Codesigning

the Future of the State Library of Victoria

The State Library Victoria (SLV) is based in the heart of Melbourne and covers an entire two-acre city block. With 1.8 million visitors each year it is one of Australia's busiest libraries. BEN CONYERS tells us how the SLV was rewarded for their redesign of library services.

To understand how we could provide better services to our visitors, SLV engaged Meld Studios in 2014 to work with us to develop a Future Service Model, a model which this year was recognised by being awarded a Good Design Award® Best Overall in the category of Service Design. The awards ceremony was held in May in Sydney in front of 700 national and international guests. CEO of Good Design Australia, Dr Brandon Gien, said, 'This year's awards attracted some of the most innovative companies from all over the world. For a project to be recognised at this level means, without doubt, it is the best of its kind in the world.' Winners in other categories included Tesla, BMW and Uber.

Entries must represent excellence in design at every level. Judges carefully consider various factors, such as innovation, quality, functionality, sustainability and, above all, world-class design. Their comments on Codesigning the Future of the SLV were: 'This is a shining example of service design excellence at its very best. A brilliant case study on the positive impact of a design-led approach in an area that is undergoing significant transformation and disruption. The outcome could not have been achieved without a genuine commitment to a professional design approach. Every touch point, every interaction and every experience has been carefully considered and meticulously designed with the end-user in mind. The outcome is not only a more enjoyable, user-friendly experience – it has also positioned the organisation for the future in terms of technology, efficiency, service delivery and overall staff engagement.'

Over a 12-week period an integrated project team – three staff from Meld and two from SLV – worked together first to understand the current state of service delivery and then to identify opportunities for improvement and innovation.

One of the biggest strengths of the project was how well it engaged with staff. Some 180 staff members from across the organisation were involved in the project through interviews, workshops, testing working prototypes of the new designs and meetings with various teams. One of the most exciting parts of the project was testing concepts that would inform the Future Service Model. Three nights in a row after the library closed, we redesigned the library to show how service could be delivered in a new way. Around 80 staff were invited to walk through and experience the design the following morning before we opened to the public. This included showing how we could move service points, security gates and even entire collections.

In 2015, we started implementing many of the recommendations. We now have automated rosters and iPads for front-of-house staff. This has vastly improved communication and also supports a more mobile model of service delivery. We have redeveloped a room at the front of the library as part of our welcoming zone, which includes an exhibition space to entice people further into the library.

Most exciting of all is that we are at the start of a major five-year redevelopment project. This will enable us to bring all of our collections together, open up new entrances to the library and restore our fantastic Queen's Hall, one of the city's most beautiful 19th-century interiors, which, when restored, will rival the beauty of our Domed Reading Room. We are currently working on consolidating service points, making it easier for people to register for a library card online and are testing prototype kiosks.

The 2015 Good Design Award® winners can be viewed at www.good-design.com.

PROJECT TEAM
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