

Youth
Marketing Plan

2002

Great Lakes Library Service

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

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Marketing Plan, targeting youth, is the first in a series designed to investigate the library needs of the Great Lakes community. For the purposes of statistical analysis youth is defined as any person aged 15-19 years, however, the outcomes of the Plan will benefit all those that can reasonably be considered to fall into the “youth” sector.

The Great Lakes community is amongst the heaviest users of library services in the State and youth membership levels (around 90%) reflect this support of the library. The 2001 census indicates good growth in the youth population, which has risen 21% since 1996. Consequently it can be expected that youth will continue to be an important segment of library patrons.

Analysis of the youth collection does indicate that lending rates are low compared to the library average, with youth collection items being lent out 3.48 times per annum. General trends within the youth community indicate demands on time that create difficulties in getting to the library during opening hours, a preference for non-print media (e.g. CDs), an interest in accessing the Internet, an antiquated image of the library and higher expectations of service. This latter issue appears typical of all library users. Discussions with the newly established Youth Advisory Committee and Homebase Youth Centre confirms a desire to see enhancement of stock in certain areas (e.g. CDs, magazines) as well as the establishment of an area for youth within the library.

In the provision of the library service it must be recognised that youth, in general face a financial hurdle in accessing information and leisure items as well as being able to access technology (though in both cases parental support may reduce the size of this hurdle). A further reality is that, in the main, youth have not developed extensive skills in finding the correct information in the most efficient fashion. It must also be acknowledged that in the Great Lakes region some youth may be confronted with geographic isolation.

The needs of youth can be categorised broadly as access to information, access to a range of print and non-print leisure material and to feel relaxed in the library. In order to achieve this efforts must be made to alter the image of the library so that it is perceived as providing quality material relevant to their needs and that the library is a welcoming and comforting place to visit. Competition in the area of information provision comes largely from the Internet and this must be incorporated into the Marketing Plan. Similarly, the field of leisure provision is increasingly becoming congested and the library must make ever effort to present its relevance to youth as well as providing access to material they desire. Conversely, competition in the provision of a place of relaxation is far more limited and there is ample scope for the library to position itself as a key provider of

relaxation space. It is proposed to undertake the following objectives in improving services to youth:

- Continue to develop the role of the Youth Advisory Committee to incorporate stock selection, as well as to continue to offer advise on the creation of a youth space.
- Approach the Forster High School to determine the best mechanisms to promote its service to youth.
- Contact will be maintained with Homebase Youth Centre to ensure appropriate feedback on the development of the service is obtained.
- Contact the Great Lakes TAFE to determine if a cooperative means to promote both services is feasible.
- Conduct an activity in the library, along the lines of a “*Pizza and Pages*” event, in which youth can visit the library after hours.
- Contact Bulahdelah Central School and inform them of the branch network and the ability to lodge requests for information online. This is to be done after the online reference service is established.
- Promote the newly constructed library at Tea Gardens to the community in that area. This can occur only after the building has been constructed.
- Investigate producing a promotional postcard to be made available at youth gathering points (e.g. Music shops).
- Develop a small area in the library as a youth space.
- Promote the library as an area of relaxation.
- Investigate purchasing the HSC Infocus service.
- Establish a fund for youth to make suggestions for purchase out of.
- Make provision in the 2003/2004 budget for additional “alternative” music CDs to be purchased via a standing order arrangement.
- Expand the youth magazine collection.
- Expand the Playstation games collection.
- Establish a Playstation 2 collection.

- Develop an online reference service. Promote this service in the branches.
- Develop online reservation system.

No specific market share is identified but it is predicted that patronage of the youth fiction collection will increase from 3.48 loans per item to 4.5 loans per item by 2003.

In order to best promote the Marketing Plan objectives the library will tap into the local media and the library and Forster High School newsletters. Central to the awareness campaign is word-of-mouth communications. The library has identified the Youth Advisory Committee, Homebase Youth Centre, Forster High School and, to a lesser degree, the Great Lakes TAFE as key stakeholders. These will be specifically targeted as avenues for promotion.

The cost of implementing the entire programme identified in the Youth Marketing Plan is in the order of \$11,000. At this stage \$4,000 funding has already been allocated. This will enable the library to redesign the youth area and to continue to expand the youth collection, the Playstation games collection and the magazines. The cost of establishing the “alternative” music and Playstation 2 collections will be pursued in the 2003/2004 budget cycle. Funding for the production of postcards will be sought through grant funding. There is no unfunded cost impact on the 2002/2003 budget

2. GENERAL LIBRARY ENVIRONMENT

Definition of Youth

For the purposes of this Marketing Plan youth will be defined as any person between the ages of 15 to 19. This definition fits well with the statistical data available from both the library software and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Other sources, notably the UN, have a wider age range definition which can span anywhere from 8 to 40 years of age. The purpose of this Plan is not to enter into detailed debate on these definitions, but rather to operate within a framework that is manageable. For people under the age of 15 a children's Marketing Plan will be adopted.

It must be stressed that the age range has been adopted only for statistical purposes. It is hoped that the objectives of this Plan will meet the needs of all residents, irrespective of age, whose behaviour and interests fall into the needs of youth.

Mechanisms For Obtaining Input from Youth

The library has established a Youth Advisory Committee. This Committee draws on local youth and acts as a focus group, providing input into development of services for this segment of the community.

A local youth group, Homebase Youth Centre, has also been approached for input into the development of services to youth.

In a broader scene, the library has a board that allows members of the public to make suggestions for improvement of the service. It is evident from the nature of the suggestions received that youth use this mechanism to provide constructive input into the development of the library.

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 organization. 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 and has branches in Bulahdelah, Hawks Nest, Nahiic, North Arm Cove and Stroud. It also has a well-patronised Internet presence. There are plans underway to utilize 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 have 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

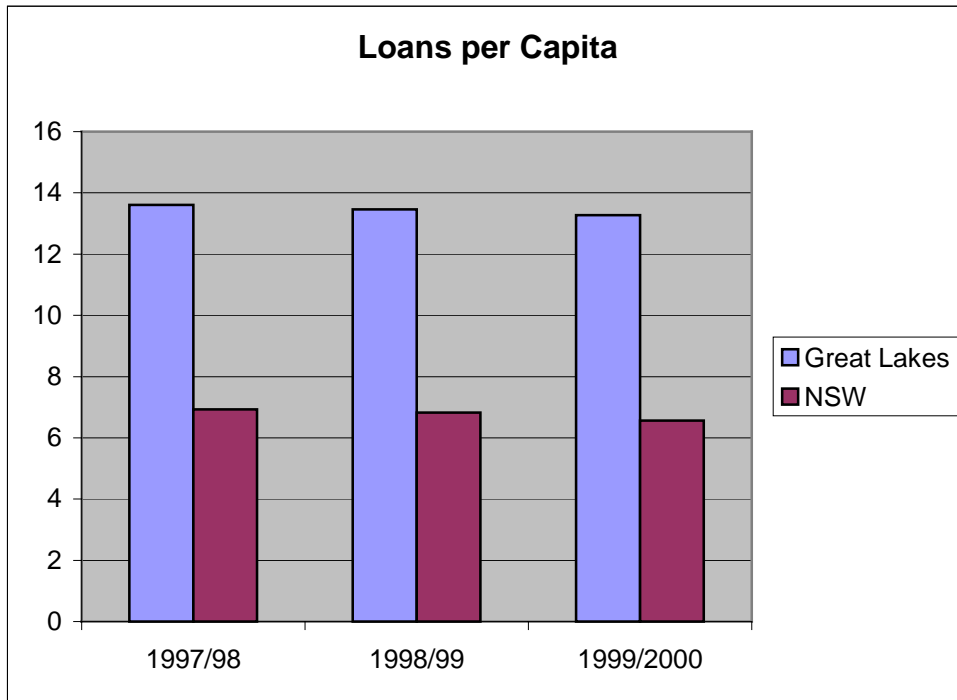
On a per capita basis the Great Lakes Library Service is one of the most heavily used in NSW. Table 1 and its accompanying graph provide figures on library patronage over the past three years. It is evident from the data that the library lends out items at rate more than twice the State median. This 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.

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

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

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



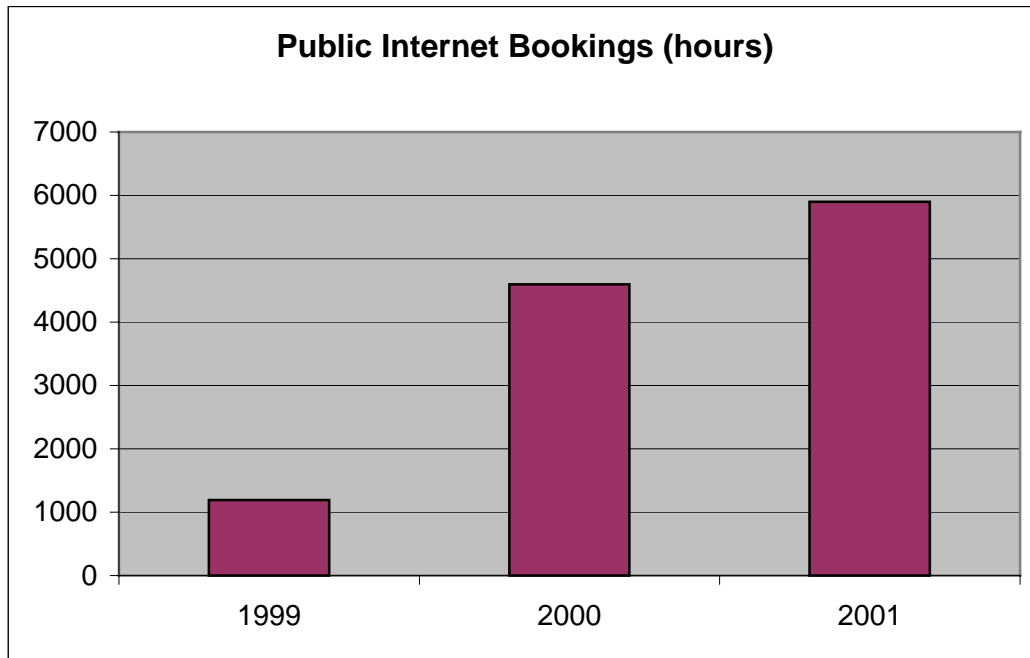
The high usage made of the library by its public is reflected in the membership rate. 19,136 residents are registered library users, representing almost two thirds of the community. In a given year the Forster Library can expect around 120 000 visitors. Since opening for service 13 years ago, there have 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 bookings 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 2-3% 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.

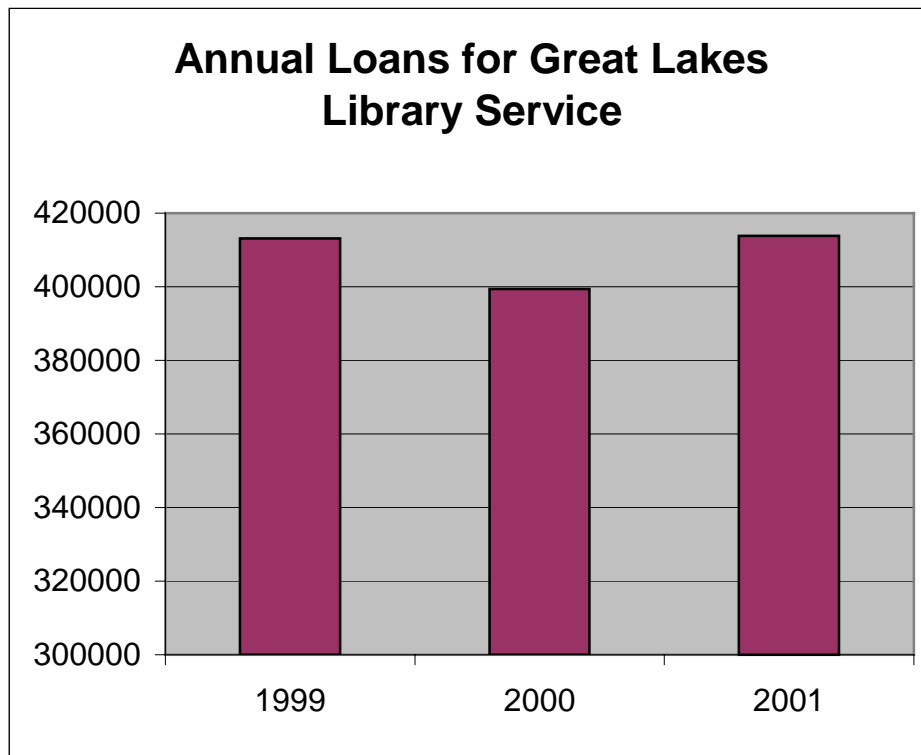
² Great Lakes Council, *Great Lakes community profile: 1999*, Great Lakes Council, 2000

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 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

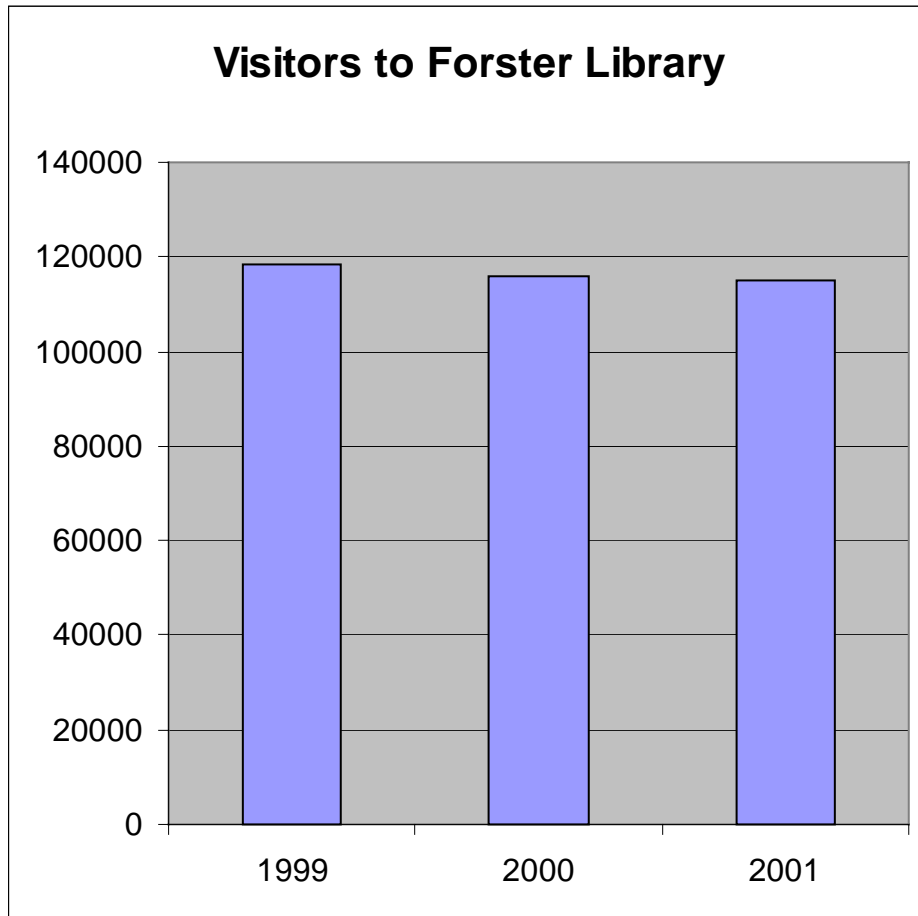


What is evident is that usage of the library remains strong, with the latest statistics showing a tendency for even higher levels of usage.

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. Again, what they reveal is strong patronage.

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.

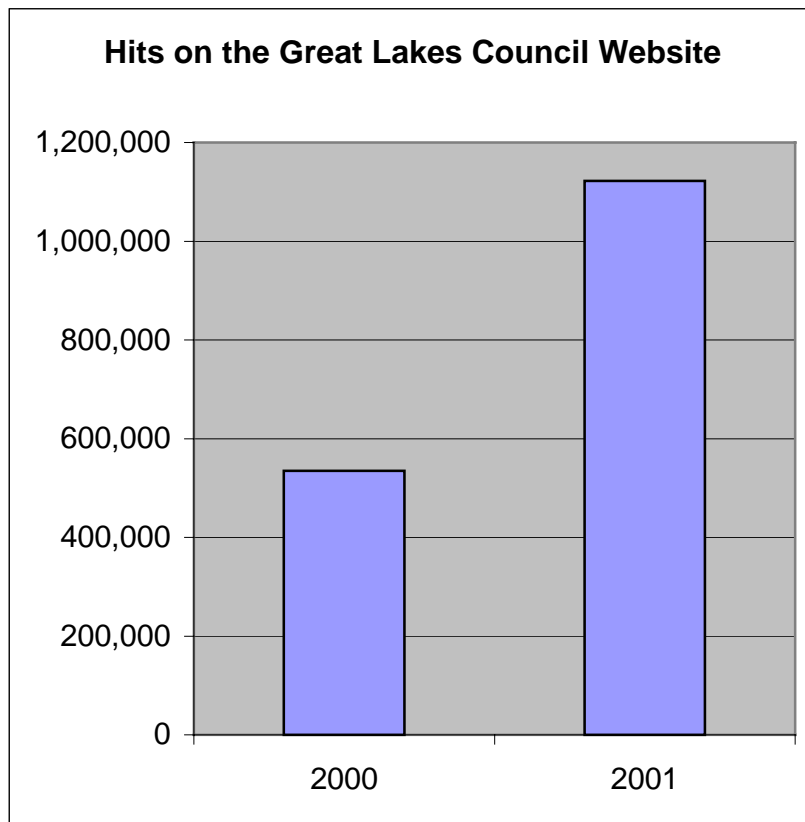
Website Usage

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 websites, 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, with hits in 2001 reaching over 1.1 million. 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 (estimates for 2002 are around 2 million hits).

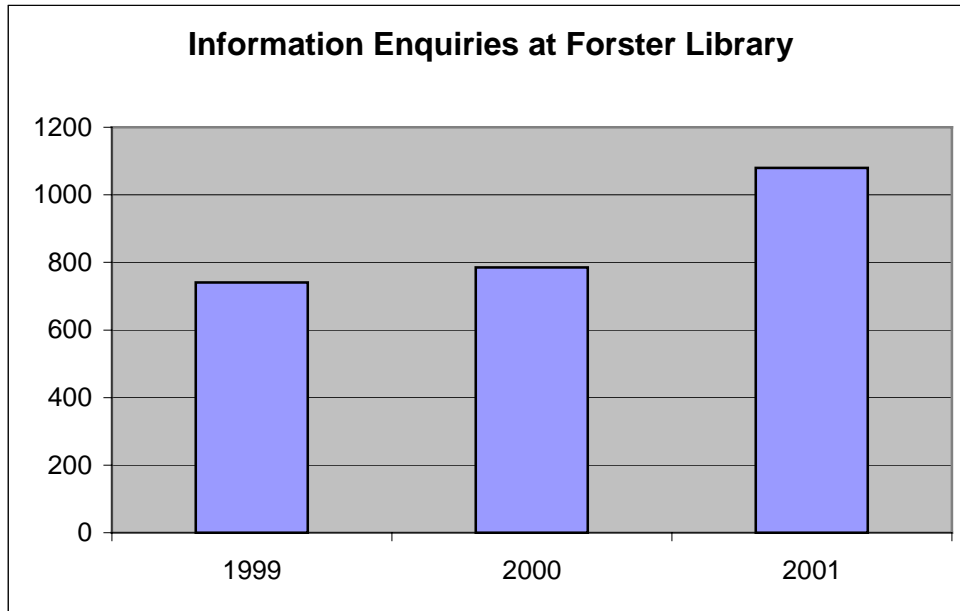
Figure 5: Number of hits on the Great Lakes Council Website



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 that are currently being put in place it can be expected that this demand will continue to grow.

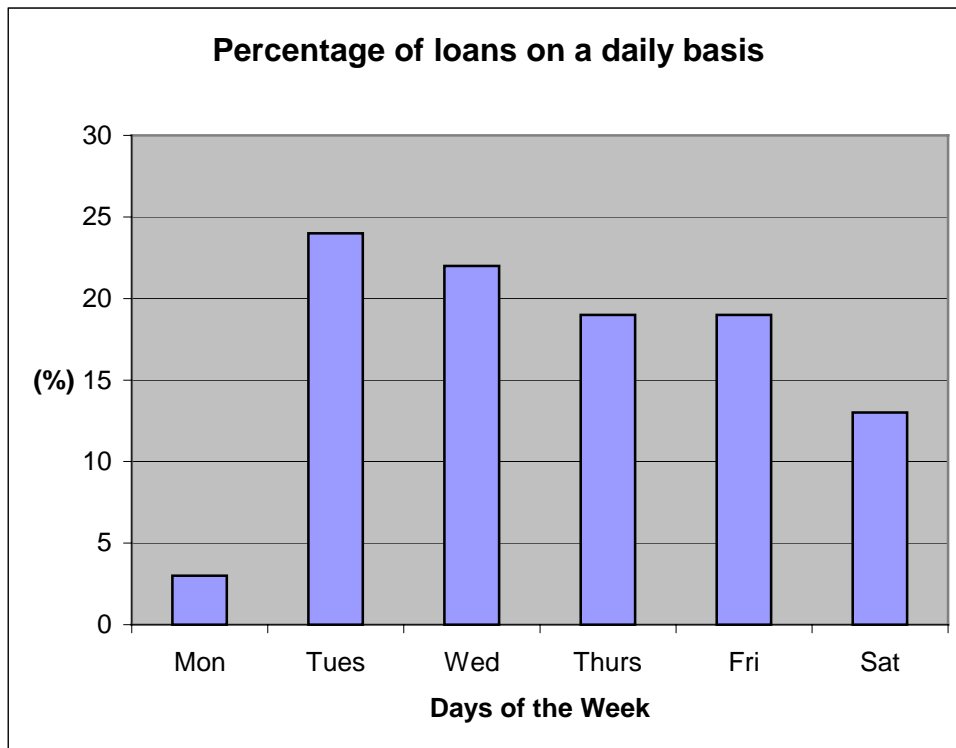
Figure 6: Information enquiries received at Forster Library.



Fluctuations in Demand

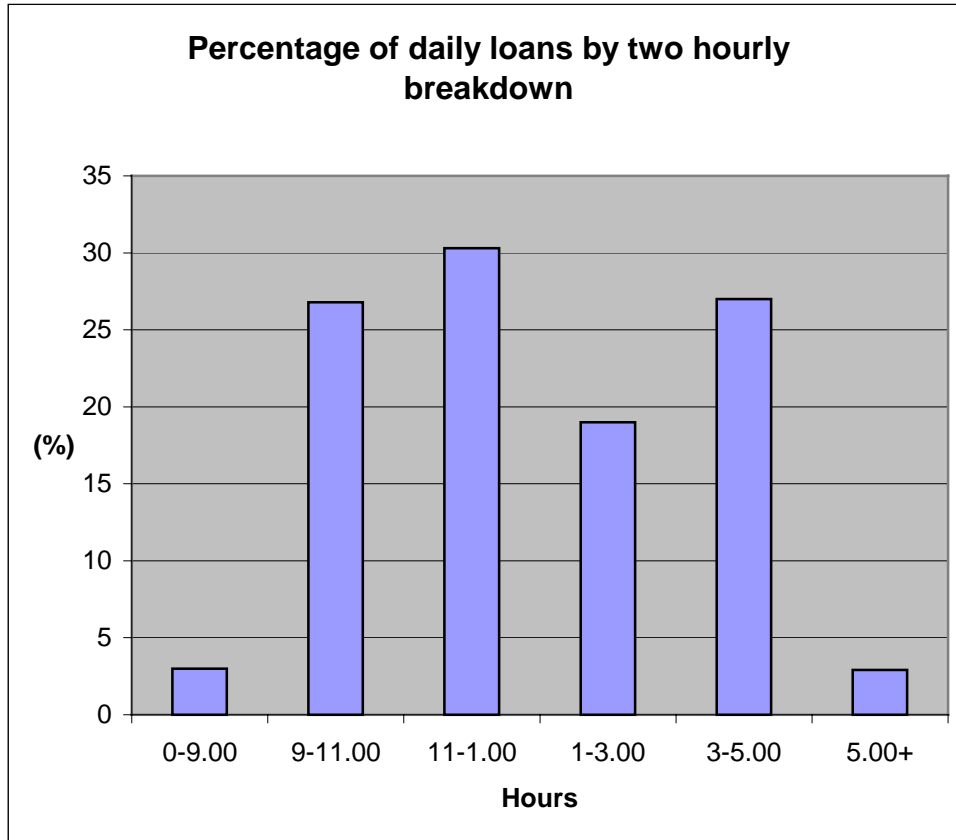
Underlying the general trend upwards are seasonal and daily fluctuations in usage. The library service is busiest on a Tuesday, which relates to the Forster Library being closed on a Monday. Figure 7 provides a profile of a normal week in the library service.

Figure 7: Percentage of loans on a daily basis



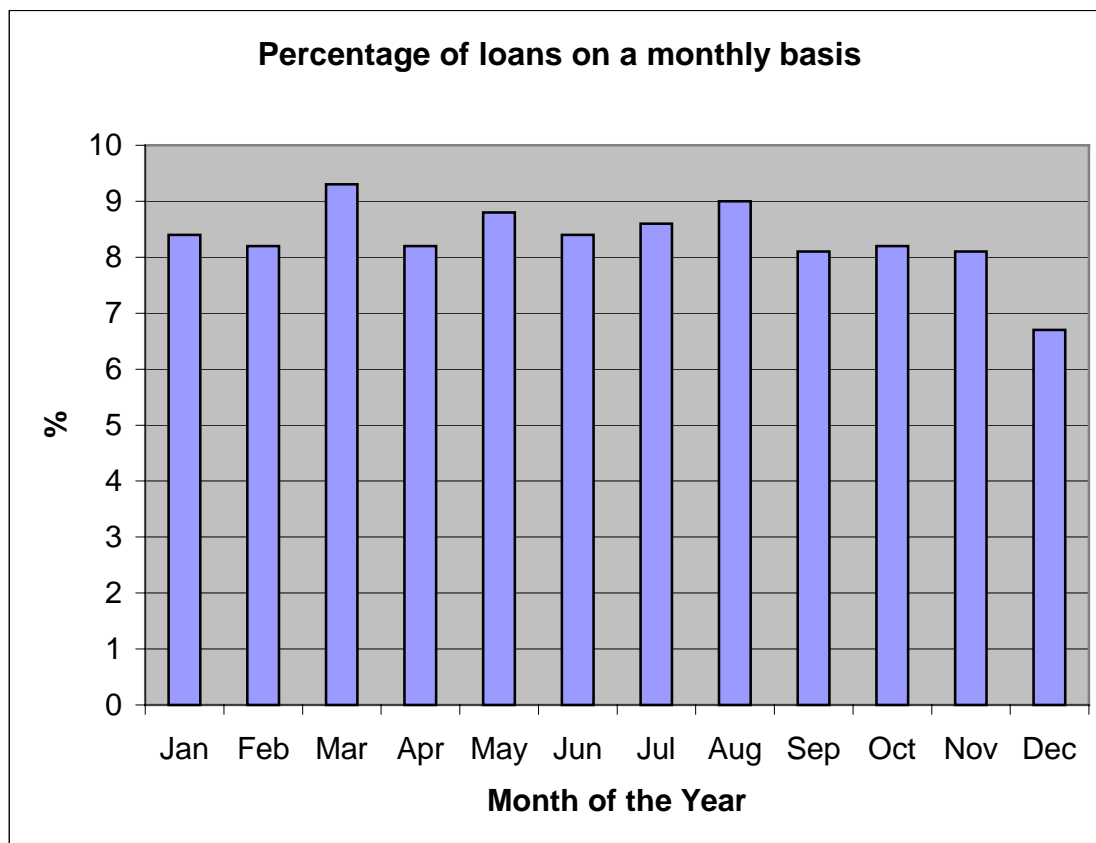
Loan rates also depend on the time of day. Typically, the library is busiest in the mornings, though there is a small increase in usage after three o'clock when school children are able to visit. Figure 8 provides the relevant information on daily stock movements.

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	2-4
Visitor Numbers	114,950	2-4
Internet Usage	5,897	30
Website Hits	1,121,890	50-60
Information inquiries	1,082	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 2-3% 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 and this has been catered for in the 2-4% 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 at a similar rate to the loans.

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 40% growth could well prove conservative.

Current Focus of the Collection

Great Lakes Local Government Area 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 both heavily represented within 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 youth sector.

4. MARKET ANALYSIS

Market Trends

Lack of Time for Youth to Visit the Library

One of the biggest challenges in attracting youth to the library service is the lack of time they have to undertake this activity. Research contracted by the Australian Centre for Youth Literature and the Australia Council (contained within the Report *Young Australians reading: from keen to reluctant readers*³) found 64% of 10 to 18 year olds would like to read more. The positive aspect of this research is that youth generally were interested and committed to reading, but it is also clear that there are significant pressures on the time youth have available for reading. It is predicted that these pressures will remain into the foreseeable future.

Interest in Formats other Than Books

The explosion in differing entertainment formats (e.g. PCs, multichannel television, Playstation/PS-2/X-Box/Nintendo/Gameboy games,) has made the entertainment industry increasingly competitive. Consequently it is expected that youth needs will be across a wider range of media than previously experienced. As youth are often advocates of the new technology it is expected that they will place a steady demand on the library to adopt new media. This has been evidenced through the Library Suggestion Board where youth members of the library service consistently express an interest in purchasing non-book media. It is interesting to note the very high demand for magazines emanating from the youth community.

Internet

It would be naïve to ignore the potential impact of the Internet on library services. Anecdotal evidence of users of the free Internet service reveals strong patronage from youth. It appears that usage is strong for both information retrieval and personal communications (e.g. e-mail). In the latter case youth may find the library offers them more freedom to communicate with friends than in the home environment, especially as home Internet usage is likely to have an associated cost.

Youth do appear to have a propensity to seek information via electronic sources so it can be expected that they will increasingly turn to this environment for information. This has a double impact. First, youth may well access this information through the home environment, thereby circumventing the library service. Second, it may be more appropriate to look to providing information for youth via the electronic media.

In this environment the library can serve an important role as a) a free provider of Internet access b) a web site containing useful Internet links, and c) promoting the library as the most effective mechanism for locating valuable information on the Internet.

³ Source: Woolcott Research, *Young Australians reading: from keen to reluctant readers*, Woolcott Research, 2001.

Increasing Expectation of Service

As the world embraces electronic communications there is the potential for the library to provide a range of services online. The library currently offers Internet access to its library catalogue, which could be used by youth to find out what stock the library held. The library is also pursuing an online reference service.

Image of the Library Service

Information obtained through consultation, the library *Suggestion Board* and anecdotally indicates that the youth still have a high regard for the library, though they may perceive it as slightly out-dated and are unaware of the range of material it holds.

An effective promotional campaign and the establishment of appropriate links to the youth community provide an opportunity to redress these matters.

Demand for a Comfortable Environment

It is also evident from discussion with local youth that there is an increasing demand for a space within the library that provides comfort in a zone distinct from the adult area.

Patronage of the Library Service

Contrary to some predictions in the library literature the library service has not seen a decrease in patronage over recent years. At worst the library usage has remained constant, or, as is the case in the past 12 months it has seen a steady increase.

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 likely that these forces have had some impact, but it has either been greatly exaggerated or offset by growth in 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 relaxation⁴.

Gaps in the Provision of Information to Youth

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 can 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.

⁴ Source: Cox, Eva *A safe place to go: libraries and social capital*, State Library of New South Wales, 2000

The library offers a particularly affordable mechanism for gaining access to such information.

In addition, youth face a genuine financial hurdle in obtaining leisure material in an environment that has seen traditional material (e.g. books) rise dramatically in price as well as the appearance of a plethora of entertainment media (e.g. Playstation, PS 2, Game Box). The library can assist youth to access this media.

Technology Hurdle

There is anecdotal evidence that youth prefer accessing information via the Internet. This can present a real barrier if their home does not possess Internet access, or if parents impose time/usage restrictions. Youth also appear to have a propensity to use the Internet as a communications medium and, once again, restrictions in the home environment may prevent appropriate levels of access. The Internet set-up that the library has established provides youth with an ideal environment to access online information and electronic communications.

Geographic Gap

Youth in the Great Lakes region face geographic isolation. Pockets within the community may be 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 youth 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.

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

The library offers a range of services that can directly benefit youth.

Product: Leisure material

Benefit: The library provides free access to a range of the leisure material in a range of formats.

Product: Comfortable meeting place.

Benefit: Youth are able to meet within the library to relax, interact and seek information without fear of exclusion.

Product: Wide range of non-fiction materials.

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

Product: Range of non-print material and magazines.

Benefit: Youth appear to have a strong interest in magazines and non-print material (e.g. CDs, videos, Playstation games). The library can provide free access to this material.

Product: Access to the Internet.

Benefit: Youth can obtain access to online information free-of-charge.

Product: Access to e-mail.

Benefit: Youth can obtain free and unfettered access to e-mail facilities in the library.

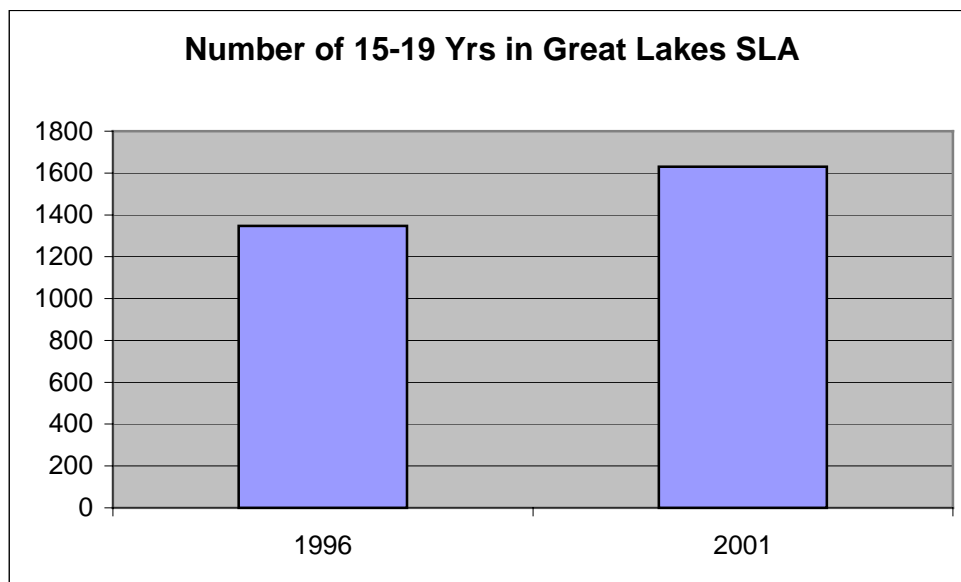
Product: Reference Service.

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

Brief Profile of the Great Lakes Community and the Place of Youth Within This Community

The latest Census data reveals that Great Lakes has a population of 31,384, of which 15,451 are male and 15,933 are female⁵. Since 1996 the population has grown 9.7%.

Figure 10: Number of 15-19 Year olds living in the Great Lakes SLA in 1996 and 2001.



⁵ Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census 2001: Great Lakes Statistical Local Area: Basic Community Profile*, 2002.

Analysis of the data reveals that in 2001 there were 1,630 15-19 year olds in the Great Lakes SLA (5.2% of the population). This compares with the 1996 data, which shows a youth population of 1,347 (4.7% of the population). This represents a 21% growth in youth numbers since 1996. The comparison is given in Figure 10 above. It is interesting to note that whilst the total population has 49% male representation, the 15-19 year old segment has 54% male representation

Representation of Youth as Library Members

It is possible to use library software to determine the representation amongst library members. Analysis shows that as at June 2002 there were 1,520 registered borrowers aged 15-19 years. Comparing this to the number of residents of this age range it is apparent that a very high proportion of youth, over 90%, are registered with the library. This figure may be slightly inflated as the membership data has been collected 12 months later than the census data. This impact, is however, likely to be minor and a claim of around 90% youth membership appears legitimate.

Segments of the Youth Community

As this marketing plan focuses on youth, 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. There are, however, two smaller segments within the youth community that merit some attention.

Forster-Tuncurry Catchment

Around 60-65% of the population of Great Lakes resides in the demographic catchment of Forster-Tuncurry. Youth in these locations have better access to the major facilities in the central library.

Other areas within Great Lakes

It will be far more difficult to offer accessible services to youth in these areas 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 the 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.

A larger, fully staffed branch at Tea Gardens will be constructed by mid-2003 and this will allow greater youth access to library services in the southern part of the region.

Current Perception of the Library by the Youth Community

Surveys of library 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.

The library has also gained positive feedback through community consultation, its Youth Advisory Committee and the *Suggestions* board. From these forums it is apparent that youth appreciate the service, but are willing to offer suggestions for further improvements. There is some indication that the library may not be perceived as relevant to the whole youth community.

The challenge the library confronts is to develop its services to make sure they are relevant and appealing to youth and also to communicate the services the library offers more effectively to local youth.

Future Perception of the Library Service by Youth

The intention of this marketing plan is to create a perception in the youth community that the library service:

- Is a comfortable place for them to meet, relax and study within;
- Contains, or can access, information that is relevant to them;
- Offers access to leisure material of relevance to them;
- Is accessible to them;
- Holds an extensive and developing range of non-print material;
- Has technology that enables them to access the Internet and e-mail free of charge.

Key Stakeholders

The most effective way to attract youth to the library is to convince key stakeholders of the associated benefits. In the instance of the youth community there are a number of avenues to operate through:

- Youth Advisory Community;
- Homebase Youth Centre;
- Forster High School Library.

The Youth Advisory Committee and Homebase Youth provide direct conduits into the youth community, effectively tapping into the word-of-mouth network in the youth

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

community. The School will act as an advocate for the library, as it promotes itself as a support to rather than a competitor with its services.

To a lesser degree, the Great Lakes TAFE could be a key stakeholder and it would be appropriate to interact with this organisation to determine the best mechanisms to promote the library to youth and to determine a complementary level of service.

5. COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

Competitors in Information Provision

In the provision of information to youth there are two potential competitors, the local high school and online information. To a lesser degree the local TAFE can act as a competitor. In the case of Forster High School they provide access to non-fiction material relevant to student's study needs, as well as free online access to the Internet. Their limitations lie in a narrower collection than the Great Lakes Library Service and limited opening hours.

The Internet also poses competition to the provision of information. Students will have access to it at school and TAFE. According to the latest Census, there is reasonable exposure of students to the Internet at home as well (over 17% of residents have home-based Internet access⁹). Anecdotal evidence indicates youth preference to access information via the Internet than through the print medium, almost irrespective of the quality of the data obtained from print. The limitations in relation to these competitors are limited hours of access (in the case of school and TAFE), potential limitations of legitimate sites that can be accessed (either through filtering software or parental control) and cost (in the case of home-based data). There is also the difficulty with home-based searching that there is no information professional on hand to assist with searching. One point of note is that the library has reasonably good speed of access to the Internet, which it will shortly upgrade. This gives it a likely edge over normal home access.

It is strongly recommended that the Great Lakes Library Service does not seek to actively compete with either the High School or TAFE, but rather seeks to complete their service.

Competitive Positioning Regarding Information Provision

In order to promote the library as an information provision service to youth it is beneficial to understand where the library is positioned relative to competition in this area. The following figures indicate the position of the library within the youth community. The key criteria of relevance, accessibility, perceived quality of service and potential cost have been included in the analysis. The information contained within the figures is drawn from discussions with youth, discussions with other library professionals and the observations of the Chief Librarian.

Within each figure the current position of the library is given. An arrow is used to indicate where the library will seek to be positioned in the future.

There is every indication that youth will continue to show a preference for online information. For this reason it is important that the provision of free online access to at the library be promoted effectively. Also it will be necessary to raise the perceived

⁹ Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census 2001: Great Lakes Statistical Local Area: Basic Community Profile*, 2002.

relevance of the library to youth. Efforts should also be made to promote the quality of service provision offered by the library.

Accessibility is a two-edged sword for the library. On the one hand the library provides much broader opening hours than the High School and TAFE. On the other hand, our hours are low in comparison to other library systems and after-school/TAFE access may be difficult. Furthermore, online access to information has the potential to be available 24 hours a day.

Figure 11: Perceived Relevance vs. Availability graph of information provision

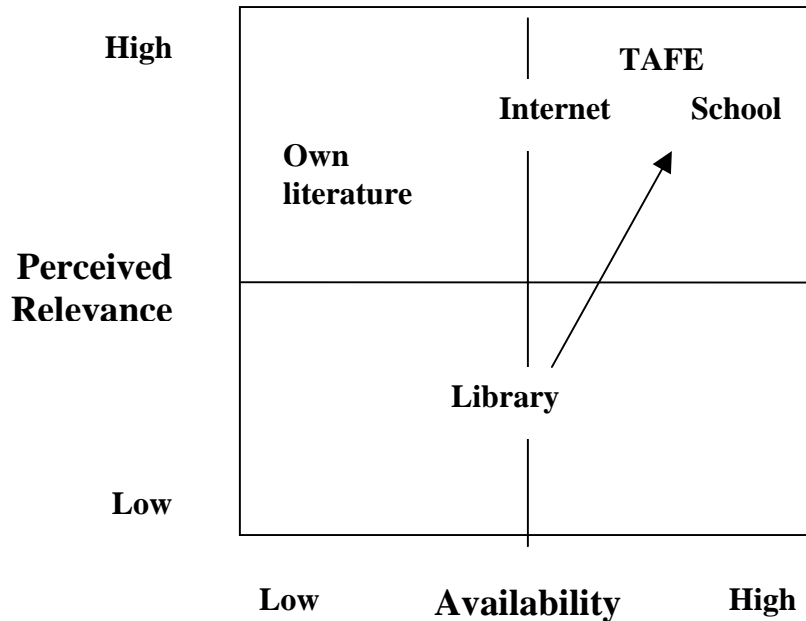
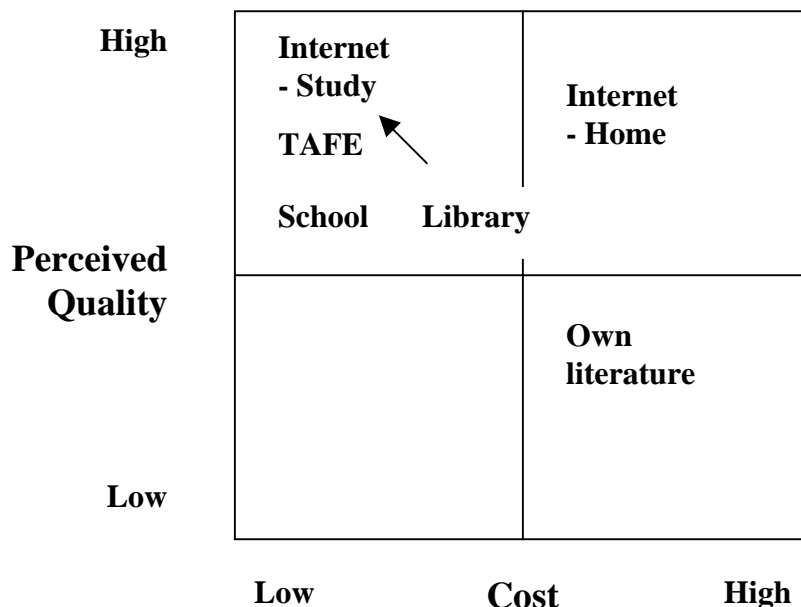


Figure 12: Perceived Quality vs. Cost graph of information provision



Competitors in Entertainment Provision

In analyzing competitors in the entertainment sphere this Marketing Plan is focusing on sedentary rather than active entertainment. This has been done because it keeps the comparison to a more manageable level and it is reasonable to assume that the library competes more strongly in the area of sedentary entertainment.

Once again, the information contained within the figures is drawn from discussions with youth, discussions with other library professionals and the observations of the Chief Librarian and within each figure the current position of the library is given as well as an arrow indicating where the library will seek to be positioned in the future.

In relation to entertainment provision the competition is much stronger. The library now vies with a vast array of electronic games, the Internet, television and video, music and bookstores for a share of the entertainment market.

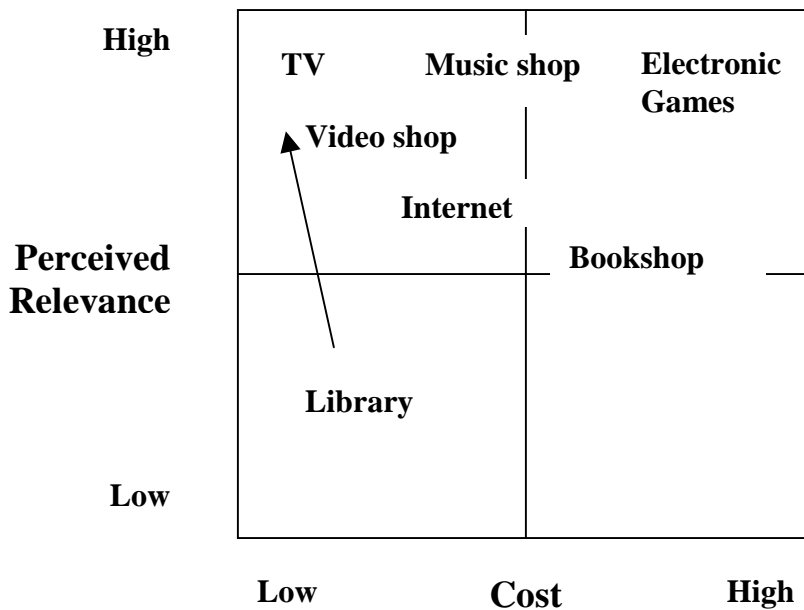
The library has not sought to compete across all these fronts at all levels, but rather has been more selective in its approach. It targets non-fiction/instructional videos and holds only limited electronic games resources, largely for budgetary reasons.

A significant edge that the library holds is the free availability of material.

Competitive Positioning Regarding Entertainment

As with information provision it is useful to determine the position of the library relative to other entertainment providers.

Figure 13: Perceived Relevance vs. Cost graph of entertainment provision



The goal of the library, in this environment is to increase its relevance to the youth community and to reinforce its competitive costs.

Competitors in Place of Relaxation

Consultation with youth indicates an interest in an area where they can relax and feel comfortable. This indicates that there may be a difficulty in youth finding any suitable venue where they feel accepted. In regards to this there are few venues in Great Lakes that are free of charge and which encourage you to feel both relaxed and welcomed.

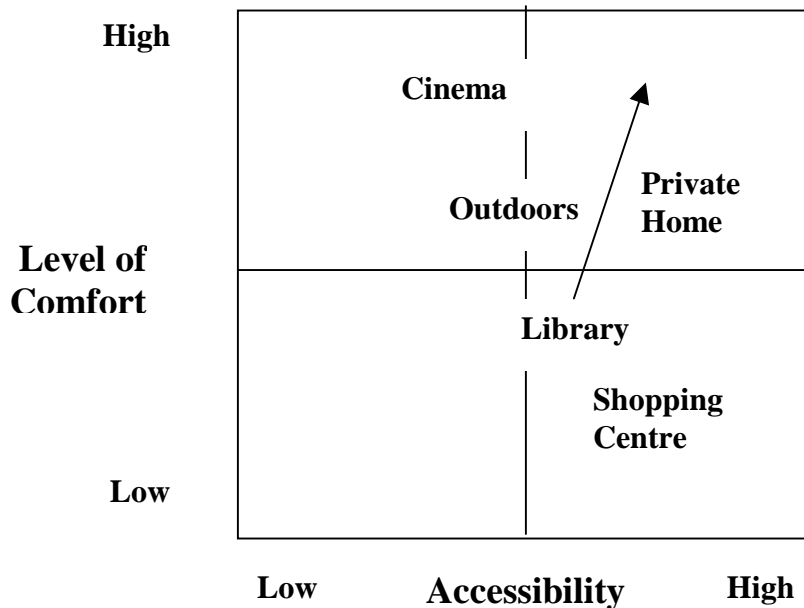
Competition could come from shopping precincts, cinemas, outdoor meeting places and private residences, all of which have limitations. Shopping precincts do not necessarily encourage youth meetings, cinemas involve a charge, outdoor meeting places have issues of comfort and accessibility and private homes may also carry the pressure of parental intrusion.

Once more, information contained within the figures is drawn from discussions with youth, other library professionals and the observations of the Chief Librarian. The current position of the library is given along with an arrow indicating where it will seek to be positioned in the future.

Competitive Positioning Regarding Places of Relaxation

Figure 14 shows a comparison between a range of venues for relaxation. A comparison is made between level of comfort and accessibility. In the case of accessibility, cost has also been taken into consideration.

Figure 14: Level of Comfort vs. Accessibility graph



The objective will be to position the library so that the level of comfort it provides is increased. Accessibility is likely to remain something of an issue due to limited opening hours. This matter should continue to be pursued to determine if an increase in opening hours can be achieved. This is certain to be the case for the Tea Gardens region when the new library is established, though issues still remain in relation to the central library at Forster. Budgetary and usage constraints are likely to preclude the extension of library hours at the other branch service points.

6. SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT Analysis of Information Provision to Youth

Strengths

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

- Access to an extensive range of databases of information, including a network of libraries Australia-wide;
- Professionally qualified staff experienced in information provision;
- The library is a free service;
- There are a network of access points scattered across Great Lakes;
- Online access to information is largely unfettered, and includes e-mail access;
- The service has embraced a range of technologies and information formats;
- Internet access is of reasonably good speed;
- Opening hours are more extensive than the local High School and TAFE.

Weaknesses

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

- Maybe perceived as not relevant;
- Maybe be perceived as being a slow option to obtaining information in comparison to online data;
- Access may be limited by opening hours;
- Collection may not be best tailored to youth/student needs;
- 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 youth community of the library as a quality information provider through targeted information distribution channels;
- Establish online access to the collection and services;
- Establish online Reference service;
- Investigate more suitable opening hours;
- Implement mechanisms to tailor library collection to youth/student needs.

Threats

There is one central threat to the library in regards to the provision of information:

- Youth may turn to the Internet in preference to the library service – this is a potentially high risk scenario;

In addition there are structural changes occurring between local education providers that may impact on the library service:

- The local high School and the TAFE will shortly be providing a joint campus. This may take business away from the library

SWOT Analysis of Entertainment Provision

Strengths

When promoting the library as a provider of entertainment the library has the following strengths:

- Low/minimal cost;
- Increasingly diverse range of collections;
- Mechanisms in place to receive input from youth;
- Reasonable level of accessibility.

Weaknesses

In relation to provision of entertainment the library has the following weaknesses:

- Low awareness of what the library holds;
- A desire for immediate access to material;
- Youth perception that the library is not relevant to them;
- Opening hours are limited in comparison to other entertainment providers.

Opportunities

The library has the following opportunities in relation to the provision of entertainment:

- Raise youth awareness of relevance of the library to their needs;
- Raise youth awareness of range of collections available in the library;
- Expand/enhance the existing collections that appeal to youth.

Threats

In competing for the youth entertainment market the library faces the following threats:

- Lack of funding to expand collections/services;
- Even more forms of entertainment coming onto the market;
- The growth of provision of leisure items directly to end user (e.g. direct downloading of music/books).

SWOT Analysis of Place of Relaxation

Strengths

When promoting the library as a place of relaxation the library has the following strengths:

- Free access;
- Reasonable accessibility;
- Good levels of comfort;
- Potential to be an obvious central meeting place that would meet with parental approval;
- Freedom from parental interference;
- A less authoritarian/unwelcoming environment.

Weaknesses

In relation to provision of a place of relaxation the library has the following weaknesses:

- Low awareness of suitability of the library for a meeting place;
- Limited space within the library to develop a comfort area for youth;
- Perception that it is an institution rather than a welcoming place to meet;
- Opening hours are limited compared to other meeting venues.

Opportunities

The library has the following opportunities in relation to the providing a place of relaxation:

- Raise youth awareness of relevance of the library to their needs. Emphasis in particular freedom of access and welcoming nature of the library;
- Develop a space for youth, within the library area available;
- Change youth perception of the library;
- Investigate longer opening hours.

Threats

In competing in this market the library faces the following threat:

- Staff and the public may resist encouraging youth to use the library.

7. OBJECTIVES

The library is seeking to raise its profile in the youth community and enhance its relevance and appeal to this group.

Objectives

1. Establish and develop communication channels into the youth community.

The library will continue to develop the role of the Youth Advisory Committee to incorporate stock selection, as well as to continue to offer advice on the creation of a youth space. This will occur by August 2002.

The library will approach the Forster High School to determine the best mechanisms to promote its service to youth. This will be done by September 2002.

That contact will be maintained with Homebase Youth Centre to ensure appropriate feedback on the development of the service is obtained.

Conduct an activity in the library, along the lines of a “*Pizza and Pages*” event, in which youth can visit the library after hours. To be done as a trial by December 2002.

Contact Bulahdelah Central School and inform them of the branch network and the ability to lodge requests for information online. This is to be done after the online reference service is established. To occur by August 2003.

Contact the Great Lakes TAFE to determine if a cooperative means to promote both services is feasible. To occur by December 2002.

Promote the newly constructed library at Tea Gardens to the community in that area. This can occur only after the building has been constructed. To occur September 2003.

Investigate producing a promotional postcard to be made available at youth gathering points (e.g. Music shops). This investigation to be completed by December 2002, with funding to be sought, if necessary, by June 2003.

2. Develop a youth space in the library and promote as a place of relaxation.

The library has identified a small area in the library that can be developed as a youth space. Furniture and equipment identified by the Youth Advisory Committee, Homebase Youth and any other youth in the community will be purchased, if feasible. Provision has been made in the 2002/2003 budget to begin undertaking this. Such provision will be maintained in future budgets, wherever feasible.

Promote the library as an area of relaxation through the communications channels identified above.

3. *Shape the library collection and service to better meet youth needs.*

Investigate purchasing the HSC Infocus service. To be done by October 2002.

Establish a fund for youth to make suggestions for purchase out of. Use the “*Pizza and Pages*” concept to allow selection to occur at a specific event.

Make provision in the 2003/2004 budget for additional “alternative” music CDs to be purchased via a standing order arrangement.

Expand the youth magazine collection. There are currently 18 titles directly associated with youth interests. Seek to expand this collection to 25 titles by June 2003.

Expand the Playstation games collection. The library currently holds 86 titles. Seek to expand this to 120 titles by June 2003.

Establish a Playstation 2 collection. This to be done, but with a limited range of titles, by December 2002.

4. *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. PLAN FOR MARKETING LIBRARY SERVICES TO YOUTH

Market Share Objectives

Currently youth membership of the library service is strong, with approximately 90% of residents in the 15-19 age range holding membership. It is unrealistic to expect higher levels of membership than this. For this reason a market share objective in relation to membership is not appropriate.

It is appropriate, however, to consider raising lending rates of various collections, as a form of market share. The Table 4 shows current lending rate of the young adult collection and an objective for the year 2003. The objective has been kept to a reasonable level (around a 30% increase), reflecting the increasingly competitive leisure market.

Table 4: Loans per item for young adult for 2001 and a target for 2003

	2001	2003
Young adult collection loans per item per annum	3.48	4.5

Review of the target objective would occur at the end of 2003.

In relation to leisure materials the library has already identified the more popular collections with youth. The library will endeavour to expand these collections as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Popular youth collections. Current levels and projections for 2003

	2001	2003
Playstation	86	120
Playstation 2	-	30
CDs - Alternative	-	30
Magazines (titles only – not individual items)	18	25

Positioning

The intention is to shift the perception of the library service by youth away from a potentially irrelevant institution to a focal point for youth to access the latest information and leisure material in a comfortable environment that offers both assistance and access to online technology.

This will be done through a range of mechanisms. First, a youth area will be established to provide a comfort zone. Efforts will then be made to promote the library through the youth community, through identified communications channels and promotional events. In addition to this a means will be developed and implemented whereby youth provide input into the development of the service and the collection. Already identified services such as the HSC Infocus collection will be purchased. In relation to leisure items the library will continue to develop popular collection to youth (e.g. magazines, CDs,

Playstation games). Finally greater online access to the collection and reference service will be developed.

Marketing Information Systems

Usage of the youth collection will be monitored to determine if patronage has increased.

Youth membership will also be monitored.

Overall usage of the collection, the Internet and the reference service will be analysed though it must be recognized that many factors other than youth patronage will affect these figures.

Comments on changes to the youth area will be monitored through the *Suggestion Board*.

Distribution Channels

In general, it can be expected that youth will contact the library directly, particularly if the concept of a place of relaxation proves successful. The library will continue to support phone contact also.

In the longer term the library would look to providing reference assistance via the Internet.

In relation to face-to-face contact the library will continue to develop links such as the Youth Advisory Committee and Homebase to ensure the greatest awareness of the service through the youth community.

9. PROMOTION

Media Activities

The traditional media for promotion (e.g. newspapers, talk-back radio) are not likely to reach many of the youth community. The major focus will be on word-of-mouth and personal contact. However, all avenues will be pursued as given below.

Personal Contact: The service will be promoted through the Youth Advisory Committee and Homebase Youth. In addition, an approach will be made to the Forster High School to establish further links if possible.

Press Releases: The library has strong links to the local radio and newspapers. In future articles the library will increase its promotion of youth services.

The Northeast Zone of the Country Public Libraries Association has produced a television advertisement aimed at youth.

Newsletters: The library will promote itself to youth through its own newsletter and the Forster High School newsletter.

Specific Events: The library will look to hold a “*Pizza and Pages*” promotion during 2002. If this is successful further events could follow.

Production of a postcard: The library will investigate producing a postcard to promote the library to youth. This postcard would be available at key youth gathering points.

Stakeholders

Youth Advisory Committee: This Committee will be maintained for as long as participants perceive it serves and effective role. Much has been done to ensure members feel they are contributing to the development of the service as well as acting as an important conduit into the youth community. This Committee is likely to meet in the library on a monthly basis.

Homebase Youth Centre: Initial contact was made by the library to obtain feedback. Further contact can be made in a similar fashion to inform Homebase Youth of progress and to obtain further feedback.

Forster High School – Librarian: No direct contact has been made with the Librarian at Forster High School yet. The Great Lakes Library Service and Forster high School Library have had cordial relations for some time and it should not be difficult to make an appointment. Following on from this would come other meetings, either directly with youth or in whatever forum seems most suitable.

Great Lakes TAFE: This may act as a conduit into the youth community. Direct contact should be made with the Tuncurry campus of TAFE to determine if a cooperative means to promote both services is feasible.

Communication to Staff

It is essential that staff support the promotion of youth services. This support will come by keeping them advised of plans and to seek input into the process. Such input will occur through normal staff meetings and direct personal contact.

In particular, it will be necessary to ensure that staff are accepting of youth rather than portraying an authoritarian establishment.

Marketing Resources

The library does have at its disposal bookmarks promoting the library. These are not seen as being particularly relevant to youth. In preference the library will investigate producing postcards that promote the library.

The library has good display space that can also be used to promote the service.

10. FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

Expenses

Redesign of Youth Area: Up to \$1,000 per year spent on furniture, posters etc. for the youth area.

Youth Collection: Up to \$1,000 per annum spent by youth on the youth collection.

Expansion of Magazine Titles: Increase of approximately \$450 per annum.

Development of “Alternative” Music Collection: Once established, approximately \$1,800 per annum.

Expansion of Playstation Collection: Based on 30 new titles per annum, an annual cost of approximately \$1,200.

Establishment of a Playstation 2 Collection: Based on 30 new titles per annum, an annual cost of approximately \$1,500.

Postcards: If grant funding is obtained the library would produce postcards aimed at the youth market.

Potential Income

Grant Funding for Postcards: If the library were to produce postcards it would investigate this through a grant-funding process. This could be expected to cost in the vicinity of \$4,000.

Small Grant Funding: The Library Council of NSW provides \$1,300 worth of grant funding each year for small collections. This funding could be put towards either the Playstation or Playstation 2 collection.

Youth Area: The current library budget has provision for funding to allow a gradual upgrade of the youth area.

Youth Collection: Provision has been made in the stock suggestion funding for youth items to be purchased.

Magazine Titles: Provision has been made in the library budget to purchase further youth-oriented titles.

Additional Funding Needs

To pursue all programmes the library would require an additional level of funding in the vicinity of \$7,000 per annum. At this stage, this has not been funded in the current budget. Therefore the development of the “alternative” music collection will be held in abeyance until funding can be obtained. Similarly, the full expansion of the Playstation and Playstation 2 collections will be held to a financial ceiling of \$1,300 until further

funding is sourced. This would be pursued in the 2003/2004 budgetary cycle. Funding for the production of postcards (approximately \$4,000) will be the subject of a grant funding application. There is no unfunded cost impact on the 2002/2003 budget.