Ministerial Advisory Council on Public Libraries

Tomorrow's library discussion paper May 2012

Response by the City of Melbourne

FUTURE OF LIBRARIES – CITY OF MELBOURNE

A VISION FOR LIBRARIES

Is the public perception of libraries still locked some decades in the past? Is the general public really aware what the 21st century library service has to offer?

Libraries are our local neighbourhood portals into a world of cultural engagement and activity. In our libraries all the cultural pursuits exist from literature, music, media, entertainment, art, games to performance.

There is a need to develop a new and common understanding about the breadth of cultural pursuits available in our local libraries and the benefits of learning and social connections that can emerge from people's engagement with libraries. This is the real face of libraries in the 21st century – not just as providers of information. Libraries are well placed to leverage off their existing reputation and to further develop the role of libraries in community strengthening at a both a very personal and very local level.

The repositioning and rebranding of libraries requires a more strategic, deliberate and coordinate approach. There is much to be learnt and applied from our compatriots in Europe and the Northern hemisphere in this regard.

The question is how we take the strength of the existing reputation and reposition libraries in the 21st century.

There exists the potential for a more coordinated effort by the State Government, PLVN and many local councils, to reposition libraries in a more strategic and deliberate way in the eyes of the general public and to begin the process of Victoria leading Australian libraries into a new and different 21st century future.

> CoM submits that the Ministerial Advisory Council (MAC) and Public Libraries Victoria Network (PLVN) seek to develop a new strategic approach for the repositioning and rebranding of Libraries in Victoria that would guide future funding and publicity for libraries across Victoria.

CITY OF MELBOURNE - A CAPITAL CITY LIBRARY SERVICE

Melbourne is the creative capital of Australia and a UNSECO City of Literature. As a capital city, the Melbourne Library Service (MLS) has more than 1.4million visits annually, with 70% of our members residing beyond the boundaries of the municipality.

The MLS is uniquely placed to support the kind of innovation and leadership required to reflect and represent the role that a contemporary library service plays in Australian culture.

The MLS plays a unique and important role in servicing many non residents of the City. This contributes significantly to other State Government institutions and registered training organisations within the City in support of the State of Victoria's objective for Melbourne as a Knowledge City.

The City of Melbourne believes that a revised structure and funding arrangement needs to be adopted between the Victorian Government and the City of Melbourne Library service to better acknowledge and reflect the Capital City role and function.

Some examples of specific and unique Capital City funding arrangements can be found in a number of other capital cities around the world and in Australia (eg: Adelaide). These arrangements are established to appropriately reflect and fund the unique patronage and role that a capital city library service plays in delivering in partnership on State Government and capital city objectives.

At present the funding arrangements between the Victorian Government and the City of Melbourne reflect its role as a municipal library service and results in only 10% of the MLS funding coming from the Victorian Government for a library service that is playing a significant role in supporting the City's reputation as a knowledge capital and a UNESCO City of Literature.

CoM submits that the Minister enter into consultation with the City for the development of a revised funding and structural arrangement that would acknowledge the capital city function and contribution of the Melbourne Library Service.

LEADING - THROUGH COLLECTIVE AND CONSORTIA THINKING

Demonstrating leadership and developing greater influence through collective thinking is not new to libraries, attested by entities such as the Ministerial Advisory Committee and the Public Libraries Victoria Network (PLVN). The consortia arrangement put in place for the development and adoption of library management systems has lead to great improvements in functionality, customer outcomes and ensured that vendor innovation is closely aligned to the objectives of library services.

New technology continues to emerge as a defining feature of future library services. The ability to be at the cutting edge of new technology will be an important part of positioning libraries as desirable, relevant and necessary public institutions into the future. The key challenges facing libraries in their endeavour to be at the cutting edge of technology is the ability to adopt said technologies and associated cost.

The ability to adopt technology is critical in positioning libraries as a leader rather than a laggard. The capacity of library services to be a 'timely adopter' of technologies requires the resources and expertise necessary to assess new technologies through all the stages of research and testing to adoption and implementation. The resource required for this entire process can often be beyond the resources of any individual library service.

A consortia arrangement applied to other areas of technology could enable the library sector to act collectively and share resources to expedite the assessment and adoption of 'technology' appropriate to the 21st century library service.

'E-Book' technology

In the technology age, one of the format changes most likely to have significant implications for libraries is the emergence of the 'e-book'. The adoption of the e-book format has its own specific challenges that require its own specific collective response.

Indications from other parts of the world are that the public appetite for 'e-books' as a new format for reading and learning is on the rise. In combination with traditional hard format books, there are many benefits to be gained through the adoption of 'e-book' technology.

The key challenge facing Australia is the new publishing environment of e-books. At the heart of this issue is the ability of Australian library services to develop the capacity and scale necessary to overcome the current publishing constraints, which if not overcome will significantly hamper the ability of libraries to provide universal and free access to electronic publications.

The City of Melbourne recommends that the MAC and PLVN take a lead role in the development across Australia of an 'e-books' consortia aimed at developing strategies to address the barriers for universal and free access to electronic publications in Australia.

CHALLENGES FOR COLLECTIONS, RESOURCES AND PROGRAMS OVER THE NEXT 5 TO 10 YEARS?

<u>COLLECTIONS, RESOURCES AND PROGRAMS</u>

Investment in collections: At present there is sufficient funding to allow purchase of new materials to meet the needs of our users, however with at least three new libraries planned over the next few years, it may be difficult for the City of Melbourne to keep up with materials purchasing. This is particularly difficult as library stocks age and require constant refreshing.

Further difficulty is through the constant growth in our loan figures, currently increasing at about 9% per annum. This puts great pressure on the collections requiring greater levels of replacement to occur, at a cost to new titles. This may call for a funding formula for Melbourne Library Service which recognises high turnover due to its capital city status. This formula would recognise a key component of the formula being replacement costs.

MLS has launched into provision of e-books and e-audio books through third party providers. Current funding is unable to allow leasing of sufficient titles to offer a sufficiently wide range and number of titles. At present there are a minimal number of library services which provide e-books, therefore the demand on MLS stock comes from right across Victoria. With other libraries adding e-books to their collections, the situation will improve for our local members.

Another key challenge now and in the future is working with publishers and distributors to enable the provision of digital content in line with user expectations and to advocate for at least the same access as our overseas counterparts.

Standards: The age of our collections is acceptable in most instances, however greater demand for updating collections will occur over the next five years as City Library stock rapidly reaches the end of its life cycle.

LOTE: Our current LOTE and ESL (English learning texts) collections are in very high demand and require constant expenditure, as new language groups move in to the City of Melbourne we need to be able to respond to provision of different languages. LOTE materials are expensive to purchase and process, and in many cases meet the needs of a relatively small population, therefore do not achieve the turnover of English materials. MLS is currently testing the feasibility of setting up a cooperative LOTE procurement service similar to the one run by SLNSW but on a much smaller scale, commencing with our Chinese collections. This is anticipated to deliver greater efficiency and cost effectiveness across an expensive area of our collection.

Procurement: MLS is currently involved in a Procurement Australia tender to provide a more efficient and cost effective method of procuring library materials and providing shelf ready items. The new procurement contract should deliver greater economies of scale as a greater number of library services are participating in the tender. Additionally Procurement Australia is expert in the field of procurement and is more likely to effectively address all aspects of Local Government legislation with respect to procurement.

Programs: Demand for programs continues to grow. This year MLS has increased the number of children's programs, but demand is still outstripping supply. It will become increasingly difficult to offer more programs as they are staff intensive and there is little possibility to increase staff levels. MLS continues to investigate ways to redirect staff to programs through continued efficiencies with the introduction of RFID and more efficient work practises. MLS is also working to develop further partnerships in delivery of programs to meet the needs of our users.

RFID: City of Melbourne has introduced RFID technologies across all branches, and will roll out as new libraries open. City of Melbourne has made the decision to introduce this technology as an effective and efficient way to deal with the millions of transactions that are carried out each year.

Outreach: Currently outreach is provided through extensive on-line services, our outreach and partnerships staff, children's and youth services staff and through home library service. While demand increases for these services, fixed staff numbers prevent large increases in the outreach area.

What assistance is required to meet the challenges?

Increased funding is of course at the core of the limited resources and programs. At present the State Government funding is approximately 10% of total operation costs, costs which will continue to grow as further libraries are added to our service. As a capital city library, some 70% of our users are non-residents, a new funding agreement for City of Melbourne would certainly be a step in the right direction to recognise our special use by Victorians in general.

<u>LIBRARY BUILDINGS</u>

Fit-for-purpose buildings: City of Melbourne currently has two new libraries under development. Our Southbank Library is due to open in July 2012 in a converted heritage building which has posed some challenges. The Docklands Library due to open towards the end of 2013 is a purpose built facility jointly funded by Lend Lease, Places Victoria and the City of Melbourne.

 The current City Library has outgrown its current space and it is likely it will need to be moved in the next five years. The cost of a purpose built central library for Melbourne Library Service will require significant support from other levels of government and stakeholders.

Standards: An agreed standard on the size of public libraries would assist in planning of new facilities. However being a capital city library, our central library would require significant extra space to cope with the demands placed on it. Our current City Library is approximately 1650m2 with some 3000 visitors a day and over 1 million loans per year, It is envisaged that a greatly enlarged and well planned space will be required to take this library in to the future.

Compliance: Our libraries all meet current building codes and accessibility standards, although City Library and North Melbourne Library being older buildings, this is an on-going and costly exercise. As older buildings they are not able to meet the Council's goals for green buildings.

Co-location: The Southbank Library is co-located with several other council services, including artist studios and family services. While co-location is ideal when the building space allows for this, it is a design challenge in buildings that lack space and are retrofitted to meet the communities needs.

Provision of other services: Melbourne Library Service provides limited meeting spaces at its libraries. Demand for public seating space has seen the opening up of meeting spaces as general library spaces. Council is developing a payment kiosk that will be located in each library to allow transactions to occur.

What assistance is required to meet the challenges?

Redevelopment or relocation of our libraries is required to allow inclusion of sufficient public space as well as meeting spaces as demanded by our users. Redevelopments and relocations will require the financial support of all levels of government.

TECHNOLOGY

LibraryLink : Melbourne Library Service is developing the technology to allow full support of LibraryLink systems during the next few months. Swift software does not provide a suitable solution for Melbourne Library Service, however there may be some investigation into sharing a library management system with a 'like' library.

Future technologies: Provision of new technologies is a challenge for all library services, in terms of cost, expertise, council willingness to support new technologies, appropriately trained staff to assist users, and the space to have the technologies available to the public. Melbourne Library Service has kept at the forefront of technologies through continued support by the City of Melbourne and experienced technology staff in the library service. However the introduction of large technology items such as book dispensing machines requires greater support from other levels of government.

Community use of technology: Libraries have traditionally provided free access to desktop computers. We will see a change in this offering over the next few years as we move to using tablets on wireless systems. However this comes at a cost as existing furniture and hardware is no longer required and more powerful wifi systems and tablet dispensing kiosks take their place.

Users already expect mobile applications to interact with the library service. At present we have a mobile catalogue under development and hope that over time we will be able to employ an app writer to develop apps specifically for MLS.

MLS is also planning to offer access to other technologies such as sound recording studio, animation and video editing suites, CAD design and 3D printing of models, to name but a few.

SERVICE DELIVERY

Workforce: It has been a challenge for libraries to attract qualified and experienced staff for several years now and this issue will increase as our workforce ages. Salaries for library staff tend to be

lower than other areas of local government staff for equivalent qualifications, skills and job requirements.   As a key strategy for recruitment of staff, MLS works closely with two universities with library and information science departments through provision of work placements, tours and mentor programs. City of Melbourne will be looking at its whole award structure including staff classifications across all divisions during the next 12 months. A review of this kind has not occurred for many years.

MLS is moving toward employing a mix of both formally qualified librarians and specialists (e.g. Multimedia technicians) who received in house training in basic reference and customer service skills.

Equity in access: City of Melbourne is inadequately resourced as a capital city library service by the State Government as there is no recognition of the high non resident use of our library services which equates to approximately 70% of our total membership. Current funding is based on a per capita basis which fails to acknowledge the highest non resident library usage in Victoria.

 A change in the funding formula for City of Melbourne is required if the State is to play an appropriate role in the provision of library service at City of Melbourne.   The demand on book collections is very high, with a turnover much higher than the state average, greater numbers of collections are required to give equality of access to materials.

Model of service: With the introduction of RFID self service kiosks, the model of service has changed with focus more on user support, general reference assistance and public training. MLS Library staff have undergone training and continue to develop skills in customer service and reference interviews as a result of the move from the more traditional transactional based service model.

Demographic change: Additional to this non residential component of library use, the City of Melbourne has one of the fastest growing populations in Victoria and this is projected to grow exponentially in future years with hot spots in the Southbank and Docklands areas.   The City of Melbourne has responded by building new libraries in these areas however these developments will not ease the demand on the current City Library which has outgrown its spaces due to the demand by international students, city workers, residents and visitors to the city.   It has been clear for some time that City Library will need to relocate to meet demand within the next five years.