

Max Webber Library, Blacktown

The 'new' Max Webber Library in Blacktown has now been open for two years. Anyone who walks into the premises is immediately impressed by its size, elegance and impression of light. The state-of-the-art building is 5,500 square metres in size, includes a function centre and gallery, boasts ecologically sustainable features and houses print and non-print resources on approximately four kilometres of shelving.

Blacktown City Council recognised the need for a new central library building to assist the city's residents in accessing information, education and recreation to support and enhance their lives.

Since opening on 25 September 2005, the library has had 1.8 million visitors. The public's reaction has been very positive to this new location and welcoming and very functional library for Blacktown City residents, their families and friends.

Ecologically sustainable features include an automated louvre control and solar sensors to control glare from the many large windows, large open space areas, artificial lighting and active lighting control systems, solar power generation, a night purge ventilation system, and solar hot water. These features offer long-term cost effectiveness and provide a healthy environment for patrons.

The building is large but the layout makes it simple for the public to navigate. For ease of access, all lending services are located on the ground floor including fiction, non-fiction and biography collections, children's collections, DVDs, videos and music CDs, spoken word, large print, magazines, CD-ROMs and community language collections in 22 different languages. There are three levels of underground parking.

Level one includes reference, study and HSC resources and the local studies and family history collections. Also on this level are open study and group study areas, quiet study rooms, local studies and family history research area, the Technology Centre and the Max Webber Function Centre.



Max Webber Library at night

The Technology Centre provides computer and internet access to 32 users at any one time. A feature of the design of this area is that part of the room can be isolated to create a Training Centre with 22 computers. This feature allows ten general public computers to still be available while a training course is being conducted.

The Max Webber Function Centre can seat up to 200 and allows for a range of library related social/cultural events, lectures, seminars and launches. The centre provides a full range of audio-visual equipment and can, by operating a sliding wall system, be divided into three separate meeting rooms. A Gallery is also available for displays and exhibitions. Both the Function Centre and Gallery may be hired by businesses, community groups and the public.

The architects were FJMT Architects and the builders were ADCO Constructions.

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Palmerston Library — The Heart of the City

As part of the 2007 Palmerston Festival in the Northern Territory, local songsters were asked to compose songs to be performed at the festival concert. One composition was titled 'Clean, Green and Serene' by Gail Evans.

For Palmerston Library staff, hearing the song for the first time, the middle rap section came as a complete surprise. Listening on in amazement, staff were astounded to hear:

In the middle of town is the library, it's the heart of the city, it's the place to be. You can meet your friends, get a book to read, have a cold drink or grab a feed. You can sit and chill, you can surf the net, you can just hang out in the cool, don't sweat it! Hang out in the cool, don't sweat it. Don't sweat it!

It was reassuring for staff to hear that the library, open for just over one year, is well thought of and cool enough to be rapped about. Or is it hip, or sick?

The library was a key player throughout the festival, hosting an art exhibition and playing short film competition entries. It was also the backdrop to an impressive art installation created by renowned artist Craig Walsh.

'Library Fills With Water' were the headlines, and it was all true. Craig virtually immersed the library's community room with water then dropped in some larger than life rare goldfish, which swam happily around until the water was slowly drained.

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Sounds amazing, doesn't it? And it was as evidenced by the large number of people crowded around the windows of the room watching the fish in awe. This visual feast was created with digital projectors, mirrors and art medium that Craig has been working with all over the world, and now Palmerston Library is part of his impressive portfolio.

So the library became a fish tank, a gallery, a movie theatre and was enthusiastically rapped about. Who said libraries are no longer relevant? Palmerston Library is the heart of the city, how much more relevant can you be?

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Zoning as a Design Concept at Griffith Uni

Transforming the library into the 'lounge room' of the university has been a gradual, but successful process for the Library and Learning Environment Services team at Griffith University.

A subsequent increase in gate stats and the successful introduction of zoning are just two of the results of the refurbishment.

The library spaces project was launched in August 2004 and the transformation has been amazing. The objective was to improve the look and feel of our library spaces to ensure the library was seen as a place to work, collaborate or relax between classes.

The design principles of ambience, light, colour, views, zoning, proclamation of function and way-finding were first applied to the entrance foyer of the Nathan campus library in 2005. A new paint scheme, furniture and carpet feature turned our somewhat cavernous and dark entrance into a bright, inviting and comfortable area for clients to wait for friends, take phone calls, watch cable television and relax.

Zoning in multi-level library spaces, was also introduced, with the entrance level being the 'active learning zone' and 'noisy' level. That space is provided for group collaboration, mobile phones are welcome and a laptop lounge is available.

The upper level of any Griffith library is a quiet zone with collection space and where possible silent/individual study space is also available. In quiet zones no mobile phones or MP3s are permitted but brief, whispered conversations are okay. The space is also wireless enabled.

The collaboration zones, which currently exist at the Mt Gravatt, Nathan and Centre for Medical and Oral Health campus libraries are also wireless enabled and quick access computers (25 minutes or less) may be available. The space also includes whiteboards and here, normal levels of conversation are okay.

A research zone has also been introduced at the Nathan campus. The zone is wireless enabled with power available, there are common use (three hour) computers and brief, whispered conversations are okay.

Also at Nathan are silent/individual study rooms where conversations of any kind, mobile phones and MP3s are not permitted.

Following the success of the first collaboration zone at the Mt Gravatt campus, one was introduced to an underused quiet study area on the entrance level at the Nathan campus.



Collaboration zone