

# Australian public libraries statistical report 2021-22

March 2023. Revised June 2024



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## Note

This report is intended to provide a broad snapshot of Australia’s public library services. It must be noted that it is difficult to use this data to compare state/territory services with each other. Not least of the reasons for this are that public libraries are governed by a variety of jurisdictional administrative arrangements, ranging from services wholly delivered by the state/territory through to services wholly delivered by local government. As well, the significant variations in social and geographic criteria between and within jurisdictions create differing community demands and needs, affecting the type and scope of public library services provided.

This version of the report published in 2024 contains some revised national totals figures.

## Introduction

The Australian Public Libraries Statistical Report is an annual project that identifies and measures the usage and activities of Australia's public library services. The report is compiled by National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) using data supplied by the authority responsible for public library services in each state and territory.

NSLA is a collaboration between the national, state and territory libraries of Australia and the National Library of New Zealand. In Australia, NSLA members also represent the interests of the public library networks within their jurisdictions and work closely with colleagues in the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), and the ALIA Australian Public Library Alliance (APLA).

Following a national review in 2020-21, a number of changes were made to the annual data collection survey to update the statistics collected to better reflect current public library services and usage. Last reviewed as part of the *Guidelines, standards and outcome measures for Australian public libraries* (ALIA, July 2016), the data collected previously focused on loans, footfall and providing access to technology. The review added measures to reflect how library services are being used in an increasingly digital age (e.g. wifi being used with users' own devices, rather than using library-owned PCs) and the expanded services being offered, such as bookable spaces, facilitated bookclubs and online programming. The greatest change was to program reporting, which is now aligned with the outcome measures for Australian libraries<sup>1</sup>, reflecting libraries' increased role in e-government- transformation and digital and information literacy, workforce skills, community engagement, personal wellbeing and business development. New measures are marked with an asterisk (\*) in the data tables.

### 1. Selected national statistics 2021-22

The 2021-22 reporting period was again significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the mandatory closures and restrictions in each state and territory throughout the 12-month period. The impact of lockdowns and physical location closures, social distancing constraints, limitations on onsite programming and physical attendance are apparent in the relevant statistics. Challenges in this report include that the measures designed for physical library locations have struggled to capture the innovative remote service delivery options used by public libraries to deliver services through these challenges. More information on the responses by Australia's public library services to the unprecedented circumstances are included in the commentaries by state/territory in section 4 of this report.

#### Summary of findings

In 2021-22:

- access to public library services was provided through 1,706 service points, including 1,405 branches, 74 mobile libraries serving hundreds of separate locations, and 227 other outlets
- total usage of public library collections was over 146 million instances, comprised of almost 103 million loans of physical items and more than 43 million loans, downloads and retrievals from electronic collections.
- a significant rise in electronic collections use and a decline in in-person visits to library facilities over the past three years reflects the continued impacts of COVID restrictions.
- total collections of more than 42 million items (1.6 items per capita) were available for the use of the community, with investment of more than \$135 million to ensure that these collections remained up to date and relevant
- more than 259,000 library programs attracted over 3.5 million attendances, with many library services increasing online programming in response to community demand and COVID restrictions.
- despite COVID restrictions, 1,478 bookable rooms and meeting spaces were used for 518,000 hours.

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<sup>1</sup> *Guidelines, standards and outcome measures for Australian public libraries*, ALIA July 2016, available at <https://read.alia.org.au/guidelines-standards-and-outcome-measures-australian-public-libraries-july-2016>

## 2. Five-year national comparison

### 2.1 Total expenditure<sup>2</sup>

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22 <sup>3</sup>
<b>Expenditure on public library services</b>	\$1,224.06m	\$1,331.17m	\$1,286.90m	\$1,264.77m	\$1,259.89m
<b>Expenditure per capita</b>	\$48.99	\$52.49	\$50.11	\$49.15	\$48.90
<b>Collections expenditure</b>	\$129.39m	\$133.90m	\$137.76m	\$132.54m	\$135.83m
<b>Collection expenditure per capita</b>	\$5.18	\$5.28	\$5.36	\$5.15	\$5.27

### 2.2 Service points

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
<b>Number of library branches</b>	1,410	1,409	1,407	1,419	1,405
<b>Number of mobile libraries</b>	79	81	80	71	74
<b>Number of other library outlets<sup>4</sup></b>	181	193	177	200	227
<b>Total number of library outlets</b>	1,670	1,683	1,664	1,690	1,706
<b>Total opening hours</b>	2,833,557	2,950,318	2,774,524	2,884,922	2,944,811

### 2.3 Members and visits

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
<b>Registered library members</b>	9,002,081	9,051,026	9,320,784	9,048,570	8,407,465 <sup>5</sup>
<b>Members as % of total population</b>	36%	35.7%	36.3%	35.2%	32.6%
<b>Library visits (physical facilities)</b>	111,480,357	110,612,784	84,229,103	57,747,548	56,329,191
<b>Physical visits per month</b>	9,290,030	9,217,732	7,019,092	4,812,296	4,694,099
<b>Physical visits per capita</b>	4.5	4.4	3.3	2.2	2.2
<b>Website visits</b>	51,018,201	51,901,444	63,627,539	55,077,627	55,607,292
<b>Website visits per capita</b>	2	2.1	2.5	2.2	2.2

### 2.4 Services

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
<b>Public access internet devices<sup>6</sup></b>	13,902	14,228	14,235	12,683	14,247
<b>Programs<sup>7</sup></b>	250,099	273,041	213,295	148,591	259,620
<b>Program attendances</b>	7,035,173	7,441,019	6,425,311	3,887,526	3,527,149
<b>Library-facilitated bookclubs*</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	5,323
<b>Local history collections*</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	488
<b>Bookable meeting rooms/spaces*</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,478
<b>Hours booked in meeting rooms/spaces</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	518,940

<sup>2</sup> Note that these figures have not been adjusted to reflect Consumer Price Index changes over the period.

<sup>3</sup> Note that financial data is still to be received from Brewarrina Shire Council, NSW, which may alter these figures slightly

<sup>4</sup> Includes self-service kiosks (in separate locations from branches), automated vending machines, deposit and unstaffed depots and all other outlets.

<sup>5</sup> Some jurisdictions reported significant membership decreases due to automatic expiry of membership after a certain period of inactivity, which is reflective of the period of COVID disruptions restrictions, and some patrons' reluctance to return to in-person visits.

<sup>6</sup> Inclusive of all public access internet devices for use within library branches, including desktops, laptops and tablets.

<sup>7</sup> Excluding Victoria until 2021-22.

## 2.5 Collections and usage<sup>8</sup>

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Collection items (physical and digital) <sup>9</sup>	39,976,999	39,209,249	37,581,970	39,869,924	42,235,410
Collection items per capita <sup>10</sup>	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.6
Collection usage (all physical and digital transactions)	157,454,780	158,648,004	141,966,136	144,833,515	146,046,652
Collection usage per capita	6.3	6.1	5.5	5.6	5.7

## 2.6 Staff

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Total staff (full time equivalent – FTE)	7,748	7,930	7,852	7,798	7,727
Staff members (FTE) per 10,000 persons	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.0	3.0

## 3. Comparative data

### 3.1 Expenditure

Total expenditure was 0.4% lower in 2021-22, a reflection of reduced funding for libraries in a number of jurisdictions, but expenditure on collection items increased by 1.5%.

	ACT	NSW <sup>11</sup>	NT	QLD	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Aust.
Total expenditure <sup>12</sup>	\$18.9m	\$376.01m	\$12.3m	\$273.9m	\$101.9m	\$39.7m	\$269.5m	\$167.7m	\$1,259.9m
Total expenditure per capita	\$41.64	\$46.45	\$49.48	\$52.02	\$56.40	\$69.62	\$41.09	\$60.72	\$48.90
Total spent on collections	\$1.25m	\$35.25m	\$1.02m	\$31.51m	\$9.63m	\$2.96m	\$41.5m	\$12.71m	\$135.83m
Collections spend per capita	\$2.76	\$4.35	\$4.09	\$5.98	\$5.33	\$5.20	\$6.33	\$4.60	\$5.27

### 3.2 Collections

While some jurisdictions returned to near pre-COVID levels of collection usage (notably NSW and Queensland), others were still very much feeling the effect of lower physical item loans related to less users visiting onsite.

	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Aust.
Total collection usage	1.78m	37.17m	0.72m	36.93m	16.29m	3.33m	34.82m	14m	146.05m
Total number of physical items	0.35m	13.13m	0.35m	5.84m	2.84m	0.52m	7.33m	3.93m	32.29m
Total number of digital items	0.18m	2.51m	0.32m	2.41m	0.21m	0.1m	1.34m	1.14m	8.21m
Local history collections	1	88	11	69	82	45	49	143	487

<sup>8</sup> Reported collections are inclusive of all formats, including physical and electronic/digital collections and services.

<sup>9</sup> The identification and inclusion of consortia-level collection items is a factor in the large increases reported in 2017-18 and 2018-19. New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia report substantial consortia holdings.

<sup>10</sup> The per capita measure includes all reported consortia holdings.

<sup>11</sup> Note that financial data is still to be received from Brewarrina Shire Council, NSW, which may alter these figures

<sup>12</sup> Total includes purchase of library materials

### 3.3 Visitation

For the first time, libraries have reported on the number of hours booked in publicly available meeting rooms and spaces. Community groups, local organisations, library partners and individuals used these spaces for more than half a million hours in 2021-22.

	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Aust.
<b>Onsite visitors</b>	0.83m	12.79m	0.72m	13.18m	6.54m	2.16m	12.46m	7.64m	<b>56.3m</b>
<b>Website visits, incl. catalogue</b>	5.27m	11.89m	0.22m	13.17m	10.1m	2.9m	8.03m	4.01m	<b>55.61m</b>
<b>Hours booked in rooms/spaces*</b>	3,315	88,781	4,226	1,50,471	94,495	43,235	83,998	50,419	<b>518,940</b>

### 3.4 Internet access

In 2021-22 for the first time libraries reported on the number of hours of use for public access internet devices, rather than just the number of devices available. To reflect the large number of visitors using their own laptops, tablets, smartphones and ereaders within libraries, the number of wifi sessions and usage hours were introduced as new measures.

	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Aust.
<b>Public access devices</b>	70	4,728	246	2,981	1,330	569	3,137	1,186	<b>14,247</b>
<b>Public device usage hours*</b>	20,931	924,951	72,064	2,981	521,641	85,365	650,817	416,566	<b>3,538,690</b>
<b>Total wifi sessions*</b>	n/a	3,695,876	372,706	1,795,305	305,245	1,846,643	n/a	571,938	<b>8,587,713</b>
<b>Hours of wifi use*</b>	n/a	n/a	106,806	1,282,780	n/a	n/a	1,320,214	338,770	<b>3,048,570</b>

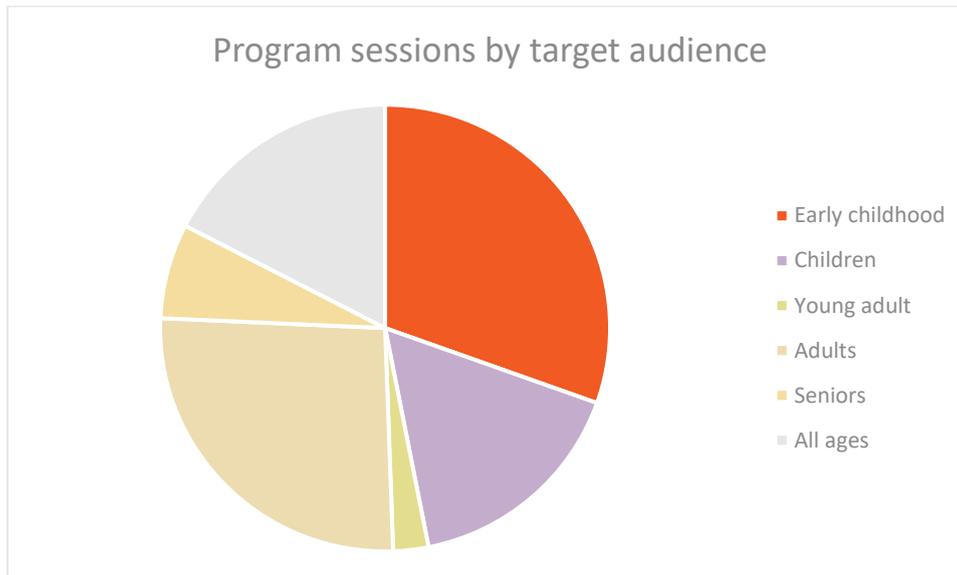
### 3.5 Public programs

Where previously only the total number of program sessions and participants was reported, the measures introduced from 2021-22 aim to demonstrate the range of programs for different audiences, and by their primary purpose (literacy and lifelong learning, digital inclusion, wellbeing, etc.).

#### 3.5.1 Programs by target audience\*

These measures show libraries' response to community demand for programming aimed at particular life-stage demographics and needs. For example, the high number of sessions aimed at an early childhood audience reflects the important role libraries continue to play in pre-school literacy and learning.

SESSIONS	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Aust.
<b>Early childhood</b>	588	15,072	1,169	23,441	7,492	1,494	17,130	12,984	<b>79,370</b>
<b>Children</b>	90	7,023	716	6,866	6,959	438	9,069	11,488	<b>42,649</b>
<b>Young adult</b>	n/a	1,445	170	1,506	281	n/a	1,706	1,434	<b>6,542</b>
<b>Adults</b>	176	10,718	475	3,026	9,326	3,868	18,250	22,304	<b>68,143</b>
<b>Seniors</b>	9	4,973	270	1,073	2,563	49	2,259	6,573	<b>17,769</b>
<b>All ages</b>	71	2,510	687	21,821	7,079	n/a	7,441	5,538	<b>45,147</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>934</b>	<b>41,741</b>	<b>3,487</b>	<b>57,733</b>	<b>33,700</b>	<b>5,849</b>	<b>55,855</b>	<b>60,321</b>	<b>259,620</b>



Note that these sessions are categorised by the primary audience they are intended for, not by the demographics of those who chose to participate. For example, the number of people who attended sessions aimed at a general adult audience could include young adults and seniors, and any accompanying minors.

PARTICIPANTS	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Aust.
Early childhood	12,264	269,187	6,175	453,638	163,906	28,443	387,408	274,977	<b>1,595,998</b>
Children	2,124	127,383	9,751	159,260	113,927	6,063	193,432	107,703	<b>719,634</b>
Young adult	n/a	20,177	3,312	15,161	4,326	n/a	16,300	11,560	<b>70,836</b>
Adults	2,434	132,236	2,131	46,664	64,044	19,744	174,607	114,756	<b>556,616</b>
Seniors	159	29,964	2,517	12,799	13,298	442	18,041	17,590	<b>94,810</b>
All ages	1,758	63,329	10,050	254,505	47,489	n/a	80,359	31,756	<b>489,246</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18,739</b>	<b>642,276</b>	<b>33,936</b>	<b>942,027</b>	<b>406,990</b>	<b>54,629</b>	<b>870,147</b>	<b>558,342</b>	<b>3,527,149</b>

### 3.5.2 Programs by outcome area\*

These newly introduced measures illustrate programs and program participation in line with the six outcome measures<sup>13</sup> for Australian public libraries:

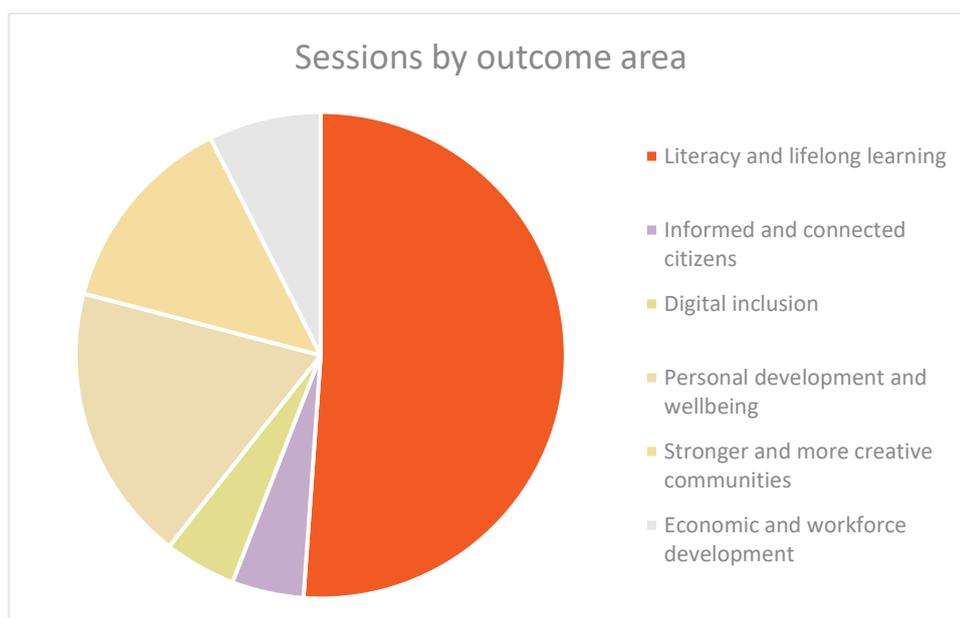
- Literacy and lifelong learning - Programs whose primary purpose relates to literacy and/or educational learning, e.g. story time, English conversation, homework help, reading-related programs, programs supporting development of learning habits and skills.
- Informed and connected citizens - Programs whose primary purpose is to connect participants to their community and/or build the capacity of the community to participate in community discussions, access government services and participate in political processes, e.g. eGov sessions, new residents morning teas.
- Digital inclusion - Programs whose primary purpose is to increase participants' confidence using digital technology, e.g. Tech Savvy Seniors, PC skills, internet skills, coding.
- Personal development and wellbeing - Programs whose primary purpose is social inclusion or personal development, e.g. hobby clubs (Lego, knitting, video games, etc.), author talks, health-related programs.
- Stronger and more creative communities - Programs whose primary purpose is to support expressions of culture, identity and community pride, e.g. cultural celebrations, multilingual programming, local history events, writing workshops.

<sup>13</sup> Guidelines, standards and outcome measures for Australian public libraries, ALIA July 2016, available at <https://read.alia.org.au/guidelines-standards-and-outcome-measures-australian-public-libraries-july-2016>

- Economic and workforce development - Programs whose primary purpose is to improve employment and productivity outcomes, e.g. programs for jobseekers, programs for micro/small business owners, vocational programs.

Literacy and lifelong learning programs were both the most-run and the best-attended, demonstrating libraries' trusted and established role in this area. We also see libraries playing a strong community role as hubs for cultural and creative expression and for inclusivity.

SESSIONS	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Aust.
Literacy and lifelong learning	723	18,481	1,637	38,662	11,902	3,155	28,916	15,609	119,085
Informed and connected citizens	2	1,143	324	1,947	1,231	72	3,441	2,823	10,983
Digital inclusion	5	3,069	292	9,983	9,507	1,968	8,758	9,189	42,771
Personal development and wellbeing	53	6,732	609	3,391	5,016	384	7,415	7,685	31,285
Stronger and more creative communities	42	3,444	384	475	2,789	223	5,800	4,083	17,240
Economic and workforce development	20	6,153	241	3,275	1,465	47	1,525	385	13,111



PARTICIPANTS	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Aust.
Literacy and lifelong learning	13,370	330,073	48,627	752,360	243,520	42,161	569,251	306,536	2,305,898
Informed and connected citizens	73	21,894	3,289	37,557	27,241	1,506	65,579	21,250	178,389
Digital inclusion	24	25,617	2,822	44,089	21,284	5,139	38,537	28,672	166,184
Personal development and wellbeing	2,213	97,278	8,218	38,501	56,806	4,548	108,145	63,977	379,686
Stronger and more creative communities	733	71,648	6,864	22,160	19,283	1,239	82,310	49,618	253,855
Economic and workforce development	234	6,153	424	47,360	11,164	99	6,325	1,546	73,305
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16,647</b>	<b>552,663</b>	<b>70,244</b>	<b>942,027</b>	<b>379,298</b>	<b>54,692</b>	<b>870,147</b>	<b>471,599</b>	<b>3,357,317</b>

### 3.5.4 Programs by delivery mode\*

This new measure aims to reflect libraries' efforts to meet community needs by delivering programs in diverse modes, depending on the audience or content. They are:

- library onsite: at the library, delivered/arranged by the library
- partner onsite: delivered by a partner organisation at the library; use of facilities only, not private hire
- community location: offsite and outreach
- online: livestreamed, pre-recorded, posted on social media.

SESSIONS	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Aust.
<b>Library onsite</b>	630	32,262	2,981	45,393	47,892	5,131	39,056	43,947	<b>217,292</b>
<b>Partner onsite</b>	160	1,985	344	6,108	1,732	288	6,412	4,592	<b>21,621</b>
<b>Community location</b>	35	1,381	86	3,831	1,266	408	4,384	1,756	<b>13,147</b>
<b>Online</b>	109	6,357	76	2,401	781	22	6,003	237	<b>15,986</b>

PARTICIPANTS	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Aust.
<b>Library onsite</b>	12,157	428,600	42,579	641,141	n/a	42,111	604,282	450,579	<b>2,221,449</b>
<b>Partner onsite</b>	1,906	26,914	7,261	n/a	n/a	3,114	55,260	46,571	<b>131,026</b>
<b>Community location</b>	953	46,590	4,684	185,154	n/a	6,168	104,142	36,710	<b>384,401</b>
<b>Online views<sup>14</sup></b>	3,723	565,441	15,720	115,732	151,555	3,299	106,463	182,709	<b>1,144,624</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18,739</b>	<b>1,067,545</b>	<b>70,244</b>	<b>942,027</b>	<b>151,555</b>	<b>54,692</b>	<b>870,147</b>	<b>716,569</b>	<b>3,881,500</b>

<sup>14</sup> Number of views of programs online (livestreamed or pre-recorded and shared via social media)

## 4. Commentary by state/territory

While this report aims to provide a broad snapshot of Australia's public library services, it must be noted that it is difficult to use this data to compare state/territory services with each other.

Not least of the reasons for this are that public libraries are governed by a variety of jurisdictional administrative arrangements, ranging from services wholly delivered by the state/territory through to services wholly delivered by local government. As well, the significant variations in social and geographic criteria between and within jurisdictions create differing community demands and needs, affecting the type and scope of public library services provided. The diverse delivery methods used to provide public library services is also a factor.

With this in mind, each state and territory has provided a brief commentary below on the reporting period, noting any reasons for significant changes in service delivery or uptake, including the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on our services and patrons.

### Australian Capital Territory

The impacts of COVID-19 pandemic were major challenges, with increased library closures due to illness and staff shortages. Occupational violence has also increased over the reporting period, and Libraries ACT has been working closely with Directorate Security, and Safety and Wellbeing Teams, as well as local homelessness support services to resolve this.

Despite COVID, Libraries ACT was able to complete public consultation for the Imagine Libraries 2030 community co-design. Strategy documents and plans have been developed that will enable Libraries ACT to respond to and engage with community feedback.

Libraries ACT continued to build on innovations developed during COVID, including expanding the range of online and face-to-face programming on offer. While onsite attendance remains low, the ACT community has fully embraced online programming, with core programs like the Too Busy Book Club continuing to grow a strong audience. Innovative face-to-face programming, such as the inaugural Kid's Lit Festival held in June 2022, is also enticing the public to return to branches. Outreach Coordinators (Family Literacy, Multicultural, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and Disability) have built relationships with new audiences through onsite visits, partnerships, and the development of new programs. Libraries ACT also continues to take advantage of the adaptations staff have made to online working and communications, with examples including tri-weekly all staff meetings, and fortnightly online Top Up Training sessions. These sessions have proven very popular with staff and are an important means of sharing operational and service information across the 11 sites, and to people who continue to work from home.

Originally designed as a COVID response, the Mystery Box Delivery Service continued in 2021-22 due to solid uptake. It provided deliveries to 1,127 customers in 2021-22, and the team received a Highly Commended Award for Customer Service from the Director General, Transport Canberra and City Services. The Home Library Service (HLS) now delivers to childcare and detention facilities as well as individuals, aged care facilities and mental health services. Customer numbers have returned to pre-COVID levels, and HLS loans increased by 44% over the year.

Loans of ebooks and e-audiobooks remain high post COVID, with investment in these areas of the collection shifting accordingly. The collections team also completed a strategic procurement plan for 2021-2026. Book and collection profiles, standing orders, catalogue specifications, requirements, and distribution schedules have all been reviewed and updated to provide customers with more diverse and appealing materials. Large scale collection reviews, weeding projects and space reallocations have also taken place across all 9 public library branches, revitalising the offerings at all branches.

ACT Heritage Library's collection growth continues to be high, and a popular program of public events and exhibitions has brought new audiences to their location in Fyshwick.

Community room use has increased but is still below usual levels. Volunteers have returned to libraries, and Libraries ACT has also undertaken significant volunteer recruitment, to meet the demands of several new volunteer activities.

The Digital Creative Team established new technology facilities at Woden Library from February 2022, with a recording studio, podcast studio, and editing station. The team provides ongoing technical support, and supports public events and marketing initiatives, including live streaming. 105 inductions were provided for The Hive, Community rooms and the Life Lab. These new spaces hosted 158 sessions over 486 hours in the first five months of operation.

### New South Wales

Across NSW there are 363 public library buildings, with a further 59 outlets, and 25 mobile libraries that provide services to approximately 422 smaller and isolated communities.

Public libraries are operated by local councils in accordance with the *Library Act 1939*, with statutory links to the State Government through the State Library of NSW. The State Library works with local libraries to develop quality services, build capacity in the library workforce and ensure library buildings, technology and facilities meet the needs of diverse communities across NSW.

In 2021-22 the Public Library Funding Strategy managed by the State Library delivered a record \$38.618 million to public libraries in subsidies, grants and program support. The NSW Government is providing an additional \$60 million to public libraries over the four years from 2019-20, including \$24 million in capital grants to assist library building and IT improvements.

NSW local councils collectively budgeted over \$411 million for public libraries in 2021-22. Public library service in 2021-22 was significantly affected by COVID-19, with library building closures in place between 1 July and 13 October 2021, followed by mandatory restrictions on visitor capacity between October 2021 and January 2022. Libraries continued to adapt by providing enhanced online services, while other low-contact services, such as click- and-collect and home delivery, provided hard copy materials to readers.

## Northern Territory

Northern Territory public libraries continue to support some of the most remote communities in the world and provide services to a significant culturally and linguistically diverse population of 246,000. In 2021-22 public library services were provided in the Northern Territory through 30 physical library branches, and a range of digital services including free wifi hotspots in 48 remote communities. Library & Archives NT supports local councils to provide library services through operational funding, funding for collections, and centralised services including a Territory-wide library management system, extensive ebook, e-audio and emagazines and research databases and wifi hotspots.

Libraries in the Territory responded to the COVID pandemic by supporting thousands of visitors to navigate the COVID passes for neighbouring states, MyGov, vaccination and a range of e-government requirements.

The increased 'hours open' and onsite visit statistics correlate directly with and reflect a full year of face-to-face program sessions and participants. Membership was significantly impacted by automatic expiry occurring during 2021. The increased ebook, e-audio and emagazines loans is consistent with the national trends.

## Queensland

State Library of Queensland partners with 76 local governments to enable a thriving statewide network of more than 320 public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres.

The ongoing impacts of COVID-19 and series of natural disasters in 2021-22 has resulted in challenges across many cultural industries and sectors, with public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres being no exception. Across the state this resulted in expanded delivery of digital and outreach services and programs.

Highlights from the 2021-22 annual reporting include:

- an increase in the total number of collection items purchased during the year, with a significant increase in expenditure on electronic collections
- collection usage of almost 37 million, a 2.6% increase over the previous year and the first year to see an increase above pre-COVID-19 levels of usage (2018-19)
- library memberships have now reached a total of 2.03 million, which is approximately 39.3% of the Queensland population
- visitation of 13.1 million was recorded for both physical and online visitation – taking the total number of combined visits to 26.2 million
- while programming numbers are still to recover to pre-COVID19 levels, 2021-22 has seen a significant increase in the total number of programs delivered (increased by 62.9%) and face-to-face program attendances (increased by 75.4%) since the previous year
- celebrating the establishment of a new Indigenous Knowledge Centre in Mapoon
- First 5 Forever program continued to support strong language and literacy foundations for all Queensland children aged 0-5 years through the delivery of more than 24,000 early literacy sessions across all councils, and the development of a total of 748 community partnerships.

Despite these achievements, the reporting revealed that the majority of libraries are not meeting the Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines for visitation, membership, program attendance or collection usage.

State Library continues to advocate for, partner with and provide support and development opportunities to Queensland's public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres to enable them to deliver high quality services in these changing operating environments, in response to new ways communities are wanting to access public library resources and that continue to meet the needs of their communities now and into the future.

## South Australia

The newly established Collaboration Agreement between the Local Government Association and Libraries Board of SA ensures the continued provision of services and support to South Australia's 92 public libraries until 2026. The South Australian Public Library Network received \$20.7m from the State Government to maintain the state's OneCard network, ensuring that every person, regardless of how remotely they live, will have access to a vast collection of almost 3 million items.

The tools used to collect South Australian library statistics have also changed; a move guided by a network- designed Performance Framework. This framework's measures are intended to direct the optimal allocation of future funding, effort, and project resources to enhance performance. This change in survey tools has been augmented by the introduction of customer surveys; a process that is already yielding interesting trend data concerning customer experience. To this date, over 12,000 customers have participated.

The easing of COVID-19 restrictions saw increases in the number of onsite program sessions, which soared 115% from 2020-21. Of note is the number of digital inclusion program sessions, which increased by 106%. Digital inclusion program attendance also increased by 37%, reflecting targeted state-wide 'being digital' programming. This programming was designed to deliver digital literacy and inclusion resources across all South Australian public libraries, including those school community libraries that serve remote and sparsely populated communities.

2021-22 also saw the South Australian community increase their interactions with libraries in other ways. The number of hours booked in meeting spaces, for example, increased by 112%, while the total physical items loaned from Station Libraries increased by 11%. Public access device use also improved, this time by 37%. Also worth stating is the number of active users equal to or greater than 75 years old, which rose by 4%.

A tender process for the supply of digital content to all South Australian libraries commenced in December 2021. This rigorous contract review process identified significant savings for the network, with expenditure being reduced by 6% from 2020-21. Loan rates for consortium-owned ebooks and digital audiobooks continue to grow, with December 2022 numbers increasing 23% from those documented in December 2021 to a record 2,183,717 loans.

## Tasmania

Across Tasmania's state-wide public library network there are 45 public libraries, a library at Risdon Prison and online services at Bruny Island. The state-wide lending collection allows for items to be borrowed and returned to any library in the state.

Public libraries are managed and operated along with the State Library of Tasmania and Tasmania Archives by Libraries Tasmania within the Department for Education, Children and Young People. In 2021-2022 Libraries Tasmania improved public library reporting for these statistics by excluding State Library and Archive Service data. This has meant a more accurate count in a number of areas, including for permanent full-time equivalent employees working in or contributing to public library functions in Libraries Tasmania.

Continued investment in public library lending collections, including State Government Contemporary Library Resources funding, enabled the purchase of over 20,000 physical books for the lending collections, as well as 652 Book Group items. There were 756 New Release Express Service items added to enhance popular collections.

Improved discoverability interfaces including a new Libraries Tasmania Lending App, contemporary shelving and interactive touch screens contributed to 92.6% of members reporting that they found what they were looking for.

COVID-19 continued to negatively impact user engagement in Libraries Tasmania services up until the last four months of the 2021-22 financial year. While the easing of restrictions since early March 2022 and returning confidence post-border re-opening have led to small increases in a number of areas, the most significant increase remains in online services, with digital item loans increasing by more than 14% on the previous financial year.

Libraries Tasmania enhanced diversity, inclusion and access through the expanded provision of programs and events including multicultural and multilingual Storytime sessions. The purchase of 587 bilingual board and picture book titles for the children's collection saw loans for these items increase around 400% since bilingual titles were added to the children's lending collection. There was increased promotion of LGBTIQ+ related ebooks and audiobooks from the online lending

collection and a gender-neutral title field for new memberships was introduced. A new membership for those without a permanent address was introduced to enable more people to become library members.

Our libraries continued to make improvements to enable universal access. These included providing access to Lexia (online literacy tool) for adult learners to improve literacy skills from home, while we reconfigured library layouts to make it easier for wheelchair users to navigate around and access lending items and computers. A sensory-friendly hour was also introduced at selected libraries with spaces and technology made available for children on the autism spectrum.

Libraries Tasmania provided opportunities for more than 600 volunteers who added value to our services, made community connections and built their skills. In the 2021-22 period, they gave 41,150 hours of their time as home library couriers, adult literacy tutors, learning mentors and general volunteers, many of whom gave digital support to clients.

## Victoria

In 2021-22, Victorian public library services were delivered through 38 stand-alone single local government area (LGA) library services, 10 regional library corporations (servicing 29 LGAs) and two library networks (12 LGAs). Local government is responsible for service provision and provided 80% of the total \$265M library funding, with the State Government contributing 18%.

The composition of the Victorian library sector continues to change incrementally as individual LGAs move from long-standing service alliances to explore new collaborative approaches encouraged through the *Local Government Act 2020*. This is creating opportunities to realise efficiencies in collection management, library systems and service administration.

The impact of COVID on public library use was once again a dominant feature of the Victorian library landscape in 2021-22. Lockdowns and restrictions on access continued until March 2022, with library branches accessible to users for only 59% of the full year, compared with 48% in 2020-21 and approximately 70% in 2019-20. Library visits and attendance at library programs were 60% below pre-COVID levels, with total borrowing 36% below pre-COVID levels. Downloads of digital items have increased by 75% since 2018-19, and in 2021-22 settled at 25% of total borrowing, up from 11% in 2018-19 but down on the 28% recorded in 2020-21.

One positive outcome from the COVID-related library closures has been unleashing of the innovative capacity of the library workforce who have taken the opportunity to trial new service models in an effort to maintain service provision to their communities. The adoption of click-and-collect service models, online programming, open libraries, and new mobile and outreach approaches has sustained community connections that library users have praised for contributing to their personal health and wellbeing and community resilience.

Investment in library infrastructure continues to grow with local government, supported by the State Government's Living Libraries Infrastructure Program, embarking on development of new libraries in areas of high population growth, major replacements and expansions, and significant refurbishment of ageing libraries in metropolitan, regional and rural areas.

More than 18,000 library users from all parts of the state participated in a survey in March 2022 that captured information on the profile of library users, their access to and use of library services, their satisfaction with service provision and the impact on their lives and communities. Another 16,000 people participated in a state-wide census of library users on 24 May 2022. The data from these two major community engagement exercises has shown the high value people place on their local library services and is being used for service planning and advocacy.

## Western Australia

Western Australian public library services are delivered through a partnership between state and local government.

Agreements between the Library Board of Western Australia (representing the state) and local governments have been in place for more than 70 years. In 2022, the Public Libraries Working Group working on behalf of state and local government released the WA Public Libraries Strategy 2022-26<sup>15</sup> to deliver more agile and innovative public library services and programs that respond to the diverse needs of Western Australian communities and are sustainable into the future.

A new public library funding model came into effect from 1 July 2021 enabling metropolitan and large regional local governments to have more autonomy in decision making about how they spend State funding. It also redirects State Library support to smaller regional and remote local governments as well as capacity building and contract management to support the entire network. Under the model, metropolitan and large regional local governments can apply for up to 20% of their allocated state funding as a cash grant to spend on library priorities including technology, programs and new services. Two grant streams have been introduced to support smaller regional and remote local governments to implement library technologies and programs based on technology and to encourage promising practice.

In 2021, the government made funding available for the expansion of the State Library's Better Beginnings Family Literacy

Program<sup>16</sup> in the Pilbara and Kimberley regions of the state and for community-based organisations state-wide to receive grants to support early childhood literacy programs and initiatives.

Statistical information gathered from the state's 232 local public libraries showed an increase in the number of people visiting both in person and online. There was an increase in the number of loans of online resources (11%), like ebooks and e-audiobooks, with a corresponding decrease in loans of physical items (3%). A quarter of all loans are now online resources (24%, up from 21% last year). Public libraries offered more programs and events (38%), both in person and online, that attracted more participants across age ranges (14%).

The number of active members reported decreased (38%). This may have been a lingering effect of COVID where members are still reluctant to visit a public library in person. There was also a change in the wording of the definition of an active member that led to more accurate reporting. It is believed public libraries may have been over-reporting in the past by including non-active members.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://slwa.wa.gov.au/about/partnerships/local-government-public-libraries/wa-public-libraries-strategy-2022-2026>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.better-beginnings.com.au/>

## 5. Data sources

The data used to prepare this report is available from each individual State or Territory authority. It should be noted that the data may vary from that published separately by individual States and Territories.

For further information on the data please contact:

### **Australian Capital Territory**

Libraries ACT  
PO Box 158  
CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601

### **New South Wales**

Public Library Services  
State Library of New South Wales  
Macquarie St  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

### **Northern Territory**

Assistant Director, Library Sector Services  
Library & Archives NT  
Department of Tourism, Sport and Culture  
GPO Box 42  
DARWIN NT 0801

### **Queensland**

State Library of Queensland  
PO Box 3488  
SOUTH BRISBANE QLD 4101

### **South Australia**

Public Library Services  
GPO BOX 1971  
ADELAIDE SA 5001

### **Tasmania**

Libraries Tasmania  
91 Murray Street  
HOBART TAS 7000

### **Victoria**

Chief Executive Officer Public  
Libraries Victoria Level 12/60  
Collins Street MELBOURNE VIC  
3000

### **Western Australia**

State Library of Western Australia  
25 Francis Street, Perth Cultural Centre  
PERTH WA 6000

## 6. 2021–2022 summary data

	ACT	NSW	NT	Qld	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Australia
<b>Income</b>									
Operational funding from Australian Government	NA	NA	NA	NA	\$1,333,314	NA	\$477,924	\$295,951	\$2,107,189
Operational funding from state/territory govt	\$12,854,000	\$33,152,615	\$7,158,750	\$26,994,983	\$2,675,673	\$40,005,006	\$49,855,636	\$946,840	\$160,789,503
Operational funding from local government	NA	NA	\$4,798,002	\$228,957,760	\$68,713,260	NA	\$212,421,810	\$108,647,669	\$623,538,501
Capital funding from Australian Government	NA	NA	NA	NA	\$377,714	NA	NA	\$2,885,345	\$3,263,059
Capital funding from state/territory government	\$3,544,044	\$6,000,000	\$231,000	\$0	\$805,571	\$470,000	\$13,926,633	\$8,460,202	\$29,893,406
Capital funding from local government	NA	NA	\$2,000	\$19,263,754	\$1,310,891	NA	\$13,867,617	\$2,086,354	\$36,530,616
Income from sponsorship	\$464,495	NA	\$909	NA	\$49,748	NA	NA	\$166,856	\$217,513
Other income	\$339,882	NA	\$331,954	\$10,205,862	\$1,437,939	\$2,074,555	\$6,334,615	\$3,919,128	\$24,304,053
<b>Expenditure</b>									
Wages and salaries	\$10,645,485	\$202,963,755	\$8,077,517	\$136,170,240	\$59,971,301	\$28,800,029	\$180,125,499	\$78,634,635	\$694,742,976
Professional development costs	\$86,976	n/a	\$67,951	\$388,192	\$193,403	\$165,635	\$0	\$215,857	\$1,031,038
Operating and corporate expenses	\$5,976,061	n/a	\$2,788,788	\$76,842,328	\$21,377,864	\$7,269,661	\$33,425,406	\$39,278,242	\$180,982,289
Expenditure on physical library collections	\$741,728	\$24,008,495	\$703,024	\$22,189,267	\$7,927,310	\$1,726,407	\$30,183,060	\$9,570,819	\$96,308,382
Expenditure on digital library collections	\$507,598	\$11,237,305	\$315,626	\$9,320,693	\$1,702,597	\$1,237,801	\$11,319,723	\$3,138,390	\$38,272,135
Capital expenditure	\$802,815	\$4,495,818	\$132,517	\$27,943,027	\$8,633,827	\$469,500	\$13,563,149	\$36,885,441	\$92,123,279
Other expenditure	\$116,271	\$133,309,265	\$249,061	\$1,010,363	\$2,082,338	NA	\$902,835	NA	<b>\$137,553,862</b>
<b>Staffing</b>									
Number of permanent full-time equivalent (FTE) employees	103.29	2,299	79	1588	736.9	206	1876.7	837.7	7,623
Positions (not FTE) that require an ALIA-recognised library technician qualification	0	622.91	8	180	102	5	0	51	969
Positions requiring an ALIA- recognised library and information science qualification - undergraduate or postgraduate	26	714.13	13	363	153	11	0	236	1,490
Positions requiring a non-library qualification, e.g. accounting, marketing, education	0	269.24	15	96	74	1	0	70	525
<b>Collections</b>									

Total physical items in permanent collections	352,185	13,134,313	346,333	5,843,576	2,836,265	518,751	7,326,245	3,931,539	33,937,022
Total digital items in permanent collections	183,760	2,512,059	31,983	2,414,162	212,779	104,723	1,342,057	1,144,680	7,762,443
Number of libraries with a local history collection	1	88	11	69	82	45	49	143	487
Total physical item loans	939,545	25,403,785	572,891	24,525,281	12,031,360	2,413,985	26,130,656	10,934,026	102,011,984
Total digital item loans	554,315	7,072,331	146,236	6,305,329	2,431,670	823,680	8,673,956	3,394,262	28,847,464
Total digital device loans	0	2,262	NA	NA	9,579	0	14,209	1,865	27,915
Total sessions streaming content from library-enabled sources, e.g. Kanopy, Freegal Music, Naxos	100,083	1,151,627	NA	NA	194,188	92,875	0	192,397	1,631,087
Total usage sessions for database and other electronic services e.g. Lynda, Ancestry, Find My Past	186,668	3,541,647	3,675	6,103,155	1,625,581	NA	0	473,533	11,747,591
<b>Services and usage</b>									
Total active registered library members	197,603	2,863,295	54,366	2,031,736	484,213	105,245	2,033,800	637,207	8,209,862
Number of library visitors (physical) to all branches/outlets	832,404	12,786,536	722,237	13,181,271	6,536,717	2,164,303	12,463,542	7,642,181	55,496,787
Number of library website visitors	5,274,124	11,886,519	224,106	13,168,593	10,101,158	2,904,717	8,034,059	4,014,016	50,333,168
Number of bookable meeting rooms/spaces available for hire or use	22	397	6	224	176	106	301	246	1,456
Number of hours booked in library meetings or spaces	3,315	88,781	4,226	150,471	94,495	43,235	83,998	50,419	515,625
Number of library branches	10	362	31	301	141	45	283	232	1,395
Number of mobile libraries	0	28	0	12	5		25	4	74
Number of other library outlets	0	84	3	13	7	5	97	18	227
Total annual opening hours for all library outlets	15,855	858,959	31,617	553,575	278,057	66,962	708,550	431,236	2,928,956
Number of library services (not physical library branches) providing a home library delivery service	1	85	2	41	58	1	47	103	337
Number of individuals/organisations utilising home library services	1,127	11,676	42	4,652	3,850	801	4,735	2,392	28,148
	<b>ACT</b>	<b>NSW</b>	<b>NT</b>	<b>Qld</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>Tas.</b>	<b>Vic.</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>Australia</b>
Number of public access devices	70	4,728	246	2,981	1,330	569	3,137	1,186	14,177
Number of hours public access devices in use	20,931	92,4951	72,064	846,355	521,641	85,365.45	650,817	416,566	3,517,759
Number of wifi sessions	0	3,695,876	372706	1795305	305245	1846643		571938	8,587,713

Number of hours of wifi use	NA	NA	106,806	1,282,780	NA	NA	1,320,214	338,770	3,048,570
Number of library-facilitated book clubs	238	1,483	10	1,011	632	195	1,440	314	5,085
Number of local partnerships with businesses, education or community organisations	51	1,329	102	2,001	1,396	92	1,935	1,495	8,350
<b>Programs</b>									
Program target audience: Early childhood	588	15,072	1,169	23,441	7,492	1,494	17,130	12,984	78,782
Program target audience: Children	90	7,023	716	6,866	6,959	438	9,069	11,488	42,559
Program target audience: Young adult	0	1,445	170	1,506	281		1,706	1,434	6,542
Program target audience: Adults	176	10,718	475	3,026	9,326	3,868	18,250	22,304	67,967
Program target audience: Seniors	9	4,973	270	1,073	2,563	49	2,259	6,573	17,760
Program target audience: All ages	71	2,510	687	21,821	7,079		7,441	5,538	45,076
Participants: Early childhood programs	12,264	269,187	6,175	453,638	163,906	28,443	387,408	274,977	1,583,734
Participants: Children's programs	2,124	127,383	9,751	159,260	113,927	6,063	193,432	107,703	717,519
Participants: Young adult programs	0	20,177	3,312	15,161	4,326		16,300	11,560	70,836
Participants: Adult programs	2,434	132,236	2,131	46,664	64,044	19,744	174,607	114,756	554,182
Participants: Seniors' programs	159	29,964	2,517	12,799	13,298	442	18,041	17,590	94,651
Participants: All ages' programs	1,758	63,329	10,050	254,505	47,489		80,359	31,756	487,488
Sessions: Literacy and lifelong learning	723	18,481	1,637	38,662	11,902	3,155	28,916	15,609	118,362
Sessions: Informed and connected citizens	2	1,143	324	1,947	1,231	72	3,441	2,823	10,981
Sessions: Digital inclusion	5	3,069	292	9,983	9,507	1,968	8,758	9,189	42,766
Sessions: Personal development and wellbeing	53	6,732	609	3,391	5,016	384	7,415	7,685	31,232
Sessions: Stronger and more creative communities	42	3,444	384	475	2,789	223	5,800	4,083	17,198
Sessions: Economic and workforce development	20	6,153	241	3,275	1,465	47	1,525	385	13,091

	ACT	NSW	NT	Qld	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Australia
Participants: Literacy and lifelong learning	13,370	330,073	48,627	752,360	243,520	42,161	569,251	306,536	2,292,528
Participants: Informed and connected citizens	73	21,894	3,289	37,557	27,241	1,506	65,579	21,250	178,316
Participants: Digital inclusion	24	25,617	2,822	44,089	21,284	5,139	38,537	28,672	166,160
Participants: Personal development and wellbeing	2,213	97,278	8,218	38,501	56,806	4,548	108,145	63,977	377,473
Participants: Stronger and more creative communities	733	71,648	6,864	22,160	19,283	1,239	82,310	49,618	253,122
Participants: Economic and workforce development	234	6,153	424	47,360	11,164	99	6,325	1,546	73,071
Delivery: Library onsite (at the library, arranged by the library)	630	32,262	2,981	45,393	47,892	5,131	39,056	43,947	216,662
Delivery: Partner onsite (at the library, use of facilities only, not private hire)	160	1,985	344	6,108	1,732	288	6,412	4,592	21,461
Delivery: Community location (offsite and outreach)	35	1,381	86	3,831	1,266	408	4,384	1,756	13,112
Delivery: Online (livestreamed, pre-recorded, posted on social media)	109	6,357	76	2,401	781	22	6,003	237	15,877
Participants: Library onsite (at the library, arranged by the library)	12,157	428,600	42,579	641,141	NA	42,111	604,282	450,579	2,209,292
Participants: Partner onsite (at the library, use of facilities only, not private hire)	1,906	26,914	7,261	NA	NA	3,114	55,260	46,571	139,120
Participants: Community location (offsite and outreach)	953	46,590	4,684	185,154	NA	6,168	104,142	36,710	383,448
Number of views of programs online (livestreamed or pre-recorded and shared via social media)	3,723	565,441	15,720	115,732	151,555	3,299	106,463	182,709	1,140,919