

GUNGAHLIN LIBRARY PROFILE

A GOOD REASON TO VISIT CANBERRA



When Libraries ACT's Gungahlin branch opened in May 2011, it was instantly added to the list of places Australian library lovers must visit.

With 3000 square metres over two floors, there is space for two conference rooms, each with a seating capacity of 100, theatre-fashion; dedicated zones for different elements of the collection, with retail-style genre groupings backed by Dewey decimal order; a freestanding glass room in the centre of library for quiet study; a spacious children's area and dedicated lounge for young people; a café; courtyard; and rooms designed for seminars, workshops, and informal learning.

It's big and it's beautiful. The architectural vision and attention to detail can be seen in everything from the colourful shades on the exterior of the building to the 'pick up sticks' décor in the children's zone.

If you are in Canberra anytime, take the opportunity to visit. In the meantime,

here is our photo tour of a few of the highlights.

1. Alexander Bunyip – can you think of another library that has a giant statue of a mythical city-devouring creature to guide people to its entrance?

2. Carpets – some wonderful quotes about books, reading, and libraries are woven into the carpet and the red stripes leading to screens for the online catalogue is a neat touch.

3. RFID – you may be getting blasé about automated return chutes, conveyors, and sort bins, but this is RFID on a large scale. There are two feeds – one conveyor belt dropping from the first floor to the ground floor, the other on the same level. It's so impressive, especially for younger borrowers, that there is a screen by the smart chute where

you can watch your returned books follow their journey through the system.

4. Sound domes – or cones of silence, if you are a *Get Smart* fan. They look like glass lampshades, but turn them on and you can watch a film, Skype, or listen to music without disturbing your neighbours.

5. The red centre – it looks nothing like a traditional library desk.

6. Interactive floor – a mat-like covering in the children's area onto which graphics are displayed. Kids can jump around bursting bubbles, and there is no mess to clean up.

7. The Hangout – "What are we going to call the area for young people?" "I don't know." "What are they going to do in there?" "Just hang out." And that's how it got its name. Giant screen, a curved wall like a skate park, comfy bean bags: of course teens are going to hang out here.

8. Signage – bright red triangles provide an easy, can't-miss-it, way-finding system.



Australia's newest digital hub

At Libraries ACT's Gungahlin Library we also have Australia's newest digital hub opening in February. It is one of up to 40 such centres opened in libraries and community venues around Australia since the Australian Government announced the \$13.6 million program in 2011.

Around half of the digital hubs announced so far are situated in libraries. It is a perfect and obvious fit. Libraries already bring together community, technology, and learning, rendering them natural locations for digital hubs where residents can access online training and experience NBN-enabled services and technology.

Sarah Steed, Learning Community Manager at Libraries ACT, was involved in the initial application for digital hubs funding, which resulted in \$436 800 [GST exc] of Australian Government funding to set up a community learning centre for digital literacy in the Gungahlin Library.

"Gungahlin is the first place in the ACT to connect with the National Broadband Network (NBN)," Sarah said. "When the second round of applications to become a digital hub came out last year, Libraries ACT applied in partnership with the ACT Government. Our bid combined three elements – the digital hub, Digital Enterprise (training for small businesses), and Canberra Digital Community Connect (access to e-government) – and I think that was a big thing in our favour. Collaborating with other interests gave us a better chance of success and it makes perfect sense to have one location servicing the needs of several audiences."

Sarah makes it sound easy, but the funding application required a detailed budget proposal and an innovative program of training and information sessions. "It was a team effort," she said. "We brought the library staff together for a workshop where we brainstormed blue sky ideas. Librarians have some pretty amazing ideas and we came away thinking, 'What can we do now and what can we build on for the future?' There was no shortage of creativity."

The other factor that supported the Gungahlin application was the focus on Canberrans with limited digital literacy skills and access to the internet. In less than two years, Libraries ACT has established strong relationships with community leaders representing marginalised and disadvantaged Australians and these relationships contributed to Gungahlin Library's funding success.

Sarah's colleague Kate McAlister is new to the position of NBN Project Manager. She joined Libraries ACT in November, with a background in communications, media, and teaching. Her role will be to manage the digital hub program and be the lead trainer and facilitator.

"I will be working with library staff as well as bringing in community volunteers to help run the courses," she said. "There will be one-on-one sessions of about half an hour, where people can come in and ask questions, bring in their own devices, and generally use us as a kind of help desk. There will also be group sessions for up to ten participants, which will be pre-booked with the library staff or online through our website."

The training sessions will cover the basics of getting started on the internet, using email, online banking, and accessing e-government services. "People will be using a variety of ICT devices to access the internet using very fast broadband delivered by the NBN," Kate said.

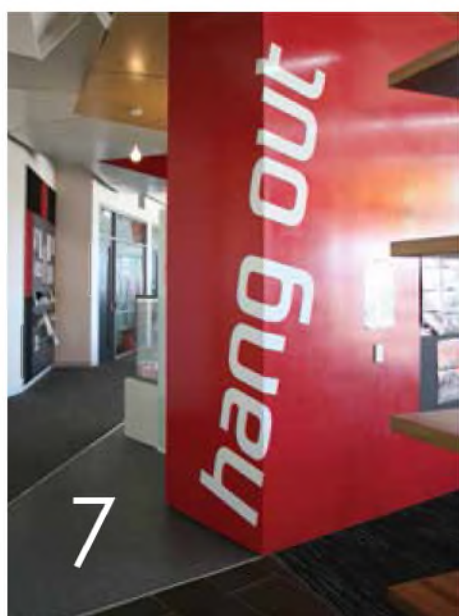
The digital hub is located near the main entrance of the library and will have the same opening hours as the library. It will be filled with the latest state-of-the-art equipment and technology, including writable walls, laptops, ereaders, and small screen devices, such as tablets, gaming consoles, and a smart TV. "It will be an open environment that's fun and educational at the same time," she said.

Three design companies and the library team have all had a hand in the fit-out, which has been influenced by visits to the Inspire Centre at the University of Canberra and Yellow Edge, a Canberra-based centre for Australian leadership development and training.

"We will have a fabulous resource, but the next challenge is to get people over the threshold. Other libraries that have already launched their digital hubs have been very helpful. We have learned a lot, for example, from the Armidale digital hub in NSW. To really get the word out there, we will be talking to community groups, visiting other community centres, and walking down the main street passing out flyers. We will do whatever we need to do to reach our target audiences."

That will also involve addressing people's reluctance towards, or lack of understanding about, the online world.

"It's not always so much about fear of the technology, it can be about being overwhelmed by all the options that are out there," Sarah said. "People can be concerned about the time commitment if they get involved in social media. They can feel that technology just isn't relevant to their lives. We think that the



people who will use the digital hub will benefit from the group environment, will feel safer with other people around them, will be better prepared for a trial and error approach."

On 21 December 2012, there was a relatively low-key event at Gungahlin Library, attended by Senator Kate Lundy, Andrew Leigh MP, and Andrew Barr MLA, and a number of government advisors and fibre optic technicians. Everyone adjourned to the room that would become the digital hub, which was then an empty shell with just a laptop in one corner. The high speed internet access kicked in straight away. The test successfully behind them, the Libraries ACT team could then concentrate on the launch.

Bookings will be open to the local community from next week and the first digital hub session will be held on 1 February.

As Sarah confessed, "Being in Canberra and only a short drive from Parliament House, we are conscious of being in the spotlight. We are expecting a close eye to be kept on our digital hub. It adds that tiny bit of extra pressure, but we're confident our facilities and programs will meet everyone's

expectations and hopefully even exceed them."

Gungahlin library facts

- Opened May 2011
- Cost approximately \$12 million
- 3000 square metres
- 30 800 users each month
- 71 100 items in the collection
- 39 900 loans each month
- 11 members of staff
- Joint use with Gungahlin College

Ewan Brown, Gungahlin Community Council, comments:

"People expect the NBN to be turned on the minute the cable is laid, so we've been waiting a long time for the opportunity to take advantage of the access to very fast broadband. The digital hub will help a lot of people, particularly older people, get to grips with technology and how to use it – surfing the web, making better use of

digital services, even using a mobile phone. The training will also make people more aware of the security issues. It will help people use the internet for things other than just entertainment and we're pleased that there is a separate stream for businesses.

"It will also help the Community Council. The more people we can get through the doors [of Gungahlin library], the more people who will be accessing our information electronically. We had

a hard copy newsletter, now we've decided to go entirely digital, using email and Facebook to pass on news, with alliances with other groups. We're pleased that the digital hub will pick up older demographics who are not so tech-savvy.

"Gungahlin library is a dynamic place and with the new digital hub, it's going to be even more dynamic."

Australia's Best Library Systems!



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Ravenswood School for Girls



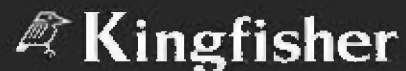
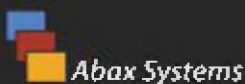
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