

Clarence Regional Library: A review of services and programs

State Library of NSW November 2022

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Photograph 1 Reading and listening area at Grafton Library

1 Background

1.1 Introduction

Kathryn Breward, Regional Librarian, Clarence Regional Librarian, requested a service review by the State Library of New South Wales in accordance with the Library Act 1939¹, sections:

4A(a) *to promote, provide and maintain library services for the people of NSW through the State Library and through co-operation with local libraries...*,

4A(b) *to advise... local authorities...on matters of policy and administration relating to library services...*

5(1)(a) *to make or cause to be made careful inquiry into the administration and management of every local library*

5(1)(b) *to cause every local library...to be inspected from time to time*

This follows reviews in 2013 and 2017.

1.2 Scope of the review and terms of reference

The scope is to review Clarence Regional Library for efficiency and effectiveness, investigating the balance of collections and services for the whole community. It will look at public library trends and opportunities.

- Efficiency and effectiveness of the services as benchmarked against NSW figures. This would be looked at for region as a whole and by local government area.
 - What are the trend for public libraries? This would look at Australian examples and may consider some international examples.
- The efficiency and effectiveness of the current Regional Library service and staffing ratios.
- Is Clarence Regional Library supplying the right balance of services:
 - book stock v online
 - evidence we are purchasing the right stock.
- Is Clarence Regional Library providing services for a range of people in the community including:
 - Youth
 - Adults
 - Aboriginal people
 - People with a disability
- How will the services need to adapt to COVID world and a post pandemic transformed world- e.g.:
 - More tertiary students studying online already the Country University at Grafton has 150 students.
 - Trend to home offices.
- What potential services can be provided to the Clarence Correctional Centre?
 - Every prisoner has online access via an individual electronic device
- Using the community consultation information and other data look at how the mobile library is being used, and consider opportunities which it could be used for
- Hours of operation of libraries

1.3 Components of the review

- Aim of the work is to help Clarence Regional Library understand how their community is changing and the current state of the library service. This will help the library plan for immediate and future service provision.
- To assist by benchmarking Clarence Regional Library against the Standards and guidelines
- The State Library of NSW could provide information sessions for staff on emerging practice and/or suggest other Library Services to approach for comparison.

1.4 Review process

Consult with Regional Librarian, and relevant staff across the library service, analysis of collection and other information provided by the library service, or as the result of desktop research.

Ellen Forsyth, Consultant, State Library of NSW met with Clarence Regional Library staff during September and October 2022, including:

Bellingen Shire Council

- Louise Fazio Dorrigo Library
- Margaret Hartley Dorrigo Library
- Adi Moir (acting Community Wellbeing Bellingen Council, usually Bellingen Library)
- Sue O'Donoghue Bellingen Library
- Alison Pope Urunga Library
- Rowena Seirant Bellingen Library
- Tiffany Sisson Dorrigo Library

Clarence Regional Library

- Kathryn Breward Clarence Regional Library
- Monique Buchbach Clarence Regional Library
- Victoria Keane Clarence Regional Library
- Leonie O'Shea Clarence Regional Library
- Grace Ramsay Clarence Regional Library
- Darcie Smith Clarence Regional Library
- Georgia Wilcox Clarence Regional Library

Clarence Valley Shire Council

- Kahlua Charlton Grafton Library
- Di Collins Grafton Library
- Danielle Gates Mobile Library
- Jacqui Hinshaw Yamba Library
- Rowena Shakespeare Grafton Library
- Katrina Shillam Grafton Library

- Tracy Sowell Iluka Library
- Louise Tyrie Maclean Library

Philipa Scarf was involved in an interview with Kathryn Breward.

1.5 Standards, guidelines and benchmarks

*Living learning libraries: standards and guidelines for NSW public libraries*¹, is an evidence-based guide to the development of library services in NSW. Written in two parts, it provides a practical basis for comparison among library services, as well as a framework for service assessment and continuous improvement. It is intended to encourage best practice in service delivery not by presenting theoretical targets, but by highlighting what standards are already achieved by leading libraries. Developed by the State Library in consultation with NSW Public Libraries, these standards and guidelines are intended to assist public libraries and Councils to:

- evaluate current services
- set targets for improvement
- develop continuous improvement in library service delivery, and
- plan for future needs.

Living learning libraries: standards and guidelines for NSW public libraries uses current *NSW Public Library Statistics*² to set evidence-based targets for public library collections and services and is updated annually.

Libraries are compared to libraries of similar size. This places Clarence Regional Library in the *Urban medium* cohort.

Recent data shows that 47.15% of the of the community are members of the Clarence Regional Library. This is above the median for the Urban median cohort². The percentages of members vary from library to library in this service. Continuing taking action to encourage library membership and increase the use of the libraries is to be encouraged. This figure of 47.15% of the community is very positive, however, it also means that just over half the community are not members of the library and there is the potential for further outreach to encourage membership and use of the libraries. This is hard to achieve with current staffing in the smaller libraries as there is no time for the staff to go out into the communities around the libraries to promote membership, collections and services.

There are 2.75 visits per capita per annum which is slightly above the cohort median of 2.19. Like some of the other library data these show a pandemic impact of library closures and other constraints on people visiting. It is expected that the number of visits will increase.

The expenditure on library materials per capita of \$6.82 is higher than the cohort median of \$4.72. This is to be commended. The items per capita is 1.98 and is close to the cohort median. The acquisitions per capita, at 0.38 is above the cohort median of 0.18 and possible because of

¹ *Living learning libraries: standards and guidelines for NSW public libraries* <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/content/living-learning-libraries> [accessed 26 September 2022]

² During interviews it was mentioned that borrower records are deleted after 5 years of inactivity, while on Bibliostat this is reported as happening every 2 years. That the deletions happen every two years needs to be confirmed.

the expenditure per capita. The age of the collection shows that 39.6% was purchased in the last five years, which is below the cohort median of 48.89% with 74.5% of the collection purchased in the last 10 years which is below the cohort median of 81.36%. Despite these lower figures the collection looks well maintained and received positive comments from the staff interviewed. The turnover of stock 3.07 is the cohort median, while the circulation per capita is 5.59 above the cohort median of 4.27.

1.6 NSW public library trends

Library usage figures for 2019/2020 were significantly affected by COVID-19, with all library buildings ordered to close from 23 March to 1 June 2020. Onsite services for June were restricted due to COVID-19 Safety Plans, and many libraries remained closed over that month. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact the statistics for 2020/2021 because of continuing restrictions and then the start of lockdown in Sydney and associated areas. The 2021/2022 statistics are influenced by the extended lockdown in Sydney, the brief statewide lock down, and specific local government area lockdowns some extended like in Sydney and some regional areas, others were impacted by moving in and out of lockdown frequently. The lower use of libraries during December 2021 and January 2022 (from anecdotal information) is because people limited the locations they were going because of the ongoing pandemic and the Omicron surge are also likely to be shown in the statistics. The collated data is not yet available for 2021/2022 but it is expected that there will continue to be a significant impact from COVID-19, with statistics varying across NSW as lockdowns ran for varying amounts of time in different local government areas

In NSW public libraries in 2020/2021 there were:

- 17.1 million physical visits to NSW public libraries
- 35.1 million loans of collection items
- 12.5 million virtual visits to public library websites
- 4.4 million internet bookings (including wi-fi)
- 2.4 million ebook loans, an increase of 400,000 on the previous year.

Libraries continue to provide what could be described as traditional services - the provision of collections and information to the community. These continue to be core and important services for libraries. However, it is also clear that our local communities expect public libraries to provide additional services. These services reflect the role of modern public libraries as community facilities where people can meet, access technology, share and learn.

2 Clarence Regional Library: the councils

2.1 Clarence Valley Council

Clarence Valley Council has a population of 54,180³, the community has a median age of 49 (NSW median is 39). The median weekly household income is \$1,126. 8.1% of the community are Aboriginal people, more than twice the NSW average. 17% of the community have one or both parents born overseas (for NSW it is 64% of people).

2.2 Bellingen Shire Council

Bellingen Shire Council has a population of 13,197⁴, the community has a median age of 50 (NSW median is 39). The median weekly household income is \$1,197. 4.2% of the community are Aboriginal people, just above the NSW average. 36% of the community have one or both parents born overseas (for NSW it is 64% of people).

3 About the Clarence Regional Library

Clarence Regional Library has a customer service charter which states that the library service aims to provide:

a contemporary, welcoming, responsive and inclusive library service to the communities of Clarence Valley and Bellingen Shire; and services that are sustainable, equitable and accessible.

With a vision that the library services is a

recognised and valued provider of services, collections and programs that help build community cohesion and capacity and provide opportunities to connect to the community and the world.

The library communicates clearly using the statistics for each library. The infographics on the website which show the statistics for each library are informative and colourful, making the statistics locally relevant and interesting. This work is to be commended.

Library staff commented on the benefits of their clients being able to borrow items from the whole regional library so that even in the smaller libraries the entire collection is available. This was commented on by staff in each of the local government areas and was seen as a particular benefit by the Bellingen Shire staff because of the smaller population of that local government area.

³ Profile Id data was used <https://profile.id.com.au/clarence-valley/> as was ABS data from 2021 <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA11730>

⁴ Profile Id data was used <https://profile.id.com.au/bellingen> as was ABS census data from 2021 <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA10600>

4 SOAR exploring strengths, opportunities, aspirations and results

SOAR which stands for strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results, was discovered via Webjunction training⁵. Instead of the better-known SWOT analysis which looks at strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, SOAR takes a more active and positive approach looking at strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results. This approach seemed a better fit with the investigation requested by Clarence Regional Library.

Below are listed some of the strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results. They will be looked at under later specific headings where appropriate.

Strengths:

- Positive feedback about the collections
- Visibility of First Nation people via the acknowledgment of country, Aboriginal collection, and staff uniforms.
- Resilient Clarence collections
- Infographics for library statistics
- Programs for the community
- Clarence Regional Library has Deductible Gift Recipient Status with the Australian Taxation Office.

Opportunities:

- To extend the opening hours so that there are no lunch closures and there is additional staffing for outreach and to better enable professional development in the single person libraries
- Programs for the community
- Improving the Instagram posts so they have a wider interest and do not focus so much on niche memes.

Aspirations

- To increase the number of people who are using the library collections, services, programs and facilities

Results

- Good use of infographics to tell the statistical story of each library to their community
- Good use of social media to tell the story of each library

⁵ Skills for community centred libraries: exploring the SOAR model. 19 April 2021 Webjunction, <https://www.webjunction.org/content/dam/WebJunction/Documents/webJunction/2021-08/slides-exploring-SOAR-model.pdf> [accessed 26 September 2022]. It is also described in Strengths, opportunities, aspirations, results (SOAR) analysis, ASQ Service Quality Division, 6 May 2016 <https://asqservicequality.org/glossary/strengths-opportunities-aspirations-results-soar-analysis/> [accessed 26 September 2022]

5 Collections

Collections are the core of every library service. Effective, thoughtful, and imaginative management of collections is critical for being able to provide collections of relevance to each community and not simply the same collection for everyone. Clarence Regional Library with a mix of standing orders and direct selection appears to be providing a collection of relevance for their community. At each library visited the collection was well maintained and appealing. Having a mix of floating titles (adult fiction) and ones with home locations (adult non-fiction) seems a positive approach. The collection is maintained with a weeding program across all sites, replacing some worn out titles while discarding others. The collections staff aim to have complete series so that people can read their way through without becoming stuck by gaps. Staff in each of the libraries commented on the responsiveness of the collection staff, and there seem to be strong and positive relationships throughout the region. Staff in libraries were able to comment about collection gaps, for example there appears to be a publishing gap for junior non-fiction horse books. While this is very specific this shows that there have been conversations between library and regional library staff to discuss this.



Photograph 2 The collection on display at Dorrego Library

The catalogue is well maintained with titles being on Trove. Trove content is maintained so that titles discarded from the Clarence Regional Library are no longer visible on Trove. This work which should be standard in all public libraries is all too rare. This effective bibliographic maintenance is to be commended. While most books are purchased from library suppliers' additional titles are usually obtained from a local bookshop. Titles purchased from library suppliers come with MARC records. Ebook titles are available via the catalogue.

Original cataloguing is undertaken for local studies items. A recent large donation from Nola Mackey (a local historian and genealogist) has provided additional maps, ephemera, photographs and books, all of which need to be catalogued. This collection is currently only available for browsing by appointment.

There is weekly stock transfer between the libraries. The library system is used to identify low use items to transfer from one library to another. The transfers are lists of low-use titles, with popular items being retained at the libraries where they are popular. This has increased the loans as low use titles are moved to other libraries where they are more suited. Several staff in different libraries commented on the usefulness of this rotation. Rotation is also done when one library has full shelves because of returns. These titles can be reallocated to other libraries to provide space, and to make them easily available for readers at other libraries. The book club sets were popular.

Living learning libraries: standards and guidelines for NSW public libraries has standards which relate to collections and their use. Items per capita are the number of items for each person in the whole library service. The library has an *item per capita* of 1.98, which is above the cohort median of 1.58%. It is to be commended that the measure is above the median, as the population served by Clarence Regional Library the community needs more rather than less choice, particularly because the collection is in multiple libraries across two local government areas. This figure is supported by the *acquisitions per capita*, which for Clarence Regional Library at 0.38 is notably above the cohort median, which it would need to be to provide choice for the community in their reading. The collection is older, although some of this could be influenced by the local studies collection. The inclusion of specialized collections such as the Resilient Clarence collections is good to see.

Turnover of stock and circulation per capita provide an indication of how well the library's collection is used. Turnover of stock is obtained by dividing total circulation by the total number of items which are available for loan. The *turnover of stock* for the library is 3.07, which is the cohort median standard. This figure is an indication of how active the collection is. Circulation per capita is another way of looking at loan data and describes the number of times each item is borrowed, divided by the population of the area. For Clarence Regional Library, the *circulation per capita* is 5.59, slightly above the cohort median figure of 4.27. The circulation per capita has increased, while the cohort median has decreased.

5.1 Collection performance

While the non-fiction collection is 26.29% of the collection (table 1) and 10% of the loans (table 2) it is not suggested that the non-fiction collection is further reduced in size. This is because it could increase the slide to lower use as less people find non-fiction titles of interest. This is the main area where the percentage of loans is much lower than the percentage of the collection size. The youth collection, while smaller (as are most youth collections) probably should not be further reduced in size for similar reasons, once collections become too small there is too little selection available which then further decreases the loans. The only exception to this approach is when formats are being removed from the collection, for example the now superseded VHS titles.

Table 1 Collection size item totals and percentages 2021-2022

Clarence Regional Library collection						
Group	Adult	Youth	Junior	Picture	Total	Share
Non fiction	31,413	1,151	6,487	678	39,729	26.69%
Fiction	35,450	4,331	12,080	9,050	60,911	40.93%
Ebooks	6,716				6,716	4.51%
Large Print	10,991				10,991	7.38%
Periodicals*	118				118	0.08%
Online periodicals*	4065	6	11		4082	2.74%
Audio	5,240	98	417		5,755	3.87%
Eaudio	2,794				2,794	1.88%
Toys/games		33	148		181	0.12%
ESL/literacy	2,362				2,362	1.59%
DVD	11,873		2,154		14,027	9.42%
Graphic novels	1,167				1,167	0.78%
Total	112,189	5,619	21,297	9728	148,833	
Share	75.38%	3.78%	14.31%	6.54%		

*number of titles not number of items.

These figures show the importance of analogue and digital collection items. Individual readers may have preferences and there are digital divide considerations to consider. A recent research paper from the United Kingdom states that

findings from these focus groups highlight what aspects of digital and physical services are valued by those who use UK public libraries. We explain how participants were affected by COVID library closures, how they coped with these closures, and how they intend to use library services in the future. We show how digital and physical library services are conceived of differently by library users and that simple arguments that

digital services can replace physical ones do not match the experiences or wishes of those who use these services⁶.

Table 2 Loans as percentage of total loans 2021-2022

Clarence Regional Library loans						
Group	Adult	Youth	Junior	Picture	Total	Share
Non fiction	33,985	315	6,423	2,118	42,841	10%
Fiction	124,119	5,779	26,346	30,160	186,404	45.54%
Ebooks	30,949				30,949	7.56%
Large Print	34,318				34,318	8.38%
Periodicals*	10,242	122	508		10,872	2.66%
Online periodicals*	11,370				11,370	2.78%
Audio	8,866	54	566		9,486	2.32%
Eaudio	29,658				29,658	7.25%
Toys/games		45	656		701	0.17%
ESL/literacy	5,631				5,631	1.38%
DVD	38,405		6,170		44,575	10.89%
Graphic novels	2,521				2,521	0.62%
Total	330,064	6,315	40,669	32,278	409,326	
Share	80.64%	1.54%	9.94%	7.89%		

*number of titles not number of items.

Local studies is an area where it is hard to measure collection performance as most of the items are not for loan. Several years ago Clarence Regional Library was active in creating content for their local studies collection, mainly in the form of oral history interviews. It is suggested that these interviews continue and expand to include interviews with First Nations people as well as people of different ages in the community. For example, there could be very interesting interviews with some of the participants for *Live 'n' loud at the library* as well as with the artist who created the artwork used in the library uniform as well as other places.

⁶ Ruthven, I., Robinson, E., & McMenemy, D. (2022). The value of digital and physical library services in UK public libraries and why they are not interchangeable. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/09610006221127027>

5.2 Planning collecting

Clarence Regional Library has both a collection development policy (adopted 23 June 2020) and a collection management plan (reviewed April 2018). It is suggested that the policies section on the website is updated so that superseded policies and plans are removed, for example there is June 2020 collection development policy as well as an April 2018 collection development policy. This could prove confusing for the community.

On page 1 of the collection development policy under purpose, it states that the library will *provide a balanced collection of resources*. It is suggested that the word *balanced* is replaced with the word *representative*. The idea of balanced collections⁷ has been used to include incorrect information such as books which deny the holocaust, and books which go against known and factually correct science. While this wording may appear a minor and token change using *representative* is important as it helps to fight misinformation and mal-information as libraries do not need to include known inaccurate or false information. In section 4.7 it states that *Material should be accurate, up-to-date, and non-biased (or if a work presents a clearly-stated viewpoint, it should generally be balanced by another work presenting a differing viewpoint)*. This effectively states that the library would collect titles which dispute the holocaust, are opposed to vaccination or suggest incorrect medical treatment⁸. It is suggested that the longer sentence above is updated to *Material should be accurate and up-to-date. The library will not add items which contain disinformation to our collection*. Or you could use the terms misinformation and mal-information for disinformation. This is important as in the vision for the regional library it states that it is *a trusted and valued source of information*. It cannot be this if it is collecting misinformation and mal-information. Having this wording does not limit *the free flow of information and ideas to inform and inspire* (also from the vision) but rather it encourages it through the use of accurate information. On page 4 (unpaged) there is mention of *presenting, as far as possible, all views on current issues*. The same comments about inaccurate information, misinformation and mal-information apply. This highlights the importance of a statement such as *Material should be accurate and up-to-date. The library will not add items which contain disinformation to our collection*. The collection cannot be accurate, and balanced, but it could be accurate and representative.

⁷ For information about this from an ALA discussion this year see <http://raforall.blogspot.com/2022/07/ala-2022-final-thoughts.html> and <http://raforall.blogspot.com/2022/06/ala-2022-monday-recap.html> especially about *not adding items which contain disinformation to your collections*. [accessed 2 November 2022]

⁸ For an example The whole pantry by Belle Gibson where she claimed that a particular diet cured her cancer, when she had never had cancer. For further information see <https://www.smh.com.au/business/consumer-affairs/belle-gibson-fined-410000-after-misleading-people-with-claims-she-cured-cancer-20170928-gyq86z.html> [accessed 2 November 2022]



Photograph 3 Part of the collection at Iluka Library

There are a few points relating to specific parts of the collection development policy:

- It is encouraging that there is a regular *Collection needs survey* to examine the collection.
- In sections 4.1 and 4.3 references to LIAC should be updated to *Find legal answers*. As should the reference on page 6 of the collection management plan.
- Section 4.8 should have Aboriginal in capitals within the text. This is a term which needs capitalisation even when the graphics style is to not use capitals.
- In section 4.10 *literary merit* has the potential to provide a biased and not a representative collection. Each person will interpret literary merit in a different way. It is suggested there is another way to describe it. *Imaginative writing* is also subject to different interpretations. These criteria are present in 4.11 and 4.21.2 as well.
- 4.13 Young adult collections, 4.14 Junior fiction and 4.15 Junior easy require original writing rather than imaginative writing. Deciding on this also risks bias.
- Include a statement in the collection development policy that the collection will be diverse, equitable and inclusive as that will connect to the Community plan which states 1.3 *We will have a diverse and creative culture*⁹. It is appropriate to include in a collection plan.
- 5.7 Reasons for non-inclusion could include titles containing mal-information or misinformation. It would be helpful to add this as a statement.

⁹ This point is mentioned on page 1 of the Collection development policy June 2020 https://www.crl.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/CRL-Regional_Library_Collection_Development_Policy_V40-adopted-23062020.pdf

- 5.72 states that *The Library aims to provide materials which collectively represent all sides of controversial issues*. This is a different idea to knowingly including mal-information or misinformation in the collection, but the library needs to make sure they are not knowingly including mal-information or misinformation in the collection. For example, it would be mal-information or misinformation to include information which denies climate change, or which justifies the invasion of Ukraine by Russia.
- The 2018 collection management plan includes a reference to the *2013 Living learning libraries*. When this plan is updated this reference should be updated. The attachment of the *2013 Living learning libraries* should be changed to a link to the *Living learning libraries*¹⁰ website as that will always provide access to the latest version.
- *Access to information NSW public libraries guideline*¹¹ has a later version than that shown on the Clarence Regional Library website as there were updates made because of changes to legislation in 2019.
- The classification information about games needs to be updated as games are now part of Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995¹²

The description of the local studies collections is excellent and highlights recent and older collecting and a range of formats. Consideration could be given to having one- or two-year collecting priorities in local studies, for example one year on festivals, two years on culturally and linguistically diverse people and so on. This does not exclude these areas from being collected at other times but makes sure they are actually collected some time. It would be helpful to include the option of staff-created content, as at present oral history recordings undertaken by staff are difficult to schedule. As well there should be a reference to a donation form for the formal transfer of ownership of items.

5.3 Local studies collection plan

This is separated from the general comments, just as the local studies collection plan is separated. It is encouraging that the local studies collection plan provides the potential for collecting in a range of formats and includes analogue and digital items. Another important inclusion is that of the status *permanent information value* so that items are not withdrawn from the collection. A few comments to consider:

- Page 1 mentions access to the collection being on a limited basis. While this is true for the collections in locked rooms, other items are online including on Amplify or on open access shelves. It may be helpful to describe this more clearly using similar terms to 5.3 which provides a much clearer description of access.

¹⁰ *Living learning libraries* <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/content/living-learning-libraries> [accessed 2 November 2022]

¹¹ *Access to information NSW public libraries guideline* <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/accesstoinformation2007.pdf> [accessed 2 November 2022]

¹² Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995 <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/C2004A04863> see also <https://www.classification.gov.au/about-us/legislation> [accessed 2 November 2022]

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18

6 Staffing

Well-trained effective staff are key to each library service. When NSW library members were asked what they missed most about public libraries being able to ask library staff for help and advice ranked a close second to being able to browse collections¹³.

At Clarence Regional Library staff commented on how effective communication is between libraries within each council area, and across the two councils. There were consistently positive statements about the relationships between regional library staff and library staff. This information was provided at each location. Various means are used for communication and include some face-to-face meetings as well as email and telephone calls. There are some issues with the current structure where the Yaegl Library staff report to Kathryn, this has been challenging in terms of workload. This will be looked at as part of a staffing restructure when vacancies occur.

The staff levels are close to the overall minimum level with 21.27 staff rather than the minimum of 21.61. The standard does not provide allowance for multiple sites but assumes all the staff are in one location. The practice of closing several of the libraries at lunchtime because of low staffing levels, and use of volunteers for roles such as shelving which should be undertaken by paid staff, indicate that Clarence Regional Library should consider working to increase the number of library staff. The library service would probably need to work towards exemplary staffing of 28.11 to be able to keep all libraries open at lunchtime and provide more support to the smaller libraries in each council area. Currently there are between 4 and 9 hours of support for the single person libraries. This is to provide time for programs such as storytime, and program preparation including writing the rationale for running programs. Additional time for this could be helpful, as well as being able to undertake this work off desk. Even for participating in online professional development, the only computers available for staff to use are on the desk. This means they are subject to interruptions from the community. Additional hours would mean that staff in smaller libraries would be able to undertake outreach at local programs, places and community organisations.

In the short term it is recommended that Clarence Regional Library aim for enhanced staffing of 23.79 as this would provide approximately 70 additional hours a week to keep all the libraries open at lunchtime as well as provide time for program preparation and professional development for library staff in the five smaller libraries. It may even permit smaller libraries to open at 9.30am, making them available to people who are out and about earlier in the day. It is suggested that this is an additional 0.8 people for Bellingen, Dorrigo and Urunga libraries, and an additional 1.2 people for Iluka, Maclean and Yamba libraries.

At Grafton Library the Regional support staff all work on the service desk. As well as providing staff to serve the community this connects the Regional support staff with people who are using the collections and services they manage.

¹³ COVID-19 closures and the impact on NSW public library users <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/covid-closures-impact-library-users> [accessed 4 November 2022] see also *Part of my daily life: the importance of public libraries as physical spaces* https://researchoutput.csu.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/228939705/Part_of_my_Daily_Life_accepted_version.pdf

It is suggested that Clarence Regional Library reconsider their use of volunteers considering the ALIA statement on voluntary work in library and information services which includes the following:

Use of volunteers in library and information services for specific purposes is acceptable but must never compromise the quality of service provision, nor replace paid employment in any way¹⁴.

If libraries are to be viewed as an essential service it is important that councils take this seriously and employ staff. In contrast road maintenance workers are all paid for their time, experience and skills, and to not pay for core work in libraries is to imply that this is not an essential service.

All the libraries in the smaller communities commented on the shortage of local casual staff. The casual staff need to be quite local as otherwise more time can be spent driving to a library than working at the library. It is suggested that planning is undertaken to increase the casual staff in each area. For the staff who regularly work the 4 - 9 hours in smaller libraries, consideration should be made to these staff becoming permanent part time staff as they are working permanently and part time.

Several staff, in smaller libraries, commented that there were no private spaces in their libraries. This impacted some staff discussions as well as discussions with the community. There is an impact on them being able to participate in online professional development, not only because they are often the only person in the library, but because when they are participating in online professional development, they are doing so from a service point.



Photograph 5 Smaller services desks at Maclean Library with an RUOK Day promotion

¹⁴ ALIA statement on voluntary work in library and information services Adopted 2001, amended 2009 and 2017 <https://www.alia.org.au/Web/Web/Research-and-Publications/Policies/Statement-on-voluntary-work-in-library-and-information-services.aspx> [accessed 24 October 2022]

7 Programs and services

Each of the libraries in Clarence Regional Library provides a range of programs and services for their communities. Each council has slightly different programs, but that is appropriate for the different communities. Some programs are dependent upon grants, for example at some libraries the Vintage film club relies on grant funding for the staff time as this is out of usual opening hours. There are program meetings across the libraries and forms to be completed for each planned program to provide relevant information about what is actually planned. The promotions are undertaken centrally by the Digital engagement officer with the programs being delivered by a range of staff across the libraries.



Photograph 6 Event promotion in Grafton Library

7.1 Clarence Regional Library website

The website is managed by the Regional library. It works for large and small screens (although there is likely to be a lot of scrolling on a smaller screen). It has easy to find links on the home page to each of the libraries and to events at the libraries. For libraries in Bellingen Shire clicking on the events link gave an error message even when there are coming events like storytime. These error messages need to be resolved. The library app is likely to sidestep some of these issues although as the same data source is used the same programs would be missing. Back copies of the email newsletters are available on the library website.

Resources such as Amplify need a greater visibility on the website as that would make it easier for the community to find it and may increase the amount of transcription which is undertaken. A search of the website did not show any link to Amplify¹⁵ are part of the local studies pages and only a very general link under services. It is recommended that there is improved visibility of Amplify on the website.

Filter by: All Themes Clarence Regional Library All Collections Search title/description

Sort by: Random Apply filters Reset

Recording Title	Speaker	Description	Duration	Contributors	Progress
REFLECTIONS ON THE C...	Harold Winkel	Harold speaks of his arrival on the Clarence...	15m 54s	0 contributors	
REFLECTIONS ON THE C...	Magda Mussared	Magda was born in the Netherlands at the...	15m 19s	4 contributors	
REFLECTIONS ON THE C...	Bill Watt	Bill talks about the history of McKittricks...	43m 16s	0 contributors	
REFLECTIONS ON THE C...	Baden Payne	Grafton born to a long time Grafton Family...	37m 25s	2 contributors	
REFLECTIONS ON THE C...	Spiro Notaras Part 2	The Notaras family have been involved in...	37m 20s	0 contributors	
REFLECTIONS ON THE C...	Robert Hastings	Robert provides an insight into the history of...	58m 59s	0 contributors	
REFLECTIONS ON THE C...	David Abrahams Part 1	David relates the history of Gerards and...	54m	1 contributor	1% have edits
Reflections on the Clarence	Violet McLachlan				
REFLECTIONS ON THE C...	Violet McLachlan Part 2	Violet speaks about the area of Trenayr on the...	14m 44s	0 contributors	
REFLECTIONS ON THE C...	Elsie Braund	Descended from the Wallbank and Hewitt...	47m 58s	2 contributors	
REFLECTIONS ON THE C...	Stan Mussared	Stan was born at Tamworth and raised on dairy...	30m 28s	4 contributors	99% have edits
REFLECTIONS ON THE C...	Roy Morrow	Roy was born in South Grafton, both his father...	32m 58s	5 contributors	100% have edits 1% awaiting review
Reflections on the Clarence	Violet McLachlan				
REFLECTIONS ON THE C...	Violet McLachlan Part 1	Violet speaks about her childhood in Grafton...	1h 1m 47s	0 contributors	
REFLECTIONS ON THE C...	Barbara Fahey	Born in Grafton, Barbara recalls in great...	1h 9m 55s	1 contributor	65% have edits
REFLECTIONS ON THE C...	Mary Thompson Part 1	After leaving school Mary lived in South...	1h 4m 26s	3 contributors	80% have edits 1% awaiting review
REFLECTIONS ON THE C...	Bruce Sahlqvist	His family established the Northern Rivers...	52m 15s	0 contributors	
REFLECTIONS ON THE C...	Bill Dahl	Bill commenced a plumbing apprenticeship in...	52m 21s	0 contributors	
REFLECTIONS ON THE C...	Neville Oxenford	Neville talks about some of the engineering...	57m	4 contributors	
REFLECTIONS ON THE C...	Mona Ibbott	Although born on the Richmond River her family...	44m 49s	3 contributors	
REFLECTIONS ON THE C...	Irene (Reta) Palmer	Reta grew up in Grafton during the 1920's when...	43m 10s	0 contributors	
REFLECTIONS ON THE C...	David Abrahams Part 2	David relates the history of Gerards and...	31m 34s	0 contributors	
REFLECTIONS ON THE C...	Frank Ford	Frank comes from early family settlers Ford ...	1h 1m 24s	0 contributors	

Photograph 7 Shows some of the oral history recordings on Amplify

¹⁵ Amplify Clarence Regional Library <https://amplify.gov.au/clarenceregionallibrary> [accessed 25 October 2022]

7.2 Social media

Each of the Clarence Regional Library libraries have their own Facebook accounts which they manage. Some content is provided by Clarence Regional Library and some by each library about their local events and people. It would be helpful to have links to the social media on each of the library pages as part of the contact details for each library, as well as promoting these in the libraries. The website has links to the Clarence Regional Library social media, which is helpful, and yet on the library specific pages there are no links to the Iluka, Maclean or Yamba Facebook pages or those at Bellingen, Dorrigo and Urunga.

Yamba Library Facebook page has information on upcoming programs, followed by photographs of many of these events. This is an excellent way to connect with the community and seems tailored to the Yamba community with some reposting from Clarence Regional Library. Maclean Library does more reposting from Clarence Regional Library on Facebook with some local photographs. It would be lovely to be able to see more photographs specifically of events at Maclean. Iluka Library has some reposting from Clarence Regional Library as well as local events. The local photographs and posts seem to have a higher number of likes, maybe because of the very local nature of their content. Bellingen Library has a small number of local posts, with reposts from Clarence Regional Library as do Dorrigo Library and Urunga Library. The Bellingen Shire Libraries include some reposts from their council, including RUOK day. Some of the libraries send their draft Facebook posts to the Digital engagement officer, but as she works three days a week this can lead to substantial delays in posting. It is suggested that the libraries post directly to Facebook to avoid this delay. As staff are abiding by the *Clarence Regional Library Customer service charter*¹⁶ and RESPECT¹⁷, this should not create problems.

As well as the libraries reposting information from Clarence Regional Library or their councils, they could consider using some of the social media resources from the State Library of NSW. There is a webpage for social media campaigns¹⁸ which includes social media ready posts about Openbook magazine, indyreads, as well as law and health related posts.

The Clarence Regional Library Instagram account has fewer posts about local events and of the library than it used to. It would be helpful for these to return, as they show what is happening in the library as well as the staff, the collection, and people who use the library. It is like the library has become invisible in its own Instagram posts. Some of the memes used recently may be a bit niche for a general audience and possibly not appeal, although they do sometimes have more likes than some of the other posts by the library (for example a recent post focusing on dated and unprofessional stereotypes such as shushing). Posts such as this one¹⁹ provide a dated, and backward-looking view of libraries while using modern photographs, using a stereotype which

¹⁶ *Clarence Regional Library Customer service charter* <https://www.crl.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/Customer-Service-Charter.pdf> [accessed 28 October 2022]

¹⁷ RESPECT <https://www.crl.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/CRL-RESPECT-Sign-new.pdf> [accessed 28 October 2022]

¹⁸ State Library of NSW social media campaigns <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/advice-and-best-practice/community-and-engagement/social-media-campaigns> [accessed 12 October 2022].

¹⁹ <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cha5JArl6Bl/> [accessed 12 October 2022]

has been outdated for decades in public libraries. This is not the professional and connected image which Clarence Regional Library would want to convey to its community. The collection (via photographs in the libraries) used to be more visible, now the collection seems replaced with memes. Social media looks best when a mix of methods are used for example a combination of the photographs from individual libraries as well as resources from places like BorrowBox and the State Library of NSW. As it is the Instagram feed for the entire region it is important for each of the libraries to be regularly visible in it. This could be by library staff either posting directly to Instagram or emailing photographs and text to the Digital Engagement Officer.

While there are some posts about local studies items, they are few and far between, and yet could be an entertaining weekly post for #FlashbackFriday, #ThrowbackThursday or some similar relevant hashtag. Amplify is very hard to find on the Clarence Regional Library social media, and yet promotion of it on social media could help encourage transcription of oral history recordings on in.

There are few hashtags used in the Instagram posts. Hashtags can connect to wider discovery, for example #NSWPublicLibraries, #ClarenceValleyCouncil, #GraftonLibrary, #YambaLibrary or #DorrigoLibrary. Mixed case hashtags are used because they can be read by screen readers. If hashtags are all lower or all upper-case screen reading programs cannot “see” the words in them, as they are just a set of letters running together.

It may be helpful to look at a couple of examples of social media use by libraries in other libraries. Canadian examples are chosen for variety.

- Edmonton Public library <https://www.epl.ca/> Their twitter account engages directly with the community see <https://twitter.com/EPLdotCA> and connects with local events. They have a different personality on Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/epldotca/> and connect locally. They seem to have lower connection on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/EPLdotCA> As a usual practice they include images and information about people who are First Nations and who are culturally and linguistically diverse (so that people can see people like themselves on the library social media – this should be done regardless of diversity).
- Calgary Library <https://calgarylibrary.ca/> Their tiktok looks fun <https://www.tiktok.com/@calgarylibrary> Twitter connects with community and includes tough topics like information on the residential schools and the relevant truth and reconciliation commission as well as library events etc <https://twitter.com/calgarylibrary> Facebook continues the visibility for First Nations people <https://www.facebook.com/calgarylibrary> (as well as people who are culturally and linguistically diverse) as does Instagram

The library needs a structured plan for social media to make sure that:

- Amplify and other local studies information are regularly posted
- there is weekly promotion of onsite library collections as well as online collections
- all the libraries are visible – this may be a monthly schedule
- greater visibility of library staff

- regular use of State Library of NSW social media campaigns
- other council and community promotions are required

7.3 Connecting with communities

Each of the communities in Clarence Regional Library have diverse populations with people of different ages, including children, young people and adults as well as people of different backgrounds including Aboriginal people and people who are culturally and linguistically diverse. There are people with disability and people who are LGBTQIA+.

Each of the libraries provides story times and or rhyme times to their community. In areas with smaller populations these are sometimes combined, depending on which families come to the library each week. Programs for older children and young adults tend to be more focused on school holiday activities at most libraries with some having additional programs. In some communities the libraries are not open when young people arrive home after school as they attend high school in other towns. It impacts on the ability to connect with some young people in the smaller communities. This highlights the importance of local connections, for example in Dorrig the youth centre refers people to the library and the library refers people to the youth centre. Most of the libraries do outreach to local schools for book week, and this appears to be a popular annual program.



Photograph 8 Community jigsaw at Dorrig Library

Programs for adults are more frequent in larger libraries, but most of the libraries have some programs for adults. The film clubs were described as important social connectors as well as fun social events for older adults. Partnerships, especially at Grafton have proved important for the provision of some programs. For the smaller libraries with more limited opening hours, their programs are understandably more restricted. Without each of these being evaluated it is difficult to comment on their effectiveness. They appear popular. There are some very local connections such as regular legal information sessions provided at Urunga Library. It was encouraging to hear about how some of the libraries have been participating in some of the events led by Aboriginal people in the area.

While visiting the libraries other partnerships were visible for example at Dorrigo and Bellingen libraries there were displays about the CWA 100th anniversary. While this year it is an anniversary display about the CWA, each year there is a display done by the local CWA in these libraries.



Photograph 9 Celebrating the centenary of the CWA, a display at Bellingen Library

7.4 Visibility of First Nations people

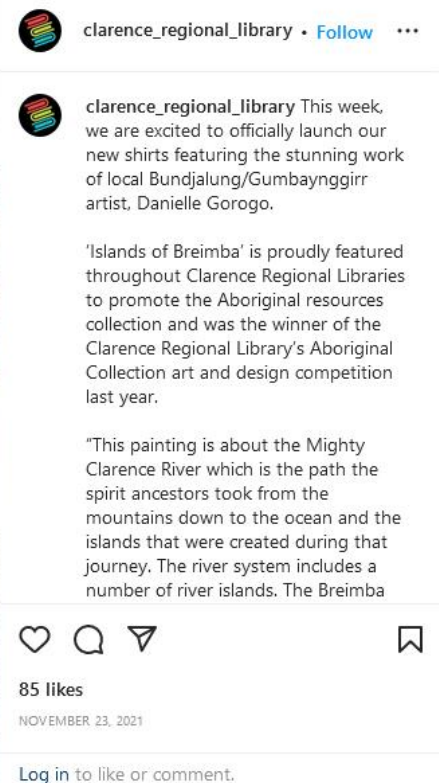


Photograph 10 Sign in Gumbaynggirr and English in Urunga Library

The work that Clarence Regional Library has undertaken with local First nations people is to be commended and continued. The signs in Gumbaynggirr at Bellingen, Dorrigo and Urunga libraries both for the collection and with an acknowledgement of country are impressive. Seeing writing in an Aboriginal language is still all too rare in NSW. Working with local Gumbaynggirr people has been a crucial part of this.



Photograph 11 Showing the uniforms from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CWmDL7tlq1j/>



In the libraries the work with Bundjalung/Gumbaynggirr artist, Danielle Gorogo who designed the artwork used for the Aboriginal collection in Clarence Valley, also shown as part of the acknowledgement of country, and used for one of the library uniforms for Bellingen Shire and Clarence Valley library staff, is to be commended. Photograph 11 shows how attractive the design is. The Close the gap shirt from Mudyala Aboriginal Corporation is also part of the

library staff uniform. It demonstrates the importance of appropriate pay and acknowledgement for artists. It also shows the kind of photographs which used to make the Clarence Regional Library Instagram account so appealing and interesting.



Photograph 12 Close the gap shirt 2022 from Mudyala Aboriginal Corporation <https://mudyala.org.au/product/clarence-valley-close-the-gap-shirt-2022-pre-order/>

7.5 Benchmarking NSW public library services to multicultural communities.

*Benchmarking NSW public library services to multicultural communities*²⁰ provides a way for libraries to benchmark how they provide services to multicultural communities. The purpose of this benchmarking is to know the current situation ranked from 1, for few services, to 5 for best practice, so that libraries can plan where to invest their time and other resources to improve services for multicultural and multilingual communities. Every library does not have to aim for a score of 5 in each area, however, each library should aim to improve their ranking. These benchmarks show the need to work with the community, and not simply for the community. Clarence Regional Library could consider benchmarking their services.

8 Clarence Correctional Centre

Clarence Correctional Centre is a maximum and minimum-security correctional centre for male and female offenders. The centre is located 12km south-east of Grafton. Clarence Regional

²⁰ *Benchmarking NSW public library services to multicultural communities*
<https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/multicultural-library-service-benchmarks.pdf> [accessed 10 December 2021]

Library is interested in exploring ways of providing the inmates of Clarence Correctional Centre with books and other printed resources.

The State Library has had a successful partnership with Corrective Services NSW for over a decade providing the Find Legal Answers tool kit books to 50 state-run correctional facilities, this includes tool kit titles accessed online via the prisoners' legal information portal. The State Library has recently agreed to provide the Multicultural Bulk Loans service to inmates via the Metropolitan Remand and Reception Centre (MRRC) Library at Silverwater.

Corrective Services NSW has an agreement to deliver inmate library services to Clarence Correctional Centre, which includes the purchasing, processing and cataloguing of new books for inmate libraries up to an agreed annual amount; a legal and general information request service; access to the multicultural bulk loan service from MRRC, and access to the KOHA library management system on the OAC 'green' computer network. The State Library has agreed to provide three copies of the Find Legal Answers tool kit to Clarence Correctional Centre.

The State Library has consulted with the Manager, Library Services, Corrective Services NSW and recommends the best way that Clarence Regional Library can assist is to offer to supplement Clarence Correctional Centre's budget for new books with donations of appropriate material, including weeded books that are in good condition and meet the requirements under our Custodial Operations Policy and Procedure 8.4 Inmate Libraries²¹.

9. Buildings

All the libraries are well maintained with renovations recently completed at Urunga and Bellingen, with plans (grant funded) for renovations at Dorrigo. Iluka, and Maclean have recent renovations and there are plans for a new library at Yamba.

Population projections have become harder to obtain. The Projections Explorer by NSW government for 2021 shows the projected population for Clarence Valley in 2041 as being 54,352²² with an annual increase of 0.24%, and yet the 2022 census provides a current population of 54,115. This strongly suggests that this area will reach the 20 year projection much sooner and has a higher annual percentage increase. Similarly for Bellingen Shire the 2041 population projection is shown as 13,580 a number it has almost reached in the census data from last year which shows the Bellingen Shire population as 13,253 this is with an annual increase of 0.17%. These changes in numbers highlight the importance of planning for larger libraries sooner as the impacts of the last few years have moved populations from larger metropolitan areas to places like Bellingen Shire and Clarence Valley.

²¹ *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures (COPP)* <https://correctiveservices.dcj.nsw.gov.au/csnew-home/correctional-centres/custodial-operations-policy-and-procedures-copp.html> [accessed 4 November 2022]

²² NSW Government Projections Explorer <https://pp.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/populations> [accessed 11 November 2022]

Tables 9.1 and 9.2 show indicative population sizes to calculate library sizes however, additional work needs to be undertaken to include local data including population estimates as there is tension between the census data and the actual rate of growth in both Bellingen Shire and Clarence Valley. It is strongly recommended that service-based benchmarks are calculated for greater precision in planning. The number of seats is calculated using the service benchmark. No non-resident work force is included.

9.1 Bellingen Shire Libraries²³

Library	Current size in square metres	Indicative minimum <i>People places</i> size based on 2032	Current catchment population estimate 2022	Number of seats+++	Population estimates 2032 based on 0.95 annual population growth++
Bellingen	440	591+	6,142	50	6751
Dorrigo	117.5	190	2,172	20	2387
Urunga	262.5	374	4,883	40	5418
	820 total current floor size	1,155 minimum estimate based on population	13,197		14,556

+ Includes a larger work room allowance as the central service point for the shire.

++ Using the calculator <https://www.omnicalculator.com/math/percentage-increase>

+++Calculated using the service benchmark for the 2032 population estimate

The above table shows that Bellingen, Torrigo and Urunga Libraries are smaller than recommended for the 2032 population projection for these communities. This can be seen by comparing their current size with the indicative minimum size for 2032. *People places* requires using the population estimate for 10 years in the future so that libraries will be adequate in size. Bellingen Shire has experienced significant population growth, which makes planning difficult, but not impossible. The total floor space for the libraries for the Bellingen Shire is at least 300 metres less than it should be. Bellingen, Torrigo and Urunga Libraries should consider an increase in size for their communities. Potential floor sizes are shown in the column *Indicative minimum People places size based on 2032*. The State Library of NSW is always willing to provide advice and assistance to councils planning new library buildings.

The number of seats is derived from the *People places* service benchmark. This is used to indicate the number of people who should be able to be seated in the library, on a variety of types of seats. This is to ensure that people can spend time in the library enjoying the space, and not simply come to borrow and leave. The number of seats is a very helpful planning indicator.

Doors at Torrigo and Urunga are not automatic or there are issues with how they work. This can lead to them being propped open for access which is not effective for air-conditioning.



Photograph 13 Bellingin Library in the park



Photograph 14 Urunga Library in the park



Photograph 15 Inside Dorrig Library

9.2 Clarence Valley Shire Libraries

Library	Current size in square metres	Indicative minimum <i>People places</i> size based on 2032	Current catchment population estimate 2022	Number of seats++++	Population estimate 2032 based on 0.95 annual population growth++
Grafton	1,982	2,180+	35,700	192	36,186
Iluka+++	140	247	3,285	28	3,578
Maclean	346	722	8,818	74	10,462*
Yamba	292.26	722	6,376	74	10,462*
	2,760.26 total current floor size	3,871 minimum estimate based on population	54,179		60,688

+ Includes a larger workroom allowance.

*using data from 2017 for 2026 as other population estimates have already been passed

++ Using the calculator <https://www.omnicalculator.com/math/percentage-increase>

+++Includes part of Woomba in the calculation, other sections

++++Calculated using the service benchmark for the 2032 population estimate

The above table shows that Grafton Library is close to the size recommended by *People places*. This shows excellent planning by Clarence Valley Council as this library was constructed using 10 year population estimates and opened in 2014. This highlights the importance of building a library which is big enough for the community as it will facilitate providing collections, services and programs as the population grows. When libraries are too small based on population and

service benchmarks from *People places*, it is difficult to fit collections of adequate size, and to provide services and programs for the people in the area. Note the indicative minimum sizes are to show, that several of the libraries should have plans for either extensions or new buildings. It is noted that the new Yamba Library is planned for 440 square metres. Planning a new site for Maclean Library is to be commended as while Maclean Library is attractive and well maintained, a custom designed and built library would improve what is possible as some of the spaces are difficult to supervise. The State Library of NSW is always willing to provide advice and assistance to councils planning new library buildings.



Photograph 16 Inside Grafton Library



Photograph 17 Public access computers at Iluka Library



Photograph 18 Near the entrance to Maclean Library



Photograph 19 Display and seating at Yamba Library

9.3 Clarence Valley Mobile

Clarence Valley has a mobile library which has had a separate review. This mobile is smaller than previous mobiles. This has advantages (it can go on local ferries) and disadvantages (less collection is available). It had been intended to serve more as a mobile maker space but issues with having to realign the 3D printer at every stop and the pandemic caused a change in approach.



Photograph 20 Clarence Valley Mobile Library

With the smaller mobile there are issues of rain blowing in, and it being much harder to browse the collection. There have been suggestions of a covered location with a slab of concrete or gravel for the van to park on at each site. This seems likely to be an expensive solution, and another kind of vehicle could change the need for this. There needs to be further discussion about what actually are the community needs of the mobile library as at times it sounds like it is mainly being used to provide a home library service as well as click and collect. Improved disability access to the mobile library may help with some of these issues. Note this information is derived from a draft and not a final report.

10 Library services and change

It is difficult to provide a global overview of trends in public libraries as some places like the United Kingdom have been struggling with budgets cuts since the global financial crisis, and many countries in Europe provide their reports in languages other than English. Continuing to combat misinformation is still a crucial role of public library staff. The interest in this can be seen by the presentation delivered by Nicole A Cooke at 2022 reference seminar²⁴. There is a continued importance of library staff working to provide accurate and timely information. IFLA the International Federation of Library Associations has provided a 2021 (but not yet a 2022) update to their Trend report²⁵. The trends they list, in priority order are:

1. Tough times ahead
2. Virtual is here to stay
3. The comeback of physical spaces
4. The rise of soft skills
5. Diversity gets taken seriously
6. An environmental reckoning
7. A mobile population
8. The impatient user
9. An analogue backlash
10. Scale matters
11. Data domination
12. Search transformed
13. Race to the extremes
14. Lifelong learners
15. A single, global collection
16. The privatisation of knowledge
17. Qualifications matter
18. Information literacy recognised
19. 'Open' raises questions about libraries' unique selling point
20. Inequalities deepen

²⁴ Dr Nicole A. Cooke at 2022 reference seminar online https://wiki.libraries.nsw.gov.au/doku.php?id=2022_reference_seminar_online May 2022, [accessed 11 October 2022]

²⁵ IFLA trend report 2021 update <https://trends.ifla.org/update-2021> [accessed 25 October 2022]

Some of these topics will be explored in detail below, as well as some others which seem relevant to Clarence Regional Library

10.1 Tough times ahead

The top point, with *Tough times ahead*, could perhaps be better worded as tough times *continue* as since 2018 the Clarence Regional Library area has experienced drought, bushfires, floods, and a pandemic as well as the associated economic and personal impacts of these disasters. The local housing shortage is part of a wider housing shortage, partly caused by disasters, and partly by the tree change/sea change appeal of the area.



Photograph 21 Resilient Clarence collection at Maclean Library

10.2 Virtual is here to stay and the comeback of physical spaces

These are a matched pair with the State Library of NSW continuing online professional development as well as providing training at the State Library and in public libraries. Feedback from public libraries is that they like both options. At Clarence Regional Library it is about increasing the community comfort in the comeback of physical spaces, and in bringing people back in who have lost the library habit. There are people who do not use the Clarence Regional Library and it would be great for them to discover these collections, spaces and services. Some libraries continue with a mix of onsite and online, for example Central Coast Libraries provide D&D sessions in the library and online to provide people with choice.

10.3 Importance of libraries as space and place with collections, services and skilled staff

Research by Professor Philip Hilder, Dr Jane Garnder, Associate Professor Hamid R. Jamali and Dr Simon Wakeling called *The importance of the physical spaces of NSW public libraries: What users miss and why*²⁶ shows that

- library spaces are highly valued by the community
- libraries serve diverse communities
- libraries provide an experience for users
- libraries offer the opportunity to connect with others
- library collections are highly valued by the community
- library staff have a positive impact.

Browsing and reading books and magazines was the most missed activity while libraries were closed because of lockdown by 86% - 93% of people in the four libraries surveyed closely followed by people missing asking librarians for help and advice (by 70% - 84% of people in the four libraries surveyed). This demonstrates the continued importance of collections and skilled staff. This highlights that libraries are not “beyond books²⁷”. Claiming the importance of being a library and not apologising for having a collection is important. Libraries as places with collections are crucial. The importance of library spaces, collections and skilled staff matter because of point 20 in the *IFLA trend report 2021 update, Inequalities deepen*. As inequalities deepen there continues to be a need for a free public library service with high rates of membership. High rates of membership are more likely to lead to inclusion of people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, rather than elite interest groups.



Photograph 22 Bellingen Library

²⁶ Hilder, Philip, Jane Garnder, Hamid R. Jamali and Simon Wakeling *The importance of the physical spaces of NSW public libraries: What users miss, and why* <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/covid-closures-impact-library-users> [accessed 12 October 2022]

²⁷ A phrase used recently on a NSW public library email list

Several staff commented on the increase in homeless people in their area, some sleeping under the library and some in cars. Several library staff participated in the online homelessness training, and this is likely to have provided some useful skills for this and other areas of customer service.

For the regional library as a whole point 10 *Scale matters*, because by two councils working together there is a larger collection for all the community, a shared website and other resources which demonstrate the value of working together. There may be elements of point 6 *An environmental reckoning* as well. Encouraging to see that Clarence Regional Library participates in the enquiry completion rate as this provides important information about the kinds of questions and assistance the community is seeking.

10.4 Importance of First Nations people

Clarence Regional Library is to be commended for the visibility of First Nations people in the libraries with bilingual signs in some libraries and art works in others. This links to point 5 *Diversity gets taken seriously* in the *IFLA trend report 2021 update*.



Photograph 23 Welcome to Urunga Library

10.5 Importance of first language

In 2021 the State Library of NSW commissioned research by Charles Sturt University into the importance of first-language reading²⁸. This provides evidence for what we have been hearing anecdotally that it is crucial that people have the opportunity to read in their first language. To quote from this research:

First language reading clearly supports links back to home and family, but participants also mentioned that reading in their first language also allowed them to connect their children with their cultural heritage. Reading to children in the language of their cultural heritage also keeps the language alive and connects the next generation to their cultural past and communities. So, reading in a first language supports links to the past, and also to the future, and as such is a highly valued activity for each of the participants. Every participant was also extremely grateful for the work done by public libraries to make the experience of first-language reading possible²⁹.



Photograph 24 Library display at HJ Daly Library Campbelltown, showing books in several languages

²⁸ Garner, Jane First-language reading and the role of the public library, Libraries Research Group Blog, 27 September 2021 <https://librariesresearchgroup.csu.domains/blog/2021/09/27/first-language-reading-and-the-role-of-the-public-library/> [accessed 12 January 2022]

²⁹ Garner, Jane First-language reading and the role of the public library, Libraries Research Group Blog, 27 September 2021 <https://librariesresearchgroup.csu.domains/blog/2021/09/27/first-language-reading-and-the-role-of-the-public-library/> [accessed 12 January 2022]

The recent research by Dr Jane Garner for *First language reading and the role of public libraries* highlights that it is an emotional and an important cultural experience to be able to read in your first language. As one of the people interviewed for the research stated

Because it's my first language so I really – very relaxed when it come to the book, I know every word meaning, I know ever sentence's meaning, and I don't need to guess. I don't need to read the dictionary³⁰.

This helps to show the importance for libraries of including material in languages other than English, even where there are a relatively small number of speakers like the Clarence Regional Library area.

For displays in each of the libraries it is recommended that titles from State Library's collection language collections are included. It will raise an awareness of the kinds of collections available with a minimum time investment. This can be done as part of every library display at each library to improve visibility and awareness of items from the State Library of NSW in a range of languages. Libraries can request boxes of items in a range of languages, for example five titles each in seven different languages, including titles for children.

Research by Dr Sabine Wardle, Dr Kasey Garrison and Associate Professor Karen Bell called *Embracing the cultural identity of burgeoning ethnic groups in regional public libraries: A pilot project with the Punjabi Indian Community in the Riverina*³¹ demonstrated the importance of connecting with people via a first language for adults, and of assisting children in learning a family language. It shows the importance of talking with the community about the services and programs they want, and not making assumptions. This section links to point 5 *Diversity gets taken seriously* in the in the *IFLA trend report 2021 update*.

10.6 Importance of specific staff skills

There is a continued importance of readers' advisory services provided by well-trained staff. At least one staff member commented about the online readers' advisory training provided by the State Library of NSW and how this has influenced her work. Readers' advisory work can be in the form of displays in libraries, and all the Clarence Regional Library sites had attractive displays when visited. It can be through the use of resources to assist clients with 'what to read next' not based on the staff member's reading but on the use of relevant resources. This links with point 4 *The rise of soft skills* in the *IFLA trend report 2021 update*. Trained, skilled library staff are important and links to point 17 *Qualifications matter*.

³⁰ Garner, Jane *First language reading and the role of public libraries* [https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/first-language-reading/February 2022](https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/first-language-reading/February%2022) [accessed 12 October 2022]

³¹ Wardle, Sabine, Kasey Garrison and Associate Professor Karen Bell *Embracing the cultural identity of burgeoning ethnic groups in regional public libraries: A pilot project with the Punjabi Indian Community in the Riverina* <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/advice-and-best-practice/research-projects/embracing-cultural-identity> [accessed 12 October 2022]

Staff skilled in both collecting local studies items and making them available for their community continues to be important. This can be a mix of older items as well as new items. Each of the libraries has a local studies collection relevant to their area.

10.7 Connections for learning and access

Building relationships with the local Country University Centre in Grafton is important as this can help with local information connections and support. There are already connections for this and other organisations and partnership. This action by Clarence Regional Library connects to point 14 *Lifelong learners* in the *IFLA trend report 2021 update*.

11 Recommendations

The recommendations are divided into different sections, so it is easy to see which ones are faster to do, and which will take more investment of time, funds or the redirection of resources.

11.1 Faster implementation

- Make sure items in languages other than English are always part of library displays in each library. These items should continue to be added to the displays (when borrowed) or changed to other items (if not borrowed for a few days).
- Use State Library of NSW promotional fliers, signs, and posters (digital or printed) in all libraries to promote collections in languages other than English.
- Use pull-up banners promoting the bulk loans from the State Library of NSW in each library
- Use hashtags for social media posts
- Provide links to each library's social media on their library page on their website as well as promotion in each library
- Increase the visibility of the collection and the libraries in the social media posts
- Use social media to promote transcription on Amplify at least once a fortnight.
- Improved visibility of Amplify on the library website.
- Improved visibility of programs at Bellingen Shire Libraries – make sure the information is in Spydus for access.
- Use social media resources from the State Library of NSW including posts about Openbook magazine, indyreads, and law and health related posts³².
- Clarence Regional Library to reconsider their use of volunteers considering the ALIA statement on voluntary work in library and information services.

11.2 Medium implementation

- Regular (weekly/fortnightly) posts about the local studies collection
- Provide links to the social media on each of the library webpages as part of the contact details for each library, as well as promoting these in the libraries. The website has links

³² State Library of NSW social media campaigns <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/advice-and-best-practice/community-and-engagement/social-media-campaigns> [accessed 12 October 2022].

to the Clarence Regional Library social media and needs to add links to the Iluka, Maclean or Yamba Facebook pages as well as those at Bellingen, Dorrigo and Urunga.

- Add Amplify to the Clarence Regional Library website to make it easier for the community to find it and to increase the amount of transcription which is undertaken. Put the links in the local studies section as well as in other relevant locations on the website Amplify³³.
- Explore options to increase the number of casuals local to each library. Note this does not appear to be an issue for Bellingen or Grafton libraries.
- Install automatic doors at all sites
- Developed a structured plan for social media posting to Regional library accounts

11.3 Longer implementation

- It is recommended that Clarence Regional Library aim for enhanced staffing of 23.79 as this would provide approximately 70 additional hours a week to keep all the libraries open at lunchtime as well as provide time for program preparation and professional development for library staff in the five smaller libraries. It may even permit smaller libraries to open at 9.30am, making them available to people who are out and about earlier in the day. It is suggested that this is an additional 0.8 people for Bellingen, Dorrigo and Urunga libraries, and an additional 1.2 people for Iluka, Maclean and Yamba libraries.
- Note while this is a longer implementation, planning for this needs to start soon.

³³ Amplify Clarence Regional Library <https://amplify.gov.au/clarenceregionallibrary> [accessed 25 October 2022]

12. Appendix

12.1 Custodial operations policy and procedure 8.4 Inmate libraries

Attached separately