

Feeling a bit green?

According to Wikipedia (bless its heart), "many view the library as having a unique role in the green building movement due to its altruistic mission, public and pedagogical nature, and the fact that new libraries are usually high profile, community driven projects".

Perhaps this is why, whenever INCITE focuses on sustainability, we are inundated with news of really great ideas from around Australia. Some are massive redevelopments; others are smaller changes at the forefront of daily practice. All are important.

Green building – and environmental sustainability – is of course only one aspect of the broader topic of sustainability, which also incorporates economic sustainability and community sustainability. By understanding the importance of each of these things, we better understand and manage corporate social responsibility and the social return on our investment.

Research shows Australian consumers are significantly aligned to the notion of sustainability, with the vast majority of us talking the talk of what the marketers now call "lifestyles of health and sustainability" (LOHAS). The same research shows however, that only around 10% of us actually follow through consistently with our buying decisions. A lot of us try but sometimes we fail because we can't quite figure out how to make the right choice. It's through this prism that those trying to improve sustainable practice in a library or information service must focus on their objectives.

We can't all build a new library when we want one, at least not physically, but changing our thinking can be just as powerful as changing a building. And there is much to learn from the creative solutions to the challenges posed by older environments, policies and practices.

In this issue we look at the big picture and the small, from the role of the library as the glue of a community to the nuts and bolts of the products and systems we use to create healthier, happier and more sustainable environments.

People power drives award winning green library

The Grove Library in Perth generates its own power, collects its own water and recycles its waste water – because that's what the community wanted. This is a stunning building that incorporates an impressive list of environmentally sustainable design (ESD) innovations, for which has won it the 2011 Australian Institute of Architects (WA Chapter) Walter Greenham Sustainable Architecture Award.

The architects at Cox Howlett and Bailey Woodland initially designed a 'basic' green building, but when the local governments of Cottesloe, Peppermint Grove and Mosman Park, who collectively manage The Grove library, asked for community feedback, they received a loud and clear



WEST AUSTRALIAN NATIVE FLOWERS STAR IN THE FOYER INSTEAD OF A FORBIDDING CIRCULATION DESK

message that residents wanted to include as many green features as possible.

Showcase ESD technologies include an underfloor thermal maze which underpins the energy efficient air conditioning system, double glazing and the use of natural lighting and light sensor controls, rainwater harvesting for internal use, onsite treatment and reuse of all waste water in toilet cisterns and on the landscaped gardens, and solar panels and wind turbines which generate electricity for direct use onsite.

All aspects of the building are under the watchful eye of the Building Management System which

decides when to turn on a light, pull down a shade or open the louvres to capture a cooling sea breeze – it even checks the weather forecast for the next day to decide how much night air to allow into the building. The pre-existing library dating from the seventies even played a part in the sustainability brief – 80% of the demolition materials were recycled.

The Grove project is one of 13 projects supported by the Australian Government's Green Precincts Fund, an initiative to prepare Australia for a future with less water and to encourage local communities to better manage their water and energy use. The total cost of the building was \$17 million. The ESD components have been costed at \$2.7 million, however they will contribute to significant whole-of-life savings in the operation of the building compared to conventional construction.



BRINGING THE OUTDOORS INDOORS: THE GARDEN IS AN EXTENSION OF THE LIBRARY

While the building design is remarkable, it's what's going on inside that has attracted the crowds. There are high school students who inhabit the many study booths and the 'pod'

(whose walls double as white boards) for collaborative study, mums who stay on for a morning coffee in the library café after storytime and people coming to the many events, seminars and workshops that are held in a variety of meeting spaces located throughout the library and the adjacent Community Centre.

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Technology is abundant, including numerous floor boxes supplying power for laptops, free wifi, self checkout and checkin, automated PC bookings and printer control, and screens and projectors for use with big or small groups. iMacs installed with the Creative Adobe Suite and FinalCut Express, iPod Touches, a Kindle and an iPad are also available.

Friendly roving library staff members assist people to find and use books and technology, where and when needed.

For people who like sound and vision, there is Foxtel on two screens, a sonic chair for individual DVD viewing, and a Wii gaming platform cheekily shaped like a skate ramp.

For people who like peace and quiet, there is a quiet room, many quiet nooks and crannies with comfy furniture, and easy access to the landscaped gardens.

The Grove was made possible by the leadership and collaboration of three forward thinking local governments working with a vocal and supportive community led by an active Friends group and a passionate project team including Library Manager Tricia Hille, who devoted nearly every waking moment to the project for the four years it took to get from drawing board to completion.

The Grove showcases what's possible by bringing together cutting edge environmental design and bold architecture to create a place of learning, innovation and beauty.

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