CONNECTING AND THRIVING

LIBRARY PLAN
2021-2025

GEELONG
REGIONAL
LIBRARIES

CONTENTS

WELCOME

We are pleased to present our Library Plan 2021-25.

The Geelong Regional Library Corporation *Library Plan 2021-2025: Connecting and Thriving* acknowledges and responds to the cataclysmic changes of 2020 and 2021. It celebrates and seeks new ways to support reading, learning, thinking, creativity, work, community cohesiveness and care for Country. It brings to the forefront Geelong Regional Library Corporation's (GRLC) capacity to be an imaginative leader and partner in the region's economic, social and cultural recovery.

The scale of disruption caused by COVID-19 to work, movement, travel, education, industry, business viability and human connectivity has been monumental.

While there have been many losses during the global pandemic, there have also been unexpected gains, including:

/ massive uptakes in the use of digital platforms and online communication tools, from e-commerce, e-learning and e-government, to online entertainment and cultural experiences

/ a renewed focus on local neighbourhoods and the importance of quality public spaces

/ new business offerings and hybrid ways of working

/ reprioritising collective solutions to replace individualism.

The Geelong region can draw on its rich history of design, invention and adaptation to build on and strengthen these positive trends.

As our region rebuilds its economies and communities it will need lively centres for learning and working, jobs and business opportunities, inclusive community gathering places, access to knowledge and information, uplifting cultural and creative experiences, opportunities for connection, and collaborative approaches to innovative partnerships.

GRLC plays a leadership role in all of the above.

CONNECTING AND THRIVING

More than 4,000 people have contributed to the development of this strategy. We've received feedback, ideas and advice about what we need to keep doing well – and start doing – to better support the needs and aspirations of our regional communities.

The *GRLC Library Plan 2021-2025: Connecting and Thriving* reflects the generous, concrete and imaginative feedback our communities have provided.

It is built around four interconnected pillars: Community, Places and Spaces, Our People and Regional Leadership. These pillars aim to strengthen and expand what we already do so well as a leading public library service – providing spaces, tools and know-how to help our communities to connect and thrive.

LOOKING FORWARD

We have a lot to look forward to.

In 2021, we welcomed Colac Otway Shire into the GRLC network. Membership of GRLC now mirrors the footprint of G21, our region's collaborative regional alliance. We are excited to work with our newest communities – as well as existing ones – to provide tailored and localised library services, increasingly delivered 'beyond the four walls' of our libraries.

The communities of Queenscliff, Drysdale, Torquay, Lara and Armstrong Creek are keenly anticipating their new or refurbished libraries, which will emerge during the life of this plan. We look forward to these being dynamic, well-designed, inclusive and creative spaces, reflecting community input.

The strategic challenge for GRLC is to continue to provide high quality services and support expansion in designated growth areas during a period of financial restraint.

Our people are our future. As a team we will forge a path as innovative, empathetic, collaborative and curious leaders. We will put customers and staff at the centre of what we do, playing a key role in strengthening the health and wellbeing of our people and communities.

The GRLC is a leader in the G21 region – both as an employer and a provider of community services – and we will play an important role in the region's COVID-19 recovery. This includes ensuring that our spaces and programs reflect the needs of our growing region – connected to contemporary and emerging platforms and practices.

The future of GRLC is full of contradictions: online and physical; quiet and noise; inside and outside; high tech and sensory; experimentation and expertise; celebrating new ideas and learning from the ancient knowledge of First Nation Peoples.

No matter what challenges we face over the next few years, GRLC will continue to provide a home for learning, available to everyone, out and about across the region, working in partnership to build resilient and thriving regional communities.

Vanessa Schernickau, Chief Executive Officer

Councillor Ron Nelson, Board Chair

This plan celebrates and seeks new ways to support reading, learning, thinking, creativity, work, community cohesiveness and care for Country.

CONTEXT

Since its inception in 1997, the Geelong Regional Library Corporation (GRLC) has succeeded in elevating the region's public library service to be one of the best in Victoria.

Collaboration between its Member Councils – the Borough of Queenscliffe, City of Greater Geelong, Golden Plains Shire, Surf Coast Shire, and from 2021, Colac Otway Shire – has always been paramount to the GRLC's success.

There have been numerous achievements and milestones:

/ developing scale across the regional library network, responding to local needs and award-winning building design

/ expanding library collections, physical and online

/ improving access to the region's unique history and heritage artefacts and records

/ building a strong, recognised and widely appreciated regional presence

/ consistently ranking as Victoria's benchmark public library service for efficacy and community responsiveness.

THE PARADOX OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated some trends and upended old certainties.

The importance of human connection has never been more important. Underlying inequities have been magnified, resilience and perseverance have been tested, yet the value of community contributions has been amplified.

Amidst the disruption and uncertainty, the pandemic has highlighted seeming contradictions:

/ people may be alone or isolated but also connected, part of a local and global phenomenon

/ the loss of everyday freedoms in order to enjoy greater freedom in the future

/ extended periods of lockdown generating new neighbourhood-based intimacies

/ an intensification and reliance on the digital accompanied by a craving for human contact, touch and nature.

The ramifications of the COVID-19 global pandemic will be discussed and analysed for decades. While post-pandemic recovery efforts will continue to cast a shadow over the regional landscape, opportunities for innovation and lateral thinking abound.

A PROUD REGION

The City of Geelong is a UNESCO designated design city, and the region has a long and proud history of exemplary design, manufacturing and innovation. The problem solving ethos at the heart of design thinking permeates the region's urban planning and cultural economy.

Commitment to and collaboration with First Nation Peoples are overriding principles in the thinking, planning and cultural practices of all five Member Councils. We acknowledge that the colonisation and dispossession of Wadawurrung and Eastern Maar Peoples has impaired landscape, biodiversity, cultural heritage, language retention, and ecological knowledge about how to care for sea and country. We acknowledge and celebrate First Nations Peoples of this land as the custodians of learning, literacy, knowledge and story.

The rise, fall and rise again of the region's manufacturing and agricultural industries have contributed to our stories of optimism and resilience. The 1990s recession saw significant population decline. The loss of key manufacturing industries – car, textiles, oil refining, glass and aluminium – has affected the urban and social fabric of many suburbs. The ebb and flow of tourism, particularly in the Bellarine and Surf Coast areas, contributes to sporadic economic growth.

These historic changes have been accompanied by adaptation and inventiveness. The birthplace of the Ford coupe utility – the "ute" – in 1934, has now seeded new, boutique manufacturing methods and production facilities. Deakin University, for example, continues to pioneer new manufacturing and applied digital technologies, along with a deeper investigation into First Nation Peoples' ecological knowledge of sea and country.

The region's substantial arts and creative industries, while devastated by the global pandemic, will rise again to lead new ideas, creative expression and enterprises. Commitment to environmental protection and sustainable practices are central features of community plans across all local government areas, although rapid growth will feature strongly as a tension in the years ahead.

The numerous losses and hardships associated with the pandemic are real, but disruptive change also yields invention. The Geelong region is well placed to seize the moment and imagine new possibilities for its diverse peoples and communities.

WHERE DO PUBLIC LIBRARIES FIT INTO THIS PICTURE?

There are few public services that exemplify the inventiveness and shapeshifting found in modern public libraries. Public libraries have continued to adapt and change, outliving the predictions of redundancy that some thought an inevitable fate in the age of the Internet. Through innovation in response to community needs, public libraries are now multifaceted, thriving, knowledge-rich and increasingly valued services in cities, towns and regional areas across the world.

Welcoming and accepting, trusted and resourceful, public libraries accommodate a multitude of needs, in place and online, 24/7, for increasingly diverse communities.

GRLC, like many other library services, was therefore quick to respond to the disruption triggered by pandemic-induced lockdowns. New and enhanced services – such as Click & Collect, Click & Deliver, technology access through the Home Library Service, expanded eResources, online events and programs – were developed and eagerly embraced by community members. These services will be further explored over the four-year strategy timeline, building on some of the positive change that COVID-19 has led to.

The library of the future will have Interactive experiences using virtual reality or augmented reality to engage with educational material, local histories and stories.

Library Plan 2021-25 Community Engagement Survey Respondent

PUBLIC LIBRARY TRENDS

Below is a summary of trends currently visible in the public library sector which have influenced the development of this plan.

COVID-19 / Post-COVID-19

/ A massive shift to online platforms and communications – service delivery, home-based working and education, health support – has hastened trends already in play.

/ Click & Collect and Click & Deliver services have been catapulted to a new level.

/ Dramatic uptake in use of eResources – eBooks, eMagazines, film streaming and databases.

/ Online program and event delivery has opened up new channels and new audiences.

/ Increased fluency in the use of online interfaces of all kinds has changed expectations of what libraries can be and do.

/ Restricted mobility during lockdowns has brought renewed attention to local neighbourhoods: shopping precincts, parks and public gathering places, including libraries.

/ Some public library services are stretching perceived views of what libraries can do in times of crisis and change, becoming a conduit for access to life essentials: food, health packs, tools, clothes.

/ The high uptake of eResources, combined with successive lockdowns, has reduced library visitation numbers across all public libraries. An important future consideration for the coming years will be how libraries welcome people back into their physical spaces, including the vulnerable and hard-to-reach who are isolated and may need extra encouragement.

/ The impact on all revenue streams will require innovative partnerships and solutions for a sustainable future.

Digital equity

/ Around 2.4 million Australian households are still without Internet and broadband access.

/ First Nations Peoples' communities continue to experience disadvantage, with 21 per cent of Indigenous school children and 30 per cent of all Indigenous households without a home Internet connection.

/ Around 87 per cent of all Australian jobs require digital skills, but fewer than 40 per cent of Australians are confident they can keep up with technological change.

/ Continuing to bridge digital divide remains a priority for libraries: access to fast speed Internet and WiFi, computers and tablets; digital literacy programs; support for basic digital citizenship – accessing government services online, completing job applications, proficiency with digital devices.

/ Opportunities remain within Geelong and surrounding regions to address the issue of a Digital Inclusion gap, as evidenced by recent data from the Australian Digital Inclusion Index.

Digital leadership

/ Libraries are digital pioneers, providing equipment, spaces and learning support for new and emerging technologies: robotics; virtual reality; digital production labs; 3D printers; recording studios; interactive screens and interfaces.

/ Latest developments in the digital space include new discovery platforms like collection browsing apps using artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR); exhibiting history and heritage collections using augmented reality (AR).

Access And Outreach

/ 24/7 access to library spaces, WiFi and physical collections is a growing trend.

/ Augmenting traditional mobile libraries with smaller, agile vehicles.

/ Presenting pop-up programming in the community is becoming popular.

/ Joined-up delivery of government services such as tourism and business development, family and aged care services, recreation, and arts and culture.
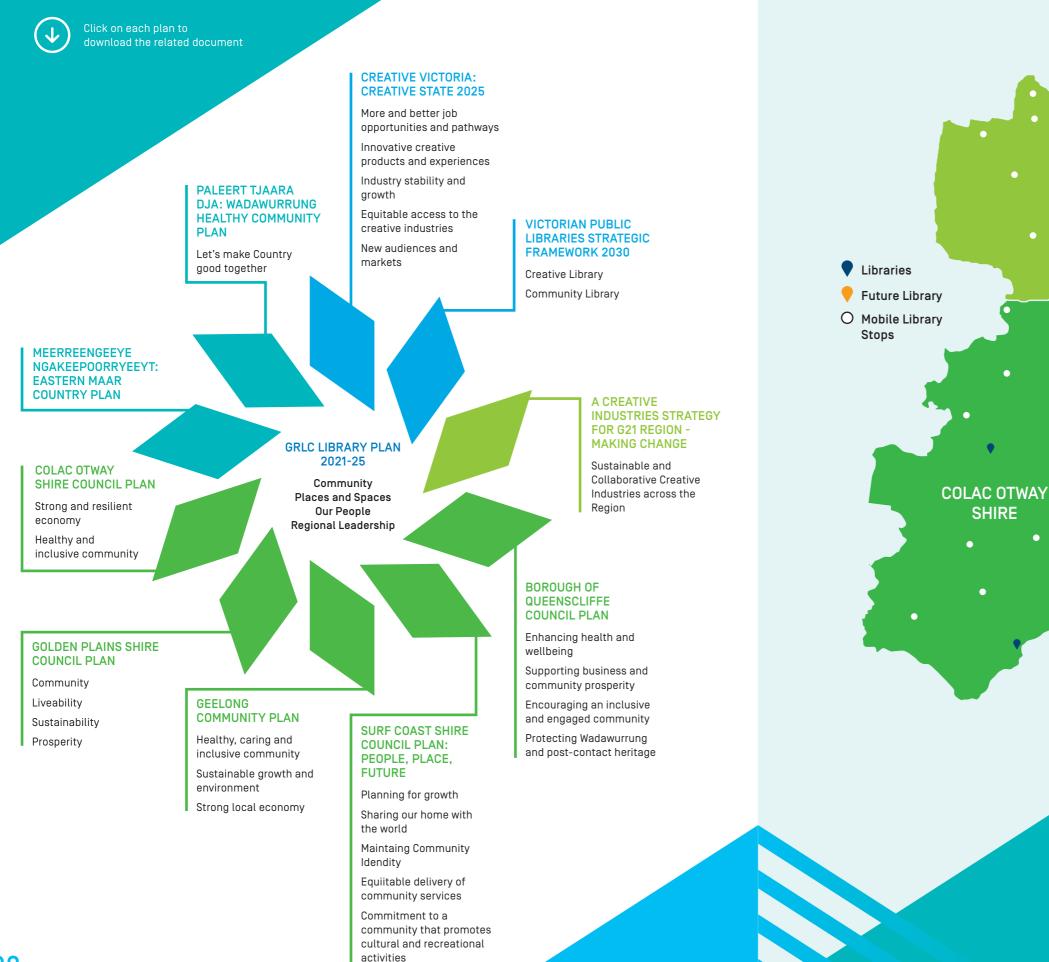
Library space design

/ Public libraries are often the most aesthetically and generously designed places in town.

/ New libraries are often multipurpose, flexible spaces, capable of meeting diverse needs and uses.

/ The trend is towards customisation of space versus prescribed use.

/ Dedicated children's spaces are important for families with young children, while dedicated spaces for youth increase the possibility of meaningful engagement with this hard-to-reach audience.

/ Latest acoustic treatments.

/ Co-working and business development hubs.

/ Integrated art and local history design features and exhibits.

Place activation

/ Libraries have a demonstrable impact on economic, social and cultural outcomes for communities.

/ As civic hubs, they enhance community perceptions of liveability.

/ They are welcoming and inclusive spaces.

/ Provide opportunities to maximise inside-outside design.

/ Opportunities to attract growth, visitation and business development in regional areas; known as regional destinations.

Our libraries are refuges for the people; free, safe and culturally alive.

Council Stakeholder

This diagram shows how our plan integrates with the plans of our state and regional partners

Click on each plan to download the related document

CREATIVE VICTORIA: CREATIVE STATE 2025

More and better job opportunities and pathways

Innovative creative products and experiences

Industry stability and growth

Equitable access to the creative industries

New audiences and markets

PALEERT TJAARA DJA: WADAWURRUNG HEALTHY COMMUNITY PLAN

Let's make Country good together

VICTORIAN PUBLIC LIBRARIES STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2030

Creative Library

Community Library

MEERREENGEEYE NGAKEEPOORRYEEYT: EASTERN MAAR COUNTRY PLAN

GRLC LIBRARY PLAN 2021-25

Community
Places and Spaces
Our People
Regional Leadership

A CREATIVE INDUSTRIES STRATEGY FOR G21 REGION - MAKING CHANGE

Sustainable and Collaborative Creative Industries across the Region

COLAC OTWAY SHIRE COUNCIL PLAN

Strong and resilient economy

Healthy and inclusive community

BOROUGH OF QUEENSCLIFFE COUNCIL PLAN

Enhancing health and wellbeing

Supporting business and community prosperity

Encouraging an inclusive and engaged community

Protecting Wadawurrung and post-contact heritage

GOLDEN PLAINS SHIRE COUNCIL PLAN

Community

Liveability

Sustainability

Prosperity

GEELONG COMMUNITY PLAN

Healthy, caring and inclusive community

Sustainable growth and environment

Strong local economy

SURF COAST SHIRE COUNCIL PLAN: PEOPLE, PLACE, FUTURE

Planning for growth

Sharing our home with the world

Maintaing Community Identity

Equiitable delivery of community services

Commitment to a community that promotes cultural and recreational activities

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Libraries

Future Library

Mobile Library Stops

GOLDEN PLAINS SHIRE

CITY OF GREATER GEELONG

Corio Bay

SURF COAST SHIRE

COLAC OTWAY SHIRE

BOROUGH OF QUEENSCLIFFE

Bass Strait

We serve a community of more than **350,000** people across **8,953 km2**

COMMUNITY RESEARCH

Over 4,000 people contributed to the community research which has informed this plan. Our engagement approach has involved an online survey, interactive workshops and interviews.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES, FEBRUARY – JUNE 2021

3,822
ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES

6
FOCUS GROUPS WITH 50 PARTICIPANTS

27
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

8
STAFF WORKSHOPS WITH 90 PARTICIPANTS

The high response rates, breadth and depth of constructive feedback, and lively workshop discussions, revealed how much people care about and value their libraries. 'Caring about' can take many forms, including an awareness of how things could be better. Recurrent themes which emerged from the community engagement process are summarised below.

Local needs

A recurrent theme was finding an alternative to the traditional, one-size-fits-all collection distribution model of public libraries by customising aspects of collections and programs to meet specific local needs. For example, Surf Coast Shire residents are aware of a higher-than-average population of artists, creative practitioners and a burgeoning creative industries sector in their area; providing responsive collections and supportive program delivery for the creative arts/industries was highly recommended. Golden Plains Shire residents were keen for a local focus on sustainable agriculture. Providing more newspapers, magazines and books in languages other than English was encouraged in areas such as Geelong West, Colac and Corio where there is a higher ratio of Culturally & Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities.

Clear correlation

There is a direct correlation between higher levels of dissatisfaction with library services and local libraries with constrained spatial footprints or perceptions of outdated buildings or infrastructure. For example, we received more critical comments from library users in Queenscliff, Torquay, Drysdale and Chilwell, where libraries were described as being too small to meet current needs. Positively, new libraries are on the way for communities in Queenscliff, Torquay, Drysdale, Lara and Armstrong Creek, along with enhancements to Chilwell Library.

Agile mobile presence

A common theme in feedback received through interviews, focus groups and surveys was that mobile library services could be more responsive to local needs. Augmenting the current mobile library service with agile vehicles and more programming and learning/business support options was highly recommended.

Library of things

Some survey and focus group participants were animated by the idea of a Library of Things. In other words, useful items that people can borrow that they may not want to own due to expense or intermittent need. Examples given were: tools, cooking equipment, sewing and embroidery machines, musical instruments, camping equipment, gardening items, film cameras and tiling machinery. How we expand our libraries of things will be explored during the life of the strategy.

Inside-outside

There is widespread support for what people called the 'greening' of inside and outside library spaces. Research participants had no trouble listing the multiple benefits of lively, usable and aesthetically-rich outside library spaces. Sensory gardens, seating, story nooks and productive gardens were just some of the ideas canvassed. Opportunities to co-design inside-outside spaces with youth, seniors, people with disabilities, First Nations Peoples, CALD groups, cultural stakeholders and local business will provide a great opportunity for creativity and community engagement.

Deepen partnerships

There are high levels of appreciation for library staff members. Described as knowledgeable and caring, there is admiration for the diligent way in which they deliver services and programs on a daily basis. However, further strengthening community and cultural partnerships is seen as critical to the future library. Consequently, the strategy includes objectives and actions that will support our people to extend important capacity-building community partnerships and connections.

Practical and symbolic

It is easy to focus on the concrete things people say. However, the community research is rich in commentary about the library's affective and symbolic role. Our libraries are consistently described as a haven, sanctuary and treasure by thousands of people living in city, suburban, coastal and rural locations. People look to the library as a source of continuity and reassurance. Libraries are seen and described as generous and welcoming. In surveys, workshops, interviews and in-depth conversations, library users and partners exhibit trust in GRLC's ability to meet the evolving needs of the communities it serves.

The library's outreach is like a thread that weaves its way around our communities. It's as much about social interaction as service delivery; building relationships and a sense of community. It offers so much opportunity for different ways of thinking about what libraries can be and do for our communities.

Council stakeholder

CONNECTING AND THRIVING

OUR PURPOSE

A thriving public library service that boosts our communities' health, prosperity, connectedness and belonging.

OUR FOUR PILLARS

Community
Places and spaces
Our people
Regional leadership

OUR VISION

This Library Plan sets a roadmap for our work over the next four years. By 2025, this is what you will be seeing.

COMMUNITY

Geelong Regional Libraries is an innovative partner. We are addressing local needs with local solutions. You see us out and about in the region, focusing on vulnerable and hard to reach communities.

PLACES AND SPACES

Our spaces are adaptable and democratic; uplifting and sustainable.

OUR PEOPLE

Our team is curious, caring and skilled. We exhibit a spirit of experimentation that matches transformative times.

REGIONAL LEADERSHIP

Geelong Regional Libraries is known for leading regional recovery. We use our core strength for community good.

SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

COMMUNITY

Living and learning

/ expand range of eResources, streaming, online learning programs

/ improve/extend Click & Collect / Click & Deliver services

/ special focus on our communities' health and wellbeing

/ implement actions in *Reader Engagement and Youth Engagement Strategies 2021-2025*

/ extend resources and community engagement opportunities for vulnerable and isolated community members.

Local needs, local solutions

/ proactive partners, collaborators, precinct neighbours

/ customise collections and services to support local priorities

/ use core strengths for social and economic good

Neighbourhood connectors

/ renew outreach services and 24/7 options

/ be visible, easy to access

/ support sharing economy

Celebrate unique histories, heritage, living cultures

/ close collaboration with First Nation Peoples

/ close collaboration with CALD communities

/ new ways to capture, access & share histories and stories

/ accelerate digitisation program.

PLACES AND SPACES

Adaptable, democratic

/ flexible spaces: quiet and reflective; lively and engaging

/ activate new libraries; retrofit old

/ explore opportunities for exhibiting and performing spaces

Uplifting and sustainable

/ pursue design excellence

/ enhance liveability and precinct place-making

/ leaders in sustainable design

Inside-outside

/ accessible to all learning needs: cognitive and sensory

/ library beyond four walls

/ enhance health and amenity through better indoor-outdoor connections

Places for belonging and community connection

/ enhance participation in cultural life through shared physical and virtual spaces, partnerships and cultural programming

/ pilot new kinds of library spaces in growth areas.

OUR PEOPLE

Spirit of experimentation

/ learn from COVID-19: rethink work, partnerships, services

/ cross-team ideas/projects

/ structured experimentation

/ focus on customer experience

Creative collaborators

/ creative partnerships: new cultural programs and events

/ cross-disciplinary STEAM projects

/ co-design ethos and skills take centre stage

Leaders are learners

/ pioneers in new digital technologies and platforms

/ support strategic imperatives of our customers

/ accountability and responsibility for change

/ healthy, safe, stimulating workplace culture.

REGIONAL LEADERSHIP

Resilient economies, communities, people

/ support businesses, start-ups, creative practitioners

/ enhance employability, job skills

/ contribute to local economies

Digital momentum and leadership

/ bridge digital divide

/ expand range of eResources, streaming, learning options

/ explore and apply emerging technologies and new discovery platforms

Imagining the future

/ thought-provoking programs, events, conversations

/ critical thinking, constructive debate around complex regional challenges

/ planning for sustainable growth and changing demographics

/ partner to grow alternative revenue streams

Passionate advocates for public libraries

/ leading advocacy role

/ capturing stories and metrics

/ presenting case for library investment.

COMMUNITY

GEELONG REGIONAL LIBRARIES IS AN INNOVATIVE PARTNER. WE ARE ADDRESSING LOCAL NEEDS WITH LOCAL SOLUTIONS. YOU SEE US OUT AND ABOUT IN THE REGION, FOCUSING ON VULNERABLE AND HARD TO REACH COMMUNITIES.

Our libraries offer hope, reassurance and practical support. During a period of constraint and limitation, they continue to provide access and inclusion.

There is a broad range of needs, geographic and demographic diversity, and socio-economic complexity across our five local government areas. Addressing barriers to participation will inform actions around outreach, responsiveness to local priorities, and mutually beneficial community partnerships.

The strategy will build on our ability to reach out and into every pocket of the region; our reputation as caring and proactive community partners; our responsibility as collectors and conservators of unique local histories.

LOCAL NEEDS, LOCAL SOLUTIONS

OBJECTIVE		ACTIONS
1.1	Consolidate our role as proactive partners in city, suburbs, coast and country.	Lead the development of community growth, arts, literature and culture initiatives across the region, through existing and new strategic partnerships.
		Facilitate community development and capacity-building initiatives through partnerships and shared projects.
		Use our core strengths (information provision, literacy and learning programs, welcoming spaces) to work closely with community partners to deliver and promote social impact programs, particularly in areas of high need.
		Customise aspects of library collections and programs that support local priorities and events.
		Support and grow our volunteers; build confidence and a sense of belonging.
		Plan for the future; identify growth areas and demographic changes across the region.
1.2	Geelong Regional Libraries: visible, easy to access, out and about in the community.	Develop new outreach strategy.
		Investigate options and demand for a Library of Things: conduct needs assessment.
		Refresh library branding, signage and way finding.
		Extend resources and community engagement opportunities for vulnerable and isolated community members.
1.3	Celebrate our histories, heritage, stories and living cultures.	Work collaboratively with First Nation Peoples; sharing stories, cultural heritage, language and knowledge.
		Ensure cultural sensitivity protocols underpin collecting, digitisation and publishing initiatives that involve Wadawurrung and Eastern Maar material, histories, voices and artefacts.
		Expand and promote access to content for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities.
		Accelerate digitisation program, expanding access to community history and heritage collections.
		Find new ways to capture, codify, conserve, exhibit and share local stories.
1.4	Promote a lifelong love of reading and learning.	Increase early year's literacy through expanded collections and learning programs.
		Implement actions in *Youth Engagement Strategy 2021-2025*.
		Implement actions in *Reader Engagement Advocacy & Development Strategy 2021-2025*.
		Continue to provide great reading and literature options for loyal customers.

What you will see

In the first year of this plan a program logic framework will be developed to measure, implement and evaluate each action. This will detail the resources and activities required for each action, and the changes the community will see as a result. This will be reported against annually to the community.

In the library of the future, local Indigenous history, culture and language can be found in every library.

Library Plan 2021-25 Community Engagement Survey Respondent

PLACES AND SPACES

OUR SPACES ARE ADAPTABLE AND DEMOCRATIC; UPLIFTING AND SUSTAINABLE.

Our libraries are seen as a refuge, haven, community hub and heart.

Across all neighbourhoods – the Cultural Precinct in Geelong; the vibrant cultural hubs of Bannockburn and Queenscliff; the conveniently situated libraries of Geelong West, Waurn Ponds, Belmont, Newcomb and Torquay; the community adjacent libraries of Corio, Leopold, Ocean Grove, Drysdale, Colac and Barwon Heads – our libraries are a space for gathering, learning and exchange.

Over the life of the strategy, new libraries will appear in Drysdale, Armstrong Creek, Queenscliff, Lara and Torquay; enhancements will be made to many others.

ADAPTABLE AND DEMOCRATIC; UPLIFTING AND SUSTAINABLE

OBJECTIVE		ACTIONS
2.1	Ensure all regional libraries offer flexible, adaptable, comfortable and welcoming spaces.	Develop future library spaces that can accommodate quiet and contemplative thinking and learning together with collaborative group learning and play.
		Apply a best practice project management approach to our programs and capital projects.
		Include exhibiting and performing spaces/possibilities for the visual, tactile and performing arts in all new library spaces.
		Increase use of library meeting rooms and venue spaces.
2.2	Inspire our communities with great library design: uplifting, sustainable, place-based.	Support alternative ways of learning through increased transparency between inside and outside spaces; extending usability beyond library walls.
		Identify and pursue opportunities to green inside and outside libraries; sensory gardens; biodiversity; story and programming nooks.
		Ensure all new libraries offer amenable indoor/outdoor sitting and learning spaces.
		Partner with our Member Councils to advocate, plan and secure funding for place-based library developments that make a difference for our local communities.
2.3	Invite customers to shape and influence the functionality and accessibility of library spaces.	Facilitate flexible collaborative spaces that can be repurposed to meet the needs of individual users.
		Encourage and promote the use of libraries as co-working and creative practice and maker hubs for the community.
		With community, develop and launch a new Disability Access and Inclusion Plan, considering both physical accessibility and non-physical barriers to participation.
2.4	Enhance the role of libraries as places for belonging and community connection.	Grow the role of libraries as activators of community connection through joint initiatives with local partners.
		Actively reflect the unique character, stories, cultural heritage and naming of local places through library programs, collections and spaces.
		Develop our virtual library spaces to strengthen opportunities for belonging and connection.

What you will see

In the first year of this plan a program logic framework will be developed to measure, implement and evaluate each action. This will detail the resources and activities required for each action, and the changes the community will see as a result. This will be reported against annually to the community.

The library of the future.. brings the outside in and the inside out.

Library Plan 2021-25 Community Engagement Survey Respondent

OUR PEOPLE

OUR TEAM IS CURIOUS, CARING AND SKILLED. WE EXHIBIT A SPIRIT OF EXPERIMENTATION THAT MATCHES TRANSFORMATIVE TIMES.

In a COVID-19 recovery period, our people are ready to apply their skills and customer service ethic to the work of transitional change.

We have shared a vision of a future in which a spirit of experimentation would invigorate the library's services, partnerships, spaces and programs. We will develop and support our team so that together we can demonstrate community leadership, bring people back to the library, build new audiences, and embed a collaborative way of working.

ENCOURAGE A SPIRIT OF EXPERIMENTATION

OBJECTIVE		ACTIONS
3.1	**Curious, caring and skilled people, looking to make a difference.**	Build COVID-19 resilience by rethinking work practices, community relationships and service delivery.
		Develop cross-team collaboration to deliver new ideas and practices focused on improving customer experience.
		Support, maintain and celebrate our professional skills and knowledge.
		Ensure good governance informs everything we do.
		Scope and develop a plan to resource and deliver an alternative beneficial enterprise model.
3.2	**Known as reliable and imaginative partners by social, learning and cultural stakeholders.**	Collaborate with our regional partners to design and deliver effective programs and resources that meet community needs.
		Develop advocacy skills for public libraries and embrace our role as influencers.
3.3	**Build a culture of inspiring regional leaders.**	Build a diverse team which mirrors the diversity of the communities we serve.
		Embed a creative problem-solving mindset, turning ideas into actions.
		Maintain our digital literacy and communication skillset, instilling confidence in the delivery of in-house and outreach programs across all platforms.
		Design and deliver a workplace culture program that embeds the values and behaviours of kindness, trust and customer focus.
		Ensure our libraries are healthy, respectful and fun places in which to work.

What you will see

In the first year of this plan a program logic framework will be developed to measure, implement and evaluate each action. This will detail the resources and activities required for each action, and the changes the community will see as a result. This will be reported against annually to the community.

If the team is working well together and having fun, this transfers to the customer's positive experience.

GRLC staff member

REGIONAL LEADERSHIP

GEELONG REGIONAL LIBRARIES IS KNOWN FOR LEADING REGIONAL RECOVERY. WE USE OUR CORE STRENGTH FOR COMMUNITY GOOD.

Post-COVID-19 recovery will shape the regional landscape over the four-year strategy timeline.

By necessity, recovery involves jobs, skills development and region-wide collaboration. Hard hit sectors – such as retail, arts and culture, education and tourism – will need ongoing support. New ways of working will continue to emerge and evolve and applied creativity and innovation will be paramount.

Balancing financial constraints with the need for economic stimulus will inform each Council's strategic planning and decision-making. GRLC will utilise what it does well to accelerate regional resilience, growth, equity and cultural vitality during this transformative and historic period.

As one of the largest regional library corporations in Victoria, we have a responsibility to take a leading role in advocacy efforts and campaigns that reinforce the critical role of public libraries as essential social and cultural infrastructure.

RESILIENT ECONOMIES, COMMUNITIES, PEOPLE

OBJECTIVE		ACTIONS
4.1	Support business growth and work readiness.	Provide information, reference services and training in research and information navigation skills.
		Support creative practitioners, entrepreneurs and start-ups to access work and makerspaces, collections and specialist expertise, and opportunities for collaboration.
		Provide job and career development tools, resources and programs.
4.2	Regional leadership in digital access, learning and creative expression.	Increase access to digital content that facilitates connection, learning and literacy for the whole community.
		Provide access to emerging technologies, spaces and platforms to support creative production and flexible work practices.
		Host innovative digital programs and events that connect thought leaders and contemporary ideas, resulting in new regional opportunities.
		Partner to innovate and educate on regional digital initiatives such as the Geelong Smart City and State Government Digital Twin Cities.
		Partner in the delivery of cross-disciplinary STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics) initiatives.
4.3	Providing a home for critical thinking, imagination and civic participation.	Advance regional knowledge in and constructive debate around complex challenges such as reconciliation, climate change, social equity, population growth.
		Introduce creative fellowships/residencies aimed at bringing fresh eyes and perspectives to heritage collections and library spaces: First Nation Peoples, historians, writers, visual and performing artists, graphic artists, scientists.
		Review events and festivals, including the Word for Word National Non-Fiction Festival, to ensure sustainability in the new landscape of online and face-to-face events.
4.4	Leaders in stimulating ideas, knowledge and metrics about the critical role of public libraries in contemporary societies.	Take a leading role in state, national and international library advocacy campaigns like #LibrariesChangeLives.
		Capture and share stories and knowledge about the many ways in which our libraries change and improve people's lives.
		Use data on the economic, social and cultural benefits libraries provide and advocate for increased investment in public libraries for all Victorians.
		Partner with other regional leaders to build new revenue streams and deliver new initiatives that contribute to local economies and place activation.
		Advocate for open access initiatives; fair copyright regulations; fair price for access to eResources.

What you will see

Our organisation has been acknowledged for developing partnerships that contribute to the long term sustainability of public libraries in the region. In the first year of this plan a program logic framework will be developed to measure, implement and evaluate each action.

This will detail the resources and activities required for each action, and the changes the community will see as a result, and will be reported against annually to the community.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Definition
AI	Artificial Intelligence: computers programmed to be able to perform tasks and activities that have previously required direct human intelligence and decision making.
AR	Augmented Reality: an interactive digital experience where visual and aural digital features enhance the user experience.
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
Click & Collect	Customers can reserve items online from the GRLC catalogue and arrange to collect items from their branch library at an appointed time. This service was introduced when branch libraries were closed during lockdowns.
Click & Deliver	Customers can reserve items online from the GRLC catalogue and arrange for items to be delivered to them at home.
Collection development	Library collection development is the process of meeting the information needs of the people (a service population) in a timely and economical manner using information resources locally held, as well as from other organisations.
Creative industries	The creative industries are innovation led, knowledge intensive and potentially exportable businesses that cover a range of creative practices across all art forms.
Digital literacy	The ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.
Digitisation	The conversion of text, pictures, or sound into a digital form that can be accessed by an electronic device, computer, tablet etc.
eResources	Resources available in a digital format – books, magazines, journals and databases in electronic format and new resources published directly online.
First Nation Peoples	All Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander People.
GRLC	Geelong Regional Library Corporation
G21	G21 Regional Alliance, collaborative network of five regional councils: City of Greater Geelong, Borough of Queenscliffe, Surf Coast Shire, Golden Plains Shire, Colac Otway Shire.
Libraries Change Lives	#LibrariesChangeLives is a state-wide library advocacy campaign led by State Library Victoria and Public Libraries Victoria.
LIS	Library Information System; sometimes called Library Management System (LMS).
Lifelong learning	Providing formal and informal learning opportunities throughout people's lives in order to foster the knowledge and skills needed for work, pleasure and community participation.
LoT	Library of Things: non-traditional library collections.
Partner	An individual, group, organisation or business with whom GRLC can work to deliver a learning/cultural event or program that brings benefit to both parties.
PLV	Public Libraries Victoria
Pop-up library outreach	New generation mobile or ephemeral libraries, which can include refurbished shipping containers, modified caravans, architect-designed pods, motorcycles or bicycles, or the temporary occupation of vacant shopfronts.
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indices For Areas: developed by the ABS to rank suburbs according to levels of advantage or disadvantage.
Self-service library	Use library swipe card to access collection/spaces/click and collect items.
SLV	State Library Victoria
STEAM	Science Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
VR	Virtual reality
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ZOOM	Commercial online meeting platform. Popular during COVID-19 lockdowns.

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In 2020, GRLC received a $5,000 grant from the Give Where You Live Foundation to run 'Exam Cram and Eat'.

This program sought to support young people within the 3214 and 3219 postcode areas experiencing food insecurity during the critical period of intensive study in the lead up to school exams. The initiative was to run from the Corio and Newcomb Libraries and would provide study space and resources, and healthy snacks for students. COVID-19 made this impossible, so we adjusted our approach. We developed food and resource packs, in consultation with schools, to support students and their families in the target areas. In total, 94 packs were distributed to Year 11 and Year 12 students. This image shows a GRLC staff member with students at Northern Bay Secondary College.

The great thing about library outreach is that it's an opportunity to bring the vibrancy of the physical library out into the community, expanding connections and possibilities. It's a lifeline to many and we hope the library plan will expand and invigorate this vital community asset.

Council Stakeholders

IMAGES

Cover Library customer at Geelong Library & Heritage Centre (Photo: Provided by City of Greater Geelong)

02 Young customers are helped by Julie at Belmont Library (Photo: Monika Berry)

05 Virtual reality at Corio Library (Photo: Monika Berry)

06 Rendering of new Drysdale Library building and surrounds (Image: Antarctica Architects & Architecture Associates)

11 Women gather at Leopold Library to create 'Boomerang Bags' (Photo: Monika Berry)

12 Sheridan at Geelong Library & Heritage Centre prepares books for Click & Collect (Photo: *Geelong Advertiser*)

14 A family enjoys the mobile library (Photo: Ferne Millen)

16 Cr Sarah Mansfield, staff member Ilona and visitors celebrate National Simultaneous Storytime outside Geelong West Library (Photo: Mike Dugdale)

18 The Reading nest, *Ngawarring ngiyt*, Geelong Library & Heritage Centre (Photo: Elizabeth Schiavello)

20 Rebecca, Jessica and Jean at Corio Library (Photo: Monika Berry)

22 Presenters at the Word for Word National Non-Fiction Festival 2019 (Photo: Mike Dugdale)

26 Students from Northern Bay College with GRLC staff member, Subha (Photo: *Geelong Advertiser*)

This page

Customers at Colac Library (Photo: Ferne Millen)

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MOBILE LIBRARY STOPS

Aireys Inlet

Anakie

Anglesea

Beeac

Beech Forest

Birregurra

Cape Clear

Coragulac

Cressy

Deans Marsh

Dereel

Enfield

Forrest

Gellibrand

Grenville

Haddon

Lavers Hill

Linton

Lorne

Meredith

Portarlington

Rokewood

Smythesdale

St Leonards

Winchelsea

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