

How much is your library worth?

With many libraries under pressure to justify their budgets, even declining ones, ways to demonstrate good value for money, or return on investment, are popular amongst library managers. There has been a renewed interest in dollar valuations of services, even of the many non-marketed services that libraries offer. A technique that librarians have occasionally borrowed from economics is *contingent valuation*, which attempts to estimate a given community's 'willingness to pay' for a service, or set of services, were it marketed. The technique is essentially a special kind of survey, and canvasses both users and non-users.

The School of Information Studies at Charles Sturt University, has recently applied the contingent valuation method to estimate the direct benefits of the Wagga Wagga City Library to its community in the Riverina region of New South Wales, the first time the method has been used to value an Australian public library.

The research conducted was able to show that the library provided the people of Wagga Wagga good value for the funding it received, with a benefit-cost ratio of at least 1.33 to one (excluding benefits to non-residents and groups such as schools and businesses, and indirect benefits known as multipliers). This compared quite well with results from similar studies carried out for American and European public libraries.

The cost-benefit ratios of the collection and technical services element of the public library service was also investigated and found to be particularly favourable.

The methodological aspects of the research project are discussed in depth in the forthcoming article, 'Using the contingent valuation method for dollar valuations of library services', shortly to be published in the journal, *Library Quarterly* (78/4). The technical services valuation is reported in another article, to be published in *Library Resources & Technical Services* (52/4). Other results from the research are reported in a third article, published in *Australasian Public Libraries & Information Services* (21/1:33-40).

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UWS shines on PM's shortlist

The University of Western Sydney's support for Australian literature has been rewarded with the announcement that a UWS researcher and graduate have been shortlisted for the inaugural Prime Minister's Literary Awards.

Sorry is the latest novel by Gail Jones, a research professor in the Writing and Society Research Group based at the UWS Bankstown campus.

Burning In is the second novel by UWS PhD graduate Dr Mireille Juchau, and is published by the Writing and Society Research Group's Giramondo imprint.

Gail Jones and Mireille Juchau will be competing with literary greats Tom Keneally and David Malouf for the top prize.

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Abax are leaders in library interiors, with over thirty years of experience in the field. We work with leading architects, designers, librarians and craftspeople to develop furniture and furniture systems.

We are always eager to explore new influences, and trends. The library is no longer just a place for books and studies, but a hub for multicultural exchange, communication and social events.

At the same time the library is a space for contemplation, affording room for individual study and reflection.

Our ambition is to be at the cutting edge of library technology, to meet and respond to the needs and developments of libraries, whether in planning the interior of the local school library or designing custom furniture for a new international research centre.

We hope you'll be inspired. - We look forward to seeing you in Alice Springs at ALIA - Kingfisher by ABAX SYSTEMS Booth No 67 & 68/



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