



Indigenous services at the State Library of NSW

The State Library of NSW has a number of programs and initiatives in place to assist Indigenous researchers and others interested in Indigenous studies.

Specialist Indigenous Services Librarians Ronald Briggs and Melissa Jackson have worked at the Library since 1991 enhancing access to information from the Library's collections for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers.

The Indigenous Services Team is based in Reader Services and deals directly with the public using the Library's reference desks. Liaising with individual researchers and Indigenous group visitors, they provide assistance when required; ranging from short-term visits to research taking months or years.

There has been a marked decline in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who actually visit the library's reading rooms over recent years, possibly reflecting the increase in the use of the internet for sourcing information.

The library's website, like many others, has become integral to the provision of information about services and collections. Indigenous Services have worked extensively on exhibitions that feature Indigenous content, much of which becomes available online. Indigenous materials held by the library are prioritised for digitisation.

The State Library acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services and is aware of sensitivity issues associated with some Indigenous materials kept in its collections. The library is participating in a pilot project with the University of Technology, Sydney, to investigate appropriate means of digitising materials with Indigenous content.

The Indigenous Services Team advises cataloguers and other library professionals within the library about describing, cataloguing and publicly displaying Indigenous collections when appropriate.

Readers Services operates an Information Request Service where limited research can be undertaken for NSW country and non-NSW clients requiring access to the library's unique collections. The records of the Australian Board of Missions, for example, contain a great deal of information about the work of missionaries in Aboriginal communities in northern and central Australia.

InfoKoori is an online index to the Koori Mail newspaper available from the Library's website and is a library initiative from the 1993 UN Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples. Indexing for this database is done by the Indigenous Services Team and also includes references to many other published sources of information about the Aboriginal people of NSW.

Much of the indexing done on InfoKoori is especially relevant to the Stolen Generations as it includes information from early government and missionary publications – the agencies responsible for the removal and care of Aboriginal children. The library also works in collaboration with State Records NSW and the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs to hold

information days, locally and throughout the State, about the availability of records relating to Aboriginal people.

Indigenous Services run workshops at public libraries that feature Aboriginal family and local history research. These have been successful in attracting the Indigenous community to the library and informing about local studies collections.

The State Library of NSW continues to demonstrate its commitment to the Indigenous people of NSW through a range of programs that make it easier to access one of the world's great Indigenous studies collections. The library also actively promotes a greater understanding of Indigenous peoples, cultures and histories.

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Working together

In 1997 the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) Learning Centre began working with the Yurauna Centre to establish a Resource Library within the Yurauna Centre.

The Yurauna Centre, located on Reid Campus at CIT, provides educational programs and student support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at CIT. The student support includes academic and personal support for Indigenous students in a culturally friendly environment where students can meet and study. The Yurauna Centre's Resource Library is an excellent resource for study, research, self-development, cultural knowledge and literacy.

Resources are added to the CIT Learning Centre catalogue and are classified by an in house system using broad subject terms and the first 3 letters of the title. Material is lent using a manual card system. The Learning Centre continues to provide advice on the security, accessibility, development and maintenance of the collection.

In 2006 the Learning Centre won the CIT Chief Executive's Indigenous Reconciliation award for their work with the Yurauna Centre in establishing the Resource Library.

The partnership between the two Centres also includes Yurauna staff delivering courses in cultural awareness to Learning Centre staff and as a result, Learning Centre staff are equipped to deliver Information Literacy sessions to Indigenous students. Sessions are delivered in the Yurauna Centre where students are in a familiar environment and in the Learning Centre. The assistance provided to students by Library staff in using learning Centre services and resources has been fundamental in ensuring that students are comfortable in utilising these essential student services.

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