

eSmart Libraries Evaluation Summary Report: Preliminary Findings

PREPARED FOR THE ALANNAH AND MADELINE
FOUNDATION

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YOUNGANDWELL
Cooperative Research Centre

A partnership between

The Alannah
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eSMART LIBRARIES EVALUATION SUMMARY REPORT: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Prepared for The Alannah and Madeline Foundation

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Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre

The Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre is an Australian-based, international research centre that unites young people with researchers, practitioners, innovators and policy-makers from over 70 partner organisations. Together, we explore the role of technology in young people's lives, and how it can be used to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 12 to 25. The Young and Well CRC is established under the Australian Government's Cooperative Research Centres Program.

youngandwellcrc.org.au

The Alannah and Madeline Foundation

The Alannah and Madeline Foundation is a national charity which aims to keep children safe from violence. The Foundation was established in memory of Alannah and Madeline Mikac, aged 6 and 3, who, with their mother and 32 others were killed at Port Arthur, Tasmania on 28 April 1996. The Foundation cares for children who experience or witness serious violence and develops programs designed to help prevent violence in the lives of children. The Foundation's National Centre Against Bullying (NCAB) is a peak body comprised of experts in the area of bullying and cyberbullying.

amf.org.au

Introduction

BACKGROUND

eSmart Libraries is a behaviour-change initiative developed by The Alannah and Madeline Foundation in partnership with the Telstra Foundation, collaborating with Australia's Library Network to connect libraries and their users with tools and resources to improve cybersafety, wellbeing and facilitate digital inclusion in the community.

Being an eSmart Library means staff and patrons know how to guard against security and privacy risks online, download content in a legal and ethical way, research and reference information, as well as manage reputation and relationships in cyberspace. eSmart helps to embed a culture of positive technology use, create policies and procedures, gain access to evidence-informed resources and track progress in becoming eSmart.

The Alannah and Madeline Foundation engaged the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre (Young and Well CRC) to undertake an evaluation of the eSmart Libraries initiative between August 2014 and May 2017.

The evaluation has two waves of data collection:

- Wave One (March – July 2015); and
- Wave Two (March – June 2016).

This summary report presents the key findings of the first wave of data collection of the eSmart Libraries evaluation.

The Wave One data collection aimed to gather evidence on four key areas:

- Area 1: Impact;
- Area 2: Implementation;
- Area 3: Partner Objectives; and
- Area 4: Perceptions of the program to its stakeholders including library services and local government representatives.

The summary report provides useful and timely insights into the success factors and barriers to implementation of the eSmart Libraries framework for library services.

EVALUATION DESIGN

The methodology developed for the eSmart Libraries evaluation is grounded in a mixed method approach. It incorporates qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection to ensure an informative evaluation that provides timely and iterative feedback, to assist in the ongoing development of the eSmart Libraries framework.

The Wave One evaluation investigated how the eSmart Libraries framework functions in real-world library settings and assesses potential contextual factors that contribute to success and what inhibits implementation in different library service settings in rural, regional and metropolitan Australia.

Participating library services were based in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia.

Library services were in one of three stages of their implementation of the eSmart Libraries framework:

Planning: focuses on establishing mechanisms within the service to implement the eSmart Libraries framework, reviewing and identifying gaps in policies and procedures and assessing the knowledge and skills of staff and library users.

Implementing: focuses on renewing or creating all relevant policies and procedures, delivering training and developing opportunities for staff, library users and the broader community to learn and engage with cybersafety and digital literacy. At the end of this stage, a library is deemed to be eSmart.

Sustaining: focuses on providing actions to retain eSmart status, evaluating impact, consistently reviewing library practices and sharing success.

Importantly, only two of the seven library services were in the sustaining stage of the framework, having reached it in the five months before the research team undertook data collection. The other five library services were in planning and implementing phases. Some sites experienced significant delays in rolling out the framework due to local government restructures or other competing priorities, which are discussed throughout this report.

Wave One of the evaluation collected data from the following participant groups:

Participant group	Survey	Focus Group	Interview
Library Managers	✓		✓
Library staff	✓	✓	
Library eSmart Coordinators	✓		✓
Library users - seniors aged 60 plus	✓	✓	✓
Library users - adults aged 25 to 59	✓	✓	✓
Library users - young people aged 16 to 25	✓	✓	✓
Library users - young people aged 10 to 15 years	✓	✓	✓
Local government representatives			✓
The Alannah and Madeline Foundation's eSmart Libraries Team			✓

Participants

There were over 500 participants across the seven library service sites in the Wave One data collection phase:

- 359 library users participated in the focus groups, interviews and the online survey;
- Seven Library Managers and seven eSmart Coordinators were surveyed and interviewed;
- 138 library staff participated in surveys and focus groups; and
- Five local government representatives participated in interviews.

CONTEXT

A contextual review was also completed as part of the Wave One evaluation report. The review highlighted the social, political and technological influences library services are currently facing across Australia.

Influences included:

- The way community members are engaging with libraries as social hubs, engaging in events, activities, arts spaces and maker spaces;
- The impact of library funding, local government reform and restructures; and
- The influence of technology.

Perhaps the largest change in libraries is due to the internet and the uptake of new digital technologies. Public libraries tend to be early adopters of new technologies, and the current trend is for the provision of creative and collaborative resources and spaces such as hacker-spaces and maker-spaces, 3D printing and robotics kits. Anecdotally, with the roll out of the NBN certain areas received a supply of digital resources such as increased accessibility, iPads, tech trainers and spaces designed for digital learning. These are excellent trends in a nation with a reputation for early technology uptake, however, they have implications for future resourcing, requiring more equipment, better spaces and continual refreshment of staff skills when many public libraries are already experiencing budgetary pressures.

The eSmart Libraries framework aims to support library services in their uptake of digital technology, providing a framework to embed best practice policy and procedures and innovative and sustainable approaches to technology use by staff and library users.

Key Findings

AREA 1: IMPACT



Impact: Library management and staff

“The process of working towards becoming an accredited eSmart Library is increasing our knowledge and attitudes...”

– Library Manager, regional library service

There were many examples where the participating libraries are successfully promoting and supporting library staff members and users’ safe, smart and responsible behaviour online – although only two of the seven had completed the eSmart accreditation.

100% of libraries described changes they had implemented or were seeking to implement to their policies, procedures and practices to ensure online safety.

- 57% of managers believe that implementing eSmart Libraries had changed library practices.
- 77% of staff reported an improvement in policies and procedures for managing internet use in the library.

Where the eSmart Libraries framework has been implemented and/or library service has engaged with their staff in the initiative there is evidence of increased knowledge and corresponding policy and procedure changes.

Of the staff who responded regarding benefits to implementing eSmart Libraries framework:

90% reported improved knowledge in how to be safe, smart and responsible online

- 66% of library managers believed implementing eSmart Libraries had changed staff knowledge and attitudes to online behaviour.



Impact: Library users

Libraries are popularly regarded as safe places and are a refuge for many different members of the community.

Library users discussed why they frequent the library:

- A place to feel welcome;
- When escaping family upset;
- As a lifeline after a partner died;
- A place to go after retirement; and
- A place to study and undertake research.

Understanding the expectations library users have of libraries is important in ensuring that access to online spaces are safe and supported.

Seeking support in the library

83% said they would ask library staff for assistance if they came across something unsafe online.

- 45% of library users reported feeling more supported in their library to manage online risks in the last year.

Learning about being smart, safe and responsible online

Preliminary findings suggest that eSmart Libraries can play a key role in supporting library users to develop their digital capacities to stay safe online.

- Users of the two eSmart accredited libraries reported they had learnt from their library to be smart, safe and responsible online (13% and 50% of respondents respectively).

Promotion of online safety

- 41% of library users reported seeing advertising material for cybersafety training in their library.
- 30% had seen posters/media about being eSmart.

This suggests that eSmart Libraries is successfully promoting available support amongst library communities, however, there is room to raise the profile of such support further, particularly when library staff members are faced with a growing need to provide technology based assistance to library users.

Integrating cybersafety awareness into libraries

Library services are working in busy environments, often facing local government restructures, staffing losses and budget constraints.

With the increased availability of technology-based services, libraries are responding to a growing need to provide support to library users with limited digital literacy skills.

Competing issues impact on the roll out of eSmart Libraries, for even when there is willingness within the service, time, resource and organisational pressures can stall implementation.

Library staff and management highlighted the following challenges when implementing cybersafety and wellbeing initiatives associated with the rollout of the eSmart Libraries framework:

Increasing public digital knowledge and awareness

Library staff and management reported that user apathy and disinterest could make it difficult to convey messages regarding how to be safe, smart and responsible online.

However, staff also conveyed concerns that some library users' inexperience online leads to exposure to security risks.

Examples of risks faced by vulnerable library users included:

- Potential security breaches, such as identity theft; and
- Exposure to scams and pornography.

Some services had been able to link in with digital literacy programs and presenters. Some services have connected with eSmart Schools and strengthen the eSmart message.

Library managers spoke of the need for a broader eSmart media campaign on cybersafety to complement the work they are doing in the libraries, such as the Slip, Slop, Slap campaign messaging in the 1980's and 90's.

Staff digital literacy and cybersafety knowledge

Staff and management spoke of the importance of ensuring that staff are:

- Digitally literate;
- Able to manage their safe online participation; and
- Trained in how to approach and support library users who experience risks online.

Staff spoke of the increasing number of library users requiring support with technology and the expectation that library staff will be able to assist. Also highlighted was the importance for ongoing or refresher training for staff.

Strategies already in place within library services included:

- Internal cybersafety training focused on staff;
- Circulation of stay smart online security alert emails; and
- Staff assisting each other with library user questions and concerns.

Monitoring computers and Wi-Fi use

With the introduction of Wi-Fi into libraries and the number of users requiring computer access increasing, library staff and management discussed their responsibility to monitor internet use.

Some services are utilising programs that alert them if a customer is looking at websites that contravene their internet-use policy, and have procedures in place to respond to this breach. Other services struggle to supervise computer use due to placement of computers in the library, lack of step-through or monitoring software, unsupervised children, as well as time pressures.

Organisational Approach

Local governments are predominantly responsible for the funding of public libraries (approximately 80%, with 20% coming from the State libraries and governments). If operational issues impact local government and subsequent library plans, then priorities, such as digital literacy and life-long learning will be negatively affected. Managers reported organisational challenges such as restructures, staff changes, inadequate technology and unclear policies. Within the four case study sites whose implementation had stalled, three were dealing with local government restructures, three had been struggling to advocate for policy changes, and two reported limited leadership support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Challenge: Staff digital literacy and cybersafety knowledge

Ensuring library staff skills and knowledge in online safety and the use of technology is continually prioritised, encouraged, developed and supported by governing bodies.

Opportunity for The Alannah and Madeline Foundation to work with local government and the Library Network:

- Work with local government, library services and State/Territory Associations to prioritise and develop better access to training packages that eSmart Coordinators can deliver to staff (and adapt where necessary).
- Provide professional development opportunities for library management and staff and opportunities for staff to learn from each other, which may involve establishing peer mentoring at a local and state level or providing professional development days where the library is closed
- Provide libraries with a list of credible and affordable presenters (from across Australia) on different cybersafety and digital literacy topics.

Challenge: Increasing public awareness

Evidence shows that the eSmart Libraries' brand and purpose is relatively unknown by most library users.

Opportunity for The Alannah and Madeline Foundation:

- Explore brand awareness opportunities both within library services and at a broader community level.

AREA 2: IMPLEMENTATION

Library Managers and staff reported that all the domains in the eSmart Libraries framework are important to effect library culture and behaviour change. The framework is perceived as comprehensive, well researched and credible.

eSmart Coordinators were apprehensive at first viewing and required time to relate the framework to their current work. eSmart Coordinators who built momentum and progressed successfully through the framework did so by applying the framework to their current work, identifying actions they had already achieved, and focusing on those that they were yet to complete.

An eSmart Coordinator who has the interest, authority and communication skills to drive the implementation is essential in ensuring the successful rollout of the framework.

The skills identified by library staff and management as essential to the eSmart Coordinator's success include:

- Digitally literate and knowledgeable about cybersafety issues;
- Project management and research skills;
- Good communication and networking skills;
- Enthusiasm/passion/confidence;
- Organisational and procedural skills and knowledge;
- Knowledge of the whole initiative and eSmart principles and processes; and
- Authority to implement changes to policy or procedures.

Where taken up by the library services, other elements of the initiative such as the help desk, resources, training, and communication with The Alannah and Madeline Foundation were well received and considered useful.



Successes implementing eSmart Libraries

Key success factors in implementing the domains have included:

- Integrating the framework into daily activities and tasks;
- Assigning the eSmart Coordinator role to a team leader or library manager;
- Being flexible when implementing the framework; and
- Utilising community relationships and networks.

Challenges implementing eSmart Libraries

Some of the key challenges for library staff and management in implementing the eSmart Libraries framework have included:

- Limited time allocation by management;
- Insufficient staff resources to assist with library change;
- Low staff confidence in responding to technology-based questions or a cybersafety incident;
- Limitations to available software and hardware;
- Limitations regarding IT department assistance;
- Impact of local government restructures; and a
- Lack of authority or understanding of the authorising environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Challenge: competing priorities

Libraries are faced with multiple and competing priorities which can impact on their capacity to prioritise implementing the eSmart Libraries framework.

Opportunity for The Alannah and Madeline Foundation to work with the Australian Library Network:

- Work with libraries to establish how implementing the eSmart Libraries framework can dovetail with other priorities/existing commitments.
- Work with the eSmart Libraries reference group to advocate and highlight the role of libraries in supporting access to government services.
- Work with ALIA, APLA, PLA to advocate to state and federal government regarding the essential services libraries provide and the importance for staff to be skilled and supported to provide digital literacy services.

Challenge: eSmart Libraries framework

The comprehensive nature of the eSmart Libraries framework can be overwhelming at first glance, as it is multi-layered and there is an expectation of behavior change, which takes more than 12 months to embed.

Some services struggle with this, particularly when faced with competing priorities and an eSmart Coordinator who may have limited project management experience or authority.

Opportunity for The Alannah and Madeline Foundation:

- Undertake further research into the online user experience of the eSmart Libraries system tool to ensure simplicity and action-focused response to the tool.

Challenge: eSmart Coordinator role

The implementation of eSmart Libraries relies on the Libraries eSmart Coordinator's interest, capacity and authority to undertake the eSmart Libraries framework as a library service priority.

Opportunity for The Alannah and Madeline Foundation:

- Provide eSmart Coordinators with one on one support to troubleshoot implementation.

- Provide a list of eSmart Library Coordinators (ambassadors), at a State level to encourage peer-to-peer learning.

AREA 3: PARTNER & INDUSTRY OBJECTIVES

The evaluation has explored the extent to which eSmart Libraries is meeting the partner objectives of supporting digital inclusion (Telstra Foundation) and reaching children in a community setting and reducing incidents of cyberbullying (The Alannah and Madeline Foundation).



Digital inclusion

“Libraries are one of the last places that people can actually come and we will try to give people some help in that area [digital literacy], because the expectations that you will have internet access... there is still quite a big barrier between some people... It presents challenges and opportunities... in terms of what we might do”
 – Library staff member, rural library service

Libraries provide access and support to community members who have limited access to technology; this may be due to socio-economic status, age and/or limited connectivity in rural communities.

The majority of library staff (84%) described the range of ways they supported library users to access the internet. These included:

- Offering one-on-one support;
- Offering free public access to computers and the internet;
- Assisting with internet navigation and search engines;
- Providing practical help (guidance regarding Wi-Fi use, printing support, eBooks); and
- Offering digital literacy training.

In particular, staff reported providing one-on-one support for library users to access online government (for example My Gov) and community services such as registering for working with children checks, passport applications, online shopping, rental applications and job searching. Library staff and management reported how they regularly encounter library users who do not have the necessary support at home (and yet are required) to access services that traditionally could be accessed in person or via a paper-based format. This underlines the importance of emphasising users' digital literacy education within the process of implementing the eSmart Libraries framework.

Library Managers and staff spoke of how providing free and accessible technology services to their community encourages:

- Diversity of library users;
- Access to a broad range of online resources (eBooks, audio, magazines, databases);
- Exposure to new technologies (3D printers); and
- A safe place to use and experience technology and stay connected.

Reaching young people

With the increase of technology use in libraries (such as free Wi-Fi), staff spoke of seeing more young people coming into their services – in particular after school hours – to study and play. Young people spoke of the library as a safe place to escape to when things aren't going well at home.

“Every time when I fight with my parents I vacate to the library, it's a place where I can chillax [sic], relax, (and) cool down”

– Young person, regional library service

Young people did not tend to attribute their cybersafety knowledge to eSmart learning modules, rather to school, experience, family and media.

100% of surveyed parents from the two eSmart accredited libraries thought that the library was a safe place for young people to go online.

More than one quarter of surveyed parents (27%) had seen advertising for cybersafety training in their library for children or young people. 44% of parents surveyed believe their children are confident to stay safe online, and this result is consistent across the seven libraries. More than half of the parents also believe their children know how to report/ act when they come across something unsafe online.

Parents believe their children learnt about cybersafety mainly from:

- 53% themselves
- 32% school
- 5% friends
- 5% library.

Has eSmart Libraries made some difference to cybersafety and cyberbullying?

eSmart Libraries managers and staff reported that the initiative was making some difference to cybersafety and cyberbullying:

- 67% of managers believe it has made some difference
- 33% were undecided.
- 47% of staff believe it has made some or significant difference
- 45% of staff were unsure.

Working with industry partners

An important partner in the delivery of the eSmart Libraries initiative is Australia's Library Network, who has supported the eSmart Libraries initiative by providing experts on the eSmart Libraries Reference Group.

At a National level, the 2015-2018 ALIA Australian Public Alliance National Strategy and Action Plan builds on the national vision and framework for Australian public libraries 2010-2015. eSmart Libraries features in the plan to support the second strategic priority: providing safe and equitable access to information, resources and e-government.

Each State and Territory has its own Library Association to support the training needs of the local public libraries and provide a strong lobbying voice on their behalf. The Association sets and supports the agenda for public libraries. There is an opportunity to follow the Public Libraries Victoria Network, who have seen the value of eSmart Libraries to its members and given its support. This is shown in the progressive uptake of eSmart Libraries in the case studies, who have become eSmart.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Challenge: library as a safe place

Ensuring that the feeling and reality of 'safety' and libraries as safe places encompasses safety online.

Opportunity for The Alannah and Madeline Foundation:

- Market to library services the benefits of becoming an eSmart Library for staff and users.
- Develop a media strategy that promotes the benefits of accessing an eSmart Library service.
- Work with library services to ensure that they are aware of the assumptions and expectations of library users when using technology in the library.

AREA 4: PERCEPTIONS

“We are early adopters of technology, so we are always ahead of the game. People just didn’t realise, they just thought we wear buns”

– Staff member, rural library service

Benefits of technology use in the library

Library Managers, staff and users spoke of the benefits of technology use in the library, including how it:

- Increases patronage;
- Supports social connection;
- Provides access to community and government online services; and
- Increases the diversity of library users.

Value of eSmart Libraries

eSmart Coordinators reported that eSmart Libraries is a timely and worthwhile initiative that responds to a need to support library users’ safe online participation.

Managers spoke of the eSmart Libraries framework being a great catalyst for change and a worthwhile program.

66% of library managers would recommend eSmart Libraries

75% of library staff would recommend eSmart Libraries

“I would have thought, quite a strong public acceptance or perception that we would be operating in a safe environment and that if a parent knew that their child was going to the library, that they would be not only safe in the library, but safe using whatever resources are in the library as well”

– Local government public servant, rural library service

Library Associations, national bodies and Local Government support the up skilling of public library staff and the overwhelming evidence in this report suggested staff are the first to benefit from the implementation of eSmart Libraries.

CONCLUSION

This summary report of Wave 1 data provides insights into what assists libraries to implement the eSmart Libraries framework as well the contextual, social and political challenges faced by library services that have stalled with their implementation.

Overall, where the eSmart Library framework has been implemented or taken up by library staff it has had a positive impact on the staff's knowledge and attitudes towards online safety.

Library management and staff reported great value in the eSmart Libraries initiative and quoted concrete examples of how their policies, procedures and practices had changed for the better.

The findings suggest that there are also opportunities to further build the capacity of the library sector to implement the framework so that libraries move beyond policies and processes towards an emphasis on the digital literacy of staff and users.