



PUBLIC LIBRARIES NEED TO GO **RAD**

Past perceptions of public libraries can still haunt people who haven't accessed a library since their childhood. Memories of a grim lady in a dark and dusty room presiding over her treasure trove linger long, and an antipathy to children was imbibed by many would-be young users. The Shire of Harvey library team says this has to change.

Current reality needs to be promoted to combat these gloomy perceptions. But how do we do this for those who have been frightened off for ever? A lively, funky, and well-designed promotional program is needed to get libraries not only noticed, but to change perceptions from sad to 'rad'.

Radical promotion needs internet and TV advertising, Facebook presence, articles in popular magazines, and inclusion in scripts of prime-time shows such as *Home & Away*, *Packed to the Rafters*, and *Sunrise*. (The nature of libraries as community hubs was well expressed in *The Librarians* series, although a more positive presentation would have possibly been more helpful).

Radical rebranding using bright and stylish logos on information pamphlets, posters and signage needs to be in public places such as shopping malls, high streets, transport centres, entertainment venues, cafes, hospitals and so on. The message needs to offer buzz and stimulation in addition to our well-respected trust and professionalism. We need to sell a notion or idea or possibility, in addition to the physical product of books.

Radical personnel and in-house overhauls of visual presentation would be effective. Video-store style public libraries with young tech-savvy staff in stylish work-wear could provide a fast-track channel to up-market

resources. Books presented face-on and with 21st century lighting and furnishing could be accompanied by the availability of snacks and drinks for purchase. Bigger libraries are already offering extended services such as in-library retail outlets for accessories, stationery and some books, plus coffee shops and child-care opportunities. Should more funding be set aside for these add-ons, despite a possible negative impact on resource purchases?

Radical programs that appeal to all ages are probably already on offer at many libraries – but does

their promotion have zest and sex appeal? Do we have the courage to spend more on publicity and marketing, even if it means spending less on resources? We have wonderful resources, but without pushing ourselves energetically in fields including education, community development, social inclusion, personal fulfillment, and literacy, our sometimes under-utilised resources may be wasteful to the public purse.

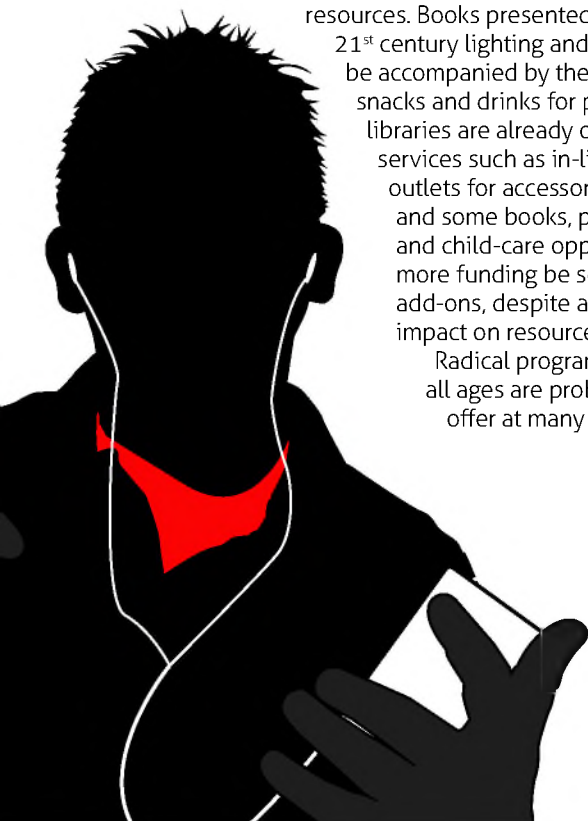
Radical is not a word that can often be used with some current library staff. Fifty-plus year old ladies (myself included) are often not the face of radical changes that could lift our profile from the comfortable 'nice and safe' to something more ritzy and even glamorous. Can we change from

warm and fuzzy Milo to bright and sparkly Moet? We have the knowledge, we have the skills, we have the resources. We now need to add a sound market and media presence. Let's engage some top of the range execs to move us into the limelight where we so much deserve to be.

Ruth Campbell-Hicks

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