

Podcast 149 – My Local Public Library

Learn English while learning about daily life in Australia,
with Rob McCormack

Podcast Number 149 – My Local Public Library

<https://traffic.libsyn.com/slowenglish/podcast149.mp3>

(This podcast is 14 minutes and 28 seconds long.)

Hi,

In today's digital and online world, one doesn't think of libraries as being as important as they used to be. However, public libraries in Australia, like many public libraries around the world, now make effective use of both physical and digital resources. By doing so, they have been able to improve the delivery of their free services for their local communities. In this podcast, I would like to talk a little about those services.



Public libraries in Australia are funded through local government, which is the 3rd tier of government in Australia (see [Podcast 81](#)). There are some differences in the way libraries are organised across Australia, so I will use my local public library here in Melbourne as an example to explain how it works. I will provide only a high-level summary. For full and accurate information, you should visit the library website at www.wml.vic.gov.au, or your local public library website if you live elsewhere in Australia.

My local public library is called The Pines Library and is within walking distance from my home. The Pines Library is one of 8 public libraries in our part of Melbourne which work together in order to offer services to their communities. They offer a wide range of information and reading resources. The aim of the libraries is to support life-long learning and reading. Their vision is to provide a library service that

enriches our community.

Of course, public libraries offer, first and foremost, access to physical books and audio-visual resources which can be borrowed to take home. In order to use the library services, you must become a member. In fact, in 2021/22, across the 8 libraries for our area, there were around 104,000 members. Considering the area covered by these 8 libraries has a combined population of around 294,000 people, you can see that around 35% of the population have become library members. In 2021/22, those members made 2.36 million loans. I think these are impressive figures and it tells you that people in our local communities value their local public library.



At each library there are also internet connected computers, printers and photocopiers. There is also a WIFI service for connecting to the internet, which library users can access,

including with their own personal devices such as a smart phone or tablet. Use of these is free, except for printing, photocopying and scanning, for which you must pay a small charge. So, you can see that, if you don't have access to a computer or to the internet at home, you can come to the local library and get it for free. Every time I visit our library, the computers are almost always being used, so they are obviously popular.



But the library is so much more than just resources for loan and access to computers. It's also about events and activities which connect people and bring them together. This is where I think our public libraries are really enriching people's lives and encouraging life-long learning. These events and activities are organised around the different life stages of the community members. We have activities and events for babies and pre-schoolers, for primary school children, for

teens, for young adults, for adults and finally for seniors. Everyone is catered for, giving everyone the opportunity to continue their learning. It's a great concept. During the pandemic, many of these events were converted to online using Zoom software and these continue today. You don't even have to leave home to participate.

For young children under 1 year of age, there is baby karaoke. For toddlers aged 1 to 3 years, there are storytime sessions, nursery rhyme sessions and craft activities. There are even storytime sessions for children of migrants from China, Greece and Iran, so that the young children can continue to maintain their language and cultural links with their parents' homeland.

For primary school children, there is the Lego Club after school and Book Week activities such as cartooning, craft, games and writing workshops. There are also computer coding, robotics and video games sessions. There is also a great school holiday program, to keep primary school children active and interested during their school holidays.

For teens, there is a homework club where teens can get help and assistance with maths, science and English, either at the library or online.

For adults, there are a range of activities including Book Club, where people can share their enthusiasm and thoughts about books they have read. Authors are also invited to give talks about their work. Again, these can be at the library or online. There is also a large Lifestyle and Learning program, where people can attend sessions to learn cooking skills, jewellery making, meditation, gardening, researching your family history, or you can join a group to play Scrabble. These are just a few of those activities offered. The list is very long.



Finally, for seniors, there is a strong focus on improving their digital literacy, which means giving them the skills to successfully use digital resources and the internet in their daily lives. For example, there are sessions on Google maps and spotting an online scam. There are sessions on using many of the online functions which people must use these days to communicate with government organisations and businesses.

One good example of an organisation which offers online services is the public library itself. It's called the eLibrary service. From their webpage at <https://www.wml.vic.gov.au/Services/eLibrary>, you can search the catalogue and find books and resources of interest. You can then download, for free, eBooks, audio books, music, magazines and newspapers, movies and educational games. There are thousands of resources available. There is also a History Online service where you can research your own family

ancestry. The eLibrary service is a fantastic service in my opinion.

One last area I will mention covers English language skills. This is obviously something I have a special interest in. There are many residents in our communities who are migrants keen to improve their English skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing. I hope some of them may be followers of my Slow English podcast. The library runs English Conversation Circles both at the library and online, where volunteer native English speakers will help English learners to better understand and speak English. There is also an English Reading Group where English learners all read a book and then discuss its ideas and themes using English. I think this program is extremely valuable and allows community members the chance to improve their language skills in a relaxed and friendly environment. Furthermore, you can also get access to some excellent online English courses through the eLibrary website, using your library membership number. One good example is AMES Australia, which offers four excellent online English language courses through the library website. Another example is the Road to IELTS courses which are online materials to help English learners pass the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) language test. The Road to IELTS courses have a cost.

In summary, I can say that I am very impressed with our local library service. When our children were young, my wife made good use of this excellent service, for borrowing books and videos, and also attending events in the library. Of course, that was around 30 years ago, when online services were just an idea. Today, when we visit the library, we are still very impressed with the friendly service which we receive from the staff and the online service is superb. Our local libraries are doing a great job and I encourage all my Australian listeners to check out their local library. You won't be disappointed.

If you have a question or comment to make, please leave it in the comments box at the bottom of this page. Or, you can send me an email at rob@slowenglish.info. I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about yourself and what you think of my Slow English podcast. I will write back to you, in English of course. If you would like to take a short quiz to see if you have understood this

podcast, you will also find it on my website. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

Podcast 149 Quiz - Did you understand the podcast?

You can take the quiz as many times as you like.

Start quiz

Vocabulary

- Play aim = your objective, your goal
- Play ancestry = the study of your family's past
- Play audio-visual = things which are watched or listened to – movies, podcasts, CDs etc
- Play Book Week = one week each year which celebrates Children's Books. In 2023, it is 19th – 25th August.
- Play borrowing = to take something home, use it, then return it
- Play cartooning = drawing

- Play catalogue = a list of everything
- Play catered for = (here) to look after someone's needs
- Play charge = a cost
- Play combined = together
- Play computer coding = the special instructions which tell computers what to do
- Play concept = idea
- Play connect = (here) when people make contact and talk with one another
- Play conversation = when two or more people talk together about a topic
- Play converted = changed
- Play craft = (here) making things with your hands
- Play cultural links = understanding the way people do things in other lands
- Play delivery = when something is brought to someone
- Play devices = small machines which help you do something e.g. mobile phones, computers
- Play digital = related to computers and the internet
- Play disappointed = when you find out something is not as good as you expected
- Play effective = when you do something well, successfully
- Play encouraging = when you tell someone to act in a certain way
- Play enriches = (here) improves

- Play enthusiasm = when you are very excited about something
- Play environment = (here) where you are, the things and people around you
- Play events = (here) when people come together to see, do or experience something
- Play extremely = very
- Play fantastic = very, very good
- Play figures = numbers
- Play first and foremost = the most important thing in a list of things
- Play funded = paid for
- Play impressed = when you think something is very, very good
- Play impressive = when something is very, very good
- Play jewellery = small things that people wear such as earrings, rings, necklaces etc
- Play karaoke = singing along with music
- Play meditation = a way of relaxing which clears you mind
- Play membership = when you become a part of a group of people
- Play organised = how things are set up, how they are operated
- Play participate = to do something along with other people, to be involved, to take part
- Play physical = (here) things that are real, that you can touch, not things online

- Play public = all the people in a community
- Play receive = to get something from someone else
- Play relaxed = when you are not stressed
- Play resources = (here) the things you use when you do or make something
- Play scam = a trick, when someone tries to cheat you out of money,
- Play scanning = to use a computer to copy a picture or page of text
- Play seniors = people who are over 60, or people who are retired
- Play service = when you are given, or buy, help from someone else
- Play spotting = identifying, being able to see something which is hard to see
- Play summary = the main points about a topic
- Play superb = very, very, very good (yes, almost perfect)
- Play themes = ideas
- Play tier = level
- Play vision = how you see things will be in the future
- Play walking distance = a distance that is not too far, you can easily walk that far