

NSW Public Libraries and eGovernment Research report

prepared by **Environmetrics**

for the **Library Council of New South Wales**



State Library
of New South Wales

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NSW Public Libraries and eGovernment was commissioned
by the Public Library Network Research Committee
www.sl.nsw.gov.au/pln

Research was conducted by Environmetrics
www.environmetrics.com.au



Environmetrics
social and market research

ISBN 0 7313 7151 8

Published by the Library Council of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000
Australia

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This document is available on the State Library of New South Wales website:
www.sl.nsw.gov.au/pln

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Foreword

Public libraries serve the educational, economic and social needs of Australian local communities. As well as meeting individual information and research needs, public libraries serve a broader role in community support as a whole and have demonstrated their commitment to meeting shifting and growing community needs through the provision of communication technologies and access to new, electronic information.

Over the past decade the volume of information available online has increased dramatically. The Internet continues to have a pervasive impact on work, education and day to day living and while most Australian communities are aware of the Internet's power, many have only their local public library as their point of access to this wealth of information.

The recent Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) survey — *Public Libraries Australia 2003-04* — cited public libraries as key access points for local communities. There are 1400 public libraries across the nation (372 of which are in NSW) and ABS reports:

- increased overall usage of public libraries — 100 million visits nationally each year
- 30 million of these visits made to NSW public libraries
- 34% (1567) of the 4638 Internet access points in Australian libraries are in NSW.

Between 1998 and 2003 the number of Internet terminals in public libraries increased from 319 to 1625 and the number of Internet hours reserved, from 95,767 to 1,392,268.¹ It is reasonable to expect such growth to continue and expand by a further 20% annually into the future.

One of the most significant ways in which libraries provide access to Internet resources is through equitable access to electronic government (eGovernment) information and services.

The NSW Public Library Network Research Committee recognised that to maintain and develop these services — within a dynamic online environment — a better understanding of the impact of eGovernment policies on the community's use of public libraries was required; the Committee commissioned Environmetrics Pty Limited to conduct research into the impact of eGovernment on public libraries.

This research report — *Public Libraries and eGovernment* — is the result. It gives a comprehensive view of the support that NSW public libraries are giving to eGovernment initiatives looking specifically at:

- the general uptake of eGovernment information and services
- the usage of specific, high demand sites
- the amount and type of assistance public librarians provide to clients
- general issues associated with supporting eGovernment.

Public Libraries and eGovernment shows the support provided by public libraries at a specific point in time (with a reassessment planned for three years' hence). As the three spheres of government (federal, state, local) continue to implement eGovernment initiatives and

¹ *Public Library Statistics 2002/03*, State Library of New South Wales, 2004, pp82-83

strategies, the role of NSW public libraries in providing effective access to such information, services and programs will increase.

The *Public Libraries eGovernment* research report was submitted to the July 2005 Library Council of New South Wales for consideration. Library Council commended the report and endorsed its recommendations.

Kathleen Bresnahan
Assistant State Librarian, Public Library Services
October 2005

Acknowledgements

There are quite a few people and organisations who contributed to the success of this project. In particular the project steering group who provided advice and direction:

Elizabeth Barry	Central West Libraries
Kerrie Burgess	Public Library Network Research Committee
Robert Knight	Library Council of NSW, Public Libraries Consultative Committee
Noela Lim	Shoalhaven City Library
Lyn McIntosh	The Bowen Library, Randwick
Sue Parkinson	State Library of NSW
Helen Perry	Stanton Library, North Sydney
Roxanne Seaward	Wingecarribee Public Library

Local councils, libraries, schools and community organisations that participated in the consultation phase were:

Auburn Council
Bega Valley Shire Council
Dubbo City Council
Eurobodalla Shire Council
Fairfield City Council
Greater Taree City Council
Gwydir Shire Council
Hastings Council
Council of the Shire of Hornsby
Kempsey Shire Council
Liverpool City Council
Moree Plains Shire Council
Warrumbungle Shire Council
Wellington Council
Willoughby City Council

The Country Public Libraries Association, the Metropolitan Public Libraries Association as well as the following government departments also provided input during the consultation phase:

Australian Bureau of Statistics
New South Wales Police
NSW Department of Commerce
NSW Department of Community Services
NSW Department of Education and Training
NSW Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources
NSW Health Department
NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages
Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW

Executive Summary

Introduction

Internet use is an increasingly critical factor in determining how well an individual participates in contemporary economic and social life. As the number of services available online continues to grow, so too does the divide between those that have Internet access and those that do not. This research, *NSW Public Libraries and eGovernment*, reports on how NSW public libraries are bridging the divide. To date, this is the most extensive research conducted on public libraries and eGovernment both within Australia and internationally.

Access to eGovernment

Australian federal, state and to some extent local governments have embraced the Internet as a means of delivering information and services. However, there is currently a disjuncture between governments' readiness for eGovernment and citizens' capacity to participate in these services.¹

Policy makers are aware of this gap and are keen to develop programs that can address the digital divide. One of the most effective ways this can be done is to engage and support intermediaries who already assist citizens in their use of online government services. Public libraries are already active in this role of intermediary: they support local and equitable access to eGovernment by providing the technology, resources and staff to assist clients to use government information and services. This intermediation will continue to grow because public libraries are accessible in terms of location and opening hours and their clients are able to conduct other business while they are there, rather than make a separate visit to a specific government agency.

Online services complement more traditional services requiring personal contact such as face to face or the telephone. However, as the use of the Internet grows so too does the potential for electronic government, now commonly known as eGovernment. Increasingly, the service is determined by the available functionality of the Internet, for instance the Federal Government's Job Network system is a primarily Internet based service.

The research

Over the past few years, NSW public libraries have observed that client use of eGovernment has been growing. In some instances government agencies specifically refer clients to their public library for assistance with accessing and using their website.

1. United Nations, Global EGovernment Readiness Report 2004, www.unpan.org/egovment3.asp, viewed 7 March 2005

This research was commissioned in response to this trend with the aim of developing a greater understanding of the impact of government electronic services on NSW public libraries.

The research involved site visits and interviews with a range of public libraries across NSW, as well as with local councils, education providers, social support agencies, technology centres and other relevant community stakeholders. Interviews were also conducted with government agencies providing those online services that are most likely to be accessed at public libraries and representatives of the State Library and NSW public libraries. This qualitative research was then supported by a survey of all NSW public libraries.

Key findings

There are several key findings resulting from the research:

Increasing demand

Most libraries noted clients' growing use of government websites for both information and transactions. These clients are less likely to have access to the Internet at work or home, and are likely to use other library resources. As government agencies continue to put more resources and functions online, the demand for public Internet access is likely to increase, as is the need for free or low-cost training in computer and Internet skills.

Invisible draw on resources

While aware of the use of high-demand government online services, library staff rarely had a complete picture of all government services accessed by their clients. As a result, the full extent of the use of online government services is likely to be higher than reported.

Unintended impacts

Online government services can provide better access for users and streamlined operations. However, this can place extra burdens on public libraries. Poor website design and changes to websites can lead to extra work for library staff in helping clients access the information and services they require.

Staff assistance

In order to provide public access to the Internet and to government online services, library staff assist clients to use government websites; manage bookings; provide assistance with printing and use of equipment; supervise use of terminals; troubleshoot technical glitches; conduct training and prepare finding aids.

Duplication of services

The multiplicity of government initiatives to support public access to new technology (for example, CTCs and RTCs) has resulted in fragmentation and

duplication. Many of these initiatives have proved to be unviable beyond their initial funding period, leaving libraries to fill the gaps.

Socioeconomic context

Libraries stretched their resources to try to fill gaps left by inadequate services and resources. In disadvantaged communities, the degree of need meant that libraries experienced no diminution in demand, even when special social support services were available.

Funding

Grant-based funding to local government for the provision of Internet access in public libraries has resulted in a mixture of technology, and this has added to the complexities of managing resources effectively. Such grant-based funding has also created an environment of short term planning and uncertainty about the future.

Low profile

For many senior policy makers the public library sector appears to have a low profile, and they are unaware both of the full potential of the sector to provide access to eGovernment services and the central role that libraries fill in their local communities.

Need for resources

Public libraries' priorities were for more staff and staff training, more computers and equipment, faster and more reliable Internet connections, and better technical support

Conclusion

Australia currently has a sophisticated eGovernment program that is receiving suboptimal use.¹ Countries such as the United Kingdom have realised that the inclusion and support of intermediaries in their eGovernment strategy is an effective way to increase use of these services.² Thirty seven percent (37%) of the Australian population access the Internet from sites other than home or work, such as public libraries.³ This strongly suggests that the engagement and support of intermediaries such as public libraries would be extremely beneficial in advancing citizens use of online government in the Australian context.

Similarly, eGovernment offers public libraries the opportunity to create a stronger position for themselves as focal points within their community and to illustrate

1. Accenture, *eGovernment Leadership: High Performance, Maximum Value*, www.accenture.com/xdoc/en/industries/government/gove_egov_value.pdf, viewed 7 March 2005

2. United Kingdom Cabinet Office e-Government Unit, *Service Design and Delivery Guide*, www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/e-government/docs/bestpractice/pdf/sddg.pdf, viewed 9 March 2005

3. Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, *Australia Online 1st Quarter 2004 Statistics*, www2.dcita.gov.au/ie/framework/benchmarking, viewed 10 March 2005

further their value to both citizens and government. However, to support the full range of eGovernment initiatives potentially requires public libraries to go beyond their traditional role of information provision to service provider.

This research has the potential to contribute to the development of eGovernment strategies and services as well as strengthen the role of public libraries as effective intermediaries supporting the use of online government information and services by local communities.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the NSW Public Library Network, including the State Library of New South Wales:

- Liaise with government agencies, especially those that have high impacts on public libraries, to develop memoranda of understanding that acknowledge and fund the role of public libraries in providing access to, and delivery of, eGovernment information and services.
- Support and facilitate training for public library staff on eGovernment issues.
- Review ICT within the NSW public library network to assess the ability of the network to provide access to online information and services.
- Conduct follow-up research in three years time to assess the ongoing impact of eGovernment on NSW public libraries and the ability of the network to respond to the demands created by eGovernment policies.

October 2005

Introduction

This report has been prepared by Environmetrics on behalf of the Public Libraries Network Research Committee in order to develop a greater understanding of the impact of Government electronic information and service delivery initiatives on New South Wales public libraries.

This study follows a literature review¹ that looked at public libraries as eGovernment service providers in their own right and at the ability of libraries to support eGovernment initiatives generally. It reviewed emerging issues and their implications for public libraries with the focus on services for the community rather than business.

In most cases, Government agencies have used the Internet as a supplement to traditional forms of communication by mail, phone or personal contact. Increasingly, however, services are shaped to the particular functionality of the Internet with the result that some services are available only via the Internet. This trend is observed at the federal, state and local government levels. For example, the federal Job Network system of delivering assistance to job-seekers is largely Internet-based.

High proportions of Australians have access to the Internet at home or at work. The ABS² reports:

- The number of adults using the Internet continues to grow strongly, though the rate of growth is slowing. In 2002, 58% of Australian adults accessed the Internet, rising from 31% of adults in 1998. Access to the Internet at home has shown particularly strong growth during this period, from 13% of adults in 1998 to 43% of adults in 2002. Similar to computer use, adults were most likely to access the Internet from home.
- In 2002, the Internet was used by 23% of adults to pay bills or transfer funds (up from 17% in 2001), 21% of adults used the Internet to access government services (up from 16% in 2001) and 15% of adults shopped via the Internet (up from 11% in 2001).

Because Internet access is by no means universal, equity of access to government information and services is an important issue that must be addressed in all strategies for Internet-based services. Community members who are not computer-literate or Internet-savvy will need special assistance in accessing government programs that are Internet-based.

1. Jennifer Berryman, Policy and Research, State Library of New South Wales (Feb 2004): *E-government: Issues and implications for public libraries*. Available at www.sl.nsw.gov.au/pln/projects.cfm. Accessed on 25 October 2004.

2. *Household Use of Information Technology*, Australia (cat. no. 8146.0) September 2003.

Some Internet-based services provide access for users via a specialist network of kiosks such as the Job Search kiosks located in Centrelink offices and the offices of employment service providers, however this is not a practical option for many government services.

Public access to the Internet is provided by the private sector via 'Internet cafes', however these are not distributed throughout the community, instead they tend to be restricted to areas where backpackers congregate.

The most extensive network of public access points to the Internet is provided by public libraries. Public libraries offer the following benefits:

- distributed throughout the State in all communities including metropolitan, regional and rural;
- opening hours usually go beyond office hours;
- a safe environment that is supervised;
- trained staff who know how to use computers and the Internet.

The trend towards eGovernment is likely to place increasing demands on public libraries and their staff, especially in supporting community members with low computer and Internet literacy.

The brief for this project notes that libraries in NSW have demonstrated strong leadership in meeting community need by providing communication technologies and access to new information. The State Library of NSW through NSW.net, a NSW government initiative, has provided public libraries with subsidised and improved access to the Internet. Access has been improved by providing connections, PCs, and quality online information resources. Recent research indicates high use of the PCs and online resources.

The role of NSW public libraries in providing effective access to government information, services and programs will continue to increase as the State Government implements its eGovernment initiatives and *connect.nsw*: an Internet Strategy for NSW.

To enable public libraries to fulfil this role while continuing to meet the needs of the community, a better understanding of the impact of such policies is required.

Research Aims

This project had the following objectives:

- Explore in detail, NSW government e-initiatives and their impact on New South Wales public libraries;
- Investigate the ability of NSW public libraries to support the delivery of government electronic services with specific reference to infrastructure.

The project will give a detailed account of the current and likely load placed on public libraries by eGovernment initiatives. The results of the research will assist:

- Public libraries in the provision of access to government electronic information and delivery of electronic services;
- Public libraries and other government agencies in their support of government initiatives in general.

The project was designed to be comprehensive in addressing:

- a representative range of government e-initiatives
 - including various domains such as health, planning and education, etc.
 - including initiatives of different scale and impact
 - including initiatives where the Internet supports other media as well as web-only initiatives
- a representative range of libraries in metropolitan, regional and remote areas.

Research Method

The study involved four stages of research:

1. **Desk research.** A review of key documents examined features and trends in current practice. Resources listed at www.sl.nsw.gov.au/pln/links.cfm were the main source of information. This review allowed the study to be set in a meaningful context.

2. **Field consultation.** The field consultation followed a Consultation Plan that is detailed in the Appendix. It contained the following elements.
 - Interviews with website managers in government agencies with online initiatives likely to impact upon public libraries.
 - Representatives of the Public Library Network were interviewed in order to identify industry structures and potential cooperation channels between the library industry and government agencies that are developing online services.
 - Five geographic case study areas were identified to represent Metropolitan and Rural contexts. Areas were selected to include more isolated areas, high-demand areas and areas of social disadvantage. The following areas were included in this study:
 - Metropolitan, North Shore – Willoughby City Library, Hornsby Shire Library and Information Service
 - Metropolitan, Western Suburbs – Liverpool City Library, Auburn Library, Fairfield City Library Service
 - Rural, Northern coast – Greater Taree City Library, Kempsey Shire Library, South West Rocks Library, Hastings Library, Laurieton Library
 - Rural, Southern coast – Eurobodalla Shire Library Service, Bega Valley Shire Library, Merimbula Library, Eden Library.
 - Rural, North West Inland – Northern Regional Library and Information Service, Warialda Library, Macquarie Regional Library, Wellington Library, Coonabarabran Library

Within these areas, relevant stakeholders were interviewed as follows:

- library staff;
 - local Council officers from sections that offer online services (e.g. Council's website or planning section);
 - High Schools and TAFEs;
 - social support agencies or employment services providers;
 - other relevant stakeholders or community organisations;
 - Community Technology Centres.
3. **Survey of libraries.** All public libraries in NSW were invited to complete a questionnaire. There were 211 responses, giving an effective response rate of

60%. Of the 99 Central Libraries in New South Wales, 61 responded to the survey, giving an effective response rate of 62% for Central Libraries.

The questionnaire is in the Appendix.

- 4. State Library Case Study.** Staff and clients at the State Library were interviewed regarding usage patterns, needs and issues. This study is detailed in a separate report.

About this report

- Some percentages have been rounded off. When this occurs, totals may be a little more or a little less than 100.
- Percentages add to more than 100 when multiple responses are possible.
- When the term 'significant' is used in this report, it refers to a statistically significant difference between two percentages.

Research Findings

1. Setting the scene

The development of eGovernment is taking place in an evolving information and communication technology context which establishes new benchmarks and expectations for service and functionality with each passing year.

Analysts describe four stages in the development of government online services. Cap Gemini Ernst + Young describe the four stages as follows:

Table 1. Four stages of government online services¹

Stage	Nature	Description
1.	Information	The information necessary to start the procedure to obtain this public service is available on line
2.	One way interaction	The publicly accessible website offers the possibility to obtain in a non-electronic way (e.g. by downloading forms) the paper forms to start the procedure to obtain this service.
3.	Two way interaction	The publicly accessible website offers the possibility of an electronic intake with an official electronic form to start the procedure to obtain this service. This implies there must be a form on authentication of the person requesting the service.
4.	Full electronic case handling	The publicly accessible website offers the possibility to completely treat the public service via the website including decision and delivery. No other formal procedure is necessary for the applicant via 'paperwork'.

In 2004, Australian government websites range across the four levels of functionality. New levels of functionality are added on a seemingly continuous basis. It is anticipated that the provision and demand for government service functionality online will continue to expand in the coming years. This means that the pressure on venues, such as public libraries, that provide public Internet access will continue to grow.

In NSW, the NSW Government Chief Information Office, formerly known as the Office of Information and Communications Technology, plays a leadership role in developing and driving whole of government initiatives for the use and management of ICT within government, industry and the community.

1. Cap Gemini Ernst & Young, 2003. Online Availability of Public Services: how does Europe progress? Web-based Survey on Electronic Public Services, prepared by Cap Gemini Ernst & Young for the European Commission and DG Information Society, p. 4. Available at: www.capgemini.dk/nyheder/2003/files/overall_report_2003.pdf. Accessed on 15 January 2004

The role of the Information Office is to use ICT to foster improved value, customer focused services, and improved processes for government activity.

The Internet strategy for NSW Government is expressed in *connect.nsw* – a whole of government strategy which outlines the use of information technology to improve the access, quality, customer focus and efficiency of government services, enhance the quality of life for the NSW community and position NSW as a dynamic, knowledge based economy.

Connect.nsw plots a course for the NSW Government's reform process, underpinned by four underlying strategies:

Integrated Government. Establish common infrastructure for delivering government services and for sharing information within and between agencies across all tiers of government.

Electronic Service Delivery. Encourage NSW Government agencies to deliver customer focused services to the NSW community through the use of electronic technologies.

Electronic Commerce. Accelerate the take up of electronic commerce to support NSW economic development.

Networked Communities. Enhance the quality of life of people living in NSW by networking within and across communities, especially those isolated by distance or social dislocation.

Public libraries have played an important role as information resource centres that have adopted new technologies. The State Library of NSW through NSW.net, a NSW government initiative, has provided public libraries with subsidised and improved access to the Internet, with the distribution of over 700 PCs and the provision of free access to quality online information resources.

As well as meeting individual information and research needs, public libraries serve a broader role in supporting the community as a whole. One of the most significant ways libraries do this is through the provision of equitable access to electronic government services and information.

On a broader level, NSW public libraries are involved in a range of regional partnerships with government agencies that jointly deliver information and services. For example the Lithgow Regional Library is the cornerstone of a new strategy to revitalise the local community by identifying Lithgow as a 'Learning City'. The Lithgow Regional Library will be co-located in the main street along with the Lithgow Technology Centre and the Lithgow Learning Centre.



The role of NSW public libraries in providing effective access to government information, services and programs will continue to increase as the State Government implements its eGovernment initiatives.

2. Overview of Government websites (2004)

This section provides a brief description of the characteristics and functionality offered by Government websites that are widely used in NSW public libraries.

The following websites are described here:

Federal Government

- Australian Taxation Office
- Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Department of Immigration
- Australian Jobsearch
- Australian Electoral Commission

State Government

- Roads and Traffic Authority
- Board of Studies (eBOS)
- NSW Small Business website
- Births, Deaths + Marriages
- Infringement Bureau
- Better Health Channel (Victorian Government site)

Local Government

- Local Council website – Dubbo City Council

2.1 Roads and Traffic Authority NSW

www.rta.nsw.gov.au

The RTA website offers a wide range of content ranging from general policies and procedures through to specific information about particular processes or locations including up to the minute road and traffic conditions.

The site makes information and handbooks available to download. A number of other functions can be carried out on the site, including booking appointments and car registration renewal.

At the time of the research (November 2004) the researchers found that access to the online Driver Knowledge Test required a four-click pathway from the front page.

2.2 Australian Taxation Office

www.ato.gov.au

The ATO website offers comprehensive detailed and specific information for a wide range of users.

As well as information onsite, the website offers downloads (information and forms), some calculators and the capacity to submit a tax return electronically.

2.3 Local Council website

The Dubbo City Council website is used as an example of local government websites. www.dubbo.nsw.gov.au

The website is an information-only site. It offers a range of information online as well as a collection of documents that can be downloaded.

2.4 Board of Studies (eBOS)

www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au

This website offers a comprehensive range of diverse information both on the site and for download.

Some functions that can be performed on the website include:

- online shop for educational materials
- students can review their HSC marks
- online tools to practice multiple-choice exams
- download statistical software for marking.

2.5 Australian Bureau of Statistics

www.abs.gov.au

The ABS website carries a comprehensive range of information including free content online and also catalogues of information available for purchase.

The main service available is an online shopping facility to purchase ABS publications and data.

2.6 Health information websites

The Better Health Channel, sponsored by the Victorian Government, is an example of a government-run health information website.

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

This information-rich site includes an extensive library of fact sheets, as well as plentiful current news items on health topics, sourced from the ABC.

The site has some simple calculators such as the Body Mass Indicator. It has a searchable database of service providers in Victoria.

It also offers a Q+A service wherein questions submitted via an online form are answered.

2.7 Immigration

www.immigration.gov.au

This website provides a comprehensive range of information about migration to Australia. Documents and forms can be downloaded.

The Immigration website offers the opportunity to submit visa applications online as well as access to the Legendcom database.

Associated websites address Multiculturalism and Indigenous Affairs.

2.8 Australian JobSearch

www.jobsearch.gov.au

The JobSearch website provides a database of job vacancies throughout Australia. Visitors can search the database and send job applications online.

The site provides information on career choices, finding employment and training opportunities. Tools on the site address career planning, resume writing and other skills.

2.9 Small Business Website

www.smallbiz.nsw.gov.au

The NSW Department of State and Regional Development provides this website as a service to small business.

The site provides comprehensive information about regulations and government supports available to small businesses.

The site presents quite a number of 'toolkits' for specific business situations. The toolkits include information, templates and quizzes. Some can be completed online, while others are downloaded and printed.

2.10 Births, Deaths + Marriages

www.bdm.nsw.gov.au

The NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages provides information about the range of services offered by the Registry. Forms can be downloaded.

Interactive elements include a search function that lists popular birth names.

2.11 Infringement Processing Bureau

www.infringements.nsw.gov.au

This website provides a single function whereby people can pay fines levied by a range of NSW State Government instrumentalities online using a credit card. The function is immediately available on the front page.

2.12 Australian Electoral Commission

www.aec.gov.au

The Australian Electoral Commission website provides information about the Australian electoral system, including practical information about electorates and

boundaries, and historical information about the development of the system. The site also provides information about current elections.

Functions include searches, downloading forms and subscription to an email newsletter.

3. Clients

The user profile of a library is usually broadly reflective of the general population profile of a location. Therefore a coastal 'sea change' town such as Port Macquarie have a large number of clients who are retired/semi retired; a western inland location such as Moree have young people and Aboriginal people as significant user groups and libraries in Fairfield have a high proportion of recent migrants as clients.

Overall, librarians indicated that the majority of Internet users in a library were typical of the overall population who visited the library. There were some exceptions with travellers/backpackers and some young people, depending on the location of the library.

The broad common factor that related Internet users in a library was that the majority did not have access to the Internet at home, work or school/education base. In many cases, this reflected on the skill level of the user – many had low computing and Internet skills.

3.1 Seniors

Seniors were nominated by all libraries as heavy users of all library services. In relation to the Internet, many of their demands were high as they often had very limited experience.

Seniors consisted of those aged over 60 years retired from the workforce who did not have access to the Internet at home. Though difficult to determine, it would appear that females dominated, as they were also heavy users of public libraries.

Seniors split into three main user groups as follows.

- 1. No/limited experience – one-off need.** This user-group required a considerable amount of staff time in one-to-one assistance on an ad hoc basis. Sometimes basic training was provided. Government websites that were accessed include ATO, BDM, RTA, Veterans Affairs, Health and Government travel sites. Often this involved not only guidance through the website but additional training / explanation related to using the computer and printers.

In many cases, the client had been advised that they could access the information/resources they needed at their local library.

- 2. No/limited experience – develop skills.** Across Australia, computer uptake amongst seniors is higher than for other age groups at this point in time. Accordingly there is strong demand for basic computer and Internet training courses that are low-cost and appropriate to the learning style and interests of older people. Because a high proportion of seniors are familiar with their local library and know the services it offers, they are drawn towards training opportunities offered by their library.

“A client was told that they could download a form from the Veterans Affairs website at their local library. It took 30 minutes of help from a staff member to complete the process. Because the client is not likely to use the Internet on a regular basis, any skill transfer probably won’t be retained.”

Library staff

These clients were looking to expand their horizons and learn more about the resources available on the Internet and they looked to their local library as a source of expertise in this regard. Libraries that offered courses in basic computing skills and Internet skills noted that seniors were the largest group of clients for training.

In some locations, training for seniors was offered by community organisations such as U3A, Community Technology Centres, Migrant Resource Centres or community colleges. While TAFEs also offered courses, these were less attractive to seniors as the fees were regarded as too high.

Many seniors chose to practice their newly developing skills at their library while exploring new topics or carrying out new tasks. If needed, they sought guidance and assistance from staff to refresh their grasp of basic skills and to find their way around websites.

- 3. Experienced regular user.** This group of seniors were present in many libraries across NSW. They used their local library to pursue an area of interest on a regular basis. Some interests were family and local history, travel, health, digital photography, books, film, current affairs and weather news. Some popular government sites accessed were: Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM), the Australian War Memorial, Health, Local Council and the Bureau of Meteorology.

In some libraries, computers have been dedicated to these specific interests, such as family and local history where resources and links to sites such as BDM are prominent.

Usage Times

Seniors used their local library at any time of the day, with the high demand times more likely to be in the morning or early afternoon. When the researchers visited some libraries, seniors were waiting at the door to be admitted at opening time.

Seniors, unlike some user groups, tended to be patient and were often happy to fit in with library staff in terms of the time available for assistance. At times, staff assistance with government websites took over 10 minutes due to the capacity of the client, the usability of the website, the effectiveness of the network and the difficulty of the function they were trying to perform.

3.2 Young people

Young people were important users of public libraries and their Internet services. They used Internet computers for email, hobbies and interests such as music or sports based sites and general education such as assignments or research.

Most libraries did not allow clients to use computers for games but some regional/branch libraries allowed it for social reasons and for the benefit of reinforcing keyboard skills.

Usage varied with age as follows:

- Upper primary children were likely to pursue hobbies and interests and follow school-centred activities.
- Lower high school children were likely to pursue hobbies and interests – and other distractions depending on age and gender.
- The 16-17 year age group was likely to use the RTA site to practice the Driver Knowledge Test.
- The 17-20 age group were likely to follow study topics.

The most frequently used eGovernment site for young people was the RTA site. Even libraries in affluent socio-economic areas, such as Chatswood in Sydney, experienced high demand from young people to use library computers to access the RTA website and practise the Drivers Knowledge Test. Every afternoon, several computers at the Chatswood Library were fully booked for this purpose. While there is a RTA office in Chatswood in the same street as the library, it had only one public access PC and the library was regarded as a more attractive destination for young people because they could access a range of resources (including the RTA website) during their visit.

Most young people were skilled in basic computing and Internet usage. The assistance they needed was likely to be based on difficulty navigating particular sites, log in difficulties and intermittent connections. Librarians indicated that young people often had limited

“Our young users are usually capable. Sometimes they sit in pairs and help each other.”

Library staff

information-searching strategies, nevertheless, they indicated that they spent less time per problem with young people.

The young people who used Internet services in public libraries were often economically and/or socially disadvantaged and most of them did not have a computer at home. The level of disadvantage varied with the locality. For example, in areas with high migrant populations, public libraries felt the pressure of demand from young people who were struggling with language and technical literacy. Part of the load fell on libraries despite extra resources put into schools and support services such as migrant resource centres in these areas.

While schools said they set assignments that did not depend on home computers, some school librarians acknowledged that there was demand for computer access outside the hours the school computers were available.

Usage Times

Usage by young people was typically heavy in the afternoons after school hours. Other busy periods were during pre-exam study periods, in school holidays and at weekends. Computer access was often restricted when demand was heavy. At busy times, staff assistance was often less instructive and more supervisory as their time was taken managing bookings and ensuring correct behaviour.

3.3 Unemployed

The unemployed were high users of library services, especially in localities of social disadvantage. Where there were appropriate resources in a locality, such as employment service providers, migrant resource centres and CTCs, the load placed on public libraries by unemployed clients was reduced.

Unemployed clients were most likely to use the Australian JobSearch website. In the course of job seeking, these clients wanted to complete a number of functions:

- print job descriptions;
- search web pages to find out more about prospective employers;
- prepare and update resumes;
- email applications to prospective employers.

These functions often involved more library resources than Internet access to JobSearch. Librarians noted the difficulties that resulted for this kind of user from the policy that NSW.net computers may not have common office software loaded. Unemployed clients could not update their resume on a NSW.net computer because these computers did not have Microsoft Word.

“The NSW.net computers are entirely separate – they can ONLY be used to access the Internet.”

Library staff

It would appear that, overall, the majority of unemployed users were Internet competent and overall did not place heavy demands on staff time. The exceptions were migrants whose language and cultural disadvantage created special needs.

Unemployed clients who used the Internet in public libraries for job searching were more likely to be female and adults rather than young people.

Usage times

Unemployed clients used public libraries at various times of the day, however regular users tended to use the Internet in the mornings.

“We have a few unemployed single mums who come in most mornings after they have taken the children to school. I think they feel more comfortable here than at Centrelink.”

Library staff

3.4 Mature Students

The typical mature-age student client was undertaking a TAFE course rather than a University course. In most cases, they were economically disadvantaged, often unemployed, and were undertaking educational / vocational training in order to improve their employment opportunities.

The most demanding feature with respect to mature age students was the amount of computer time they needed. Not all their computer time was used for Internet-based activities. Limited computing resources in most libraries meant that computer access was tightly controlled by booking systems. In busy metropolitan libraries, clients might be restricted to a 30 minute timeslot booked a week in advance.

The demand on public libraries by mature-age students was affected by the facilities offered by local TAFEs. Some TAFEs had quite restricted opening hours,

others allowed access to computer facilities outside normal hours with the use of a pass key.

Usage times

Mature-age students needed flexibility as many were juggling the demands of family responsibilities and work regimes. Where possible, they preferred to visit the library during the early part of the day as they knew the opportunity to access the Internet was greater.

“If no one else has booked the computer, they can stay on it.”

Library staff

3.5 Small business owners

Small business owners were not heavy users Internet users in public libraries as most business owners had access to a computer. Those who did not have access at work or at home sometimes turned to relatives or friends when they had particular needs. Those without these resources often came to the public library.

Overall, these people were not confident computer or Internet users and they could require extensive staff assistance to complete the required tasks.

Most small business users had one-off or occasional needs that brought them to the public library. The majority of these interactions were with eGovernment sites such as ATO, NSW Small Business Website and Local Councils. As well as looking for information, buying documents or downloading forms, these users often needed to print information or downloads.

3.6 Travellers/Tourists

Travellers and tourists were heavy users of Internet services in public libraries in some regional (usually coastal) and metropolitan areas. Email was the main function sought by tourists, but a number of government sites were accessed: ATO; Board of Studies; Immigration; Australian JobSearch and Local Council/ Tourism.

Most travellers were Internet savvy and when they needed staff help it was to locate websites or find information on them.

3.7 Special User Groups

Public libraries went to considerable lengths to cater for the needs of users such as those with physical disabilities or with language, literacy, ethnicity or cultural differences. Where there was a known population of a particular user type, many libraries had provided additional resources, such as multi-lingual staffing and language software to cater to their needs.

Libraries in Fairfield catered to the large ethnic diversity of that area and the library in Moree catered to the needs of the local Aboriginal community.

“A third of our staff speak community languages”

Fairfield Library

Libraries in those urban areas receiving the bulk of recent migrants reported that there was considerable demand on librarians to help clients discover which government department they needed to contact to resolve particular issues. There were particular cultural difficulties with new migrants, especially refugees, who had little trust for government authority.

In terms of physical disability many libraries in older buildings have been modified to provide wheelchair access. Computers have software to aid-vision impaired clients.

Key Findings	Implications
Most users of the Internet in libraries did not have Internet access at home.	Public libraries play an important role in supporting equity of access to online information resources.
Most users of the Internet in libraries also used other library resources.	The synergy of print and electronic resources makes public libraries particularly valuable community resources.
There is high demand from Seniors to learn computer and Internet skills at minimal cost.	Where other low-cost resources are not present, a high demand falls on public libraries. Staff resources are needed to meet the needs of Seniors.
Young people were drawn to use the range of resources available in public libraries and were encouraged by parents and teachers. Most were computer literate and Internet savvy.	Adequate computer facilities are needed to meet the needs of young people.

Key Findings	Implications
Unemployed clients used library computers for job seeking. Where there were appropriate service providers in the locality, the load on the library was reduced.	Public libraries are offering services beyond traditional information resources.
Small business owners used library computers for compliance with government regulations and for business planning/development.	Staff resources are needed to meet the needs of small business owners who are not confident computer users.
Non-English speaking clients and new migrants used library computers to interact with a range of government departments.	Staff resources are needed to meet the needs of non-English speaking clients as they navigate systems that are unfamiliar in system, culture and language.

4. Library Perspective

4.1 Role of public libraries

Public libraries are run by local councils and usually structured as a central library along with branch libraries and mobile libraries.

Public libraries in NSW are strongly linked by a common ground of professional standards, resources, networks and legislative framework. However, each library is administered at the local level. This allows for considerable diversity in facilities and services to cater for the individual needs of local communities.

In the past 20 years, public libraries have undergone major changes as technology and cultural expectations have revolutionised information resources at all levels. New resources have poured into the library sector to enable it to keep abreast of new technologies and community expectations resulting from the importance now placed on the 'Information Economy'¹. In the course of this development, libraries have come to the forefront as important institutions in local communities. Indeed, in some rural areas, the library has become the cornerstone of social revitalisation.

“The Art in the Heart precinct [including the new Library] will be a central focus for arts and cultural industries and will be very beneficial for Lismore, even though it's a fair way down the track,” Cr King said. “The CBD will benefit greatly by having so many extra facilities nearby, and this will attract more tourists and generate more business.”

Northern Rivers Echo

More effective social measurement has revealed the importance of libraries as cultural institutions. A 2003 ABS² study showed that libraries were the second most attended cultural venue or event in 2002. Over 42% of Australians had attended a library and two-fifths of them had attended 10 or more times in the 12-month period. This recognition has helped draw resources to the library sector.

This renaissance in public libraries in NSW is reflected in strong building programs that have resulted in well-appointed new premises for many libraries. These changes have helped public libraries play a role in the 'Information Economy', and the process of social change is still continuing. The boundaries of what a library can be are still expanding. For example, the Baulkham Hills Shire

1. Australia's Strategic Framework for the Information Economy 2004-2006 acknowledges that a strategic priority is to ensure that all Australians have the capabilities, networks and tools to participate in the benefits of the information economy (digital inclusion) and that particular groups of Australians are not marginalised (sometimes referred to as the 'digital divide'). www2.dcit.gov.au/ie/community_connectivity/social_impacts_of_ict. Accessed 28 October 2004.

2. *Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues and Events*, Australia, 2002. ABS (cat. no. 4114.0)

Library, opened in 2004, is co-located with a Community Centre in a building with 60 apartments and it incorporates an indoor-outdoor coffee shop.

The library industry supports a developing role for public libraries as “focal community access points for publicly available electronic information and government interactive electronic resources”¹. This is in contrast with the current situation where many communities lack facilities and resources or, alternatively, have access to several small scale resources funded intermittently by grants from a range of sources.

Research participants noted the following benefits of a single access point that has ongoing funding.

- efficient service provision;
- synergy effect of a range of services;
- centre of gravity possible when resources are pooled;
- social benefits from providing a more visible resource;
- increased professionalism of operation, due to size.

Participants noted that there is some support for this vision. Notably, the New South Wales government has helped fund technological services in public libraries through NSW.net.

A local council representative in this research noted that State Government requirements that local councils develop Social Plans and Cultural Plans is helping to highlight the valuable role played by libraries in local communities. This shift in perception is needed because local councils have traditionally placed emphasis on the ‘three R’s’, rubbish, rates and roads, and downplayed the role of social services such as libraries.

Participants in this research noted the following barriers impeding the implementation of this integrated model of service delivery.

- Funding for CTCs and RTCs is based on establishment grants and success in winning service contracts. In contrast, public libraries have ongoing funding provided via local councils. If the organisations are combined, local councils must be prepared to take on the uncertainty of ongoing viability of CTC/RTC and be prepared to fund the ongoing costs of the CTC/RTC service if insufficient service contracts are won. However, few local councils can find more resources because rates, their main source of funding, are capped. It was noted that of all Australian States, New South Wales contributes the smallest proportion (9%) of the cost of running libraries.
- Government service provision is fragmented across levels of government and

1. ALIA submission to Senate Inquiry into the Role of Libraries in the Online Environment. <http://alia.org.au/advocacy/submissions/online.environment.a.html>. Accessed 9 September 2004.

between agencies. Strong political will is needed to drive a 'whole of government' approach to integrated service delivery.

- Part of the funding basis of CTCs is that they charge fees for Internet access. In contrast, public libraries are required to provide free access.
- CTCs are based on the premise of commercial viability, whereas public libraries have a community service orientation. These differences will lead to conflicting priorities and frictions in running a combined service.
- The integration of services such as school libraries and public libraries, is limited by geographic factors such as a suitable location that serves both purposes; the cautionary need to restrict public access to school premises; and work function differences between public librarians and school librarians.
- The library sector has undergone rapid and extensive redefinition in the past 20 years as Australia has entered the Information Age. Some in the industry may find it difficult to sustain engagement with continuing significant changes.
- Public libraries tend to have a low profile in government and this means that they are overlooked in the planning process. Many older people, including politicians and public servants, are not up to date with what contemporary libraries are doing.

Stakeholders in this research expressed the concerns that many CTCs would fail because they would not generate sufficient funds to cover operating costs. Stakeholders were concerned local libraries in areas where CTCs fail will experience additional burdens.

“As CTCs fall over, libraries will try to fill the gap and that will draw resources out of libraries.”

Library Staff

At the time of this research, the larger vision for public libraries as community focal points is in the early stages of establishment in New South Wales. In most cases, public libraries continue to offer traditional services with the addition of electronic resources and capabilities. Further steps could be achieved by greater integration of facilities and services through the co-location of libraries and other services and a more integrated, possibly joint-use model.

An Information Paper¹ prepared by the State Library of New South Wales notes that co-location of libraries with government or private sector bodies is quite extensive in NSW, but finds only five examples of further integration in the form of joint-use libraries.

1. *Inquiry into the Joint Use and Co-Location of Public Buildings*, Information Paper prepared by the State Library of New South Wales. August 2004.

Key Findings	Implications
Libraries are undergoing a long period of redefinition as they stay abreast of rapid information technology change.	Libraries are contemporary and flexible institutions, capable of managing major change.
In many communities, libraries have been placed at the centre of community revival programs.	Libraries are becoming more prominent cultural venues in their local communities.
Government programs to support public access to new technology have resulted in duplication of small scale resources. Local libraries are often one element in a patchwork of services.	Consolidation of resources could result in more effective service delivery.
There are concerns that the funding model for CTCs will result in a proportion of failures and that the burden of these failures will fall on local councils. Local council funding is not growing in line with increasing needs for new technology and cannot fund new demands.	Reliable ongoing funding for new technology resources is needed, regardless of whether the resources are provided through public libraries or not.
Government service provision is fragmented across levels of government and between agencies.	Strong political will is needed to drive a whole of government approach to integrated service delivery.
The library sector has a low profile and many senior policy makers are not aware of the evolution of library services.	Decision makers may overlook the potential for libraries to play a central role in serving public information needs in this new technological era.
Across NSW there are many examples of local libraries that are co-located with other facilities. There are very few examples of joint-use facilities.	It appears that the first steps towards an integrated model have begun, but the industry vision of the local library as the focal point is a long way off.

4.2 Demand for eGovernment in public libraries

4.2.1 Sites used

During the course of this research, library staff often noted that they had only a limited knowledge of what clients did on library computers. Library staff had a considerable respect for the privacy of clients and tried not to intrude on the use they made of library computers. Staff became aware of what clients were doing when clients asked for help or when they noticed, in passing, what was on the screen.

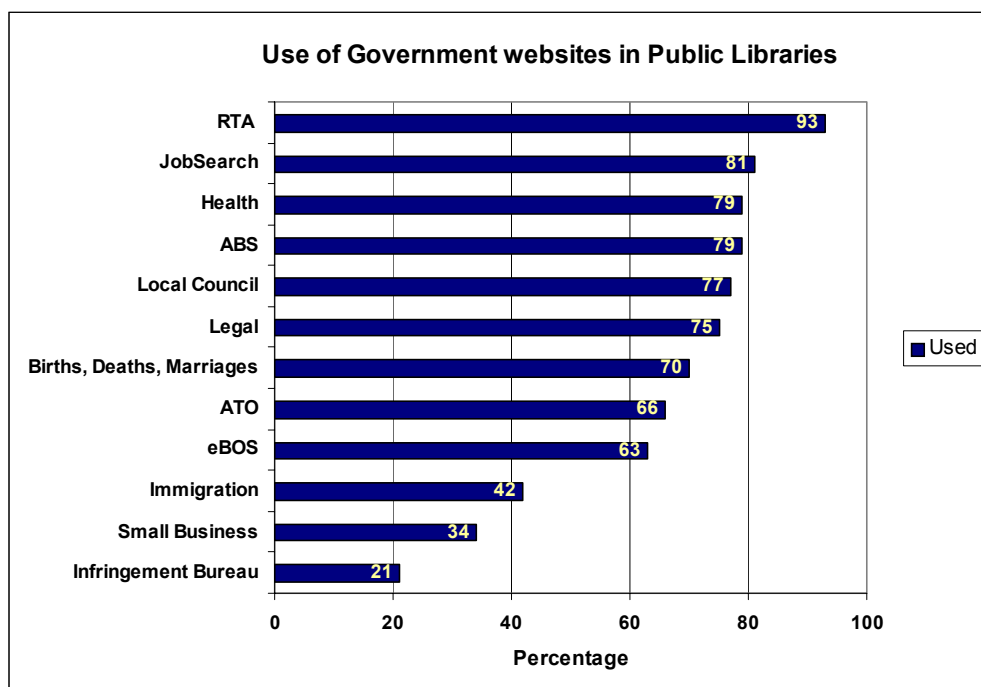
“In a small community it is particularly important to respect their privacy. They probably don’t want everyone to know if they are looking up details on Parkinsons Disease.”

Library staff

Our survey of public libraries was based on staff perceptions of client usage patterns. It showed that there was extensive use of government websites in public libraries. A wide range of sites were accessed, and seven sites were accessed in more than three-quarters of public libraries.

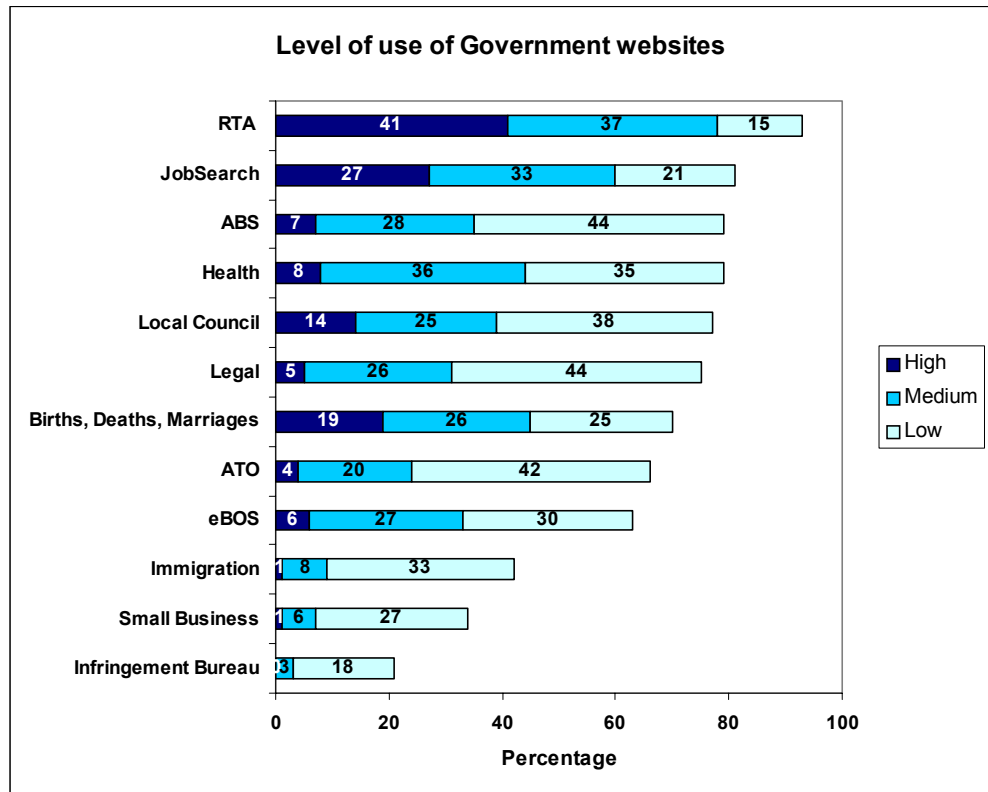
The following graph shows the extent to which 13 government websites were accessed in public libraries.

Fig. 1. Use of government websites in public libraries



The 13 government websites were used to varying degrees as shown in the following graph.

Fig. 2. Level of use of government websites



The websites with the most widespread levels of high usage were:

- RTA – 41% of libraries reported high usage levels
- JobSearch – 27% of libraries reported high usage levels
- Births, Deaths, Marriages – 19% of libraries reported high usage levels.

The survey revealed the following differences in level of use.

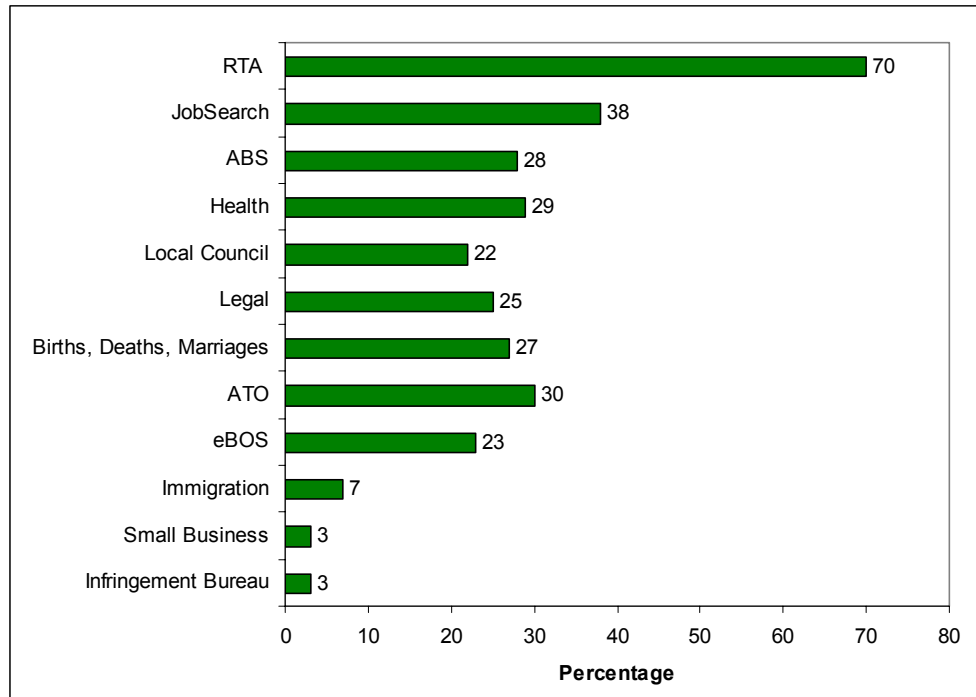
Table 2. Differences in level of use of government websites

More in Metropolitan than Rural	More in Rural than Metropolitan
Local Council websites ABS Board of Studies Immigration	ATO Health information Births, Deaths, Marriages Infringement Bureau
More in Central than Branch	More in Branch than Central
RTA ATO Local Council Board of Studies ABS Legal Health Immigration Small Business Births, Deaths, Marriages Infringement Bureau	None

Libraries were asked to indicate the trend in demand for assistance with government websites. Six in ten (58%) libraries said clients accessed government sites more than a year ago.

Libraries estimated a strong increase in demand for particular government websites, as shown in the following graph.

Fig. 3. Government websites used more heavily than 12 months previously



- Seven out of ten (70%) libraries noted that the RTA website was used more heavily than 12 months previously.
- A wide spectrum of sites were thought to be used more by 20-30% of libraries.
- A handful of sites were thought to show little change over the previous 12 months.

It must be concluded that, across the board, libraries are noticing an increase in client demand to access government websites in public libraries.

4.2.2 Demand on library staff for assistance

We note the wide range of expertise in public library staff across the state. Clients using public libraries encounter staff with expertise ranging from the clerical worker in the branch library through to the experienced reference librarian with deep content knowledge and strong knowledge of technical functions.

All library staff encountered in this study, regardless of experience, showed a strong desire to help clients with problems. Problems included classic information finding problems ('where can I find out about...?'), procedural problems ('how do I get hold of...?') as well as technical problems ('how does this work?'). Less experienced staff were frequently out of their depth, with regard to content and also with respect to technology.

***"When I can't help, I phone
[librarian in main library] and
we try to work it out together."***

Staff in rural branch library

Clients who accessed government services sometimes needed assistance that required library staff to have specific knowledge about the agency's services and website structure. Library staff drew on their research skills to help the client find the information or complete the function they were trying to do.

Apart from giving direct assistance to clients, library staff carried out the following functions to support access to the Internet and eGovernment.

- Manage the booking system;
- Collect fees for printing, use of equipment, etc;
- Supervise the terminals visually to ensure compliance with policy;
- Troubleshoot technical glitches;
- Virus check client disks before they are used for downloads;
- See the area is kept tidy and functional;
- Create and maintain finding aids.

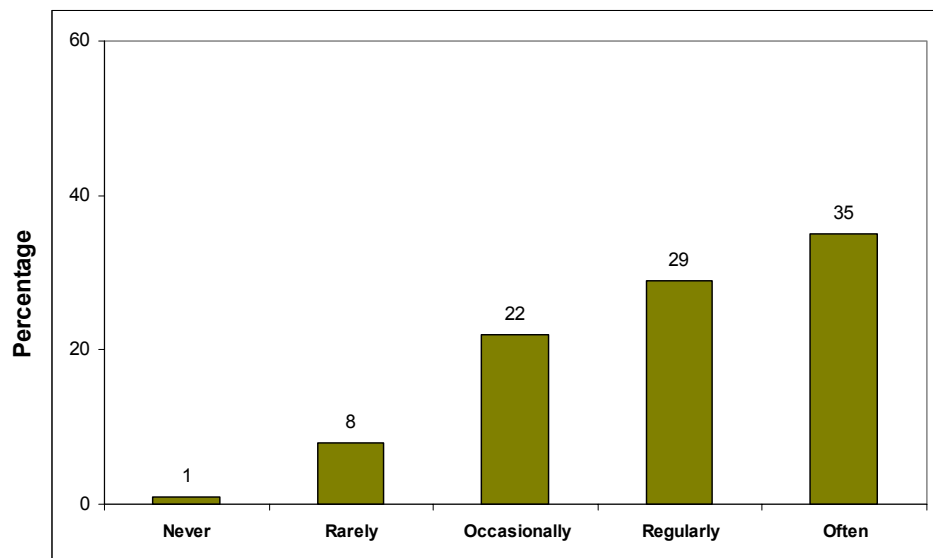
Staff assistance was shaped by the location of computers in the library. In most cases, Internet computers were close to the main desk so visual supervision and physical assistance were easier. In libraries with more than two or three Internet computers, additional computers could be located:

- Near reference desk
- In Young People's section
- In Family History section
- In a specialist study section.

Our survey asked libraries to indicate how often clients needed staff help to access Government services. This data relates only to the direct assistance staff provide to clients and does not include the range of support functions listed above.

The following graph shows the extent of help needed.

Fig. 4. Degree of staff help needed for government websites

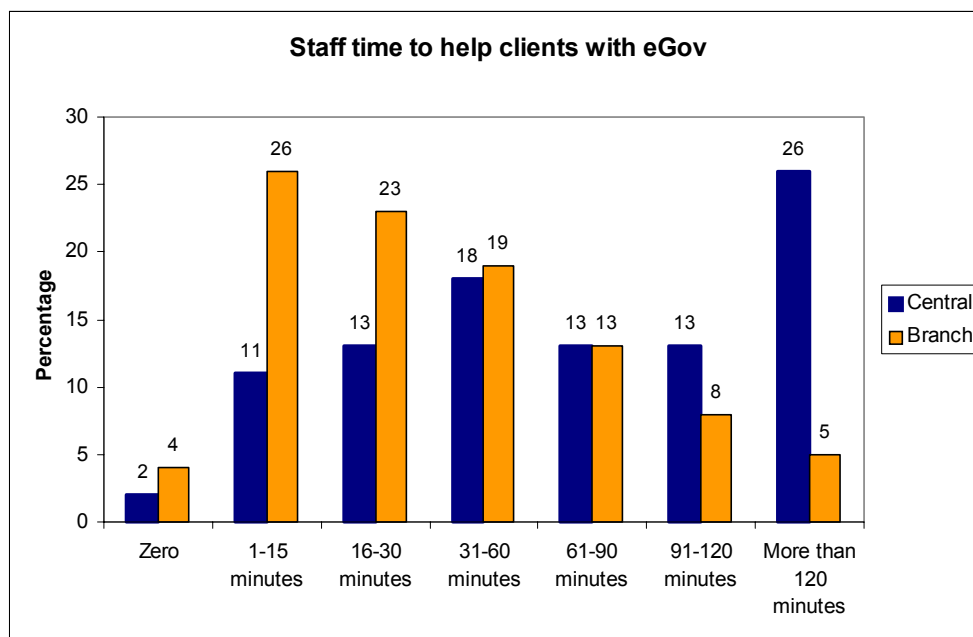


One in three libraries reported that clients **often** needed staff help to access Government services online.

Two-thirds said this occurred either regularly or often.

Libraries were asked to indicate the amount of staff time spent helping clients to access Government services in an average week. The following graph shows the data for Central and Branch libraries.

Fig. 5. Staff time helping clients with eGovernment



Branch libraries commonly spent up to an hour a week giving direct assistance to clients accessing government websites.

Central libraries commonly spent more than an hour, and a quarter spent more than two hours per week giving direct assistance to clients.

Onsite interviews indicated the extent of the load on some libraries as librarians spoke about rostering extra staff to the main desk or as 'roving aids' during busy afternoon periods.

Cost to libraries

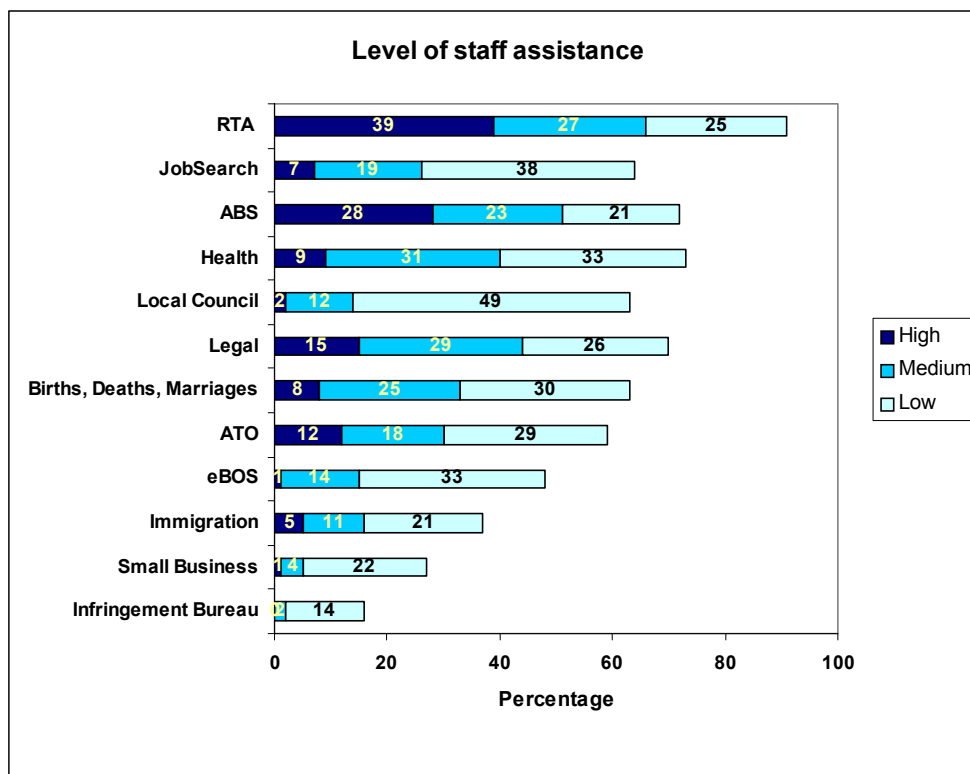
An estimate can be made of the cost to libraries of staff time spent giving direct assistance to clients accessing government websites. Taking the mean of 50 minutes per week across all libraries, gives an annual demand of 15,687 hours for all NSW libraries. This is the equivalent of more than one week of total opening hours for the State's public libraries.

In addition to the staff time spent on direct assistance to clients many more hours are spent on staff and client training and the preparation of training materials; administrative support such as supervision, maintaining booking systems and collecting print fees; and selecting and maintaining direct links to government websites.

Our survey also asked librarians to estimate the level of staff assistance commonly needed for 13 specific government websites.

There were marked differences in the degree of staff assistance required for different websites, as shown in the following graph.

Fig. 6. Level of staff assistance



Two sites stood out as requiring higher levels of staff assistance:

- **RTA** – 39% of libraries indicated a high level of staff assistance;
- **ABS** – 28% of libraries indicated a high level of staff assistance;

Onsite interviews indicated typical examples of the kind assistance needed for these two sites.

- **RTA.** The main impact was from the large numbers of people seeking to find information on the site and to practise the Drivers Knowledge Test. Library staff frequently had to guide new users through the site to help them find the elements they wanted. Most libraries had provided finding aids such as Quicklinks to the Drivers Knowledge Test. Some libraries had posted laminated notices with instructions for how to find elements that were in high demand. A simple change in the website meant that library staff had to update

their finding aids.

Libraries in areas of high migrant populations noted that while the RTA website does have some information in community languages, it is not evident on the homepage and it is hard to find at lower levels. Library staff provided assistance to clients with poor English in navigating the site and finding information in community languages.

- **ABS.** The main impact was from clients who needed guidance about which publication contained the information they needed and about the form of the information.

“They think they will just find the answer to their question on the ABS site. They don’t know that they may have to buy the data and compile the answer from more than one place.”

Librarian

Central libraries indicated higher levels of demand for staff assistance for all the nominated websites than branch libraries.

The following table summarises the differences between Metropolitan and Rural libraries with respect to levels of demand for staff assistance.

Table 3. Levels of demand for staff assistance

Higher demand in Metropolitan libraries	Higher demand in Rural libraries
RTA Local Council websites ABS Board of Studies Immigration Australian JobSearch Small Business Website	ATO Health information Births, Deaths, Marriages

4.2.3 Specific examples of assistance given to clients and time taken

Library staff were asked to nominate specific examples of assistance given to clients. For each incident, they nominated:

- the nature of the problem
- the type of assistance given
- the amount of staff time spent helping.

The following table indicates the type of assistance provided for all websites and for the three sites mentioned most often.

Table 4. Assistance with Government websites

	Total n =175 % ^a	RTA n=122 % ^a	ATO n=30 ^b % ^a	ABS n=27 ^b % ^a
Showed how to navigate/follow links/locate information	69	57	33	67
Assisted with locating or accessing website/URL	50	33	23	26
Assisted with printing/downloading information from Internet	27	5	13	22
Provided guidance on self completion/lodging form/doing test	17	19	23	-
Showed basic computer procedures	8	5	-	-
Reassured user that website is unavailable/not working	5	6	7	-
Provided help with use of resources	7	-	3	7
Showed basic Internet procedures	7	2	7	
Provided unspecified general help	4	2	-	-
Rebooted/reset/started them	3	5	-	-
Assisted with email address	4	2	3	-
Assisted with language difficulty/literacy issue	3	4	-	-
Staff searched unsuccessfully	2	1	7	4
Explained costs involved in use	2	2	-	-
Other	3	-	3	4

a. Note: Multiple responses, totals add to more than 100%.

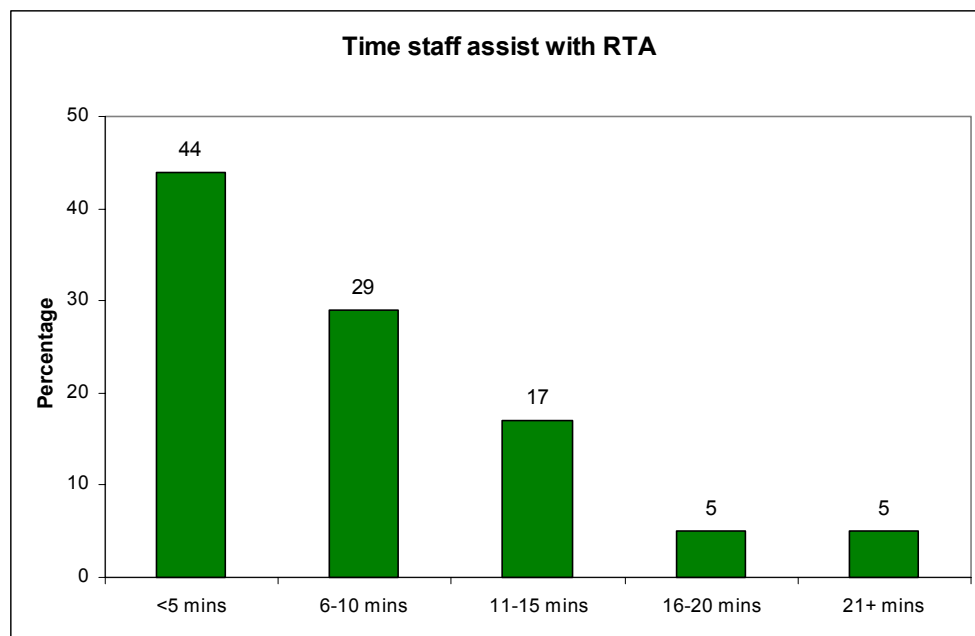
b. Note: Small bases for ATO, and ABS: percentages should be treated with caution.

It is clear that most assistance related to helping clients find the information source, be this locating the initial website/URL (50%) or assistance with site navigation (69%).

The RTA was the most frequently mentioned site with 70% of all comments relating to this site.

Library staff were asked to indicate how much staff time was spent on specific examples of assistance. The following graph summarises the time spent giving assistance on the RTA website.

Fig. 7. Time spent giving individual assistance on RTA website

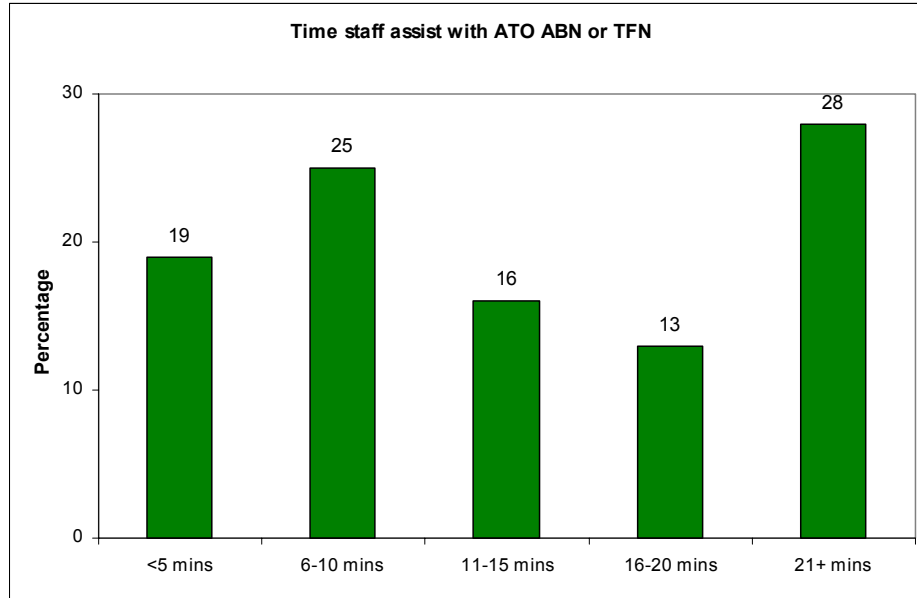


Note: Base, n=133

In general, time spent with individual clients who had difficulty with the RTA website was quite short. Nearly half (44%) the examples took less than five minutes of staff time. This is consistent with the nature of the help needed as shown in the previous table where 57% of assistance for the RTA website was to help clients locate information (e.g. Drivers Knowledge Test) on the site.

The following graph summarises the time spent giving assistance on the ATO website.

Fig. 8. Time spent giving individual assistance on ATO website

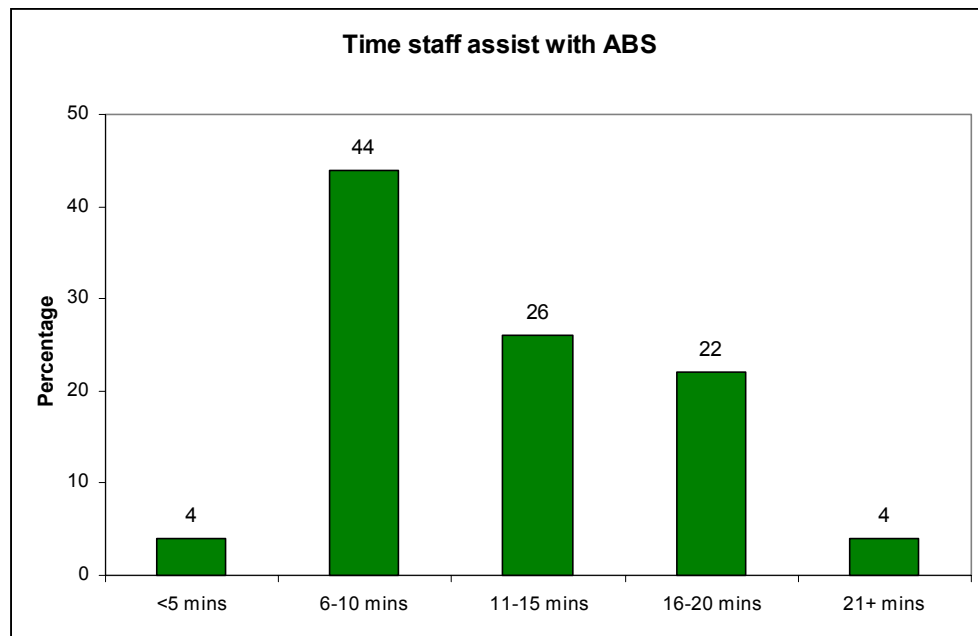


Note: Small base, n=32

To help clients who were carrying out functions relating to ABNs or TFNs on the ATO website, library staff were likely to spend longer periods of time. In more than a quarter (28%) of examples, staff had spent more than 21 minutes giving individual assistance. This is consistent with the type of assistance shown in Table 5 which indicates that a notable proportion of assistance related to more complex functions such as completing forms and downloading documents.

The following graph summarises the time spent giving assistance on the ABS website.

Fig. 9. Time spent giving individual assistance on ABS website



To help clients seeking information on the ABS website, library staff spent considerable amounts of time. In half (52%) the examples given, staff estimated they spent more than 10 minutes with each client.

The following table summarises the average times library staff spent helping clients with particular government websites. The websites listed here were mentioned by librarians in this study when they described particular incidents of assistance given to clients.

Table 5. Average staff time spent per incident

	Average time spent per incident
ATO	17 minutes
BDM	16 minutes
Health	14 minutes
ABS	14 minutes
Immigration	13 minutes
JobSearch	13 minutes
Local Council	11 minutes
RTA	10 minutes
AEC	7.5 minutes

While the RTA was frequently cited as a government website that placed a demand on library staff, the amount of time spent on each occasion was shorter than for most other government websites.

Key Findings	Implications
A wide range of government websites were accessed in libraries across the State. High usage levels were reported for RTA, Job Search and BDM.	Libraries are providing notable support for public access to government services.
58% of libraries said clients were accessing government sites more than a year ago. Substantial increases in demand were reported for 10 agency websites. Increased demand for the RTA site was most prominent.	The demand on libraries is increasing. As government agencies put more information and increased functionality online, the demand for access grows.
Library staff ranged in expertise from experienced reference librarians to clerical workers. Clients accessing government services might need assistance from staff with specific knowledge about the agency's services and website structure.	Staff training needs to take account of the growing demands on library staff to support clients accessing government services through agency websites.
Apart from giving direct assistance to clients, library staff perform seven other functions to support client access to government services online.	The demand on library staff resources goes beyond direct client assistance.
<p>One-third of libraries said that clients often needed staff help to access government services online.</p> <p>A quarter of central libraries spent more than two hours per week on direct client assistance. Branch libraries commonly spent up to an hour a week.</p>	Government online services are making a considerable impact on library staff.

Key Findings	Implications
<p>Government websites that required the highest levels of staff assistance were: RTA, and ABS. Demand was higher in metropolitan libraries than in rural libraries.</p> <p>Libraries reported specific incidents of assistance given to clients accessing government services online. On average, assistance ranged between 17 minutes per incident for the ATO website to 10 minutes for the RTA website.</p>	<p>Library staff need to provide both simple assistance with location and process as well as more complex problem definition and research.</p>
<p>The main kinds of assistance were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • locate information/navigate • find URL/website • help download/print • help complete a function (test, form) 	<p>Library staff need to help with both information requests and functional requests.</p>

4.3 Difficulties libraries have with government websites

This section outlines some specific difficulties with government websites and the consequences for libraries.

Issue	Consequence for libraries
Structure of information on government websites can make it hard to find things. For example, on the RTA website the Drivers Knowledge Test is hard to find from the front page.	Libraries help clients by providing advice, notices or Quicklinks.
Some websites use 'organisational' terminology that is meaningless to end-users.	This increases the load on library staff as clients seek assistance.
There is a vast range of government services available online in various forms. Library staff do not have specialist knowledge about government services.	Library staff spend time researching specific questions and helping clients find the information or service they need.
Agencies and service providers tell people to go to their local library to access government websites.	This adds to the workload of libraries, especially when the client expects that the librarian knows about the service.
Websites are updated, revised or relaunched so the structure changes. Files may be removed altogether, renamed or relocated.	<p>Library staff can no longer find things and have to research to find whether the file still exists and where it is located.</p> <p>Libraries have to update their finding aids including printed material and Quicklinks.</p>
Some resources are structured as single large files that take too long to download so that networks become congested or operations time-out.	Library networks slow down and clients seek staff assistance when functions fail.
Some resources are structured as multiple files making it hard to assemble a complete document.	Library staff have to bear the brunt of client dissatisfaction with ineffective service provision by government websites.

Issue	Consequence for libraries
Too little information is available in community languages. Information in community languages is often hard to find from the home page.	Libraries in areas with high NESB populations try to help clients find the resources they need.
There can be differences in what an agency provides for free and what it charges for. Clients can get upset when they discover they have to pay a fee.	Library staff have to bear the brunt of client dissatisfaction.
Referencing of documents is becoming more casual as agencies are producing more material in informal forms such as guides, fact sheets or brochures.	Library staff have to bear the brunt of client dissatisfaction and help clients source adequate referencing information.

4.4 Avenues for cross-sector networks

Stakeholders and State Library staff emphasised the need for improved channels of communication between the library sector and government agencies at all levels. Existing cross-sector networks, contacts and communication mechanisms needed to be refreshed and supported, and additional pathways needed to be established.

The following suggestions were put forward.

- Initiate top level contact at the Director level between the State Library of New South Wales and government agencies.
- Build networks between the library sector and government departments at middle levels. Use current structures such as the MPLA and CPLA and LGSA to extend and develop contact.
- Reinforce professional networks such as GLINN, the network for librarians in NSW government agencies.
- The LGSA needs to be more vocal about the need for recurrent funding for public access to Internet technologies.
- The State Library needs to advocate more strongly to educate policy makers about the new role and image of libraries, especially the potential for libraries to be information hubs for local communities.
- The library sector should build stronger connections with programs such as Communitybuilders.

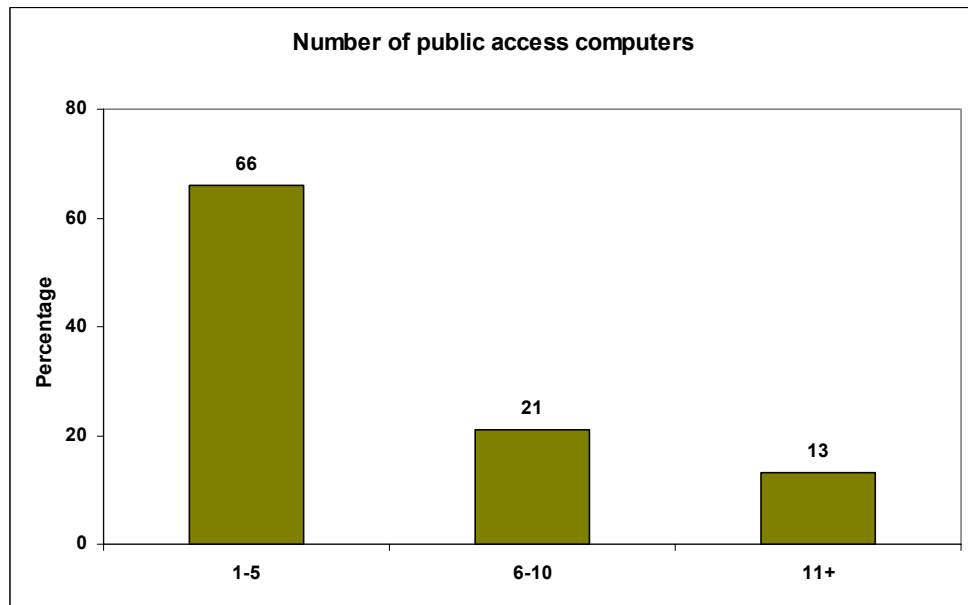
It was also suggested that the library sector needed to be proactive in establishing pilot projects and centres of excellence. These examples should be used in advocating for more effective support for libraries. LIAC was given as an example of a successful model. It was suggested, for example, that Homework Help programs in libraries would be more successful if they had been implemented with a more standardised process as used by LIAC.

5. Resources in Public Libraries

5.1 Number of computers

Most libraries in NSW have less than five computers available for public Internet access, as shown in the following graph.

Fig. 10. Number of public access computers



In a personal interview, Willoughby City Library noted the heavy use of their Library. Their six Internet computers are located close to the main desk and were in constant use during opening hours, from 9.00am to 9.00pm.

“They queue to use the computers.”

Library staff

In addition to the Internet access computers, 7% of libraries had a computer that was dedicated to a particular government purpose, in most cases this was used for the RTA website.

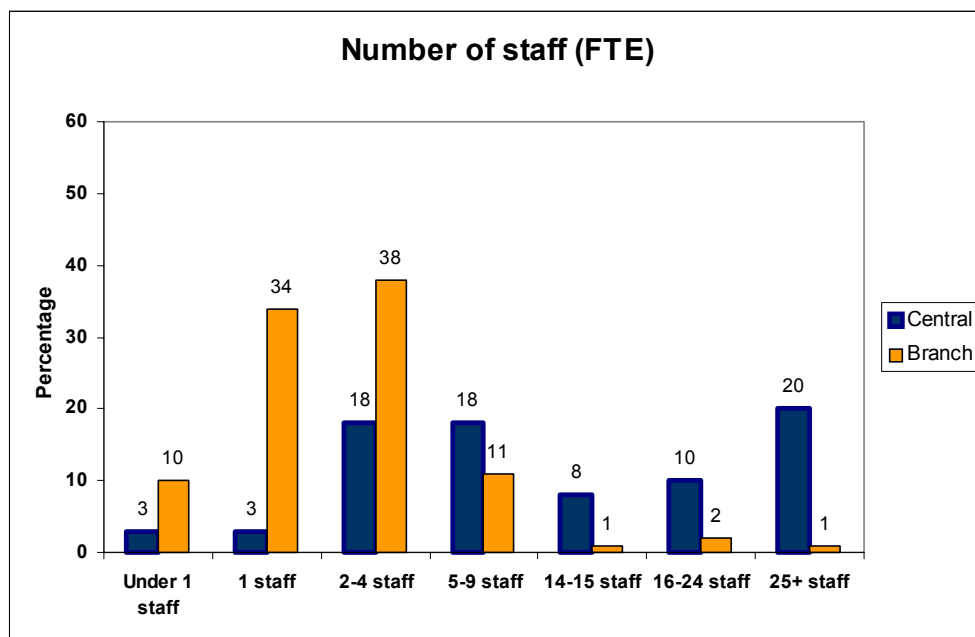
“We had a machine dedicated to HSC papers on CD. We switched it to the RTA Drivers Knowledge Test on CD, in order to free up an Internet computer.”

Library staff

5.2 Staff levels

The following graph shows the number of staff (Full Time Equivalent) in the libraries surveyed.

Table 6. Number of staff in public libraries

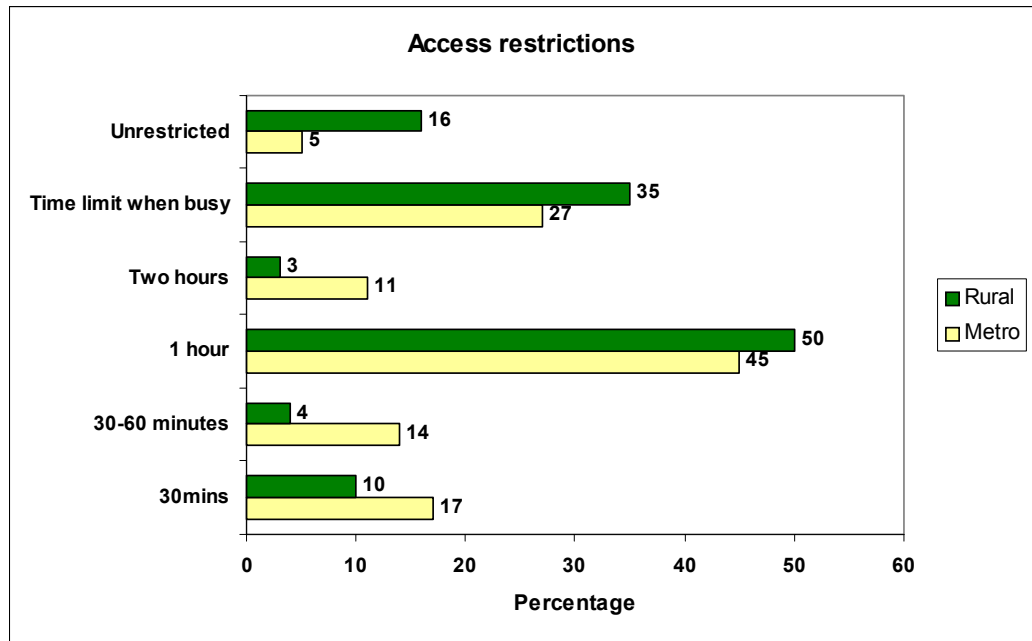


Most branch libraries had between one and four staff members. Central libraries ranged in size from those with 2-4 staff through to the 20% with more than 25 members of staff.

5.3 Access restrictions

Libraries were asked whether they placed restrictions on Internet access and most libraries indicated that they managed the resource quite tightly by implementing time-based rationing regimes. For libraries in high-demand locations these limits were applied all the time, while others applied them only at busy times of the day or in busy seasons. The following graph shows the extent of these restrictions in Metropolitan and Rural areas.

Fig. 11. Access restrictions



It is clear that control regimes were much tighter in metropolitan areas than in rural areas.

Metropolitan libraries, both central and branch, were less likely to give unrestricted access. They were also more likely to have the shortest booking period of 30 minutes.

In metropolitan areas, one in six libraries restricted users to 30 minutes.

In addition, these booking systems mean that users have to book in advance, sometimes up to a week ahead. This excludes users who have more immediate needs.

When public Internet access comprises a 30 minute timeslot that must be booked a week in advance, questions can be asked about how real this access is, especially when it is acknowledged that it is disadvantaged community members who must rely on this form of access.

“Their time is up, others are waiting, but they haven’t finished what they wanted to do. They can get upset, and you have to handle it.”

Library staff

These restrictions can be taken as a strong indication of lack of resources to provide effective Internet access in some public libraries.

5.4 Source of resources

Interviews with libraries in this study gave an overview of the resources available to public libraries in meeting client demand for Internet access and for access to government services online.

The two main sources of funding were the local council and the State Government through NSW.net. Additional resources were obtained through specific funding grants and local philanthropy.

Local Councils

Local councils were the main funding source for public library networks and equipment. Across the state, this equipment ranged from contemporary flat screens and compact casing to ‘hand me down’ PCs from council offices. Public access computers funded by the local council usually provided a range of office software that allowed clients to work on documents such as study assignments and personal resumes.

“95% of our funding comes from Local government and 5% from State government.”

Library staff

Local councils provided maintenance, technical support, software upgrades and licences, Internet connection, furniture and floor space for public access computers.

Council funding for local libraries varied by district. There were some council areas where significant resources had been allocated to library resources, including computers and networks. With regard to networks for example, the Bega Valley Shire Council (BVSC) established a broadband network for the region that provides economical and effective connectivity for the whole region, including smaller centres. While libraries in centres such as Bega link directly to

NSW.net, libraries in smaller centres connect with NSW.net through the BVSC WAN because it is much more effective than the ISP Ruralnet (now part of iinet). In addition to forming the basis for BVSC operations, the network provides public access through the sub-lease of bandwidth to a private ISP.

Some Councils noted that there had been funding cuts across the board and that resources for their libraries had suffered as a consequence.

NSW.net

The State Government funded NSW.net which provided subsidised high speed Internet access and 700 public Internet PCs to public libraries in 2001–2002. At the time of this research, these computers were prominent across the library network and libraries were very positive about having the resource. Some libraries reported that with these computers they had three times as many public Internet access computers than previously.

The period of network and technical support for NSW.net computers expired during the course of fieldwork for this project.

Libraries noted the following difficulties with the NSW.net scheme.

1. The NSW.net computers do not carry common office software for word processing or spreadsheets. Some clients found this frustrating as it made it impossible for them to carry out some of the functions they wanted to complete online. For example, a job seeker could not modify their resume and apply for a job.
2. Libraries noted that the scheme had provided computers that were now growing older. It was some months after the initial three year period of NSW.net expired before recurrent funding for NSW.net was announced. Until that announcement, it appeared that local councils would be left to fund ongoing service.

Grant based funding

Some libraries had used funds obtained from various Government grant schemes aimed at specific community members such as young people, seniors, socially disadvantaged, migrant and indigenous people, to enhance Internet equipment. The grants often came with restrictions that could limit the total benefit that could be obtained from the equipment.

“There was an offer from the Dept of Ageing called Seniors Online – if you dedicate a PC they would give you banners and software. We didn’t take it up because it was too limiting.”

Library staff

As with the NSW.net computers, obsolescence was an issue as libraries needed to source funds for upgrades every few years.

An issue with grant based funding was the drain on resources (effort and skill) required to write grant applications and fulfil the associated paperwork requirements.

In addition, the grants usually provided only one element of a whole solution and the other elements needed to be resourced from other budgets. For example, a grant may buy a computer, but the library had to find space, furniture and ancillary hardware, software and consumables. Grant based funding resulted in a mixture of technology, platforms and equipment at each site and this added to the complexities of managing resources effectively.

Grant based funding created an environment of short term planning and uncertainty about the future because there was no assurance that funding would be available for associated expenses or upgrades.

Philanthropy

Philanthropy was not a significant source of resources for public libraries in NSW. Across all the interviews, two libraries indicated that the local history society had supplied an Internet computer – these were used exclusively for genealogy and BDM searches. No libraries indicated they had received donations from individuals, small businesses, community groups or charities for computing facilities.

5.5 Other resources

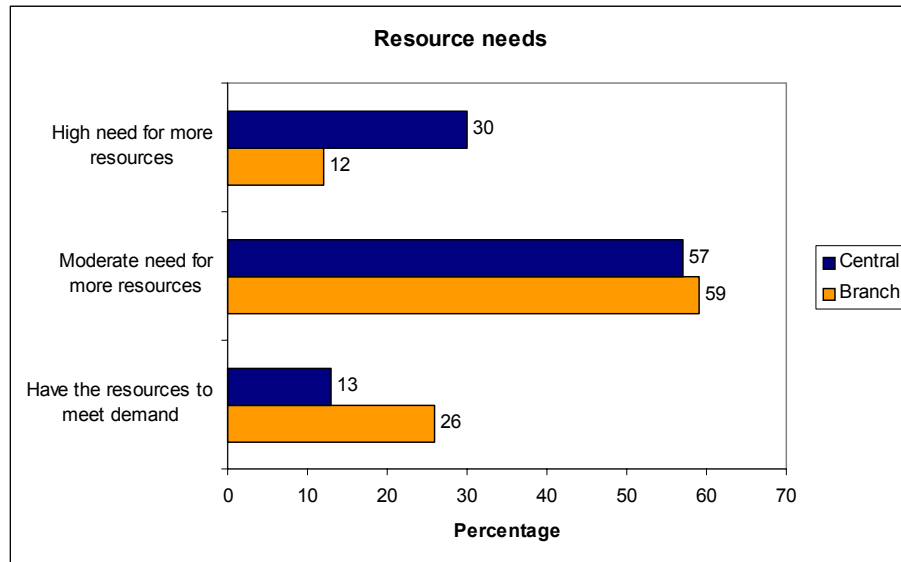
In many older buildings, libraries struggled to incorporate public Internet PCs in an effective manner. Older buildings often lacked the space and/or configuration to permit effective service. For example, one library noted that they could not locate the Internet PCs in an area that had wheelchair access. Others noted the cost or inconvenience of bringing power and network wiring to the place where the computers should be located.

The majority of libraries charged a fee for printing (usually 20-30c for black and white copies). This income was used to maintain and upgrade the printer/s. It should be noted that the majority of libraries had a limited number of printers that were usually shared by several PCs.

5.6 Resource needs

In our survey, libraries were asked to indicate the extent to which they needed additional resources to meet client demand for eGovernment. Central libraries, in particular, showed high needs, as the following graph illustrates.

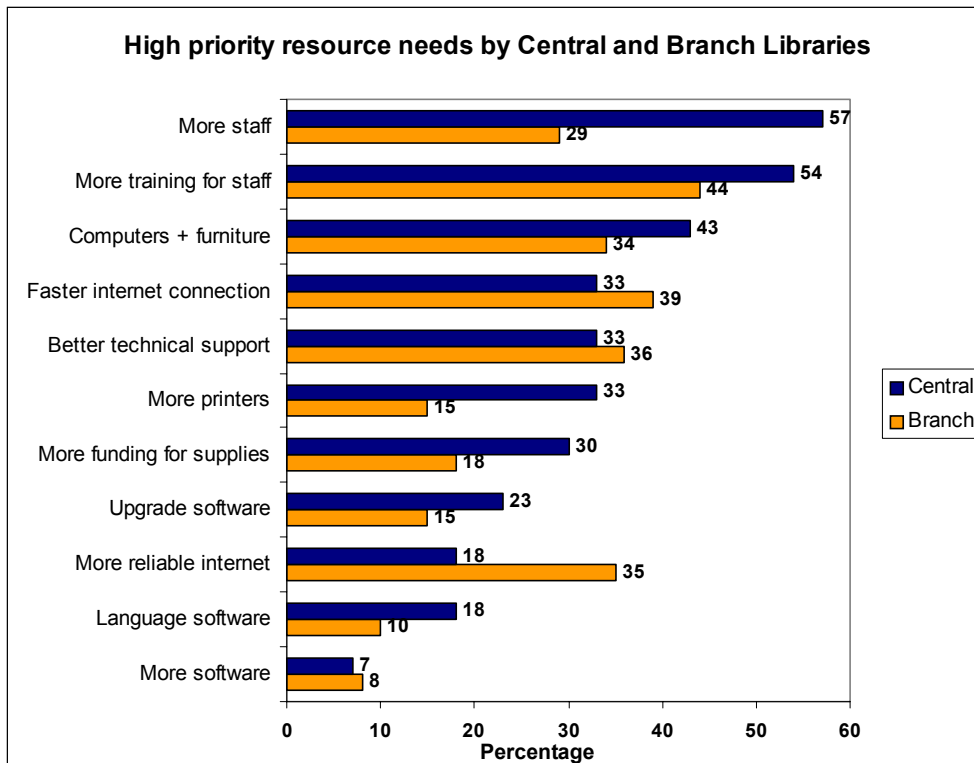
Fig. 12. Resource needs



Nearly one in three Central libraries indicated a high need for more resources. More than half of both Central and Branch libraries showed a moderate need for resources, while a quarter of Branch libraries said they could meet demand with current resources.

The following graph shows the resources that were listed as a high priority by Central libraries and Branch libraries.

Fig. 13. High priority resource needs by Central and Branch libraries



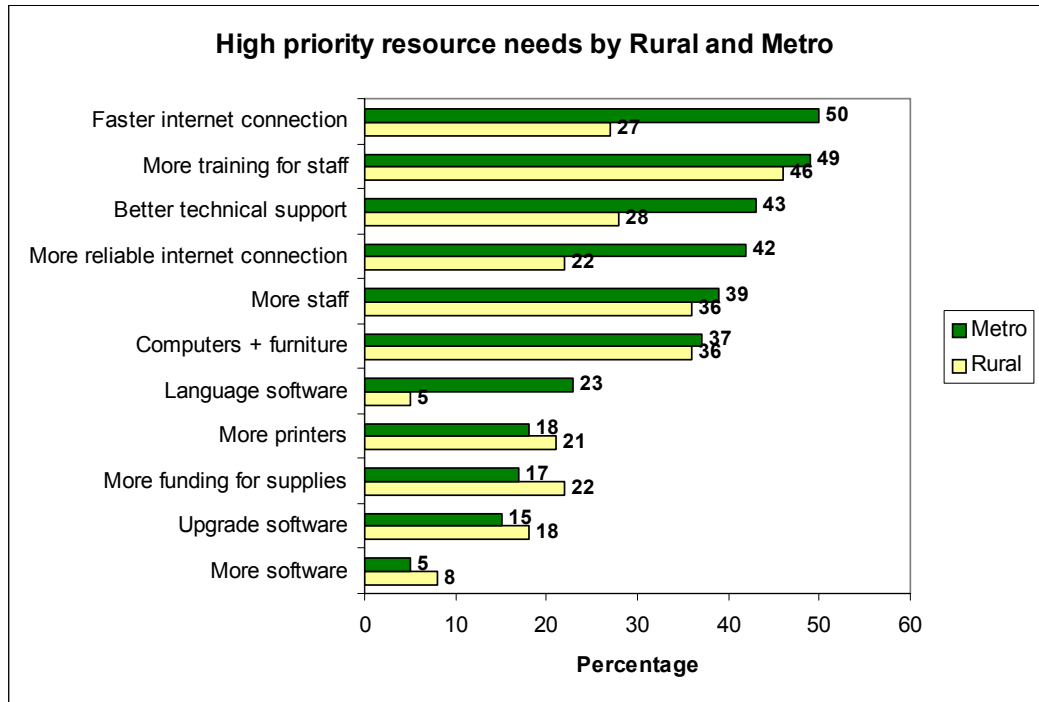
The chart suggests that it is Central libraries that are feeling the strongest demand on their current resources. For most items, Central libraries showed the highest levels of need.

The chart also indicates that a wide range of resources were needed which is a reflection of the many elements necessary to provide public Internet access in libraries and to inform library staff about the content of government websites so they can assist clients effectively.

Central libraries expressed much higher need for more staff, staff training, computers and furniture, printers and funding for supplies. Branch libraries, on the other hand, expressed a much higher need for more reliable Internet connections.

The following chart compares the needs of Metropolitan and Rural libraries.

Fig. 14. High priority resource needs by Rural and Metropolitan libraries



Metropolitan libraries placed high priority on:

- Faster Internet connection
- Staff training
- Better technical support
- More reliable Internet connection
- More staff
- More computers and furniture.

Rural libraries placed high priority on:

- Staff training
- More staff
- More computers and furniture.

Key Findings	Implications
Most libraries had 1-5 computers available for public Internet access.	Most public library Internet access sites are small-scale.
<p>Most libraries imposed restrictions on Internet access, usually in the form of time-limited booking systems.</p> <p>Control regimes were much tighter in metropolitan libraries than in rural libraries.</p>	<p>The demand for public Internet access in libraries is higher in metropolitan areas than in rural areas.</p> <p>Tight control regimes are an indicator of insufficient resources to meet demand.</p> <p>Tight control regimes make access impractical for users with needs that are immediate or extensive.</p>
Local councils and State Government's NSW.net were the main sources of funding for public Internet resources. Local councils provide ongoing funds, but funds from State and Federal governments are usually channelled through grant schemes.	Grant funding resulted in piecemeal resources that were less compatible and more complex to manage. It created an environment of short term planning and uncertainty about the future.
30% of Central libraries nominated a high need for more resources in meeting client demand for eGovernment.	Demand falls most strongly on larger, Central libraries.
<p>Central libraries placed high priority on–</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more staff and staff training • computers + furniture, printers • faster Internet connection, better technical support 	The need in Central libraries is for both staff and equipment.
<p>Branch libraries placed high priority on–</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • staff training • computers + furniture • faster and more reliable Internet connections, better technical support 	The need in Branch libraries is for staff training, equipment and connectivity.

6. Local Contexts

By adopting a geographical approach, the study was able to look at key characteristics of individual communities and to make comparisons between different areas. The following factors appear to influence the role of the public library as a site for public access to the Internet.

6.1 Factors that affect local contexts

6.1.1 Size of the suburb/town

Central libraries in larger towns and metropolitan areas offered a substantial range of resources across all media, of which Internet access was just one element. These libraries sometimes had synergies with other institutions such as the University of Wollongong Access Centre at Bega Valley Shire Library. Their larger collections and range of services made these libraries attractive destinations for many clients. One result of this overall range of facilities and services was increased demand for Internet access. As noted earlier, young people in Willoughby chose to access the RTA website from the library because they had other things to do at the library and because RTA offices provided only a limited number of terminals.

In contrast, very small branch libraries often had very limited collections and services. As a result, more discerning users were not drawn to them and demand for Internet access was correspondingly lower.

“The Fairfield library website is a fabulous resource. They have databases online that schools can’t afford. I tell all the kids to join the Fairfield library so they can access the databases. They can access it from here [school] or from home. Of course they go to the library too, and not just the studious ones.”

School librarian

“The local branch library is very poor. It has terrible book stock and poor technology. I only went once and saw how useless it was.”

U3A member in rural district

6.1.2 Proximity to larger centres

Local Councils provided branch libraries in order to give ratepayers convenient access to basic services. In country areas, library clients felt isolated by distances requiring a drive of an hour or two. Branch libraries and mobile libraries helped cater for the needs of these residents. In city areas where actual distance was not such a factor, some branch libraries were situated in locations with perceived geographic or social barriers.

For example, a small branch library was maintained in Willoughby because it had a loyal following of elderly people in the immediate locality. In Auburn, the Council opened a branch library in the Community Centre in Newington in order to provide services to this new community which is separated from the main part of the Auburn LGA by the M4 motorway and set apart by a very different demographic profile.

“Council established a collection point with two Internet PCs at Newington to help create a sense of community.”

Auburn Council

Branch libraries that were fairly close to main centres were maintained at a minimum level on the basis that most clients could access the Central Library while in town on other business. Branches in more distant locations were sometimes better resourced.

6.1.3 Socio-economic character

Libraries situated in areas of greater economic need noted high demand for online access. Staff noted that clients often did not have a computer at home or Internet access and were less likely to have computer skills or familiarity with the Internet. This placed greater demand on library staff to assist with basic procedures. In these areas, library staff also noted that clients had fewer alternatives to the facilities in the public library. If the library facilities were not available due to heavy booking or technical difficulties, clients went without.

In more affluent areas, clients were likely to have Internet access at home or work and use of the library was more discretionary.

“They use the Internet while they are here doing other things.”

Chatswood Library

6.1.4 Availability of other services

Where government agencies had withdrawn services, or downgraded the level of service provision, it was reported that local libraries experienced a stronger demand on their resources, especially from less capable people who needed personal assistance to find information or carry out transactions. This was reported most commonly in rural areas.

In small centres, library services tended to evolve in relation to other services that were available. Where significant gaps appeared, the public library might extend a service or facility to meet the need. For example, where there were no other facilities in town for Internet training, the public library tried to offer courses. In locations where CTCs were active, the demand on the library for Internet training was often low. In the metropolitan area of Liverpool, there was a well-resourced U3A and the demand on the library for Internet training for seniors was low.

In rural communities, a number of initiatives have been established to help provide access to government services. These include:

- Community Technology Centres
- Rural Transaction Centres
- Government Access Centres

Community Technology Centres (CTCs) are an initiative of the New South Wales and Commonwealth Governments. They are located in small towns to provide access to Internet connected computers as well as provide printers, video and teleconferencing facilities, business equipment, and e-commerce incubator facilities¹.

CTCs were established with seed funding to establish the facility and support it in the initial years. Their ongoing viability depends on the success of the CTC in winning contracts to provide services for government agencies, the private sector or community organisations. For example, at the time of the research, the Eden CTC had contracts to provide local services for Centrelink and the ATO. Bermagui CTC depended on a contract to print a monthly newsletter but needed further income streams to ensure ongoing viability.

The current study notes that the presence of a CTC alleviated some of the demand on local libraries for services. For example, CTCs were better equipped than branch libraries to provide training because they had 5-10 computers while small branch libraries had only one or two. Where CTCs had agencies for government business such as Centrelink and ATO, clients were less likely to use library computers to access these services.

While libraries offered Internet access to their members/ratepayers or to NSW library members at no charge, CTCs charged fees in the order of \$3.30 per 30 minutes or \$3.50 per hour. This fee was a deterrent to low-income community members such as those on pensions/benefits, and they tended to use library facilities for Internet access rather than CTCs.

In most locations, the CTC and the local library were separate. They occupied separate premises and had little contact with each other. In effect, they developed separate client groups. For example, people with low computer and Internet literacy were likely to stay in the comfort zone of the public library, while those with some skills were drawn to CTCs. Examples of co-location are discussed in Section 6.2 below.

1. About CTCs ref: <http://communitytechnology.net.au/about/>. Accessed 15 October 2004.

The Rural Transaction Centres (RTC) Program, a Commonwealth Government program, provides funds to help small communities establish multi-function service centres. An RTC should not duplicate any existing or planned services in the community. While it was envisaged that a number of services in a single centre would enhance the viability of the centres and make them self sustaining financially, this research notes that RTCs are essentially a duplication of services offered through CTCs and GACs. Some small communities have more than one of these centres and the available resources are duplicated or divided. When it is recognised that the local library was also used to access government services online, it can be seen that in some areas the few resources are spread across two, three or even four service points.

Government Access Centres (GACs) are existing State Government service outlets which have been assigned as one-stop shops for a range of government (NSW and Commonwealth) services. They provide convenient face-to-face, customer focused information and services for rural and remote communities. For example, in Eden, the Motor Registry offers services for Births, Deaths and Marriages; Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care; Fisheries; Housing; Infringement Processing Bureau; Office of Fair Trading and Waterways.

Community Services. In metropolitan areas, it might be thought that the existence of a good range of support services would relieve the load on public libraries, but this does not appear to be the case in localities such as Fairfield, Liverpool and Auburn. In these areas, the demand for support services was very strong due to the high number of new migrants, especially refugees. Libraries were called upon to provide extra resources to meet the heavy demands placed upon them, despite the existence of other support services.

“The Whitlam Library is near the station and in a service hub. It is well-recognised for its services. We looked at doing joint computer classes with them.”

Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre

TAFEs provided another important resource for community members who sought to access government services online. In most cases, access to the TAFE library was restricted to students, but a wide range of programs means that, in effect, TAFEs can serve many community members. For example, long-term unemployed can access one free TAFE course per year.

Our research indicates that students use a variety of government websites. Some use is closely related to course work, but other use is more personal.

They practise the Drivers Knowledge Test. I figure they are improving their keyboard skills.

TAFE librarian

TAFE librarians noted that students commonly accessed the following sites:

- ABS
- Job Search
- Education sites
- ATO
- Health
- RTA – Knowledge Test

In most TAFEs a booking system was in place that allowed students to access the Internet PCs, however the limits were not as restrictive as in public libraries because users could book a computer for several hours in a TAFE. Outside TAFE opening hours, the local library could feel the pressure of demand from TAFE students.

In Port Macquarie, the TAFE had an Internet PC area separate from the library that could be accessed during extended hours.

U3A/ Seniors Computer Groups. In some areas these two organisations were very strongly represented. At all U3A cells contacted in this research, computer courses were the most popular and were fully subscribed. The courses were limited by the number of computers that could be found to run the course.

In many cases, these organisation relied on the goodwill of community organisations to provide access to computers. In Merimbula the employment services provider training room was used to run a U3A training course. In Liverpool, U3A was provided with subsidised premises by the Council and had negotiated with the Council to be given older computers when the Council upgraded their system. Their room with 10 computers was fully booked five days a week with training courses.

In some cases, training sessions allowed free-time access to the Internet but for most the limited access to computers meant that all available time was used for training courses.

Not all seniors who took these courses had Internet facilities or access to a home computer. Some used the library for access and to practise their newly developing skills. Common sites mentioned were Births, Deaths and Marriages and health information websites.

Internet cafes were not widely used by local community members to access government online services because of the hourly cost. Users of these establishments were usually Internet savvy and younger. Library clients

contacted in this research and librarian/teachers suggested that Internet cafes were used for government services such as:

- Employment
- Immigration/travel
- Tourism
- Taxation

6.2 Examples of Local Context

This section looks at three locations and examines the synergies between a variety of access points.

6.2.1 Eden

Eden, population 3,100, is located at the southern end of the Bega Valley Shire Council area.

Government services can be accessed at:

- Bega Valley Shire Council office
- Government Access Centre in Motor Registry
- Community Technology Centre
- Branch library



Eden Library

The Bega Valley Shire Council office, branch library, CTC and Visitor Information Centre are located in a building situated on the main road into town.

The library and CTC occupy separate parts of the same building.

The two organisations cooperated by referring users to each other, as applicable.

We send them to the CTC for training and for email, because we don't have email here.

Eden Branch Library

We send people to the Library when our system is down because they have a different ISP.

Eden CTC

The CTC offered a range of equipment crowded into small rooms, while the library offered a single space with bookshelves and two computers.



Eden CTC



Eden Library

Since moving to the new premises, Library staff noted that they had more users. They thought this was partly because the Library was more visible and partly because some users were referred by the Visitor Centre and the CTC.

The library noted that tourists who visited the Visitor Centre tried to use the library computers for email, but the library did not have email access and referred them on to the CTC.

Tourists expect libraries to have free Internet access, but we charge an hourly rate for people who are not a member of a NSW library.

Eden Branch Library

The presence of a GAC at the Motor Registry, which offered services for Births, Deaths and Marriages; Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care; Fisheries; Housing; Infringement Processing Bureau; Office of Fair Trading and Waterways, also reduced the demand on the Branch Library as an access point for government online services.

Eden has three Job Network employment service providers. Their shop front offices give clients and job seekers access to Job Search through easy to use Internet kiosks.

6.2.2 Warialda

Warialda in northwestern NSW was an example where the presence of a CTC meant that Internet resources were strong outside the library. The Library and CTC shared resources informally. Both were located in the same building on the main street, though each had its own entrance. There were no other public Internet facilities in the town.

The Library opened daily but had restricted hours. The Library also acted as a contact for the local history museum, which was located in a connected room but still had its own street entrance. The Library had recently acquired a new Internet

computer replacing an obsolete and non-functioning (for several months) PC. Overall, Internet access in the Library was limited as the restricted hours of operation meant access was not available during all business hours.

The CTC had become the town's key Internet point – it had five Internet computers and operated as the representative for several Government agencies. It opened daily during business hours closing for an hour at lunch time, when the Library was also closed. The CTC offered training courses related to computers and the Internet and provided general Internet access.

It was interesting to note that the CTC was running Internet training courses for seniors. Some of these seniors then practised on the new computer in the Library. This was an example of the locals sharing and using all the facilities in the town.

6.2.3 Lithgow

Lithgow is taking service integration a step further with the establishment of a main street centre incorporating the public library, CTC services and a Learning Centre. The new centre is the cornerstone of a renewal program that centres on the concept of a 'Learning City'. It opened on 9th February 2005.

Key Findings	Implications
Larger centres had libraries with more resources and this attracted more users.	Clients benefit from libraries that bring together a wider range of resources.
Libraries developed services that were compatible with other services in the area. They tended to fill gaps left by other services.	There is a tendency for the cost of service provision to fall on libraries when other services fail.
<p>CTCs have been established with seed funding. Not all of them will attract sustainable funding and some will close.</p> <p>Some CTCs have been co-located with libraries and this has some synergy benefits.</p>	<p>The closure of CTCs may put pressure on local libraries to provide additional services.</p> <p>Larger service centres that share common resources may be more viable than small-scale stand-alone operations.</p>

Key Findings	Implications
<p>RTCs offer similar services to CTCs and GACs. They are sited independently of other service centres.</p>	<p>The separate existence of RTCs spreads resources more thinly across small service centres and loses the opportunity of developing more robust services with long term viability.</p>
<p>GACs are established in existing government offices.</p>	<p>There appears to be little opportunity to develop synergies between local libraries and GACs.</p>
<p>Urban areas that had additional community services, such as Migrant Resource Centres, also had higher levels of demand.</p>	<p>The existence of more community resources seems to be an indicator of greater community need and can be associated with higher levels of demand on local libraries.</p>
<p>TAFEs provide useful resources for disadvantaged community members, but awareness levels are low.</p>	<p>Library staff need better information about TAFE services.</p>
<p>U3A is a flourishing organisation that provides extensive educational resources for older people. They report demand for computer courses that they can't meet due to lack of suitable facilities.</p>	<p>Seniors need access to computer facilities in order to learn the necessary skills.</p>
<p>Small centres where the library was co-located with a CTC and other services, reported beneficial synergies.</p>	<p>Co-location provides a deeper level of service that is more useful and more robust.</p>

7. Government Agencies

We interviewed nine Government agencies about website development.

Australian Bureau of Statistics
Department of Commerce (NSW)
Roads and Traffic Authority (NSW)
Department of Health (NSW)
Department of Education & Training (NSW)
Births, Deaths and Marriages (NSW)
Department of Community Services (NSW)
Infringement Processing Bureau (NSW)
Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (NSW)

These interviews covered website development, the role of libraries as a public access point, the relationship the agencies have with libraries and future relationship opportunities.

In addition, interviews were conducted with staff responsible for website development in five local councils.

There was strong awareness that government websites are in a constant state of improvement. Each year, more services are brought on line and functionality expands. It was generally thought that websites were developed with two aims:

- to streamline government communication and interaction;
- to meet the demand from clients for online availability of information and functionality.

It was acknowledged that in most cases, agencies used the Internet as an alternative channel alongside traditional methods of doing business, including over the counter, telephone and mail. In this respect, there was a broad expectation that people without Internet access would be able to use traditional channels of communication.

In the case of DIPNR, the new planning tool for sustainable housing, BASIX, was launched in July 2004 and is available only as an online tool. It is compulsory for all new dwellings in NSW to have a BASIX certificate. In developing BASIX, DIPNR consulted with local councils and building industry practitioners. It was not expected that many people would use public access Internet facilities to complete their BASIX applications because even owner-builders were expected to use the services of professionals such as architects or planners who could be expected to have Internet access.

While agencies and local councils acknowledged a role for government in providing Internet access for all citizens in order to support equity, they did not see this as the responsibility of their agency.

7.1 Library sector – role and communication channels

All agencies interviewed acknowledged the role of public libraries in providing public access to the Internet. Several NSW agencies were also aware of the role of CTCs in facilitating public access. Public libraries were recognised as a key element in allowing universal access, however there was limited awareness of more detailed implications of this role or of the impact agency decisions could have on public libraries.

For most agencies, there was no information conduit either formally or informally with the public library sector. While libraries were acknowledged as relevant, they were not considered in the process of website development, at the launch of a new site or when updates were issued. Some officers interviewed had considered the need to inform libraries about changes to their websites, but, with one exception, none had taken steps towards doing this.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics was the only agency in this study to support libraries with training and structured communication about their web-based services. In turn, libraries acknowledged the support and collaborative relationship they had with the ABS.

“We have a very strong commitment to the Library Network.”

ABS

The ABS has established a Library Extension Program (LEP) covering 520 libraries across Australia in metropolitan and regional areas. Through the LEP libraries are kept informed of changes to the ABS site. A quarterly newsletter is sent (paper and email) to all member libraries and ABS co-ordinators contact member libraries at least twice per year. Training is provided on an ‘as needs’ basis.

Several NSW agencies have introduced new web sites in the last eighteen months but none had actively informed libraries of the changed status. Participants in this research acknowledged that libraries were often the first customers to request details about changes to websites.

“When we changed the site 18 months ago librarians were the first to call asking about our URL.”

DOCS

One NSW agency indicated that discussions had been undertaken with the State Library at director level when redeveloping their web site. This however was a single case and no formalised process appeared to have been established.

In most cases, government agencies did not have contacts in the library sector and did not know how to communicate with libraries.

“When we launched the new site we emailed those on our links – I don’t have a Central Library email.”

Government agency staff working in the IT area interviewed for this project were not aware of

DOCS

library sector email lists, professional structures such as the CPLA or MPLA or the role of the State Library as a leading agency within the sector.

7.2 Web site development

Government agency web developers place high importance on accessibility and legibility. It was the general view of web development staff that usability and accessibility is under constant improvement with each upgrade of government websites.

The following factors were key elements in website design in the public sector.

Layout and language. The layout of agency pages was beginning to comply with emerging web conventions. One layout convention was: headings at the top, navigation strip at the right hand side, news at the left and key content in the centre.

User-centred language was also recognised as important. Agencies such as DOCS were adopting more colloquial language rather than 'Government speak'.

Universal Accessibility. Accessibility was acknowledged as important for those with disabilities and impairments. The NSW Government Chief Information Office has developed guidelines for NSW agencies under its Website Quality Program¹.

As well as designing for those with disabilities and impairments, agencies tried to design websites that would work on slow connections and low-end equipment. They avoided plugins such as Flash or Shockwave for essential functions.

Constantly Evolving. It became clear when discussing issues with agencies that websites were constantly being updated and modified. These changes were undertaken to improve accessibility and add additional functions. These changes often were undertaken without public notification.

Feedback. All agency web sites have feedback channels, usually an email address. Most NSW agencies noted that they attended to this feedback and responded to queries and comments. When the researchers used this contact channel, they received responses from NSW Government websites but not from Federal agency websites. Web managers said that these feedback comments were used when refining and maintaining the site.

Usability Testing. Some agencies undertook usability testing amongst potential users to assess the functionality of the site in address key needs. These results were either incorporated at development stage or into future updates. It would

1. OICT. www.oict.nsw.gov.au/content/7.1.3.Improving.asp. Accessed 15 October 2004.

appear, based on our discussions, that there is no common testing format and each agency uses different methods to evaluate its site.

Agencies indicated that they carried out accessibility testing either through peer review or by a checklist of key elements.

7.3 Partnership with Libraries

Apart from the ABS, no agency had established formal communication channels or support measures with the library sector. Several NSW agencies had been in discussion with library representatives however no formal channels had been established.

Several of the agencies interviewed indicated a willingness to be more involved with libraries. Areas mentioned were:

1. **Feedback on site-related issues.** ABS indicated that on several occasions it had worked with libraries (usually university libraries) to modify aspects of the website and facilitate user access. Feedback could be via standard web manager email contact on websites, or through another mechanism such as invited feedback via library sector email lists.
2. **Information about changes to websites.** Agencies suggested communication via email about significant changes to websites. This could occur through library sector email lists. Concerns were raised that communication should be restricted to significant website launches, revisions and updates.

Key Findings	Implications
Agencies developed websites with a view to offering a channel of communication and functionality that was additional to traditional channels such as telephone, mail and shop front operations.	Agencies did not expect high usage by people who did not have private access to the Internet.
Where agencies introduced Internet-only functions, they intended them to be used by professionals who were expected to have private Internet facilities.	Internet-based resources were not expected to generate notable usage in public access Internet locations.

Key Findings	Implications
There was a general expectation that websites were dynamic structures that would be updated regularly and redesigned from time to time.	Libraries may need to develop systems that can cope with the dynamic nature of web-based resources.
Agencies acknowledged a role for government in providing public Internet access, but did not see this as the role of their agency.	In general, agencies saw little need to provide resources to support public access to the Internet.
Agency web development staff had a general awareness of the role played by libraries in providing public Internet access but they lacked specific knowledge about the level of demand, resource limitations and consequences of some of their actions.	Agencies were unaware of the unintended impacts of their decisions on libraries.
<p>Apart from the ABS, agency web development staff had no communication channels with the library sector and were not aware of professional structures.</p> <p>The ABS was noted as an example of good liaison with the library sector.</p>	<p>Communication channels between agency website developers/ managers and the library sector should be developed.</p> <p>Communication can range from cooperation in strategic planning through to simple notification of changes and new resources.</p>
<p>Professional practice in website development is evolving as standards for legibility and accessibility are developed and adopted.</p> <p>NSW government agency websites are adopting standard structures and features.</p>	Problems with website functionality should reduce with time as standards of practice improve.

Appendix

1. Glossary of terms
2. Library user case studies
3. Library Manager questionnaire

Glossary

ABN	Australian Business Number
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AEC	Australian Electoral Commission
ALIA	Australian Library and Information Association
ATO	Australian Taxation Office (Commonwealth)
BDM	Births, Deaths and Marriages (NSW)
CPLA	Country Public Libraries Association
CTCs	Community Technology Centres, established by NSW State Government.
DIPNR	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (NSW)
DOCS	Department of Community Services
GAC	Government Access Centre, established by NSW State Government.
GLINN	Government Libraries Information Network (http://glinn.ilanet.net.au/glinnpol.htm)
ICT	Information and communication technologies
LGA	Local Government Area
LGSA	Local Government Association of NSW and the Shires Association of NSW
LIAC	Legal Information Access Centre (at State Library)
MPLA	Metropolitan Public Libraries Association
NESB	Non-English Speaking Background
NSW.net	A network that links councils and public libraries throughout New South Wales to the Internet. It is managed by the NSW State Library.
OICT	NSW Office of Information and Communications Technology
RTA	Roads and Traffic Authority (NSW)
RTC	Rural Transaction Centres, established by the Australian Government to provide services in smaller rural towns.
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TFN	Tax File Number
U3A	University of Third Age – community-run non-profit organisation that runs training courses for people over 55 years of age.
URL	Unique Reference Locator

Case Studies

Introduction

The following case studies illustrate the findings published in *NSW Public Libraries and eGovernment* — report of a project commissioned by the Public Library Network Research Committee. The project is helping develop greater understanding of the impact that NSW Government electronic service delivery initiatives are having on public libraries and their clients.¹

NSW public libraries serve a diverse range of clients who, in turn, access a range of eGovernment initiatives in a variety of ways. These case studies provide personal perspectives to the project's research and highlight pertinent results. The findings indicate that:

- for some members of the community the public library is the only means of accessing the Internet and computer technology
- public library clients access eGovernment at the local library for a range of reasons: job seeking, career advancement, studies and personal interest, for example searching health related or entertainment sites
- the need to use government websites has, in some cases, brought new clients to the library

The Sydney public libraries selected as case study sites, Cabramatta, Hurstville and Waverley, reflect the diversity, in socio-economic profile, ethnicity of the local area, library size and availability of Internet access computers, of NSW metropolitan libraries.

Fairfield City Library Service

Interview 1 — Male, 50 years, unemployed

This well educated male, an immigrant from Eastern Europe, has teaching qualifications but his spoken English is poor. He is currently unemployed and looking for work.

He is a heavy user of libraries in the district, most commonly Cabramatta, Liverpool and Fairfield several times per week (total). He does not have access to a computer with Internet connection at home but mentioned that his reasons for using more than one library include a combination of 'keeping himself occupied', job searching, general reference and reading as well as free access to computer and Internet facilities.

1. The full report, *NSW Public Libraries and eGovernment* can be found at www.sl.nsw.gov.au/pln/projects.cfm

He is a confident Internet user, and rarely needs to ask for advice or help from staff, having taken basic computer courses and developed skills especially using the Internet. He tries to find information he needs himself and will only call on staff if his strategies are not effective.

He uses the Internet on most visits and several times a week he accesses Government websites, mostly in his search for work.

Recent government websites visited are:

- Job Search
- NSW Department of Education — for Board of Studies material
- Australian Taxation Office (ATO)

Another website he uses regularly is Teachers on the Net (www.teachers.on.net) an Australian education job search website. He identified this as a government site, though it is, in fact, a privately run service.

He estimated that accessing eGovernment accounts for 40% of his time at the library. He has not experienced major difficulties with any of the websites mentioned.

Interview 2 — Male, mid 40s, unemployed

This participant is a daily visitor to the library, and a heavy user of the library's Internet services. He is unemployed and lives close to the library. He has been using the Internet at the library regularly for almost five years.

He does not have Internet access at home but he has developed his own website, a fan site for an American singer, that he maintains from the library. He pays fees for Internet access at the library when he exceeds the free period and for accessing non-Government sites.

He describes his skills as very good (he is self taught), but at times he seeks help from library staff.

He has visited many government websites. Some of this use is for his own needs, but he also finds himself helping other library users because he spends so much time at the library. To some extent, he has become a volunteer aide in the computer section, assisting other users when the need arises.

He expressed a frustration with government websites' lack of sufficiently broad keyword search facilities. He tends to use search engines such as Google to locate government information.

Sites he visited include:

- Births, Deaths and Marriages
- Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) — 'a very popular website that library users

often have difficulty with'

- Immigration — used for general information, though he assumes he would need to visit the office to get 'real assistance'
- ATO — he has processed some of his tax returns on line
- Centrelink
- State Rail — for timetable information though he says the site is difficult to navigate
- Department of Veterans' Affairs
- Legal Aid

Hurstville City Library and Information Service

Interview 3 — Male, retired, 70 years

This retired male does not have access to the Internet at home but is a frequent visitor to the library (several times a month) and uses it mostly for family history research.

He describes his Internet skills as basic and has not taken any specific courses. He needs library staff assistance but notes that this is decreasing as his skill grows. He sees himself as extending his use of information resources. Where he previously used only paper-based sources, he has progressed to using microfiche and the Internet.

He uses mainly eGovernment sites including:

- Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM)
- Medical sites – for information after a diagnosis of cancer
- Telstra – to find details about his bill, but he found it so difficult to use that he has not accessed it again
- RTA — once, to find information about renewing his driver's licence. He felt it was not user friendly and was difficult to manage.

Interview 4 — Retired Couple, 65-70 years

Although they could afford to buy a home computer, this retired couple had chosen not to. They reasoned that the female of the couple, who had worked in IT, would be tempted to spend too much time online. She also suffers from RSI and did not want to exacerbate the ailment.

The couple visits the library several times a week to check emails and to borrow books (fiction and non-fiction). They choose to visit the Hurstville Library because their closest library, Oatley, does not have Internet access. In addition to email, they use the Internet for other purposes depending on their need.

The female, a confident Internet user with very good skills, often helps her husband who is not as confident. He mentioned he would like to undertake a free course on Internet usage. They generally do not ask library staff for help with their computer use unless they encounter problems with printing or website/computer 'freezes'. When the library is not busy, they use separate computers but at busy times they share a computer.

They tend to use the Internet as their first source of information on a range of topics — health, travel, hobbies and food. On one occasion they sought information on colon cancer as the husband had recently been diagnosed with the disease.

They appeared comfortable with the standard of government websites and had used the following:

- State Rail
- Centrelink
- NSW Tourism
- Tourism Tasmania — for information on a holiday
- National Parks and Wildlife
- RTA

Interview 5 — Youth, 17 years, student

This young man of middle-eastern background is not a regular library visitor and had used this library three or four times per year to work on school assignments until he prepared for his driving licence test.

He currently visits the library at least twice a week (for 1–2 hours) and spends his time on the RTA site. He has no difficulty locating the learner's test as the login is automatic because he uses one of the two computers that the Hurstville Library has dedicated to the RTA site. He only interacts with library staff to reserve a computer. He occasionally visit with a friend and shares a terminal.

He does not have access to a computer at home. However, he occasionally accesses the Internet when visiting a cousin or friends. He has Internet access at school, but not for using the RTA learner's test. He chose the library because it offers free Internet access for up to two hours and he can access the RTA site readily.

He is a confident Internet user and was told about the RTA terminals in the library by his friends.

Interview 6 — Male, 20 years, student and part-time worker

This young male is studying horticulture part-time and looking for full-time work. He currently has casual employment and lives in locally in share accommodation.

He does not have Internet access at home, but he can access it at weekends when he visits his parent in Wollongong.

He visits the library several times a week, usually for short periods, primarily to check emails and search for employment, and also to use newspapers in hard copy.

He feels 'knowledgeable' about the Internet using skills and experience acquired at school. He estimates that Government websites account for about a quarter of all his Internet use. He has accessed the following sites:

- Employment (www.jobsearch.gov.au).
- Agriculture (www.agric.nsw.gov.au) to find information about a plant breeder.
- RTA to find information while getting his driver's licence.

Waverley Library

Interview 7 — Female, mid 30s, mature-age student

This female mature-age student has recently become an Australian resident and does not speak English as her first language.

She visits Waverley Library several times a month because it is convenient to Bondi Junction where she catches the train. She visits Randwick Library more often as it has more computers and is closer to her house. She also accesses the Internet at TAFE. She does not own a computer but plans to buy one.

She uses library and TAFE computers to research topics related to course work for Welfare Studies and for employment or Centrelink matters.

She describes her skill level as 'adequate' though she occasionally needs help from library staff. She notes that it can be 'frustrating' as staff often have limited time to work with her. She spends about 50% of her Internet access time visiting government websites. Her key sites are:

- ABS — considers it straightforward but cannot always find the statistics in the format she needs.
- Welfare Studies — her area of study; sites are usually based on references.
- Employment sites, including Centrelink.

Interview 8 — Male, mid 30s, full-time worker

This maintenance shift worker works in Bondi Junction, where Waverley Library is located, and lives in Minto, an outer suburb of Sydney.

He has a computer at home, but does not have Internet access. He is not a regular library user and it was his wife who suggested that he could access the Internet from public libraries. He visits the library because he is studying for his Heavy Vehicle licence and needs to use the RTA site. He visits Waverley library twice a week, for an hour, as it is easy to access from work. At weekends, he accesses the Internet at his local library in Minto.

He describes his Internet skills as basic and said that he had sought assistance from library staff on his first visit.

Government site visited:

- RTA — the site is complex to navigate, but once the Heavy Vehicle test section is found it is straightforward and logical.

NSW Public libraries and eGovernment

Environmetrics Pty Ltd has been engaged on behalf of the Public Library Network Research Committee to conduct research amongst libraries and users relating to eGovernment.

EGovernment means all forms of government services that are offered online. It includes local, state and federal government. Services may range from straightforward information (e.g. train timetables, regulations, travel warnings, etc.) to purchasing and payment (e.g. publications, taxes, fines, rates, etc.) and submission of compliance information (e.g. forms and documents).

The information you provide in this survey will highlight the role public libraries play in providing access and support to government services. The results will also provide an indicator as to the resources required to support eGovernment services.

WHICH LIBRARY? This survey form applies to all individual libraries in NSW, including central libraries, branch libraries and mobile libraries – if they provide internet access. *A separate form should be completed for each individual library.*

CONFIDENTIAL – individual responses to this survey will remain confidential, only grouped responses will be reported.

CONTACT – for queries about this survey, please contact Kerrie Burgess at the State Library. Email: kburgess@sl.nsw.gov.au. Phone: (02) 9273-1765, Tue-Wed-Thur.

RETURN YOUR SURVEY – There are two ways you can complete the survey:

1. By computer – highlight answers or type responses into this Word document and **email** it to [>reception@ekas.com.au<](mailto:reception@ekas.com.au).
2. On paper – print out the form, write your answers and **fax** it to 02 9976 2374.

DUE DATE: 15 September 2004

1. In your library, how many computers are available to library users to access the Internet?

2. Do you have any computers that are dedicated to a specific Government purpose (e.g. RTA driver knowledge test)?

Yes.....	1
No	2

What is the purpose of your dedicated computer(s)?

.....

3. Do your clients have unrestricted access to the Internet at your library, or do you limit access in the following ways? (Please circle a number or write a description of the access regime you use.)

Unrestricted access.....	1
Users have 1 hour.....	2
Users have 30 minutes	3
Time limit during busy times.....	4

Other regimes.....

.....

- 4a. In the past 12 months, has there been any demand for your library to provide basic training on use of the Internet?

Yes.....	1
No	2

- 4b. IF 'YES' – please indicate the level of demand.

Low	1
Medium	2
High	3
Other.....	4

- 4c. If there is demand, do you provide Internet training?

Yes.....	1
No	2

5. As far as you know, to what extent do clients access the following eGovernment services at this library?

	High	Medium	Low	Zero	Don't know
RTA driving knowledge test	1	2	3	4	5
ATO tax information	1	2	3	4	5
Local Council website	1	2	3	4	5
Board of Studies (eBOS)	1	2	3	4	5
Australian Bureau of Statistics	1	2	3	4	5
Legal information websites	1	2	3	4	5
Health information websites	1	2	3	4	5
Immigration	1	2	3	4	5
Australian Jobsearch (Centrelink)	1	2	3	4	5
Small Business Website	1	2	3	4	5
Births, Deaths + Marriages	1	2	3	4	5
Infringement Bureau	1	2	3	4	5
Standards Australia	1	2	3	4	5
Other (specify)	1	2	3	4	5
Other (specify)	1	2	3	4	5
Other (specify)	1	2	3	4	5
None	1	2	3	4	5

6. Please indicate the level of staff assistance that is commonly needed for the following websites.

	High	Medium	Low	Zero	Don't know
RTA driving knowledge test	1	2	3	4	5
ATO tax information	1	2	3	4	5
Local Council website	1	2	3	4	5
Board of Studies (eBOS)	1	2	3	4	5
Australian Bureau of Statistics	1	2	3	4	5
Legal information websites	1	2	3	4	5
Health information websites	1	2	3	4	5
Immigration	1	2	3	4	5
Australian Jobsearch (Centrelink)	1	2	3	4	5
Small Business Website	1	2	3	4	5
Births, Deaths + Marriages	1	2	3	4	5
Infringement Bureau	1	2	3	4	5
Standards Australia	1	2	3	4	5
Other (specify)	1	2	3	4	5

7. Compared with a year ago, do your clients use library computers to access Government services –
- More than a year ago1
 - About the same as a year ago2
 - Less than a year ago3
 - Not sure/can't say4
8. Which services, if any, are used more heavily now than they were a year ago?
- RTA driving knowledge test1
 - ATO tax information2
 - Local Council website3
 - Board of Studies (eBos)4
 - Australian Bureau of Statistics5
 - Legal information websites6
 - Health information websites7
 - Immigration8
 - Australian Jobsearch (Centrelink)9
 - Small Business Website10
 - Births, Deaths + Marriages11
 - Infringement Processing Bureau12
 - Standards Australia13
 - Other (specify)14
 - Other (specify)15
 - Other (specify)16
 - None20
 - Don't know21
9. How often do your clients need staff help to access Government services from library computers?
- Never1
 - Rarely (every few months)2
 - Occasionally (every month or so)3
 - Regularly (every week or so)4
 - Often (more than once a week)5
 - Not sure/can't say6

10. If possible, please describe some examples of the assistance staff have offered to users of eGovernment services in the past two weeks.
For example:

Incident	Nature of the assistance	Staff time
1. Client could not find information on Veterans Affairs website.	Staff member helped/showed them where to find it and print it out.	10 minutes

Incident	Nature of the assistance	Staff time
1.		
2.		
3.		

11. In an average week, how much staff time is spent helping clients access Government online services? (Estimated total for all staff. Please include direct assistance, training and equipment maintenance.)

- Zero1
- 1-15 minutes.....2
- 16-30 minutes.....2
- 31-60 minutes.....3
- 61-90 minutes.....4
- 91-120 minutes.....5
- More than 120 minutes.....6

12. How readily can your library meet the needs of clients who access Government services online, with your current level of resources?

- We have all the resources to meet demand1
- We have a moderate need for more resources2
- We have a high need for more resources3

13. Please rate the following resources for the degree to which your library needs this resource to meet demand for eGovernment services?

	High priority need	Low priority need	Not needed	Don't know
More computers + associated furniture	1	2	3	4
More printers	1	2	3	4
More software (specify)	1	2	3	4
Upgrade software	1	2	3	4
Language software	1	2	3	4
Better technical support	1	2	3	4
Faster internet connection	1	2	3	4
More reliable internet connection	1	2	3	4
More staff	1	2	3	4
More training for staff	1	2	3	4
More funding for paper, ink, etc.	1	2	3	4
Other (specify)	1	2	3	4

14. Please record the following details.

Name of your MPLA or CPLA zone

Name of your library service

Is your library...
 Central library1
 Branch library2
 Mobile library3

15. How many staff (full time equivalent) work at your library?

16. Other comments about your library and eGovernment.

.....

