

# **SHARED LIBRARY SERVICES IN THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Victorian Government has committed to a whole of government approach to the provision of shared services under its *Efficient Government* policy. To achieve this aim a Shared Service Provider (SSP) was established within the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) to provide facilities, accommodation, car pools and library services across the 11 in-scope government departments and four agencies.

The overall objective of the libraries shared services plan is to combine the existing library services of in-scope departments and agencies into a new Whole of Victorian Government (WoVG) library service. This paper will outline the first steps taken to establish shared library operations, and discuss strategic library projects currently underway to deliver unified and integrated library services across Victorian government departments.

## **1. BACKGROUND**

In 2006 the Victorian Bracks Labour Government released an *Efficient Government* policy. A key undertaking of this policy was to increase the efficiency of government, in part by adopting whole of government approach to shared services. More corporate services functions would be standardised, technology was to be further standardised, and resources and expertise pooled. The aim was for shared services arrangements to free departments and agencies from 'backroom' processing responsibilities to enable them to concentrate on service delivery.

### **1.1. Existing shared services in the Victorian Government**

Shared corporate services are not a new concept to Victorian government departments. Existing shared service arrangements already operates to some extent across various departments and

agencies, e.g. four of the 11 government departments participated in an information and communications technology (ICT) shared service centre, and shared service arrangements were in place for all corporate service functions (including library services) operating across the DTF and DPC.

## **1.2. Proposed shared services**

Processes under consideration for new or extended shared service arrangements included facilities and property management, financial management and services, vehicle fleet management, information and communications technology, human resources, procurement and library services. All of these functions had been provided and managed independently by each department and agency, and were considered to have potential for delivering efficiency and service delivery gains by moving to a new shared service model.

In late 2008 an evaluation was undertaken of the viability of creating a shared library service across government. Research on existing corporate functions including a benchmarking and baselining analysis of these functions was the first step towards developing a submission to the government's Expenditure Review Committee (ERC) for funding to implement shared service strategy.

## **1.3. Benchmarking and baselining analysis**

Four libraries were selected for the benchmarking and baselining analysis. They were the corporate libraries of the Department of Primary Industries (DPI), the Department of Human Services (DHS), and the Department of Justice (DOJ), including the Corrections Victoria Resource Centre (CVRC). Collectively, these three libraries were seen as being broadly representative of the various libraries within Victorian Government departments and agencies.

The DPI library was by far the largest library service. By September 2004 DPI had completed an extensive restructure and rationalisation of its library services. [1] Altogether 16 individual library collections from throughout metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria were downsized to 'tool of trade collections', with a minimal on-site staffing presence. The balance of the collections were consolidated into a purpose built Knowledge Resource Centre in the western suburbs of Melbourne. Technical services were centralised, and electronic materials became the format of choice, accessible via a virtual library. In addition, the DPI library provided library services to the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) via a formal shared access arrangement. Collectively, the two library services supported a large client base with multidisciplinary interests. By way of comparison, the Corrections Victoria Resource Centre was staffed part-time, and provided reference services to a single business unit almost exclusively in the specialised subject areas of criminology and penology.

Aspects of library services that were benchmarked included staff and payroll costs, library footprint and cost of library facilities, number of eligible and actual users, costs of print and electronic resources, cost of information technology, reference statistics, metrics on service delivery and the extent of full time equivalent effort expended on performing specific duties such as circulation

functions, reference, management, acquisitions etc. The consultants undertaking the analysis compared the benchmarking data returns against a set of reference data. This assessment formed the basis of a business case for establishing shared library services.

Similar benchmarking analysis was conducted for the other functions under consideration for shared service delivery including facilities and property management, financial management and services, vehicle fleet management, information and communications technology, and human resources.

#### **1.4. Shared Library Service Proposal**

The benchmarked functions identified for the first stage of shared services collectively termed 'ancillary services' were library services, facilities, accommodation and car pools".

In April 2009 the DTF released a consultation draft proposal to establish a Victorian Government shared library service. [2] The proposal included establishment of a Shared Service Provider (SSP) entity in the DTF to provide ancillary services.

The overall objective of the libraries shared services plan is to combine the existing library services of in-scope departments and agencies into a new whole of Victorian Government library service. A defining aspect of the Victorian government shared service model is that participation by the in-scope departments and agencies has been mandated by government.

Key elements of the shared library service proposal included:

- participation of 11 departments and 4 agencies as mandated by Government.
- establishment of the SSP as the new shared library service provider
- staffing of SSP libraries via a Machinery of Government (MoG) transfer of existing library staff to DTF
- creation and recruitment of a library strategic projects unit, and
- co-location of selected libraries in the Melbourne Central Business District (CBD).

A further phase of data collection and analysis followed release of the proposal. All in-scope libraries participated in data gathering on a range of library services and functions including shelving and floor space usage, client facilities, client profiles, acquisitions functions, collection strengths, subscription services and web delivery.

## **2. TRANSITIONING TO SHARED LIBRARY SERVICES**

### **2.1. Staffing the Shared Service Provider Library**

Following the formal consultation period, the final plan for Whole of Victorian Government Library Services was released in September 2009. [3]

In total there were 64 affected existing employees including 60 on-going public service employees and 4 contractors. All full-time staff, and part-time or fractional employees who spent 50% or more

of their usual hours of work managing libraries or in delivering library services were in scope to be transferred to DTF under the MoG arrangements.

Staff who did not meet the 'tipping in' requirements included staff with responsibility for functions deemed to be outside of library services (e.g. corporate web management and bookshop staff). Departments also retained responsibility for contract staff.

The MoG change became effective in early December, whereby the DTF assumed responsibility for library services of all the in-scope libraries.

## 2.2. Recruitment of key positions

Recruitment into the new roles established in the SSP, (Manager, Library Operations, and staffing the projects unit) was based on a preferential selection process that favoured existing library staff. A phased selection process was developed to fill the new roles:

- Phase 1 – merit based Expression of Interest and selection of affected staff, i.e. those staff in scope to be transferred to DTF via the MoG change
- Phase 2 – merit based selection open to other public sector employees, and
- Phase 3 – merit based selection via external recruitment.

Once these newly established roles were filled (whether by internal applicants, or external recruitment) there were subsequent vacancies to be filled in the library locations. As library co-locations were proceeding at the same time new opportunities arose for existing staff to move into different roles and locations. Over 50% of library staff have moved to a new role in the SSP, or have been newly recruited into the Victorian public sector since the MoG change.

## 2.3. Library projects

A libraries project team was established to work with departments and agencies towards identifying and implementing best practices in library services across WoVG. The main objectives of the team are strategic direction setting, WoVG library policy development, managing strategic relationships and delivery of planning projects.

The libraries project team has carriage of four major library initiatives to underpin a WoVG library service:

- **Library Management System (LMS) Project:** implementation of a single library management system across in-scope government libraries. This project will deliver an integrated LMS, replacing all the existing departmental systems.
- **Virtual Library Project:** creation of a virtual library that delivers a unified information search and delivery solution via an intranet. The virtual library will replace the library intranet sites currently maintained individually by each department and agency.
- **Service Delivery Project:** development of a service level agreement and service catalogue for library services, and
- **Subscriptions Project:** consolidation and rationalisation of journal subscriptions and selected electronic resources, currently managed by each of the Victorian government departmental and agency libraries, together with a targeted move from print to electronic resorting wherever

possible. This project aims to deliver efficiencies by reducing duplicate resources, and providing access to a wider range of resources.

The library projects team will also deliver recommendations on future efficiencies in service delivery, strategies for improving information discovery and access to all public sector staff, the development of systems to improve service delivery. Further areas of focus include opportunities for strategic partnership arrangements with like institutions, developing the best option available to provide offsite storage for little used material, and developing a staffing model which will provide the most efficient library service delivery for the in scope departments and agencies.

A number of focus groups have been established with representatives from across the SSP library service to inform and progress delivery of streamlined library services. These focus groups will also guide development of the library projects, training and marketing services, reference and current awareness services. Many of the staff in the focus groups have not worked together previously, so the focus groups provide a forum for staff to share information, to identify existing best practices within SSP libraries and to set new standards for library services.

Technology related focus groups directly contribute to and influence development of new systems including evaluating trials of information products and technology solutions, and assisting in the development of specifications for systems.

## **2.4. Baseline audit**

Prior to the MoG transfer of staff into the SSP a baseline audit project was completed across the in-scope libraries to provide an assessment of service delivery maturity. The maturity assessment and baseline project was initiated to define and understand the level of library service delivery across the departments and agencies prior to the full implementation of the SSP.

This project differed from previous data collection and analysis activities as it aimed to provide an objective assessment of how well each of the library service lines are delivered in respect to five broad competencies necessary to deliver a service. Each library service was scored against five key service delivery competencies of governance, service management, process management, service assurance and customer management. The results of the baseline audit are being used to inform the development of a whole of government library service delivery model by the SSP.

## **2.5. Library co-locations**

Co-locations were seen as a necessary part of the development of a WoVG library service, delivering immediate cost savings in expenditure on floor space in the Melbourne CBD.

Six libraries were selected for co-location of departmental and agency libraries. With the exception of the DPCD library, all of the library services were located on different levels of the 121 Exhibition Street building. The DPCD library service was moved to be co-located with the existing Department

of Transport library on level five. The library services of Corrections Victoria (CV) and the State Revenue Office (SRO) were subsequently co-located on the existing DOJ level 25 site.

Workshops were arranged to address co-location issues such as information technology issues, collection management and integration, and accommodation arrangements.

It was anticipated that co-locations would be finalised by the end of December 2009, however transfer of collections, fit-outs and providing a level of shared IT access were more complex than expected. Due to floor loading constraints not all collections in scope for co-location were moved, making service delivery less streamlined than planned.

## **2.6. Systems integration**

Library shared services are being delivered in parallel with a graduated rollout of common ICT platforms and systems across WoVG. To date, six of the in-scope agencies and departments are on a common platform. A further four departments are being integrated into the same network, and the remainder of the in-scope departments and agencies will transfer in over time.

Lack of a single ICT network presents a number of challenges. For example, currently there are four different types of catalogue software in use in SSP Libraries, with 11 different instances or versions in place. Microsoft Outlook is the departmental standard for email for two of the in-scope departments, the balance use different versions of Lotus Notes. The most common browser is Internet Explorer 6, although some departments and agencies allow different browsers, or have higher versions of Internet Explorer.

Such variability of systems and platforms present a barrier to delivery of a single library services across government. Service delivery in co-located sites can be impacted by incompatible systems and applications.

Initiatives to overcome the different technology platforms in place include use of:

- remote access to enable SSP staff in their home departments to access DTF systems such as the intranet, human resources applications and the records management system
- a social networking tool to enable communication across SSP staff without the need to log into DTF system, and
- the WoVG intranet as an interim platform for delivery of consolidated library services in a web environment.

Deployment of a single library management system via a virtual library is acknowledged as being critical to enabling shared library services.

## **3. ANTICIPATED BENEFITS**

It is anticipated that the major benefits associated with the changes outlined in the library shared service plan will be realised once a single library service has been fully established. Once the work

of strategic projects has completed, and shared services are fully operational, a number of benefits are expected to accrue from the WoVG library service.

A range of benefits are anticipated for library staff, for library users, and for government. Overall, the establishment of the WoVG Shared Library Service is expected to deliver estimated savings of \$2.2M over 4 years. These benefits are expected to derive from a reduction in the total amount of CBD floor space utilised by government libraries, the implementation of a single library management system, and the consolidation and rationalisation of library subscriptions.

### **3.1. Benefits for library staff**

- greater opportunities to share resources and knowledge in a more structured environment (for example through one library management system)
- greater opportunities for career progression and related opportunities such as higher duty assignments
- improved equity and consistency in position descriptions and classifications across VPS library staff
- greater opportunities to develop specific skills and expertise in areas of interest

### **3.2. Benefits for library users**

- greater access to library resources from across government, regardless of location
- consistency in systems and processes across government will assist staff transferring across departments or agencies
- ability to leverage combined library staff skills and knowledge in development of resources and services for users such as training packages and promotional materials, and
- greater clarity about library services and service levels through documentation in a formal service level agreement and catalogue of services.

### **3.3. Benefits for government**

- greater efficiencies through economies of scale, increased purchasing power and centralised management (through a centre of excellence)
- reduced floor space costs
- address the inequalities of service delivery across government
- increased ability to manage MoG changes (collections will no longer be required to be split and relocated across government).

## **4. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The SSP libraries plan has put in place a roadmap for delivery of shared library services across WoVG. Fundamental first steps such as the rollout of the necessary underlying infrastructure and systems to support shared services delivery is underway, but will not become fully operational for some time.

Thus far a number of significant initiatives have enabled us to take the first steps towards a co-ordinated single library service across WoVG:

- delivery of WoVG online subscriptions
- co-location of six library sites within the Melbourne CBD
- development of standardised metrics
- elimination of intra-library borrowing charges, and
- deployment of a customer satisfaction survey

Current areas of foci are offsite storage options for print collections, and developing the appropriate staffing and funding models to underpin shared library services into the future.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Nijke, M.: Library staff or resource managers? The Libraries redevelopment project of the Department of Primary Industries Victoria, *Incite*, Vol. 26, pp.16 (2005).
- [2] Department of Treasury & Finance, Victoria.: Proposal to Establish a Shared Service Provider: Victorian Government Shared Library Service Proposal: A 'draft for consultation' proposal (2009).
- [3] Department of Treasury & Finance, Victoria.: Shared Service Provider: Victorian Government Shared Library Service Plan (2009).

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CBD	Central Business District
CV	Corrections Victoria
DEECD	Dept. of Education & Early Childhood Development
DHS	Dept. of Human Services
DIIRD	Dept. of Innovation, Industry & Regional Development
DoH	Dept. of Health
DOJ	Dept. of Justice
DOT	Dept. of Transport
DPC	Dept. of Premier and Cabinet
DPCD	Dept. of Planning & Community Development
DPI	Dept. of Primary Industries
DSE	Dept. of Sustainability and Environment
DTF	Department of Treasury and Finance
EPA	Environment Protection Authority
EGS	Efficient Government Services
ERC	Expenditure Review Committee
FACS	Facilities, Accommodation, Car Pools
GSG	Government Services Group / Division
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
MoG	Machinery of Government
SRO	State Revenue Office
SSP	Shared Service Provider
VPol	Victoria Police
VRoads	VicRoads

WoVG	Whole of Victorian Government
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