

A blue ribbon-shaped logo with the text "CITY OF CANADA BAY LIBRARIES" written vertically in white, uppercase letters.

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2020 LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN

Community Consultation Summary

Help Shape Your Library – The New Library Strategic Plan

Community consultation program summary

The City of Canada Bay boasts three libraries; Concord Library, Five Dock Library and The Learning Space at Rhodes. Rapid changes in technology, society and the formats in which information is published have brought about an evolution in libraries. In order to plan for the future, the City of Canada Bay is currently redeveloping its Library Strategic Plan, ensuring it is aligned with the community's expectations through a thorough community consultation process.

The current Plan was developed in 2011 with over 1000 community members contributing to the consultation. From August to November 2020, we consulted with 600 community members. Participation was hindered by COVID-19 health orders which forced Library Services to stop all in-person programming. Despite this, the consultation garnered the second highest participation rate across Council consultations in 2020.

With a two-phased approach, we sought feedback via a community survey in four community languages and supplemented this feedback through focus groups with the community and key stakeholder groups; schools, community organisations, Library staff, Council staff, and the library industry.

2020 Results

- 522 community members took part in the survey
- 94.4% were from residents of the City of Canada Bay
- 50 of the respondents indicated that they did not use any of the Library's services
- 35% of participants use Five Dock Library, 34% use Concord Library, 16% use the eLibrary and 6% use The Learning Space at The Connection, Rhodes.
- Older participants were over-represented in the survey responses, particularly the 45 to 74 years age range.
- Younger residents (24 years and under) were under-represented indicating a need to conduct further consultation with this group
- 77 participants in focus group sessions

Considerations

Analysis must take into account the period during which this consultation was conducted. During COVID-19, the libraries have been running at limited capacity, with little to no in-person programs or social events. This has affected how many in our community we could reach, and how our community has rated their satisfaction and usage of the libraries.

Positively, COVID-19 has also provided Council with an opportunity to take on the feedback from the community to refresh and renew the Library Strategic Plan, particularly with regards to social cohesion and community development as we "build back better".

Satisfaction

Satisfaction with library services overall was high, with the percentage of respondents that were satisfied or very satisfied at 96.4%. Satisfaction was consistently high across all services and facilities. It is worth noting that the percentage of respondents that were very satisfied was significantly less than in 2011 while the percentage satisfied was up significantly. This does indicate a drop in satisfaction overall.

2020 - Satisfaction with Services	Responses	% of Total Responses	2011 – Satisfaction with services	Responses	% of Total Responses
Overall			Overall		
Very satisfied	147	34.3%	Very satisfied	398	51.9%
Satisfied	266	62.1%	Satisfied	356	46.4%
Dissatisfied	13	3.0%	Dissatisfied	9	1.2%
Very Dissatisfied	2	0.5%	Very Dissatisfied	4	0.5%
Total	428		Total	767	

Some dissatisfaction was evident with online access to library services; library web pages; programs and events; collections and opening hours, all with around 12% of survey respondents indicating they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with these services.

When comparing satisfaction results, it is worth noting that at the time of the 2011 consultation the City of Canada Bay ran two libraries which were approximately 5 years old at the time. Likewise, The Learning Space does not hold any books – the reason 81.23% of participants go to the Library for.

Collections

2020 - I use or would like to use the Library to ...	Responses	% of Total Responses
Borrow books	424	81.23%
Borrow DVDs, CDs or audiobooks	283	54.21%
Attend events	270	51.72%
Read or browse magazines/newspapers	243	46.55%
Do study or research	222	42.53%
Photocopy or print documents	173	33.14%
Access wireless internet	146	27.97%
Meet friends or socialise	142	27.20%
Attend children's programs	137	26.25%
Access internet or email	104	19.92%
Access computers	95	18.20%
Other (please specify)	37	7.09%
Totals	522	

The quality of the collection remains the community's top priority. Reasons for visiting the libraries reflected traditional uses of library services with borrowing library books and audio-visual items in first and second place followed closely by attending events. While the top two uses of the library were still borrowing books and audio-visual material, borrowing audio-visual material had slipped by more than 10%. This is likely due to the advent of music, TV and movie streaming services. Interest in picking up and returning books to The Learning Space was notable in the survey and focus groups. Likewise, availability and wait times for bestseller books is an issue that the Library Services Team are already responding to with a trial of an Accelerated Circulation Plan, called Read Now, for best sellers and current popular titles, to better meet demand.

Programs

The community values library programs and events highly. All categories of events received more future interest than attendance in the past 12 months, indicating either unmet demand or demand from community members unaware of what has been available. This could also be attributed to the lockdown period and reduction of program delivery in response to COVID-19.

With over 400 individual suggestions, the variety and quantity of ideas/requests for programs, events and workshops indicates a growing interest in the library as a meeting place for social connection and also highlights a need for greater collaboration with other Council teams (e.g. sustainability), community organisations and other libraries to best meet the expectations of our community.

The community does not differentiate between who delivers the programs and events they want, but they do value diverse and consistent program offerings that are promoted broadly.

Spaces

This interest in greater social connectivity also speaks to a growing conflict between those who see their local library as a place for conversation, socialising, vibrancy and events, and those that see it as a place for quiet reading, work, study and contemplation. All of our libraries lack appropriate amenity for both simultaneously.

As seen in question 25, “In the future, my ideal library is...” (open ended – sorted into below categories), the community displays competing priorities, as demonstrated by the grey highlighted responses:

Q25. In the future, my ideal library is ...	Responses	% of Total Responses
diverse and modern catalogue	163	35.4%
events & programs	87	18.9%
digital services	85	18.5%
social hub	69	15.0%
inclusive and welcoming	63	13.7%
ebooks	57	12.4%
focus on study & work	57	12.4%
children's interest	49	10.7%
calm & quiet	41	8.9%
longer hours/after hours	40	8.7%
comfortable	37	8.0%
break out spaces for groups	36	7.8%
helpful staff	33	7.2%
cafe	25	5.4%
computers and printing	16	3.5%
vibrant & fun	16	3.5%
online events	15	3.3%

With macro trends including the changing role of the workplace and more people working from home, coupled with feedback that our community is staying local with a growing interest in events and programs, the design of all three libraries needs to be considered a priority in order to effectively deliver against the community's needs.

Focus groups

During the second phase of community consultation, Council officers undertook nine focus groups with key stakeholder groups. A total of 77 people participated in the focus groups.

The following groups were held:

- Library staff
- Resident session x 4
- Internal stakeholders
- Community organisations & groups
- Schools
- Industry – other LGAs, the State Library

Emerging themes include:

- Collaboration needs to be enhanced further - within library team, across Council, with other Councils, community organisations, schools and wider community e.g. via volunteer programs and larger Sydney-wide festivals
- Shared spaces, different times for different groups, quiet spaces vs. group/social/work spaces conflicts are consistent concerns for resident participants, and across other LGA's libraries
- Collection improvements are a priority – availability, bestsellers, audiobooks, academic databases
- Staff technology training and customer service training is an area for improvement
- Tech programs for consumer tech & how to navigate the library's digital services should be expanded
- Promotion and marketing improvements – including broadening or narrowing audiences and topics across different channels, also engaging with community champions and word of mouth including staff direct marketing.
- Programming for all audiences – there is high interest in participation, but a varied perception of offering. The team need to review variety, promotion, delivery, timing and resourcing to meet demand. Test and trial different areas of interest to gauge participation rates.

State Library of NSW Analysis

The State Library of NSW provides advice on library services to Councils as part of its role as defined in the Library Act 1939. This advice includes participation in strategic planning for library services and preparation of information on library trends in NSW and comparison of individual libraries current statistics and services with state-wide benchmarks as documented in *Living Learning Libraries: standards and guidelines for NSW public libraries*.

As part of this service the State Library of NSW prepared an analysis of the City of Canada Bay Libraries performance against the Living Learning Libraries benchmarks, including any change since this was last done in 2011. This benchmarking is done against libraries that fall into the same population cohorts. The City of Canada Bay is in the *urban medium population of 50,001 to 150,000* cohort.

The State Library of NSW analysis is summarised in the comments and table below. Of particular note is the improvement in the performance of the Libraries' collections since 2011.

Summary comparison 2020 – 2011

In summary, Canada Bay Library is performing well against most of the performance measures listed in Living Learning Libraries.

There has been a significant improvement in expenditure on library materials per capita, with spending almost doubled. The age of the collection has also improved by over 10%.

An area of concern is the number of visits per capita. Canada Bay Library is well below the cohort and state median. In the last reporting period library visits have dropped by over 40,000 visits.

Standard	2020		2011	
	Meets or above cohort median (baseline target)	Below cohort median (baseline target)*	Meets or above baseline target	Below baseline target
S1 – Expenditure per capita	✓			✓
S2 – Members as a percentage of population	✓		✓	
S3 & S4 – Total opening hours	✓		✓	
S5 – Visits per capita		✓	✓	
S6 – Minimum level of staff members		✓		✓
S7 – Qualified staff members – minimum level	✓		✓	
S8 – Staff members – special responsibilities for targeted services	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
S9 – Expenditure on library materials per capita	✓			✓
S10 – Items per capita		✓		✓
S11 – Acquisitions per capita per annum	✓			✓
S12a – Age of collection (percentage under 5 years)	✓			✓
S12b – Age of collection (percentage under 10 years)	✓		✓	
S13 – Turnover of stock	✓		✓	
S14 – Circulation per capita		✓	✓	
S15 – Provision of public internet workstations	✓		✓	

KEY: ✓ - improved since 2011 analysis ✓ - maintained since 2011 analysis ✓ - declined since 2011 analysis

The two areas that have declined since 2011, loans and visits, are both areas which have declined state-wide in the same period.

Loans per capita are down approximately 25% and visits have declined by around 5% across the state since 2011. The City of Canada Bay Libraries' total loans have increased by 3% but given the population increase in the area loans per capita have decreased by 14.71%.

Visit statistics have been unreliable and were overcounted at Five Dock Library prior to 2012/13. Visits have been stable since then, with undercounting occurring in 2018/19 due to malfunctioning people counters. In addition, The Learning Space visits have not been counted as a result of the multiple entries requiring more sophisticated and more expensive people counting systems. In reality visit statistics appear to have been stable at around 330,000 visits per annum for the past 8 to 10 years.

Key Takeaways

The City of Canada Bay Libraries are a beloved part of the City's social fabric. The 2020 Community Consultation uptake exceeded the team's expectations, and feedback shows a largely satisfied community.

Despite this, there are areas that require consideration and prioritisation as part of the development of the new Library Strategic Plan, including but not limited to:

- Adapting to rapid technological innovation – including audiobooks, ebooks etc
- Educating the community on how to use the Library, including improvements in user experience of digital services
- Improving access to best sellers and other collection improvements
- Improving and/or adding events and programs, especially book clubs and author events, via collaboration within Council and with other organisations, libraries and Councils
- Examining library layouts to better accommodate both quiet study and group/social events
- Supporting the ageing population
- Empowering, educating and engaging young people 12-24 years old
- Promoting library services to the community
- Reviewing opening hours

Next steps

The Library Services team will draft the Library Strategic Plan for review and adoption for public exhibition at the March 2021 Council Meeting, with final adoption planned for June 2021.