% Through the home library service
- 5% Through the mobile library service
- 23% Through the library web site
- 1% Other – please specify

**2. What is the name of the public library branch you use most often?**

**3. Approximately how long have you been using this library?**

- 2% First time user
- 10% Less than 12 months
- 10% 12 months to 2 years
- 19% Between 2 and 5 years
- 59% Over 5 years

**4. How frequently do you visit this library?**

- 3% Every day
- 17% Every few days
- 32% Weekly
- 20% Fortnightly
- 18% Every 3–4 weeks
- 6% Every 5–8 weeks
- 3% 3–4 times a year
- 1% 1–2 times a year
- 1% Less than once a year

**5. How do you usually travel to this library?**

(Multiple responses allowed)

- 36% Walk
- 6% Bicycle
- 9% Public transport
- 1% Community bus/transport
- 0% Transport provided by the library
- 73% Car
- 1% Other – please specify

**6. Who do you come to the library with (most of the time)?** (Multiple responses allowed)

- 72% By yourself
- 6% Friends
- 18% Spouse or partner
- 24% Children
- 5% Parents
- 3% Other relatives
- 1% As part of a group
- 1% Other – please specify

#### Children’s use of the library

If you ever bring young children (i.e. children under the age of 14 years) to the library to use its services please answer questions 7 to 10. Otherwise go to Question 11.

**7. How many children do you generally bring to the library with you?**

26% of survey respondents (3409 people) answered the following question.

- 41% 1
- 44% 2
- 11% 3
- 2% 4
- 0% 5
- 0% 6
- 1% More than 6

**8. What age group are these children?**

(Multiple responses allowed)

- 47% 0–4 years
- 36% 5–7 years
- 34% 8–10 years
- 35% 11–13 years

9. Please indicate which library services these children have used in the last 12 months by ticking the appropriate box in Column 1.

For the services the children use, please tell us how important you think these services are (in Column 2) and how satisfied you are with them (in Column 3) by circling the appropriate answer.

Service	C1 – % use	C2 – How important is this service to you? Low = 1; Med = 2; High = 3				C3 – How satisfied are you with this service? Low = 1; Med = 2; High = 3			
		L	M	H	Average	L	M	H	Average
		Loans of books and/or other resources e.g. games and toys	27%	2%	13%	85%	2.8	2%	21%
Story time and reading clubs	10%	10%	27%	63%	2.5	5%	5%	75%	2.7
School holiday activities	8%	12%	35%	53%	2.4	7%	26%	68%	2.6
Computer/ Internet	8%	11%	25%	64%	2.5	8%	23%	69%	2.6
Place to read/study	8%	9%	29%	62%	2.5	7%	23%	70%	2.6
Other – please specify	1%	94%	2%	4%	1.1	93%	4%	3%	1.1

10. What do you think are the main benefits these children get from the library?

Benefit	Not at all 1	2	3	4	Very important 5	Average	Don't know
Improved literacy skills	1%	0%	7%	17%	72%	4.6	2%
Place to make friends	18%	18%	23%	14%	20%	3.0	7%
Support with school projects	5%	3%	9%	19%	57%	4.3	7%
Other – please specify	2%	1%	4%	10%	63%	4.6	20%

## About the services you use

11. Please indicate which library services and facilities you have used in the last 12 months by ticking the appropriate box in Column 1.

For each service you use, please indicate how important it is to you (in Column 2) and your satisfaction with the service (in Column 3) by circling the appropriate answer.

Service	C1 – % use	C2 – How important is this service to you? Low = 1; Med = 2; High = 3				C3 – How satisfied are you with this service? Low = 1; Med = 2; High = 3			
		L	M	H	Average	L	M	H	Average
		<b>Loans</b>							
Books	92%	1%	12%	87%	2.86	2%	21%	77%	2.76
CDs, DVDs and videos	60%	10%	33%	57%	2.46	8%	32%	60%	2.52
Magazines, newspapers	45%	13%	32%	55%	2.41	6%	29%	65%	2.60
Loans from other libraries	39%	9%	23%	67%	2.58	3%	21%	76%	2.73

Service	C1 – % use	C2 – How important is this service to you? Low = 1; Med = 2; High = 3				C3 – How satisfied are you with this service? Low = 1; Med = 2; High = 3			
		L	M	H	Average	L	M	H	Average
<b>Facilities/resources</b>									
Meeting rooms	6%	33%	27%	40%	2.07	14%	28%	58%	2.44
Place to read/study/work	24%	12%	32%	56%	2.43	9%	31%	60%	2.52
Equipment e.g. photocopier	33%	17%	33%	50%	2.32	5%	26%	68%	2.63
Computers/Internet	37%	12%	24%	64%	2.52	6%	27%	67%	2.61
Adaptive technology for people with disabilities	2%	38%	19%	43%	2.04	17%	34%	49%	2.32
Online data bases	17%	10%	29%	61%	2.51	6%	30%	64%	2.58
<b>Services</b>									
Help finding information	46%	5%	25%	70%	2.65	2%	18%	80%	2.77
Local and family history resources	10%	14%	32%	54%	2.4	8%	31%	61%	2.53
Community Information/notice boards	21%	13%	14%	45%	2.32	6%	39%	55%	2.49
Information about government	12%	16%	37%	47%	2.31	9%	36%	55%	2.47
Reference material	23%	8%	31%	61%	2.53	3%	28%	69%	2.65
Information services for small business	3%	29%	31%	40%	2.11	18%	38%	44%	2.26
Interpreting services	1%	43%	28%	29%	1.86	18%	37%	45%	2.28
Library web site	33%	6%	24%	71%	2.65	5%	28%	67%	2.62
Home Library Service	4%	24%	18%	58%	2.35	7%	24%	69%	2.62
Mobile Library Service	6%	21%	16%	63%	2.43	7%	18%	75%	2.68
<b>Events and Programs</b>									
Homework and school support	8%	9%	22%	69%	2.60	6%	25%	69%	2.63
Book clubs/reading groups	4%	16%	29%	56%	2.40	9%	28%	63%	2.55
Language and literacy programs	2%	25%	24%	52%	2.27	15%	33%	51%	2.36
Club activities	1%	27%	30%	43%	2.16	19%	31%	50%	2.31
Computer/Internet training	4%	16%	24%	60%	2.44	11%	26%	63%	2.52
Writers' workshops	2%	23%	31%	46%	2.23	14%	33%	53%	2.39
<b>Events and Programs</b>									
Cultural events	7%	13%	37%	51%	2.38	8%	32%	60%	2.52
Exhibitions/displays	11%	12%	45%	43%	2.31	6%	34%	60%	2.54
Talks/lectures	8%	13%	40%	47%	2.35	8%	31%	61%	2.53
Special events e.g. Children's week	7%	10%	26%	64%	2.54	5%	24%	70%	2.65
Other – please specify	1%	19%	22%	59%	2.40	9%	22%	69%	2.61

**12. Are there any library services which you don't currently use but which you think it is important for the library to offer (please list)?**

## About your satisfaction with library services

13. Please indicate your overall satisfaction with the services of your library on the following scale.

Not satisfied 1	2	3	4	Very satisfied 5	Average
0%	1%	7%	30%	61%	4.51

14. How well do you think your library performs on the following?

Library issue	Very poor 1	2	3	4	Excellent 5	Average	Don't know
Opening hours	1%	4%	14%	35%	44%	4.2	2%
Ease of finding books and information	1%	2%	12%	37%	46%	4.3	2%
Usefulness of the library website	1%	3%	12%	27%	34%	4.2	24%
Responding to users' requests	1%	1%	7%	24%	57%	4.5	10%
'Look and feel' of the library building	2%	5%	14%	32%	44%	4.2	3%
Availability of parking	5%	8%	18%	25%	36%	3.9	8%
Charging policy	4%	5%	18%	26%	30%	3.9	16%

15. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about library staff?

Library issue	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly agree 5	Average	Don't know
Provide useful assistance	0%	1%	6%	22%	70%	4.6	2%
Respond to library users in a professional manner	0%	1%	5%	21%	71%	4.6	1%
Are knowledgeable and competent	0%	1%	5%	22%	68%	4.6	3%
Are courteous and helpful	1%	1%	4%	19%	74%	4.7	1%
Expand my use of library services	2%	4%	14%	22%	49%	4.3	10%
Go out of their way to be of help	1%	2%	9%	20%	63%	4.5	4%

16. Please describe briefly anything you are not satisfied with at your library

17. If you could make one improvement to your library what would it be?

## About the benefits you get from the library

### 18. When at the library do you?

Activity	Never	Occasionally	Frequently
Talk with library staff	5%	52%	43%
Ask staff for help	5%	69%	26%
See people you know	23%	52%	25%
Meet new people	50%	40%	10%
Talk with other library users	35%	51%	14%
Talk with people from outside your usual social circle	39%	48%	13%

### 19. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your library?

Library issue	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly agree 5	Average	Don't know
Has a reputation for being a safe place	0%	1%	7%	24%	57%	4.5	11%
Provides information I can't get elsewhere	2%	5%	20%	29%	36%	4.0	8%
Is a hub for community activities and connections	2%	7%	25%	25%	22%	3.7	19%
Attracts users from all walks of life	1%	2%	13%	29%	44%	4.3	11%
Is a good place to find out what is going on in the community	2%	7%	24%	27%	25%	3.8	15%
Is a good place to find out about Council or other government services	3%	8%	22%	24%	21%	3.7	22%
I can always find what I want at the library	3%	9%	27%	33%	25%	3.7	3%
The library is easy to get to	1%	2%	9%	25%	62%	4.5	2%

### 20. To what extent has your library helped you with the following?

Library issue	Not at all 1	2	3	4	Very much 5	Average	Don't know
Encouraged me to read more	8%	5%	15%	24%	39%	3.9	9%
Introduced me to new topics of interest	7%	7%	18%	28%	31%	3.8	9%
Built my confidence	17%	12%	22%	14%	13%	2.9	22%
Helped me understand different cultures and perspectives	13%	13%	22%	18%	15%	3.1	19%
Helped me to develop better learning habits and skills	15%	12%	21%	17%	15%	3.1	21%
Improved my computer/Internet skills	24%	12%	15%	12%	13%	2.7	24%
Provided me with an easy access point to Council's services	17%	13%	19%	13%	11%	2.8	27%
Helped me get a job	41%	7%	7%	4%	6%	1.9	35%
Made my life more enjoyable	4%	3%	13%	25%	47%	4.2	7%

**21. In the last 12 months, have you suggested to a friend or family member that they use the library services?**

- 78% Yes
- 22% No

**22. Do you contribute in any way to your library?**  
(Multiple responses allowed)

- 5% Member of friends of the library
- 0% Member of the library advisory committee
- 2% Contribute items for display
- 3% Volunteer time
- 12% Donate goods or materials
- 3% Other – please specify
- 58% None of the above

**23. Please tell us in a few words what you most like about your library.**

**24. Please tell us in a few words how you think your library contributes to your community.**

## About you

**25. Are you ...?**

- 32% Male
- 68% Female

**26. How old are you?**

- 2% 0–14
- 9% 15–24
- 12% 25–34
- 19% 35–44
- 18% 45–54
- 17% 55–64
- 14% 65–74
- 10% 75 or over

**27. Which of the following best describes you?**

- 3% Child under 15 years
- 6% Dependent student (15 to 24 years)
- 35% Member of a couple
- 4% Sole parent with dependent children/ students
- 24% Member of a couple with dependent children/ students
- 17% Single person
- 12% Widowed, separated or divorced

**28. In which country were you born?**

**29. Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?**

- 1% Yes
- 99% No

**30. If you speak a language other than English at home, what language is this?** (If more than one language please chose the one that is spoken most often)

- 2.3% Italian
- 1.1% Greek
- 3.7% Chinese
- 0.7% Arabic/Lebanese
- 1.7% Vietnamese
- 0.8% Spanish
- 8.8% Other (please specify)
- 80.9% English Only

**31. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?**

- 5% Still at school → please go to question 36
- 0% Did not go to school
- 4% Year 8 or below
- 19% Year 9, 10, 11 or equivalent
- 15% Year 12 or equivalent
- 23% Certificate/Diploma
- 34% Degree/Higher degree

**32. If you are currently studying, what type of educational institution are you attending?**

- 4.6% Technical or further educational institution (including TAFE Colleges)
- 5.9% University or other higher educational institution
- 3.1% Other – please specify type

**33. Which of the following best describes your current employment status?**

- 19% Full time employment
- 19% Part time employment
- 6% Self employed
- 6% Unemployed
- 30% Retired
- 12% Homemaker and/or carer
- 5% Student
- 3% Other – please specify

**34. If you are employed, or have previously been employed, what is (was) your main occupation?**

- 14% Manager or Administrator  
Finance manager, child care coordinator
- 39% Professional  
Scientist, teacher, registered nurse, police officer
- 5% Tradesperson  
Motor mechanic, electrician, hairdresser, florist
- 19% Clerical worker  
Personal assistant, bookkeeper, library assistant
- 8% Sales worker  
Sales representative, salesperson, sales assistant
- 7% Service worker  
Carers and aides, hospitality workers, vet nurse

- 1% Transport worker  
Truck driver, bus and tram driver
- 2% Production worker  
Machine or plant operator, forklift driver
- 4% Labourer  
Cleaner, factory labourer, farm hand

**35. What is your total family income before tax?**

(If single, please indicate level of your individual income)

- 19% Less than \$20,000 per year
- 29% Between \$20,000 and \$50,000 per year
- 16% Over \$50,000 and up to \$80,000
- 10% Over \$80,000 per year
- 26% I'd prefer not to answer this question

**36. Do you have access to the Internet apart from at the library? (Multiple responses allowed)**

- 26% No
- 23% Yes – at work
- 56% Yes – at home
- 9% Yes – at school, TAFE or university
- 3% Yes – at an Internet cafe
- 3% Yes – other – please specify

**37. What is your postcode?**

# Attachment B

## Library Users Census

### Census Report – Statewide Summary

#### 1. What are your main reasons for using the library? (Multiple responses allowed)

- 93% To borrow books or other resources
- 21% To use the computers and/or internet
- 5% To attend activities (e.g. book club)
- 4% To attend special events (e.g. talks)
- 17% For a place to read/study/work
- 14% For children's services and activities
- 4% Other

#### 2. What is your gender?

- 32% Male
- 68% Female

#### 3. How old are you?

- 5% 0-14
- 8% 15-24
- 12% 25-34
- 20% 35-44
- 17% 45-54
- 15% 55-64
- 13% 65-74
- 9% 75 or over

#### 4. Which of the following best describes you?

- 7% Child under 15 years
- 5% Dependent student (15 to 24 years)
- 24% Single person
- 32% Member of a couple
- 25% Member of a couple with dependent children/students
- 4% Sole parent with dependent children/students

#### 5. Do you speak a language other than English at home?

- 78% No (English only)
- 2% Italian
- 2% Greek
- 5% Chinese
- 1% Arabic/Lebanese
- 2% Vietnamese
- 1% Spanish
- 5% Other

#### 6. Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?

- 1% Yes
- 99% No

#### 7. Did you come to the library with other persons?

- 38% Yes
- 62% No

# References

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