

Can regional collaboration help build the public library of the future?

This paper considers the role of regional collaboration in how the public library of the future is imagined. Based on research undertaken by the UTS Centre for Local Government on behalf of the State Library of NSW, we argue that collaboration at local and regional levels between public libraries can be used to further our understanding of the public library of the future, with a shift in focus away from the services provided at a local level to those provided more regionally. The data is drawn from a mixed methods approach, drawing on survey data collected from public library managers across NSW and interviews with selected managers and key stakeholders.

The research found that public libraries in particular are open to different ways of organising across borders and boundaries, and that the importance of community consultation must be emphasised for any collaborative proposal. The research also found that public libraries in regional collaboration models can be used as exemplars for wider local government activities considering regional collaboration activities, expanding the impact of the work of public libraries further than the library sector.