



The Mayor's Message



I am very proud to present Yarra Libraries' 2018-19 Annual Report.

Our libraries continue to deliver exceptional services to our community. Or Libraries were ranked as the second-most popular service in this year's Council annual customer satisfaction survey for the second time running.

At time when social isolation is increasing, it is heart-warming to see our libraries delivering such compassionate and inclusive services and programs. As our motto goes, *Libraries Change Lives*.

Our libraries champion innovation, inclusivity and accessibility for all, and ARE being recognised for their achievements on an international scale. Our libraries' programs have won international awards and have been shared with the world; looking ahead to 2020 I am sure we will see even greater things from Yarra Libraries.

Cr Danae Bosler Mayor, Yarra City Council

Library Manager's Message



What a big year it has been for Yarra Libraries! I am really proud of what we have achieved these last 12 months. We have delivered great customer service to our community, created many great programs, continued with our wonderful partnerships, and also highlighted how our libraries change lives every day.

We have taken part in international conferences and also won two international awards. Yarra Libraries continues to be an innovative, cutting edge library service that prides itself on multiple offerings for our community.

Our wonderful Ewing Trust, supported and funded Yarra Libraries to deliver the inaugural Fitzroy Writers Festival which was held in April, which was a wonderful event with over 1500 people attending.

In May I was very proud that I and Coordinator Community Learning & Partnerships, Kylie Carlson, flew to Aarhus in Denmark to represent Yarra Libraries Internationally to deliver a 90 minute workshop session at the NEXT Library Conference. We spread the word internationally that Libraries Change Lives and how to tell your story.

Our partners both within Council and in the community are an integral part of our success. On January 26, Yarra Libraries hosted a William Cooper oratian, in partnership with Community Programs team at Yarra Council. It was a very moving event which made me very proud to be part of the Yarra Community.

At the end of 2018 we delivered the wonderful Sensitive Santa Program developed and run by Kylie Carlson and the library staff. This program gives children with disabilities the opportunity to have a one on one with Santa away from the stress of a shopping centre visit and the chance to interact with him in a controlled quiet environment. The heart-warming feedback we received by the participants and their families was a testament to this wonderful program. A video was created on this program by our wonderful Dan Trevarthen and we were honoured to receive two awards at the 2019 A Corto Di Libri International Short Film Contest.

We listen to our community, we work hard to deliver the resources and facilities they need and enjoy.

Our libraries change lives every day. Looking ahead, I am positive that the future for Yarra Libraries is bright as we continue working hard to be a home of innovation, inclusion and imagination for our community.

Felicity Macchion Manager, Yarra Libraries

Leaps and Strides

What a big year it has been for Yarra Libraries! We have won awards, taken part in international conferences and programs, and played a key role in Victoria's Libraries Change Lives campaign. Yarra Libraries continues to be the go-to library for partnerships, launches and progressive new ideas for authors, artists and peak bodies across the library sector both in Australia and internationally.

NEXT Conference, Aarhus, Denmark

At the end of May, our Manager Library Services, Felicity Macchion, and Coordinator Community Learning & Partnerships, Kylie Carlson, flew to Aarhus in Denmark to represent Yarra Libraries and facilitate a workshop session at the NEXT Library Conference.

Along with Dr Michael Stephens (Associate Professor, San Jose University) and Jason Evans Groth (Digital Media Librarian, North Carolina State University), they delivered a joint presentation on the power of stories and storytelling, sharing some of the inclusive and creative approaches Yarra Libraries has taken to engage the community, including Sensitive Storytime and Sensitive Santa.

International Short Film Awards

We were honoured to receive two awards at the 2019 A Corto Di Libri International Short Film Contest for our video on Sensitive Santa; **Best Documentary** and **Film of the Year**. We created the short film to highlight the impact this program is having on our community and are proud to be sharing it with the world.

A corto di libri is an international short film competition honouring short films that focus on libraries and the librarian profession.



Libraries Change Lives

Yarra Libraries is currently taking part in a state-wide funding advocacy campaign called Libraries Change Lives by collecting and sharing stories from the people who use our libraries about what this means to them. Each story is shared on social media with a photo of the person and the hashtag #librarieschangelives.

At Yarra Libraries we provide a place where all people are welcome, and everyone belongs, regardless of who they are and what has brought them to our space. We believe that nowhere offers the same safe and inclusive spaces with free and equal, life-changing access to art, ideas, education and social engagement, as public libraries.

On 18 May Yarra Libraries took part in a big event at State Parliament House showcasing the power and community benefits of funding public libraries. We captured photos of attendees on our green screen and our Sensitive Storytime and award-winning Sensitive Santa videos were playing on loop in Yarra's display, catching the attention of many peopLe.

The event was compered by Alan Brough, a Libraries Change Lives champion, and The Minister for Local Government, Hon Adem Somyurek MP was in attendance. Alan Brough also spoke about the event on ABC Drive later in the day (interview starts at 2.49mins).

The delegation presented thousands of handwritten postcards from people across Victoria acknowledging the personal impact of public libraries on their lives. Many of the messages were quite profound, demonstrating that our libraries really do change people's lives.











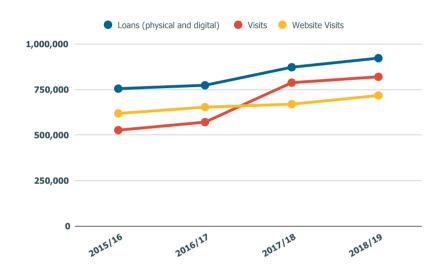




2018/19 Statistics

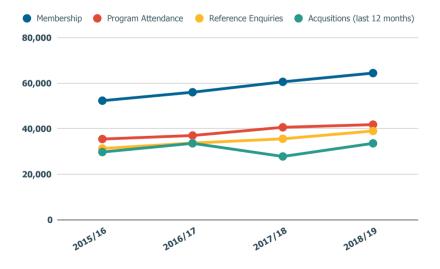
In 2018/19 Yarra Libraries enjoyed another year of impressive growth, with figures growing significantly across the board.

Our top three growth areas remain Wi-Fi (up 33% from last year's gain of 88.2% following improvements made to the login process) and computer usage (up 18% from last year).



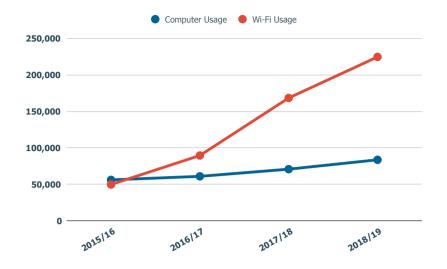
Digital loans continue to increase as we make improvements and additions to our online library.

Improvements to our website around accessibility and navigation appear to have contributed to an increase in site visits - our eNewsletter campaigns often link back to our site as the primary location for information about our regular programs.



A focus on festival attendance and outreach appears to have contributed to our sustained growth in membership; we are preparing to reduce some barriers to membership that may see this figure increase much further next year.

Program attendance increased slightly as we begin to consolidate our offerings and establish a more routine calendar, with additional sessions of popular programs like RhymeTime in response to community feedback.



Computer usage has increased and is reflective of the growing dependence on library computers for accessing government services.

Wi-Fi usage has steadily climbed, ahead of the 88.2% increase the previous year. This has prompted us to investigate upgrading our connections to better support community need, particularly at Bargoonga Nganjin, North Fitzroy Library.

КРІ	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	VARIANCE
Wi-Fi Usage	89,439	168,320	224,597	+33%
Visits	571,513	787,998	820,202	+4%
Computer Usage	60,863	70,704	83,538	+18%
Loans (print and digital)	773,739	872,695	922,576	+6%
Program Attendance	37,034	40,642	41,824	+3%
Membership	56,028	60,587	64,433	+6%
Website Visits	634,105	670,003	717,572	+7%
Reference Enquiries	33,724	35,582	39,017	+10%
Acqusitions	33,611	27,845	33,600	+21%

Yarra Libraries performed above the Victorian state average in most of these areas for 2017/18. The data for 2018/19 was not available at time of publication.

Fitzroy Writers Festival

Thanks to the Ewing Trust, the inaugural Fitzroy Writers Festival was held on Saturday 6 April at Fitzroy Town Hall Ballroom, Reading Room, Council Chambers and Fitzroy Library.

Featuring 13 different free author talks, panels, presentations, performances and workshops over the course of six hours, plus a ballroom marketplace, children's and young adults activities, giveaways and food, Fitzroy Writers Festival was a huge success. The festival engaged with over 40 different community groups, individuals and small businesses, attracting 747 people to booked events and over 1,500 people overall.

Behrouz Boochani, No Friend but the Mountains: Journalist Behrouz Boochani joined us via web link from Manus Island to talk about his incredible book No Friend But the Mountains. The book was recently awarded the \$100,000 Victorian Prize for Literature. Boochani talked about the process of writing a book while being held in detention and the book's themes of identity and strength in the face of adversity.

Growing up African in Australia: Award-winning author Maxine Beneba Clarke was joined by Guido Melo, Santilla Chingaipe and surprise panellist and TV personality Faustina Agolley to talk about the new anthology Growing Up African In Australia. Told with passion, power, and poise, this book tells the stories of African-diaspora Australians: diverse, engaging, hopeful and heartfelt.





Blak Brow Launch: Blak Brow is a very special issue of The Lifted Brow created entirely and independently by a First Nations collective of editors, curators, academics, and designers, filled with new work by First Nations writers and visual artists with a focus on indigenous women. Several of the contributors talked about of the successes of the issue.

Carly Findlay, From blogging to a book: We were very fortunate to have Carly Findlay begin the program of events in the Main Library Area. Her recent book, Say Hello, regarding her portrayal of living with a rare, severe skin condition, ichthyosis, has received wide-spread acclaim. An award-winning writer, speaker and appearance activist, Carly was named as one of Australia's 100 Women of Influence in 2014.

Ballroom Marketplace: A highlight of the festival was the busy and bustling book room marketplace. Featuring 25 different independent small publishing labels, authors and book sellers, this area showcased the diversity of the Melbourne literary scene and provided a great opportunity for people in the industry to promote their titles and network with other small publishers.

Festival Partners

Yarra Youth Services	Fitzroy Legal Service Niche Press		
The Lifted Brow	Carly Findlay	Booked Out	
The Gents	Stuart Kells	Marilbel Steel	
Eliabeth McCarthy	Melbourne Spoken Word	Catherine Deveny	
Emma Russack	Justin Heazlewood	The Back Room	
In One Act	Hares & Hyenas	Archer	
Alison Evans	Marlee Jane Ward	Brodie Carmody	
Brow Books	The Little Bookroom	Fitzroy Lions Club	
Sticky Institute	Wild Dingo Press	Fitzroy Learning Network	
Concrete Queers	Odyssey Books	Swampland	
Ford Street Publishing	Abdi Aden The Community Grocer		
Grattan Street Press	Margaret Zalisz	City of Yarra	
Society of Women Writers Victoria	Victorian Association of Women Writers Melbourne Young Writers' Studio		





Creating opportunities for learning and literacy



National Simultaneous Storytime

National Simultaneous
Storytime (NSS) is held
annually in May by the
Australian Library and
Information Association
(ALIA). Every year a picture
book, written and illustrated
by an Australian author
and illustrator, is read
simultaneously in libraries,
schools, pre-schools, childcare
centres, family homes,
bookshops and many other
places around the country.

Mayor Danae Bosler read Alpacas with Maracas by Matt Cosgrove at Collingwood Library to a group of students from Collingwood College. Cr Amanda Stone read to children and visitors at Fitzroy Library while Cr Jackie Fristacky read at Bargoonga Nganjin, North Fitzroy Library.

The event at Collingwood Library also featured real-life alpacas, courtesy of Surilana Alpacas, which were friendly and patient while children and vistiors posed with them for photos.

The event attracted the attention of Channel Nine who came to film the event and featured us on their evening news broadcast.

The Write-In

The Write-In is a monthly creative writing workshop held at Bargoonga Nganjin, North Fitzroy Library where enthusiastic writers and people wanting to write can meet in a supportive environment to share ideas and engage in short creative challenges designed to develop their skills. 8 sessions were delivered across 2018/19 with an average attendance of 9 participants, many of whom attend regularly. A recent extension of this program has seen participants submitting their writing for feedback - the facilitators have a professional background in writing and editing. This has deepened the quality of the program and ensures participants attend regularly. The success of this program is eagerly anticipated to be replicated at Fitzroy Library in 2019/20 after garnering support from The Ewing Trust.

Poetic Mamas

On Saturday 23 March, we hosted Poetic Mamas, the first of our spoken word events for 2019. The event featured five woman poets from the local poetry scene as part of our International Women's Day events. Partnering with Viki Mealings, a stalwart of the poetry scene, we aimed to deliver a family-friendly, inclusive afternoon gig that provided women poets with a performance opportunity they wouldn't get at the usual bar/night-time venues because they're caregivers.

A number of the poets live with disability and/or work in the disability sector, so we worked with Aged and Disability Services to promote the event through their channels, and a number of the poets' colleagues showed up to support. Some of them even performed pieces of their own during the open mic section at the end.



Putting People First

Community Wellbeing Day

In recognition of Mental Health Week in October 2018, we hosted a community wellbeing day and invited many local community services to join us and celebrate positive mental health. Held in Atherton Gardens for its proximity to the library, schools and housing estates, we intended to expand the visibility of some vital community service including Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, Neighbourhood Justice Centre, Connecting Fitzroy Network (formerly the Atherton Gardens Network), Co-Health, and Mental Health Foundation Victoria. The day also included entertainment from Circus Oz and wellbeing workshops with Tai Chi and Bollywood dancing sessions, and free food from The Community Grocer.

Bridges to Harmony

Now in its third year, Bridges to Harmony is a celebration of Fitzroy's vibrant multicultural heritage and history, promoting social inclusion, human rights and sharing across cultures. Held at Condell Street Reserve and presented in partnership with Fitzroy Learning Network, Yarra Youth Services, Fitzroy Legal Service, Fitzroy Residents Association and Cultivating Communities, the event was a rocking great party featuring live music, food and dance performances.

Yarra Libraries and The Ewing Trust provided dance workshops, face painting, henna hand painting, interactive mural painting and free book giveaways.





Connecting with our Community

Each year, Yarra Libraries partners with a number of community groups and organisations to deliver exciting and meaningful programs and events to the public. This year was no different. We hosted three community days and many stand-out partnership events in the last financial year.

Reconciliation on the Rooftop

On Monday 27 May we celebrated the start of Reconciliation Week at Bargoonga Nganjin, North Fitzroy Library with our popular annual Reconciliation on the Rooftop event.

Partnering again with with SNAICC, Aboriginal Housing Victoria and Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages to bring to life this year's theme, *Grounded in Truth, Walk Together in Courage*, 120 community members attended the event, despite the unseasonably cold weather, which was also broadcast live by 3KND Kool 'n' Deadly radio.

Colin Hunter performed a beautiful smoking ceremony and Welcome to Country, and Cr Amanda Stone introduced the event with a speech acknowledging the importance of truth and courage in reconciliation. Cr Daniel Nguyen and Cr James Searle also attended the event, as did a number of our Executive Management Team.

Representatives from each of the partner organisations spoke eloquently and bravely about how vital it is to acknowledge the difficult truths of our shared history.



Legendary Kokatha/Gunditjmara Songman and Storyteller Dave Arden opened and closed the event with his soulful guitar and beautiful songs.

At the end of the event, the community stayed on to enjoy a shared lunch and good conversation, learning about the partner organisations and talking with 3KND. Yarra Libraries gifted everyone with a seedling native to our local area for them to take home and grow as a reminder of the day and what we have all learned together.

It was truly a day to remember that set the tone for our continued work towards a culture of reconciliation and respect that will enable us to walk together into a better future.

Open Table Partnership

Open Table's free lunches aren't just a delicious way for the community to connect, they also help raise awareness around food waste. Open Table serves food that would otherwise have been thrown out. They get their produce from food rescue organisations OzHarvest and Secondbite, or from local businesses.

The lunches are run by volunteers, who come from a range of different backgrounds and levels of skill and experience.

Open Table runs two free lunches each month at Bargoonga Nganjin North Fitzroy Library. Library staff attend the lunch to chat with participants about our service and offer pre-loved books for them to take home.





Library Lovers' Day

In February we celebrated Valentine's Day, affectionally known as *Library Lovers' Day* (developed by the Australian Library and Information Association) on-board the 11 tram with costumed staff gifting passengers with books and speading our messages about the pleasure of reading.

At The Abbotsford Convent we introducted a romantic edge to our Text Appeal program and read some poetry and prose, and at Richmond Library we encouraged visitors to write a love letter on our vintage typewriter. Our efforts were featured on the Public Libraries Victoria Facebook and Instagram pages. The love letters crafted at Richmond Library were later used in an installation inside Parliament House as part of a *Libraries Change Lives* event showcasing the power and impact of public libraries.

New Library Podcast

In late January we launched the "Yarra Libraries Podcast", a new audio channel hosted by Soundcloud (available on iTunes and Spotify) that features many of our author talks, discussion pannels and public lectures, plus reading recommendations from our Childrens and Youth team members. The podcast was created in response to community feedback about accessing our events remotely, after trials of Facebook Live video streaming proved ineffective.

The podcast aims to extend the life and reach of our programming, especially to those in the community who may be unable to attend physically. Some recordings have already accrued over 100 listens; in some cases this is greater than double the number of people who attended the live event.



Connecting with Technology

Digital Coaching

Technological change moves at an ever-quickening pace and for many reasons people can find it difficult to keep up. To help people learn more about digital technologies, we deliver free, half-hour digital coaching sessions that can be booked every week at each of our five library branches. Patrons can bring in any device and get one-on-one assistance with everything from basic operation to using apps and navigating the online world. It is one of our most popular programs and some locals now use the service regularly to help navigate their new digital lives.

Be Connected

The Victorian Tech Savvy Seniors program, which Yarra has delivered successfully in multiple languages for several years, has been replaced by Be Connected, a series of workshops to engage seniors with digital technologies and improve their digital literacy. This year we partnered with Lively, an organisation that trains and employs young job seekers to help older people use technology. It is a great partnership and Lively has helped us bridge the generational divide while closing the digital one.

These free and accessible sessions focussed on a range of topics such as using search engines, sharing and storing photos, socialising online, and staying safe on the internet. Participants benefited from being able to ask questions in a supportive environment with a guiding hand from the next generation.





Bringing our Collections to Life

In 2018/19, Yarra Libraries acquired 33,600 new items and increased borrowing by 6% (922,576 total loans). Our Collections and Reader Development team aim to to increase readership and a love of reading through programs and initiatives like our Red Hot Reads collection and Game of Loans summer reading challenge.

Red Hot Reads

Our Red Hot Reads collection continues to include popular, high-demand items and titles that support Yarra Libraries' programs & events. It also showcases debut authors, Aboriginal authors and stories that resonate with our community's lived experiences. The majority of titles in this collection are made available at all branches, however, this year we trialled providing smaller quantities of titles and rotating titles to different branches to extend their life or to support localized demand.

Originally, books were not covered and were withdrawn from the collection after 12 weeks. This year, a decision was made to cover tand retain them for our circulating collection and/or Book Group sets to improve return on investment once the initial demand for them subsided. Titles now remain in the Red Hot Reads collection for up to 10 weeks before they moved into the general collection or considered for Book Group sets.

Our Red Hot Reads collection is also being replicated and promoted in our digital library (where available) to ensure our community can access them in the various formats they require.

Banned Books Week

Banned Books Week is an annual awareness campaign that celebrates the freedom to read and draws attention to banned and challenged books. Library team members were photographed with popular titles in our collection for a campaign we ran on Instagram last September. The photos were accompanied by captions that explained why the books had been banned and acknowledged the freedom our community can enjoy for being able to find them on our shelves.







Game of Loans - Summer Reading Challenge

For 2018 we took a risk and re-imagined our Summer Reading Challenge into a competitive game for our young members and their families, and utilised a mobile app called Beanstack Tracker.

Clevely titled *Game of Loans*, the program was the first of its kind in a Victorian public library and has since been used by the app developers as a prime example of what their product can be used for.

Over 300 members participated in the game (more than double the number of participants from previous years) which had them competing in 'Houses' to read the most books and accrue the most points before the end of January 2019. The program used game-based learning principles to encourage reluctant readers to maintain literacy levels over the long summer break and engage with the library; feedback was overwhelmingly positive with some parents reporting their children were reading as many as ten books a week thanks to the program.

The program winner, Zoe Tranter, received her prize - a \$700 gift voucher to Zoos Victoria (cost equivalent to a Family Pass to the Roar n Snore program) - on the rooftop of Bargoonga Nganjin, North Fitzroy Library with her family, pictured below.



Author Encounters

This year we hosted over 20 Australian authors, including Yassmin Abdel-Magied, Dylan Alcott, Tony Birch, Mark Brandi, Reg Dodd, Chloe Hooper, Sohpie Laguna, George Megalogenis, Solli Raphael, Sally Rippin, Graeme Simsion and Clare Wright. Our library branches and venues are desirable locations for authors to launch their books, providing not only a central location for the wider community to gather, but a warm and intimate environment to engage with the community and discuss their books, stories and experiences.

Yassmin Abdel-Magied

We were honoured to be invited by Penguin Publishing to host mechanical engineer, writer and social advocate, Yassmin Abdel-Magied. Promoting her debut novel, *You Must Be Layla*, Yassmin spoke to over 100 local primary and secondary students from across City of Yarra in the Fitzroy Town Hall Ballroom, and stayed to sign copies and take photos.

Dylan Alcott

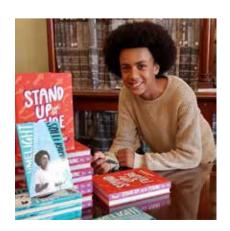
Wimbeldon champion and Australian Paralympic gold and silver medallist Dylan Alcott launched his autobiography, *Able: Gold Medals, Grand Slams and Smashing Glass Ceilings* on the rooftop of Bargoonga Nganjin, North Fitzoy Library. Chosen for its award-winning accessible design, Dylan spoke to a booked-out audience about his childhood, success in sport and overcoming his personal challenges.

Solli Raphael

Solli Raphael is the youngest winner of the Australian Poetry Slam held annually at Sydney Opera House. A budding humanitarian, he enjoys writing powerful and emotive poetry and performing pieces to instigate change around social equality, the environment and animal protection. We were proud to launch his book, Stand Up For The Future with The Little Bookroom in the Fitzroy Town Hall Reading Room.







Looking Ahead

The year ahead is bright and full of opportunities as we wrap-up our final year of actions and prepare for the development of a new library strategy. We will continue to remove barriers for access to our services, collections and spaces, continue to focus on bridging the digital divide through programs and partnerships, and seek out further opportunities to connect with local service providers to ensure we are providing the best library service for our community.

We will continue to champion accessibility and social inclusion, and lead the way in creating quality community-led programming.

We will continue our leading role in the Libraries Change Lives campaign and further embed its messaging into our service delivery.

Projects for the coming year include the abolishment of library fines and a trial of extended, unserviced opening hours at Bargoonga Nganjin North Fitzroy Library and Richmond Library.





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ARABIC

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SIMPLIFIED CHINESE

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GREEK

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VIETNAMESE

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