STATE LIBRARY OF NSW – REGIONAL LIBRARY MANAGEMENT MODELS – ONLINE SURVEY

The University of Technology, Sydney Centre for Local Government (CLG) has been engaged by the State Library of New South Wales to undertake research to explore and consider regional and cooperative library management models across NSW.

CLG is undertaking this research project to:

- understand the types of arrangements that are currently in place for regional or cooperative library services across NSW;
- explore regional management models for NSW public libraries; and
- explore other possibilities for management models e.g. cooperative models that councils may use for other local and regional arrangements.

The online survey will help us gain a greater understanding of your thoughts and experience on regional and cooperative library models across NSW.

Note: This survey is confidential and you will not be identified. We also do not expect you to do any additional research to answer the following survey.

PARTICIPANTS/TARGET AUDIENCE:

- Managers of libraries across NSW

PART 1 (INTRODUCTION):

Firstly, we would like to ask you some questions about your role and the area in which you work.

1) Which of the following best describes your current role?
- Library Manager/Director
- Library staff (other than Manager/Director)
- Other, please specify

2) Which of the following geographic areas best describes the location of the area in which you work? [*multiple answers possible*]

- Greater Sydney
- Central Coast
- Hunter
- Illawarra/South Coast
- Southern Inland
- Riverina
- Murray
- Central West Orana

- Northern Inland
- Mid North Coast
- Northern Rivers
- Far West

[*Link to NSW regional map*]

3) What is the name of the library you work at?

[*Open ended*]

The following question is about the definition of different library models under the *Library Act 1939*. We understand that there are also other library models that are not necessarily defined within the *Library Act 1939*.

TEXT BOX:

A standalone library – where local governments independently provide library services to their community. The library service is integrated within local government operations and may be part of a wider local government department such as Community Services. Examples include:

- Warringah Library;
- Liverpool City Library;
- Parkes Shire Library;
- Inverell Shire Public Library; and
- Guyra Shire Council Library.

A regional library – where two or more local governments agree that one local government manages library services on behalf of the other(s). Although such arrangements often form within geographically recognised regions, the term 'regional' simply denotes the involvement of multiple local governments. Examples include:

- Macquarie Regional Library;
- Riverina Regional Library;
- Central Northern Regional Library; and
- Ryde Hunters Hill Joint Library Service.

A cooperative library – where two or more local governments agree that one local government provides a component or components of library service on behalf of the other(s). Examples include:

- North Western Regional Library
- Southern Tablelands Regional Libraries Cooperative; and
- North West Slopes and Plains Cooperative Library Service.

Some libraries work cooperatively with other libraries, however have not necessarily formalised this arrangement under the Library Act s12. Examples include:

- Shorelink (North Sydney, Lane Cove, Mosman, Manly, Willoughby)
- Mid-North Coast Cooperative Library (Kempsey, Port Macquarie-Hastings)
- Eastern Suburbs Library Cooperative

4) Thinking about your library, within which of the following library models does that library fit?

- **Standalone library model**
- **Regional library model**
- **Cooperative library model**

- **Other** (e.g. models that are *not formalised* under the *Library Act 1939* or do not fit within the library models outlined above) – please specify the library model you operate under.
- **Not sure**

5) You stated that your library is a regional library model/cooperative library model…

Thinking about the agreement (between councils) of your regional or cooperative library model… which of the following best reflects the legal arrangement of the library model?

- Agreement under s12 of the Library Act 1939
- Agreement under s12a of the Library Act 1939
- Agreement under the Local Government Act 1993
- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)
- Not sure
- Other (Please specify)

PART 2 (SECTION 12A)

Now we would like to ask you a few questions about the 2011 Section 12A amendment to the *Library Act 1939*.

Section 12A provides a further platform for greater collaboration across local government areas in the provision of aspects of library services. To date, we understand that there have been no applications from councils for consideration of alternate models under Section 12A.

Note: In 2011, the Library Act 1939 was amended to add Section 12A. This amendment enabled councils to propose alternative models that offer greater flexibility in regional library management arrangements – that is libraries operated on behalf of two or more local councils across NSW.

The answers for the following questions will be de-identified and particular comments will not be linked to each individual library service or respondent. We would appreciate your honesty to the following questions.

6) Are you aware of the 2011 amendment (Section 12A) to the *Library Act 1939*?

- Yes (Go to question 6a)
- No (Go to question 7)

6a) If yes, what is your opinion of the amendment to the *Library Act 1939*? (i.e. the establishment of legislation to encourage further collaboration between libraries)

[*Open ended*]

7) There has currently been no take-up of Section 12A by any council. Do you think there are any particular reasons councils have not proposed alternative models for regional library management, as per Section 12A?

[*Open ended*]

PART 3 (REGIONAL AND COOPERATIVE LIBRARY MODELS):

[Exclude people who answered '*regional library*', '*cooperative library*', '*other*' *(not formalised) or 'not sure'* at question 5. The following question is for people who answered '*standalone*' library only].

You stated that your library is a standalone library model…

8) Has your library been part of a regional or cooperative library model before?

- **Yes** (Go to question 8a)
- **No** (Go to question 9)
- **Not sure** (Go to question 9)

8a) If yes, what was the reason for leaving this library model?

[*Open ended*]

9) Has your council considered being part of another regional or cooperative library model?

- **Yes** (Go to question 9a)
- **No** (Go to question 9a)
- **Not sure** (Go to question 10)

9a) What do you think have been the reasons so far for <u>your</u> council / library not wanting to be part of a regional or cooperative library model?

[*Open ended*]

10) Regardless of your own library's experience, in general, do you think there are <u>incentives</u> for standalone libraries to want to be part of a regional or cooperative library model?

[*Open ended*]

11) In general, do you think there are <u>disincentives</u> for standalone libraries to want to be part of a regional or cooperative library model?

[*Open ended*]

12) As a standalone library, do you work with other libraries on cooperative ventures or services?

- **Yes (**Go to question 12a**)**
- **No (**Go to question 16**)**
- **Not sure (**Go to question 16**)**

12a) Which libraries and what type of ventures or services do you work with?

[*Open ended*]

[*Exclude people who answered standalone library at question 4. Those people who stated 'regional library', 'cooperative library', 'other' (not formalised) or 'not sure' all get the opportunity to answer the following questions].*

13) You stated that you work most closely with a regional/cooperative library model…

13a) What were the main reasons for establishing a regional library model?

[*Open ended*]

13b) What were the main reasons for establishing a cooperative library model?

[*Open ended*]

14) Please list the councils that are involved in your regional or cooperative or other library agreement. [*Open ended*]

15) What library services does the regional or cooperative or other library agreement cover?

[*Select all that apply*]

- Cataloguing
- Common ISP (Internet Service Provider)
- Virtual Private Network (VPN)
- Electronic Books (eBooks)
- Human Resources
- Information Technology e.g. internet, computers etc
- Learning Management Systems
- Local studies
- Mobile library service
- Purchasing of collection materials
- Reciprocal borrowing
- Reference services
- Other (Please specify)

BRING BACK IN PEOPLE WHO STATED STANDALONE LIBRARIES AT QUESTION 4.

16) Do you think a regional or cooperative library model makes each of the following easier or more difficult?:

	Much more difficult	More difficult	No change	Easier	Much easier	Not sure
Strategic planning for future library services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Provision of community programs/events	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Relationship building with local community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Relationship building with regional community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Relationship building with other councils	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sharing of library resources	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Establishing a regional	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Much more difficult	More difficult	No change	Easier	Much easier	Not sure
identity						

16a) Are there any other areas in which you see that cooperating at a regional level would make your work easier of difficult?

[*Please list*]

You have identified that you work most closely with a regional/cooperative/standalone library model.

Now thinking about this library model…

17) What do you think are the benefits of this specific library model for…

17a) Council [*Open ended*]

17b) Library staff [*Open ended*]

17c) The community [*Open ended*]

18) Do you think there are any detriments of this specific library model for…

18a) Council [*Open ended*]

18b) Library staff [*Open ended*]

18c) The community [*Open ended*]

19) Considering the following list, what do you see are the overall top three (3) benefits for being in a regional or cooperative library model?

[*Please select your top three responses from the following list*] tick a box, not ranked

- Building relationships between councils
- Better service provision
- Library system management
- Collegiate environment between library and council staff
- Economies of scale and reduced cost
- Employment of specialist staff
- Enabling the provision of mobile library services
- Increased regional identity
- Joint training opportunities
- Larger collection of library resources
- Provides opportunities for better Information Technology (IT) and communication capabilities
- Regional operations enhance grant applications
- Other (Please specify)

20) Considering the following list, what do you see are the overall top three (3) challenges/barriers for being in a regional or cooperative library model?

[*Please select your top three responses from the following list*]

- Increased complexity of library service provision across a number of councils
- Potential loss of autonomy
- Potential loss of jobs

- Potential loss of local identity
- Smaller councils feel they have less influence
- Potential threat to sustainability through withdrawal of one or more councils
- Insufficient organizational capacity
- Other (Please specify)

21) What do you think would assist collaborative arrangements between councils work better?

[Please list]

PART 4 (OTHER SHARED SERVICES):

In context of this survey, the term 'shared services' is broadly used to encompass most kinds of inter-council collaborative activity. 'Shared services' is the shared provision of a specific service by more than one council - where the service role, aims and objectives are mutually agreed and implemented at the local scale for the benefit of the local and/or regional community.

Outside of library services, there are a number of councils engaging in shared services across different geographic areas. Some of these include information technology; communications; human resources; records management; utility infrastructure; and community events and programs.

22) Do you know of any examples in your Local Government Area or surrounding region where a shared service arrangement other than for library services is in place?

- Yes (Go to question 17a)
- No (Go to question 18)

22a) Please describe this shared service arrangement and how it works/operates.

[*Open Ended*]

PART 5 (THE FUTURE):

The following questions will ask you for your opinion on future challenges and opportunities for library services across New South Wales.

Community expectations with regard to local and regional services are always changing. Over the last decade community expectations of libraries and their services have also changed.

Thinking about your role and involvement with libraries…

23) What additional services do you think the community may want from libraries in the future?
[*Open ended, please list*]

24) Do you think there is, or is not, a role for regional or cooperative library models in responding to these changes?

- There is a role (go to question 24a)
- There is not a role (go to question 24b)

24a) What sort of role do you see regional or cooperative library models playing in responding to the future changes you stated?

[*Open ended*]

24b) Why do you think there is not a role for regional or cooperative library models in responding to the future changes you stated?

[*Open ended*]

25) Please provide a short statement that outlines the overall value you think libraries provide your local or regional community.

[*Open ended*]

You have reached the end of the survey. Thank you again for your time and your feedback. If you have any comments about the survey or anything further you would like to say, please email Ben Dowler at the University of Technology, Sydney Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (CLG) on:
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For more information about this research project please visit:
http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/services/public_libraries/committees/network_research/plnrp_current_projects.html