



ALL SHINY AND NEW



At the end of May, a new world of possibilities will arrive for Sydney's Double Bay community with the opening of an exciting new library. VICKI MUNRO can't wait.

It's with a touch of sadness that we say goodbye to our current much-loved library in the historic St Brigid's building in the beautiful Blackburn Gardens. It has been our home for more than 50 years, but we've simply outgrown the 119-year-old building.

The design concept of 'a garden within a library' is a tribute to the current building. We think people will love the space – the total area is 2,234 square metres, a substantial improvement on the current 468 square metres. There are three floors and there will be spaces for everyone, from quiet, contemplative areas to a bustling events hub and access to the latest gaming and technology. They will also love the extra seating, improved accessibility of the library provided by a large lift, inclusion of the local history collection within the library (which we're also digitising for 24/7 access) – all within convenient access to parking and fabulous new shops. The building and layout is flexible enough to meet both our current and future needs.

To match our new state-of-the-art building, we're implementing a new service model to bring our vision for a 21st-century library to life: self-service technologies, automated returns and online services will be used wherever possible. Staff will be able to spend more time with customers and we'll be increasing our use of volunteers to provide excellent service and increase community engagement.

While Woollahra Libraries has always had a strong focus on literary events, we're now extending our programs to engage a wider range of library users:

- Culture Vulture events – comedy, storytelling and live music in the evening
- Youth events – gaming, film nights, pop culture trivia nights, HSC and study support, makerspace and STEM learning opportunities
- Library Bites – to help customers connect with established and emerging technologies
- Small-business workshops – these will cover business writing, how to turn a good idea into a business and how to develop a marketing plan
- Seniors events – older library users can connect socially and hear from guest speakers
- Discover Your Local History – the reintegration of our Local History collection will allow for local history research and genealogy through regular workshops.

There are a few important lessons we've learned:

- Expect delays. Our project is significantly behind schedule due to unexpected construction difficulties and bad weather. While you can't control the weather, you can make the construction process easier by using the same construction company for the build and fit-out to ensure continuity. Appoint a dedicated project manager to oversee the construction so you can focus on library services.

- Be adaptable. Make your plans adaptable, particularly around technology to cope with the rapid pace of change. Many of the technologies we initially planned on using have now been superseded by newer models and we've also had to consider emerging technologies, such as 3D printing. Factor in extra cabling and power points to allow greater flexibility and don't attach fixtures and furniture, so you can evolve spaces as required.
- Budget accordingly. Construction delays and technology advances inevitably resulted in our costs going up, so allow wiggle room in your budget.

We've set some ambitious targets for the new library's first year: growing our active membership by 70 percent, increasing library visitation by 50 percent, and increasing circulation by 40 percent.

Once the move is complete, we'll enter a test-and-learn phase. We've anticipated how we think the community will use the new library, but this might not match the reality. We'll continue to adapt our spaces, programs and processes as required to meet community needs and reach our targets. ✨

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