

# EXPANDING HORIZONS

*Positioning Queensland public libraries  
for the future 2008-2012*





## POSITIONING PUBLIC LIBRARIES: 2008 – 2012

Key initiatives to be implemented through collaborative action by SLQ, QPLA and LGAQ over the next four years.

- Showcase examples of excellence in library spaces, services, programs and use of information technology

- Measure the value of public libraries with a statewide community attitude survey
- Establish a leadership program for library managers and future workforce planning
- Review and enhance public library standards
- Target services and programs to promote learning and literacy
- Maximise access to technology to enhance community capacity in an online world
- Promote public libraries as places for community activity
- Build partnerships with allied organisations as partners and champions of public libraries
- Promote the role of public libraries in documenting Queensland's memory and preserving local history and heritage.



## Who's who

*Expanding Horizons* is a joint initiative of three major stakeholders in Queensland's public libraries:

**State Library of Queensland (SLQ)** is the leading library of Queensland documentary heritage and a major reference and research library for all Queenslanders. SLQ supports Local Government to deliver public library services through provision of grant funding, regional programming, training and digital services and through leading innovation in library practice.

**Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ)** is the peak representative body for Local Government in its dealings with other governments, unions, business and the community.

**Queensland Public Libraries Association (QPLA)** the peak representative body for public libraries in Queensland. QPLA liaises with key stakeholders and decision makers on emergent issues, arranges training and networking for members, facilitates co-operative projects and promotes the role and value of public libraries.



## Queensland public libraries

Queensland has over 330 public library sites.

Public libraries make a fundamental contribution to building fair, socially cohesive, information rich, economically strong and culturally vibrant communities.

Libraries are hallmarks of civic pride for Local Government and are consistently recorded in LGAQ customer and community surveys as 'high performing' and 'highly valued'.

Public libraries are a gateway to information in multiple formats, and provide people with the skills and expertise to access knowledge, resources and self-directed learning opportunities. Their role is particularly critical for groups and individuals who would otherwise be disadvantaged through lack of resources, skills and support in our increasingly knowledge-based society.

Public libraries provide a statewide access point for all tiers of government to engage with local communities to enhance democratic decision-making. In many communities, the public library serves as the central civic place for social gathering and interaction.

Public library staff are highly skilled. They are trained to adapt to constantly changing technologies and customer service models. Librarians are good communicators, they work closely with people of all ages and backgrounds. They are resourceful at identifying ways the public library can contribute to community wellbeing.

## About *Expanding Horizons*

*Expanding Horizons* is a positioning paper developed in partnership by the State Library of Queensland, the Queensland Public Libraries Association and the Local Government Association of Queensland.

A steering committee comprising public library staff and representatives from across government and the community sectors guided this initiative, in consultation with Local Government Councillors and local staff in public libraries and other community services.

*Expanding Horizons* recognises the considerable investment made by Local and State Government in public library services and sets the framework for strategic alignment of public libraries to corporate and community needs and aspirations.

Future improvement of public libraries does not call for complete reinvention. It does require that we continue to maximise our strengths.

This document is geared for use by people working in public libraries. It also intends to help people operating outside the library sector understand the role of public libraries and highlight opportunities for productive organisational and private sector partnerships that contribute to building healthy communities.

*Expanding Horizons* identifies shared principles and suggests good practice measures for future directions in public library services in Queensland. It also identifies eight key initiatives to be implemented through individual organisations and collaborative action by SLQ, QPLA and LGAQ over the next four years.

## Key principles for Queensland public libraries

Underpinning all that public libraries do are some key guiding principles:

- Fostering the love of reading and supporting literacy and learning in communities
- Embracing new technologies, resources and programs to meet the changing needs and expectations of individuals and groups
- Promoting community engagement
- Cultivating local distinctiveness and cohesion in local communities
- Upholding civic values of access and equity.



# KEY THEMES FOR IMPROVING QUEENSLAND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

There is much to be gained by public libraries and the communities they serve through operating within a strategic framework and achieving good practice standards. *Expanding Horizons* is focused on four key themes and a range of measures that are widely regarded as good practice.

## Welcoming spaces

Public libraries build social capital. Whether located in a building or in the virtual world, public libraries link people, technology and knowledge.

Public libraries offer a vast range of activities and staff that promote community engagement by bringing people together and facilitating positive social and learning experiences.

At their best public libraries are inclusive, vibrant and dynamic community places, designed with flexible spaces that can easily adapt to different activities. Public libraries offer welcoming and safe spaces that attract a broad range of user groups.

*“Librarians must be innovators: Creating new services, identifying community trends, helping communities develop for themselves.”*

*Chris Batt*

### Good practice for welcoming places

- delight visitors and have a character reflecting local culture and community aspirations
- flexible, vibrant, safe, multiple use community spaces
- located to maximise links with community activity, public transport and safe routes for walking
- co-located with complementary community facilities and commercial outlets to enrich visitor experiences and share infrastructure
- future focused and ecologically sensitive in design and construction
- reach the community at the library and through online services and activities throughout the community.

**Fast fact...** There are 330 public library sites in Queensland – more than double the number of McDonalds in the State.



## Connecting people

Public libraries provide and support a wide range of innovative, creative programs and opportunities. They provide programs focusing on literacy, new technology, local history, the arts, employment, children and young people, Indigenous and multicultural communities, active communities and learning for life, both in the library and online.

Public libraries reduce isolation and enhance social connections between individuals and groups. They support active citizenship and community engagement.

Public libraries are a well-networked and an objective source of information. They are accessed by 50% of Queenslanders and are often the first stop for individuals and families relocating into a community, and for travellers passing through.

Public libraries provide value-added services and refer people to facilities and programs beyond the library.

*“There is an almost universal perception that libraries are places where all people have right of access, regardless of their circumstances or backgrounds.”*

*Eva Cox*

### Good practice for connecting people

- promote public libraries as community gathering places
- develop partnerships with community groups to deliver public programs, events and initiatives
- provide library services that engage Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders
- provide opportunities for learning, social and cultural expression which appeal to people with varied backgrounds and interests
- connect in virtual worlds, including online e-democracy initiatives for all spheres of government
- maximise access to digitised information resources, enabled by Web 2.0 technologies
- employ staff with a range of skills to respond to community needs.



## Learning and leisure

Public libraries foster a love of reading, support literacy and nurture lifelong learning. They are hubs of knowledge, culture, history, stories and memories. The collections are dynamic, reflecting changing communities.

Public libraries have a key role in documenting Queensland's memory and preserving local history, information and knowledge for current and future generations. They are vital contributors in enhancing the understanding and appreciation of the State's community history and heritage.

Public libraries provide pathways to learning and leisure and equitable access to collections and rapidly developing technology. Skilled staff navigate information for quality and relevance and guide users to the most useful resources in a complex information world.

*"Parents should be reading to their children from the first weeks of their life. It only needs to be for 10 minutes a day."*

*Mem Fox*

### Good practice for learning and leisure

- Support the love of reading and broad literacy development through innovative programs and services
- Add value by providing personalised services for reading and information
- Provide 24/7 access to resources through online services, virtual spaces and extended opening hours
- Extend services to fill gaps in the community such as toy libraries, sports collections or providing retail outlets
- Create partnerships to provide learning opportunities
- Support people to move from consumer to creator, for example books online, digital art and blogs.

**Fast fact...** Public libraries run over 9,000 hours of public programs each year – that's equivalent to playing Xbox for 375 days.



## Embracing technology

Public libraries link users with technology and support them to participate in economic, social, environmental and cultural opportunities.

Investment in technology is essential for public libraries to remain relevant and build digital inclusion.

Technology enables people to access resources, connect with each other and to pursue their interests.

Technology provides opportunities to increase access to public library services for those who cannot easily visit libraries.

Public libraries embrace the efficiencies technology can bring to back-room and front-line functions so that skilled library staff can focus on developing and delivering services for library customers.

Queensland public libraries offer a range of technology that creates a people's network linking Queenslanders with instant online information where ever they live, accessible 24/7.

*"If you give people tools, [and they use] their natural ability and their curiosity, they will develop things in ways that will surprise you very much beyond what you might have expected."*

*Bill Gates*

### Good practice in embracing technology

- Provide greater opportunities for technological literacy through training programs and support
- Exploit Web 2.0 technology to enable clients to create their own resources and develop interactive public library spaces
- Use technology to improve customer service and utilise staff skills, eg RFID, automated returns, federated searching and linked library systems
- Digitise collections to enable preservation and online access
- Provide access to broadband and wireless solutions.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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**State Library**  
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### Fast facts...

There are more than 40 million loans each year from Queensland public libraries – that's more than three and a half times *The Courier-Mail* circulation for a whole year, Monday to Friday.

Queensland public libraries offer 113,000 square metres of public space – the equivalent of 2,260 lounge rooms.

Libraries offer their services online which means the majority of Queenslanders have 24/7 access.

Queensland libraries have 8 million items for loan, each item is lent an average of six times each year.

More than 2,000 PCs are in libraries across the State offering internet, catalogue and software access.

As well as over 330 public library sites across Queensland, 17 mobile libraries stop at 480 places.

More than 18 million Queenslanders visit public libraries a year and 1.9 million are library members.



### Cover image

Dogwood Crossing @ Miles  
(The Pioneer Library)

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