

Connecting with the Community



LIBRARIES/BUILDING/COMMUNITIES

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The background



- Libraries Building Communities research shows:
 - 60% of Victorians use public library services
 - 27% give 'lifestyle' reasons for not using the library.
- Which leaves ... about **13%** of the population
 - They have potentially much to gain from using library services but face barriers in accessing and using these services.
 - They include people from marginalised social groups who experience severe deficits in their access to information and technology
 - They include people who face special difficulties in accessing and using the library.

The brief



- Research the perceptions and needs of 'hard to reach' groups identified in *Libraries Building Communities* Report 3: Bridging the Gaps.
- Use qualitative consultative methods to:
 - Identify the specific 'hard to reach' groups that will be the focus and target of this project
 - Identify potential strategies to overcome these barriers and reach the identified target groups
 - Identify local, national and international examples of programs engaging with 'hard to reach' community members in libraries
 - Develop practical recommendations to overcome these barriers to use and work towards achieving the goal of social inclusion.

The challenge



They're 'hard to reach'

The one thing we know for certain
is where NOT to look for them

Where do we start?



- Of all the possible 'hard to reach' groups that might be included in the research, who do we choose to be in scope?
 - Indigenous
 - New migrants
 - CALD communities
 - Low educational status
 - Occupational groups
 - By family structures
 - Older / younger people
 - People with disabilities
 - Low income people
 - Housebound
 - Homeless
 - ...

How do we choose?



- Universality
 - Relevant to the majority of Victorian public libraries.
- Achievability
 - Likely to be interested in/benefit from access to library services.
- Policy connectedness
 - Groups identified as socially excluded and target groups in Commonwealth, State and local government policy statements.
- Research efficiency
 - Not the subject of similar research in the public library system.
- Coverage
 - A significant proportion of the 13%.

Our targets



- Five target groups were selected
 - People from 'emerging communities'
 - Indigenous Australians
 - Low income families with dependent children
 - Disadvantaged young people
 - Vulnerable learners.

Research approach



- Try to find the 'hard to reach' by working with other community agencies who are also interested in supporting these population groups
 - State and local government agencies (e.g. DHS Neighbourhood Renewal)
 - Schools
 - Community and welfare agencies
 - Migrant resource centres
 - Our own library networks.

Research approach



- Literature review
- Interviews with community stakeholders
- Consultation with targeted 'hard to reach' groups
 - Focus groups, small groups, one on one
 - Settings that are local, familiar and non-threatening
 - Facilitated by local agencies/contacts
 - Use interpreters
 - Open access
 - Provide food and other incentives
- Focus groups with library staff

Horn of Africa communities



- Humanitarian and refugee migration programs have seen a significant influx in Victoria over recent years of migrants from Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Djibouti.
- Aside from being a target group of interest in their own right, it was thought the issues related to library access and use by this group might be indicative of those faced by other and future emerging migrant communities.

Indigenous Australians



- Previous LBC research and library data indicates that Indigenous Australians are generally not frequent users of library services.
- The information, literacy, educational and computer services available through public libraries are of benefit to Indigenous Australians of all age groups, including people living in rural and urban communities.
- Libraries could also play a role in developing and maintaining Indigenous language and cultural records.

Low income families



- Families with children living in economically disadvantaged areas have been identified in a range of research reports as facing difficulties in accessing community services that could assist their economic, educational, health and social wellbeing.
- This target group includes families dependent on Centrelink benefits and sole parents.

Disadvantaged young people



- This target group includes teenagers and young people who:
 - have left school early
 - are homeless or at risk of being made homeless
 - are in families where parents are unemployed
 - face other forms of social and/or economic disadvantage.

Vulnerable learners



- The skills demands in the 21st century workplace are different to those possessed by many older workers, long-term unemployed and people with low level skills making the transition back to employment/learning.
- For many men aged over 45, women without an employment history, and people with disabilities accessing further education and information and computer skills is critical to their capacity to participate in the workforce.

Principles of engagement



PRINCIPLE	
Awareness	Ensure all targeted user groups are aware of available library services.
Engagement	Create places and spaces that are accessible, inviting, engaging and comfortable for each targeted user group.
Collections, Programs and Services	Provide collections, programs and services that meet the library and information needs of each targeted user group.
Policies and Procedures	Implement policies and procedures that maximize access to library services and allow all library users to have an enjoyable library experience.
Customer Service	Ensure library staff have the motivation, capacity and resources to engage and support library users.

The bottom line



In the future our estimate of ‘hard to reach’ or uninformed “non-users” is no longer 13%, but 10% ... or 9% ... or 8%.