

Non-descript Rockdale City Preferred Library Scenario

October 2013

Background

We all have many futures but we fail to always recognise the choices we have. We recognise our present mainly by looking back to where we have come from. That past view is actually a series of choices, many of them sub-conscious. This Scenario is a picture of what is desired for the Rockdale Library in 2016. It is a picture in the imagination of what it will be like in 2016.

The Preferred Library Scenario in this document has been established by Workshops in August and September 2013 engaging community representatives, council and library staffs.

All of our experience is based in what we know and experience rather than knowing what could be.

This Scenario is intended to describe a future three years hence in 2016. It is especially believed that these changes should be in place by September 2016 to precede the opening of the new Rockdale City Library. The resources, staff and service mixes are however quite different reflecting some of the possibilities open to the Rockdale community. This is not a strategic plan but is rather the step beforehand. The Preferred Library Scenario forms the target with strategic planning as the tool to achieve this future.

Read and let your imagination work from this scenario of what should be Your Library.

Not a time machine, the ‘Wow Plus’ Tardis is where anything can and does happen

A non-descript sealed bottle washed up on the shores of Botany Bay contained this story of what the Library would be like in late 2016.¹ A scenario from the future has emerged on the tide of the past.

With a strong ‘Tardis-like’ presence, the Library in 2016 is so much more than what appears on the outside. Through the glass walls of the new main Library in Rockdale the busy life, on and around the Princes Highway, is left behind as a calm greets the customer coming into these warm, inviting and varied spaces. The highly digitised service is punching very much above its weight and is known as the service where social media have been used to greatly heighten the use of these vibrant new spaces and to enrich the community with the vast information resources it has. It has an expectation of knowledge, expertise and a very strong sense of the future!

Rockdale Library Wi-Fi has become so synonymous with high net speeds that they are just an accepted part of this environment where community members can gain assistance in applying for work, gain background industry information and learn improved information literacy skills. Many other innovative programs supporting growth in the community emerge constantly. The Library is seen as being the connector between community groups, generations and futures.

There are now a variety of different space environments in the new library which appeal to the different community groups. The facilities are so flexible and have net-bookable small group rooms. The Library has a deep vein of content running through its new future while reaching out to engage other cultural bodies in the community and Council to make the new spaces even more vital.

There is less print than previously and a very much stronger digital presence enabling access to excellent fiction, non-fiction and children’s material online; rich content focused on the Rockdale community needs now and into the near future. Language groups are drawn together and supported with all forms of eBooks, print, video and audio. The Library has begun offering new services whereby Rockdale authors can have

¹ The concept of the sealed bottle was proffered generously by Anne Field.

their works digitised and thus available to the world under 'Creative Commons' licenses. This move to help authors and local history writers has been widely applauded as the Rights of these authors are protected while their works are widely and professionally disseminated. The annual Ron Rathbone Local History awards have achieved national status and the hits across the net have created a vital learning environment for historians across Rockdale and the country. This is part of the revolution in the wider world of publishing but in a systematic and professionally guided fashion. Librarians know how to publish on their Institutional Repository and to create the necessary metadata for discovery. Accessibility, in many senses, has been a key driver of the Library.

A steaming cup of fresh coffee now allows the Library customer to discuss ideas generated by the library's content before participating in some new and exciting programs designed for this community. Different generations mix together encouraging each other with new skills and knowledge gained through the expert literacy programs delivered by the Library. Young Adults have found these new spaces to their liking as a connected space with gaming, social media integrated with the Librarian's expertise to infuse situations with relevant content. Wolli Creek has become a vibrant centre for a new library presence for their growing community to use, to engage with the wider Rockdale communities through the Library. A sense of the future and trust has been created within the glass walls of the new Library.

Excellence in education, training and the empathetic use of social media has become a central feature of the Library's success and popularity. Both are attuned to customer need on the use of technology with emphasis on access to needed content; aimed at the community member and various groups with special need from the unemployed, to those with issues of accessibility. Emerging appropriate and flexible technologies are always linked to improving the reading or learning experiences of the Library's customers young and older. The educative role of the Library is the new future strength.

Storytime is but one early literacy program bringing young readers and their parents into the Library, often evidenced by the large number of parked prams. This early experience is continued through the Homework-support programs, into the information and even gaming plans of Young Adults. There are now many more portals to different experiences for these younger folk and their parents.

While having a rich compliment of experienced library professionals, the Library now also has IT specialists, more CALD expertise, marketers, trainers and social media programmers adding so much creativity to the drive of the Library and value to the community. All of the staff have constantly refined and re-focused their professional skills to the changing information need of their communities. Indeed one of the keys to its success is the absolute commitment of the staff to achieving this preferred library scenario. Savvy volunteers, guided by the staff, work together to keep the Library at the cutting edge of the net and gaming industries. Even a JP service has been established in response to community need.

Social media, other emerging technologies as well as RFID, NFC ² empower customers to discover so much more of their environment as well as to complete library transactions on their own. They especially discover much about the rich collections in these new ways. Staff has been freed from transactional processes to meet customer informational need across all four floors using remote hand-held catalogue and web services. With even greater collaboration between Council libraries through voluntary initiatives customers have been provided with access to many other library collections. Staff also benefit from greater access to knowledge, skill and experience through wide library networks.

Gallery exhibitions are enabling informal learning as well as the older and newer forms of private learning. Local as well as up and coming artists are grateful for the exposure they get in the physical and virtual library spaces. They create new connections and generate new ideas and creativity.

The Council vehicles carry promotions of content /services provided by the Library. The web face of the Library is a very attractive, informative, changing and engaging. It is a special destination for people who are home-bound and for those interested in local histories with many digitised histories bringing the richness of the Rockdale community into the open. They are connected to many unexpected sources of stimulation through professional advice.

² RFID – Radio Frequency Identification - is the wireless non-contact use of radio-frequency [electromagnetic fields](#) to transfer data, for the purposes of automatically identifying and tracking tags attached to objects. The tags contain electronically stored information.

NFC – Near Field Communication - is a set of standards for [smart phones](#) and similar devices to establish [radio](#) communication with each other by touching them together or bringing them into close proximity, usually no more than a few inches. Present and anticipated applications include contactless transactions, data exchange, and simplified setup of more complex communications such as [WiFi](#).

The new Library blends its work, content and focus with the refurbished Town Hall adding immeasurably to the cultural and educational experience which the community gains from this important Hub.

A Library Hub for all purposes and persons.