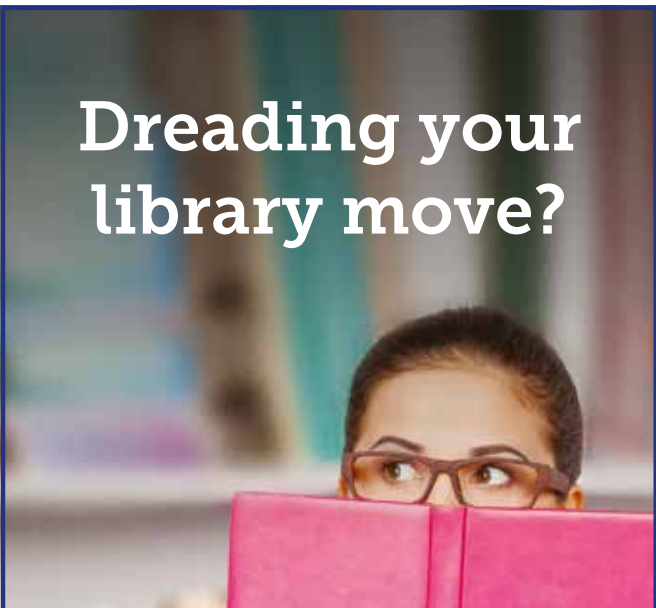


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# AUSTRALIAN FIRST FOR THE EDGE

**C**onceived as a model for the library of the future, *The Edge*, launched by the State Library of Queensland (SLQ) in 2010, is at the forefront of re-imagining libraries for the 21st century. *The Edge* focuses on creation rather than collection, participation rather than preservation, and collaboration over curation. Its mandate, like its audience, is broad, seeking to empower creative exploration across art, science, technology and enterprise. The success of this approach was most recently recognised by the award of the 2014 American Library Association Presidential Citation for Innovative International Library Projects, a first for an Australian library.

As you walk into *The Edge* building, nestled next to SLQ on a scenic bend of the Brisbane River, you are met by scenes more reminiscent of an up-market advertising firm rather than a library. To your right is a room full of large-screen Macs, occupied by people cutting video and editing photos. A short stream of musicians is filing into a recording studio, armed with microphones and guitars. Directly in front of you is a group of high school students huddled around textbooks and tablets, working together on their homework. A group of people is standing to your left, dressed in wittily-sloganed t-shirts, networking prior to the start of a web development forum in the auditorium. Behind you enters a grandmother and her grandson who proceed to stand in the foyer and stare around them, before finally asking one of the staff, 'so, what exactly is this place?'

On a daily basis *The Edge* makes its facilities freely available to the public, with an offer particularly well suited to those that want to learn, create, collaborate and share. Opening from 12-8pm most days ensures that the space is as accessible as possible, and a suite of media labs and programs combine to provide a resource not available anywhere else in the country.

The Digital Media Lab offers high spec Mac computers, complete with professional standard software for graphic design, video editing, web and app development, and sound recording, editing and mastering. Each computer also provides access to lynda.com, a vast online library of video tutorials.

The onsite recording studio is the only free public recording space in the city and is accessible to anyone who has completed the studio induction.

In the basement there is a science lab and a fabrication lab. The science lab is used to explore what science looks like in combination with art, technology or enterprise, the other key elements in The Edge's mandate. In this space, internally known as the 'creepy lab', are vats of kombucha used to grow sustainable textiles from tea and bacteria, as well as telescopes and microscopes used to capture images of the microscopic or astronomic to be used in the design of custom fabrics.

The fabrication lab provides access to power tools, soldering irons, 3D printers, sewing machines and more for use in supervised hands-on workshops and projects.

These facilities have supported the delivery of over 1,400 programs to 28,000 participants since The Edge opened.

## Collaboration at The Edge takes places on a range of levels, as the team works to develop an offer for, with and by the community.

Working for the community, The Edge team presents a year round program of workshops, activities, projects and meet-ups. These programs are designed to provide participants with the skills and experience required to participate more fully in other offerings at The Edge. The Edge team also works on a range of fee for service programs, making their expertise, programs and technology available to organisations across the state. This could see the team delivering a 45 minute ringtone workshop for a group of teenagers in a public library, or an ongoing information communication technology self-sufficiency program with kids in detention.

In the context of working with the community, The Edge focuses on partnerships as a key driver of collaboration. Recent partnership programs have included the Mobile Media Lab project, delivered with Rockhampton Regional Library and Darumbal Community Youth Service. This project saw Edge staff working with local partners over a number of months to design a range of programming and upskill staff and participants in the use of the media creation technologies such as tablets, apps and virtual DJ decks. The lab was then handed over to the local partners for ongoing use in their community.

Providing opportunities for an offer to be presented by community, for community, is the final model of collaboration. This could be as simple as assigning space and resources to weekly meet-ups like Hack the Evening for technologists, or the Producers Club for musicians. Often, though, this will be realised on a larger scale, like the three iterations of the Zombie Apocalypse alternate reality game. This annual program saw a group of 15 young people taking ownership of The Edge building, scripting and producing a game. The event then took place throughout The Edge building over a 12-36 hour period, providing engagement for up to 80 participants as either zombies or survivors.

Facilities like The Edge demonstrate the critical role that libraries can play in initiating and facilitating collaboration in their communities. For more information about The Edge head to [www.edgeqld.org.au](http://www.edgeqld.org.au).

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**REBEKAH WAITE**  
Communications Manager  
The Edge, State Library of Queensland  
[rebekah.waite@slq.qld.gov.au](mailto:rebekah.waite@slq.qld.gov.au)

*IMAGES (clockwise from left): Workshop participants in the Digital Media Lab; Students using the free wi-fi; Participants in the Zombie Apocalypse; The Edge on the river in South Bank.*

