

Libraries ACT: Imagine 2030

REPORT ON WHAT WE HEARD

The role and use of public libraries continues to change over time. From 14 January 2020 to 30 June 2022, Libraries ACT undertook a co-design approach to develop a strategy to guide the future of our libraries.

The Libraries ACT Imagine 2030 Strategy (the Strategy) will guide the forward planning, delivery, and management of library services, ensuring our libraries are an accessible space for inspiring, belonging, connecting and lifelong learning. The Strategy will be informed by the extensive co-design approach and an evidence base of national and international best practice research. It will provide a firm foundation from which Libraries ACT can develop more detailed programs of activities, improvements, and innovations, which will continue to be driven by ongoing collaboration with the community.

THE CONVERSATION

During the co-design period we received more than 7,000 pieces of feedback in total.

Feedback was sought through a wide range of engagement activities including online and in person workshops, one-on-one interviews, the ACT Government's engagement platform YourSay and interactive displays at all library branches.

The project initially commenced in January 2020 with work postponed from March 2020 due to the impacts of COVID-19. During this period engagement involved interviews with staff and key stakeholders as well as community interviews at the 2020 National Multicultural Festival.

The project recommenced in July 2021 with an ideas generation session with more than 100 library staff, community interviews in library branches, one-on-one key stakeholder interviews as well as online engagement via the YourSay platform from 30 July to 10 September 2021. The co-design was postponed again due to COVID-19 in September 2021.

The engagement recommenced in March 2022 with 55 engagement sessions including one-on-one in-depth interviews, in-person discovery workshops, virtual idea generation workshops, virtual strategy testing workshops, virtual playback sessions as well as further online engagement via the YourSay platform from 25 March to 20 May 2022.

WHO WE ENGAGED

The consultation targeted past, current and potential library members as well as the broader community.

In total we engaged with approximately 400 individuals, government and non-government organisations and representative groups. Our diverse participants identified themselves as:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Culturally and linguistically diverse
- Living with a disability
- LGBTIQ+
- Youth
- Older persons
- Current and former library staff and volunteers
- Practising authors
- Public library active, inactive and non-members
- Community sector practitioners and leaders
- ACT and federal government representatives
- Advocates for accessibility and inclusion
- Educators
- Advocates for multicultural communities
- Advocates for formal and informal carers for people living with dementia and disabilities
- Advocates for women's safety, health and wellbeing
- Advocates for early literacy for children
- Parents with children (babies to varying ages)
- People experiencing homelessness.

WHAT WE HEARD

The key insights below represent the most common themes raised across all feedback channels.

Key insights from the community

Accessibility is a priority

- You told us it's important that everyone in the community can easily access library services, collections and programs that engage the whole community.
- Continuing to make libraries free of direct charge for all and ensuring all visitors feel a sense of safety when interacting with the library services is also important – including onsite, online and outreach services.

More collaboration

- We heard there's opportunities for better collaboration across our diverse network to extend our service offering, activate lifelong learning and have a greater impact on the community.
- Suggestions for increased collaboration include engaging our local community on which services are prioritised and creating new pathways with community services, groups and businesses to leverage each other's purpose for the mutual benefit of our communities and the economy.

Integrating online, onsite and outreach services and experiences

- Getting the basics right to meet current service expectations and match global standards is key. There's also an opportunity to activate a more contemporary service delivery model and apply universal design principles to deliver a seamless user experience for everyone.
- You told us achieving integrated, consistent and efficient user experiences across all channels and library branches is important, so it feels like one library irrespective of location.

Empowering, enabling and sustaining learning at all life stages

- You'd like us to focus on understanding community needs and what is already offered through other services to cultivate lifelong learning, so the library is not duplicating existing services but complementing them.
- Evolving our collection to meet individual and group formal and informal learning needs at all life stages is important as is offering access to a broad range of services that support digital, health and cultural literacy.
- There's support for adapting spaces for lifelong learning, including intergenerational learning, and nurturing our libraries as a safe haven that supports people through life transitions by offering social connection, access to government services accompanied by formal and informal learning opportunities to build skills.
- Libraries are well placed to reduce the digital divide and lead learning opportunities to increase digital literacy including creating a network of skilled volunteers to support people along their digital learning journey.

Increasing awareness of the library's value and offerings

- You told us we need to increase awareness and understanding of the wide range of library services on offer to broaden the perception of public libraries across the Canberra community.
- Creating library champions in the ACT community and celebrating our contribution to becoming an International Learning City will help strengthen the ACT community's perception of public libraries as the heart of the community.

Ways of working

- Creating a collaborative and adaptive culture and increasing capability will help deliver 2030 aspirations.
- Nurturing a culture that embodies Libraries ACT's aspiration and purpose is important to inspire creativity, curiosity, learning and foster collaboration, inclusivity and acceptance.
- There is strong support for increasing diversity in leadership, staff, collaborators, partners and volunteers.
- You'd like our future libraries to strive towards global best practice in customer experience and sustainability and for us to continue to co-design with our community to deliver services that meet their unique needs.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Thank you to everyone who imagined together how the future of libraries could be. Your contributions, ideas and feedback will help us write, refine and finalise the Libraries ACT Imagine 2030 Strategy.

The co-design process focused on understanding the community's desires for public libraries and helped start the conversation around the future as we look towards 2030. All the contributions insights and learnings will be translated into the aspiration, purpose, commitments and key priorities of the Strategy. This will provide a firm foundation from which Libraries ACT can develop their more detailed future frameworks, plans and programs of activity, that involve an ongoing codesign approach with the community, stakeholders and staff.

Key Timings

14 January – 20 March 2020: Project commenced including scoping, planning and discovery. Co-design postponed due to COVID-19.

30 July 2021 – 10 September 2021: Co-design engagement and information gathering recommenced including Stage 1 YourSay engagement. Co-design postponed again due to COVID-19.

25 March 2022 – 20 May 2022: Co-design engagement recommenced, including Stage 2 YourSay engagement. Research and review of library and government context, and initial data analysis and synthesis undertaken.

21 May 2022 – 30 June: Further targeted and more indepth co-design engagement undertaken, followed by final data analysis and sythesis.

8 November 2022 : What We Heard Report released.

2023: Libraries ACT Imagining 2030 Strategy finalised and released.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

4,731

There were 4,731 page views to the project page on YourSay

158

There were 158 YourSay contributions, receiving 756 votes of support

7,000+

We received more than 7,000 pieces of feedback in total

100+

We received 100+ data points from emails, library displays & social media channels

130

130 Community members (library users & non- users) participated in interviews, workshops & strategy testing

114

114 library staff members participated in interviews, workshops & strategy testing sessions

75

75 key stakeholders, organisations & representative groups participated in interviews, workshops & strategy testing

80,000+

We reached people via Facebook, Twitter and Libraries ACT website more than 80,000 times