

THINK CREATIVE / BE CREATIVE

Libraries are widely regarded as trusted repositories of knowledge: by definition, these institutions collect and preserve information relating to almost every aspect of human existence. In terms of creative works, the thousands of kilometres of shelving within Australian libraries support collections of art, audio items, books, ephemera, films, journals, objects, magazines, manuscripts, personal papers, photographs, and realia. The role of libraries is not, however, only preservation and storage: these institutions are active and productive engine rooms of creativity. Of course librarians, across the country and around the world, know this. Indeed, library and information professionals regularly model creativity and innovative thinking through not only their facilitation of new ways to access collection materials, but also in their own production of new knowledge through undertaking research projects that advance the profession and benefit their clients. Many clients, however, might not immediately identify some of the activities that libraries facilitate as 'creative'.

Yet, all libraries demonstrate creativity in numerous areas that range from public programming to content co-creation. This can be seen in the diverse efforts of libraries that, for instance, offer baby-related programming, which aims to stimulate creativity with pre-literacy activities designed to encourage little ones to read, provide programs for students from

The idea that only some people are creative is made void in ... arenas where everyone has the capacity to be creative...

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primary school through to tertiary level, as well as a significant range of offerings for lifelong learners. Creativity is also visible in the way libraries provide access to book clubs targeting specific groups within their communities, gaming sessions (on site and online), and resources for researchers creating family trees. Libraries, and their clients, also demonstrate their capacity for creativity through content co-creation projects; one of the better-known examples being the National Library of Australia's Australian Newspapers Digitisation Program. Newspapers are made available online and volunteers then correct newspaper text. These volunteers can also communicate with each other in a user forum, which becomes a site of peer-to-peer learning. This is a very creative enterprise in both idea and design, perhaps most especially because the provision of more accessible data facilitates more creative use of it. The work of libraries in placing content online opens up new ways for clients to creatively interact with libraries as well as each other. There is also a range of popular social media tools now readily available to libraries such as blogs, Facebook, and YouTube, while Twitter is proving to be a very effective tool for creatively promoting collections and encouraging interaction with those collections.

In these and many other ways, libraries are active and productive engine rooms, as well as storehouses, of creativity. As these cultural institutions belong to us all, so too, does creativity: the idea that only some people are creative is made void in these arenas where everyone has the capacity to be creative – to take imaginative, innovative, and often unpredictable, but always vibrant, concepts and make them his or her own.

This article is from a longer work, *Libraries and archives: trusted repositories of knowledge and vibrant engine rooms of creativity*, available free online at: <http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue16/Brien&Franks.pdf>

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BECOME THE APPLE OF YOUR CUSTOMERS' EYE

Libraries can look to lessons from leading corporate brands to create lasting customer connections.

Have you ever contemplated what the Apple phenomenon is all about? What is it that drives consumers to crave Apple products and line up for hours to interact with its retail stores?

Imagine if you could emulate Apple's customer engagement success across your library community. What if you could create a virtual and physical connection that achieved the same rousing appeal? What could this do for your organisation, your customers, and your library?

Being different starts with a vision to be different.

At the core of Apple's success is a clear vision to be different. Its aim is not to make and sell technology products – this is what the company does. Its goal is much bigger, and underpins every customer interaction from brand and product development, customer service, and operations.

From all observations it seems the company's objective is to *build emotional customer connections through technology innovation*.

An example of how Apple forms emotional connections with users is by enabling them to self-select and self-create the content (apps) they want on their phones, tablets, and computers. As a result, the user's ability to customise the content and how they use the device, *the way they want it*, has a positive effect on how the product and service is perceived. This creates an unmatched loyalty as there is no other product or service like it on the market. It is truly as unique as the user themselves.

This strong ability to create emotional connections is extended across the company's retail outlets where customers can engage one-on-one and gain personalised service in a 'club' like environment – offering a physical experience comparable to the customer's virtual world.

The combination of the ability to self-customise content and to have the same experience reinforced across the physical and virtual environments creates one of the most powerful and lasting connections that an organisation can build with its customers.

Lessons for the library

Apple's success is based on some key understandings of today's customers. It understands that customers want to:

- flock to the latest technology and feast on advancement;
- customise the content they receive and interact with;
- feel connected, be social, and belong to like-interest groups;
- bond in physical hubs that match their virtual realities;
- self-serve and self-innovate with anywhere, anytime technology;
- be delighted by change.