

Online programs in NSW public libraries

Findings from a survey of NSW public libraries

August 2020



Introduction

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in all public library buildings being closed between 1 April and 31 May 2020. Due to these closures all onsite library programs across the state ceased.

Following building closures, many libraries adapted traditional onsite face-to-face programs such as storytime and author talks to streamed or published video content on online platforms including Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Other facilitated programs such as reading groups moved to platforms such as Zoom, Skype or Facebook. Although libraries could reopen from 1 June 2020 most libraries have not resumed onsite programs to the same level as pre-COVID times.

The State Library of NSW collects annual statistics about the total number of programs and attendance offered by NSW public libraries. However, online programming is not currently included in these statistics. The volume of online programming produced since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic presents an opportunity to collect and analyse this data.

Survey details

This survey was designed to capture information about online programming in public libraries during the period 1 April to 30 June 2020. This period covers the closure and subsequent re-opening of public libraries in NSW.

The survey was conducted by Public Library Services, State Library of NSW during August 2020.

Recommended citation: State Library of NSW (2020) *Online programs in NSW libraries: survey findings*
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Survey method



Survey

Hosted in SurveyMonkey.
16 questions in total
featuring a mix of multiple
choice and open-ended
questions



Distribution

Survey link distributed via
email



Sample

NSW public library
managers or delegated
staff responding on
behalf of their library
service



Analytics

Survey data cleaned,
de-duplicated and
anonymised

Survey responses



Respondents

91 valid responses
n=91 unless otherwise stated



Library locations

62 country
27 metropolitan
2 unidentified



Library size

49% serve a population < 50,000
48% serve a population > 50,001

Definitions

Online programming includes *live virtual programs* and *recorded programs*.*

- *Live virtual program*: audio or video content that is streamed live on Facebook, YouTube, Zoom, etc.
- *Recorded program*: audio or video programs that were never streamed live. Does not include promotional or marketing content.

These exclude library activities delivered on a one-to-one basis, rather than a group, such as one-to-one homework assistance, readers' advisory and Home Library services.

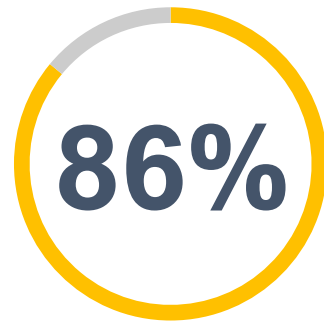
*Definitions used as described in [Public Library Annual Report: How to Report Program Data Elements](#), Library Research Service Colorado.



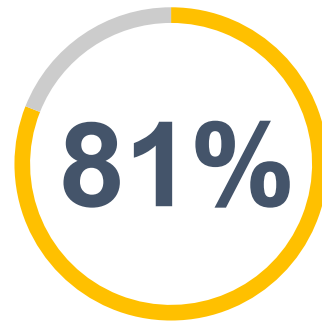
Libraries offering online programs



Prior to
1 April 2020



1 April to
30 June 2020



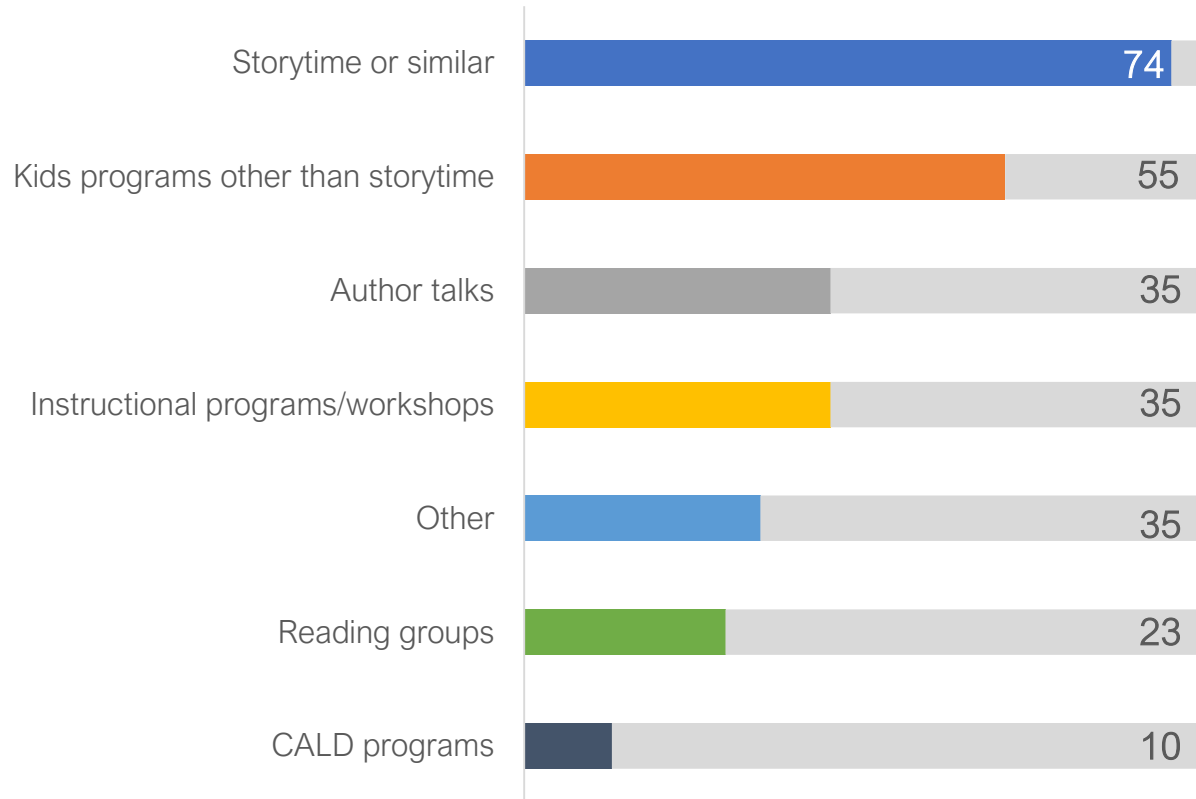
Since
1 July 2020

Prior to 1 April 2020 only 11 public libraries reported delivering online programs.

Between 1 April to 30 June 2020 this number jumped to 78 libraries. All NSW public libraries were closed to the public between 1 April and 31 May by the public health order. As a result all onsite programs were suspended.

Although libraries could reopen from 1 June 2020 most libraries have not resumed onsite programs to the same level as pre-COVID times and have continued to deliver programs online.

Types of online programs



Childrens' programs were the most popular form of programming.

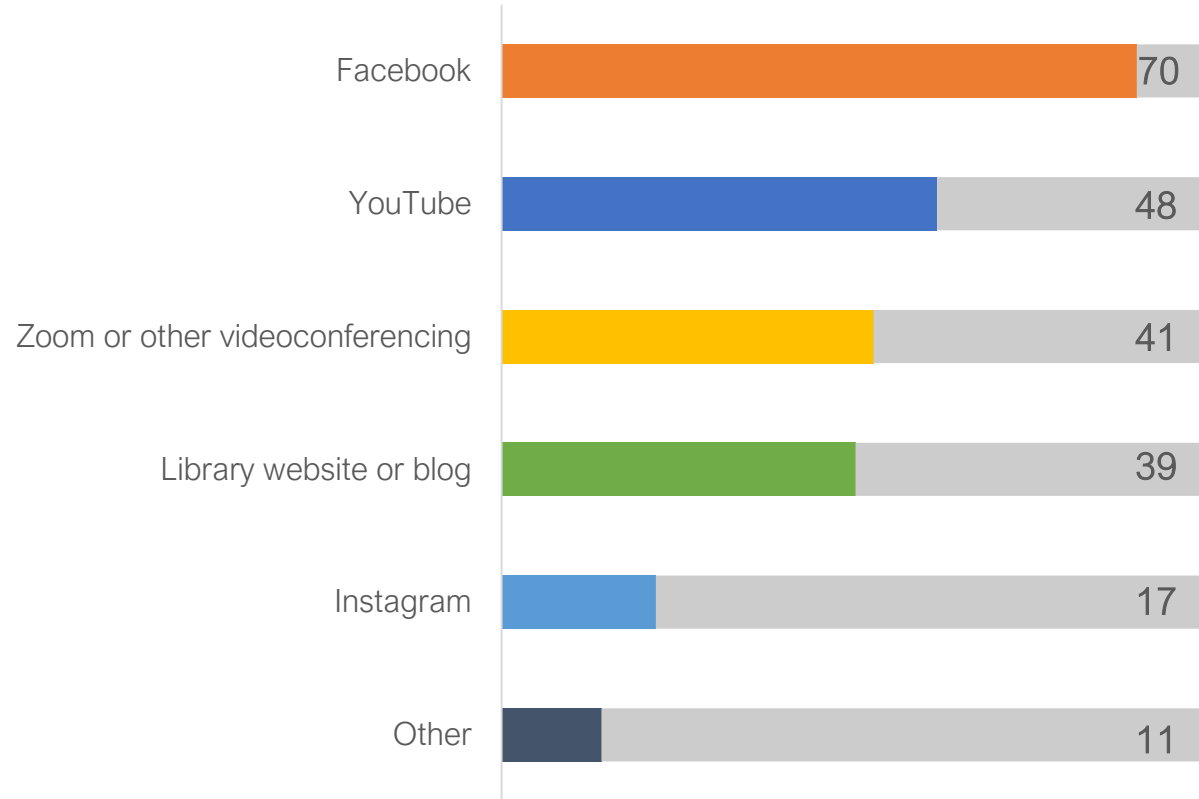
Early literacy programs (for young children aged 0-5) such as storytime were the most popular with 95% of libraries* who delivered online programs delivering these sessions online.

* n=78

Other types of programs

| | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|--|-----------------------|--|--|-------------------------------|---|
| Youth programs | Young Writer's Award | HSC lecture series | Teen Book Club | Chair yoga | Mental Health videos for youth to cope during Covid - partnered with Headspace | Nutritional talk | Easter Hat Parade |
| Legal talk | Drawing competition | Art classes | Online Movie clubs | Escape rooms | Wildlife shows | Magic shows | Illustration workshops |
| Adults coding, craft, cooking etc | Online eye spy, treasure hunts and trivia competitions | Technology programs for adults | 3D print club | the lab (for young people 10-16 with autism) | Technology class | Animal safety | UNE Discovery/Voyagers (Lego Challenge) |
| Film Group meetings | Midwaste food smart and bees wax workshops | Watch Party - Movies | Law week presentation | Online interactive exhibitions | Collaborative podcasts | Seed library virtual meet ups | Parenting course |
| Writing and arts courses online | Happiness and well-being online groups | eResources tutorials | Zentangle workshops | Science programs | Young Writer's Award | Trivia competitions | Local History video |
| Presentation by the Cancer Council | Tax Webinar | Sustainability and gardening workshops | Virtual work hubs | HSC study skills workshops | School of Philosophy panel discussion | Maths career webinar | TikTok dance lesson |

Platforms used to deliver programs



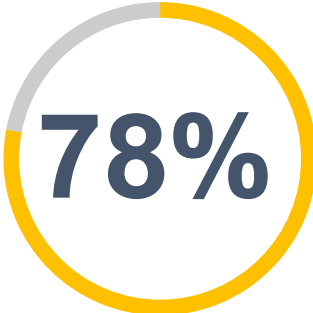
Facebook was the most popular platform with 90% of libraries* using the social media channel for delivery of programs.

The majority of libraries (82%) used two or more channels for program delivery.

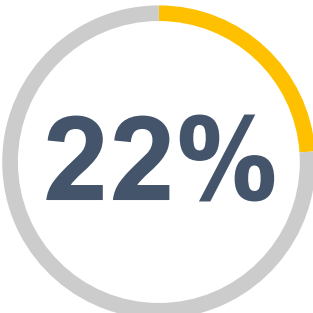
Other platforms for delivery of online programs included StreamYard, TikTok, Twitter, Eventbrite Virtual Events, podcast channels, library apps and bespoke websites or applications.

* n=78

Future intentions



Yes



Unsure

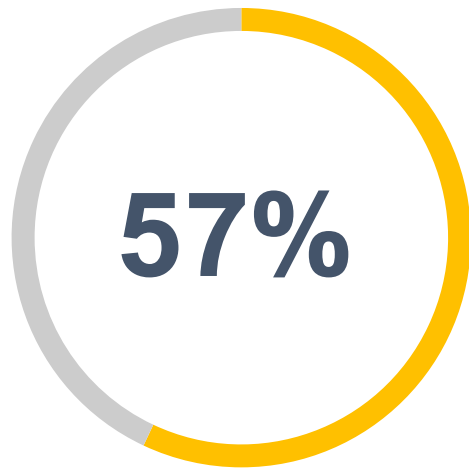
Libraries* were asked if they intend to continue with online programming and the majority (78%) indicated their intention to do so. However, 22% of libraries were unsure at this stage.

*n=78

“depending on staff availability”

“The preference is for face to face delivery however at the moment we are continuing to explore online programming. This is continuously being reviewed.”

Take-home activities



1 April – 30 June 2020

Just over half of libraries surveyed provided take-home activity packs for their clients. This included libraries who did not deliver online programming. These activity packs include items made available for download, items available in person from the library and items posted to clients.

Take-home activities included:

- Storytime craft templates
- Makey makey and basic electronics kits for Code Club members
- School holiday activity booklets
- Trivia and escape room activities

Live virtual programs

Audio or video content that is streamed live on Facebook, YouTube, Zoom, etc.



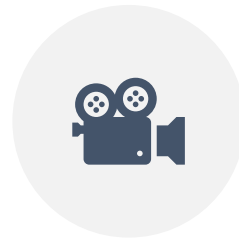
41 libraries



767 live virtual programs



37,488 attendees of live virtual programs



54,563 on-demand views of previously livestreamed programs

Recorded programs

Audio or video content that was never streamed live. Does not include promotional or marketing content.



65 libraries



1987 recorded programs



332,812 views of recorded programs

Survey questions

1. Name of library
2. Name of branch (if applicable)
3. Did your library offer online programming prior to 1 April 2020? Yes/No
4. Did your library offer online programming during the period 1 April - 30 June 2020? Yes/No/Other
5. Has your library continued to deliver online programming since 1 July 2020? Yes/No/Other
6. Does your library intend to continue the development and delivery of online programming in the future? Yes/No/Unsure/Other
7. What type of programs did your library deliver during this period?
 - Storytime, Rhyme Time, Baby Bounce or similar / Reading groups / Kids' programs (other than storytime, e.g. coding, craft) / Instructional programs (e.g. family history workshops) / CALD programs / Author talks / Other
8. Which platforms did you use to deliver these programs?
 - Facebook / Instagram / Zoom (or other videoconferencing software) / YouTube / Library website or blog / Other
9. Our library is able to provide statistics for online programs delivered during 1 April - 30 June 2020. Yes/No/Other
10. Number of live virtual programs held
11. Number of attendees in live virtual programs
12. Number of on-demand views of previously livestreamed programs - *do not include attendance of live virtual program.*
13. Number of recorded programs
14. Total number of views of recorded programs (programs that were never streamed live).
15. Did your library offer alternate or complementary programming (such as take-home activity packs) during the period 1 April - 30 June 2020? Yes/No/Other
16. Please add any further information about your library's online programs during the period 1 April - 30 June 2020.

