

HOW AUSTRALIAN LIBRARIES SUPPORT THE AUSTRALIAN BOOK INDUSTRY



INTRODUCTION

Australian libraries provide valuable support for Australian authors and publishers in many ways.

- We buy millions of dollars' worth of books and ebooks every year.
- We introduce authors to book buyers — people who borrow books also buy them.
- We help people discover and rediscover the joy of reading, creating new audiences.
- Author talks with library communities are a useful source of income for writers and a good way to promote their work.
- Writers and illustrators use library collections as the source for their stories and drawings.
- Libraries make Australian books accessible to readers today and they preserve these works for future generations.

HOW MUCH LIBRARIES SPEND ON BOOKS

When most people think about libraries, they think about their local public library, but there are many other types of libraries. Altogether, we estimate library expenditure on print and ebooks to be in excess of \$400 million each year.

SCHOOL LIBRARIES

There are 9,503 primary and secondary schools in Australia serving 3,948,811 school students¹. Annual budgets for school libraries range from less than \$5,000 to more than \$50,000 per annum, depending on the number of students and funding source (state, Catholic, independent)². Based on a spend per student of \$25, we estimate the value of purchases per annum to be in the region of \$98.7 million.

¹ ABS

² Sofflink 2019 Australian School Library Survey

PUBLIC LIBRARIES³

There are 1,683 public library service points across Australia, including 81 mobile libraries. There are 9.05 million registered library members and more than 9 million visits each month. Items loaned in public library collections number more than 158 million and \$133 million is spent each year on new items for the collection.

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES⁴

There are 39 Australian universities serving more than 1.5 million students. University libraries spend \$74.5 million a year on books, including ebooks (there are 26.6 million ebooks in university libraries out of a total of 47.1 million books). The total library materials expenditure is \$387 million per annum, including books, journals, databases and other resources.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING LIBRARIES

Across Australia there are 59 institutes of TAFE with 2.1 million students. In addition, there are many private registered training organisations offering courses, with library resources. Based on an average \$30 per student for library resources, the spend per annum would be in the order of \$62 million⁵.

NATIONAL, STATE AND TERRITORY LIBRARIES⁶

Australia has nine collecting institutions – the National Library of Australia; the State Libraries of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia; the ACT Heritage Library and the Library and Archives of the Northern Territory. The asset value of their collection in 2019-2020 was \$3.7 billion, and \$20.1 million was spent on new materials, including print books and ebooks.

³ Australian Public Libraries Statistical Report 2018-2019

⁴ CAUL statistics 2019

⁵ Informal VET benchmark for spend per student

⁶ NSLA annual statistics 2019-2020





SPECIAL LIBRARIES

Special libraries comprise government, association, health, law, corporate, consulting firm, ICT, engineering, religious, science and technology, art, museum, agriculture, media and other libraries that serve departments, institutions, not-for-profits, charities and businesses. It is hard to pin down an exact number for these libraries; best estimates are from 2,200 to 2,400, depending on which types of library and information services are included (the definition can cover everything from volunteer-run historical society collections to libraries in large teaching hospitals). It is impossible to put a figure on the amount spent on specialist resources, but government, health, law and corporate libraries have to purchase high value items for their clients.

BOOK BUYERS AND BOOK BORROWERS

Australian libraries are a marketing and promotional vehicle for creators and publishers, connecting readers and writers. According to an American study, 20% of library users bought a book after they had borrowed it, and 47% bought a book by the same author after they'd borrowed one of their books from the library.⁷ The average library patron in the US was found to buy nine books a year. A survey of Libraries ACT members found that 63% of library users in Canberra who had borrowed a book in the previous two years had gone on to buy another book that was related to it.

HOW LIBRARIES CREATE NEW AUDIENCES

Every day Australian libraries encourage people to read and enjoy books, reading and literature. Australian libraries help create new audiences, through early literacy, family literacy and adult literacy programs. They also help people discover and rediscover the joy of reading, through campaigns such as Australia Reads and the Australian Reading Hour, through book clubs, Premiers' reading challenges and other community activities.

⁷ http://idpf.org/sites/idpf.org/files/digital-book-conference/presentations/db2012/DB2012_Jan_Singer.pdf

HOW LIBRARIES PROVIDE INCOME DIRECT TO WRITERS

Australian libraries contribute to income generation for authors and publishers in many ways. Library visits – and online author talks in 2020 – have been a source of fee income for authors and illustrators, provide direct sales (books are available for attendees to purchase, often with the local bookseller as intermediary) and promote future sales through increased awareness of an author and their work. The Public Lending Right and Education Lending Right generate revenue for authors long after the retail life span of their books has ended.

HOW LIBRARIES SUPPORT THE MAKING OF BOOKS

Australian libraries support the creative and research process, with writers and illustrators using library collections as the source for their stories, information and drawings. This can be on an informal basis, as academic research, or as part of a writing fellowship.

HOW LIBRARIES SUPPORT THE PRESERVATION AND DISCOVERABILITY OF BOOKS

Australian libraries preserve the published output of Australia's authors and publishers so this work can be accessible to, inspire and delight future generations. Libraries ensure that the published output of Australia's authors and publishers is catalogued and is discoverable for Australians and the world.

IN SUMMARY

We estimate the overall contribution of Australian libraries to the book industry to be close to \$500 million per annum in direct purchases, marketing support and promotion.

For more information, contact:

Australian Library and Information Association

T: 02 6215 8222

E: advocacy@alia.org.au

W: www.alia.org.au

