

## Taree City Library — Not Your Average Library

*You'd better get down here ... it's so cool!* — perhaps not your average comment about a library from a sixteen-year-old youth talking on his mobile — but then again this is not your average library.



*Photo courtesy Lifestyle Profiles Photography*

Greater Taree City Library's central library is the first of a new generation of public libraries for the Manning Valley, 300 kilometres north of Sydney on the NSW coast. Taree's leading edge library facility opened on 3 January 2007 and two new branches will open in 2008.

The new building has provided a significant increase in floor space (from 480m<sup>2</sup> to 1168m<sup>2</sup>) and this has enabled the expansion of services to a more appropriate level. For example, the number of public access computers has grown from 11 to 29 and public Internet hours have gone through the roof!

But even more gratifying is the creation of an ambient, welcoming space where members of our community clearly feel at home and often verbalise this sentiment.

What were the keys to this building's success?

- a clear commitment from our library strategic plan to develop more user-friendly libraries

- a detailed analysis of work practices & OHS issues which flowed into purpose designed joinery
- high priorities given to both aesthetics and marketing
- library staff being the key members of the interior design team.

What features make Taree Library so special?

- the genrification of all collections
- lounge areas overlooking the park for 'browsing' non-fiction
- innovative raked shelf design — featuring designer end panels for marketing and centre in-fill panels purely for aesthetics
- subject signage — retail style — on every bay
- unconventional shelving layout which encourages exploratory journeys through the library
- bold theme signage rather than directional signs
- circulation desk with laminate of local newspaper clippings
- stunning murals in the children's corner and dedicated youth space.

The response from the community to the new Taree Library has been one of great excitement, with an increase in library visitation of 34%; loans up by 26% and 2,500 new members joining in the first six months. To quote another satisfied customer: 'I wish I could move in here!'

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## Innovative Spaces @ Curtin University Library

When the university library closed its bindery in 2004, it released prime space within the building in a very busy access area. Responding to client feedback and studies indicating the importance of social space for students, the Lounge @ your library® took form and was opened in mid-2005.

The Lounge was designed as a multi-purpose area catering to student needs, in particular providing a place for international students to gather. There are facilities for food and drink, daily newspapers, a notice board, television, computers, casual seating areas and kitchen facilities so that the space can be used for student events and library functions.

In September 2007, the library introduced a new service using space adjacent to the Lounge @ your library®. A Newsroom has now been fitted with a large screen plasma television and several comfortable chairs for watching foreign language news. This allows clients to catch up with news from overseas and also helps those studying a foreign language or culture, with programs running continuously throughout the library's opening hours.

The library is currently developing additional exciting, flexible learning space that will allow clients to interact with library staff as

well as other students and access library resources and state-of-the-art technology. Work will commence over the summer break, with the new area to open in mid-2008.

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