

# FROM WAIKIKI TO WHISTLER



**A** library conference in Victoria on Vancouver Island in late spring was too good an opportunity for Victoria Anderson to pass up.

First stop Waikiki – Mai Tais at the Royal Hawaiian, Diamond Head at sunset, palm trees on Hanauma Bay (remember *Blue Hawaii*?) and yes, libraries! Waikiki branch could have been anywhere in suburban Australia. In fact, away from the beachfront, Oahu is reminiscent of 1970s Surfers Paradise and the library is very traditional, though busy when we visited.

Next, off to the State Library of Hawaii which doubles as the main Honolulu city library. Still housed in the original Carnegie building (beautiful but not suitable for a modern library service) the library has limited space for exhibitions, displays and events, things we expect to see in our state libraries. The building is built around an open garden, so is a lovely cool green oasis in the city, and you can even get your passport in the government information centre located in the library.

Across the Pacific to Seattle and the biggest public library I have ever been in. Eleven floors, one million+ items, 400 computers and the cleverest idea for a library shop – purpose built compactus shelves – what a great idea for a pop-up library! The library was celebrating its 10th birthday and the place was buzzing, though we were assured it is always like that (even without the free cupcakes) with over 8,000 visitors a day, and more than 2,000 events a year.

The stack areas spiral round four floors with floor tiles marking whereabouts in Dewey you are. The children's area is huge and noisy and constantly changing – adapting to what its customers want to do in the flexible space. There is colour, quirky furniture and technology everywhere, and the 200+ seat auditorium more than earns its keep when not being used for library events.

Seattle highlights were oysters at the waterfront, Pike Place Markets (remember the salmon tossing in *Fish*?), underground tour of the original city and the EMP museum (daleks, Nirvana, Jimmy Hendrix, horror movies).

Ferry across to Victoria, and I decide to emigrate! Such a beautiful city. Classical architecture, sparkling harbour, gardens, great seafood, craft beer, tame seals – this place has got it all. The Canadian library conference was held at the Conference Centre across the road from the Fairmont Empress Hotel, and bless you organisers for the special rate which allowed us to stay there. Absolutely fabulous.

The conference program was diverse with several different streams, lots of interactive sessions, and some excellent

poster presentations. Of particular interest were presentations on community engagement at St Jerome's University, the interior design audit at Edmonton Public Library (50 Shades of Greige), a roundtable discussion about public library boards, and a panel of speakers describing their great marketing ideas. We enjoyed the trade show too and have made a few good contacts. See the website for copies of some of the papers ([cla.pwwebhost.com/conference/2014/](http://cla.pwwebhost.com/conference/2014/)).

Victoria Public Library is housed in the provincial government building in town – a stock standard office building. Glass-walled staff offices are located around the edges of the reading room – not sure about that. Lots of technology, a lovely children's area and a really diverse range of events and activities, many of which happen in the large indoor atrium (in recognition of Canadian winters?).

Another ferry to Vancouver. First impression? Big city, ho hum, but it grows on you. Accommodation in the CBD is plentiful and cheap (\$300k for a brand new two bedroom apartment) so the city is very lively at ground level; lots of cafés, parks and pubs, and beautifully situated on English Bay.

There are no provincial/state libraries in Canada but Vancouver Library holds a large collection of British Columbia resources and historical documents. This room is one of only three staffed areas; the others are the children's space and the circulation desk.

Staff members do not sit at desks but wander the library with mobile phones and tablets. There is a help point on each floor where you can summon a librarian, or they will come to find you, courtesy of location markers on bay ends. Lots of training and meeting rooms, music rehearsal spaces, a job seekers' centre, a big multicultural collection and a delightful children's space where everything, including the technology, is kid-sized.

The library is entered through a soaring arcade with shops and cafés (all rental income goes to the library), and the staff area on the ground floor is open and visible from the many bridges which criss-cross the floors above.

We even squeezed in a visit to Whistler Public Library, where the visits and loans increase tenfold each ski season, and storytime is delivered at the ice rink!

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