

# ALIA Information Online 2017

Conference report

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National Library of Australia

Hi everyone, thanks for coming. My name is Danelle and today I'll be talking about my experience at the ALIA Information Online conference, and sharing with you some of the talks that I enjoyed the most.



The theme for the year was Data, Information, Knowledge, and it was interesting to see the different ways this was explored by the over 80 speakers at the conference. Some presentations were focused heavily on data usage and linked data, while others concentrated more on assisting readers to acquire knowledge by sharing our data and information through spaces and technology. The talks I have chosen to talk about today all focus on enhancing the user experience and interaction with collecting institutions, whether this is online, through public spaces, or through their collections.

The papers and powerpoints/videos for all of the presentations I'm covering today are available on the ALIA Online website, I really encourage you to take a look if you're interested. I'm able to share slides from the presentations today thanks to the authors sharing their work under creative commons licensing.

One of the reasons there were so many people from the NLA attending the conference is that many of them were actually presenting. There was a really wide range of topics covered, so I just wanted to start by recapping the NLA presentations for you.



## The museum as a public library

Sebastian Chan  
Chief Experience Officer  
(CXO), Australian Centre for  
the Moving Image (ACMI)

The first presentation I want to share with you today was probably my favourite for the conference, it was the keynote by Sebastian Chan who was speaking about the museum as a public library. Sebastian is currently the Chief Experience Officer at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image in Melbourne (ACMI). Before ACMI, he was the Director of Digital & Emerging Media at Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum in New York, and before this he was at the Powerhouse Museum.

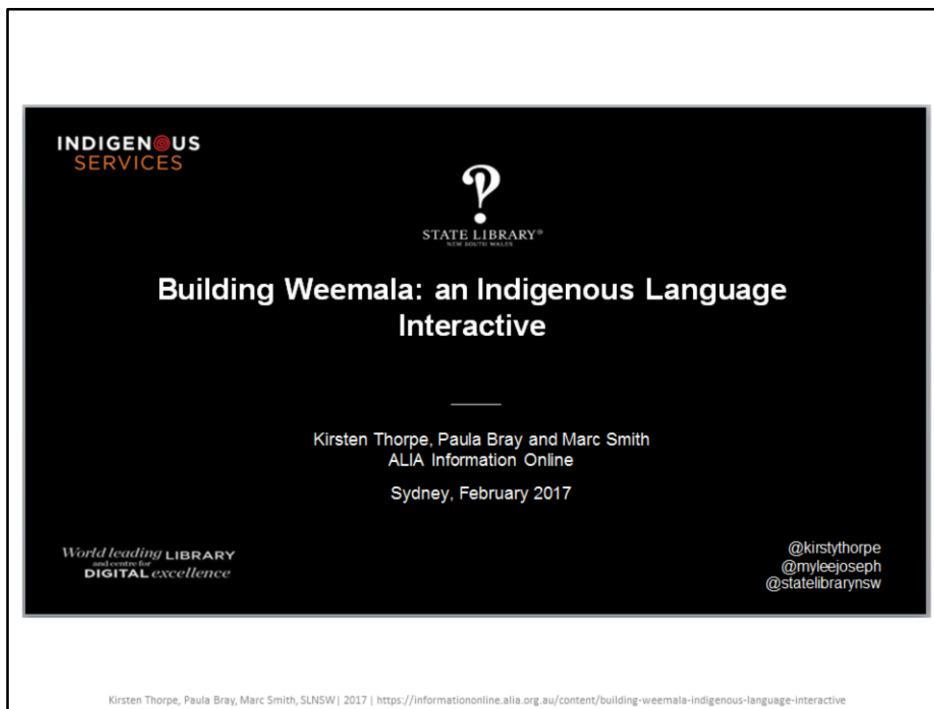
I was really inspired by Sebastian's enthusiasm for helping audiences connect with collections through the use of technology.

The technology that Sebastian designed and implemented was innovative and clever, but he was very clear throughout his talk that his main focus wasn't on the technology itself, but with connecting audiences with the collection, and technology was just a way to achieve that.

His work at the Cooper Hewitt Design Museum was absolutely incredible. They closed the whole Museum for three years while they redesigned it, and created installations such as interactive wallpaper, and a very intelligent pen. Sebastian's keynote video is actually on ALIA Online website, but it doesn't show you his slides so you can't get the whole experience, so I wanted to show you a bit of this youtube video which summarises some of the projects that he spoke about. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5V6AIRZ9Gbs>



<https://youtu.be/SV6AIRZ9Gbs>



Ok up next is ‘Building Weemala’ by Kirsten Thorpe, Paula Bray and Marc Smith from the SLNSW. This was a tricky one to write about, because I went back to check my notes and discovered I hadn’t taken any – I had been too enthralled by the talk! Weemala is an interactive site that was launched in 2016, which incorporates language material from the Library’s collections relating to Indigenous Australian placenames on an interactive map of Australia. In their talk, Kirsten, Paula and Marc talked about developing the site as a part of their rediscovering Indigenous Languages project. I’ll just pop over to the site now to give you an idea of how it works.

## Dataset: Survey Forms



**The Anthropological Society of Australasia.**

1911

THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALASIA. FORM 1. (1911.)

THE SOCIETY'S OFFICE, 10, ROYAL SOCIETY BUILDINGS, 7, MARK LANE, LONDON, E.C. 4.

THIS FORM IS TO BE FILLED UP BY THE SURVEYOR OF THE DISTRICT, OR BY SOME ONE WHO IS FAMILIAR WITH THE PLACE. IT IS INTENDED TO BE USED AS A GUIDE IN THE COLLECTION OF MATERIALS FOR THE SOCIETY'S OFFICE.

W. WESTWOOD HUNTER, F.R.S.

State or Place.	Station or Station near it, and Name.	Name of Station.	Station or Station near it, and Name.
Queensland	Blount Island, near Cairns	Balranald	St. George's Bay
Brisbane	St. George's Bay, near Brisbane	Sydney	St. George's Bay, near Sydney
Rockhampton	St. George's Bay, near Rockhampton	Perth	St. George's Bay, near Perth
Wentworth	St. George's Bay, near Wentworth	Barramamba Bay	St. George's Bay, near Barramamba Bay

Data was taken from surveys that had been recorded by representatives of the Anthropological Society of Australasia.

These forms had been largely transcribed by library volunteers.

Bumboah: "A point in Botany Bay usually called Bumbra".

Kirsten Thorpe, Paula Bray, Marc Smith, SLNSW | 2017 | <https://informationonline.ala.org.au/content/building-weemala-indigenous-language-interactive>

The Weemala site uses data transcribed from survey forms and correspondence received by the Royal Anthropological Society of Australasia between 1899 and 1903.

This material was originally made available digitally through the Library's rediscovering Indigenous Languages project site, which included a transcription tool. Members of the public can engage with the transcription tool, and complete transcriptions where needed.

## Indigenous Services



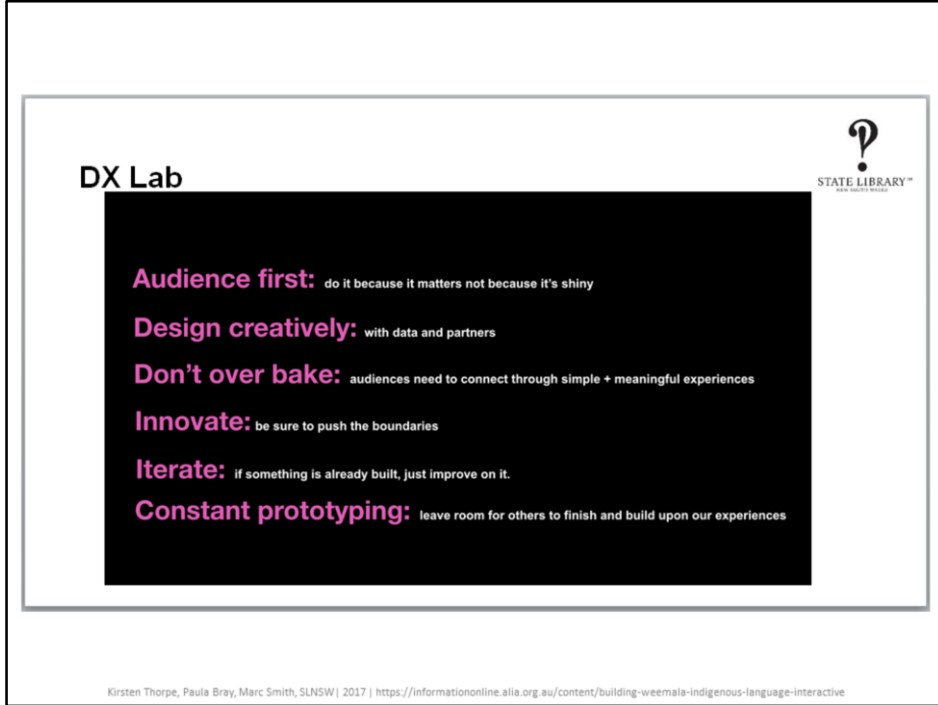
Promotes the collections and services of the State Library relating to Indigenous people

Liaises with Indigenous communities across NSW in regard to the retention and management of Indigenous documentary resources

Provides advice to staff and management of the State Library and NSW public libraries on Indigenous matters.

Kirsten Thorpe, Paula Bray, Marc Smith, SLNSW | 2017 | <https://informationonline.ala.org.au/content/building-weemala-indigenous-language-interactive>

The project was developed through the Library's DX Lab, in collaboration with the Library's Indigenous Services team, an internship program, volunteers, and consultation with communities.

A slide titled "DX Lab" with a list of six principles. The slide has a white background with a black rectangular area containing the text. In the top right corner, there is a logo for "STATE LIBRARY" featuring a question mark icon. At the bottom, there is a small line of text with a URL.

**DX Lab**

**Audience first:** do it because it matters not because it's shiny

**Design creatively:** with data and partners

**Don't over bake:** audiences need to connect through simple + meaningful experiences

**Innovate:** be sure to push the boundaries

**Iterate:** if something is already built, just improve on it.

**Constant prototyping:** leave room for others to finish and build upon our experiences

Kirsten Thorpe, Paula Bray, Marc Smith, SLNSW | 2017 | <https://informationonline.ala.org.au/content/building-weemala-indigenous-language-interactive>

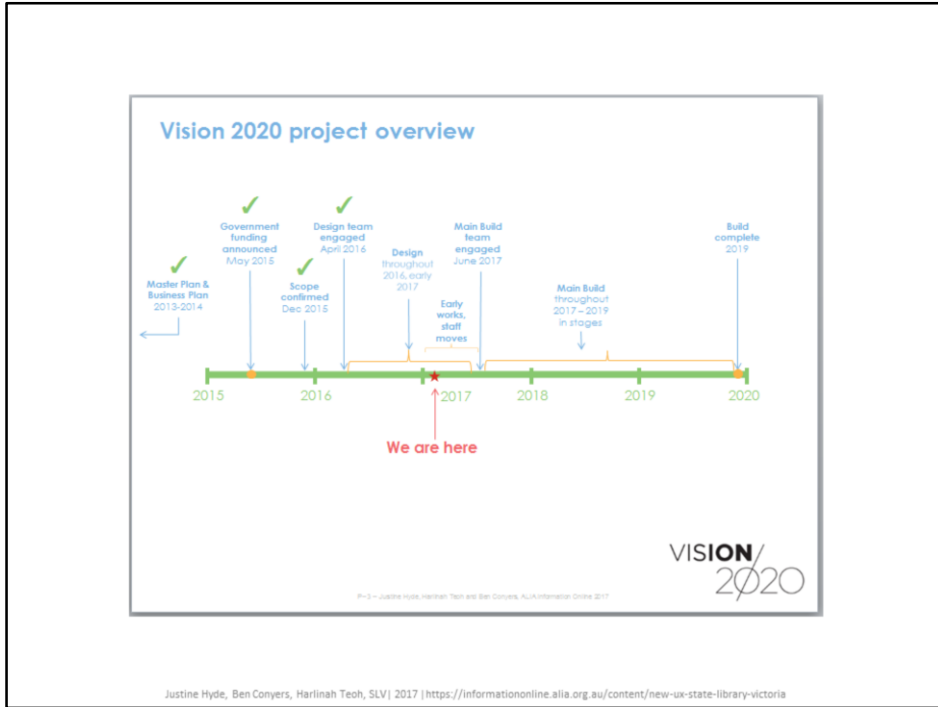
Here you can see some of the principles of the DX Lab.

I, and many other members of the audience judging by the gasps, were completely amazed to find out that the site was built in just over one week using the dataset created by the intern. The site isn't perfect, there are parts that aren't working properly as it was a project designed to be done quickly, but they are hoping to complete a version 2 at some stage.





Ok, the next talk I'll be covering was from the State Library of Victoria about the massive building redevelopment project they are currently working on. The talk was presented by Justine Hyde, Ben Conyers and Harlinah Teoh. I think the talk really stood out to me because of the similarities to the reading room integration project we've just finished, but this is on an even bigger scale, with a budget nearly 7 times as big at \$83 million dollars.



They will be restoring the Queen’s Hall as a reading room and events space, creating new children’s and youth spaces, revitalising the ground floor zone, creating a new treasures exhibition gallery, reopening the Russell Street entrance to the Library, creating a centre for innovation, opening a dedicated banquet gallery supported by a commercial kitchen, and refurbishing staff workspaces affected by the redevelopment. This will be opening up 40% more space to the public. They are also redesigning the SLV strategy, operations, service model and workforce plan, which is quite a considerable change for a five year project. The project is called Vision 2020.



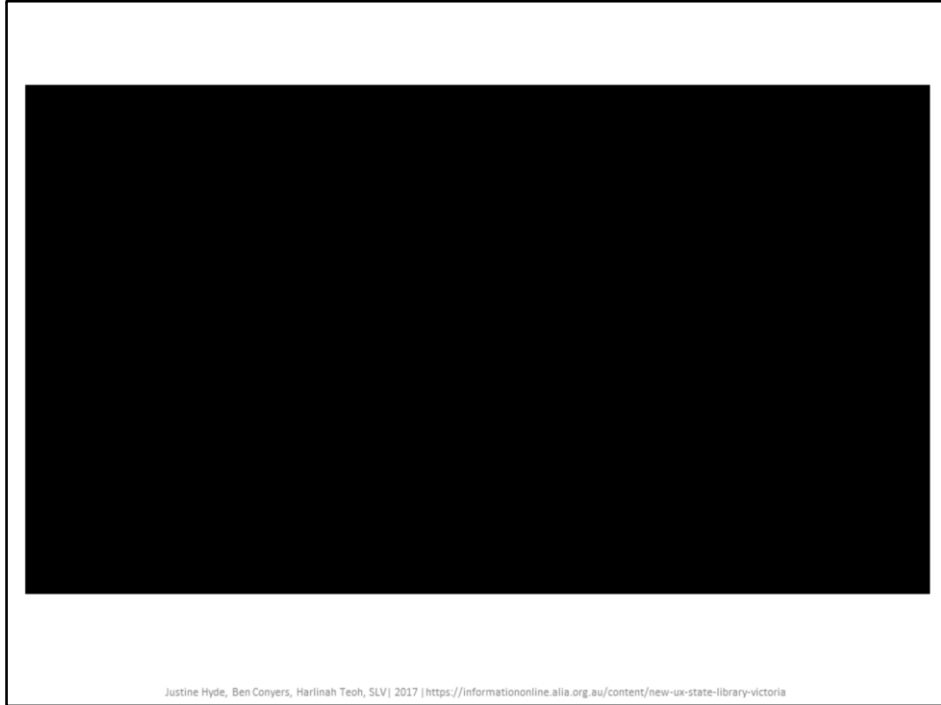
I really enjoyed hearing about how they've been handling the changes with their staff, not least because of this slide. They talked about how they have an highly skilled and experienced workforce, but have found it hard to convince them about changing traditional services. One recurring theme that came up during staff engagement was the fear that new spaces opening up would detract from 'the real library', which is completely understandable.

One of the things they were tackling was how to convince their staff members that moving to smaller and more shared workspaces would be better for collaboration and communication amongst teams, something that many of us have had to overcome in the last few years ourselves! Their communication channels included all-staff meetings, team meetings, regular newsletters, staff participation in design workshops, and close work with teams most affected by the changes.

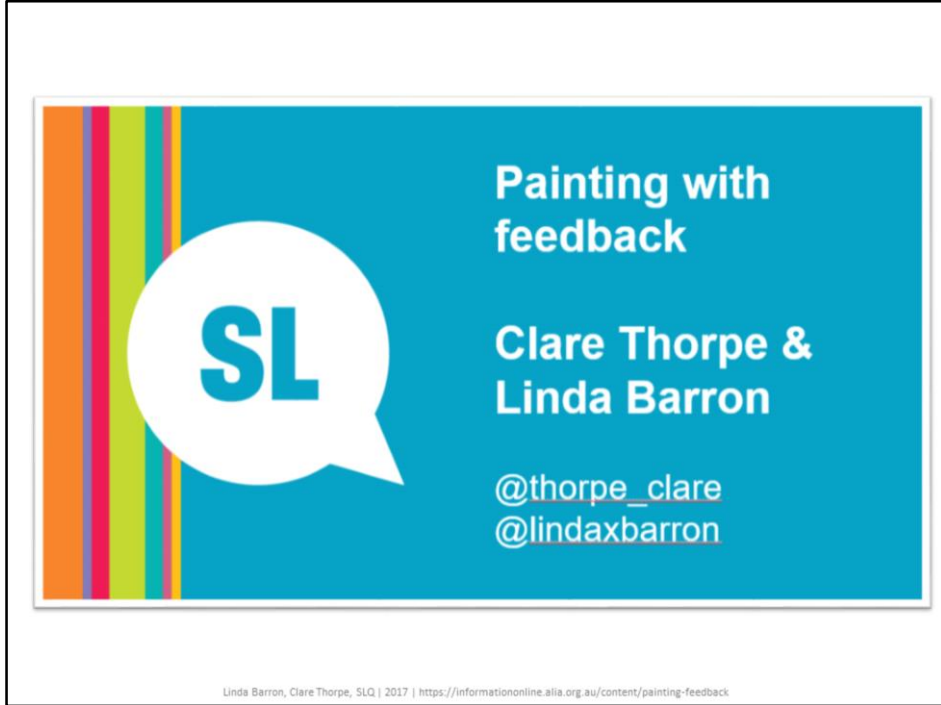


The other thing they focused heavily on was communicating with external stakeholders. Of course, in a project of this size the stakeholder group was also considerable, including the public, friends of the library, and the state government. With a budget this size they are under more scrutiny than for a comparatively smaller project.

Interestingly they said their communications strategy started out quite formal and rigid, but as time as gone on they have learned they have to be more flexible, and be able to communicate as they need to. They also have a considerable amount of work to do in terms of budget, 2/3rds of the budget is supplied by the Victorian State Government, and the other third is being fundraised by the Library.




Building works started this year and the entire project is expected to be completed by 2020. I can't wait to see how they go. And I wanted to finish with a short video they put together about their consultations with children for the children's spaces.



The last presentation I will cover today was by Linda Barron and Clare Thorpe from the State Library of Queensland, called 'Painting with feedback'. This presentation discussed the State Library's visitor feedback database called 'Tell us'.

## Feedback is important to us



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- Provide evidence to inform decision making and identify priorities
- Enhance client engagement by encouraging & responding to communication
- Gain a unique insight into visitors' experiences

Linda Barron, Clare Thorpe, SLQ | 2017 | <https://informationonline.alia.org.au/content/painting-feedback>

The database was implemented in 2014 by the Visitor Experience team, as a whole of Library approach to gathering, analysing and responding to complaints, compliments, suggestions and comments. Prior to implementing 'Tell us' database, there was no coherent approach at the State Library to understanding compliments and complaints. The aim of the database was to use the information it generated to develop and delivery better client services, and be able to accurately determine what was working and what wasn't.



The feedback they received into the 'Tell us' database mainly included online forms, physical comment cards, verbal feedback received by staff. You might be interested to hear that most of the complaints received were in regards to noise and slowness of the internet – sounds familiar!

Feedback isn't the only avenue the SLQ use to identify and inform service improvements. They also use an audience research exit survey, where visitors are randomly approached as they exit and invited to complete a survey on an iPad. They also use a 'slightly whimsical' Happiness exit poll, which many of you may have seen before, and complement this with staff observations and anecdotes.



## Innovations inspired by feedback

### Premium quiet study space

*"The space is a great place to work and research but unfortunately this is often ruined by noisy conversations and phone calls occurring regularly in the supposed 'quiet zones'."*

*"This is a great library, with great resources. Unfortunately, not even the quiet areas are quiet, with so many people talking – Level 3."*



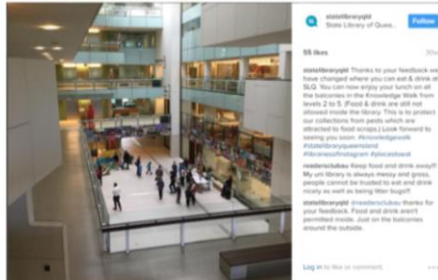
Linda Barron, Clare Thorpe, SLQ | 2017 | <https://informationonline.alia.org.au/content/painting-feedback>

I thought this was a really interesting and thorough approach to compiling feedback, and feel that it is a really worthwhile activity when evaluating what services work and what don't. The SLQ found that their visitors are highly satisfied and have positive experiences at the Library, and service delivery often exceeds expectations. Some changes they have made in response to feedback is changing the time and location of their music hour, where volunteers play music for general entertainment; more accessible power points, the creation of a premium quiet study place, and even relaxing some of their food and drink policies.

## Closing the feedback loop



Facebook post promoting new quiet study area



Instagram post promoting relaxations to our Food and Drink policy

The next stage of the project is 'closing the loop' by informing their visitors of what changes they have implemented as a result of their feedback.