

MAKEOVERS

In the course of working as a bookseller for a large part of my career, I have spent many an hour helping to design bookshops and their layouts, from poky little spaces to a giant superstore. Bookshops are similar to libraries in many ways, and one recent development they share is the move to provide more community spaces, or areas for users in which they can congregate, collaborate, learn, research, make and work or play. Libraries aren't just a source of books and services; they are also places where you want to spend time. I sometimes wonder if libraries and bookshops will one day join forces and provide an even broader service for their communities.

I remember visiting the local library when I was a child. Upon entering, I would be confronted by row upon row of drawers filled with library cards and what seemed like towering shelves packed with books. One small noise and I was told to shush. Librarians were scary to me. I now know that they aren't, but from my perspective, below the top of the desk, they looked frightening. I had also been affected by a lady in Woolworths who caught me pinching a Mintie from an open packet on the supermarket shelf. She chased me up and down the aisles until I hid behind my mother's legs. From then on, any older person who stared down at me made my knees shake. And that included the librarians.

The look of libraries has undergone a metamorphosis over the last decade or so. You only need to compare your early memories of libraries with the images in our article about the Library Design Awards to see that. And librarians have changed along with their working environment. The

library environment now expresses an ethos of openness and community.

It's such an exciting time for the LIS industry. Change is happening and you can all be a part of it. We all, in fact, need to participate and contribute to that change. We won't end up with what we want unless we all add our ideas for change. And library design is part of that.

When designing a library, the only way you can achieve the best result is to understand the library's resources and the people who will be using the library. Who are they? What do they want most from a library? What do they want but can't access in your current design? What do other libraries do that you could add to your design ideas toolkit? What would make life easier for the staff and also greatly benefit library users?

Who is best placed to answer these questions? Those who work with library customers, users and staff every day. I think that would be you. 🙌

P.S. We know there's more than one winner of the Library Design Awards, but we have chosen to feature Geelong Library & Heritage Centre on the cover because it won the ALIA Members' Choice award. I think you'll agree this photo of the Dome is really stunning!

Photo credit: Emma Cross

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