

Business

Marketing Plan

2002

Great Lakes Library Service

Tailoring the Great Lakes Library Service to the Business Needs of the Great Lakes Community

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Marketing Plan, targeted at business, is one of series designed to investigate the needs of the entire Great Lakes. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) information indicates that, as of 2001, there are over 1,500 business in the local area. With growth in Great Lakes continuing to remain strong (around 1.8% per annum) it can be expected that the number of businesses will grow at a similar rate. Consequently, it is relevant to address the needs of this expanding sector of the community. The Plan has sought to develop a better understanding of the needs of business and how the library can enhance its services to meet these needs. In addition, the Plan provides direction on how sponsorship by the local business can be most effectively pursued.

The Great Lakes community is one of the heaviest users of library services in the State and has very strong community support for the facility. Local business also appears to hold the library in high regard, though indications are that it has a lower expectation of the library providing services relevant to the business community.

In order to better understand the needs of local business a survey was distributed, which received 41 responses. These responses have provided useful input into the Marketing Plan.

The Plan has identified a range of business needs that the library could address. In particular, the library is ideally poised to act as an information provider to business. The survey indicated good interest in statistical data as well as information on business management. There was also reasonable interest in legal information. In relation to services, business has expressed an interest in having a library associated with the business, inter-library loans to obtain hard-to-locate information, the ability to lodge enquiries online and, to a lesser degree, receiving regular updates on key information.

The survey also indicated that access to the library during opening hours is difficult and that opening on a Sunday afternoon would greatly improve the situation.

One of the challenges that confronts the library is to make business aware of the services and material on offer. Whilst responses to the survey indicated strong support for the library the relevance of the library to business was less obvious to respondents. Consequently, the library will look to establishing a strong promotional/awareness campaign targeted at local business. The survey indicated that the best means to achieve this are through direct mail-outs and articles in the local press. The library will endeavour to exploit these channels as well as to develop promotional material to make the process more effective. In addition, the library will establish an online reference service by March 2003.

The library is aware that the major source of competition in relation to information provision comes from the Internet. As the vast majority of respondents to the survey had access to the Internet this poses a very real threat. The great weakness of the Internet is that it generally requires skilled searching techniques. It will be necessary for the library to convince business that it offers access to professionals skilled in this particular area and that they are capable of making the search for information much more simple and effective.

To ensure that business sees the library as an efficient and professional organisation the library will set a standard maximum response time to an enquiry of 3 working days.

In relation to sponsorship it will be necessary for the library to persuade business that it is in their best interests to be associated with the library. To achieve this the library will draw up guidelines for sponsorship as well as producing a sponsorship brochure. Businesses will be contacted through the distribution channels discussed above.

The major cost implication of the Marketing Plan is the extension of opening hours, which represents a commitment of around \$30,000. The Plan proposes to seek Council approval for such funding in the 2003/2004 budget cycle.

There are staffing implications associated with the development of services tailored to business. At this stage the impact on the service will be monitored and Council will be informed of any emerging needs. In particular, should the sponsorship programme prove to be well supported, there will be a direct impact on the cataloguing and stock processing section of the library.

2. GENERAL LIBRARY ENVIRONMENT

Outline of the Great Lakes Library Service

The Great Lakes Library Service was opened to the public in 1998. It is maintained by the Great Lakes Council and derives the bulk of its funding from this organisation. Additional funding is obtained from the State Library of NSW. The library service has also received donations and, on occasions, has successfully applied for grant funding from other government bodies.

The service operates out of a central library in Forster-Tuncurry and has branches in Bulahdelah, Hawks Nest, Nabiac, North Arm Cove and Stroud. It also has a well-patronised Internet presence. There are plans underway to utilise the Internet to provide an online library service.

The central role of the library is to provide equitable access to information and leisure materials. To meet this requirement of equity, and to comply with the Library Act (1939), the bulk of the library services are offered free of charge to the public.

The general public has an increasingly high expectation of the material held by the service. In addition to the traditional book material the library stocks magazines, books-on-tape, books-on-CD, videos, large print, CD-ROMs and Playstation games. Free access to the Internet is also now an integral component of the service.

Professionals within the library provide expert advice on how to obtain much-needed information.

In recent years there has been a growth in the number of people who use the library as a place of relaxation (e.g. reading the papers) or to interact with others. There has also been a noticeable increase in community organizations that have used the library to promote key events.

Patronage of the Library Service

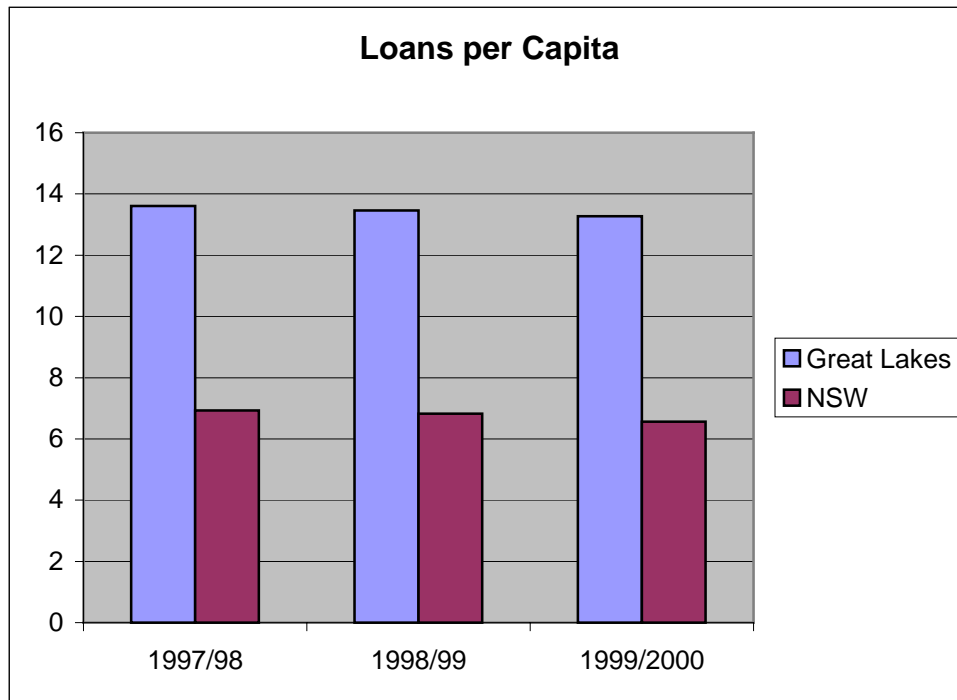
On a per capita basis the Great Lakes Library Service is one of the most heavily used in NSW. Table 1 and its accompanying graph provide figures on library patronage over the past three years. It is evident from the data that the library lends out items at a rate more than twice the State median. This level of usage places the library firmly as the most popular service in rural NSW and the third most popular in NSW. These statistics are compiled by the State Library of NSW¹.

¹ State Library of New South Wales, *Public library statistics 1997/98 – 1999/2000*, State Library of New South Wales, 1999-2001.

Table 1: Loans per capita for both Great Lakes and NSW

	Loans per capita (Great Lakes)	Loans per capita (NSW)	Ranking in the State
1997/98	13.61	6.93	4
1998/99	13.46	6.82	4
1999/2000	13.27	6.56	3

Figure 1: Loans per capita for Great Lakes and NSW residents between 1997/98 and 1999/2000



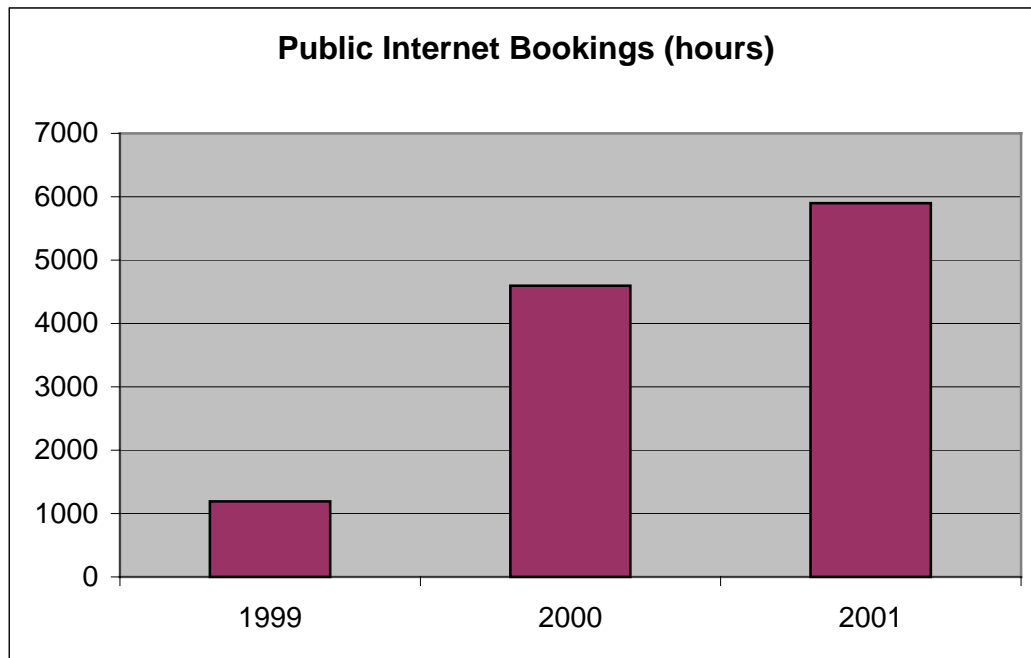
The high usage made of the library by its public is reflected in its high membership rate. 19 136 residents are registered library users, representing almost two thirds of the community. In a given year the Forster Library can expect around 120 000 visitors. Since opening for service 13 years ago, there have been over 1.5 million visitors to this library service point.

Over the past three years the library has increased its provision of free public access Internet. This has met with very strong support from the community. Since 1999 there has been a 500% increase in patronage of this service.

Table 2: Hours of Internet usage booked at Forster Library

	Public Internet Usage (Hours)
1999	1 191
2000	4 597
2001	5 897

Figure 2: Public Internet books from 1999 to 2001.



Projected Growth in Patronage of the Great Lakes Library Service

Total loans for a library system provide a reasonable indication of patronage. Great Lakes Library Service issued 399 356 items in 2000. In 2001 this figure rose to 409 148, a growth rate of 2.5%. With a yearly population growth of 2-2.5% for the region², there is no reason to expect that an annual growth rate in loans in the vicinity of 2% will not be maintained.

Similarly, usage of the Internet can be expected to continue to increase. The increase in the number of available access points will see the annual growth rate of 20-30% being maintained over the next 2-3 years until the provision of Internet access points reaches maximum capacity.

Unique Features the Library Service can Offer Local Businesses

The library offers unparalleled access to information and professionals that can help obtain pertinent data. If the library is unable to provide information on a desired issue immediately it has access to a nationwide network of library systems. Currently requests to external bodies have around an 80% satisfaction rate within two weeks of the inquiry. A fast-track system is available that can greatly reduce the waiting time, though there is a charge associated with this that varies depending on the timeframe the information is needed within.

All residents are entitled to free access to the library collection and to Internet access.

² Great Lakes Council, *Great Lakes community profile: 1999*, Great Lakes Council, 2000

The library places at the disposal of customers a professional team that is trained in obtaining information for their clients. This service is, again, provided freely.

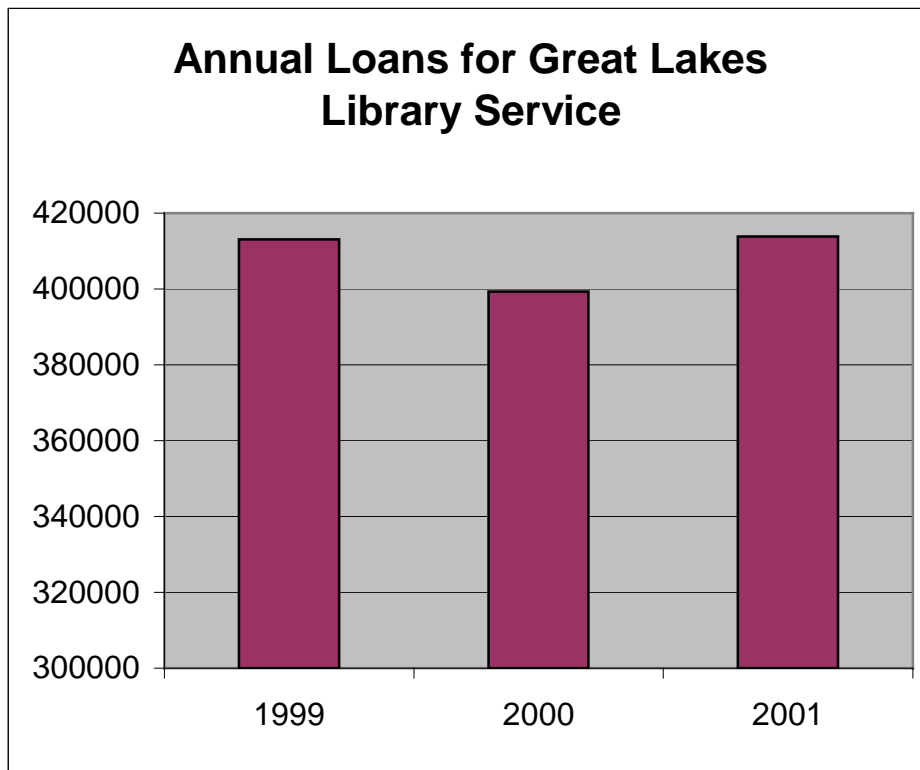
Donations made to the library service are tax-deductible. With around 120,000 customer visits each year to the Forster Library alone, there is amply opportunity for business to be involved in a sponsorship arrangement that will generate a high community profile.

3. ACTIVITY ANALYSIS

Lending Rates

The major service the library provides is access to books, magazines, videos, books-on-tape, books-on-CD. Whilst this activity can only provide a limited perspective on the quality of the library service it still remains an indicator of the health of the library service. Figure 3 provides a graph of the past 3 years of loans. The slight dip in loans from 1999 to 2000 may be associated with reducing stock levels. Note that patronage in 2001 was 2.5% higher than the 2000 figures.

Figure 3: Annual loans for the Great Lakes Library Service

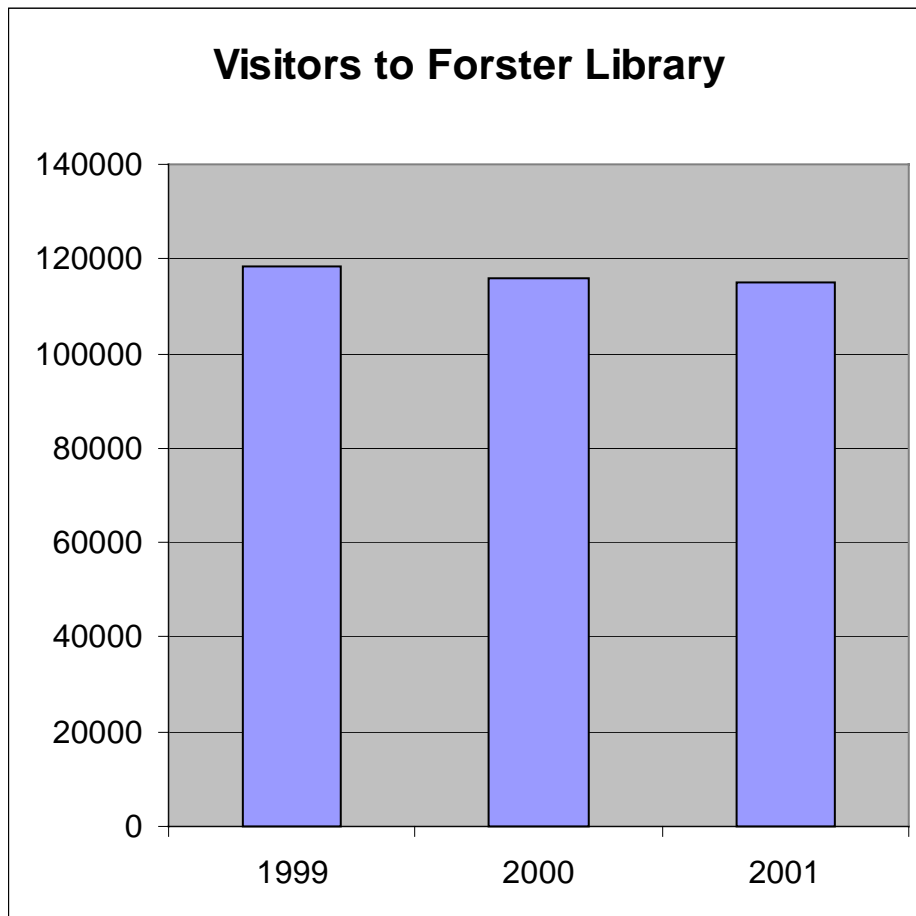


What is evident is that usage of the library remains strong, with the latest statistics showing a tendency for even higher levels of usage.

Visitor Numbers

Another indicator of the popularity of the library service is the number of visits it receives. Such data are only available for Forster Library and are provided in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Annual visitor numbers to Forster Library



Whilst there is a slight trend downwards in visitor numbers the movement is minor (less than 1% from 2000 to 2001) and could well reflect an increase in loan levels from 6 to 12 items. A decision also not to hold Children's Bookweek in 2001 reduced visitor numbers by over 1,000, in effect negating the difference between visitor rates over the past two years. At this stage the trend is not considered significant.

Internet Usage

As the world increasingly turns to the Internet as a source of information and a means of communication patronage of public access Internet PCs also becomes a mechanism for measuring the activity of the library service. This data has already been provided in figure 2 above. It is evident from the data that this service, in particular, is going through a period of dramatic growth.

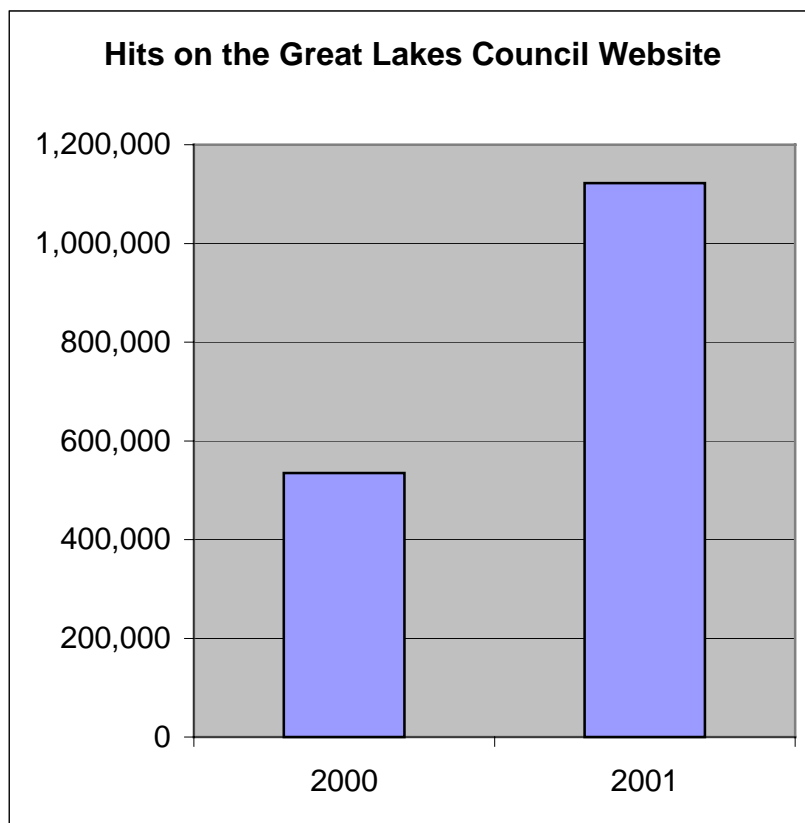
Website Usage

In addition to providing Internet access the library has embraced the opportunities the Internet provides and established a website that caters for all of Council. The website includes information on the library and Council, links to other useful website, access to the library catalogue and will, in future, enable online reference enquiries to be lodged.

As this represents an extension of the library into the virtual world patronage of the site also becomes a meaningful indicator of the performance of the library. Figure 5 provides data on the number of hits the website has received over the past 2 years. Figures cannot be provided prior to this date, as there was no mechanism to collect the data. As several months of data are missing from both 2000 and 2001 the total figures are based upon extrapolation of the information available.

Again, the graph reveals a marked increase in patronage of the website. As more and more library services become available over the Internet (and corresponding services in Council) this patronage can be expected to continue to grow.

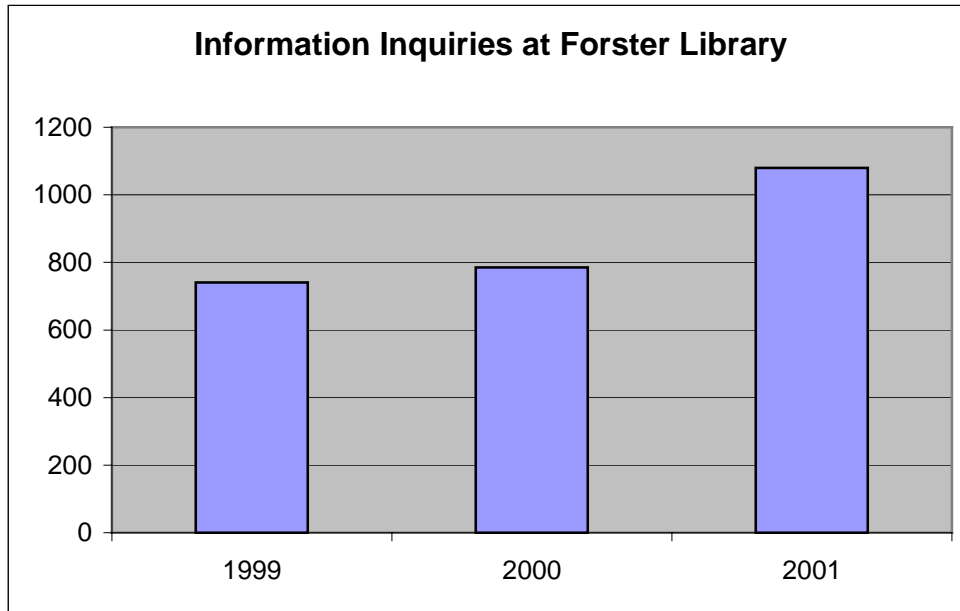
Figure 5: Number of hits on the Great Lakes Council Website



Information Enquiries

A key component of the library service is the provision of information. In 1999 the library established a reference service to assist the public in satisfying their information needs. Since then there has been a steady increase in demand for this service, particularly in the year 2001 (see Figure 6). With the processes currently being put in place it can be expected that this demand will continue to grow.

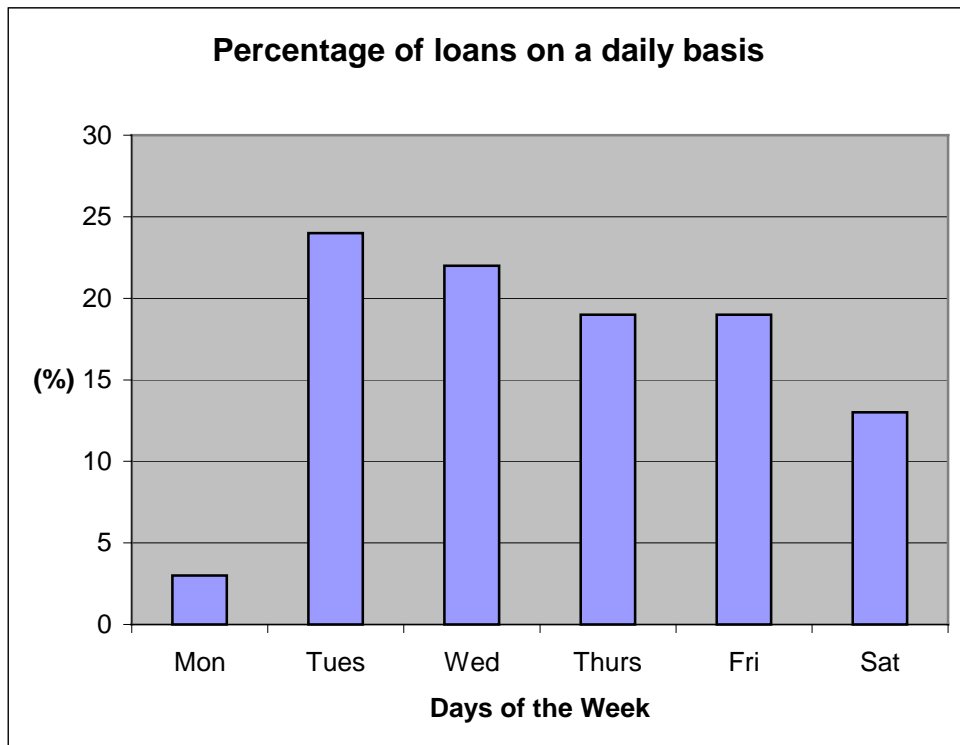
Figure 6: Information inquiries received at Forster Library.



Fluctuations in Demand

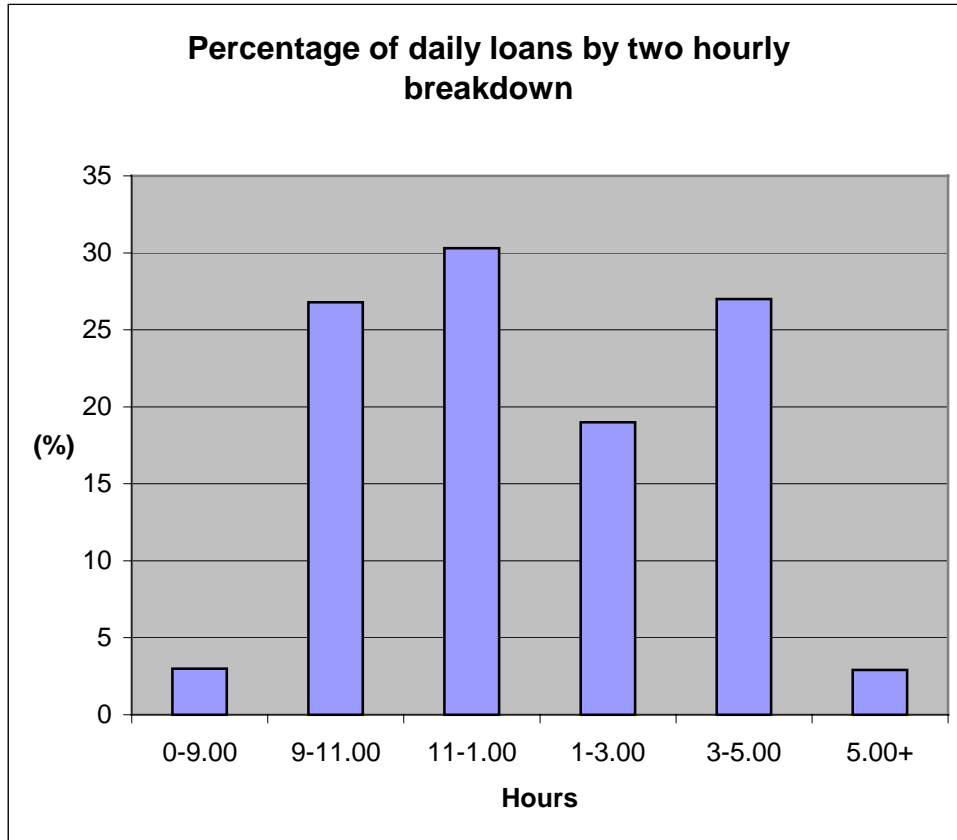
Underlying the general trend upwards are seasonal and daily fluctuations in usage. In general, the library service is busiest on a Tuesday, which relates to the Forster Library being closed on a Monday. Figure 7 provides a profile of a normal week in the Great Lakes Library Service.

Figure 7: Percentage of loans on a daily basis



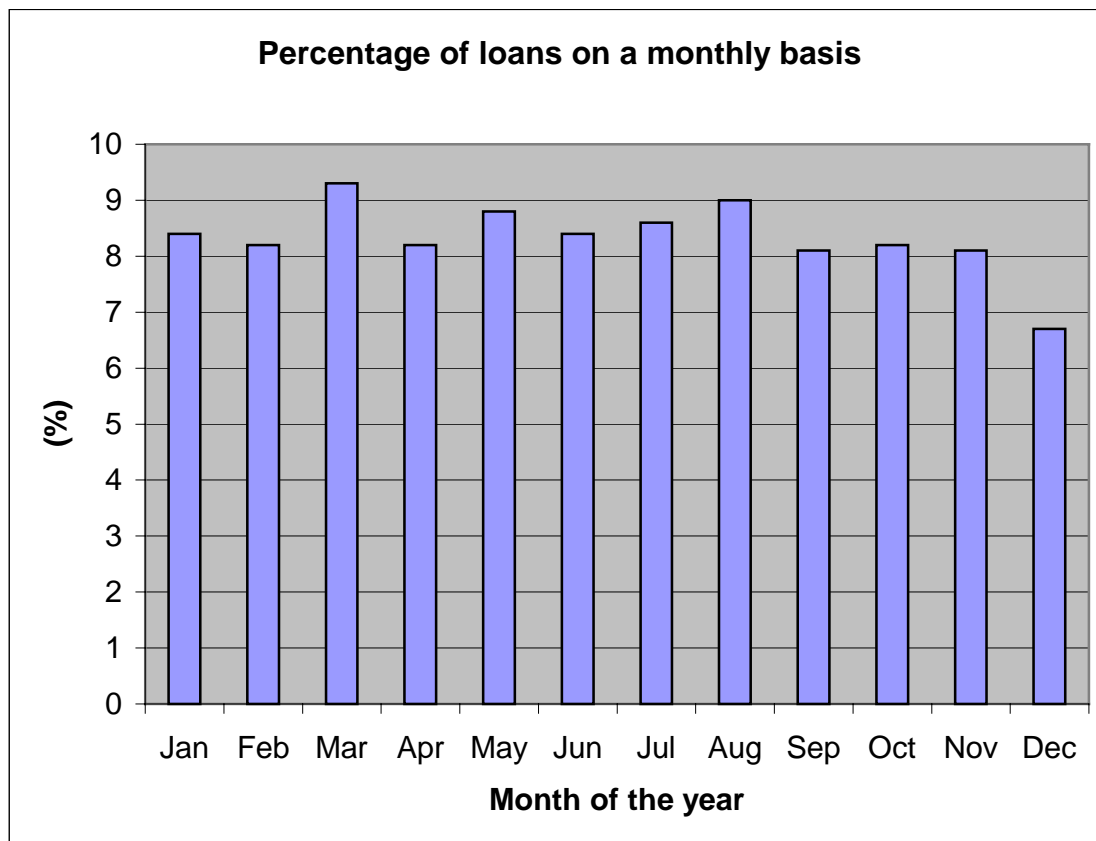
Loan rates also vary depend on the time of day. Typically, the library is busiest in the mornings, though there is an increase in usage after three o'clock when school children are able to visit. Figure 8 provides the relevant information on daily stock movements.

Figure 8: Stock movement throughout the day



Looking at the activity of the library from a seasonal basis it is apparent that lending rates are reasonably constant throughout the year. There is evidence of a dip during December and a peak in March, but in the main patronage of the library is strong all year round (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Monthly variation in lending rates as a percentage of total loans.



General Trends

All the indicators mentioned above show demand for the library service increasing. Table 3 provides estimates of future growth in these key areas.

Table 3: Growth trends in the library service

Indicator	2001 Figures	Expected Growth in 2002 (%)
Stock Issues	409 184	2
Visitor Numbers	114 950	1
Internet Usage	5 897	20-30
Website Hits	1 121 890	50-60
Information inquiries	1 082	30-40

The bases for these estimations are as follows:

Issues: The rise in issues is associated with the quality of the service and collection and population growth within the region. With growth in the vicinity of 2% the prediction is that this growth will be matched with a growth in loans. A range of customer-focused improvements could well increase patronage beyond this level (as has occurred in 2001) and this has been catered for in the 2% range. There is potential for this growth to be limited by the quality of the collection if budgetary provision fails to meet community expectations.

Visitor Numbers: As with loans visitor numbers are tied to the quality of the service and the growth in the region. Following on from this logic it is assumed that visitor numbers will grow but as recent statistics indicate that there may be some limiting factors this growth will be estimated at around 1%.

Internet Usage: A significant increase has been identified in use of the public access Internet. This figure is based on the high take-up rate of the service and the fact that 2 new machines have been made available at Forster.

Website Hits: This is the most challenging of all indicators to predict growth for. The figure of 50-60% is based upon past trends, an expectation that more services will come online and an increase in the number of residents who use Internet-based resources.

Information Inquiries: The library has put substantial effort into establishing a reference service. Recent indications are that these efforts are being rewarded. An aggressive promotional programme is being investigated that should further generate interest in this service. If this programme is effective the estimate of 30-40% growth could well prove conservative.

Current Focus of the Collection

Great Lakes has the highest median age in NSW. It has long been seen as a retirement destination and people over the age 55 have both a high representation in the community and amongst library borrowers.

As this age group is heavily represented with the library patrons and active users of the library the service has been shaped around their needs. Consequently, there has been an emphasis on fiction and leisure materials for adults.

This focus has worked very well and has resulted in the library service having one of the highest lending rates per capita in NSW.

There is scope, however, to develop the service to meet the needs of a range of other segments within the community. This market plan will focus specifically on developing the service to meet the needs of the business sector.

4. BUSINESS SURVEY

In April 2002 the Great Lakes Library Service sent out a survey to all local businesses in the Great Lakes Local Government Area. The survey was seen as part of an information gathering exercise which could be used in the development of a Business Marketing Plan. The survey served three purposes:

1. Raise awareness of the library in the business community and its relevance to their needs.
2. Seek business input into the development of library services to meet the business community's needs.

Canvass the concept of sponsorship of the library by local businesses.

Methodology

It was not intended for the survey to be produce statistically valid results, but rather to provide a picture of the business community and its needs. Consequently, a simple one-page survey form was developed (see Appendix A). This was distributed by Australia Post and was sent to over 1,000 businesses in the Great Lakes Local Government Area. Respondents were given the opportunity to return forms in person, by fax or via the mail.

The survey was also promoted through the newsletter of the Forster-Tuncurry Chamber of Commerce.

Response

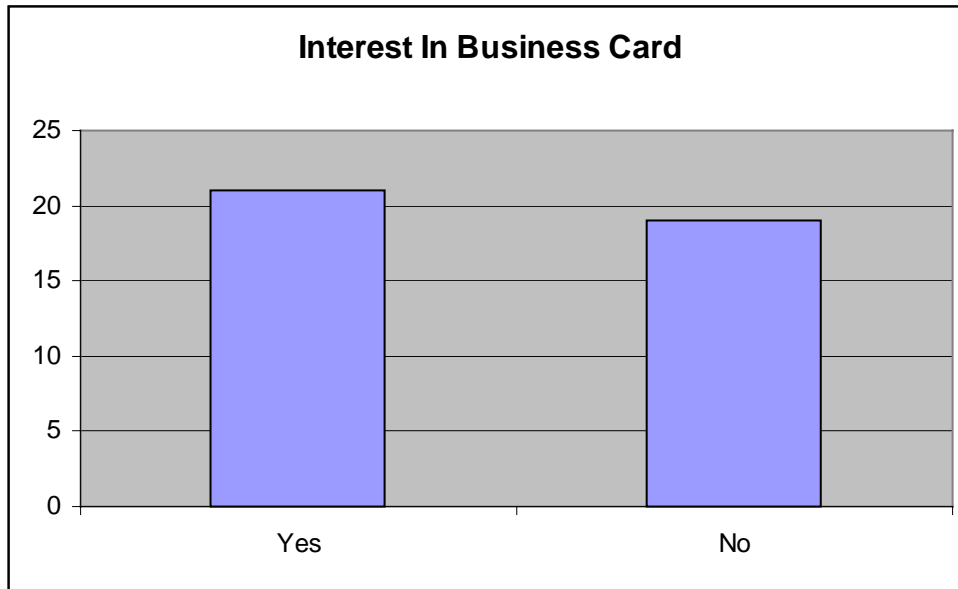
Of the 1,000 surveys distributed 41 were completed and returned, representing a 0.4% response rate. Whilst this is not overly high it does provide the library with some valuable information.

Questions

Would you be interested in obtaining a library card for your business? This card could be used to borrow items of relevance to your business.

40 responses were received for this question, 21 in support of a card, 19 indicating no interest, or already holding a library card (see Figure 10 below).

Figure 10: Interest in a business card



The information reveals that slightly more than 50% of respondents were interested in a library card. This gives sufficient encouragement for the library to investigate this possibility.

Would you find it useful to access the following free services of the library? Australian Bureau of Statistics information; Legal information; Business management books; Current affairs and finance magazines

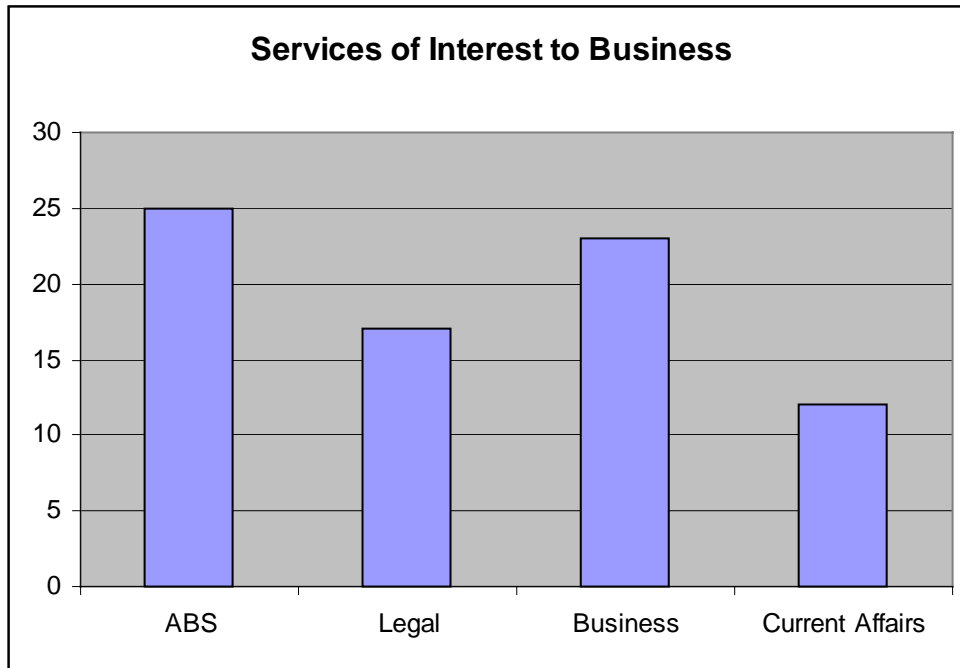
28 businesses opted to answer this question. Of these 25 were interested in Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) information, 17 were interested in legal information, 23 in material on business management and 12 on current affairs and finance (see Figure 11 below).

Whilst all areas attracted interest it is apparent that, at least for some businesses, there is good interest in ABS information and instructional books on business management. As the library already covers both these areas it is evident that further promotion of these services is relevant. It would also be of some use to investigate expanding the business management collection.

Similarly, with the interest in legal information there is obviously a roll to be played in further promoting the Legal Information Access Collection (LIAC).

There appears to be no great need to expand upon the current affairs material in the library, though promotion is still appropriate.

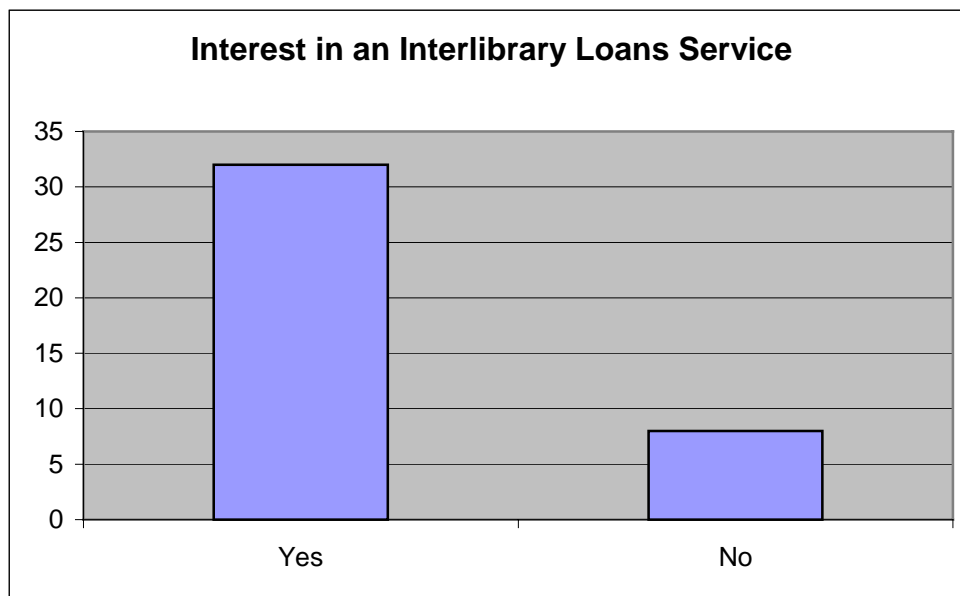
Figure 11: Services of Relevance to Business



The library is part of a nationwide network that provides access to millions of books, magazines etc. Any patron of the library can tap into this network. Would this service be of benefit to your organization?

The library received 40 responses to this question, with 32 interested in the service and only indicating otherwise (see Figure 12). This is potential for the library to promote this service through the business community.

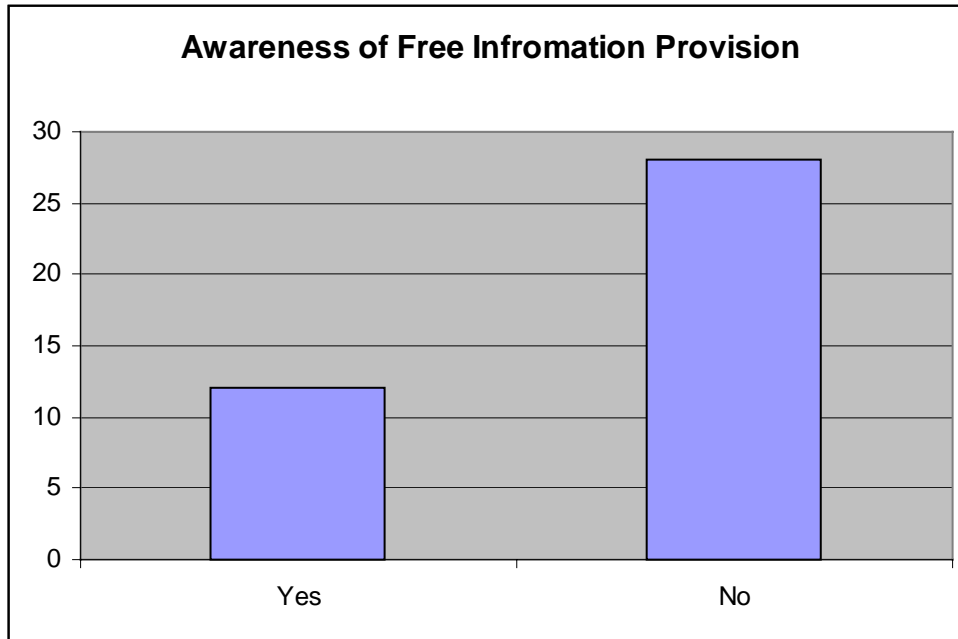
Figure 12: Interest in an Interlibrary Loans Service



Were you aware that the library offers a free service for locating information?

40 responses were received and the majority (28) showed a surprising level of unawareness in the business community of the information service provision role of libraries. This gives strong incentive to promote this service in the business community.

Figure 13: Business awareness of free information provision by the library



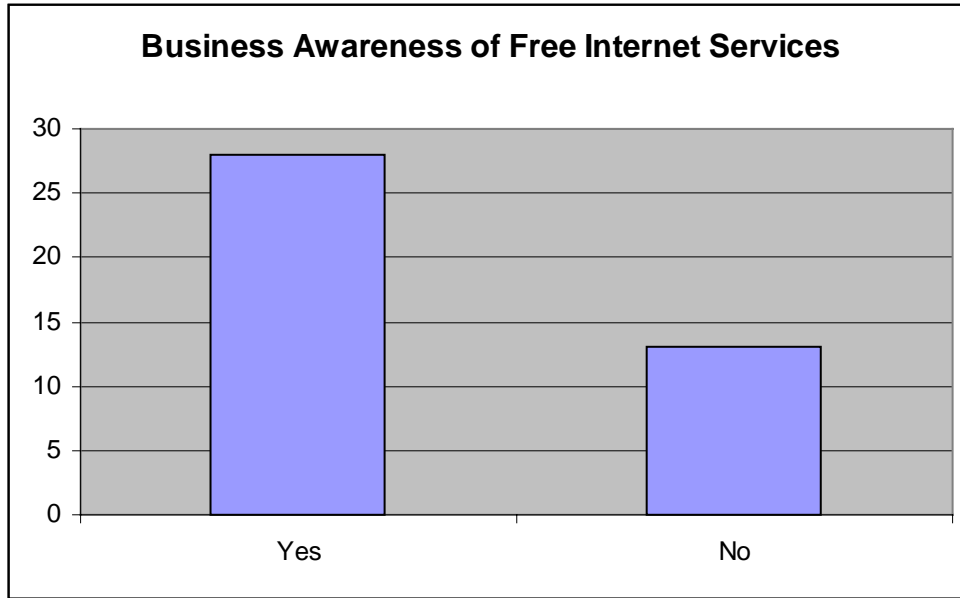
Are there any particular books/databases that you would like to see the library hold?

This question generated 13 responses across a range of areas. These will not be included in this marketing Plan but the areas identified will be addressed wherever possible.

Were you aware that the library provides free Internet access?

The library received 41 responses to this question. In contrast to the question on information services there is a good awareness amongst respondents of the free Internet Services (see Figure 14). It is evident that the library has been more effective at promoting this service than its information provision service. This may reflect the newsworthy nature of the Internet, though the comparison offers some indication of better means of promoting the Information Service.

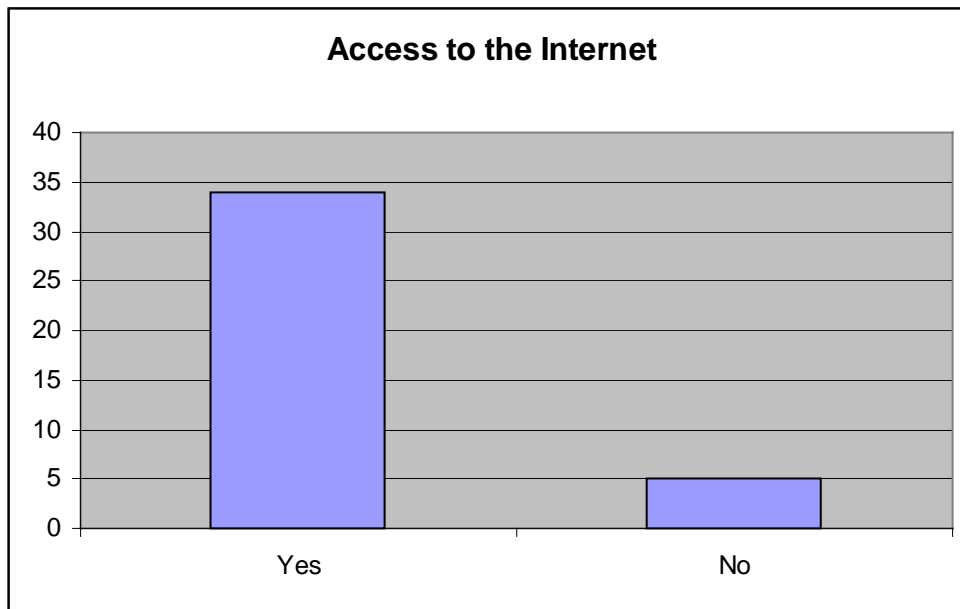
Figure 14: Awareness of free Internet Services



Do you have Internet access?

39 businesses responded, with 34 indicating they Internet access (2 of these from home). Such a high level of access to the Internet indicates that library service provision via the Internet has significant potential for business (see Figure 15).

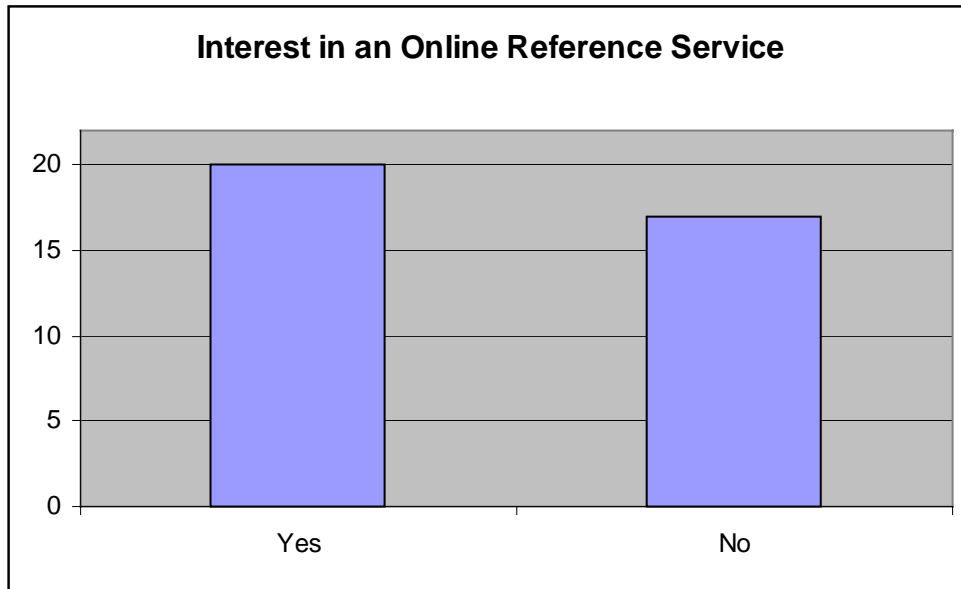
Figure 15: Business access to the Internet



Would you be interested in making an information enquiry via the Internet?

There were 37 responses to this question, 20 of them supportive of the concept (see Figure 16). This is a sufficiently strong result to encourage the library to continue its investigations into online provision of services.

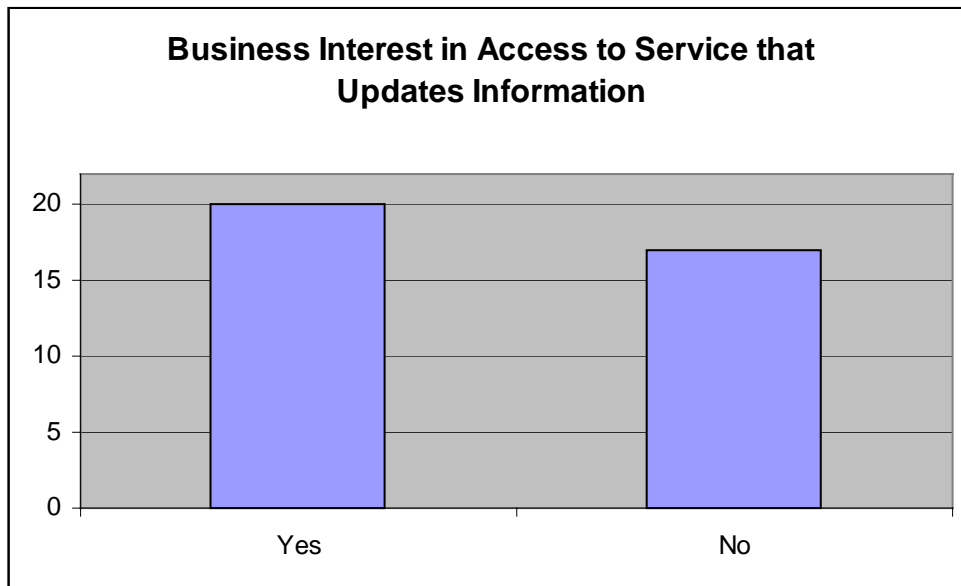
Figure 16: Business interest in an online reference service



Would you be interested in receiving regular updates of information (e.g. statistics)?

As with the above question there were 37 responses, 20 of which supported the concept (see Figure 17 below). Once again, this provides sufficient impetus for the library to investigate this concept further.

Figure 17: Business interest in the provision of a library service that updates information

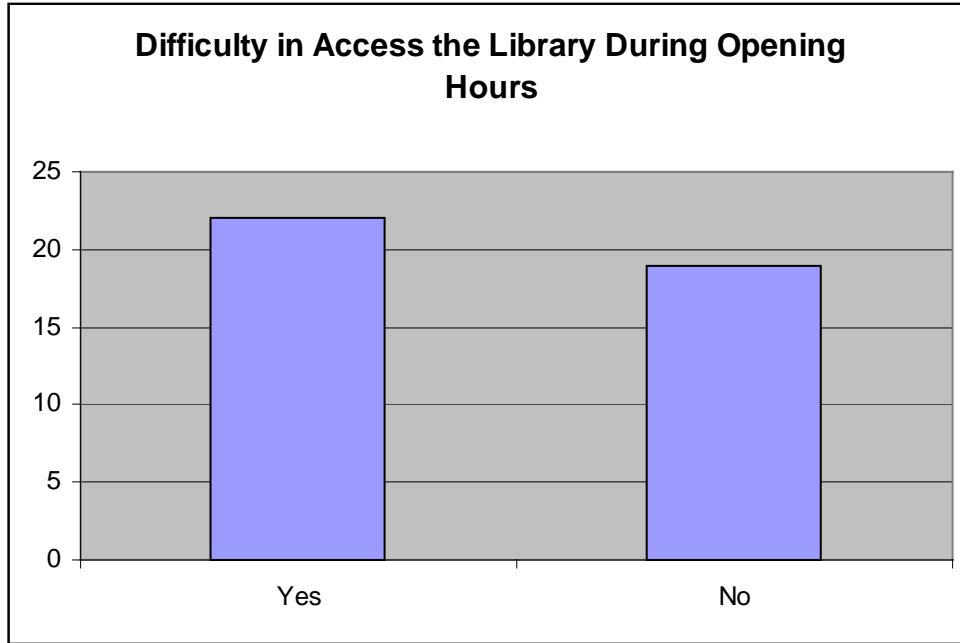


Do you have difficulty getting to the library during its opening hours?

41 responses were received to this question, with 22 indicating a problem with getting to the library during opening hours. With over 50% of respondents having some sort of

problem visiting the library this lends weight to continued investigations into expanded opening hours (see Figure 18).

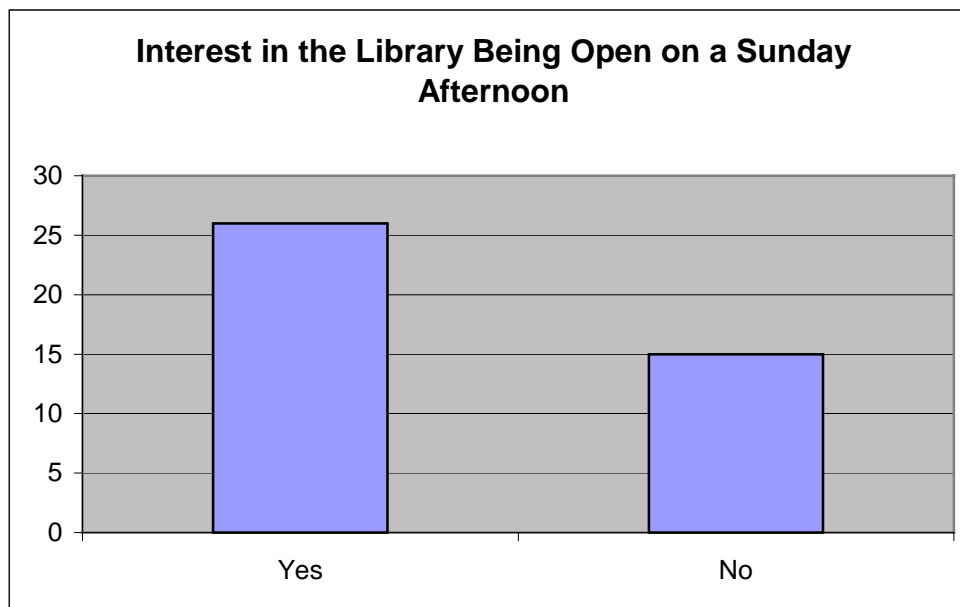
Figure 18: Difficulty in accessing the library service during its opening hours.



Would having the library open on a Sunday afternoon make access to the service easier for you?

41 responses were received, 26 of them indicating a benefit in opening the library on a Sunday afternoon (see Figure 19). With over 60% of respondents supporting this concept this issue of opening on a Sunday afternoon will continue to be pursued by the library.

Figure 19: Interest in opening the library on a Sunday afternoon.

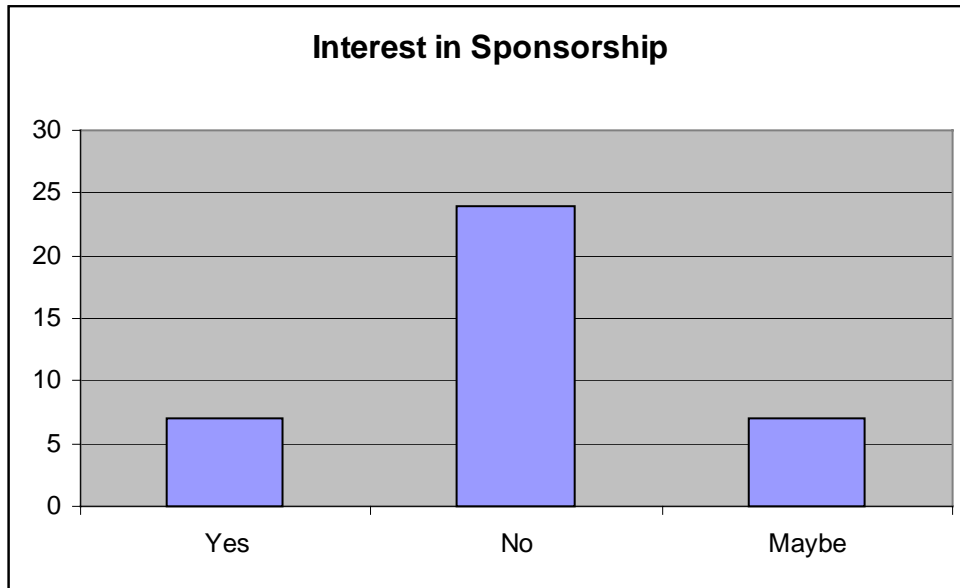


Would you be interested in sponsoring part of the library collection?

38 responses were received to this question with 7 indicating an interest in sponsorship and 24 indicating the reverse and 7 that indicated some indecision (see Figure 20).

Whilst this figure is not high it holds much promise and merits the library investigating potential sponsorship avenues.

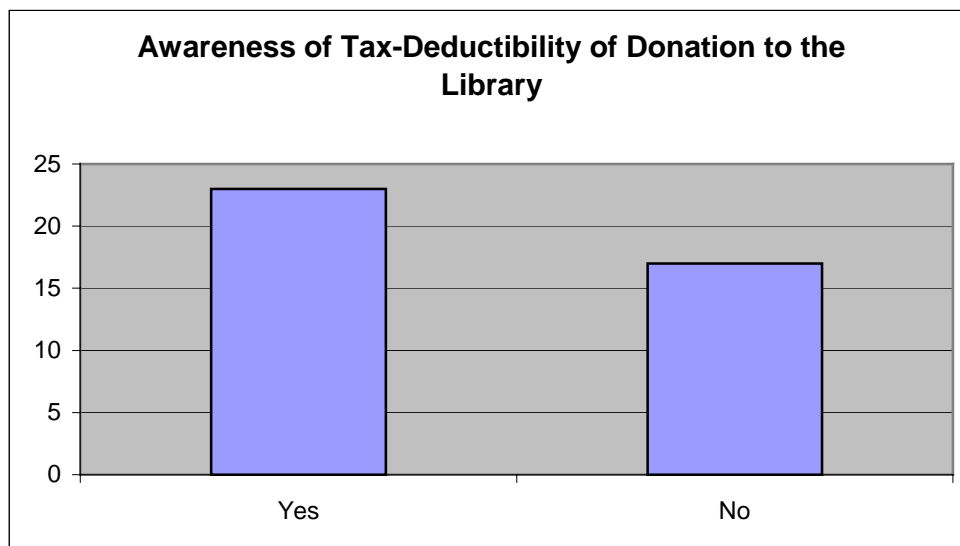
Figure 20: Business interest in sponsoring the library service



Do you know donations to the library are tax deductible?

40 responses were received to this question, with 23 indicating that they were aware that donation to the library were tax deductible (see Figure 21). This was an unexpectedly high figure but indicates a positive awareness within the business community of the charitable nature of the library.

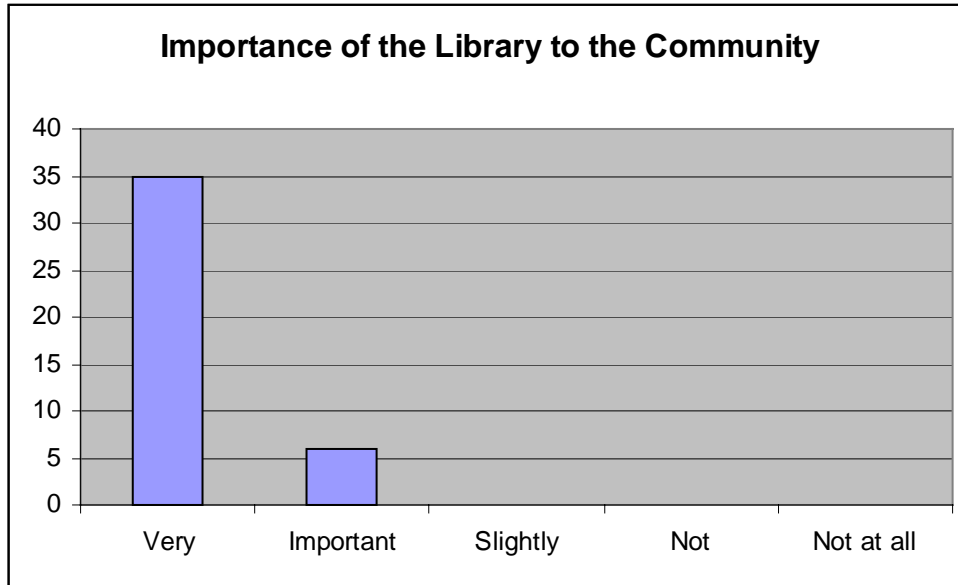
Figure 21: Awareness that donations to the library are tax-deductible



Rate the importance of the library to the community. Very Important; Important; Slightly Important; Not Important; Not Important at all

The question received 41 responses and showed overwhelming support for the library as a community facility (see Figure 22). It should be acknowledged that by the nature of the questionnaire responses were more likely to be received by supporters of the library, but the response is still highly impressive. 35 respondents rated the library as highly important, 6 rated it as important and none rated below this level.

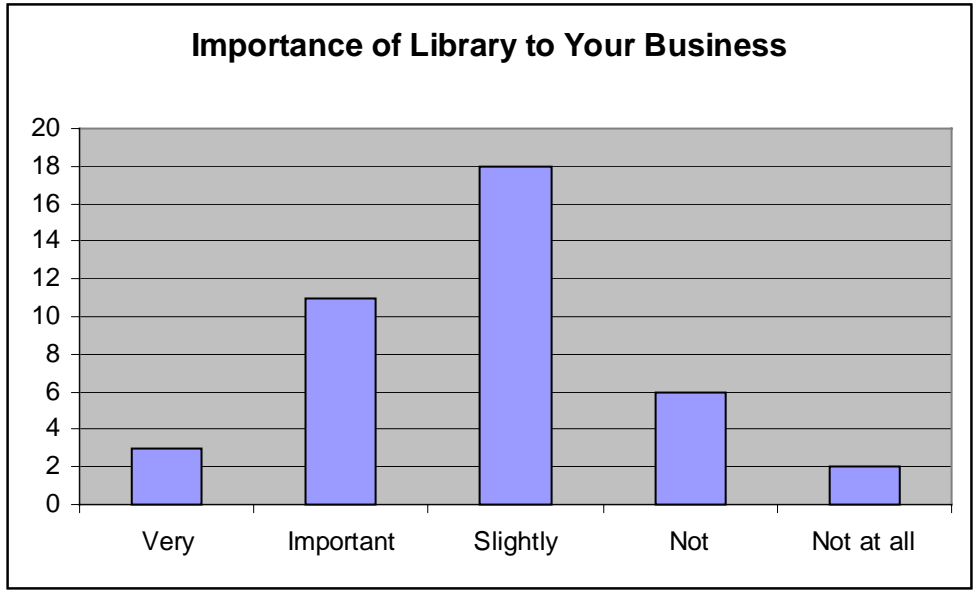
Figure 22: Importance of the library in the community.



Rate the importance of the library to your business. Very Important; Important; Slightly Important; Not Important; Not Important at all

40 responses were received to this question, with the results being spread across all the degrees of importance (see Figure 23). This indicates that the unlike is relevance to the community business sees the library as less relevant to its needs. To some degree this may be true, but there is potential to raise awareness of service and make the library more obviously relevant to business needs. Overall, the result was promising and shows more of the respondents indicating the library was important to them to some extent (3 rated it as Very Important, 11 as Important, 18 as Slightly Important, 6 as Not Important and 2 as Not Important At All) than those who saw it as having no real relevance at all.

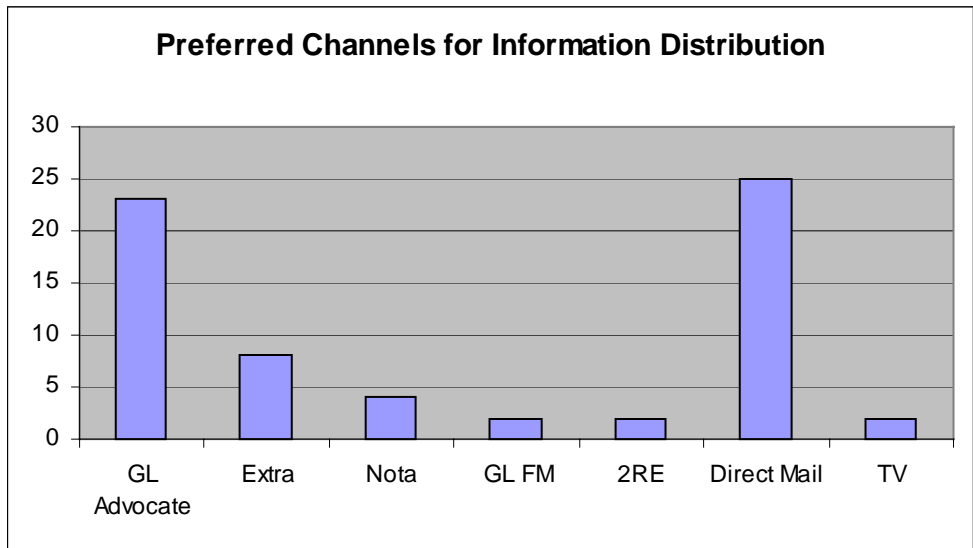
Figure 23: Importance of the library to your business



What is(are) the best way(s) to inform you of library services/events? GL Advocate; Extra; Nota; GL FM; 2RE; Direct Mail; TV.

40 Responses were received to this question, with a number of the respondents selecting multiple mechanisms for contact. The most preferred means of informing business is by direct mail (25 responses), though the Great Lakes Advocate is also popular (23 responses). It is apparent that radio and television are not the most effective means of contacting business. The survey indicates that a focus should be made on direct mail and the local papers. Whilst interest in the Nota was relatively low it must be remembered that this paper reaches the Southern area of the Great Lakes. Responses to this were expected to be lower as a smaller proportion of business lie in this region. A recent addition, *The Great Lakes News* may also be an effective and wide-reaching paper.

Figure 24: Preferred communication means for reaching local businesses



Could you provide us with your business name and what line your business is in?

This question indicated that respondents came from a wide range of businesses. There was also evidence of responses from across the Great Lakes area.

In general, interest in the library service cannot be tied to any given sector of the business community.

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

13 respondents opted to include comments. Of these 9 comments were of encouragement to the library (e.g. Keep up the good work, A very good service etc, Continue to have business questionnaires). Of the 4 remaining comments, 2 dealt with possible sponsorship arrangements, 1 dealt with the need for a bigger library in Bulahdelah and the last one indicated a need for extended services at Hawks Nest.

5. MARKET ANALYSIS

Market Trends

Competition in the Local Business Community

Based on the expansion of population in the region it can be expected that business growth within the urban areas of Great Lakes will remain strong. Consequently there is likely to be increased competition as the market develops. In this environment the business with the best understanding of its market and with the most significant profile will have a competitive edge. This presents the library with an excellent opportunity to promote itself as a means of obtaining useful business information.

Diversity of Businesses

As the region grows a greater breadth of support industries and businesses are appearing. This diversity may place a demand on the library service for a wider range of information.

Internet

It would be naïve to ignore the potential impact of the Internet on library services. The Internet offers businesses the opportunity to seek information for themselves. There is little the library can do to prevent this, but focus should be placed upon promoting the library as the most effective mechanism for locating valuable information as well as offering training in how to maximise use of the Internet.

Online Services

As the world embraces electronic communications there is the potential for the library to provide a range of its services online. The library currently offers Internet access to its library catalogue, which could be used by local business to find out what stock the library held. Business patrons could be offered the opportunity to lodge information requests via the website and it is even possible for an information alerting service to be established. Results from the survey (Chapter 4) indicate some level of business support for these concepts.

Rural Shrinkage

Rural communities face the risk of decline as residents leave the community and are not replaced. There is also some indication that the number of rural businesses in Great Lakes may also be diminishing. Whilst the library is not in a position to alter the economic environment it can provide those smaller communities in the rural area of Great Lakes with access to information that may assist in pursuing particular business opportunities.

Patronage of the Library Service

Contrary to some predictions the library service has not seen a decrease in patronage over recent years. At worst the library usage has remained almost constant.

These predictions were based upon the increasingly competitive leisure market (e.g. videos, electronic games, computers, pay television) and the expected private use of online information.

It is certainly likely that these forces have had some impact, but it has either been greatly exaggerated or offset by growth in both population and demand in other sectors. In the latter case libraries have been very effective at adopting the modern technology and this has seen strong take-up of new collections (e.g. videos) and patronage of new services (e.g. the Internet). There is also a case to be made for people seeking assistance in finding information in what is an increasingly complex environment. Recent surveys also indicate that patrons are turning to the library as a place of comfort and relaxation³.

With such strong ongoing patronage there is ample opportunity for the library to promote itself as an attractive organisation for business sponsorship.

Gaps in the Provision of Information to Business

Financial Gap

Staying abreast of the latest information is a potentially costly affair. Whilst some information may be cheaply available over the net its authenticity and currency may be brought into question. Furthermore, it is necessary to have access to a PC and the Internet. In general, current, accurate and objective information comes at a price. Similarly, magazines and other literature may provide useful (though often narrowly focused) information, but there is a cost to purchase these.

In the case of obtaining statistical information, there is often a financial implication.

The library offers a particularly affordable mechanism for gaining access to such information, though the survey indicates a need to promote this service.

Geographic Gap

Businesses in the Great Lakes region face geographic isolation. Pockets within the community maybe up to an hour's drive from a major centre and the region itself is distant from Sydney. Access to information resources may well be difficult for businesses in this area.

Skills Gap

Not only is there a potential market for information provision, there is also a gap in the pool of experts skilled in locating information. The library is convenient and benefits from a staff whose area of expertise is information location.

In relation to the above, an argument may be put forward that telecommunications are bridging these gaps. The reality is that reliable and adequately fast telecommunications are hard to come by in the country for an affordable rate. On top of that commercial information providers will levy an additional fee in order to make a profit.

³ Source: Cox, Eva *A safe place to go: libraries and social capital*, State Library of New South Wales, 2000

There is certainly competition for information provision, but the price associated with it, including the means to access it, give the library a strong advantage.

Benefit Analysis

As indicated earlier, the library offers a range of services that can directly benefit business customers.

Product: Current statistical information.

Benefit: The library provides free access to a range of the latest statistics. Business can make informed decisions based on current and accurate data.

Product: Legal information and access to the Legal Information Access Centre.

Benefit: Business will have the opportunity to gain access to current legal information as well as have access to professional advice via LIAC.

Product: Wide range of non-fiction materials.

Benefit: Business will be able to gain ready and free access to a wide variety of non-fiction works that may be of relevance to their operations.

Product: Inter-library loans service.

Benefit: Business will be able to access hard-to-find items through a nationwide inter-library loans system.

Product: Business management collection.

Benefit: A focused collection that can offer relevant advice on business management issues.

Product: Reference Service.

Benefit: Reference professionals can assist businesses in finding the information they require.

Product: Profile in the local community

Benefit: By supporting the library in a visible fashion businesses gain a strong profile in the local community.

Profile of the Business Community in Great Lakes

According to the latest available Australian Bureau of Statistics data some 1 555 businesses are registered in the region, of which 271 are in retail trade, 78 in manufacturing, 342 in agriculture, forestry and fishing and 864 in other businesses⁴. Around two thirds of the businesses are in Forster-Tuncurry, Pacific Palms and district. The bulk of retail businesses lie in Forster-Tuncurry with the agriculture, forestry and fishing businesses scattered across the region. Mail-out list figures from the Forster and District Chamber of Commerce indicate that they have around 800 businesses on their books. Business growth in urban areas remains strong with around 3 500 m² of shops,

⁴ Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Regional statistics: New South Wales, 2001*, 2001

factories etc being approved each year, on average⁵. With an annual population growth rate of between 2 and 4% (higher in the urban areas) the indications are that growth in the business sector will remain positive. There is less evidence of growth in the rural sector.

All these businesses have an opportunity to access the library service. At this stage the library does not monitor business membership so it is impossible to determine the extent to which businesses take advantage of the service. Based upon the nature of reference enquiries the library receives it can be assumed that generally business employees use the library for personal rather than business matters, though the survey (Chapter 4) did indicate that the library was at times of significant importance to business.

There is a very real opportunity to promote the library as a provider of access to a range of resources relevant business. The specific products include:

- Current statistical information;
- Professional staff capable of locating other information relevant to a business;
- Collection material on business management;
- Legal information.

Question such as method of delivery of information and shaping the collection to meet the needs of the business community must also be addressed.

It is likely that the needs of rural businesses will be similar to those for urban businesses, but the means of delivery may need to tailored to overcome geographic factors.

Segments of the Business Community

As this marketing plan focuses on business, this already represents a segment of the community. It should be noted that caution must be taken with segmenting a market as there is the very real danger of over-segmentation, which generates very little useful information for a substantial amount of additional work. There is no benefit to be derived from breaking the market up into segments that have no bearing on the service the library is looking to provide. For example, segmenting the market by the product they sell has very little bearing on the library service. Should some stock need to be purchased in certain areas there are already good mechanisms for patrons to suggest purchases. There are, however, two smaller segments within the business community that merit some attention as these can impact directly on how the library meets the needs of local businesses.

Forster-Tuncurry Catchment

Around 60-65% of the population of Great Lakes resides in the demographic catchment of Forster-Tuncurry. Not surprisingly, 60-65% of all businesses in the region also fall within this catchment. These businesses are within easy reach of the central library at Forster, where the bulk of any business collection is likely to be housed. It is also the location for the Reference Service. Businesses in this catchment have comparatively easy

⁵ Source: *Ibid.*

access to the library, though the survey (Chapter 4) indicated some difficulty for businesses to access the library during opening hours..

What is apparent from details in the business register detail is that the bulk of retail, finance, property services, business services, construction, health and personal services lie in this area.

Other areas within Great Lakes

Of the 1600 businesses in the Great Lakes area only around 600 lie outside the Forster – Tuncurry catchment. These businesses are scattered across the region, with the preponderance being agriculturally based.

It will be far more difficult to offer accessible services to these businesses simply because of their geographical location. The library does have branches at Bulahdelah, Hawks Nest, Nahiack, North Arm Cove and Stroud which do offer access to the service, though these hours are limited, the collections small and there is an absence of qualified staff. Their strength lies in being a pipeline to the central library services. The Internet also offers some opportunities in regard to online service provision.

A key component of reaching these market segments is an effective promotional campaign.

Current Perception of the Library by the Business Community

Surveys of library users and non-users consistently rate the library as an important service within the community. A community survey conducted by Council in 1998 found that 90% of residents rated the library of medium to very high importance⁶ and a survey conducted in 2000 found 98% of non-users rated the library as slightly to very important (76% of those surveyed rated the library as very important)⁷. Generally, customer satisfaction with the services provided is also high, with around 90% surveyed indicating satisfaction with the collections and services⁸ of patrons customer satisfaction survey conducted in 2000 found 90% of patrons were happy with the service

The non-user survey also asked respondents if the library offered an up-to-date service. 76% agreed, or strongly agreed, and only 4% disagreed.

Overall, this indicates a positive perception in the community of the library service. In order to obtain information on businesses perception of the library two questions relating to the relevance of the library to the community and to business were included in the survey conducted in April 2002 (see Chapter 4).

⁶ Source: Great Lakes Council, *1998 Community Survey*, Great Lakes Council, 1999

⁷ Source: Micromex Marketing Service, *Great Lakes Library: community telephone survey*, Micromex Marketing Services, 2001

⁸ Source: University of Technology – Sydney, *Customer Satisfaction Survey*, State Library of New South Wales, 2000

In relation to the importance of the library to the community 85% of respondents rated the library as very important and 15% important. None rated the library any lower than this. This result indicates that the library has as strong as standing with local businesses as in the wider community

In relation to the importance of the library to their business respondents rated the service as follows: 7.5% very important, 27.5% important, 45% slightly important, 15% as not important and 5% as not important at all. In many ways this was exceeding expectations and shows that business does perceive the library as having some relevance to their needs. It is also apparent, however, that more work needs to be done to improve these results.

Future Perception of the Library Service by the Business Community

The intention of this marketing plan is create a perception in the business community that:

- The library contains, or can access, information that is relevant to them;
- That it offers a professional service that can meet their needs within an adequate timeframe;
- That the library is accessible to them;
- That the library is well perceived in the community and worthy of support.

Key Stakeholders

The most effective way to attract business usage of the service is to convince key stakeholders of the associated benefits. In the instance of the business community there are two groups that should be approached:

- All the Chambers of Commerce across the region;
- Councillors, particularly, those in business.

The former group is important because it provides access to a number of local businesses. The latter is also important as Councillors have a significant standing in the community.

6. COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

Competitors in Information Provision

In the provision of information to business there are only a limited number of competitors. A review of advertisements in the Yellow Pages indicates that there are no comparative business offering information services. As far as other library services go, the nearest major competitor is in Taree, but traditionally library services focus on their own constituents, so this does not represent a threat.

This is not to say that the library does not face competition. The most obvious challenge to the library service comes from the Internet. Businesses may well turn to the Web to find information. The survey (Chapter 4) indicated that business access to the Internet was quite high (87% of respondents had access to the Internet). The attraction of the Internet is that it is immediate to hand and has a perception of being current. Competition is also possible from other information agencies though the availability of these is currently limited in the region. There is also a propensity for people to ask colleagues for information on a given subject and there is also the opportunity to consult personal literature to answer enquiries.

Competitive Positioning Regarding Information Provision

In order to promote the library as an information provision service to business it is beneficial to understand where the library is positioned relative to competition in this area. The following graphs indicate the position of the library within the business community.

Figure 25: Perceived Relevance vs. Availability graph of information provision

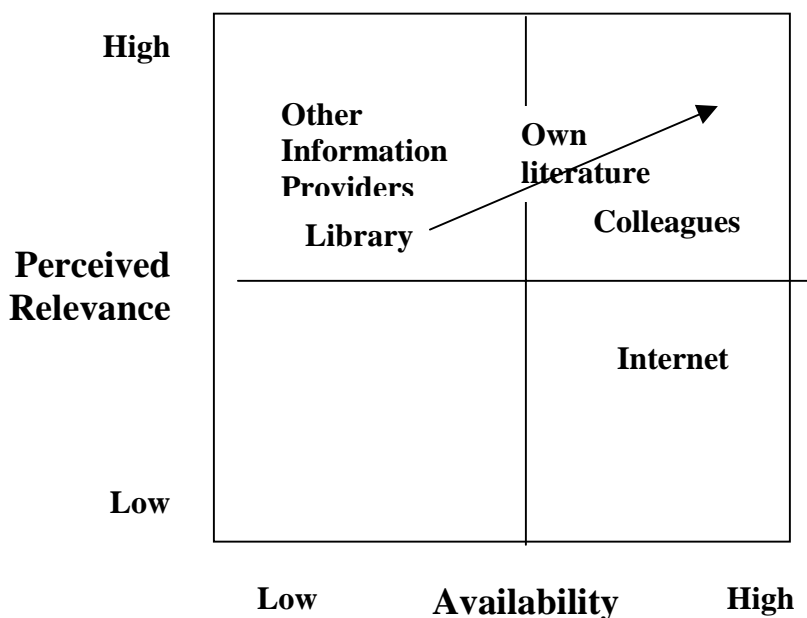
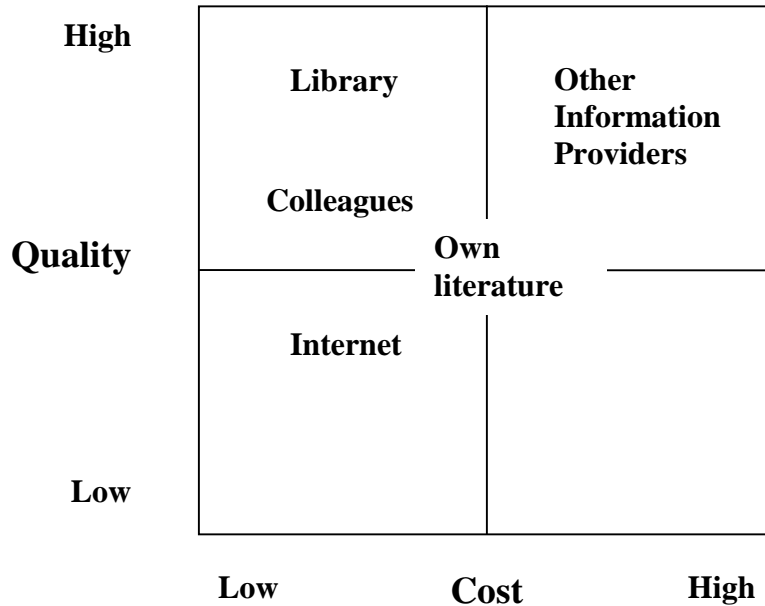


Figure 26: Quality vs. Cost graph of information provision



In order for the library to attract the interest of the business community it is necessary to increase our relevance to this sector, enhance our availability and to make business aware of the quality service available a very low cost.

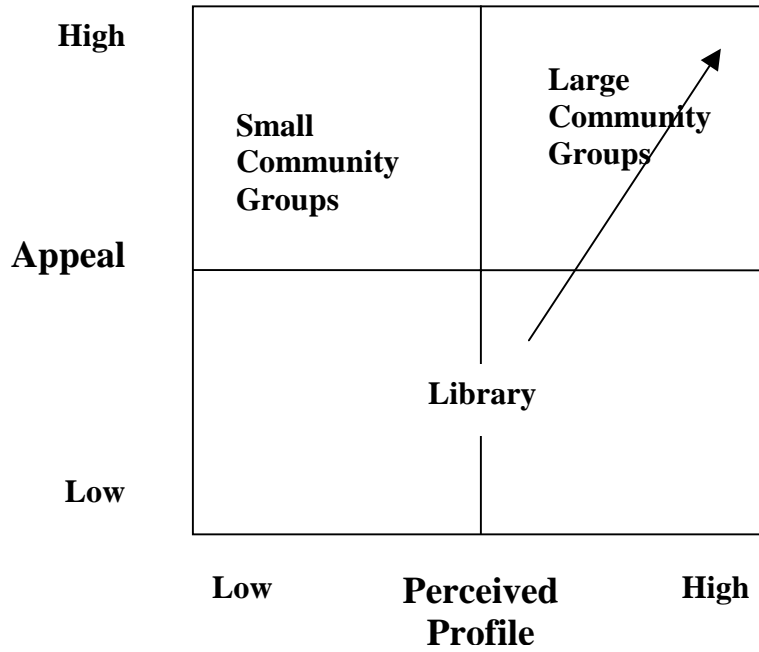
Competitors in Seeking Sponsorship

In relation to seeking sponsorship the competition is much stronger. Great Lakes abounds with community groups having a strong need for funding and that would attract kudos for a business that sponsors them. The library runs the risk of being perceived as an organisation that does not need funding as it is associated with the Council.

Competitive Positioning Regarding Sponsorship

As with information provision it is useful to determine the position of the library relative to other organisations seeking sponsorship. The survey (see Chapter 4) revealed only modest levels of interest in sponsoring the library collection, though a number of businesses were uncommitted at this stage. It should be noted that the library is not seeking or expecting to attract widespread sponsorship, but rather a number of key sponsors.

Figure 27: Appeal vs. Perceived Profile graph in relation to business sponsorship



The library is confronted with a substantial challenge if it is to attract sponsorship. It will be necessary to raise the appeal of the library to business for sponsorship and to convey the high profile that the library has in the local community.

7. OBJECTIVES

SWOT Analysis of Information Provision to the Business Community

Strengths

In relation to information provision the library has the following strengths:

- Access to an extensive database of information, including a network of libraries Australia-wide;
- Professionally qualified staff experienced in information provision;
- The library is a free service;
- Close to the bulk of businesses in the region;
- There are a network of access points scattered across Great Lakes;
- The service has a reliable source of funding and is well patronised so it is not likely to disappear overnight;
- The service has embraced a range of technologies and information formats;
- The service has information in areas of need to business (e.g. ABS, business management texts);
- The library is held in high regard by the business community;
- The staff has a strong customer focus.

Weaknesses

In relation to information provision to business the library has the following weaknesses:

- Perceived as not relevant to some businesses;
- Business has limited awareness of the services the library has on offer;
- Access may be limited by opening hours;
- The library may be perceived as having a slow response time to requests;
- Limited staffing levels present possible hurdles in service provision;
- Limited stock levels may impact on speed of response.

Opportunities

The current situation offers the library a range of opportunities:

- Raise the profile within the business community of the library as an information provider through targeted media channels;
- Establish online access to the collection and services;
- Establish online Reference service;
- Investigate more suitable opening hours;
- Usage of the library may lead to sponsorship opportunities;
- Implement mechanisms to tailor library information resources to business needs.

Threats

There are a number of threats to the library in regards to the provision of information:

- Businesses may turn to the Internet in preference to the library service – this is a potentially high risk scenario;
- Other information providers may enter the market – this is a comparatively low risk scenario.

SWOT Analysis of Sponsorship from the Business Community

Strengths

When seeking business sponsorship the library has the following strengths:

- Very high and diverse patronage from the local community;
- High standing within the community;
- Good standing in the business community;
- Reasonably long opening hours;
- Strong links to the media;
- Sponsorship can be associated with specific areas (e.g. a restaurant can sponsor the cookery section);
- Specific events can be sponsored (e.g. Writers Festival).

Weaknesses

When pursuing business sponsorship the library has the following weaknesses:

- The service falls under Council's umbrella and so is seen as not needing funding;
- Businesses may be unaware that libraries attract tax concessions, just as charities do;
- Other sponsorship groups may be seen as more worthy of support;
- Businesses may not see the library as relevant to them, in relation to sponsorship.

Opportunities

Sponsorship of the library via business presents the following opportunities:

- Raise business awareness of the profile library sponsorship presents;
- Inform business of the tax benefits associated with supporting the local library;
- Focus business sponsorship in particular collections areas or events;
- Sponsorship of events may lead to an increase in library usage.

Threats

In competing for sponsorship the library faces the following threats:

- Opposition from other community groups, thereby undermining the library's standing in the community;
- A successful sponsorship campaign may result in Council reducing its own funding to the library;
- Insufficient staffing to maintain the programme.

8. OBJECTIVES

The library is seeking to raise its profile in the business community thereby attracting business patronage as well as opportunities for corporate sponsorship.

Objectives

1. Establish a business membership card that facilitates membership.

A card will be developed that will make it relatively simple for businesses to join as a corporation. The card will not have onerous compliance conditions. This will be done by October 2002 and the success of the programme will be monitored through the number of businesses that take up membership.

Investigations will also be undertaken to develop special features to the card for library sponsors (e.g. Free reserves, no fines etc.).

2. Undertake an annual mail-out to businesses in the local area to inform them of the benefits the library offers.

The library will seek to send out, via direct mail, an annual information letter aimed at reaching all businesses in the Great Lakes area. The mailout will occur by March 2003.

3. Develop statistical packages relevant to business

The Reference Librarian will develop a package of ABS information, based around the 2001 Census that will be relevant to business. To be done in stages, commencing with the first release data. To commence by September 2002.

4. Raise the profile of the library in the business community.

Establish contact with the Forster-Tuncurry Chamber of Commerce and seek input into their monthly newsletter. To be undertaken by October 2002.

Place an article promoting key services in the library relevant to business in all appropriate newspapers. To occur by November 2002.

Promotion will focus on business cards, ABS information, LIAC data, the ability of the library to act as an information provider, the content and range of the collection/service and the Interlibrary lending network.

These mechanisms will be used to distribute key information. For example, ABS data can be distributed through the media rather than via an individual information alerting system.

5. Develop a brochure to promote the library service

Develop a brochure promoting the library service to business. This will be distributed via mail-outs etc. To be developed by November, 2002.

6. Shape the library collection and service to better meet business needs

Seek to expand the business management collection. To commence by October 2002.

7. Develop online access to services

Develop an online reference service. Promote this service in the branches. To be done by March 2003.

Develop online reservation system. To be done as soon as library software is capable.

8. Seek increased opening hours

Business has indicated that there are problems accessing the library service during its current opening hours. Good support was shown towards opening the library on a Sunday afternoon (see Chapter 4).

The library will place a report to Council on the opening hours by March 2003.

9. Establish a response time to enquiries

That a response time to all enquiries (online, in person and via the telephone) be set as a maximum of three days. To be done by October 2002.

10. Develop tools for obtaining information on the number of business enquiries

That the current means of monitoring the number of reference enquiries be modified to provide information on the number of business-related enquiries received. To be done by November 2002.

11. Develop sponsorship conditions

The library will develop suitable guidelines for business sponsorship of the library. To be done by October 2002.

12. Develop a sponsorship brochure

The library will develop a brochure relating to sponsorship. To be done by November 2002.

This will be circulated through appropriate means, with initial targeting being at businesses that have expressed an interest in sponsorship.

13. Promote the library as an organisation worthy of sponsorship

The library will promote itself through the appropriate media as an organisation worthy of sponsorship. This will initially be targeted at those businesses that expressed interest in sponsorship. This will commence once the sponsorship conditions have been adopted. To be done by December 2003.

14. Assess staffing implications of increased patronage.

The programmes identified above have direct implications on staffing. This implications will be the subject of a report to Council to be presented by March 2003.

9. PLAN FOR MARKETING LIBRARY SERVICES TO BUSINESS

9.1 Information Provision

Market Share Objectives

There are 1,600 businesses in the area, 600 of which lie outside of the catchment of the central library at Forster. The survey (see Chapter 4) indicates varying levels of interest in the library service by the business community. In light of this variation it would be reasonable to set a goal of no more than 200 businesses showing interest in the service. This figure could be revised if patronage exceeds expectations.

This patronage would be monitored through the take-up of business membership cards.

This target would be reviewed on an annual basis.

Positioning

The intention is to create the perception of the library service by business as an organisation that provides current, authoritative and free (or very reasonably priced) access to information that is relevant to the business community. It is also important that the perception of library staff is that they are competent and helpful professionals in the information retrieval field.

This will be done by ensuring that all business enquiries are handled professionally and dealt with within 3 working days. Efforts will be made to tailor the service better to business needs so that demands/needs can be pre-empted and information obtained ahead of time. Also, at all times that the library is promoting itself to business it will do so in such a fashion as to instill a sense of professionalism. All senior staff will also have individual business cards.

It is also intended to develop a professional brochure to promote the library service.

Marketing Information Systems

Staff are constantly monitoring the success of reference enquiries. This will continue, though extra attention will be placed on determining if an enquiry is on behalf of a business organisation.

The total number of reference enquiries will also be monitored, though this is affected by some many other factors that it is difficult to attribute alterations to this to any one factor.

The number of business memberships taken out will also be monitored.

Price

Initially, no price will be attached to the provision of information services, beyond photocopying costs. This will be monitored, however, and if there is a demand for value-

added services (e.g direct delivery of information, in-depth research) the matter will be addressed appropriately.

Distribution Channels

In general, it can be expected that patrons will contact the library directly, either in person or by phone. For simple enquiries these can be answered on the spot. There is scope, however, to receive information requests via e-mail, and to distribute responses via the same channel.

Some consideration can be given to regularly distributing information to identified patrons rather than awaiting a request (e.g. Useful statistics could be e-mailed directly to businesses or incorporated into media releases).

9.2 Sponsorship of the Library Service

Market Share Objectives

Sponsorship is a very competitive field and it cannot be expected that the library will attract a high market. The intention is to attract a range of businesses with a view to sponsoring various components of the collection. Realistically speaking the library would look to up to a dozen key sponsors who would provide an annual donation to the library service.

Positioning

The intention is to create the perception of the library service by business as an important community organisation worthy of sponsorship. Efforts will be made to distance the library from Council to avoid any potential stigma associated with local government.

This will be done through promotional channels and personal contact.

Marketing Information Systems

The number of businesses seeking to sponsor the library will be monitored.

Price

Through the development of a sponsorship structure the library will set a range of prices for sponsorship, and provide benefits associated with this sponsorship. Draft guidelines for business sponsorship have been developed (with input from the Library Committee) and are included in Appendix B. These guidelines will be subject to modification, based upon the response of the business community.

Distribution Channels

Businesses will be contacted via the local press, the Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, direct mail and, if appropriate, in person. As far as promoting sponsors this will occur through the mechanisms identified in Appendix B.

10. PROMOTION

Media Activities

A range of media and promotional activities will be undertaken, based upon the analysis contained within this report.

Development of Promotional Brochures: The library will look to develop brochures both promoting the library service and encouraging business to sponsor the library service.

Direct Mailout: The library will look to sending a direct mailout to businesses each year, promoting the library and its services. This could also be used to encourage sponsorship of the library.

Press Releases: The library will promote itself to business through the Chambers of Commerce newsletters.

Articles will be run in the print media, with preference being given to the *Great Lakes Advocate* and the *Nota*. The *Great Lakes News* will also receive consideration.

Stakeholders

Chambers of Commerce: The library will approach all the Chambers of Commerce in the region and inform them of the services the library can offer.

Councillors: A number of the Councillors have a high profile in the business community. Councillors, through regular mechanisms such as the Library Committee, will be kept informed of the focus that the library is placing on developing its services to business.

Where appropriate Councillors will be contacted via the mail distribution system in Council to inform them of upcoming events in the library.

Communications to Staff

The focus of library services on local business will be communicated to staff via meetings and direct personal contact.

The introduction of processes that emphasis the business nature of the client (e.g. new enquiry forms that indicate if the client is a business or not) will help to raise staff awareness of the enhancement of services to business.

Marketing Resources

The library could use its newsletter to help in the promotions programme. There is also an opportunity for fliers to be put out on the counter and for a display to be set up in the library.

11. FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

Expenses

Annual Mail-out to Business: Around \$100 for each mail-out. Initially only operate with one mailout.

Develop Fliers for Sponsorship and Promotion of Library Services: Production costs in the order of \$100. Staffing costs to be discussed below.

Expansion of Business Management Collection: Up to \$1,000 worth of stock.

Expansion of Opening Hours to Sunday Afternoon: Total cost to Council of around \$30,000.

Expansion an Online Reference Service: Staff implications only.

Staffing Implications

Is it expected that the staffing impact of developing fliers, promoting the library and introducing an online reference service can be absorbed by existing staff, at least in the early stages.

Maintenance of the sponsorship programme may well impact negatively on staff workloads, and in the long run, online enquiries may rise to such a level as to require further staffing support.

Should the sponsorship programme attract patronage the most obvious implication is that more library stock would need to be catalogued and processed. With existing staff levels already under pressure consideration would need to be given to the provision of additional staff for stock processing.

Potential Income

Sponsorship: If the sponsorship programme proves successful the library could look to up to another \$10,000 worth of stock funding each year.

Additional Funding Needs

To pursue all programmes the library would require an additional level of funding in the vicinity of \$31,000 per annum. The vast majority of this funding relates to Sunday opening hours. A proposal will be put to Council to consider the funding for Sunday afternoon opening prior to the decision making process associated with the 2003/2004 budget.

In relation to the question of staffing needs associated with new stock processing, the online reference service and management of the sponsorship programme, demands placed on staff will be monitored as the programme is implemented and should the need for additional staff become apparent a report will be made to Council outlining the concerns.

12. APPENDIX A – BUSINESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Great Lakes Library Service Business Questionnaire

Please circle the preferred answer. You can tick more than one box in any question

Would you be interested in obtaining a library card for your business? This card could be used to borrow items of relevance to your business. **Yes/No.**

Would you find it useful to access the following free services of the library?

Australian Bureau of Statistics information
Business management books

Legal information
Current affairs and finance magazines

The library is part of a nationwide network that provides access to millions of books, magazines etc. Any patron of the library can tap into this network. Would this service be of benefit to your organization?
Yes/No

Were you aware that the library offers a free service for locating information? **Yes/No**

Are there any particular books/databases that you would like to see the library hold?

Were you aware that the library provides free Internet access? **Yes/No**

Do you have Internet access? **Yes/No**

Would you be interested in making an information enquiry via the Internet? **Yes/No**

Would you be interested in receiving regular updates of information (e.g. statistics)? **Yes/No**

Do you have difficulty getting to the library during its opening hours? **Yes/No**

Would having the library open on a Sunday afternoon make access to the service easier for you? **Yes/No**

Would you be interested in sponsoring part of the library collection? **Yes/No**

Do you know donations to the library are tax deductible? **Yes/No**

Rate the importance of the library to the community (Circle preferred option).

Very Important Important Slightly Important Not Important Not Important at all

Rate the importance of the library to your business (Circle preferred option).

Very Important Important Slightly Important Not Important Not Important at all

What is(are) the best way(s) to inform you of library services/events.

GL Advocate Extra Nota GL FM 2RE Direct Mail TV

Could you provide us with your business name and what line your business is in? (Optional)

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

13. APPENDIX B – SPONSORSHIP BROCHURE