



12th Meeting of the Strategic Network Committee

Minutes of the meeting of 23 October 2020

Date and time	Friday 23 October 2020, 11:00AM to 1:00PM
Location	Online via Teams
Chair	Cameron Morley (State Library)
Members in Attendance	Michelle Maunder (CW Zone) Keryl Collard (CE Zone) Chris Jones / Jo Carmody (NE Zone) Megan Jordan-Jones (SE Zone) Melanie Gurney (Sydney North Zone) Vicki Edmunds (Sydney West Zone) Robert Knight (SW Zone)
State Library Staff in Attendance	Philippa Scarf, Ellen Forsyth, Andrea Curr, Kate O'Grady
Guests	Marta Francisco and staff from NSW Department of Planning and Environment / Service NSW Behavioural Insights Unit. Rob Thomson – ALIA
Apologies	Debbie Best (Sydney South Zone)
Minutes	Samantha Mantakoun

Minutes

Item 1: Preliminary Matters

1.1 Welcome and apologies

Item 2: Minutes, Business arising and action register

2.1 The Committee reviewed the agenda of the May 2020 meeting, which included details of library closures due to COVID-19, and discussion of reopening plans.

Item 3: Priority business

3.1 Making Public Spaces Everyone's Business NSW Dept of Planning and Service NSW Behavioural Insight Unit

Marta Francisco presented the *Making Public Spaces Everyone's Business* presentation which outlined the opportunities to work with libraries on pilots in conjunction with the public spaces' initiative. Marta explained that the definition of public space has been explicitly revised to include indoor public spaces such as public libraries. The newly agreed principles for public spaces translate well to library settings, and with this in mind, the planning of libraries with indoor and outdoor spaces, and how they address other nearby public spaces is strongly recommended. The State Library will work on linking this to *People Places*.

Kizzy Gandy from the Behavioural Insights Unit described how the work of the Unit could assist libraries with solutions to influencing behavioural change in library users or non-users. The Committee noted the presentation, and discussed possibilities for a related research project.

In discussion, the Committee identified a range of service and use changes that have occurred due to COVID-19, including adaptations in the library user base.

Robert Knight noted that, whilst this is still in the early stage, his library service has become more focused on online services and to cater for more online only access. Other members agreed that this has been a major shift since March.

In contrast, Melanie Gurney raised the issue of community need and demand for library space, which has lower capacity under the 4 square metre rules. There is pressure from the public to open additional meeting rooms to accommodate needs. People want to reconnect, for example through book groups. Keryl Collard agreed, noting that Maitland Library events were booked out, and that behaviours could fall into 3 categories – recreation, work and study.

Cameron Morley noted that indoor/outdoor library spaces may now be more important.

It was agreed that there are new needs in both the physical and online spaces of libraries due to the virus.

Kizzy advised that any research would focus on behavioural changes, for example if we select activating public spaces the BIU would focus on 1-2 key behaviours – they would pilot new behavioural influences – ascertain what works and what doesn't then scale the successful approach.

Action

It was agreed that the State Library would refine ideas for possible projects with the BIU and circulate to the Committee for advice prior to committing to a research program.

3.2 Review of Public Library Statistics survey instrument.

Cameron Morley introduced the agenda item by requesting suggestions and comments on the current Public Library Statistics collection. The latest Questionnaire and Definitions had been circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting.

Committee members noted that it is difficult for some libraries to complete and submit the statistics on time as there are varying levels of integration in library systems across NSW.

Comment was made that the statistics published are at least a year old by the time they are available. The State Library advised that this is due to very few libraries meeting the August deadline, and that it is common to still be chasing libraries in the following March and April.

Melanie Gurney noted that libraries report key data to their councils monthly, and suggested that this data could also be collected by the State Library to get a more timely snapshot of library usage and performance. It was agreed that this was worth exploring for key figures such as visitation (online and onsite), programs and collection use.

It was agreed that feedback will be sought on the questionnaire from all libraries, and that there are likely to be some statistics that don't need to be collected annually (for example building size). An approach that incorporates some

monthly online lodgement, a shorter annual survey, with some questions only updated every 5 years may be a better approach for the future.

A suggestion for the Public Library statistics was to include a question gauging and recording community satisfaction of the library service.

Vicki Edmunds noted that the statistics are critical for benchmarking and demonstrating relative library performance to council.

The State Library team noted that there are about 12 measures that are critical for the Living Learning Library standards, and are used as the basis for library reviews.

Action

- Provide suggestions on what changes the committee would like to see to the statistics for next year, including definitions.
- Zoom training sessions to be provided on Bibliostat Connect Site to show the committee how to utilise public library statistics. Make this information more easily accessible.
- Determine what data/questions that are appropriate to be collected on an annual basis or from the occasional survey.

Item 4: Other Business

Item 4.1 – Switch to digital, demand for library spaces, and effect on the public library standards

Melanie Gurney introduced this item, commenting that the massive uptake in digital collections has resulted in hard copy collections not being as well used at Northern Beaches, and this has been exacerbated by COVID-19. It was noted that rows of shelving are taking up valuable space in the library at a time when the community needs more community space. Due to COVID-19 library meeting rooms are closed at Northern Beaches.

Melanie suggested that the State Library standards could be adjusted to consider the change in demand.

In discussion Cameron Morley noted that hard copy loans have been relatively stable, and have increased at some libraries in recent years as populations have grown. Issues arise where libraries have stayed the same size, and there is certainly growing pressure on library spaces.

In new libraries that meet the size benchmarks for their populations the standards have been changed to suggest that collection space is 30-50% of total floor area. Individual libraries can adjust their space to best meet community need, including collection size, however between 1 and 2 items per capita is the suggested standard for large library services (serving more than 150,000 people).

It was noted that once COVID-19 has stabilised, and a clearer picture emerges of relative demand for hard copy and online collections, then the standards will be reviewed. They are adjusted annually based on the statistics for demand, so are responsive to changes.

Keryl Collard noted the need for libraries to be versatile and try new models. Newcastle City Library has opened a new branch in the CBD which focuses on e-services, with a relatively small grab and go collection. This works as a satellite to the larger City Library building which offers comprehensive services.

Robert Knight noted that SW Zone is looking at the SW Zone digital agreement in 2022, and will adjust expenditure to meet demand. At present about 20% of total collection spend is digital.

Jo Carmody noted that e-content demand has escalated in RTRL. The ability to join the library online (immediately) and access content coupled with an increase in the purchasing of simultaneous content has increased usage.

Keryl Collard noted that many libraries have maintained click and collect services post-lockdown, resulting in more convenient access to hard copy collections for many readers.

Item 4.2 – Responses to COVID-19

Andrea Curr presented the results of the COVID-19 surveys and report, and included a call for case studies which outline how libraries have changed their services to deal with the pandemic in the medium term.

Jo Carmody advised that there is one member of staff at Tweed Heads solely devoted to helping people apply for border passes. It was also noted that membership has increased.

All committee members noted that there has been a large take up in eResources and eCollections. Jo Carmody advised that the ability to join online and access the eResources instantly was a big factor.

Libraries were also largely maintaining the click and collect service now that buildings are open, as it continues to be a popular service. There had been a huge demand for home library and some libraries have doubled resources to cater for this service.

Some concerns were raised that there are still some councils that have not opened all branch libraries, and that there are some libraries that are only offering very curtailed levels of service at present.

The committee agreed that this lack of consistency between public libraries could be problematic if it continues in the medium term.

It was noted that some libraries have implemented restrictions that are more severe than those prescribed in the official NSW Health COVID-19 Safety Plan for Libraries (for example longer quarantine periods for books).

With mandatory record keeping for contact tracing and low transmission rates, there is some hope that the 4sqm rule will be reduced to a 2 sqm rule.

Jo Carmody suggested that the State Library could create guidelines around the opening of services to promote consistency and ease of access for library users. This was agreed, and the matter will be raised by the State Library at the December PLCC meeting.

4.2 State Library Report

Cameron Morley briefed the committee that the PLS team have been mostly working from home, with a few team members working in the office on alternate days. The State Library of NSW has been incredibly busy and almost filled to capacity. There were instances where additional rooms had to be opened to accommodate the influx of people. Up to 3,000 people a day were visiting the library within the lead up to the HSC.

Grants are due on the 6th November, and there have had positive responses with people attending the weekly Zoom drop ins.

SLNSW has paid out 29 subsidies to date, and councils are encouraged to get their applications in as soon as possible.

Next Meeting – 2021 dates to be set

Date	
Time	11:00AM - 1:00PM
Location	TBD