ACT gets new 'smart' library

The Canberra community received an early Christmas present on 17 December 2009 – a new library.

In May 2009, the ACT Government allocated funding in the budget to create a new library in Canberra's inner south: $890 000 in capital construction funding for the 2009–2010 financial year, and $3.29 million in operational funding over four years. A commitment was made to open the library before Christmas the same year. This deadline was met, with the library completed in six months, a period of time which must be close to a record.

Kingston Library, the ACT Public Library's ninth branch, is located in a shopfront in a popular local shopping precinct. Nearby cafes, restaurants, and shops all contribute to passing traffic and encourage linked trips to the library.

Designed by BVN Architecture, and constructed by Capezio & Co, the library features:

- RFID, including self check out and a smart chute for returns,
- Wireless internet access,
- Public internet PCs,
- An XBOX 360,
- Playaway digital audio books, and
- Two large LCD screens with rotating library information.

The inclusion of RFID ensures Kingston Library is in keeping with the technology installed at other ACT Public Library branches in 2009. Kingston is, however, the first of the libraries to install a smart chute. The smart chute provides increased security by recognising the RFID tag on library items, and unlocking the chute for those items to be returned.

LCD screens are being used instead of traditional noticeboards which have a tendency to become untidy. The attention-grabbing screens require minimal space and promote library services and programs, as well as community information. Mounting one of the screens in the front window of the library also enables the community to access this information when the library is closed.

Discussions are also underway in the hope of adding a bicycle rack and a dog hitching post, for those people who want to ride to the library or call in while walking their dog.

During the first week of operation, a lot of people commented that they were visiting the library for the first time in many years, and there were a number of people who returned on successive days to continue borrowing. On the first Saturday of business, a community day celebration was held with story time, face painting, giveaways, and a roving musician all contributing to the atmosphere of excitement:

It's like a bookshop you can take home.

I'm impressed with how many books they fitted in, the space is quite deceptive.

Love the location. It's just so convenient.

Although small in stature, Kingston Library is expected to reach many people. A steady flow of visitors have already been exploring the brand new books, DVDs, magazines and other material, with 2 798 items borrowed and 123 new members registered in the first five days.

With recycled timber floors and exposed brick walls, Kingston Library has been described as having a New York loft feel. Programs including story time, school holiday activities, and a book discussion group are planned, and are expected to add to the contemporary vibe.

We love our funky new smart library and would love you to visit and check it out for yourself.

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Note: A selection of photos of the new library can be seen on the ACT Public Library's Flickr photo stream **www.flickr.com/photos/librariesact**

How can your organisation do more with less in challenging times, becoming leaner but not meaner?

This question was explored on October 21 2009 at the ALIA Information Science (SA) event, *Leaner Not Meaner: Strategies for Improving Services in Difficult Times*, held at the University of South Australia City West Library Function Room. Fifteen people listened to speakers from the consulting, corporate, and university fields.

Bob Cother from Cother Consulting introduced the key concepts of lean management and explained how organisations can maximise value creation and eliminate waste, using real world examples from his own experiences as a consultant.

Simon Woodley of ALS Library Services outlined the benefits of outsourcing technical functions for public libraries, such as freeing library staff to concentrate on quality interactions with patrons. Simon's presentation included valuable tips to help libraries maintain good relationships with suppliers.

Finally, Christine Cother from University of South Australia explained how lean principles could be used to enhance service standards in libraries despite budgetary constraints. Drawing on over 15 years' experience as a professional librarian, Christine offered engaging examples of how she had used lean approaches to manage organisational change.

Further information about the *Leaner Not Meaner* presentations can be found at: **http://www.alia.org.au/groups/infoscsa/lEANER.NOT.MEANER.pdf**

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