



**Public Libraries SA**  
For the Future of Our Libraries

## **Arts Plan for South Australia: SUBMISSION BY PUBLIC LIBRARIES SA**

### **Who are we and why are we making a submission?**

Public Libraries SA are the peak body for public libraries across South Australia and have 100% membership of public and school community libraries across the State.

We bring libraries together to drive the sector, to innovate, to provide opportunities for networking and professional development.

We provide our members with the tools to be more responsive in the contribution that they are making to their communities and making these communities a better place to live.

**Public Libraries** are incredible institutions, unrivalled in the role that they play in our society, as a melting pot for people across all walks of life. The potential of libraries is even greater than what is currently realised as we further develop our role in supporting a more literate society, social cohesion and tolerance, informed decision making, and provide opportunities for meeting and activity; the public library is the only institution that brings these things together. Through the library people can engage, learn and participate and be introduced to new ideas and technologies in a safe and supportive environment.

The future of public libraries lies in the value they create from the nexus of people, place, knowledge and technology to create a platform for learning, participation, creativity, innovation and well-being.

The cornerstones of the value proposition for libraries of the future: People, Place, Knowledge and Technology. Together these five areas create a powerful platform for learning, participation, creativity, innovation and well-being.

Our libraries will continue to play a strong role in early literacy and look for opportunities on a state-wide scale to have greater impact in support of the State goals for reading, writing and literacy. Partnerships are key to this development, with particular reference to programs funded by the government and require public library support to be effective and inclusive. E.g. Premier's Reading Challenge, Little Big Book Club etc.

However, it should be acknowledged and recognised that libraries are connected community places that provide vibrant spaces with targeted programmes and events. We encourage participation, wellbeing, innovation and creativity.

We work hard to highlight the many ways that libraries and artists can support each other, and not just because 'makerspaces' (Creative spaces where people gather to make and create. People share skills and ideas and often work together on projects supported by library staff. It is a space where we promote learning through play. The important idea is that it is a place that can be used for a range of activities with changing and flexible educational goals and creative purposes) which are developing across the network are cool; many of these initiatives require design and art as a key component.

We believe that creativity is inherent in everyone, and so we define “artist” broadly in order to communicate that point: to us, an artist is any person who uses creative tools to make new things. We have art as a component of our programs, author visits, writing workshops. We think creativity — like information — should be accessible to everyone in a community, and that the library is the perfect democratic space to make that happen. The public library is at the centre of the free exchange of ideas, deliberation and community engagement central to our democracy.

#### **Current situation and Opportunities:**

#### **Libraries have a proven record of success in working across the arts and thus generate opportunities to further develop:**

1. Libraries host Writers in Residence (and Artists and Thinkers) Libraries offer free office space to enable artists the opportunity to create and develop. The libraries collections and network provide an invaluable aid to researchers and assist them in writing their stories. Librarians are well versed in local history, and many lead writing workshops (and cemetery tours) for the community.
2. Libraries collect local music and writing and help people create it. Libraries don't just open their doors to artists to use space- they collect what they produce, too, and it goes far beyond purchasing the latest best seller. Some libraries offer workshops that teach writing, editing and marketing their work.
3. Libraries show new artwork outside the gallery/museum journey- With their place at the centre of the community and the free, democratic access people have to libraries, they make a perfect place to show art, in addition to helping artists make and distribute it.
  - a. Showing work in a library is an opportunity to connect with a huge cross section of people — little kids and seniors, the homeless and the well-to-do, students and businesspeople. Basically, everyone in the community — including people who might never see a modern art installation otherwise. And if the point of art is to make someone feel something, it's best to get it out there in the open where it can do its job!
  - b. With their place at the centre of the community and the free, democratic access people have to libraries, they make a perfect place to show art, in addition to helping artists make and distribute it, make someone feel something, it's best to get it out there in the open where it can do its job!
  - c. Libraries everywhere host local art shows on a regular basis, whether that means small exhibits in glass cases or hung in a reading room, or formal gallery space that can be customized such as at The Millicent Library Gallery, West Torrens Library/Gallery space.
4. Libraries host readings and performances: In the same way that libraries can connect a huge cross section of people with new and exciting artwork, they can also open up the world of theatre and performance to community members who may not usually go to see a production. The library can make an important political statement in addition to a creative collaboration.
5. Libraries host hands-on workshops for all ages and encourage creative collaboration : you can see art and performance in a library, and you can use the space to help produce and promote your music and writing and artwork, but what if you're a dabbler, a hobbyist looking to try your hand at something new?
  - a. Libraries provide the opportunity and ability to participate it is our mission to be a focus for lifelong learning, and libraries across the public library network have a robust calendar of hands-on programs that can help community members and artists get a taste of a new skill or subject. From computer applications to coding, digital photography to embroidery, screen printing to storytelling, libraries leverage off the experts in the community to offer many free tutorials on a variety of interesting activities and skills.
  - b. When you combine these hands-on explorations with the classic library book club, you have the recipe for a unique literary exploration, and the next step in this development has been the Book to Art Club: “Read, Talk, Make,” chapters at libraries as they add a creative twist to the standard book discussion that is a popular library staple. Book to Art meetings aren't just a place to discuss the narrative, characters, or style of a title, but also invite participants to create something new in response by playing on themes, ideas, and settings in a text through simple art projects that can be customized for any skill level. Thinking visually in this way opens up some exciting discussions that would never come up otherwise.

6. Libraries are incubators and provide the opportunity, community space and ability to support artists within their communities. They have the capacity to build on these partnerships with additional resourcing.

## 1. AMBITION

- South Australia recognised as a creative state, a cultural haven where creativity is encouraged and embraced. Creativity includes a mix of the arts, sciences and culture which ideally positions libraries as a key plank in this vision. South Australia is uniquely positioned to transform a 'creative breeding ground into a place of sustainable arts and culture.' Libraries are the ideal partner.
- Rich arts and cultural experience no matter where you live. Over 50% of the population use/visit libraries.
- Artists are known as innovators and as they test the limits and boundaries and engage with emerging technologies to tell their stories in a myriad of ways, libraries are ideally placed to both provide the opportunity and provide support and encouragement.
- Underpinning this innovation is strong and creative regions - libraries, schools, galleries, arts practice collaborate to raise the profile of the Arts and as viable economic drivers for employment, training and tourism.
- We need to be brave and take risks to be the leader in the Arts; so that the world looks at South Australia for Australian arts direction, innovation and leadership across arts and culture.

## 2. FIRST NATIONS ARTS AND CULTURE

- First nations people lead the sharing of stories and libraries are ideally positioned to provide the opportunity and support to those people who wish to tell their story. Local history collections within public libraries collect stories, digitise and curate, ensuring that such stories are available to future generations.
- They also support elders to share the culture - social media, movies, books, art make it economically viable and support the next generations to continue share the stories.
- Language at schools, funding to write or record the stories and promote through public library network. Look at the Queensland State Library Indigenous Knowledge Centres and kuril dhagun initiatives <https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/plan-my-visit/spaces-visit/kuril-dhagun> and more recently Public Library Services are supporting our indigenous with library collections.
- The question could be asked is there a need for a combined leadership role of SA Museum, State Library, State records to have a team that assists to share the First Nation Story and support the oral tradition – work collaboratively.

## 3. PRIORITY AREAS AND OUTCOMES

- State Government funding in arts leadership and training to ensure that there is a sustainable cultural arts network.
- Arts incubator funding for arts hubs in regional areas to grow the Arts as an economic and tourism driver. Work in partnership with local government and further develop 'maker spaces' in libraries as a base.

## 4. GOVERNMENT AND GOVERNANCE

- It is paramount that Government funding is retained to ensure the continuation of this essential community resource; a sustainable public library network that can realise the potential from the Tomorrow Libraries Report (a report of the future of public libraries in South Australia

[https://www.libraries.sa.gov.au/custom/web/PLS/SAPLN\\_tomorrows\\_libraries\\_digital\\_edition\\_3.pdf](https://www.libraries.sa.gov.au/custom/web/PLS/SAPLN_tomorrows_libraries_digital_edition_3.pdf).

- Capital finding for arts venues, art practice – incentives for sharing of infrastructure especially in regional areas- TAFE, School - use after hours and weekends, local government, libraries
- Incentives for private sector to invest, with greater promotion of Cultural Gifts tax incentives or simpler pathways for arts, libraries, museums to have tax contribution status to encourage greater local funding.
- Corporate business dollar in regional areas is increasingly being reduced as they no longer fund local activities as head office in Melbourne, Sydney e.g. wine industry. Greater incentives for corporate funding in regional areas strategies required.
- Simplify grant programs – too much paperwork for small dollars. Trust the community and the volunteers who work within community organisations and celebrate the outcomes.
- Increase collaboration with local government to connect with local community networks – Library network, Community Development, Public Health will create across the state coverage of engagement and participation – especially in regional areas.

## 5. AUDIENCE AND ACCESS

- **Country Arts** exhibition touring is very successful – and are featured in local galleries in the country – increase funding to Country Arts and Public Libraries so that they may share exhibitions.
- Performing arts – best of SA 2-3 selected and tour regional venues including venues that are not associated with Arts SA and Country Arts. This would give a bigger spread of activity into Regional communities. Small performances in libraries.
- Similarly access to ASO & Australian String Quartet touring raises the profile and quality.
- **Simulcast** to regional communities to cinemas or arts venues e.g. success of Writers Week through libraries has been highly sought.
- Regional writers' week – rotate region each year
- Regional Arts Program be reinstated.

## 6. INDUSTRY AND INNOVATION

- Sharing of knowledge from one generation to the next especially in the museum sector with aging volunteers, limited technology access or skills and engagement with younger volunteers to take the lead for the next phase. Expressed as a concern in regional areas.
- We welcome a state-wide Digital Access Plan for our irreplaceable cultural collections –libraries and regional galleries hold significant collections of work, but are currently not resourced to conserve them properly, let alone catalogue and digitise them. The Arts Plan must recognise that we all require staff who could contribute to this work.
- Cultural tourism - especially in regional areas, share the history in innovative and interesting ways – Bendigo, Castlemaine, Clunes Book Town - arts based regional economies.
- Cities of Culture in UK every 4 years – Region of Culture in SA - supports infrastructure, creative industries, raises profile, long term economic benefit however this has been curtailed.

## 7. EMBEDDING ARTS AND CULTURE

- Corporate leadership for arts to be important to business and not as an extra.
- Arts and Health & Wellbeing - Libraries lead a grass roots campaign – Local government public health and regional health plans, Fund Local government lead – has a strong network of health and libraries

**Libraries have a proven record of success in working across the arts SEE INTRODUCTION**

## 8. ECOLOGY

**Interestingly with the collecting institutions libraries are missing.**

- It is imperative that we make use of technology and South Australian Libraries are innovative leaders.
- It's a global world use the technology to bring in to the SA regions and reach out to the world, thus increase our capacity and capability.
- Too Adelaide centric.

## 9. FINAL THOUGHTS

Greater partnership with local government to achieve local successes and community participation and build on the very successful public library network. Technology – use it to reach the regions & the world. Embrace being a global leader and put SA on the map – allow risk taking. Embrace partnership with Libraries and the public library network and build on achievements. Libraries are incubators and provide the opportunity, community space and ability to support the arts within their communities. They have the capacity to build on these partnerships with additional resourcing. Let's build on this vibrant innovative network of libraries – community hubs, places of education and leisure, recognised as places of creativity and wellbeing.