



Woollahra
Libraries

Woollahra Libraries Annual Report

1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024

woollahra.nsw.gov.au/library





Introduction

Welcome to the Woollahra Libraries 2023-2024 Annual Report.

This year marked the third of our Woollahra Libraries 5 Year Strategic Plan, 2021-2026. This strategy has been our guide in delivering exceptional library services, and this report highlights the strides we've made in fulfilling that vision.

The 2023-2024 financial year has marked our commitment to digital transformation. We launched a new website, upgraded public computers, and automated study room entry systems. Integrating new services like Hoopla and PressReader has enriched our digital library, providing a wider array of online content for our users. Our community engagement and commitment to initiatives such as the Community Access Hours project at Watsons Bay Library further demonstrate our dedication to leveraging technology to enhance community access and support. Our efforts in the digital space this year were recognized with Libero's inaugural Innovation Award.

Fostering social cohesion and community wellbeing has been equally important. The Spark Truck held a record number of events, and we proudly hosted an award-winning Sydney WorldPride program, recognized for innovation in community outreach by the NSW Public Libraries Association. During the Voice to Parliament referendum, we hosted Thomas Mayo for a powerful ideas exchange, providing a platform for vital community dialogue.

Sustainability, as part of Woollahra Council's wider environmental goals, has also been a key focus. We launched a Seed Library program to promote sustainable gardening practices and added thermal cameras to our 'Library of Things' collection to help members monitor and improve home energy conservation.

Our numbers demonstrate continued growth, with the highest number of visits since the Covid-19 pandemic and higher loan figures than ever, thanks to the expanded digital catalogue and its popularity. As we look to the future, we remain committed to connecting people to ideas and fostering a vibrant, inclusive, and technologically advanced community. Thank you for your continued support and engagement with Woollahra Libraries.

Jody Rodas
Manager Woollahra Libraries



Library staff and manager with fiction judge Claudine Tinellis at the 2023 Digital Literary Awards Ceremony

Cover image: A young girl and her grandfather enjoy a school holidays craft

Quick Statistics

1 July
2023 –
30 June
2024



26,684

Active library members



569,307

Library visits



149

Hours of opening per week



616,271

Library loans



177,410

eCollection loans



112,996

Information requests



19,251

People attended 1,055 events and programs



18

Online programs were viewed 536 times



6,529

Groups booked library spaces



16,666

Public computer bookings



91

People used the Home Library Service



103

Volunteers



181,024

Social Media reach



13,889

Newsletter subscribers



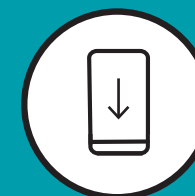
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Book Clubs engaging 117 members



29,381

Number of new items added to library collections



10,227

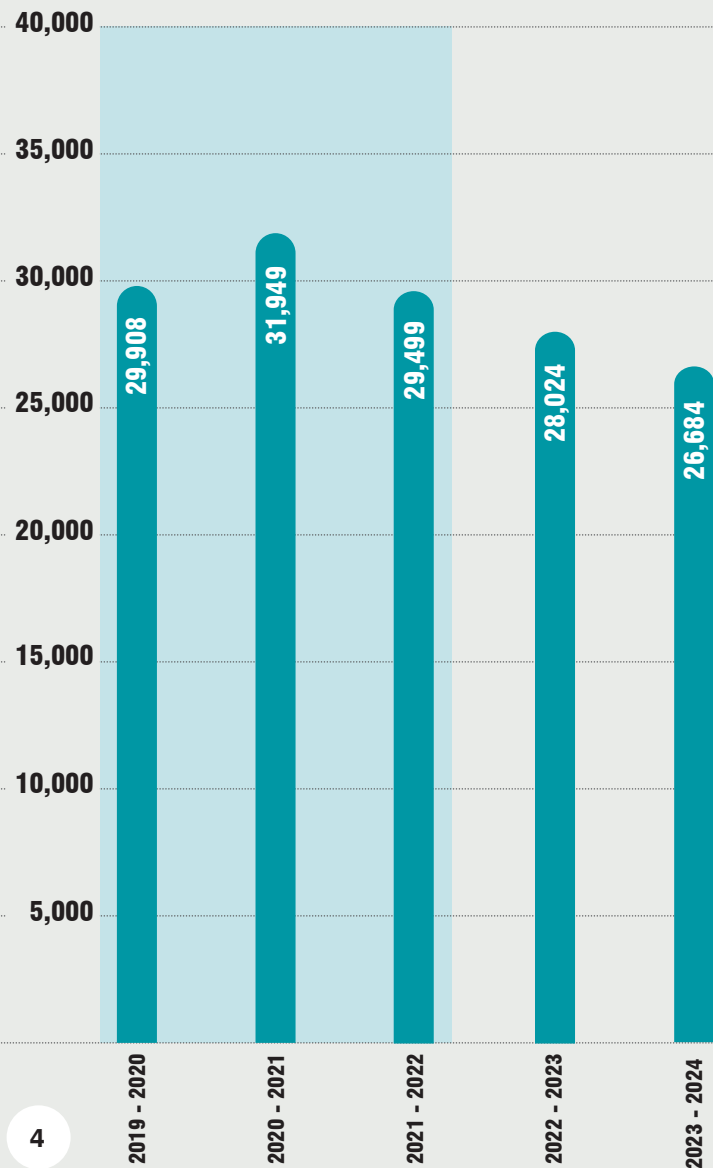
Woollahra Libraries app users (used on 10,227 devices in July 2023 – June 2024)

Year-on-Year Changes

Please note 2019-2022 statistics impacted by COVID-19

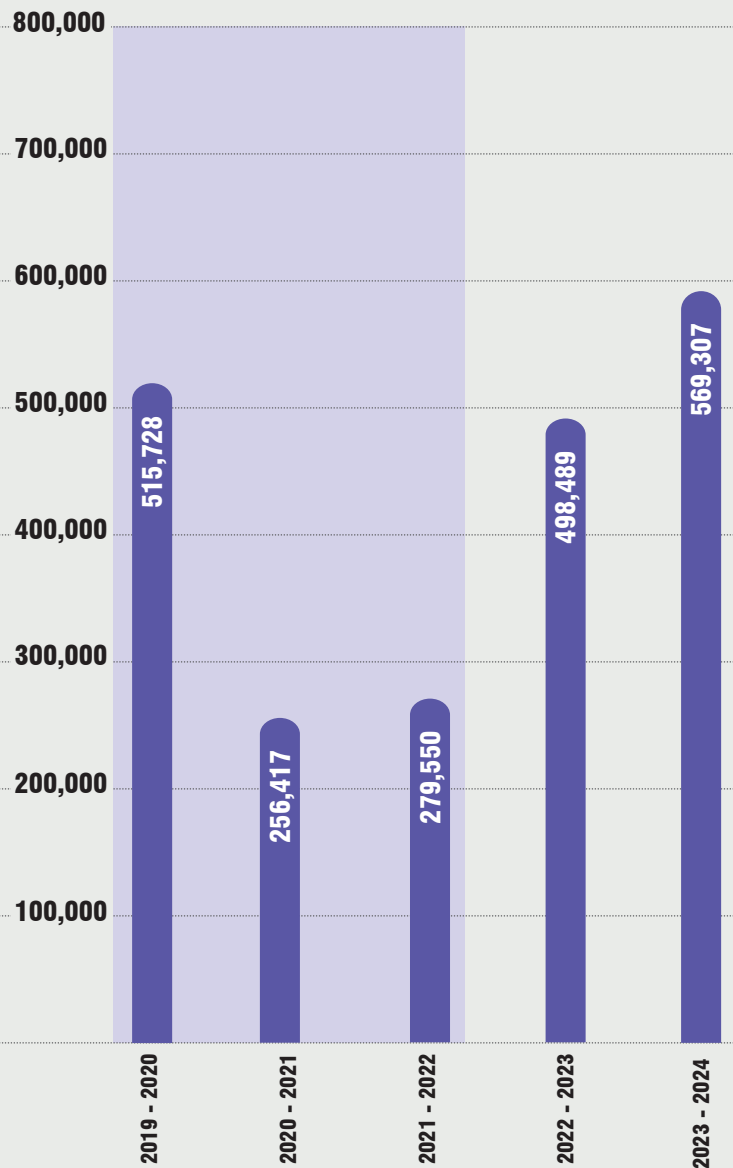
Active Members

■ 2019-2022 statistics impacted by COVID-19



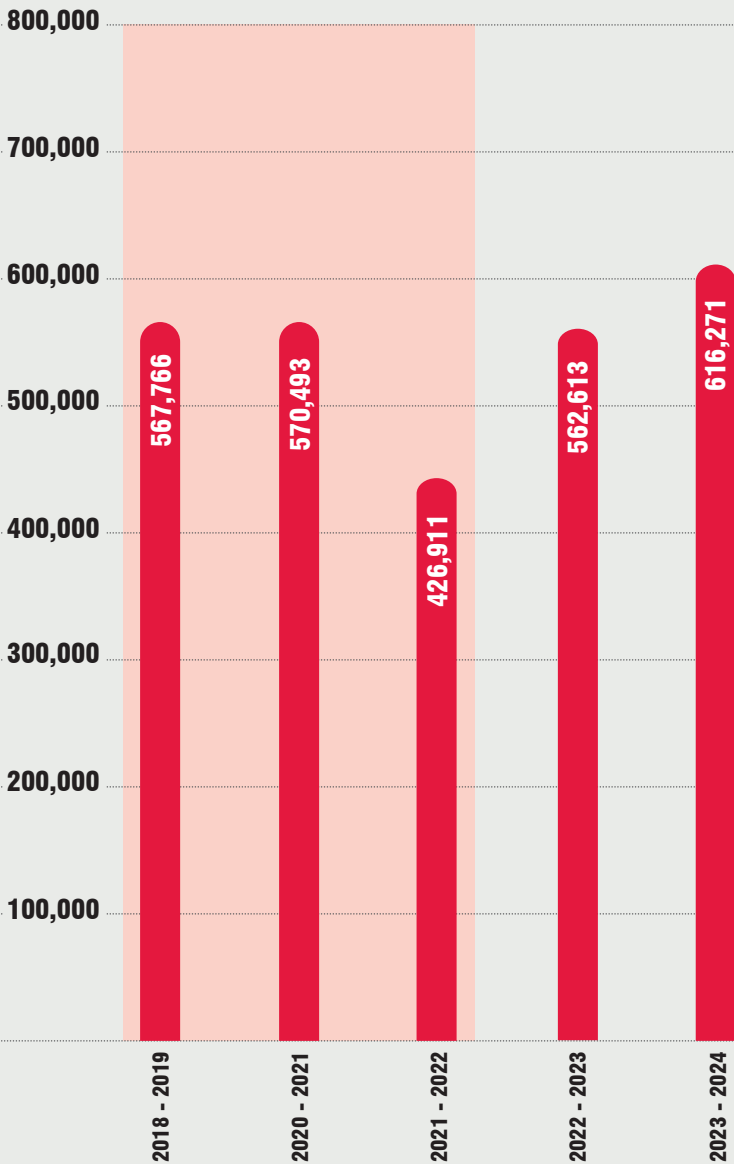
Visitation

■ 2019-2022 statistics impacted by COVID-19



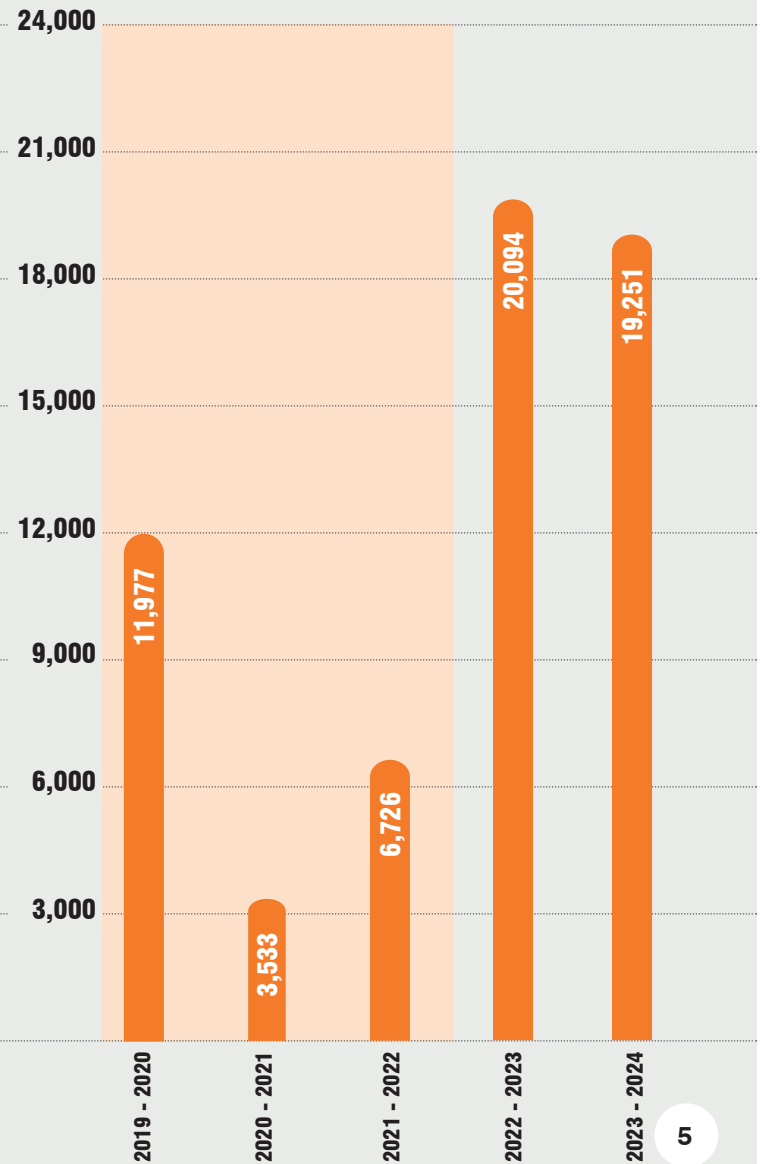
Library Loans

2019-2022 statistics impacted by COVID-19



Attendance at Library Programs and events

2019-2022 statistics impacted by COVID-19





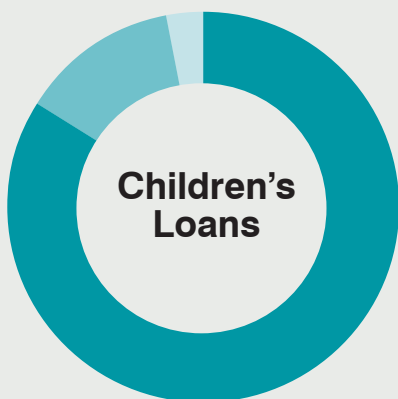
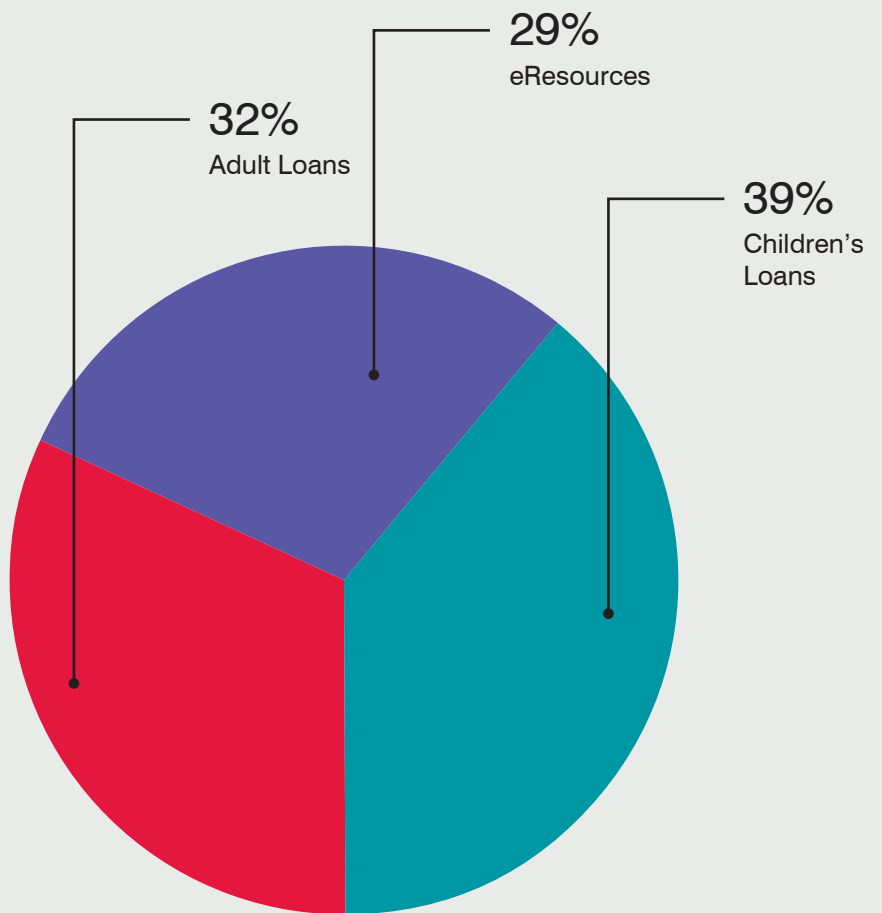
📷 A child dressed up for a CBCA Book Week 2023 story time in Watsons Bay Library

Library Loans Breakdown

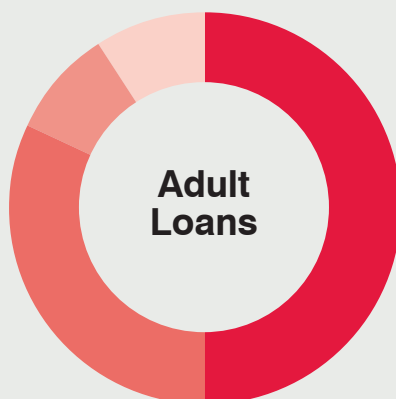
Our library's loans have continued to show impressive growth in 2023-2024, with a significant increase of 9.5% compared to the previous year. We recorded a total of 616,271 loans, up from 562,613 in 2022-2023, making us the leading library in the state for the number of items loaned per capita.

The most notable area of growth has been our eResources, which have seen an extraordinary increase. Loans in this category surged from 115,265 last year to 177,410 this year. This accounts for the majority of our overall growth, highlighting a continued shift towards digital borrowing among our customers.

While physical collection loans have remained steady overall, we observed a slight decrease of about 3% in total children's loans. Despite this, physical collections remain a crucial part of our offerings, and we continue to see strong engagement across various age groups.



- 84% Fiction
- 13% Non-fiction
- 3% Audio visual



- 50% Fiction
- 32% Non-fiction
- 9% Audio visual
- 9% Magazines



- 36% eMagazines
- 27% eBooks
- 21% eAudiobooks
- 16% Others



Events and Programs

Woollahra Libraries' diverse events program is designed to create inclusive and informed communities and motivate people to come together. This year we delivered 1,055 programs with 19,251 attendees.

Our early literacy programs, including Babies in to Books, Rhyme Time and Story Time continue to inspire a love of language and reading, offering welcoming and enjoyable opportunities to gather, read, learn, sing and create. This year, 8,824 children attended sessions across our libraries. Story Time sessions this year included First Nations, bilingual and intergenerational communities with featured programs celebrating significant dates like Reconciliation Week, Harmony Week, Lunar New Year, Pride Month and NAIDOC Week. Library staff also hosted special Story Time events for local preschools and day care centres. These included National Simultaneous Story Time and Children's Book Council of Australia Book Week, celebrating the importance of Australian authors and illustrators.

A total of 2,677 children attended our after-school and school holiday programs this year. Our monthly Mini Makers sessions and weekly Code Clubs are especially popular, challenging students to engage in collaborative skills building and creative experiences. School holiday programming highlights included Mystery scavenger hunts, writing and songwriting workshops, and animation workshops. The "Speed Meet a Scientist" event hosted as part of National Science Week in partnership with Sydney University, inspired curious, young scientists.

715 students attended programming for young adults this year, including HSC support, Y.A. Pride Book Club and Dungeons and Dragons game sessions. Robotics, Coding, TinkerCAD and 3D printing courses were also offered, along with popular zine-making and astrology workshops during the school holidays

📷 Participants select supplies for their everlasting wreaths in one of our creative workshops for adults

In 2023-24 we reached 2,425 adults through our public programs designed to enhance social engagement, relaxation and life-long learning. Highlights included:

- Technology skills support programs like Tech at Ascham, Tech Connect Express, Tech Savvy Seniors and 3D printing workshops.
- In-conversation events with authors such as Richard Glover, Tim Ayliffe, Aliza Knox, Ross McMullin, Holly Ringland, Judy Nunn, Louise Milligan, Larry Writer, Chris Flynn, Linda Royal, Stephany Steggall, Sandie Docker, Helen Signy and Charlotte Wood.
- Writing courses facilitated by Simon Hunter (screenwriting), Barbara Sweeney (food writing) and Ashley Kalagian Blunt (memoir).
- Creative workshops in flower arranging, macramé and embroidery.
- The launch of 'Crafternoons at Paddington Library' as a regular meet-up space for crafters to connect and share.
- Tai Chi and meditation classes.
- Mending and upcycling workshops.
- A series of Summer 'Sunset Sessions' at Watsons Bay Library featuring 'Summer Reading with Ailsa Piper' and 'Melodies by the Sea' with the Genevieve Brown Quartet.
- Make Music Day with the Jazzscape trio Featuring Barney Wakeford, Paul Mitchell Brown and Matt Moore.
- Monthly 'Bus to Books' morning tea events where residents in our LGA who have difficulty accessing the library are picked up from their home and driven to Woollahra Library at Double Bay.
- Community forums supporting Woollahra Council's YES strategy for the Voice to Parliament Referendum including a panel event with Gary Field and Shireen Morris hosted by Michaela Kalowski.

📷 Right: A father and child read together at a Spark in Lyne Park event (a summer series in early 2024)

Below: Students attend a Robotics STEM course at Paddington Library



All Programs

2023/2024

	Sessions	Attendance
Children	659	11,501
Young Adult	73	715
Adult	323	7,035
Total	1,055	19,251

Online Programs

Recorded in 2023/2024

	Videos	Views
Children	2	250
Adult	16	286
Total	18	536



Library Highlights



📷 A child poses with our Children's Programs officer after a rainbow themed story time



Families enjoy a Spark in Lyne Park event in Rose Bay

Spark Truck Out and About

Woollahra, Randwick, and Waverley Libraries share a versatile Spark Truck that brings our library services directly to the community. This year, the Spark Truck was on the move, extending our reach beyond the library walls with books, technology, craft and story time.

In September 2023, we joined the Double Bay Public School's 140th Anniversary Celebrations for a special fete, providing engaging craft activities and games. Over the summer (December 2023 to February 2024), the Spark Truck was central to our Saturday in the Park events at Lyne Park. These monthly summer gatherings featured games, craft activities, and vibrant themed story times, drawing a large crowd of children, parents and carers.

The Spark Truck also visited Lyne Park Rose Bay for a special Community Bike Day event and the Goethe Institut's German Cultural Day. At these events, library staff enjoyed connecting with the community, gathering feedback, and promoting reading and literacy. For example, at German Cultural Day, we highlighted our language learning resources, while at schools and Spark in the Park events, we showcased our programming for school-aged children.

Outreach efforts like these help us build awareness and share information about our programs, resources and services with the community.



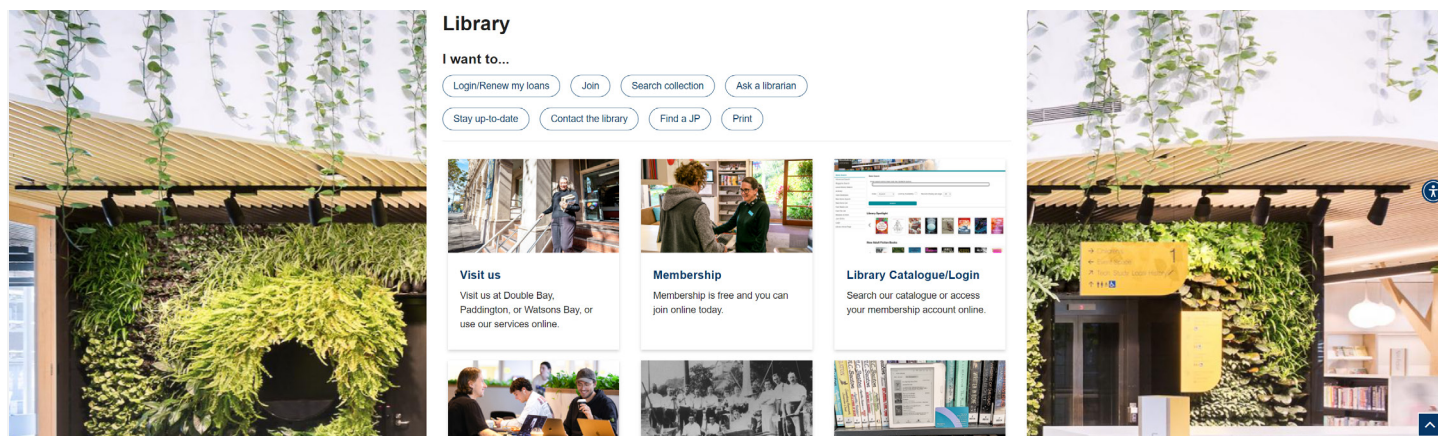
Members of the public browsing through the autumn book fair

Book Fair Round-Up

During the last financial year, Woollahra Libraries hosted four Book Fairs: in July and November 2023, and February and June 2024. These events featured thousands of pre-loved Library books for sale, offering customers the chance to find new reading material at affordable prices, while supporting our Environment and Sustainability Action Plan objectives.

On these days, library visitors enjoyed musical performances of Zaki Violin & Guitar Duo featuring the talented violinist Isobel Tzorbatzaki.

Some of the remaining books were once again sent to Lautoka in Fiji by Emilie Myers, a hand therapist, and her husband Dr Stuart Myers, a hand surgeon. The couple organises Orthopaedic Outreach and visits Lautoka Hospital annually to teach local surgeons, students and physiotherapists. Ten years ago, Emilie and Stuarts' children organised a book project through their local school, bringing used books to the hospital children's ward and the local school in Lautoka. In April 2024, Emilie's daughter Anna carried on this tradition by transporting donations from Woollahra Library to help establish local children's libraries in Lautoka.



A snapshot of the new library website homepage

New Website for Woollahra Libraries

In October 2023, Woollahra Council unveiled its redesigned website, marking the culmination of a project that began in late 2022. The transition from the old Squiz Matrix platform to the new and improved Open Cities platform brings enhanced functionality and performance, aimed at providing a better user experience through easier navigation and prioritisation of information.

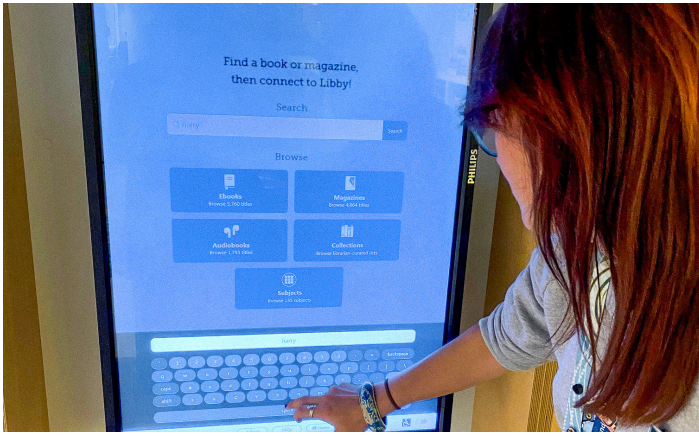
Library members have benefitted immensely from the new information architecture, making it simpler to find what they need. During the transition period from January 2022 to June 2023, the old libraries website averaged an impressive 31,000 visits per month, accounting for over 20% of the entire Woollahra Council website traffic. Our most popular pages included the WebOPAC (catalogue search), individual branch information, online booking of meeting spaces and PCs, and our children's programs area.

In 2023, we undertook a comprehensive review and migration of all content areas and pages. This process involved merging, removing, and rewriting many pages to align with the new website's design and structure. The result is a more intuitive and user-friendly experience for all visitors.

Key new features of the website include:

- **Quick Links Panel:** Located at the top of the page, this panel provides easy access to the most commonly requested pages. The most used functions are at the top of the page, reducing the number of clicks required and the amount of time needed to accomplish tasks.
- **Refined 'What's On' Area:** Our events are now easier to find, categorized into key segments for your convenience. Eventbrite integration presents the upcoming events on the library homepage, allowing users to search for events by name, category, date, or suburb.
- **Revised Events Recordings Area:** Recently recorded events can now be filtered by date and subject.

As the website is now live and fully functional, it remains in an ongoing process of review to ensure continuous improvement. We encourage you to explore the new Woollahra Council website and enjoy the improved features designed to make your experience better than ever.



This touchscreen in Double Bay has been repurposed to display our eResources



Children and their carers enjoy story time for *Don't Let The Pigeon Drive the Bus* at Watsons Bay Library

Technology Highlights

Upgraded Public Laptops

The libraries' public laptops have been upgraded to a modern touch screen model. 16 laptops are always charged and ready to be used for technology classes, workshop or STEM activities.

Microsoft Teams Rollout

Microsoft Teams was rolled out for the library staff ahead of the general council release. This tool facilitates collaboration and instant communication between library staff and allows streamlined access to information where and when it is needed.

Updated EFTPOS Terminals

EFTPOS terminals in self-payment kiosks have been replaced with the latest version ensuring compliance with the latest banking standards.

Event Promotions and QR Codes

The libraries successfully trialed displaying events promotions and QR codes for borrowing eBooks on self-service kiosks. This feature will be implemented on our new and more intuitive kiosks next year.

eCollection Touchscreen

Our Libby e-books and audiobooks are now presented on a touchscreen at the entrance of Woollahra Library at Double Bay, inviting our members to borrow, search and sample titles. When they find something they like, they can easily get links via text message, email or QR code to download Libby and borrow the title.

Community Access Hours at Watsons Bay Library

Watsons Bay Library is a well-loved local community facility, with 65,098 visits and 15,161 physical items loaned in 2023/24. It currently offers 29 staffed hours per week, with two team members providing face-to-face customer service. Community feedback from the 2019 Library Strategic Plan and previous member surveys highlighted a desire for extended weekday and weekend hours. Although staffing constraints pose challenges, a project funded through the Special Rates Variation aims to enhance accessibility by offering library access during unstaffed periods.

Following a thorough community engagement process in late 2023, a proposed trial for unstaffed community access hours received more than 50 positive responses. The trial will add 19 hours weekly, including new Saturday hours and extending hours on weekdays, bringing the library's total weekly operation to 48 hours.

To prepare for this trial, the library is installing new IT infrastructure and enhancing security measures to address any safety concerns during unstaffed hours. The extended access hours will begin in the second quarter of the 2024/25 financial year. During the initial trial, the library will gather additional patron feedback to assess the extended hours' impact and inform future decisions.

To further support the Watsons Bay Library community, a Seed Library collection was added in April, and the Ready Reads collection launched in July continues to provide popular titles for immediate borrowing. These initiatives reflect the library's commitment to meeting patrons' evolving needs and ensuring an engaging and accessible library experience.



A crowd is engaged by Thomas Mayo during his presentation on the Voice to Parliament referendum



A library staff member holds one of the many collection items available to borrow during the Voice to Parliament campaigns

Voice to Parliament Program of Events

Woollahra Libraries supported Woollahra Council's YES strategy for the Voice to Parliament Referendum by presenting three community forums. These forums explored the Voice and what a vote in the referendum would mean to First Nations people and our country.

In June 2023 Thomas Mayo, Signatory and Advocate for the Uluru Statement from the Heart, gave a powerful and heartfelt presentation on the referendum's significance and the positive impact a YES vote could have for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, providing a platform for First Nations voices on issues that affect them.

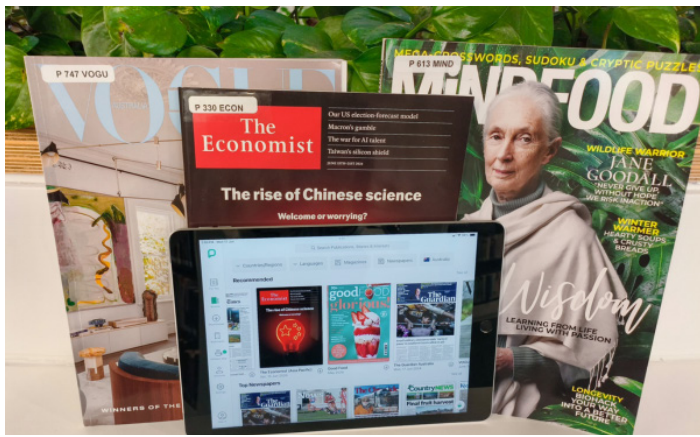
Also in June, Woollahra Libraries hosted a yarning circle with Wailwan elder and Stolen Generation survivor James Michael "Widdy" Welsh. A yarning circle is an important process that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people use to learn from one another, build respect and share knowledge. Uncle Widdy generously shared and provided attendees with an opportunity to listen, ask questions, and build robust, trusting and caring relationships within our community.

In September 2023 constitutional law expert Shireen Morris and Gary Field, a proud Wiradjuri community services professional from Barang Regional Alliance, discussed their shared vision of the promise an Indigenous Voice to Parliament held and the improved social outcomes the Voice could enable.

Woollahra Council supports the Uluru Statement from the Heart in full (Truth, Treaty and Voice) and supported the Voice to Parliament (the Yes Strategy). Woollahra Libraries programming helped provide information to the community in the lead up to the referendum.

"This was an opportunity to understand more clearly the question and history of the Voice to Parliament [referendum], and to see the link with the Uluru Statement of the Heart. Thank you. Thomas Mayo is a wonderful speaker and gave very good answers to the questions which were raised."

– Attendee, Voice to Parliament Talk



The PressReader app as viewed on a tablet pictured with some of the magazines available to access

Digital Library Expansion: Hoopla and PressReader

This year the library launched the Hoopla Platform in response to ongoing community demand for digital content. Hoopla is a comprehensive digital platform that provides simultaneous access to diverse range of materials, including eBooks, eAudiobooks, films, TV shows, music and comics. Users can enjoy instant access to titles with no reservations needed, providing a seamless digital experience.

We also introduced PressReader, expanding our wide collection of digital services. PressReader provides simultaneous access to over 7,000 digital newspapers and magazines from 82 countries in 60 languages. Available both in-library and remotely on computers or mobile devices, it has quickly become popular, with the New York Times and The Economist being the most popular titles so far.



The library events and programs team poses with their award for the WorldPride 2023 Program

2023 NSWPLA Innovation in Outreach Services Award

At the NSW Public Libraries Association Annual Conference, Woollahra Libraries won the Innovation in Outreach Services Award (populations serving 30,000-100,000) for our WorldPride 2023 Program.

The goal of this program was to cement Woollahra Libraries as a place that welcomes, celebrates, recognises and supports our LGBTQIA+ community. As part of the program, a giant progress flag with the words 'Everyone Welcome' was installed on the main bleacher staircase at Woollahra Library at Double Bay.

Highlights of the program included a Sapphic Literary Lounge with readings from local queer poets, youth art workshops and board games evenings, panel discussions and history talks, and a rainbow story time for families.

The outcomes of the project included:

- Increased visibility of the significant literary and creative contributions the LGBTQIA+ community to our library and local community.
- Enhanced connections and partnerships with the local LGBTQIA+ community.
- Positive response from our LGBTQIA+ community.
- Expanded library programming focused on LGBTQIA+ topics.
- Creation of a safe space for the LGBTQIA+ community.

The success of this program has strengthened staff's capacity and confidence in delivering inclusive and affirming programming for LGBTQIA+ groups.



Our seed library collection, available at Watsons Bay Library



Students destress from studying with a visit from a Paws Pet Therapy dog

Sustainability Initiatives – Seed Library

In April 2024, Woollahra Libraries launched our very own Seed Library, primarily based at Watsons Bay Library. This exciting new initiative aims to foster community connections, promote sustainable growing practices and cultivate a shared passion for gardening.

The launch took place on Earth Day (April 22) on the picturesque lawn of Watsons Bay Library. Our community engagement officer, Jaimie Harrison, kicked off the event with an informative introduction to the seed library program. Local author Ailsa Piper followed with inspiring poetry readings on the natural world, while Michelle Rose shared valuable insights into Woollahra Council's extensive sustainability efforts.

We started the seed library with an initial donation of seeds from Cooper Park and Rose Bay Community Gardens. This collaboration marks the beginning of a promising partnership, and we look forward to working together to promote local events and engage the community.

At the launch, we distributed 84 seed packets, gave away ivy cuttings from Woollahra Library at Double Bay to encourage propagation, and loaned out numerous books from our gardening collection.

The Seed Library has quickly become a beloved addition to our libraries and we are excited to watch this program continue to grow.

Inclusive and Innovative Programs for Young People

The youth programs at Woollahra Libraries saw increased participation from August 2023 to June 2024. A community engagement survey of young people aged 13-26 showed a preference for project-based learning. The library offered two eight-week programs in collaboration with the Australian Academy of Robotics and STEM (AARS), an "Introduction to Robotics and Coding" and the "Fundamentals of Tinkercad and 3D printing", which utilised the library's 3D printing and design software. Feedback from participants highlighted a desire for more hands-on STEM programs.

In September 2023, Woollahra Libraries piloted a Pride Book Club for LGBTQIA+ community members ages 13-18, inspired by our 2023 Sydney World Pride programming and the 2020 Trevor Project study. The four members who formed this bi-weekly club reported that it positively impacted their anxiety, depression, and gender dysphoria.

The library also ran a series of HSC late night library programs during extended hours from September to October. Feedback revealed a desire for more desk space and quieter study areas. Pop-up mental health activities, including Paws Pet Therapy and hand massages, were offered to help students manage stress. Students suggested adding tutors to this program, which have been implemented for 2024. Overall, the HSC programming provided a supportive environment, with increased activities to address student anxiety and stress.



Seniors try out virtual reality in this Festival of Fun New Experiences workshop



Seniors visit Woollahra Gallery at Redleaf during a special session of our monthly Bus to Books program

Festival of Fun New Experiences

Throughout March 2024, Woollahra Council, in partnership with local community organisations, hosted the Festival of Fun New Experiences. This festival, which coincided with the NSW Seniors Festival, aimed to immerse the Woollahra Community in engaging local activities, foster life-long learning and ensure an enjoyable time for all. Woollahra Libraries participated by offering a range of informative and creative events and classes at our library branches, all free or low cost.

The festival featured a Virtual Reality workshop where participants explored virtual worlds using the libraries' VR Headsets. They had the chance to experience activities such as 3D painting, Tai Chi and meditation. Additionally, our photo organising workshop provided valuable tips for managing and preserving photographs, from decluttering and organising photo collections to scanning them and creating lasting digital backups. At Watsons Bay Library, library staff led a popular Flower Arranging workshop, where attendees learned the art of making beautiful floral arrangements.

The Festival of Fun New Experiences also offered an opportunity to introduce new audiences to our regular library programs. We hosted a special Story Time for Grandparents, encouraging families to share a love of reading across generations. Our ongoing programs, including Bus to Books, Tai Chi, 3D printing, Tech Connect Express, Tech at Ascham and Tech Savvy Seniors continue to attract interest as the community seeks ways to learn, connect and enjoy new experiences at the library.

“[The VR was] a new concept that I had heard of but had no idea how it worked. It was very interesting not only got to learn about how it works, but to actually experience it too. Great program.”

– Participant, FOFNE Virtual Reality Workshop



Members of our Systems and Information team with the library manager after receiving the Libero Innovation Award



These thermal cameras help the user to evaluate energy efficiency

Libero Innovation Award – September 2023

Woollahra Libraries are always striving to improve our services for local residents. Recognising the potential of online visibility, we decided to make our holdings discoverable through Google to better promote the collection online.

We found that EBSCO Bibliograph service could facilitate links from Google search directly to our library catalogue. Collaborating with both EBSCO and our library management system vendor, Libero, we successfully implemented this service.

In the first year, we received 12,988 clicks through to our library catalogue from Google searches, with new borrowers commenting that they discovered our libraries through Google.

In September 2023, Woollahra Libraries received the inaugural Libero Innovation Award for being the first Libero library to implement the EBSCO Bibliograph service.

Sustainability Initiatives – Thermal Camera

This year, Woollahra Libraries introduced thermal cameras for customers to borrow, enhancing our commitment to sustainability. These cameras are designed to help users evaluate energy efficiency in their homes by finding gaps in insulation, comparing the performance of different walls and rooms, identifying air leaks and spotting water leaks or damp issues.

Customers used the thermal cameras to view and measure surface temperatures at home to assess if heat is being lost in winter or gained in summer, due to draughts and gaps in insulation. This helps to improve household energy efficiency. Since their launch, the cameras have been in extremely high demand, reflecting our community's commitment to sustainable practices and energy conservation.



Our Home Library Service officer at the ALIA Aged Care Information Hub, ready to help answer questions

ALIA Aged Care Information Hub Pilot Project

In October 2023, Woollahra Libraries received grant funding to join a nationwide pilot project partnering with the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and the Department of Health and Aged Care. The initiative aimed to distribute information and gather feedback on Aged Care reforms implemented after the 2018 Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

The project launched on October 3, 2023 with presentations from the Department of Health and Aged Care and Seniors Rights Services. These sessions covered topics like seniors advocacy, legal issues and planning for the future.

A key component of the project was the 'Hub', set up weekly on the landing at Woollahra Library at Double Bay for ten weeks. The Hub featured both physical and digital resources, including an iPad for browsing and brochures from the Department of Aged Care on topics such as Navigating My Aged Care, dementia in aged care, seniors' rights, elder abuse, and information around the recent reforms. Feedback was collected through direct interactions with Hub staff, iPad surveys, and comment cards. This data was then reported to the Department of Aged Care and ALIA.

The Hub's strategic location at the library entrance facilitated high visibility and engagement with older people, families and carers in the local community. Visitors to the hub shared their stories, experiences and concerns, underscoring that aging affects everyone.



📷 A Summer Sunset Session in the garden of Watsons Bay Library



Plaque to Professor Leslie Wilkinson OBE is unveiled by nominator Graham Humphrey, Cr Mary-Lou Jarvis and Professor Andrew Leach



Digital Literary Award judges and library experience coordinator discuss the shortlist at the 2023 ceremony

Woollahra Plaque Scheme

Over the past year, four plaques have been added to pavements in Woollahra under the Woollahra Council Plaque Scheme. These plaques celebrate individuals (or events) whose contributions have left a lasting impact on our local area and beyond. Nominations for these plaques are sourced from the public and reviewed by the Woollahra Art and Culture Advisory committee.

Among this year's recipients is Sir Mark Sheldon KBE who turned his commercial success into notable acts of philanthropy, and service to the nation as an early trade emissary. Architect and academic Professor Leslie Wilkinson OBE was commemorated for his influence on Australian architectural practice and philosophy, marking him as an educational pioneer and advocate for his profession.

Two remarkable women were also celebrated with plaques for their respective cultural contributions. Karoo (Cora Gooseberry), an Aboriginal woman whose life spanned the transition from traditional to colonial times, was honoured for her role as a custodian of cultural knowledge and leader for her people. Gisella Scheinberg OAM, founder of the Holdsworth Galleries, was acknowledged for providing a crucial centre of support and opportunity for local artists, and for fostering an appreciation for the fine arts within the community.

These four plaques not only honour exceptional individuals but also reflect a rich tapestry of contributions that have shaped our local area.

2023 Woollahra Digital Literary Award

In 2023, Woollahra Libraries celebrated the seventh annual Woollahra Digital Literary Award, a national prize recognising Australian authors who publish in innovative digital formats.

The judging panel, including Claudine Tinellis (Fiction), Tiffany Tsao (Non-Fiction), Ali Whitelock (Poetry) and Brett Osmond (Digital Innovation) reviewed 179 entries to select a shortlist of 21 works. The winners of the 2023 award shared a total prize pool of \$7,500 across the four categories, plus an additional \$250 prize for the Reader's Choice:

- **Fiction Prize:** Michael Mohammed Ahmad, *The Life of a Folk Devil*, Meanjin
- **Non-Fiction Prize:** Cher Tan, *House Style Lifestyle, or Same. Same. Same. Same. Same. Same.*, Cordite Poetry Review
- **Poetry Prize:** Dominic Symes, *Security Questions (True Vulnerability)*, Cordite Poetry Review
- **Digital Innovation Prize:** Adnyamathanha Community, *Yurlu the Kingfisher Man*, SharingStories Foundation
- **Readers' Choice:** Yael Grunseit, *The Myth of Good Posture*, Voiceworks

The winners were celebrated at an awards ceremony hosted at Woollahra Library at Double Bay by Library Customer Experience Coordinator Jenn Martin and attended by Woollahra Mayor Richard Shields. Woollahra Libraries is proud to support the Arts in Australia through this significant award recognising excellence in digital writing and publishing.



Group Study Room 3 in Woollahra Library at Double Bay, which now has automated access

Automated access to study rooms

Over the past eight years, library members have made great use of the modern Study Rooms at Woollahra Library at Double Bay. The rooms, designed for groups of up to eight, come equipped with screens that enable wireless content projection from personal devices. In the last year alone, the Study Rooms were booked 6,529 times for group study sessions and meetings.

This year, accessing the Study Rooms became even more convenient. Members now receive a confirmation email with a room access code after booking the room online with their library card. This code can be shared with the rest of their study group, allowing secure and easy entry. The room unlocks automatically when the member scans their library card or enters the access code at the interactive wall terminal.

This automation not only simplifies the process of accessing the rooms, but also increases security by ensuring only those with the access code can enter.



Martin Fell, long-time library volunteer, monitoring the slide

Volunteers Update

The Woollahra Libraries Volunteer Program fosters wellbeing, diversity, inclusion, and community connectedness. With a dedicated team of more than 100 volunteers. We successfully deliver numerous programs and events, as well as Home Library and JP services. Our volunteers provide essential IT support to the community, supervise the slippery slide at Woollahra Library at Double Bay, and work with our Local History team on document transcription and digitisation. We also offer volunteering opportunities for students completing the Duke of Edinburgh Award program.

In 2023/2024, library volunteers contributed more than 3,745 hours of voluntary service. This year saw a remarkable increase in participation, with 48 new volunteers joining our team! Volunteers are an integral part of Woollahra Libraries, making significant contribution to our services. We celebrate their efforts throughout the year at various events, including end-of-year and National Volunteer Week celebrations, as well as in quarterly meetings.

“My favourite thing about volunteering here is definitely the people, the staff and the customers. I love the slide because I don’t have any kids of my own, so I borrow everyone else’s for a few seconds.”

Martin Fell, Slide Volunteer

Woollahra Libraries

Double Bay

451 New South
Head Road
9391 7100

Paddington

Town Hall
247 Oxford Street
9391 7988

Watsons Bay

8 Marine Parade
9391 7999

woollahra.nsw.gov.au/library

