

## **Revitalising Libraries for the Self Serve Generation**

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In November 2008 I was awarded the Margery C Ramsay Scholarship by the Library Board of Victoria. The scholarship has provided the opportunity to research innovative libraries throughout Australia and New Zealand and look at formulae for success in targeting displays, signage, layout and staffing to local users.

This presentation will highlight my research on the changing face of customer service in this self serve age, identifying the changing way the community “shops” and how this should influence the design and layout of libraries in the future. Libraries must constantly adapt in order to stay afloat.

As we move forward the key to a workable library design will be to incorporate that feeling of third place, not only in the sense of a place to appeal outside the home and work environments but a place of inspiration, a place that caters not only to the body and mind but also to the senses.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century do we need a circulation desk as an imposing presence on the library floor? What options are there to dispense with a desk, what changes to service are born out of a no desk environment and what can be done to help staff cope these changes to a more retail, customer focused environment.

Improving the look and feel of the library is a major part: making each library an inviting space, offering customers access to information and recreational activities but also supporting them by providing a choice of self service technology or staff assisted searching.

While the physical space is important, perhaps more important is the role of staff. Library staff must transition into the role of connectors. The book police and gatekeepers of the past must make way for people with a passion for working in the community who can adapt to a flexible environment, quickly identifying people’s needs and connecting them with information, technology or resources at levels to suit those needs.

My presentation will include recommendations to optimise staff interaction with customers, ways to adapt service techniques and ways leaders can support staff through changes. These recommendations will be supported by community feedback from “shopper” surveys and staff feedback from site visits. It will also include a slide show of photographs from library visits and look more broadly at ideas to improve layout, signage, display and the general vibe of the library space, catering for those taking full advantage of the self serve environment by visiting without interacting with staff.