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# Understanding the needs of public library users in a COVID-changed Australia

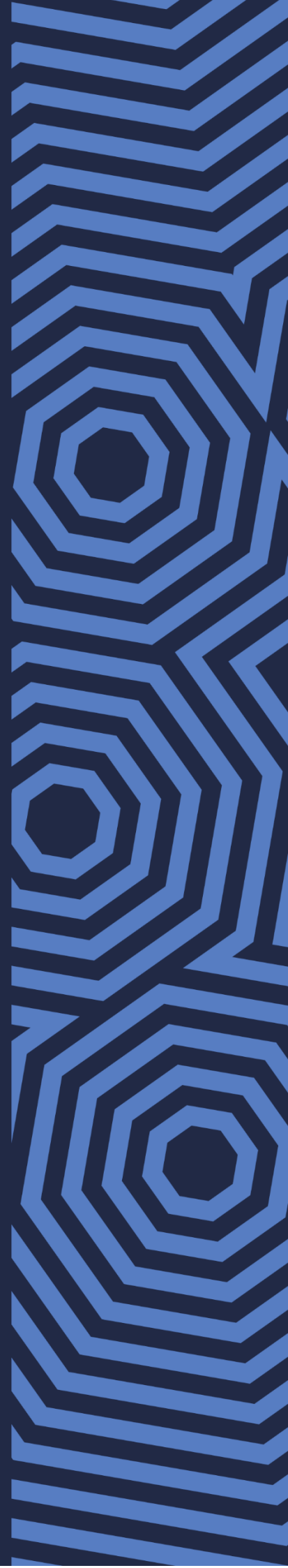
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# Introduction

The COVID-19 crisis has clearly had a significant impact on Australian society. While the long-term and persistent consequences of the crisis are still to be established, we have undoubtedly seen fundamental shifts in the economic, social, political, and technological landscape. The crisis has accelerated the adoption of digital technologies, and increased familiarity with, and exploitation of, models of online community engagement. The pandemic has also led to major changes in working practices, both in terms of greatly increased rates of working from home, and potentially increased levels of unemployment in the wake of the issues caused by the still recovering global economy. The crisis has also raised important questions about access to, and understanding of, public health information.

The research reported here builds on earlier work by the Charles Sturt University Libraries Research Group that has investigated Australian public library responses to the crisis ([Garner et al., 2021](#)), examined the importance of public library spaces to users in the context of COVID-enforced building closures ([Hider et al., 2022](#)), and analysed public library resource usage data during and after site closures ([Jamali & Hider, 2022](#)). Taken as a whole, this work reveals a picture of an Australian public library network that was agile and innovative in its response to the pandemic, serving their diverse user-base even while library buildings were closed. The work also suggests that those closures served to reinforce the value of physical spaces to users. Usage data showed a clear increase in the use of electronic resources during closure periods and suggested that while e-resource usage dropped as libraries re-opened, it remained above pre-pandemic levels.

While this previous research has focused on understanding experiences during the pandemic, the work reported here is more forward-looking. It had the objective of understanding how public library user needs and expectations have changed, and how public libraries can best meet those needs. We addressed these objectives by conducting qualitative, focus group research with library users to answer the following overarching research question:

RQ: How do NSW public library users envisage future public library services and programmes in COVID-changed Australia?

In addressing this RQ we sought to answer the following sub-questions:

RQ1. What changes in the needs and expectations of users have emerged as the result of pandemic?

RQ2. Which existing public library services, programmes and resources are most important to users, and why?

RQ3. What potential new or expanded public library services, programmes and resources would be most beneficial to users, and why?

# Method

Data for this study were collected through focus groups conducted at three NSW public libraries. The libraries were selected to ensure a mix of locales using the Australian Statistical Geography Standard for Remoteness Area, covering metropolitan, regional and remote NSW. Table 1 shows details of the participating libraries.

Table 1: Participating libraries

Library network	Locale Type	Location	Number of library sites	Invitation approach	Focus group attendees
A	Metropolitan	Sydney	6-10 *	Invitation in monthly e-newsletter Posters in libraries	6
B	Regional	Central NSW	One main library	Email to library members Posters in library	10
C	Remote	Western NSW	One main library	Email to library members Posters in library	7
* We do not report the exact number of library sites as doing so may identify the participating library network.					23

We believe it worth noting that in planning and undertaking data collection at all three sites the research team encountered a range of issues. We avoid reporting specifics in order not to identify the libraries, but these issues included high levels of staff turnover, ongoing effects of natural disasters, problematic relationships with councils, library renovation work, room availability, and IT and other technical limitations. In all cases the issues were beyond the control of participating libraries. While the problems had no effect on the research beyond some unforeseen delays, we report them here simply as evidence, if any were needed, of the incredibly challenging operational circumstances faced by many of Australia's public libraries.

A dual approach to recruiting participants was used. Electronic invitations were sent by participating libraries either as specific emails to members (library networks B & C), or included in an e-newsletter (library network A). The electronic invitations included a link to an online expression of interest (EOI) form. In addition, recruitment posters were displayed in participating library buildings, with the posters directing interested library users to paper EOI forms available at library information desks.

Potential participants were offered a choice of attending a face-to-face focus group session, or joining an online focus group hosted in Zoom. On reviewing responses, however, interest in the Zoom focus group was extremely low at all sites (no more than two participants). Zoom sessions were therefore not run. Participants were predominantly female (20 out of 23 participants), with ages as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Ages of participants (two participants preferred not to state their age)

Age	Number of participants	Age	Number of participants
25-34	2	55-64	4
35-44	3	65-74	4
45-54	3	75+	5

The face-to-face focus groups took place in late 2022 and were all held on site at participating libraries. Sessions were facilitated by members of the research team and took between 65 and 80 minutes, with a lunch provided for attendees. Participants were asked the following open questions:

- What words or phrases come to mind when you think about your public library?
- Tell us about how you used the library before COVID
- How did you use the public library during lockdowns (if at all)?
- Has COVID changed the way you use the public library? How?
- Has COVID changed the way you find information and news?
- If you had a magic wand, what would your perfect public library look like? What programs and services would it offer?

All focus groups were audio recorded, and the recordings professionally transcribed. Facilitators also made notes during the sessions. Transcripts and notes were subsequently analysed thematically, with the analysis supported by NVIVO software.

# Findings

## General perceptions of the library

The opening question of the focus groups asked participants what words or phrases come to mind when they think about their public library. Figure 1 shows all the responses recorded across the three sites. While the question was intended as an icebreaker, and to stimulate thinking about the role the library plays in users' lives, the data reveal some key themes that would go on to inform further discussions during the sessions. Many participants' responses centre on the library building itself – both in its physical sense (“a beautiful space”; “bright and happy”) and in the way that it makes users feel (“at peace straight away”; “you feel good...”). Responses also point to the role the library building plays within communities, facilitating “community connection” and affording an opportunity to “socialise”. These feelings about the library space are accompanied by mention of the libraries' collections: “books”, “magazines” and “borrowing”.

- A family library
- Socialise
- Home away from home
- Community connection
- The place to drop in
- Books
- Community
- Kids
- Magazines
- Home
- Something that you trust
- Borrowing
- A beautiful space
- Bright and happy
- I feel welcome
- At peace straight away
- You feel comfortable
- Hot librarian
- It's got soul
- You feel good just coming through the door

Figure 1: What words or phrases come to mind when you think about your public library?

## Why people use the library

As noted above, the questions asked of focus group participants distinguished between behaviour and needs pre- and post-pandemic. However, in what represents a major finding of the research, our data suggest that for *most* library users there has been little change. The exceptions to this are important and interesting, and are discussed below, but in terms of understanding how people use their public libraries the themes to emerge apply both before COVID and in the current environment.

Unsurprisingly, many participants mentioned **accessing the library collection** as a key reason for using the library. Specific comments relating to the types of resources used, and borrowing and reading habits, are discussed below, but in general most participants described regularly borrowing books, with many noting the value of the library as a free service compared to buying material (“I think one of the biggest benefits of the library is you can have books and magazines and newspapers and CDs and videos and the things for the kids and it doesn't cost you anything”).

The role of **the library as a community hub** was also emphasised by many participants. As one attendee put it “the library is a centre, not just for books, but for people doing things and getting together”. In the remote and regional libraries in particular, participants stressed the lack of alternative spaces for gathering, with the library characterised as a vital part of town life. The value of the library as an indispensable third space in all locations was seen to be strengthened by the physical qualities of the building – participants mentioned lighting, air conditioning, comfortable seating, and parking – as well as its welcoming atmosphere. Several participants echoed the words of one remote library user: “you can come in stressed out from home and you come in here and you can let it off your chest. And you're alright. Yeah, you know what I mean?”. In a similar spirit library users highlighted the library as a place to “drop-in” (in fact one participant notably described it as “*the place to drop-in*”). Library users also frequently noted the social aspect of the library. There were several instances in focus groups of participants describing how they had met each other and built friendships through the library. One participant described the value they saw in the library as a means of meeting potentially like-minded people:

*“Let's say if you go to the pokies, what type of people are you going to meet at the pokies? The people that want to play pokies ... If you go to a library, what type of people are you going to meet in the library? People who read, people who like books. You meet people that are like-minded.”*  
(Remote library participant)

It is worth noting that there were some negative perspectives on the consequences of the library's role as a community hub. Two participants in the metropolitan library and one in the regional library raised concerns about noise levels and overcrowding. As one put it: “I do hate it when I go to a library and people are chatting, watching videos. Kids are playing”. Frustration about noise levels seemed to stem from the fact that it serves as a distraction from what these participants felt was a traditional library environment:

*“it's really hard to concentrate when you're doing something and there's noise, distractions around you ... The library, to me, should be a place where you can actually sit and concentrate and actually do something”* (Metropolitan library participant)

Another key reason for visiting the library was to attend **programs and events**. Participants described a vast range of activities they had undertaken at the library, including sessions relating to arts and crafts (for example knitting), author talks, film screenings, book clubs, technology training sessions, author talks and events for children (e.g. Storytime). In many cases participants spoke of how much they had missed these face-to-face events during COVID-enforced library closures; in their view, the relatively limited online programming during lockdown had not been sufficient. It was also notable that many of the suggestions for ways to improve the library, discussed in detail below, related to increased opportunities for programs and events.

The final theme to emerge was the use of **computers, printing and Wi-Fi** at the library. Many library users (including two-thirds of metropolitan focus group participants) stated that they do not have their own computers and/or internet connections at home, and for them the use of library computers was vital; as one put it, “it's a godsend, wonderful”.

## **The library collection**

During all three focus groups a significant amount of time was spent by participants discussing the library collection, and their own reading and borrowing habits. Almost all participants stated that they borrowed books regularly, with some describing borrowing (and reading) four or five books per week. While most

participants stated that they have relatively broad reading preferences, it was notable that some participants described very specific book preferences, most often relating to particular genres or sub-genres. These included westerns, science-fiction, and horticulture. For these users, perceptions of the quality of the library collection were based almost entirely on the collection's holdings of their favoured types of books, and the ease with which such titles could be found on the shelves. Similarly, several participants noted their need for large-print books, and again their perspective on the collection was heavily informed by the availability of titles in this format.

In addition to books, there was extensive discussion of newspapers and magazines. Participants agreed that the cost of personally buying such material could be prohibitive, and thus greatly valued the provision of it by their libraries. In two of the focus groups there were some disagreements about which newspapers and magazines should be provided. It was notable that when asked whether they had ever accessed newspapers or periodicals online through the library, all participants said no.

DVDs were considered important to some participants, who again spoke favourably of the cost savings associated with borrowing rather than buying. Two participants (from the metropolitan and remote libraries) noted that their library collections were limited in terms of non-English language material. This applied to both DVDs and books.

Some negative perceptions of collections were present in all three groups, these most commonly relating to the organisation and shelving of material. Some participants spoke of difficulties finding relevant items, this view being particularly prevalent among library users with very specific preferences. These users also felt that the library could improve acquisitions in their topics/genres. In the regional focus group there was discussion of how DVDs should be placed on shelves, with a clear preference from users for these to be arranged in a spine-out way, rather than in a face-out manner (this requiring users to "flick through" titles).

It was notable that very few focus group participants had used any of the libraries' online collections. A variety of reasons were given for this. A significant number of library users were simply not aware that their library offered e-material, and that this was accessible from outside the library building. Others were broadly aware of the service, but unsure how to access it. There was also a view, particularly among older participants, that physical books were vastly preferable to e-books, both in terms of engaging with the content ("When I read it on the screen it isn't going in the same way") and because of a personal attachment to the book ("there's nothing like holding a book"). An interesting aspect to the discussion of online and IT services was the number of instances of participants demonstrating a lack of knowledge or understanding of what the library provided. These included a complaint that metropolitan library does not provide digital audiobooks (it does), a suggestion that regional library subscribe to the Libby app (it already does), a request that the library allow users to send material electronically from home to print at the library (this facility exists), and a question about when the library will provide free Wi-Fi (it has done for many years). The fact that many participants were found not to own computers is likely a factor here.

### **Library staff**

Participants' admiration for library staff was evident in all three focus groups, but particularly so for users of the remote library. This library has only one staff member, and focus group participants were effusive in their praise for them. Across all groups there was a recognition that library staff were integral to the creation of a welcoming and attractive environment. The demeanour of library staff was seen as crucial here, with several participants noting that staff were often smiling and attentive to user needs. One



participant described seeing a new library user come into the library, to be met immediately by the librarian

*“They said they liked certain authors and she searched for them and found them books. “Oh, I’ve got this for you”. And they went, “Oh, wow”. (Remote library participant)*

The knowledge and expertise of staff evident in that quote was often mentioned. As one participant put it, during a discussion of how to find particular types of books, “ask a librarian, they know everything.” Many library users spoke of consulting librarians not only for practical questions about using the library, but also for book recommendations, something one participant said they do “all the time ... it’s very valuable”. For the regional library, and in particular the remote library, these recommendations were born not just of knowledge of the library collection, but from personal relationships with library users and in-depth understanding of their reading habits and preferences. Participants also noted the willingness of library staff to help, with one metropolitan participant even citing that as the reason for the library’s busyness: “we’re chock-a-block because of the staff members. They bend over backwards to help people”. Overall, it was striking that the only negative comments about library staff were related to the fact that increased automation, particularly self-check-out, had reduced the opportunities for users to engage with staff.

There were some remarkable stories told by participants of library staff going “above and beyond” in their roles. Again, this was particularly notable in the remote library session. Library users described how the librarian was known to work many more hours than contracted for, how they would source and, in some cases, buy books and other items to fill gaps in the collection, and how they engaged family members to construct new signage for the library. Participants were unanimous in their praise for the librarian, and in their recognition of how the library has improved as a result. As one participant put it, “that’s what comes from finding people who are passionate”.

### **Post-COVID changes**

A key objective of this project was to identify the changes to public library user needs and expectations brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. When we asked about frequency of visits and behaviour at the library pre- and post- COVID, the most common response was for participants to state that they were visiting about the same amount as before the pandemic, at the same times and for the same purposes. Furthermore, when asked whether their reading habits had changed during or after COVID, all participants stated that there had been no change. This is best summed up by one metropolitan library user: “I’m doing what I did before the COVID, which makes me very, very happy to have the access again”.

It is important to note, however, that our participants are not necessarily representative of all public library users; indeed, the nature of the data collection approach meant that we were speaking to people who have remained engaged with the library in some way (and therefore saw our email invite or posters), and who were willing to travel to the library for the focus group. Even allowing for this there were some notable exceptions to the general sense of normality having returned. One regional library user stated that they “totally, totally didn’t come during COVID and haven’t really come back once.” When asked why, they explained that this was due not to any lingering concerns about COVID, or a change in needs, but rather a sense of having got out of the habit of visiting, something exacerbated by other factors (including distance to the library and vehicle access). This raises the possibility of a set of users for whom COVID instigated a break in normal habits which have yet to resume.

Several participants also described other people they know who no longer visit the library due to concerns about COVID: “I think people are just frightened”. Further evidence of this was provided during the

research process itself, with two library users who had agreed to participate in the metropolitan library focus group withdrawing from the process when they arrived at the room and saw that the session was taking place in an enclosed space, and that some other participants were not wearing masks. It was also noted that the enforced COVID lockdowns made people more capable of making do without the library: “it’s a case of being more self-reliant on what you’ve got in your house”. Another change in behaviour was noted by a participant at the remote library, who stated that during lockdown he had become accustomed to buying books, rather than borrowing, and had yet to break that habit.

Several other participants noted that the pandemic was still a concern, and that wariness about catching COVID affected their library visits. One remote library user noted that:

*“A couple weeks ago we had a really high rate infection here. We’ve got two grandchildren and also we don’t want to get infected so we kind of wanted to go to the library, but you know, we weren’t sure. So it does have that impact on things.”*

Other users stated that while concerns about COVID did not stop them visiting the library, they do influence their activities and behaviour at the library. Some spoke of being more wary of attending events, where a gathering of people might make catching COVID more likely. Another spoke of a reluctance to handle library resources in the same way as before. Describing browsing the library’s DVD collection they noted “you’ve got to absolutely literally flick through them all. But COVID. I don’t want to touch things that I don’t have to touch.”

When asked about whether COVID had changed the way they find and consume news and information, participants generally stated that things had not changed. Again, though, there were some exceptions, with a small number of participants noting that they valued the library more now as a trustworthy source of information. There was a recognition from some library users that social media was unreliable, and that “Google” (a term seemingly used by many participants to refer to all web content) could be misleading, or difficult to use. There was also a characterisation of the library, and its holdings, as being more “trustworthy” than other sources of information, a view that appeared to be based on a sense of the library as an historically neutral institution, and a view of the book as fundamentally more reliable than other media. One participant also noted that the library represents a venue for a different and “refreshing” mode of information seeking:

*“It’s refreshing to know that in the world of smartphones, when you have all the information available to you, whether it’s correct or not, it is refreshing to be able to come somewhere and find out for yourself in a different manner”* (Remote Library participant)

### **“If you had a magic wand...”**

The final question posed to focus group participants asked them to imagine they had a magic wand and could create their perfect public library. The question led to extensive discussion in all sessions, and to five broad categories of suggestions.

A number of responses related to **the library building**. For users of the remote library, which is currently housed on a relatively small site, there was a clear demand for a larger and more sophisticated space. Having previously emphasised the integral role the library plays within the community, which has no other freely available public spaces, users suggested that their dream library would be much bigger and better support the different activities that different users might want to undertake: “at the moment we are sharing everything, the whole community crammed into one little spot”. Another user described a different

library they had visited recently, suggesting it represented what they would want for their own building: “It is amazing. They have the little cafe; they have an area for booking. They have little hubs for people to sit at”. One participant also noted that while a larger space would be preferable, it is essential that the library retains its “soul” – the participant speaking negatively of a larger library they had visited which they described as consisting of “just rows and rows of books”.

Participants at the regional library echoed some of these ideas, although the fact that their library is much larger than remote library meant that changes to the physical library building were a lower priority, and related more to improvements to the existing spaces (e.g. more comfortable chairs, more greenery). Users of the metropolitan library, which is a very large urban library, saw no need for a larger building, but did identify a need for more compartmentalised spaces to allow visitors to sit in peace and quiet if they wished. As noted above, several participants in the metropolitan library expressed concern at the consequences of the library serving as a community hub, and one of these stated that they would use the magic wand to “bring the library back, not a community hub”.

Another theme to emerge related to potential improvements to **the library collection**. In general, these suggested improvements related closely to individual users’ needs, and included suggestions for more newspapers and magazines, more non-English language material (both DVDs and books), access to video streaming services, and increased collection size and quality in specific genres and subject areas. On this last point, in addition to increasing material in these areas, several participants wished that existing content could be better organised by genre to aid browsing, something they felt would greatly improve their experience in the library. One participant also suggested that the processing of new books could be done quicker. There was also some interest in expanding library collections to include non-traditional material; although the terms weren’t used, participants were essentially describing libraries of things. Suggestions here included seeds and sewing material – both of which participants were aware of being provided at other libraries. Finally, there was some discussion in the regional and remote focus groups of how the library could effectively move parts of the collection out into the community through the setting up of street libraries.

Another set of magic wand wishes related to **communication**, both in terms of how the library could make users (and potential users) aware of services and events, and also how the library could better understand what users want. On the latter point, one participant said that they would “love the library to ask more questions. What you want, what you don’t want, what you don’t like, what you like”. In terms of marketing to users, suggestions included inclusion in council newsletters, more active social media accounts, and “what’s on” and “what’s new” posters in the library.

Users also expressed a desire for more **programs and events**. Some participants suggested that there had been a decline in the number of author talks, and spoke of how much they valued these. Book clubs were also a common suggestion. Both the metropolitan and regional focus groups also included discussion of how the library could facilitate game-playing, with chess, mah-jong and 500 all specifically mentioned. More innovative suggestions for events included a greater willingness by libraries to encourage and facilitate talks and events run by community members. One remote participant, who runs a business producing a product (not named to preserve participant anonymity) using traditional techniques, expanded on this with a suggestion for knowledge exchange sessions:

*“You can offer like a swapping of skills and things. Cause lots of these things are dying arts that, you know someone might just be interested. We do something that's very niche. There's not very many people aware of that. And if there was a chance to sort of swap skills and experiences, that would be great”*

The final category of magic wand suggestion related to **technology**. For the remote library, user wishes related to things which many library users may take for granted; Wi-Fi access, more modern computers, better printing facilities, and a card reader for making payments. In the metropolitan and regional libraires technology-related suggestions were less about hardware and infrastructure, and much more focused on training and education; as one participant put it, “more computer classes, please”. Participants in these sessions spoke of already relying on the library to assist with IT questions and issues, and of seeing great value in expanding the level of support provided by the library for this sort of service. This was justified by one participant with reference to the broadness of the public library remit: “the library is all about providing a community service.”

# Conclusions and suggestions for libraries

This project set out to identify how NSW public library users envisage future public library services and programmes in COVID-changed Australia. It found that while for many users their library visiting habits have returned more or less to pre-COVID norms, for others the pandemic continues to influence their behaviour. The data reported above also show that the dual roles of the library as content provider and community hub remain foremost in users' perceptions of libraries, but also demonstrate potential tensions between these roles.

In translating the outcomes of the research into practice, it is important to note that the qualitative nature of the research and purposive sampling approach taken mean that findings are not necessarily representative of all public library users, or applicable to all libraries in NSW. Nonetheless, there is clear value in considering the perspectives of the library users consulted during this research, and determining how the insights and suggestions they offered can inform decision-making. We therefore present seven key points to emerge from the data, and that public libraries should consider in developing strategies for building and maintaining user engagement and satisfaction with their services.

## **1. Reaching lapsed library users**

While we found that most library users have returned to their pre-COVID visiting and usage patterns, clear evidence emerged of a subset of users for whom library shutdowns represented an as-yet unresolved break with their library. Within this group are library users who may be unconcerned by the current COVID-19 situation, but for whom the *habit* of visiting the library has lapsed, and users who remain reluctant to visit the library due to health concerns. For the former group libraries may consider targeted communications and community outreach to remind users of the services and programs on offer. For the latter group there may be a need to publicise the public health strategies employed by the library to minimise risk.

## **2. Marketing and awareness of services**

There was strong evidence from the focus groups that many users, even those who visit the library often, are either unaware of the full scope of services and programs that the library offer or hold misconceptions about how these services can be used. This appeared to be especially true for online services such as apps and databases. While the development of effective marketing strategies has been a key challenge for libraries for some time, our results suggest that in at least some cases existing approaches are not proving as successful as libraries might hope. Lack of awareness by users of potentially valued online services, which themselves are clearly advertised online, suggests that there is a particular need to ensure that communication to users is happening across multiple channels.

## **3. Consulting library users**

Many public libraries are already doing a great deal of work to consult with users, and to ensure that the views of the community are considered in areas such as building development / design, collection development, and program delivery. Our findings highlight the importance of this work and demonstrate the deep investment that many users have in the success of their library. The fact that in some instances users disagreed about the role of the library and identified tensions between its function as a community hub and place for study and reflection, only emphasises the importance of ensuring a diverse range of voices inform decision-making.

#### **4. Involving library users in program planning and delivery**

Many of the suggestions offered by participants related to library programs and events. In regional and remote locations particularly, the integral role played by the library in community life was shown to involve, or potentially involve, an element of reciprocity; library users appear ready and willing to provide not only ideas, but time and expertise. While many libraries already leverage community expertise in a variety of ways, we suggest there may be scope for this to be expanded, and for users to be granted more agency in the conception and delivery of events. A more consultative approach will also ensure that programming is most effectively serving the needs of the community.

#### **5. Technology support**

While previous research ([Jamali & Hider, 2022](#)) has provided evidence of a spike in usage of e-resources during library closure periods, our focus group participants had generally very low levels of awareness of what online and digital services their libraries offered, and how to access them. In addition, many participants were found not to own their own computers, and in some cases even phones, not only limiting their ability to engage, but also suggesting a lack of day-to-day experience interacting with technology. Striking examples of the lack awareness were the suggestions by some participants that the library provide access to apps (e.g. Libby) and resources (e.g. digital audiobooks) that are in fact already offered. This evidence, when combined with the fact that many users were quick to request computer classes and other technology support sessions, strongly suggests that there is a need for public libraries to consider how best they can ensure their users have the skills and awareness to access and utilise the digital services that are available to them.

#### **6. Quiet places**

As noted in point 3, the focus groups demonstrated that some users are resistant to the notion of the public library as a community hub. This perspective is clearly heavily influenced by a strong attachment to what we might consider a more traditional notion of a library – as a place for quiet reading or study. There is no doubting the value of the contemporary shifts away from this conception of the library, and indeed many of our participants spoke in hugely positive terms of role the library plays as space that is open and accessible to all. But at the same time our evidence suggests that libraries may need to consider how they accommodate those more traditional library needs, perhaps through the designation of quieter spaces in the library.

#### **7. Supporting information seeking and information literacy**

Although for the most part focus groups participants stated that COVID had done little to change how they found and consumed news and information, discussions of this topic revealed that participants generally had relatively low levels of information literacy, with many demonstrating quite fundamental misunderstandings about the nature of online information, and information seeking. At the same time, the library was also clearly perceived by participants as a source of trustworthy and objective advice and information. This suggests a continued need and opportunity for libraries to support users in developing their information literacy skills. While many libraries already undertake extensive work in this area, our evidence demonstrates that there remains a chronic need for education, training and guidance related to how to both find and evaluate information online. Any additional efforts libraries can make in this area have the potential to impact not only individual users, but society more broadly.

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