

# **THE YEAR OF LIVING DIGITALLY**

## **ABSTRACT**

Digital technology plays an increasingly major role in our lives. Greater access to information and the sharing of information is making us more informed citizens, giving us more control over our lives and how we create and develop our communities. We are witnessing a change in the nature of work, people are living longer and healthier lives, and new kinds of tribalism and internationalism are emerging. In 2017, State Library of Queensland (SLQ) is exploring *Digital Futures* in all its forms through our annual Signature Program framework. In partnership with communities and visitors, we are spending the next twelve months connecting, creating and exploring the changing digital nature of our economy, our political processes and our leisure activities.

SLQ is committed to designing and delivering programs and services which, not only connect and engage with audiences, but are genuine collaborations with our audiences. In 2014 SLQ adopted an annual Signature Program framework focusing on a theme of interest to the Queensland community through a range of activities, experiences and events. The Signature Program team engages with the community and partners to develop and deliver elements that are scalable and transferable for collaboration with regional communities. In 2017 this team will focus on *Digital Futures*, exploring meaning and experiences at the personal and state level to engage Queenslanders in conversation with experts and each other.

At SLQ we see technology as an enabler not a driver of our services. We have a role in supporting the community to stay abreast of unprecedented changes resulting from the digitally enabled economy and society. During our “year of living digitally”, we will engage with audiences to develop capabilities in data visualisation, big data

and crowd sourced collaboration. Building on the groundwork laid by the National Year of Digital Inclusion (<https://www.godigi.org.au/>) and previous innovative SLQ-led projects, such as Tech Savvy Seniors and digital literacy resource kits for public libraries, our events and exhibitions schedule will allow individuals to explore their digital world and comprehend what the new Queensland will look like. SLQ's aim is to co-create new knowledge and partner with others to undertake and facilitate research, and to support community-based research infrastructure. This paper will report on our planned schedule of engagement, document the community participation so far and invite partnerships and engagement from conference delegates.

The “year of living digitally” program explores how technology has given us new tools to question, understand, imagine, and better the world in which we live. The flow of big data and information now generates more economic value than the global goods trade. Affordable and democratic access to communication technologies has resulted in a burgeoning creativity by diverse global voices. SLQ is leading the way in how libraries can explore the global and local benefits of sharing, disruption and convergence cultures with visitors and audiences.

## Introduction

Digital technology plays an increasingly major role in our lives. Greater access to and the sharing of information is making us more informed citizens, giving us more control over our lives and how we create and develop our communities. We are witnessing a change in the nature of work, people are living longer and healthier lives, and new kinds of tribalism and internationalism are emerging. In 2017, State Library of Queensland (SLQ) is exploring *Digital Futures* in all its forms through our annual Signature Program. In partnership with communities and visitors, we are spending 2017 connecting, creating and exploring the changing digital nature of our economy, our political processes and our leisure activities.

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At SLQ we see technology as an enabler not a driver of our services. We have a role in supporting the community to stay abreast of unprecedented changes resulting from the digitally enabled economy and society. During our “year of living digitally”, we will engage with audiences to develop capabilities in data visualisation, big data and crowd sourced collaboration. Building on the groundwork laid by the National

Year of Digital Inclusion (<https://www.godigi.org.au/>) and previous innovative SLQ-led projects, such as Tech Savvy Seniors (<http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/whats-on/programs/tech-savvy-seniors-queensland>) and digital literacy resource kits for public libraries, our events and exhibitions schedule will allow individuals to explore their digital world and comprehend what the new Queensland will look like. SLQ's aim is to co-create new knowledge and partner with others to undertake and facilitate research, and to support community-based research infrastructure. This paper will report on our planned schedule of engagement and outline partnerships developed so far.

### **A new programming direction**

In 2013 SLQ's Engagement and Partnership (E & P) Directorate undertook a change process. This reframing of services and teams was led by E & P Managers who undertook a process of synthesising and reflecting on current activity in the Directorate. This consolidated thinking has led to an overarching aspiration in the programming space of contemporising experience to create new knowledge, particularly across the two strategic areas of:

- engagement — developing and delivering vibrant, cohesive and responsive programs and services that provide opportunity and inspiration to the community, staff, clients, funders and partners; and
- partnerships — initiating, enabling and nurturing collaboration across the library, across the community, across institutions, across states and across countries.

There were a number of requirements that were essential to the reframing of then activities which included providing clarity in SLQ's programming offer and connecting and engaging with our clients and audiences.

From 2014 SLQ established an annual Signature Program. This annual program would be based on a topic of interest to the community and the theme would change at the beginning of the calendar year. SLQ selects the theme through a process of research and evaluation. Institutions that synthesise and interpret facts and scholarly research for public programs create experiences for visitors that facilitate learning (America Alliance of Museums Curators Committee n.d.).

The themes are aimed to be strategically appealing to partners, be broad enough for diverse community groups to engage with and narrow enough to have a clear focus to appeal to niche audiences. Additionally themes are selected so that they are broad enough to enable SLQ business units to link their programming and activities. At the time of the Reframe it was envisaged that SLQ, led by Engagement and Partnerships, would:

- deliver programming that was evidence-based and was influenced by the community
- focus on a Signature Program — aligned effort/resources
- deliver programming with and through strategic partnerships
- increase opportunities for community creativity and connections; and
- there would be collaboration across the organisation to deliver programming to the theme.

The 2015 Signature Program theme was part of the QANZAC100 commemorations and included the exhibitions *Distant Lines* and *Peace and Quiet*. 2016 was the first

year we have delivered on a theme where programming was evidence-based and influenced by the community. The theme *Belonging* focused on the topic of Queensland Identity. The 2017 theme is focused on the topic *Digital Futures*.

The annual Signature Program is modelled on a participatory culture where the community is at the heart of programming. By harnessing principles of participatory culture, libraries can be transformed into transparent, engaged and responsive cultural organisations (Hopkins et al 2015). This model is about working with our community and visitors to make our programming relevant to them. Participatory culture is a culture where there are low barriers to the community expressing, engaging, creating and sharing its creations (Jenkins et. al., 2009). Jenkins et. al. (2009) also note that participatory culture has emerged as the community absorbs and responds to the new media that allows them to archive, annotate, appropriate and recirculate content in new ways. Simons (2010) outlines four models for putting participation into practice - contribution, collaboration, co-creating and hosted. At SLQ we work to the model that suits the program we are delivering.

Bienkowski (2016) notes that being embedded in one's community and addressing that community's needs are key elements in attracting sustainable support and funding. One of the aspirations of the E & P directorate is initiating, enabling and nurturing collaboration across library, across the community, across institution, across states and across countries. To enable this aspiration the Partnership Branch was set up in 2014. A core delivery of the new Partnerships Unit is to attract partners to deliver components of the annual program. The 2016 theme has been very successful in attracting community organisations to significantly augment the public programming offered at SLQ at minimal cost. The 2017 annual Signature

Program *Digital Futures* has attracted interest from the university sector, tech companies, small business and community organisations.

### **The process of selecting the theme**

The selection of the annual Signature Program theme is undertaken utilising qualitative and quantitative research and evaluation methods. Research and evaluation processes ensure that the theme is connected with and informed by broadly established community interests. If libraries museums and galleries are sensitive to the public interest they will seek out ideas that serve that interest (Smithsonian Institution 2012). Additionally, programming is influenced by observable and anticipated trends and Government priorities. This enables SLQ to link programs to key government priorities encouraging support from and engagement with State Government departments.

Asking people what they are interested in will not be part of the research methodology. Increasingly, visitor evidence will not be collected via survey, but through community engagement processes. When curators and programming staff work with others inside and outside the institution to compile and utilise information this has the greatest benefits to the community (American Alliance of Museum Curators, n.d.).

To select the 2017 theme, evidence was largely drawn from secondary research and involved the summary, collation and synthesis of existing research. This will be supplemented by some contained primary research involving the collection of interviews and raw data as necessary. Some of the documents, research and trends investigated and interpreted to select the 2017 theme *Digital Futures* included:

- Queensland Government's *Advance Queensland Innovation Initiative*,
- Australian Curriculum *Civics and Citizenship*,
- Queensland University of Technology research project - *Digital participation in regional and rural Australia*,
- CSIRO's 2012 research paper *Our Future World: global mega trends* and
- IBM's *Snapshot of Australia's Digital Future*.

Current trends, challenges and opportunities within the GLAM sector were also reviewed.

The 2017 annual theme *Digital Futures* will explore the topics: *Digital Participation*, *Futurism* and *Our Digital Place*.

### **Exploring Digital Futures**

Digital technology is playing an increasingly major role in our lives. Greater access to information and the sharing of information is making us more informed citizens, giving us more control over our lives and how we create and develop our communities. Affordable mobile devices, intuitive apps and social media platforms are enabling people to become active citizens in the production and development of corporate services (PwC Chair in Digital Economy, 2015).

*Digital Futures* addresses the changing nature of our economy, our political processes and our leisure activities. We are witnessing a change in the nature of work, people are living longer and healthier lives, and new trends in consumerism are emerging. Hajkowicz, Cook & Littleboy (2012) note that we are increasingly moving to online to connect, deliver and access services, to obtain information and to perform transactions. There is opportunity to explore our digital identities, and how



we use our online presence to grow and shape our worlds, and inspire others to do the same.

The ability to be able to participate in the digital world will be explored under the theme with the topic *Digital Participation*. We explore how people participate in the digital world, who is excluded and what can the digital realm offer those who are powerless. Will the new digital realm create a new digitally disadvantaged class? The reach of our lives into the digital domain is so immense that it has opened up vast new dimensions to participating in our liberal democratic society. To keep up with this digital transformation, we must broaden our understanding of what citizenship means. “Digital citizenship can be defined as the norms of appropriate, responsible behaviour with regard to technology use” (Ribble, 2016). Digital citizenship links individual good to the well-being of our society in a digital context. It acknowledges that through the digital realm, we have new freedoms and opportunities to contribute to our civic, political, social, creative, and economic flourishing. “The Digital Renaissance will be the best of times and the worst of times, but a new cultural order will emerge from it” (Jenkins et al 2009). This new digital future does not necessarily mean the eradication of many of our current problems and inequalities.

As mobility of work and lifestyle increases, the very notion of citizenry evolves to span multiple virtual and physical communities and an even greater variety of cultural practices and norms. “The future society is not a singular entity, but a collective of numerous networked communities and individuals” (IBIS World 2012). Face to face communication still remains important for human relationships both personal and professional (Deloitte Australia 2015).

What is the history of the future, what frameworks do we use to predict the future and how do we digitally define our future perceptions are questions which will all be explored under the topic *Futurism*. SLQ explores how technology has given us new tools to question, understand, imagine, and better the world in which we live.

Australians are well-known for early adoption and willingness to adapt new technologies. These technologies are affecting more aspects of our lives faster than ever before (Deloitte Australia, 2015). The flow of big data and information now generates more economic value than the global goods trade. Affordable and democratic access to communication technologies has resulted in a burgeoning creativity by diverse global voices. And we can explore some of the global and local benefits of sharing, disruption and convergence cultures.

We will also delve into some of the potentially challenging, negative and dangerous features of our digital future. New digital frontiers open up new questions about freedoms, rights, privacy issues, security concerns, and responsibilities. It requires us to think about how we respect, protect, and connect with each other. There are also the risks of surveillance, the digital divide, and the digital black hole.

The internet of things is already here and by 2020 over 30 billion devices will be connected. The internet will soon be connected to everything including our brains enabling fast and accurate decoding of multi-layered information. As Big Data merges with 'social' content, we see new strategic software and tools able to predict behaviours and buying attitudes. The growth of disruptive technologies and dedicated social media MBA programmes is already redefining learning.

Deloitte (2015) states that the implications of using technology for the design of houses, offices and public building to the operation of city-wide infrastructure

networks; from daily work routines to delivery of goods and services are profound. The topic *Our Digital Place* allows SLQ to explore the issues of connecting the whole state and addressing the disadvantage of regionality. We can explore smart cities, design and open data.

The theme also challenges us to reimagine our personal relationship with the physical world, and consider its interconnection with the digital. How and when do we ‘turn off’? Is attachment to our screens a threat to human connection? Are our timeless, deep, physical connections to local community and place losing out?

Thinking about what we do in the non-physical world outside our building is important to SLQ. In order to examine the theme *Digital Futures* through the three topics SLQ and partner organisations are programming exhibitions, events and activities throughout 2017. Along with the onsite programming we invite the community to contribute to our discussions and forums.

### **“Year of Living Digitally” Programming**

SLQ’s 2015/16 visitor survey data results specify the importance of public programs for attracting new audiences to the South Bank campus. Exhibitions, events and activated spaces collectively draw new visitors to the Library (Morris, Hargraves & McIntyre, 2016, p. 8). Work units across the library develop programming building on the established curatorial framework for the annual signature program theme. The curatorial framework outlines the overarching questions and key objectives that the theme will address. These are the foundations that the theme is drawn from and the links to SLQ’s Strategic Plan. Following are highlights from SLQs *Digital Futures* programming offer for 2017.

There will be four exhibitions across the year. The first in the SLQ Gallery space which will be the 'home' space for *Digital Futures* in 2017. It will feature two configurations over the year. In February we launch the Future Memory program, linked to our curatorial topic *Futurism* as well as *Digital Participation*. In July the focus shifts to Digital Connections, linked to the topics *Our Digital Place* and *Digital Participation*.

The SLQ Gallery will be designed as an immersive and experiential space in the form of a 'game' or 'maze', that presents concepts and asks questions of visitors, in order for them to expand their thinking around what issues a digital future might present. The other section of the gallery is a relaxed and flexible space where visitors can engage with some digital 'toys', watch futuristic film montages or TED talks, experience virtual reality, and do some making and creating with cutting-edge state of the art technology. The Gallery will include a chill out space for visitors to switch off as part of the exhibition. This exhibition will be developed utilising partnerships to contribute equipment and content.

Digital Connections will present some of the latest digital experiences and products in partnership with key educational and business partners. We ask who connects, how we connect and are we connecting differently in the digital age. Additionally we are partnering with the Directors of the Extraordinary to design a gaming experience which will start in the existing and adapted designed exhibition style space, spilling out into the library.

One of the guiding principles for SLQ to meet the Objective of the Libraries Act 1988 is for us to promote and make accessible Queensland content (Libraries Act, 1988). One of the ways we achieve this is through exhibitions which focus on SLQ's unique

collections. Two exhibitions will be held in the Philip Bacon Heritage Gallery focused on collections. The first “Freedom Then Freedom Now” will be held from May until September. The exhibition provides an opportunity to approach the commemoration of the 1967 Referendum from a new perspective. Rather than an extensive account of events in Queensland leading up to the Referendum this exhibition will situate the Referendum within a series of historical events that demonstrate the relationship between who counts and who doesn't; what has been allowed and what hasn't. The exhibition will allow reflection on personal freedom, including those freedoms we now have or may strive for in the future. The exhibition will contextualise the movement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights within a history of struggles for personal freedom in Queensland. This exhibition loosely explores the topic of *Digital Participation* through the lens of citizenship.

The second exhibition will be from October – March 2018 and is focused on technology. Technology is a topic that people feel passionate about in their own history. Memories of a first television broadcast, going to a video store or listening to a dial-up internet signal are rich experiences and central to people's lives. They have a strong ability to engage and connect the public. This exhibition addresses the topic of *Futurism* by reflecting on the past to influence the future. This exhibition will examine the role that technology has played at different stages of Queensland's history, with a view to what its future role may also be.

The final exhibition is from the kuril dhagun team who will showcase an exhibition that reflects on the national Referendum that was held on 27 May 1967. The referendum saw Australia vote 90% in favour of changing the constitution allowing for Indigenous people to be included in the census, and giving Federal Parliament the power to make laws in relation to Indigenous people. The display will include

photographs, audio interviews, digital stories and more. This will link via programmed activities to the topic *Digital Citizenship*.

In addition the Asia Pacific Design Library (APDL) team will look for opportunities to do small scale exhibitions working with their community in the APDL. Topics under consideration include Future Fashion and Design Futures.

Talks form a significant component of SLQs event offering. The Signature Program team, in partnership with 612 ABC radio will explore a series of topics related to the theme *Digital Futures*. ABC radio's Kelly Higgins-Devine will facilitate a conversation between high profile panellists, audience members and online viewers. Four talks will be presented in 2017. The talks will focus on significant questions about future scenarios, digital citizenship, the digital divide, and the digital economy. The talk series provides a range of speakers with differing views on each of the subjects discussed in order to provide a robust public conversation.

The Game Changers series is a Queensland Business Leaders Hall of Fame initiative presented by SLQ, QUT Business School and the Queensland Library Foundation. The Queensland Business Leaders Hall of Fame celebrates, records and retells the stories of outstanding Queensland business leaders and their contributions to our state. In 2017 one of the four events will explore the digital futures theme. Coordinated by SLQ's Partnerships team this series offers opportunities to hear insights from innovative leaders from business, technology and creative industries.

APDL's annual lecture series brings forward-thinking architects and provocateurs who are engaged in the generation of new knowledge, ideas and strategies within

the field of architecture. APDL will explore the digital futures theme in their events for 2017.

Community events also form part of the program for *Digital Futures*. The Signature Program team will deliver two community engagement events in 2017, one of which will be the annual Fun Palace event in October. Both of these events will involve other teams from across the SLQ as well as external stakeholders and seek to engage a large community audience. The first event will take place in Saturday 24 June 2017. It will start in the SLQ Gallery and fan out on level 2 into the two auditoriums. The day is designed as a Digital Expo where visitors can discover innovative digital projects coming out of Queensland universities and companies as well as participate in accompanying programs.

SLQ will again participate in the Fun Palace global event in 2017. The 2017 event will be held on Saturday 7th October. Fun Palace is an ongoing campaign supporting culture at the heart of every community, with an annual weekend of arts and science action created by, with and for the community. Delivered with teams from across SLQ this program is specifically for families.

The Partnerships Team initiated enabled and nurtured collaborations from community groups & institutions to deliver on the 2017 annual theme. Possible partners go through an assessment process guided by SLQ's Partnership policy to ensure mutual benefit exists before progressing. A selection of the partnerships secured as part of *Digital Futures* include:

- The Open Data Institute Queensland, delivering four lunch time lecture series, a data literacy session for students and a coaching session for people

participating in the 2017 GovHack Hackathon. These programs will be delivered in the SLQ Gallery.

- The Queensland Family and Child Commission who will be delivering a symposium in March around on-line safety for children and young people.
- The Southern Cross Soloists who will be delivering three lecture series focused on digital future or music.
- Data 3 will be providing Hewlett Packard equipment for the SLQ Gallery.
- The Grattan Institute will deliver one of their lecture series focused on the theme.

Onsite and online SLQ visitors will be invited to share their views around our digital future through a variety of participatory activities. The SLQ today blog will be utilised to share stories and provocations inviting comments. The SLQ Gallery will have a series of analogue and digital engagement activities. Overhanging the walls will be a participatory art installation. This artwork will be made of a cascade of a creeper handmade from recycled copper wire. When you touch the vine, you will hear someone's personal hopes for the future. This artwork will continue to grow through community workshops delivered as part of the Digital Futures program.

The programming associated with *Digital Futures* is delivered by work units across SLQ. The combination of traditional and participatory programming encourages engagement by a diverse range of visitors to the South Bank campus and our online visitors.

## **Conclusion**

The “year of living digitally” program explores how technology has given us new tools to question, understand, imagine, and better the world in which we live. The flow of



big data and information now generates more economic value than the global goods trade. Affordable and democratic access to communication technologies has resulted in a burgeoning creativity by diverse global voices. SLQ is leading the way in how libraries can explore the global and local benefits of sharing, disruption and convergence cultures with visitors and audiences.

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