

The image shows the interior of a modern library. The ceiling is vaulted with several large, rectangular skylights that allow natural light to enter. A central track lighting system with adjustable spotlights is suspended from the ceiling. In the center of the room, a group of people are seated around a long wooden table, engaged in reading or study. To the left and right of the table are tall, narrow wooden bookshelves filled with books. In the background, a large glass window looks out onto a green outdoor area. A statue of a person is visible through the window. A sign above the window reads "EXIT". On the right side, a sign on a stand reads "RETURNS AREA". The floor is covered with a patterned carpet in shades of blue, green, and red.

more readers reading more

Te Wharepukapuka o Whanganui | Whanganui District Library
MAHERE RAUTAKI 2018 – 2023 STRATEGIC PLAN

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Executive summary

Approximately 40 per cent of adult New Zealanders lack the functional literacy skills (everyday reading, writing and numeracy) that enable them to fully participate in a high-productivity economy. Increases in literacy levels will improve creativity leading to new knowledge and potential innovation.

National Library of New Zealand – Strategic Directions to 2030

Why are public libraries important?

- Because libraries are all about reading. Not socialising, not creating, not sharing, not consuming or experiencing. Reading. Because reading matters. And reading matters because literacy is crucial – the core skill of the modern world. Without it, everything in life is a greater struggle and participation as a citizen is limited.
- Because literacy is a skill – we are not born with the ability to read. Like all skills it is improved by practice, and the more you practice the easier it gets and the more you get out of it.
- Because practice that is pleasurable will be continued.
- Because reading materials are very expensive in New Zealand, libraries are there to level the playing field. **Literacy is not just for the rich. It's for everyone, because we are all citizens.**

Whanganui District Council provides public library services because it recognises the importance to the community of lifelong literacy supported and enhanced by free access to knowledge, ideas and works of the imagination in printed or digital form. In providing access to all, our libraries strengthen the public benefit by fostering literacy, preserving memory and connecting people. They are trusted as public spaces and an essential component of our social and economic infrastructure, enabling individuals to better themselves and participate as citizens.

Our purpose

Our libraries are not here for this particular group, or that group. They are not here to teach people. They are not here to improve people. **They are here to provide the means for people to better themselves.** To build their literacy by reading what interests, enlightens, amuses and entertains themselves. Not what we may think is good for people, but what those individuals enjoy.

Our core purpose – what public libraries were founded for – is to foster literacy. We want to see **more readers, reading more.** This isn't a question of public versus private benefit, but rather **the whole community benefits from a more literate, more capable population and public libraries are a key part of bringing that about.**

Over the next five years we aim to provide the library service our community expects. We will undertake a range of specific projects that will improve our efficiency and effectiveness. These will enable us to reach more people and deliver better service while keeping within the bounds of what the community can afford.

We will continue to use the Te Kaūru framework to underpin all aspects of the Library's service delivery. Te Kaūru is based on a foundation of Māori cultural concepts that is broad-in scope and supports core public library values of respect for individuals and communities; for their information; and for their knowledge.

We will keep literacy at the heart of our operation. We will continue to look after our community's memories and enable people to discover their own stories. We will remain a trusted, safe, welcoming community space – connecting people with literature, knowledge and with one another.

Key projects 2018 – 2023

1. **Replace single large Mobile Library with two Mobile Library vans** to improve service to children and families; improve delivery to under-served communities; and minimise service outages caused by vehicle failure.
2. **Establish four self-service suburban library hubs** in partnership with existing facilities to deliver the service locally in a cost-effective manner.
3. **Document, digitise and publish heritage collections online** to increase public access to heritage material and reduce the conservation risk of repeated handling.
4. **Improve public access to internet** by improving the wifi service at library facilities; spreading the public desktop PCs more evenly between the Davis and Alexander Libraries; and by unifying and simplifying the paid and free internet services.
5. **Increase staff capability to assist customers** by improving all self-service options and expanding digital collections, freeing staff to provide individual service to customers who need it.
6. **Use data analysis more effectively** to ensure we are meeting customer wants and needs; that we identify and respond to trends in activity; and match our allocation of resources to what customers demonstrate they want.
7. **Grow library membership** as a proportion of the district's population by providing a more widely-distributed service, tailored to customer demand and supported by an outreach and marketing programme.
8. **Increase public usage of the Alexander Library** by moving some non-borrowing elements from the Davis Library; increasing the quantity and quality of public access internet; and building usage of the Alexander by educational providers and community groups.

If you cannot read, everything in life will be harder. School, work, shopping, getting around. To get on you will have to be smarter, tougher, more determined than someone who can read. And if you were smarter, tougher and more determined, and you could read – what more might you not achieve?

Pete Gray, Manager – Libraries & Community, Whanganui District Council

Vision

More readers, reading more

Reading matters, because literacy is the core skill required to fully take part in modern life. Without an adequate level of literacy, everything is a greater struggle and participation as a citizen is inevitably limited.

We are not born with the ability to read and literacy is a skill that has to be learned. Like all skills it is maintained and improved by practice, and the more you practice the easier it gets and the more you get out of it.

Practice that is pleasurable is much more likely to be continued. If all you have to read is uninteresting or does not entertain you, you won't read and your literacy skills will degrade.

Yet reading materials are very expensive in New Zealand, so public libraries are there to level the playing field. **Literacy is not just for the rich. It's for everyone, because we are all citizens.**

Mission

Fostering literacy, preserving memory, connecting people

In achieving our vision of **more readers, reading more** there are three strands which define our day to day mission.

The core purpose of public libraries is to **foster literacy** by encouraging and facilitating reading. Literacy covers much more than simply books and newspapers, encompassing in addition online activity, e-books, magazines and videos.

Libraries are also repositories of local history objects, records and information. By collecting, documenting, caring for and **preserving these memories**, libraries provide access to the stories they represent and enable people to research and connect with their own and their community's history.

Libraries are physical spaces (even if some of them have wheels), safe, trusted and open to all. Our libraries welcome around 400,000 people every year (and more online). They **connect people** to literature, to knowledge, to entertainment and to the whole world. As public spaces, they connect people to one another.

Libraries change lives for the better. They not only provide access to books and other literature but also help people to help themselves and improve their opportunities, bring people together, and provide practical support and guidance. As a locally accountable service, they are well-placed to respond to local needs and issues. Libraries can have a critical role in helping people to realise their potential, and especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021, DCMS

Goals

Goal one: fostering literacy

Why is this important?

Public libraries provide a cradle to grave reading experience. The most important goal for public libraries is to cultivate a love of reading. Literacy empowers people, enables them to participate fully as global citizens and builds more capable and productive communities. Libraries should be the place people of all ages go for expert information about books and literature, for recommendations, reviews and personalised reading information. Librarians want to chat about books.

“What do libraries do for us? Well, they introduce many into the world of literacy and learning and help to make it a lifelong habit; they equalise; they teach empathy and help us to learn about each other; they preserve our cultural heritage; they protect our right to know and to learn; they build communities; they strengthen and advance us as a nation; they empower us as individuals.”

Malorie Blackman, UK Children’s Laureate 2013 to 2015

What will we do?

1. Replace the single large Mobile Library with two Mobile Library vans in 2018/2019 to improve service to children and families and improve delivery to under-served communities.
2. Provide an early literacy programme for children/Summer Reading programme, including providing expert guidance to parents to support their children’s reading and promoting books and the library to schools and kindergartens.
3. Grow the Home Service through increased promotion, developing new channels like GP clinics and related health services.
4. Promote the library to education providers as a venue and a resource.

“At the moment that we persuade a child, any child, to cross that threshold, that magic threshold into a library, we change their lives forever, for the better.”

Barack Obama

How will we measure it?

- 1 The number of members aged 12 and under; number of items issued from the Children’s collection; attendance at and feedback on early literacy programmes.
- 2 The number of Home Service customers; items loaned out; and user satisfaction with the service
- 3 Library use by education providers (as venue and resources)

Goal two: preserving memory

Why is this important?

The heritage collections cared for by Whanganui District Library constitute a part of our community's collective memory bank. They comprise a quantity of unique, irreplaceable documents and photographs, together with a store of associated knowledge, information and reference materials compiled over the years.

By preserving and providing access to the collections the Library enables people now, and into the future, to connect or reconnect to their families' and community's stories.

"Without libraries what have we? We have no past and no future."

— [Ray Bradbury](#)

What will we do?

1. Undertake a programme of documenting the entire heritage collection to professional standards.
2. Digitise and publish heritage collections online to increase public access to heritage material and reduce the conservation risk of repeated handling
3. Increase usage of Alexander Library by moving some non-borrowing elements from the Davis Library; increasing the quantity and quality of public access internet; and building usage of the Alexander by educational providers and community groups.
4. Build on existing formal relationships with Iwi and community organisations to encourage the Whanganui community to use the Alexander Library as a trusted repository of their family and community archives.

"...everything has a past. Everything – a person, an object, a word, everything. If you don't know the past, you can't understand the present and plan properly for the future."

— [Chaim Potok](#), [Davita's Harp](#)

How will we measure it?

- 1 The number of new items donated to or deposited in the Alexander Library collection.
- 2 The number of collection items fully recorded and digitised.
- 3 The quantity of collection items made available online.

Goal three: connecting people

Why is this important?

Public libraries are open to all. They are trusted by the community and are safe, welcoming public spaces. They provide a place for people to connect with each other and with a world of information and ideas for entertainment and life skills.

Connected communities are more cohesive, stable and high-functioning, more resilient, and better able to develop and participate in enterprise and growth opportunities. No other group, location or service in Whanganui is better placed to deliver this role for the community than the Library.

“Where do you look when you don’t even know what you want to do or what you are relevant for any more? I feel the library is full of options that I wouldn’t think were possible.”
Respondent in Taskforce user research interviews, 2015, Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021, DCMS

What will we do?

1. Improve public access to internet services, with superior dedicated connections, increased bandwidth, self-service options and an integrated free and paid for service.
2. Establish four suburban library hubs over the period of this plan from October 2018 onwards.
3. Market the library to community groups as a venue and a resource in conjunction with the Whanganui Venues & Events team
4. Redesign, test, and launch a new library website to ensure that as far as possible it meets the needs of existing and potential library customers.

“Libraries store the energy that fuels the imagination. They open up windows to the world and inspire us to explore and achieve, and contribute to improving our quality of life.”
Sidney Sheldon, writer and producer

How will we measure it?

- 1 Separately recording Library visitation in person and online.
- 2 The number of community groups using library venues.
- 3 The proportion of District population that uses library venues or services.

Goal four: more readers

Why is this important?

Literacy is the core skill required to fully take part in modern life. Without an adequate level of literacy, everything is a greater struggle and participation as a citizen is inevitably limited.

Public libraries provide the means for people to better themselves and build their literacy by reading what interests, enlightens, amuses and entertains themselves. Growing the membership of active borrowers and providing what our members want is the key to ensuring the library delivers the maximum benefit to the community. We all gain from a more literate, more capable population and public libraries are a key part of bringing that about.

Dr Who: "You want weapons? We're in a library. Books are the best weapon in the world. This room's the greatest arsenal we could have. Arm yourself!"

Russell T Davies. 'Dr Who' Tooth and Claw, Series 2

What will we do?

1. Undertake a survey of existing, former and non-members in 2018/19 and again in 2020/2021.
2. Establish a membership path from browser to borrower with membership incentives.
3. Develop customer profiles to better understand who is using our library and how.
4. Increase staff capability to assist customers by improving all self-service options and expanding digital collections.

"People flock in, nevertheless, in search of answers to those questions only librarians are considered to be able to answer, such as "Is this the laundry?" "How do you spell surreptitious?" and, on a regular basis, "Do you have a book I remember reading once? It had a red cover and it turned out they were twins."

— [Terry Pratchett](#), [Going Postal](#)

How will we measure it?

- 1 Library membership as a proportion of District population.
- 2 Level of activity (visits per user) and number of frequent users (at >10 pa).
- 3 Number of browsing members that become borrowing members.

Goal five: reading more

Why is this important?

We are not born with the ability to read and literacy is a skill that has to be learned. Like all skills it is maintained and improved by practice, and the more you practice the easier it gets and the more you get out of it.

Practice that is pleasurable is much more likely to be continued. If all you have to read is uninteresting or does not entertain you, you won't read and your literacy skills will degrade.

Literacy is not just for the rich. It's for everyone, because we are all citizens.

"I started with a book, and that led me to a library, and that led me everywhere"

Sir Terry Pratchett

What will we do?

1. Use data analysis to ensure meeting customer wants and needs, providing tailored collections at different locations for different customer profiles
2. Involve patrons with participatory acquisition opportunities
3. Change the balance of fees and charges to remove barriers to borrowing
4. Develop a training programme that builds stronger content advisory skills across the library team, enhancing customer experience

"A public library is the most democratic thing in the world...If you read, you can learn to think for yourself."

Doris Lessing, novelist, poet, playwright, and librettist

How will we measure it?

- 1 The average yearly issues per library member.
- 2 The rate of collection turnover (annual issues divided by number of items in collection)
- 3 Number of user sessions on public-access internet (paid & free)

Action Plan 2018 – 2023

Key outcome measures	Current	Target
Fostering literacy		
a. The number of members aged 12 and under	2,828	4,800
b. The number of Home Service items loaned out annually	17,633	19,850
c. Number of days per year education providers use library	240	400
Preserving memory		
a. The number of new items donated or deposited annually	New	250
b. The number of collection items fully recorded and digitised	New	15,000
c. The quantity of collection items made available online	New	5,000
Connecting people		
a. Library visitation in person per year	368,053	400,000
b. Number of community groups using library venues per year	New	25
c. Proportion of population using library venues or services	57%	65%
More readers		
a. Library membership as a proportion of District population	52%	60%
b. Number of frequent users (more than 10 visits per year)	New	3,500
c. Number of browsing members transitioning to borrowers	New	500
Reading more		
a. Average annual issues per member	24	29
b. Collection turnover rate	6	7
c. Number of user sessions on public-access internet per year	92,075	100,000

Key projects 2018 – 2023

1. Replace single large Mobile Library with two Mobile Library vans
 - a. Improve service to children and families
 - b. Improve delivery to under-served communities
2. Establish four suburban library hubs
3. Document, digitise and publish heritage collections
4. Improve public access to internet
5. Increase staff capability to assist customers
 - a. Improve all self-service options
 - b. Expand digital collections
6. Use data analysis to ensure meeting customer wants and needs
7. Grow library membership
8. Increase usage of Alexander Library

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