

# PUBLIC LIBRARIES: ALIVE, WELL AND LOVED!

Public Libraries Australia recently ran a public survey entitled 'The three things you love most about your local public library', between October 2014 and January 2015. They were overwhelmed with the love expressed by more than 200 respondents from all over Australia!

*'Public libraries rock! Books are my first love but libraries are about more than books. They are about connections within your local community. It might sound corny but this makes the world a much better place.'*

*'Life would be dreadful without the library. I've been using public libraries for over 50 years. The internet has transformed what was a good service into a really wonderful and easily accessible source of knowledge and entertainment. I give my library a gold star – probably an elephant stamp as well!'*

## RESOURCES

More than 75% of respondents made positive comments about library resources, particularly the range of collection materials such as books, DVDs, magazines, and audio books. Many commented on the important role the library plays in lifelong learning:

*'The collection is comprehensive, extensive, absorbing and exhilarating. There is always something to be found that will expand my knowledge and skills, or just to feed my soul.'*

*'I started my online education at the public library when we couldn't afford a computer or Internet. I began with a Cert IV, then my diploma, now I have a degree.'*

## STAFF

We already know this, but the survey results proved it – patrons love their library staff!

56% of respondents made positive comments about the library staff, such as:

*'The staff at my library are absolutely wonderful. They greet me with a smile every time and are always so friendly and helpful. I have been a member and frequent user of my library for over 20 years, since I was a small child. It's been a pleasure over the years to see it constantly evolve and improve but never lose its welcoming atmosphere and outstanding service. I love my library!'*

*'I am amazed at the dedication and help that is always available and nothing is too much trouble. I appreciate all that they do.'*

## BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES

Over 40% of respondents made positive comments regarding library buildings and facilities, commenting on the ambience, atmosphere, and calm, and the fact that libraries are welcoming and open to everyone:

*'A community meeting place – a well-accessed library equates with a strong community. I have formed friendships*



*with staff, bumped into my friends there and also made new friendships. As I live in a small town, I have crossed paths in the local library with shop assistants, my children's teachers and more. It is a place where news and information are swapped via casual conversations.'*

*'This library is welcoming to all age groups, hosts activities for all, and promotes a wonderful sense of community – important in an age of social media.'*

*'Welcoming, comfortable, warm in winter, blessedly cool in summer it is my home away from home.'*

*'I love the feeling of this library. Children chattering, ladies knitting amidst outbursts of laughter and the intensity of teens concentrating on their devices doing whatever teens do.'*

## PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

A quarter of all respondents love the range of programs and activities, and 15% of them commented favourably on children's activities:

*'I love the fact that my two year old is as excited by a visit to the library for storytime and book borrowing as she is about a trip to the zoo.'*

*'I love the many programs they run suitable for families and young children.'*

*'I love the art activities and storytime sessions (and the staff that run them).'*

## TECHNOLOGY AND ONLINE ACCESS

Although three quarters of Australia's households now have broadband internet, access to technology at the library is another thing our patrons love. Approximately 23% of respondents commented positively on online access to resources (11%), free wi-fi and internet (6%) and the availability of public computers, printers etc (6%). Comments included:

*'Playing PlayStation games with my daughter in the children's library, when the library is quiet.'*

*'Great online services so I can request books/DVDs and they let me know when to pick them up.'*

*'To be able to go online and reserve a book I have heard about is great, just thinking about my library makes me feel good and I might just go there now.'*

Public Libraries and their communities – let's harness the love and ownership – together we will be unbeatable!

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