VISION
We will engage with our community to inspire reading, lifelong learning, creativity and inclusion.

PURPOSE
We will provide access to services that meet the changing needs of our community.

GOAL 1: Your libraries are your place
• Anywhere, anytime, for anyone
• Offer inspiring physical and virtual spaces and collections at the heart of your community
• Services, programs and events are provided by knowledgeable, customer-focussed and innovative staff
• Enable your libraries to best serve your local community

GOAL 2: Your libraries inspire creativity and innovation
• Contribute to Wollongong's cultural life
• Provide resources, technology and facilities that enable creative exploration

GOAL 3: Your libraries encourage community well-being, inclusion and cohesion
• Promote the positive connection between libraries, customers and well-being
• Develop inclusive programs, services and collections that engage and celebrate our diverse community

GOAL 4: Your libraries collect and share local stories
• Collect and curate the history of the Illawarra, its people, stories and heritage
• Connect the community with their local heritage
• Create local stories in partnership with the community

GOAL 5: Your libraries are a gateway for lifelong learning
• Develop and deliver programs that meet the multiple literacy needs of diverse audiences
• Provide technology to support staff and customers to create successful learning opportunities
Wollongong City Libraries is a dynamic and valued service of Wollongong City Council. It plays a core role in delivering on Council’s commitment to creating a community that is informed, engaged, creative and connected. The Wollongong City Libraries Strategy 2017-2022 – *Your library, your place* sets out Council’s long term plan for library services across the Wollongong region. It has been developed in partnership with the community to ensure that our libraries remain customer-focussed and responsive to community needs and evolving opportunities.

*Your library, your place* articulates Council’s vision for our Libraries and provides direction for the Libraries’ goals and key outcomes to be delivered over the next five years to support the achievement of Wollongong 2022 Community Strategic Plan.

*Your library, your place* was developed from analysis of the City of Wollongong’s current and projected demographic profile, a review of best practice and emerging trends in the provision of library services, nationally and internationally (Appendix 3) and an extensive community and stakeholder engagement process (Appendix 1).

### FROM IDEAS TO ACTION - OUR INTEGRATED APPROACH

**Community Strategic Plan**

- Studies
- Investigations
- Community Engagement
- Service Reviews
- Needs Analysis

**Delivery Program**

The outcome of the annual delivery planning process is the development of the Resource Strategy, Delivery Program and Annual Plan.

**Implementation**

- Construction
- Service
- Goal realisation

**Supporting Documents**

Council has two types of supporting documents:

- Strategy level documents
- Implementation Plan proposals

These may contain UnFunded Opportunities (UFO’s)

**Decision Making**

- What are the priorities?
- What will we do?
- How will we make it happen?
### Background - Snapshot of Wollongong City Libraries

#### History and Location
The Wollongong Free Public Library was opened by Mr John J. Cahill, State Minister for Local Government (and future NSW Premier) on 29 June 1946. By mid-1950, there were four branches of the Greater Wollongong Public Library - Balgownie, Bulli, Dapto and Port Kembla. Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s the library service was widely regarded as the finest regional library service in all Australia. A brief history of the Wollongong Library service is provided at Appendix 2.

The library service now comprises seven libraries - Corrimal, Dapto, Helensburgh, Thirroul, Unanderra, Warrawong and Wollongong. Since its inception, Wollongong City Libraries has evolved in response to changing community needs and expectations, at times on the basis of a grounded, documented strategic plan and at others, more organically. The Wollongong City Libraries’ Strategy 2017 - 2022 builds on the vision and actions outlined in the previous Wollongong City Libraries’ Strategy 2012 - 2015 and aims to position the Libraries’ services to meet the future needs and aspirations of the Wollongong community.

#### Performance
Wollongong City Libraries is one of the top public libraries in NSW, in terms of visitation, the delivery of programs and events for the community and the loan of library items. Some key comparative statistics appear below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Wollongong City Libraries</th>
<th>NSW Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>customer visits</td>
<td>772,158</td>
<td>274,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loans</td>
<td>1,353,227</td>
<td>296,737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>internet access PCs</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>programs &amp; events</td>
<td>1,820</td>
<td>563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people attending programs &amp; events</td>
<td>34,102</td>
<td>11,582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collection items</td>
<td>348,417</td>
<td>105,260</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BACKGROUND - THE WOLLONGONG COMMUNITY

Geography
The City of Wollongong is located 80 kilometres south of Sydney, on the eastern seaboard of NSW. It is a key regional city, with strong linkages to the Sydney metropolitan area and neighbouring local government areas (LGA). Geographically, the Wollongong LGA occupies a long, narrow coastal margin, between the escarpment and the ocean, with a large lake – Lake Illawarra – separating the south eastern and south western suburbs of the city.

Demography
Wollongong’s estimated population at June 2016 was 211,213, with population growth of 11.2% between the 2006 and 2011 Census.
The Wollongong community (compared to NSW as a whole) is characterised by:

- A high proportion of young adults (20-24 years)
- A high proportion of older people 70 years and older
- High proportions of lone person households and group households
- Some level of disadvantage with low average household incomes and higher levels of unemployment (also reflected in the SEIFA index score of 979.6)
- A community with higher levels of need with a higher proportion of people needing assistance with core activities
- Lower levels of car ownership
- Lower levels of access to the internet at home
- A higher proportion of people living in medium and high density dwellings
- A higher proportion of people renting

Future population projections for the LGA indicate between 2011 and 2030 there will be a significant increase in the proportion of:

- People aged 70+ years, increasing from 11.8 percent of the population to 15 percent
- Couples without children, increasing from 24.3 to 27.5 percent
- Lone person households, increasing from 25 to 26.3 percent

Over the same period:

- There will be minor decreases in the proportion of young and middle-aged people
- Group households are projected to decline as a proportion of households

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2 ABS, 2016
What Our Demographic Profile Tells Us About Library Services

The current and projected characteristics of the Wollongong community indicate some specific areas of focus for Libraries’ planning:

- Ageing of the population indicates a need for services and programs for older people who are both “ageing well” and those who are facing health and mobility challenges – for example tailored programs, an increased focus on large print and audio-visual items in the collection, response to anticipated increases in demand for home library services and learning options to provide technology skills for seniors.

- An increase in the number of people who will require assistance for core activities of daily living points to a need for increased online access and the creation of accessible spaces, with adaptive technologies.

- Higher levels of community disadvantage indicate a need for services that are free, inclusive and accessible to all members of the community and that provide opportunities for lifelong learning. Staff need to be responsive to a range of customer needs and expectations.

- Lower levels of internet access in people’s homes indicate the importance of maintaining and expanding technology services, free public computers, Wi-Fi access and technology learning and skills support.

- Lower levels of car ownership, combined with limited public transport infrastructure and the geographic characteristics of Wollongong, underline the importance of a library service that is dispersed across a number of localities and that meets State Library of NSW guidelines for per capita service provision, proximity and access.

- The forecast increase in lone person households and increased housing density highlight the importance of our libraries to provide space and a place for local individuals, groups and communities to visit, spend time and to feel a sense of ownership and belonging.
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Engagement Process
The Wollongong City Libraries Strategy 2017 - 2022 - Your library, your place was developed through an extensive community engagement process, to ensure the community’s priorities and aspirations about library services were captured and reflected in the Strategy (See Appendix 1).

The engagement process included an online survey, ‘brainstorming boards’ in libraries, kiosks at community events, consultation with school students, surveys at citizenship ceremonies, community circles and co-design workshops. These engagement opportunities enabled the community to think beyond books, imagine their ideal library and co-write their library’s future.

In total 693 people were engaged through face-to-face activities, 434 people viewed the project page online and 205 formal submissions were received via paper feedback forms, online forms and open submissions.

What the Community Told Us

What is changing
- The role and scope of public libraries
- Community demographics, characteristics and needs
- Community expectations
- Technological possibilities

What our community is seeking
- Tailored services
- Flexible spaces for different activities
- Interesting, up-to-the-minute and relevant library books, CDs, DVDs and other resources
- Technology access and training for a ‘better’ life
- Skilled library staff

What our community sees as our goals
- Build community capacity - a sense of ownership of libraries
- Create inviting spaces - physical and virtual
- Develop dynamic collections and inclusive programs - celebrating diversity and heritage
- Realise value from technology - lifelong learning, creativity, exploration
- Invest in our staff - customer-focused and innovative
- Extend our reach - beyond the seven physical library spaces
We will engage with our community to inspire reading, lifelong learning, creativity and inclusion.

Our libraries belong to the people of Wollongong. They enable everyone in the community to have free access to information, communications technology and library resources. Libraries provide spaces where people of all ages and walks of life can participate in lifelong learning, to assist in finding work, to pursue interesting projects, to develop computing skills or to get creative. Our libraries provide homework help to students and online resources for researchers.

Our library materials are available in community languages, to meet the needs of members of Wollongong’s culturally and linguistically diverse community. They are also available in large print and audio-visual formats, to meet the needs of people with vision impairment and they can be delivered to the homes of people who are unable to access their local library in person because of health or mobility issues.

Our libraries build community connections and capacity – they create hubs of activity for diverse populations, they inspire children and young people and they engage adults and retirees with ideas and with each other.

Our libraries preserve local stories – both physically and digitally – so that future generations have access to Wollongong’s history. Local Studies collections support research into family history, stories of immigration and industry, regional geography and residential development.

Our libraries are open ‘24/7’ through virtual services that enable library customers to borrow e-books and e-resources while they are at home, at work or at play.
VISION:
We will engage with our community to inspire reading, lifelong learning, creativity and inclusion

Purpose:
We will provide access to services that meet the changing needs of the community

Values:
We value
• access for all
• empowered, literate communities
• cultural diversity
• diverse collections, programs and services
• intellectual freedom and an individual's right to privacy and choice
• creativity, innovation and ideas
• community-centred planning
• customer and community collaboration
• customer-centred service provision
• safe, inviting modern environments
• team work, respect and accountability
• partnerships that bring benefit to the community

Goals:
• Your libraries are your place
• Your libraries inspire creativity and innovation
• Your libraries encourage community well-being, inclusion and cohesion
• Your libraries collect and share local stories
• Your libraries are a gateway for lifelong learning
**GOAL 1: YOUR LIBRARIES ARE YOUR PLACE**

Supporting Community Strategic Plan: We are a Connected and Engaged Community

Objectives

4.2 Our residents feel an increased sense of community.
4.3 Residents have easy and equitable access to information resources and services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>DELIVERABLES</th>
<th>WHAT WE WILL DO TO ACHIEVE THESE DELIVERABLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1.1 Anywhere, anytime, for anyone | 1.1.1 access to information, recreational and learning opportunities, technology and services | • plan and deliver ‘pop up’ library events at locations across the city  
• develop strategies to engage residents not currently using library services  
• enhance in-library and online marketing to ensure customers are aware of the services and programs offered by their local library  
• evaluate opening hours, investigate options to expand or change services and implement as resources allow |
| | 1.1.2 deliver library services in innovative and community-based settings | • visit local schools to deliver training and programs to children and young people  
• engage with community groups to offer library services and activities in their local spaces and places  
• reach out to communities to engage them in training and programs delivered in their local area |
| 1.2 Offer inspiring physical and virtual spaces and collections at the heart of our community | 1.2.1 provide multipurpose flexible spaces | • investigate how customers use library spaces, review floor plans and layout and identify options for improvement  
• design and construct technology spaces to support program delivery and creative exploration  
• expand opportunities for groups to use libraries as meeting places  
• maximise the value of virtual space - the Library website - review customer satisfaction |
| | 1.2.2 maintain a program of scheduled refurbishment of interiors and furnishings | • progress asset renovation plans for Central, District and Branch libraries |
| | 1.2.3 plan and deliver library infrastructure that meets the needs of the community | • plan, design and construct a new Library and Community Centre in Warrawong, to meet the needs of the South Eastern suburbs  
• plan and design a new library in Helensburgh to replace the existing infrastructure  
• design and construct a learning space within Central Library |
| | 1.2.4 engage with our community through online library spaces and multiple media platforms | • investigate opportunities to enhance customer access to digital platforms  
• investigate opportunities to enhance online library services  
• investigate opportunities to develop Library social media services |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBJECTIVES</th>
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| 1.3 Services, programs and events are provided by knowledgeable, customer-focused and innovative staff | 1.3.1 identify skill sets required to deliver contemporary library services | • undertake a staff skills assessment to determine training needs of individuals and teams  
• review training needs identified by annual performance management review and program relevant training  
• in conjunction with the Human Resources unit, plan and deliver an internship program for library services and for library IT services |
| | 1.3.2 encourage and support personal and professional staff development | • support staff attendance at conferences, workshops and seminars  
• provide opportunities to explore creativity, invention and continuous improvement |
| | 1.3.3 build our libraries’ service culture so that our customers are at the centre of all we do | • investigate rotation of staff across the libraries, to build consistent practice, refresh teams and broaden experience  
• implement a mentoring program to develop leadership skills and support staff seeking career development |
| | 1.3.4 continuously evaluate and improve our customer service | • implement biennial online and in person surveys to determine community satisfaction with library services  
• act on the results of biennial community satisfaction survey results  
• review Wollongong City Libraries’ service model to ensure efficient and effective use of resources |
| 1.4 Enable our libraries to best serve their local community | 1.4.1 develop customer-driven, evolving collections | • enable customers to recommend purchase of titles for the library collection using online software  
• evaluate and renew library collections to ensure relevance, customer satisfaction, utilisation and value for money |
| | 1.4.2 understand our communities and evaluate and respond to changing community needs and aspirations | • undertake biennial community satisfaction surveys  
• respond promptly to customer feedback and improve services  
• investigate establishing a Library Advisory Group |
| | 1.4.3 engage with other library services to explore collaborative opportunities | • collaborate with library services within South East Zone, and NSW, to improve services and access for all customers across the Zone |
### GOAL 2: YOUR LIBRARIES INSPIRE CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

Supporting Community Strategic Plan: Wollongong is a creative and vibrant city

Objectives:

- **3.1** Creative cultural industries are established and fostered.
- **3.2** The visibility of cultural diversity is increased.
- **3.3** Community access to the arts and participation in events and festivals increased.
- **3.4** Strong diverse local cultures thrive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</table>
| **2.1 Contribute to Wollongong's cultural life** | **2.1.1 deliver a diverse blend of traditional and innovative programs and events** | • plan and deliver the annual Comic Gong festival  
• create and deliver a calendar of special interest events across the library service  
• promote attendance at programs and events  
• develop a marketing strategy that informs an annual promotional campaign  
• establish criteria that effectively measure alignment of programs and events with customer interests  
• work with and support the Friends of Wollongong City Libraries to deliver an annual calendar of engaging and interesting literary events  
• work collaboratively with organisations to initiate innovative projects and programs that contribute to the cultural life of the city |
| | **2.1.2 actively contribute to the development of the Wollongong Arts Precinct** | • participate in Wollongong Arts Precinct planning activities  
• ensure Wollongong Central Library is represented in the promotion of the arts precinct |
| **2.2 Provide resources, technology and facilities that enable creative exploration** | **2.2.1 provide learning opportunities for community and staff to explore, evaluate and adopt emerging technologies and resources** | • expand the technology zoo inventory to enable wider access to technology training and exploration sessions |
| | **2.2.2 provide the tools and spaces for creative exploration** | • partner with community creatives to deliver events and to encourage their use of library resources  
• establish creative workshops or events that respond to changing community needs |
### GOAL 3: YOUR LIBRARIES ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY WELL-BEING, INCLUSION AND COHESION

Supporting Community Strategic Plan: We are a Healthy Community in a Liveable City

Objectives:
- 3.1 There is an increase in physical fitness, mental health and emotional wellbeing of all our residents.
- 3.3 The public domain is maintained to high standard.
- 3.5 Participation in recreational and lifestyle activities is increased.
- 3.6 Residents have a high level of life satisfaction and personal happiness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
</table>
| 3.1 Promote the positive connection between libraries, customers and well-being | 3.1.1 create opportunities for social engagement and social cohesion to reduce social isolation | • deliver the Wollongong City Libraries Home Library Service Action Plan 2015 - 2018  
  • engage with local organisations, stakeholder groups and community volunteers to co-produce and co-deliver programs, activities and services  
  • deliver spaces and places that provide opportunities for people to come together to work, collaborate, learn, play and read for entertainment and pleasure  
  • liaise with professionals and organisations to guide development and promotion of health and well-being resources and programs |
| 3.2 Develop inclusive programs, services and collections that engage and celebrate our diverse community | 3.2.1 respond to our growing and diverse communities' needs | • develop and deliver a Wollongong City Libraries Social Cohesion Action Plan 2018 - 2022 to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Indigenous people and people with disabilities  
  • review and update Wollongong City Libraries Collection Management Plan  
  • ensure that programs and services are modelled on principles of inclusion and social justice and meet the diverse needs of people with a disability  
  • identify opportunities to engage hard-to-reach groups within our community, who have limited participation in library services |
| | 3.2.1 explore opportunities to partner with NGO/NFP agencies to develop specialised programs to engage their customers with Wollongong City Libraries | • maintain an ongoing collaboration with organisations to provide specialised services |
### GOAL 4: YOUR LIBRARIES COLLECT AND SHARE LOCAL STORIES

**Supporting Community Strategic Plan: We value and protect our environment**

**Objective**  1.4 Community awareness and appreciation of heritage is increased.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>DELIVERABLES</th>
<th>WHAT WE WILL DO TO ACHIEVE THESE DELIVERABLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **4.1 Collect and curate the history of the Illawarra, its people, stories and heritage** | 4.1.1 plan for the long term viability and relevance of Local Studies | • develop and deliver a WCL Local Studies Action Plan 2018 - 2022  
• continue to grow the Local Studies collection  
• capture Illawarra Stories as they emerge and evolve |
| | 4.1.2 engage with organisations and individuals to preserve and make accessible local material | • engage with local community groups and individuals to encourage their contribution to the Local Studies collection |
| **4.2 Connect the community with their local heritage** | 4.2.1 promote access to local studies collections through visual and interactive technologies | • plan events to encourage participation in local history  
• contribute to the University of Wollongong Community Engagement Grants Scheme Image Recognition project |
| | 4.2.2 engage children and young people in local studies collections, programs and projects | • promote the Friends of Wollongong City Libraries Youth Local History Prize to high schools  
• develop a history story time kit for pre-schoolers |
| **4.3 Create local stories in partnership with the community** | 4.3.1 establish programs that encourage innovative approaches to creating and documenting local stories | • maintain and promote the Friends of Wollongong City Libraries Local History Prize  
• maintain and promote the Illawarra Remembers website  
• maintain and promote the Illawarra Stories website  
• investigate strategies to create transcripts of local studies audio recordings |
| | 4.3.2 partner with individuals, local groups and organisations to develop and deliver programs that stimulate the creation and interpretation of local stories | • develop partnerships with local community groups, organisations and individuals to create and interpret local stories for the Local Studies collection |
GOAL 5: YOUR LIBRARIES ARE A GATEWAY FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

Supporting Community Strategic Plan: We have an innovative and sustainable economy

Objectives

2.1 Local employment opportunities are increased within a strong local economy.
2.1.5 Opportunities for training and education for unemployed and disadvantaged community members.
2.5 Wollongong continues to expand as a place of learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>DELIVERABLES</th>
<th>WHAT WE WILL DO TO ACHIEVE THESE DELIVERABLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5.1 Develop and deliver programs that meet the multiple literacy needs of diverse audiences | 5.1.1 develop and deliver training and educational programs to meet diverse community needs | • develop and deliver a Wollongong City Libraries Children's and Youth Action Plan 2018 - 2022
• engage with relevant organisations to provide programs that build multiple literacy skills e.g. numeracy, digital, employability and life skills for people of all ages or at different stages of life |
| 5.2 Provide relevant technology to support staff and customers to create successful learning opportunities | 5.2.1 evaluate technologies and respond to changing learning needs | • develop and deliver a Wollongong City Libraries Staff Training and Education Action Plan 2018 - 2022 |
| | 5.2.2 provide adequate and flexible resources to encourage independent learning | • develop and deliver a Wollongong City Libraries Information and Communications Technology Action Plan 2018 - 2022 that addresses all hardware, software and media needs across the libraries |
Executive summary
The current Wollongong City Libraries Strategy 2012-2015 will be superseded by the Draft 2016-2022 Library Strategy. The ‘Beyond Books: Your Libraries Next Chapter’ community consultation provided a number of opportunities for the community and staff to outline and review their vision of the ideal library for Wollongong in 2022. The feedback received was used to develop draft goals which in turn will inform the development of the Draft Library Strategy. A comprehensive engagement process was undertaken identifying internal and external stakeholders and targeted both library users and non-users. Diagram 1 outlines the different stages of engagement that were undertaken in the development of the Draft Library Strategy.

STAGES OF THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

- **Feedback form**
  - complete a Community Survey at your local library or online

- **Community circles**
  - run your own discussion with people you know and submit a summary of the contents

- **Community events**
  - come and have a chat to library staff at Dapto Street Fair or Spring Into Corrimal

- **Writing the Libraries’ future**
  - a workshop will be held with Library staff and the community reps to review and further develop the draft goals

- **Viva La Gong**
  - an opportunity to check in to see if the draft goals reflects what the community wants

- **Draft exhibition**
  - the draft strategy will be on exhibition - Have Your Say

Library Strategy 2016-2022 launched
The engagement process utilised a wide variety of engagement techniques including community kiosks, community circles and a co-design workshop with community and staff members. Engagement undertaken in August 2015 included children from three schools in the Local Government Area (LGA), and young people who use Council’s Youth Services. A ‘community circle’ information pack was developed which provided the opportunity for community groups to independently discuss and compile feedback on their vision of libraries of the future.

In total 693 people were engaged through face-to-face activities, an additional 434 people viewed the project page online. Two hundred and five formal submissions were received via paper feedback forms, online forms and open submissions. Further feedback was gleaned at community kiosks at Dapto Street Fair and Spring into Corrimal, and through the use of ‘brainstorming boards’ at Wollongong Central Library. This information was then presented at a Library Staff Development Day on 17 September 2015, where library staff were given an additional opportunity to have their say.

From the community and staff feedback received regarding the vision of libraries of the future, a number of key recurring themes were identified. The themes noted below were identified by respondents as the most important features that should be focussed on in considering the idealised library in 2022.

- Books/print media/digital media
- Libraries as research and educational facilities
- Technology
- Noise levels
- Contemporary design and layout
- Staff
- Pleasant environment
- Library and Community Activities
- More resources to borrow
- Extended hours/access
- Displays
- Libraries providing additional services/facilities
- Library users of all ages interacting

With reference to the key themes above, the Library Strategy Project Team developed five goals to underpin the Library Strategy. At a co-design workshop held in September, staff and community members worked collaboratively to refine the goals and identify key objectives associated with each goal. The wider community was then given the opportunity to review the goals at Viva la Gong.
Communication methods
Given the high profile nature of this project, Council’s Communications Officer developed a separate Communications Strategy. The communication objectives were developed to:

- Raise awareness of Wollongong City Libraries and promote services and events
- Encourage participation in community engagement
- Promote how library offering fits into the Community Strategic Plan
- To communicate with consistent tone across all messaging—including internal messages within the Library

The target audience was identified as all journalists, the general public and internal stakeholders.

The communication objectives were met by delivering key messages via the internal Hub system, adverts in the Wollongong Advertiser, a media release and social media—Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. The project was also mentioned in the October edition of the community newsletter which was distributed to all households in the Local Government Area. From a community engagement perspective, information was uploaded onto Council’s website to facilitate on-line engagement, and feedback forms and FAQs were distributed to all libraries. A Community Circle Kit was also developed for use by community groups. Community Engagement staff also attended the Citizenship Ceremony in August to promote the engagement.

A representative sample of community members, in terms of age, gender and LGA Wards, provided feedback. A number of engagement activities, including targetted internal and external engagements, were undertaken. Details are noted below including how many people participated.

By holding a co-design workshop the level of engagement was lifted from Consult towards Involve. According to the Council endorsed Community Engagement Policy, Involve promises that “Council will provide opportunities for the community to work directly with Council to ensure we understand aspirations, opportunities, and concerns and that these are incorporated as often as possible into plans.”
ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND PARTICIPATION RESULTS

- **Total number of users who viewed project page**: 434
- **3 primary schools**: 90
- **Total number of people engaged**: 696
- **Staff/community co-design workshop**: 30
- **Central Library brainstorming boards**: 48
- **Dapto Street Fair**: 93
- **Spring into Corrimal**: 162
- **Youth Centre community circle**: 13
- **Staff/community circle**: 8
- **Feedback forms, online & open submissions**: 205
- **Neighbourhood forum community circle**: 8
# Main Themes and Sub-Themes of Submission Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAIN THEMES</th>
<th>SUB THEMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Books/print media/digital media</td>
<td>Hard copy books, audio, e books, large print, multilingual, newspapers, magazines, comics journals, holographic books, LGBTIQ resources, make your own books, sell new books, Manga/Geek resources,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research, study, educate</td>
<td>Research service, study support, seniors’ classes (technology), on-line tutorials, family history, local history, literacy and ‘learn to read programmes’, English language classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>iPads, tablets, iPhones, computers, 3D printers, robots, voice activated for disabled, touch screens, app for book swapping, Wi Fi, high speed internet, music production software, large TV for teen gaming area, digital 3D walls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise levels</td>
<td>Silent, quiet, people talking quietly, music, more noise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary design and layout</td>
<td>Study rooms, private sound-proofed rooms, zoned areas, arts and craft space, music/recording space, sleeping pods, easy accessibility for less mobile, cubby house, reading slide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Welcoming, well-trained, more of them, multi-lingual, virtual staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant environment</td>
<td>Peaceful, relaxing, calm, welcoming, greenery, animals, natural light, bright, cheerful, colourful, comfortable temperature, social/leisure/recreation space, outdoor space, lounges, bean bags, arm chairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library and Community Activities</td>
<td>Kids’ activities, activities for teenagers, computing classes for older people, book clubs, meet your local MP/Councillors, trivia nights, movie screenings, friendship circle, dating events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More resources to borrow</td>
<td>Movies and music -on-line streaming, DVDs, CDs, board games, computer games, iPads, Cosplay, art loans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended hours/access</td>
<td>More evening, weekends, 24/7 swipe card entry, access for homeless people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays</td>
<td>Print media, digital displays, art exhibitions, local information, advertising events &amp; activities, cultural information, educational information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other services/facilities</td>
<td>Council Customer Service facility, lodge DA applications, drive through, crèche, more parking, cafe, refreshments, free water and snacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep things as they are</td>
<td>Happy with existing facilities and resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library users</td>
<td>People of all ages interacting and enjoying using the facilities, sense of community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There did already exist “a reading room, and a library of nearly 1,500 volumes of books” at the School of Arts in Smith Street, Wollongong – but it seems to have been prohibitively expensive to use for most residents. No exact figures seem to have survived but the Bellambi and Bulli School of Arts reading room which had been established in the 1860s had been forced to close because too few could afford the “three shillings per quarter” fees.

The new big plan of the 1870s, however, was for the Wollongong Council to take premises in Crown Street by, “at a rental of £42 per annum, the Councils of North and Central Illawarra being expected to pay £10 each per year toward that amount, while the Wollongong Council will pay the balance of £22.”

It ended up taking until mid-1877 for North Illawarra and Central Illawarra councils to agree to centralise their library collections at Wollongong.

A decision was made for the “interchange of 50 books is to be made between the Wollongong and North Illawarra Free Libraries during the next three months.” It was also then reported that during the last year “1,357 books were issued from the Wollongong Free Library” and that “It is proposed to spend £10 to obtain a fresh supply of popular literature.”

At the height of the 1890s depression the Wollongong institution at last proved a boon for local children and the Wollongong Free Junior public library would appear to have been very extensively patronized for (either despite or because of the hard times) even more books were being borrowed and “during last year 2,385 books were issued.”

To fund the “free” initiative, however, the Council had to rely on donations from the public and the local papers regularly published announcements of contributions made. By March “1,000 readers” had “been already enrolled at the Library and as there are only 1,500 books in stock at, present, no more readers will be enrolled as a temporary measure until more books are available.”

The Wollongong Library was then transferred to the 1910 School of Arts building in Crown Street and re-opened there on February 11 1946. But it took until mid-1946 before it was announced that the Wollongong Free Public Library would “be officially opened by Mr. J. Cahill, State ’ Minister for Local Government [and future NSW Premier] on June 29th.”

By mid-1950, “21,868 books were issued to readers by the four branches of the Greater Wollongong Public Library and purchases of new books amounted to £1,739.”

By 1952 Wollongong had the most up to date service the state - and throughout the 1960s and early 1970s was widely regarded as the finest regional library service in all Australia.

There were now 23,000 members of the Greater Wollongong library, who were borrowing books at the rate of 395,000 books a year from a total stock of 46,281.

Joseph Davis
Thirroul,
13 April 2016

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3 Illawarra Mercury, 21 November 1885, p.2
4 Illawarra Mercury, 12 January 1875, p.2
5 Illawarra Mercury, 6 January 1891, p.2
6 Illawarra Mercury, 26 January 1892, p.2
7 South Coast Times and Wollongong Argus, 14 June1946, p.8
8 South Coast Times and Wollongong Argus, 6 July 1950, p.13
David Lankes in his book *The Atlas of New Librarianship* states that “future libraries will be valued more for services than for book collections.” While many people see book borrowing as a core public library service that will remain - both physical books and eBooks - libraries now demonstrate many other roles - libraries as community spaces, technology centres that provide people with access to devices and software that will assist them to live in a digital society, and creative spaces that contribute to community cultural life. The changing role of libraries is reflected in the changed role of library staff, as they move out from behind a service desk to rove throughout the library to greet and assist customers, and to engage with them face-to-face, or online. Public libraries have turned their attention to delivering programs and events that meet the needs and interests of their community. “Public libraries will continue to connect users to information and ideas, but they will play an even greater role in bringing people together.”

“Public libraries mean different things to different people and public libraries' malleability (is) in being able to satisfy the wide-ranging needs of a diverse community.”

Public libraries sustain the community in social, cultural and environmental terms and contribute positively in terms of economic value, benefit and activity. State Library of NSW research found that NSW public libraries generated $810.2 million of economic activity annually, which is equivalent to $2.82 of economic activity for each dollar expended on public libraries. Public libraries keep people safe, build harmonious communities, enable students to fulfill their potential, provide customer friendly services, provide opportunity and support for the most vulnerable and improve urban environments. A recent online discussion in *The Guardian*, which involved leaders and experts in the sector, canvassed the future challenges and opportunities for improvement facing public libraries in the United Kingdom. The discussion was introduced with “The future of libraries is always a contentious issue and one that people feel passionately about. So, how can the service be improved for the future?” The key UK challenges noted were reductions to public library budgets, changes in technology and changes in people's lifestyles. The outcome of the online discussion included solutions for ‘future proofing’ public libraries:

- customer self-service with staff assistance when required
- partnering with social enterprise services
- libraries being creation/maker spaces, volunteers (with advice about managing volunteers)
- moving even more services online
- automatic library membership: at birth, pre-school or primary school
- physical and digital reading groups, and cafes/WiFi-enabled study/meeting spaces

These challenges and ‘solutions’ are just as relevant to Wollongong City Libraries as they are to UK public libraries. Customer satisfaction remains the key focus for libraries and their staff if they are to remain as central and vital resources for the community. And as Neil Gaiman says, “In a world where Google can bring you back 100,000 answers, a librarian can bring you back the right one.”

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12 Ibid
A review of the literature indicates that public libraries are facing five major challenges:

• Public libraries now have the widest range of library customers in history – from the ‘Great Generation’, 66 years and over; the Baby Boomers, 65 and under; Gen X, 47 and under; Millennials or Gen Y, 29 and under; and Gen Z, 10 years and under 16

• Transitioning from physical collections (books, movies, music, board games, artefacts) to digital collections will challenge library budgets, supplier relationships, staff knowhow, and customer expectations and skill levels

• Librarians need to be technologically literate in order to be able to engage and guide customers through a digital world

• Maintaining relevance in a competitive world that includes service providers Amazon, Google, Stan, Foxtel, Netflix and other streaming services, smartphones, tablets, and social networking

• Growing income gap and an ageing population within the community

According to Creaser and Spezi17, seven ways for libraries to overcome the challenges they face –

• Embed library services into Council’s goals

• Align training to assist community members learn what they need to know in order to function in a digital world

• Quantify the libraries’ value and benefit to the community and to Council

• Leverage data to understand community needs and feedback to improve library services

• Collaborate with other libraries, community groups and Council departments to develop services for the community

• Promote what the library does for the community and council

• Evolve by embracing and shaping new roles for the library based on changing community needs

“...libraries...are embedded in local communities; they have a public service orientation; and they are viewed as community assets.” 18

Wollongong City Libraries is extending the services they provide to customers - helping children, young people, adults and elderly to develop new skills; connecting with others in a number of ways; improving physical and mental health; and making their communities better places to live.

17 Creaser, C and Spezi, V, 2012, Working together: evolving value for academic librarians, Loughborough University, p11
18 Norton, M and Dowdall, E, 2016, Strengthening Networks, Sparking Change: Museums and Libraries as community Catalysts, p3