

An exploration of public libraries as dementia friendly places

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Abstract

Dementia can be a lonely, stigmatising and isolating illness. People living with dementia and their carers want to remain connected with their local communities and feel safe, welcome and valued. A growing community awareness of dementia has borne the concept of dementia friendliness and dementia friendly communities. Core features of dementia friendly communities are supportive, inclusive, welcoming and safe environments. Public libraries are widely valued as safe, accessible and welcoming community assets and in this sense are well placed to be part of dementia friendly communities. This study has sought to understand how public libraries contribute to Australian dementia friendly communities. A mixed methods approach with a sequential exploratory design was employed to answer two distinct questions: firstly, how are individual needs of patrons living with dementia and their carers being met; and second, is there alignment between dementia friendly public libraries and the ALIA Framework for Australian Public Libraries. From a review of international and Australian literature, features of dementia friendly public libraries were codified along two facets—services and enabling environments.

This study found that dementia friendly public libraries offered a suite of services and enabling environments that benefit people living with dementia and their carers. Collectively, they enable social capital and contribute to personal development and wellbeing, informed and connected citizens, and ultimately stronger more inclusive

communities—achieving five of the six ALIA outcome measures. Public libraries located in dementia friendly communities provided similar benefits, although some inconsistencies were evident with a shift to age-friendliness. Dementia friendliness is a reflective movement and public libraries in dementia friendly communities must continue to respond to the needs of that community. There was an absence of strategic planning by the public libraries assessed to provide for such need, and thus targeted, collaborative planning could be considered to enhance dementia friendliness and inclusivity.

Introduction

This study has emerged from a personal connection to a person living with dementia, and observing the challenges they and their partner have faced since diagnosis in continuing to live their socially active lives. While researching to understand the specific diagnosis, many dementia awareness and support initiatives from Australia and overseas were revealed, including the idea that people and places could be 'dementia friendly'. Put simply, this concept relates to supporting people living with dementia through improved attitudes and behaviours towards them, inclusive and meaningful social opportunities, and making the built environments they encounter accessible (Dementia Australia, 2019).

Public libraries are widely regarded as safe and friendly places for people to gather, socialise and access information (I & J Management Services, 2016; Public Libraries Victoria, 2020) and thus would appear to naturally fit as dementia friendly places. However, after some preliminary probing—through web browsing—of the idea that public libraries could be dementia friendly, there were surprisingly few Australian-based examples. This project explores if and how Australian public libraries are dementia friendly.

Dementia, its prevalence in Australia, and challenges for those living with it

Dementia is not one specific disease, rather a "collection of symptoms that are caused by disorders affecting the brain" (Dementia Australia, 2017, p. 1). Dementia is debilitating and leads to gradual memory loss and impairment of other cognitive functions, such as the ability to communicate and pay attention, and can also affect behaviour, mobility and personality (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019, para. 1). Dementia can interfere with a person's ability to perform everyday tasks, their visual perception and spatial awareness, and their normal social and working life (Dementia Australia, 2017, p. 1). Alzheimer's disease, Vascular dementia, Dementia with Lewy bodies, and Frontotemporal dementia are reportedly the most common forms of dementia, although it is possible to have more than one type of dementia at the same time (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2012, p. 2; Dementia Australia, 2017, pp. 1-2).

Dementia Australia (2020, para. 3) estimated that in 2020, about 459,000 Australians live with one or more forms of dementia. Although most Australians diagnosed with dementia are aged over 65 years it is not an inevitable part of growing older and people younger than 65 can be affected by the illness (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019, para. 4; Dementia Australia, 2017, p. 1). The prevalence of dementia in Indigenous Australians is about three times higher than the non-Indigenous population, and people are often younger when diagnosed (Flicker & Holdsworth, 2014, p. 15).

Health, lifestyle and familial risk factors associated with dementia, the burden of the disease on the health system, and positive ageing initiatives have been focal points for dementia research and policy in Australia for the past two decades (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2000, 2012; Kendig & Browning, 2016; Kendig et al., 2017; Pakulski, 2016; Piggott, 2016; Productivity Commission, 2013). The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2012) described national-level responses that have been the genesis of early intervention and support programs currently being implemented. These have focused on independence, community awareness, social engagement and improved quality of life for people living with dementia and their carers.

Quality of life, good physical and mental health, and connections with people and communities are intertwined, and these can be greatly affected by a progressive illness such as dementia. According to Dementia Australia (2019, p. 2), people living with dementia find the "lack of awareness of dementia in the community, and becoming socially isolated" particularly challenging to daily life. The stigma attached to dementia is a major factor in loneliness experienced by people living with dementia, their families and carers (Dementia Australia, 2014; Nay et al., 2015). This echoes the personal case reflected on earlier, where limited social contact was made while becoming comfortable with the diagnosis and the symptoms that were becoming more apparent and were sometimes confronting to others.

Older Australians want to 'age in place', living in their own homes and being a part of their community for as long as they are able to do so (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2013; Roy Morgan, 2020). Aging in place and the prevalence of dementia in older Australians have in part prompted a shift in public policy and community endeavour towards 'age friendly' and 'dementia friendly' initiatives. Age friendly and dementia friendly communities, dementia awareness and dementia enabling environments have emerged over the past decade as global initiatives with grass-roots action (Alzheimer's Australia WA, n.d.; Alzheimer's Disease International, n.d.; Alzheimer's WA, n.d.-c; World Health Organization, n.d.). However, although complimentary, one initiative may overlook the specific needs of the other (Turner & Morken, 2016), particularly as not all people living with dementia are in older age groups.

Being dementia friendly is difficult to define in itself, but instead is understood in the context of a dementia friendly business, organisation or community that is aware how physical and social environments affect the ability of people living with dementia to remain engaged and active and addresses barriers to this. Dementia friendly initiatives are informed by people living with dementia, their families and carers. They contribute to positive ageing, reduce loneliness, and improve quality of life. Alzheimer's Disease International (n.d.) emphasise that a holistic approach is required to support quality of life, and this includes addressing potential physical barriers to inclusivity and welcoming community-based facilities and services.

Shifting roles of public libraries and measuring their value

Public libraries are not just about reading and free computer access (Australian Library and Information Association & National and State Libraries Australasia, 2018; Public Libraries Victoria, 2020). Whilst information sharing remains a fundamental role, they are important places for people to gather, relax and connect with each other and their community. In Australia, membership of public libraries is free, and they provide unfettered access to information and ideas, supporting “the information, education, cultural and recreational needs of local communities” (Quinn & McCallum, 2012, p. 5). Much has been written over the past two decades about the role of public libraries and in particular their intrinsic value to community wellbeing and positive contribution to social capital (Cox, 2000; Ferguson, 2012; Stenstrom et al., 2019; Williamson et al., 2010).

Ferguson (2012) found that specific targeted action to improve accessibility to new user groups, in consultation with those groups, would augment the role of public libraries as a community hub. Australian public libraries have in fact recognised the need to develop services that will meet the needs of an ageing community as well as people living with dementia and their families and carers (City of Mandurah, 2019; Harris, 2018; Joseph, 2005, 2009). However, while these and other examples of dementia friendly services are positive and welcomed, taking a holistic approach to dementia friendliness in Australian public libraries is still in its infancy.

Parallel with the shifting role of public libraries is the evolving way in which their performance is measured. While quantitative measures such as patronage and return on investment are necessary, they may fail to adequately measure the intrinsic value to communities described earlier. The Framework for Australian Public Libraries (see Figure 1) includes comprehensive guidelines and a suite of outcome measures—as distinct from measures of output—through which the impact of the potentially diverse spectrum of library activities and services can be better understood (I & J Management Services, 2016, pp. 16, 72). Inclusiveness, understanding, wellbeing and community engagement in provision of services are themes within the Framework

that are of particular relevance to this study as they are actualised in dementia friendliness.

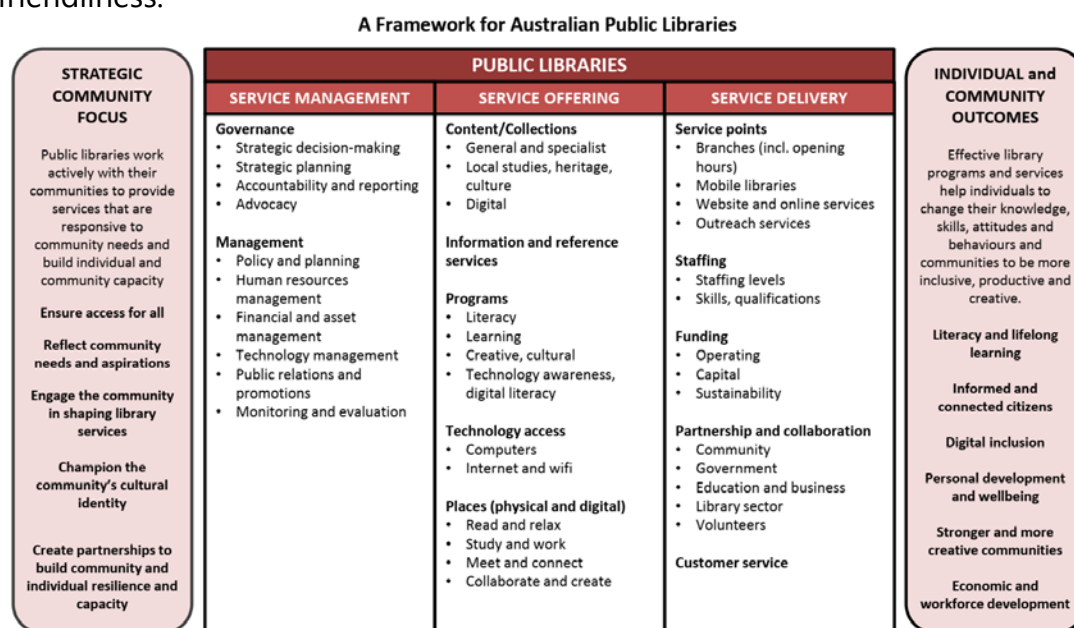


Figure 1 Framework for Australian Public Libraries

Note. From Guidelines Standards and Outcome Measures for Australian Public Libraries, (p. 16), by I & J Management Services (2016), ALIA, https://www.alia.org.au/sites/default/files/documents/advocacy/PLSG_ALIA_2012.pdf. Copyright Australia Library and Information Association.

Dementia advocacy and friendliness in Australia

There are two main organisations that represent people in Australia living with dementia: Dementia Australia and Alzheimer's WA. Dementia Australia is the national peak body representing Australian's living with dementia, their families and their carers (Dementia Australia, n.d.-a). Alzheimer's WA is the other leading voice for people living with dementia, and is particularly focused on Western Australians living with dementia, their families and their carers (Alzheimer's WA, n.d.-a).

Central to the missions of Dementia Australia and Alzheimer's WA are the concepts of being 'dementia aware' or 'dementia friendly', which are fundamental to the establishment and success of a 'dementia friendly community' (Alzheimer's WA, n.d.-a; Dementia Australia, n.d.-a). At its core, being a dementia friend (and therefore dementia aware) is understanding the stigmas and myths that may hinder a person living with dementia from leading a full life, and seeing the person rather than the disease.

A dementia friendly community is defined by Dementia Australia and Alzheimer's WA as "a place where people living with dementia are supported to live a high quality of life with meaning, purpose and value" (Alzheimer's WA, n.d.-c para. 1; Dementia Australia, n.d.-b para. 1). This is consistent with the holistic approach outlined in

international guidance (Alzheimer's Disease International, n.d.; World Health Organization, 2017). Both organisations characterise dementia friendly communities as being unique blends of one or more of the following (Alzheimer's WA, n.d.-c; Dementia Australia, n.d.-b):

- Organisations and businesses providing dementia friendly and accessible services.
- Clubs and groups that are inclusive and welcoming of people living with dementia.
- Opportunities for volunteering or paid employment for people living with dementia.

Inclusivity through community events and activities relating to dementia awareness are considered by Dementia Australia to be additional features present in a dementia friendly community. Whereas Alzheimer's WA introduces the concept of enabling environments as a defining additional feature (Alzheimer's WA, n.d.-b) and those relevant to the physical library space generally relate to accessibility and wayfinding, familiarity and human scale of spaces, risks reduction, appropriate stimulation and supporting engagement.

Objectives

Remaining connected within a safe and familiar community is important to good quality of life for older Australians, many of whom prefer to live in their own homes for as long as possible. To combat isolation and loneliness, community connection is also very important to people living with dementia and their carers, whether they be young or old. Given that public libraries are widely valued as safe and welcoming spaces and places they are in principle a natural fit for dementia friendly communities.

The purpose of this study is to understand the nature and role of public libraries in dementia friendly communities in Australia. An exploratory sequential mixed method research design was used to answer the following research questions:

- In what ways are public libraries in dementia friendly communities serving the needs of persons living with dementia and their carers?
- How does being dementia friendly align with guidelines and outcome measures of the Framework for Australian Public Libraries?

Methods

Study boundaries

For the purposes of this study, public libraries are those which provide a library service to members and are owned, controlled or managed by a single local government authority or collaboratively by a number of such authorities within a regional library corporation or consortia arrangement. This study is focused on public libraries that are:

- Recognised by Dementia Australia as a dementia friendly organisation; or
- Located within a dementia friendly community or organisation recognised by either Dementia Australia or Alzheimer's WA; or

- Connected to a recognised or developing dementia alliance acknowledged by Dementia Australia.

Research setting, design and methods

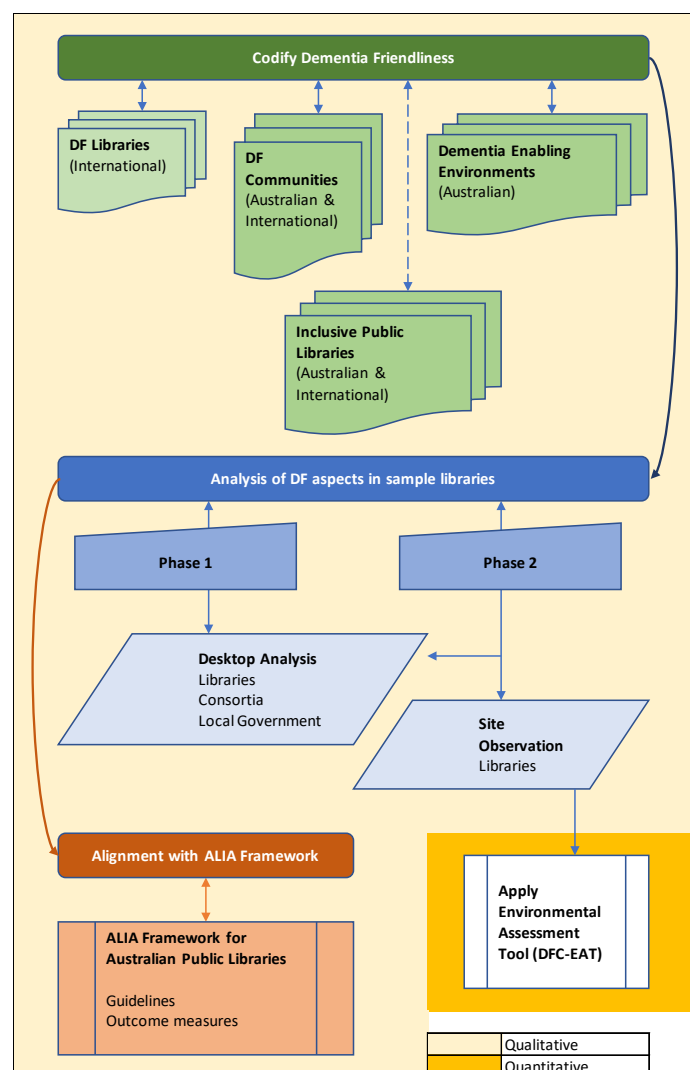
The dementia friendly concept is founded on the lived experiences of people living with dementia, first and foremost, and those persons supporting them, be they family or carers. Their experiences and views are subjective. Similarly, the experiences of people delivering dementia friendly programs, places or spaces would vary according to the circumstances in which they are developed and delivered. This study therefore attempts to capture a number of perspectives, underpinned by an interpretivist theoretical framework (Kankam, 2019).

A mixed methods approach was employed through the study, with a sequential exploratory design comprising qualitative work to inform further quantitative and qualitative research. A simplified representation of the methods used in this study is shown in Figure 2, indicating what elements were in qualitative or quantitative strands. A phased approach was taken in light of the changes to the library landscape arising from the 2020 global COVID-19 pandemic and consequent study limitations. Also, once it became apparent that inclusion of a survey would not be feasible, the content analysis became the primary mode of data capture. A secondary phase was undertaken when Western Australian public libraries began to resume regular library services about three months into this project. While this was somewhat opportunistic, the additional data captured regarding built environments was valuable to address the research question. The following points on methods are noted:

- Codifying service features and enabling environment features was based on Australian and international literature (see Table 1). In the absence of a survey instrument, content analysis of publicly available primary and secondary sources of information was fundamental to this project. An assessment checklist was developed based on codified dementia friendly features and used in both phases to complete the content analysis (see Appendix 2).
- The public libraries selected for analysis in the two primary data capture phases (see Table 2) were identified through a number of steps considering dementia friendly recognition status, library administrative arrangements and geographical location. It is noted that Phase 1 libraries did not include any age-friendly variants. Rationale is outlined in detail in the full study.
- For the quantitative assessment, the 'Dementia Friendly Community - Environmental Assessment Tool' (DFC-EAT) (Fleming & Bennett, 2017) was applied, following guidance provided by Dementia Training Australia (see Appendix 2).
- In order to gauge alignment between dementia friendly guidelines and the Framework for Australian Public Libraries, qualitative analysis was undertaken

to compare the key areas of the Framework and corresponding criteria with the codified dementia friendly features of public libraries.

Figure 2 Methods employed during study



Selected findings

Dementia friendly services and enabling environments

The percentage of libraries assessed in Phases 1 and 2 with confirmed dementia friendly services across the various service categories is shown in Figure 3. Dementia friendly services across all categories were most consistently present in libraries assessed in Phase 1 compared with Phase 2, suggesting that an age-friendly focus does not address need for dementia-friendly services (which was indicated in the literature review). A collection development policy explicitly identifying people living with dementia as a community demographic to consider in defining collection scope was noticeably absent from all libraries. The lack of other dementia related collection materials appears to reflect this. Targeted dementia friendly programs were also

absent from most Phase 2 libraries and many Phase 1 libraries and this could be viewed as an extension of the non-targeted collection services.

Table 1 Features of dementia friendly services and enabling environments in public libraries

Service features	Rationale for inclusion	Enabling environment features	Rationale for inclusion
Collections			
Inclusive collection development policy (e.g. refers to dementia)	Establishes an inclusive framework for collection development for PLWD+C*	Accessible building and amenities	Reduce barriers to inclusion of PLWD+C*
Dementia friendly collection and/or reader's advisory	Distinct education and awareness resources for PLWD	Simplified layouts, human scale	
Dementia related titles includes: • Items for children and adults • Books and materials in various genres and formats (e.g. large print, audio books) • Culturally and ethnically diverse materials	Depth and breadth of collection caters for all persons wishing to access dementia-related content	Use of traditional signage and wayfinding, considering colour contrast and brightness	PLWD can be intimidated and overwhelmed by very large spaces, too many choices and unhelpful stimulation
Dementia collection includes memory or reminiscence kits	Facilitates respectful and meaningful reminiscence for PLWD	Signage at eye level, is clear, with essential information only Collection areas have matching icons and words Collection materials include icons to label genres	Provide PLWD with simple cues and helpful stimulation
Awareness			
Dementia champions		Décor Dementia Friendly signage or branding	Recognisable by PLWD+C as friendly and enabling
Dementia awareness training for staff	Awareness is a central to dementia friendliness, respectful engagement and reduced stigma for PLWD	Defined entrances and door frames with contrasting finishes	Provide PLWD with simple cues and helpful stimulation
Hosting community dementia awareness and educational sessions		Well-lit spaces with no shadow pools Large clock visible Reduced reflective surfaces, including mirrors Avoidance of black entrance mats Acoustic treatment of walls and/or ceilings	Limit unhelpful stimulation for PLWD
Programs			
Targeted reading groups, book clubs, and poetry readings		Furnishing Avoidance of detailed patterns on rugs, flooring and chairs	Limit unhelpful stimulation for PLWD
Targeted arts programs	Inclusivity through meaningful programs targeted to PLWD+C	Use of traditional furniture styling, with contrasting colours	Provide PLWD with familiar items and helpful stimulation
Targeted music programs or lending			
Hosting intergenerational events and activities			
Hosting memory clinics or memory cafés			
Services			
Home visits and/or mobile lending	Inclusivity extended to PLWD unable to access library buildings	Spaces Quiet spaces available for reading Senior's area available, with dementia awareness display	Opportunities for PLWD+C to be alone or with others
Targeted outreach to dementia care facilities or memory cafés		Reminiscence room or display	Facilitates respectful and meaningful reminiscence for PLWD+C
Assistance			
Assistive technologies for patrons	Inclusivity extended to PLWD who need additional assistance		

* "PLWD" refers to people living with dementia and "C" refers to their carers

Table 2 Public libraries selected for analysis

Variant	State	Library branch and local government area	ID	Phase
Dementia friendly library (major cities)	NSW	Richmond Tweed Regional Library, Tweed Shire branches	L1	1
	WA	Mandurah Libraries, Mandurah	L2	1
Major city (dementia friendly)	VIC	Doncaster Library, Manningham	L3	1
	VIC	Glen Waverley Library, Monash	L4	1
	NSW	Erina Library, Central Coast	L5	1
	SA	Glenelg Library, Holdfast Bay	L6	1
	WA	Mary Davies Library & Community Centre, Rockingham	L13	2
Major city (age friendly and accessible)	WA	Cambridge Library, Cambridge	L14	2
	WA	Spearwood Library, Cockburn	L15	2
	WA	Joondalup Library, Joondalup	L16	2
	WA	AH Bracks Library, Melville	L17	2
	WA	Wanneroo Library, Wanneroo	L18	2
	WA	Vincent Library & Local History Centre, Vincent	L19	2
Inner regional (dementia friendly)	VIC	Beechworth Library, Indigo	L7	1
	NSW	Kiama Library, Kiama	L8	1
	NSW	Port Macquarie Library, Port Macquarie	L9	1
	WA	Toodyay Library, Toodyay	L20	2
	WA	York Library, York	L21	2
Outer regional (dementia friendly)	WA	Albany Library, Albany	L10	1
	WA	Manjimup Library, Manjimup	L11	1
	NSW	Narrabri Library, Narrabri	L12	1

Figure 1 Comparison of confirmed dementia friendly services at libraries

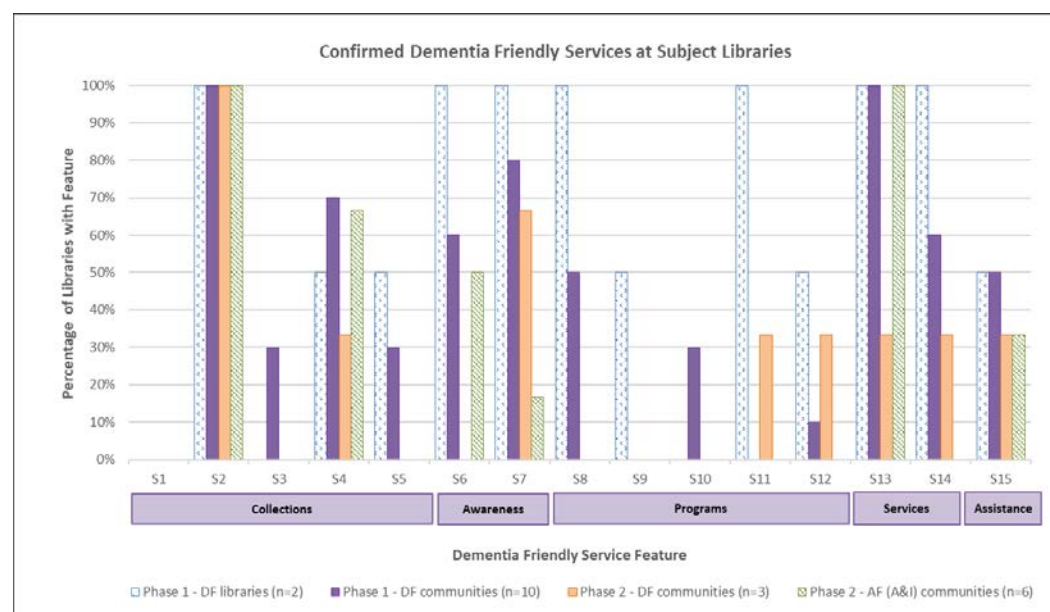
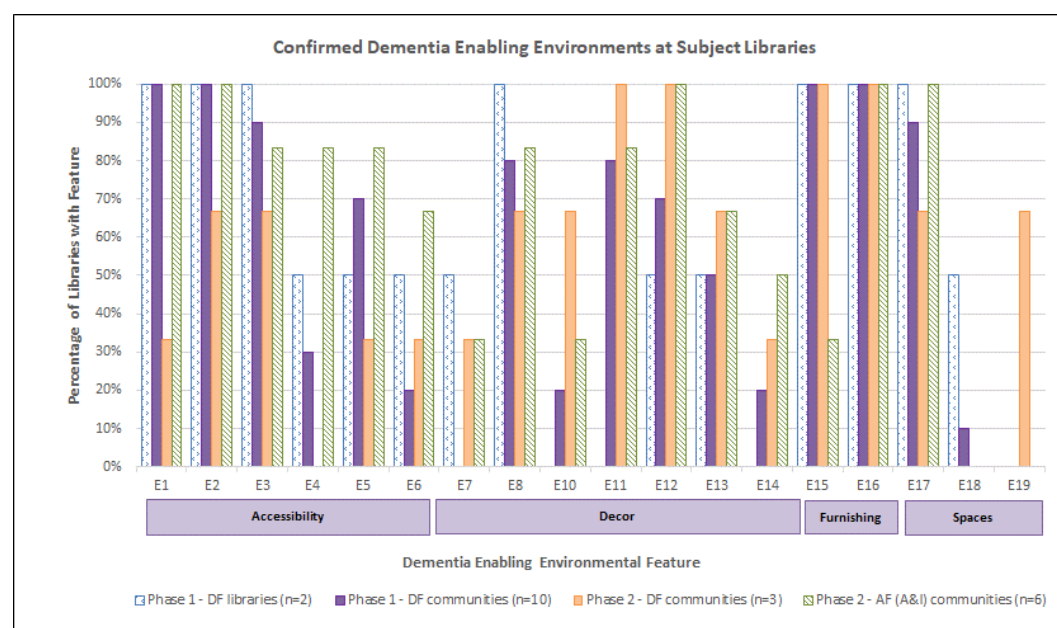


Figure 4 shows the percentage of libraries assessed in Phases 1 and 2 with confirmed dementia enabling environments. With the exception of spaces, dementia enabling environments across all categories were most consistently present at libraries in Phase 2 age friendly (and accessible) communities. The accessibility and furnishing features that would be expected at public libraries for compliance with disability regulations coincidentally contribute to a dementia enabling environment. A clear gap (and potentially evidence of no targeted dementia enabling design consideration) was the absence of dementia enabling spaces from most libraries.

Figure 2 Comparison of confirmed dementia enabling environments at libraries



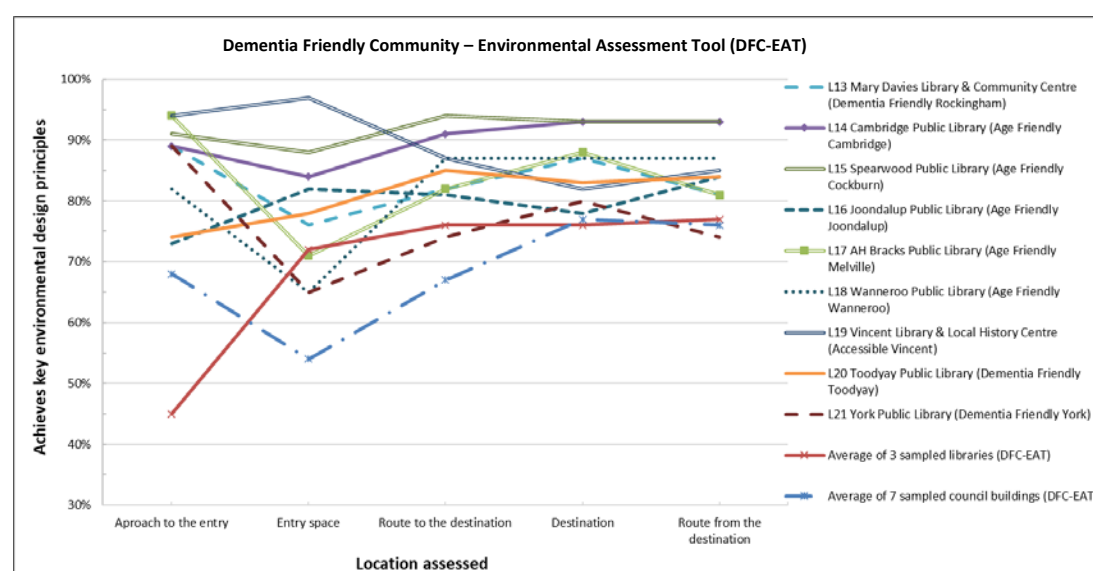
Looking at the results broadly across geographies, more dementia friendly service categories were confirmed for outer regional areas than major cities, which were

both higher than inner regional areas. Conversely, dementia enabling environmental features were least evident in outer regional areas compared with areas in major cities and outer regional areas, which were similar. Review of results for enabling environments suggests that data collection was skewed towards confirmation at Phase 2 libraries, which is to be expected given the verification that was possible during in-library observations.

Dementia Friendly Communities Environmental Assessment Tool

The DFC-EAT prompts scores for five defined journey segments (see Appendix 2) to provide an overall assessment of how dementia friendly the environment is. The result for all libraries attended in Phase 2 are shown in Figure 5 and can be compared with relevant pilot locations sampled in the development of the tool (libraries and council buildings). No single facility was assessed as achieving all key environmental design principles. Three libraries in age friendly communities consistently scored above the other locations.

Figure 5 Results of in-library observations using the DFC-EAT



Alignment with the Framework for Australian Public Libraries

Guidelines and outcomes measures from the Framework for Australian Public Libraries that correspond to the dementia friendly service categories and environmental design features developed for public libraries are present in detail in the full study. Each of the five key pillars established for the Framework—strategic community focus; service management; service offering; service delivery; and individual and community outcomes—are represented in the dementia friendly public library services and environments. However, it is the strategic community focus and service offering guidelines that most consistently match them. It is worth noting that the elements of dementia friendly public libraries codified in this study do not capture well the importance of collaboration with people living with dementia

and their carers, which underpins the dementia friendly movement. An example includes liaison with dementia stakeholders to library facility design.

Discussion

What makes a public library dementia friendly?

To understand the role of public libraries in dementia friendly communities, it was important to describe what aspects of public libraries would make them dementia friendly in and of themselves, with a view to applying this understanding to selected libraries in dementia friendly communities. Two facets were revealed through the process of codifying features of dementia friendly public libraries: services and enabling environments.

In terms of services offered by public libraries, 15 dementia friendly service features were identified within five broad categories. The categories were focused around people living with dementia and their carers and included: an inclusive policy framework supporting depth and breadth of collections; staff and community awareness programs; targeted programs; targeted outreach and mobile services; and assistive technologies.

Creating a dementia enabling environment was found to be a second, but equally important aspect of dementia friendliness. With regard to public libraries, 19 enabling environmental features were identified across four broad categories. These primarily catered to the specific needs of people living with dementia and included: accessibility to, from and throughout the building, including amenities; décor elements that would assist and not hinder; furnishings that would not cause confusion; and dedicated spaces.

When public libraries adopt the Framework for Public Libraries, they are positioning themselves to respond to the needs of their communities. The five key pillars of the Framework—strategic community focus; service management; service offering; service delivery; and individual and community outcomes—are embodied in dementia friendly public libraries. This study has shown that five of the six outcome measures from the Framework may be achieved by providing dementia friendly services and dementia enabling environments. Importantly, these can translate into individual wellbeing, personal development, and connected citizens.

Integral to dementia friendly communities is the idea that organisations themselves can become dementia friendly by striving to meet the needs of people living with dementia. Two Australian public libraries have been recognised as dementia friendly organisations: Tweed Shire library branches of the Richmond Tweed Regional Library in New South Wales and Mandurah libraries in Western Australia.

A most striking finding was that neither dementia friendly library service had a collection development policy available for public review that explicitly referred to people living with dementia. No other strategic planning documentation to aid decision making on how the needs of this demographic would be met was available. As policy documents of this nature establish the rationale for developing and maintaining collections, they are critical to efficient library governance that recognises and responds to community needs.

Another unanticipated finding was that neither Richmond Tweed Regional Library or Mandurah Library services provided dementia friendly collections (although the Tweed branches were Memorial Box partners with the Australian War Memorial). From the literature reviewed, dementia friendly collections should have items specifically for people living with dementia and also their carers. They should include a range of materials that can assist both with understanding the diagnosis and planning for the future, but also provide items that respectfully help people connect with memories (for example, books, poetry, music, videos and memory kits) and engage with others. Ideally, many of these items would be collocated to simplify access, but could also be tagged in the catalogue as being part of the dementia friendly collection and labelled on the cover for ease of recognition.

Despite not finding (publicly available) evidence of formal dementia friendly frameworks, the Richmond Tweed Regional Library and Mandurah Library services are actively responding to the needs of people living with dementia. Both offer dementia friendly services and provide dementia enabling environments across almost all of the categories identified earlier, with the majority of the features provided (based on evidence identified in this study). From the data reviewed it was not clear whether dementia champions were on staff.

Understandably, there are a few differences between the features offered by the two organisations, reflecting their administrative and funding arrangements as well as the communities they serve. With reference to the ALIA Framework, the two dementia friendly library organisations both demonstrated value to people living with dementia and their carers by providing opportunities for lifelong learning, personal development and improved wellbeing, ways to stay informed and connected, and contribute to a stronger community. A possible gap in outcomes at the Tweed branches is digital inclusion as presence or absence of assistive technologies was not confirmed via desktop means.

Role of public libraries in dementia friendly communities

The intrinsic value of public libraries and their function as safe and inclusive community hubs that enable social capital discussed earlier in this study holds true in dementia friendly communities. This study has found that public libraries in dementia friendly communities respond to the needs of people living with dementia and their

carers in a number of ways through the services they provide and the spaces they create. First and foremost, public libraries provide a welcoming space with opportunities for social engagement, whether that be talking to staff members and other patrons or quiet observation of surroundings. The contribution of these interactions to quality of life for people living with dementia and their carers cannot be understated. In practical terms, most of the libraries have removed or reduced many barriers to social interaction by creating enabling environments. For example, the accessible buildings and amenities, simplified layouts, uncluttered décor, and traditional furnishing provided by public libraries address (whether intentionally or not) changes in visual perception, spatial awareness, mobility and communication that are symptomatic of dementia.

Programs specifically targeted at people living with dementia and their carers (such as book clubs and music lending) were not typically part of the services offered at the libraries. However, broader dementia awareness and education sessions were evident at a high proportion of libraries and variants of these were provided for community members and staff. Again, whether dementia champions were on staff was unclear.

Many libraries provided outreach and mobile library services, which are important modes of connecting with people unable to attend the library, as is often the case for people living with dementia and their carers. Memory cafés provide an avenue for social engagement and are commonplace in dementia friendly communities, and while there were a few examples of pop-up libraries at memory cafés, there may be scope for their establishment as a dementia specific outreach program in more public libraries and in collaboration with dementia advocacy groups. This presents a tangible opportunity to apply ALIA guidance for community engagement in shaping library services and creating partnerships to create stronger, connected communities. The lack of an inclusive (dementia related) collection development policy has not constrained the core library collections themselves, as libraries consistently held many dementia and Alzheimer's related titles. Although, the depth and breadth of collections would most certainly be finessed with them in place, particularly if collection assessment was undertaken in consultation with in-house dementia champions or indeed advice sought from dementia advocacy groups. Practical aspects of collection development and maintenance that may assist engagement include collocating dementia related items and creating a dementia friendly collection comprising awareness, educational materials and other resources (for example, items for respectful reminiscence).

Another possible area for improvement relates to cataloguing. Alzheimer's disease is a common form of dementia, but many reviewed catalogues have used the terms as subjects interchangeably so a keyword catalogue search for 'Alzheimer's' only may not call up the full range of relevant titles. This could be redressed if cataloguing for

the broader subject of 'dementia' also included specific forms of dementia that may be relevant to the item (like Lewy body dementia or Alzheimer's disease). Further, with advice from Dementia Australia or Alzheimer's WA, titles could be tagged as 'dementia friendly' to indicate suitability for people living with dementia, noting that these may not necessarily be dementia-specific items.

One criticism that can be made relates to the often-indistinct promotion of dementia friendly initiatives of public libraries in dementia friendly communities. As this study was almost entirely desktop-based, the paucity of information is perhaps a function of the changeable nature of web content. More clarity would likely be provided through survey of library staff on how the premise of dementia friendly communities—feeling safe, welcomed and valued—is enhanced by the library.

Remoteness of communities has been found to have a more positive association with dementia friendly services category, and a more negative association with dementia enabling environments. This may be due to the age of library buildings in more remote communities, where retrofit of existing buildings beyond legislative compliance for accessibility may not be a budgetary priority for the associated council. However, it is difficult to add any further comment on this without feedback from the libraries themselves.

From dementia friendly to age friendly and back again

This study has found that work to position as a dementia friendly community in some local government areas has shifted to an age friendly focus. The concept of age friendly is intended to address inclusivity for all people regardless of their age. In practice, local governments establish their strategic intentions through age friendly plans (recognising the trend to age in place) or disability access and inclusion plans, and often the associated public libraries are nominated as facilities that support people living in the community with disability and also older people. In some instances, these strategic documents acknowledge the prevalence of people in the local community living with dementia or who may be frail and indicate support for dementia friendly initiatives. While research for this study found positive and sustained examples of this support, it is not consistently translated into practice (or perhaps not well promoted).

Clear evidence of dilution of dementia friendly services in transformation to age friendly communities was identified in this study. In one example, the library service website promoted their dementia friendly collection and home library services, but the current action plan for the library made no reference to either. Further, while an age friendly focus may align with general principles of dementia friendliness, crucial aspects can be overlooked. These particularly relate to sensory stimulation, where too much unhelpful stimulation or not enough helpful stimulation is present. The walk through with the DFC-EAT highlighted these important points, where for

example, highly contrasting patterned floors and furniture were present or entryways to potentially harmful areas were not concealed (unhelpful stimulation) and cues at decision points like toilet exits on which way to walk to return to the library were not provided (helpful stimulation).

Some local government organisations that have integrated dementia friendly aspects into age friendly access and inclusion planning include in their reference committees people living with dementia and their carers or dementia champions to guide from the dementia perspective. This is crucial to avoiding unintentionally creating barriers to accessing services and places. The DFC-EAT could be adopted by those responsible for planning future library services and facilities to support this process.

Conclusion

This study shows that dementia friendly public libraries offer a suite of services and enabling environments to benefit people living with dementia and their carers. Collectively, they enable social capital and contribute to personal development and wellbeing, informed and connected citizens, and ultimately stronger more inclusive communities—achieving five of the six ALIA outcome measures. These facts are echoed in public libraries located in dementia friendly communities, although some inconsistencies were evident with a shift to age-friendliness.

Public libraries in dementia friendly communities are welcoming and enabling spaces and provide opportunities for social engagement, with many barriers to this important social interaction removed or reduced. This includes via core public library services such as outreach and mobile services. In the absence of the 2020 global pandemic, additional information might have produced more affirmative results, but the trend for contemporary public library services towards dementia friendliness has been established.

Dementia friendliness is not measurable by a scale; it is a reflective movement and public libraries in dementia friendly communities must respond to the needs of that community. The apparent lack of strategic planning by the public libraries assessed in this study in providing for the needs of people living with dementia and their carers is somewhat surprising. Services and environments more targeted towards this demographic, facilitated by strategic documents, would enhance dementia friendliness and inclusivity, particularly in collaboration with dementia advocacy groups or other community organisations. It is perhaps then not a stretch for many of the libraries to make additional changes to meet the definition of a dementia friendly organisation.

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Appendix 1 – ALIA Framework for Public Libraries

Excerpts from the APLA Australian Public Library Guidelines Standards and Outcome Measures.

Guidelines document best practice and are intended as operational suggestions for improving library performance. Standards are quality levels for benchmarking, comparison and attainment. Outcome measures indicate the type of impact that provision and use of public library services can have on individuals and communities.

There are 16 guidelines, 15 standards and six areas of outcome measurement.

Guidelines, Standards and
Outcome Measures
for Australian Public Libraries



Australian Library and
Information Association

Report published July 2016

In 2011, the Australian Library and Information Association launched the First Edition of its Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries, authored by Libraries Alive! Pty Ltd. The Second Edition was published in January 2013, and in 2016 a revised, updated and expanded document was produced by I & J Management Services, entitled Guidelines, Standards and Outcome Measures for Australian Public Libraries. We have produced this standards and guidelines calculator on the basis of the results from the 2016 report.

The project was a collaboration between ALIA, the Australian Public Library Alliance and National and State Libraries Australasia, and this calculator has been created to be used in conjunction with the full report, which can be downloaded from the ALIA website <https://www.alia.org.au/node/184/public-libraries>.

This simple calculator is designed to enable public libraries to discover how they perform against the national standards and guidelines. The ALIA Standards (worksheet 1) give a topline appraisal, while the ALIA Guidelines (worksheet 2) provide a much more indepth analysis.

Results will provide strong evidence for advocacy - particularly useful during funding rounds - and can be used by library managers as an internal tool to monitor performance improvement in specific areas.

		Australian Library and Information Association	GUIDELINES
STRATEGIC COMMUNITY FOCUS			
Guideline 1	Ensure universal access to library services within the community		
Guideline 2	Reflect community needs and aspirations and engage the community in shaping library services <i>Guideline 2.1 Services for targeted population cohorts</i>		
Guideline 3	Champion cultural identity		
Guideline 4	Create partnerships to build community and individual resilience and capacity		
SERVICE MANAGEMENT			
Guideline 5	Governance		
Guideline 6	Management <i>Guideline 6.1 Policy and planning</i> <i>Guideline 6.2 Human resource management</i> <i>Guideline 6.3 Financial and asset management</i> <i>Guideline 6.4 Technology management</i> <i>Guideline 6.5 Public relations and promotion</i> <i>Guideline 6.6 Monitoring and evaluation</i>		
SERVICE OFFERING			
Guideline 7	Content and collections		
Guideline 8	Information and reference services		
Guideline 9	Programs		
Guideline 10	Technology access		
Guideline 11	Places (physical and digital)		
SERVICE DELIVERY			
Guideline 12	Service points <i>Guideline 12.1 Library buildings</i> <i>Guideline 12.2 Mobile libraries</i> <i>Guideline 12.3 Home library service</i> <i>Guideline 12.4 Library website</i> <i>Guideline 12.5 Opening hours</i>		
Guideline 13	Staffing		
Guideline 14	Funding		
Guideline 15	Partnership and collaboration		
Guideline 16	Customer service		

	Australian Library and Information Association	STANDARDS
SERVICE PROVISION		
Standard 1	Library expenditure per capita p.a. (exc library materials)	
Standard 2	Number of staff (FTE) per 10,000 population	
Standard 3	Number of qualified staff (FTE) per 10,000 population	
Standard 4	Library materials expenditure per capita	
Standard 5	Collection items per capita per annum	
Standard 6	Age of collection (percentage published in the last 5 yrs)	
Standard 7	Internet computers per 10,000 population	
SERVICE REACH		
Standard 8	Membership as a percentage of population	
SERVICE PARTICIPATION AND USE		
Standard 9	Visits per capita per annum	
Standard 10	Website visits per capita per annum	
Standard 11	Circulation (loans) per capita	
Standard 12	Turnover of stock (loans per volume/collection item)	
Standard 13	Program attendance per capita per annum	
Standard 14	Internet downloads per capita per annum	
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION		
Standard 15	Customer satisfaction	

 Australian Library and Information Association		OUTCOME MEASURES
Outcome 1	Literacy and lifelong learning	
Outcome 2	Informed and connected citizens	
Outcome 3	Digital inclusion	
Outcome 4	Personal development and wellbeing	
Outcome 5	Stronger and more creative communities	
Outcome 6	Economic and workforce development	

Adapted from:

I & J Management Services. (2016). Guidelines standards and outcome measures for Australian public libraries. Australian Library and Information Association and Australian Public Library Alliance.
https://www.alia.org.au/sites/default/files/documents/advocacy/PLSG_ALIA_2012.pdf

Appendix 2 – Checklists Developed for Study

Desktop Checklist

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION				ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION / SOURCE LINKS	
Location					
State					
Local Government Area					
Library Branch					
Consortia (y/n, name)					
Recognised Dementia Friendly					
Services Category	Description	Present Y/N/P/?	Comment / Evidence	INFORMATION SOURCES	
Collections	S1 Inclusive collection development policy			Collections	S1
	S2 Dementia related titles includes books & materials in various genres & formats for children & adults				S2
	S3 Dementia friendly collection				S3
	S4 Dementia related titles include culturally & ethnically diverse materials				S4
	S5 Dementia collection includes memory or reminiscence kits				S5
Awareness	S6 Hosting community dementia awareness & educational sessions			Awareness	S6
	S7 Dementia awareness training for staff or dementia champions				S7
Programs	S8 Targeted reading groups, book clubs, & poetry readings			Programs	S8
	S9 Targeted arts programs				S9
	S10 Targeted music programs or lending				S10
	S11 Hosting memory clinics or memory cafés				S11
	S12 Hosting intergenerational events & activities				S12
	S13 Home visits &/or mobile lending				S13
Services	S14 Targeted outreach to dementia care facilities or memory cafés			Services	S14
	S15 Assistive technologies for patrons				Assistance

Env't Category	Description	Present	Comment / Evidence	INFORMATION SOURCES	
		Y/N/P/?			
Accessibility	E1 Accessible building & amenities			Accessibility	E1
	E2 Simplified layouts, human scale				E2
	E3 Signage is at eye level				E3
	E4 Signage is clear, with essential information only				E4
	E5 Use of traditional signage & wayfinding				E5
	E6 Collection areas have matching icons & words, collection materials include icons to label genres				E6
Décor	E7 Dementia Friendly (or Age Friendly) signage or branding			Décor	E7
	E8 Reduced reflective surfaces, including mirrors				E8
	E9 NOT USED		NOT USED - only one example from literature review suggested this as a key design feature.		E9
	E10 Avoidance of black entrance mats				E10
	E11 Defined entrances & door frames with contrasting finishes				E11
	E12 Well-lit spaces with no shadow pools				E12
	E13 Acoustic treatment of walls &/or ceilings				E13
	E14 Large clock visible				E14
Furnishing	E15 Avoidance of detailed patterns on rugs, flooring & chairs			Furnishing	E15
	E16 Use of traditional furniture styling, with contrasting colours				E16
Spaces	E17 Quiet spaces available for reading			Spaces	E17
	E18 Senior's area available, with dementia awareness display				E18
	E19 Reminiscence room or display				E19

In-Library Observation Checklist and DFC-EAT

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION		
Location:		
Date and time:		
Destination and purpose of visit:		
Weather:		
Unusual circumstances, (e.g. building works; special activities):		
Assessors:		
Describe route to and from the destination; define specific travel route (attach sketch/photos for record purposes):		

Dementia Training Australia - DESCRIPTION OF COLUMNS		LIBRARY SPECIFIC EXAMPLES from Lit Review
1 Approach to the entry:	The approach commences a maximum of 20m away from the entry. It includes the car park (if it is situated in front of/ to the side of the building), the streetscape, the footpath and the outside of the entrance door as viewed from the approach.	Use of traditional signage and wayfinding Defined entrances, door frames and walls with contrasting finishes
2 Entry space:	This space starts from inside the building at the entry door threshold. It may include an airlock space and/or a foyer. In some instances there may not be a specific entry space, and the route to the destination (No.3) may commence from the entry door threshold. This column would not be completed when this occurs.	Simplified layouts Use of traditional signage and wayfinding Defined door frames and walls with contrasting finishes Avoidance of black entrance mats Large clock visible
3 Route to the destination:	The route commences at the end of the entry space (or at the entry door threshold if there is no entry space) and extends to the destination. The route may (or may not) be a specifically defined aisle/corridor/path.	Use of traditional signage and wayfinding Signage at eye level Signage clear, essential information only Simplified layouts Defined door frames and walls with contrasting finishes
4 Destination:	This is the place that is the purpose of the visit. It may be a specific room e.g. waiting room, or a specific area e.g. a counter. In this case the space immediately in front of and to the side of the counter should be considered as part of the destination.	Reduced reflective surfaces, including mirrors Avoidance of detailed patterns on rugs and chairs Use of traditional furniture styling, contrasting finishes Well-lit spaces with no shadow pools Availability of quiet spaces available Acoustic treatment of walls and/or ceilings Large clock visible Use words matching icons to label genres
5 Route from the destination:	This is the route taken from the destination (No.4) to reach the exit. It includes the inside view of the exit door and the entry space (where there is one). The route used in No 3 should be retraced in the opposite direction back to the exit, unless there is a more convenient or obligatory exit route.	Simplified layouts Signage at eye level Signage clear, essential information only Use of traditional signage and wayfinding Defined entrances, door frames and walls with contrasting finishes

Sketch

DEMENTIA FRIENDLY COMMUNITY - ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT TOOL (DFC-EAT)

Name of location		LOCATION					
 		Approach to the entry	Entry space	Route to the destination	Destination	Route from the destination	
1. UNOBTUSIVELY REDUCE RISKS	All areas are free from dark shadows or bright glare.						
	All areas are well lit.						
	All areas can be accessed without need to negotiate steps/stairs.						
	All changes in surface levels are safe. Consider clear marking of level changes, illumination, presence of handrails and non-slip surfaces. (Score 2 if no level changes)						
	Gradients of all ramped areas are safe for people using a wheelchair or walking aid. (Score 2 if no ramps)						
	The way to the next stage of the journey is clearly visible and safely accessible. Consider ease of access to path, trip hazards at the edge of the path, slipperiness, evenness, width sufficient for 2 people to pass, absence of obstacles on the path.						
	All manually operated entry doors /gates are easily operated e.g. have lever handles/push plates. (Score 2 where gates/doors are automatic or not present)						
2. PROVIDE A HUMAN SCALE	The size and scale of the space allows a person with dementia to feel comfortable and at ease e.g. not too large or too confined.						
	The number of people present in the space allows the person living with dementia to feel comfortable and at ease						
3. ALLOW PEOPLE TO BE SEEN AND BE SEEN	The entry/exit can be easily identified						
	The way to a toilet can be easily seen						
	The next destination can be easily seen and identified e.g. enquiry desk, aisle, corridor, office, way back to exit.						
	The final destination allows the person living with dementia to see all of the areas that they may wish to use.						
4. MANAGE LEVELS OF STIMULATION - REDUCE UNHELPFUL STIMULATION	The space is free from distracting visual clutter i.e. notices, advertisements, objects, street furniture that are irrelevant.						
	Signage provides simple, essential information at decision points.						
	Entry to areas where a person living with a dementia may be exposed to danger are not easily seen or accessed, e.g. they are the same colour as the wall.						
	Background noise is of a low level.						
	Public address systems are used minimally and only when necessary (Score 2 if not present).						
	There are no alarming or disturbing noises, e.g. flapping doors, noisy automatic doors.						
	There are no confusing odours, e.g. a bakery competing with a florist.						
	Floor finishes do not have patterns with a high level of contrast						
4. MANAGE LEVELS OF STIMULATION - OPTIMISE HELPFUL STIMULATION	Cues, such as recognisable images or symbols are positioned at decision points such as junctions and turnings along the journey to the next destination.						
	Signs assist the person living with dementia to complete the journey and task.						
	Objects and/or furniture clearly show people that they are on the correct part of the journey						
	The variety of materials and finishes present create an interesting journey to and from the destination and help the person with dementia identify the stages of the journey (e.g. brick, timber, concrete, stone, grass)						
	Olfactory cues are present that provide a variety of experiences and help identify the stages of the journey (e.g. smell of perfumed plants, bakery, cafe).						
4. MANAGE LEVELS OF STIMULATION - OPTIMISE HELPFUL STIMULATION	Auditory cues are present that provide a variety of experiences and help identify the stages of the journey.						
	There are both shady and sunny areas along the journey.						
6. SUPPORT MOVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT	The journey is pleasant.						
	Seating or nooks enable a person living with dementia to sit and rest.						
	Spaces provide opportunities to participate in or observe activities of interest						
	The space is welcoming.						
7. CREATE A FAMILIAR PLACE	The function of the space is obvious, e.g. a car park, a foyer, a thoroughfare leading to a destination.						
	Architectural design features, including landscaping and furniture, are familiar and easily understood by a person with dementia.						
	Colours and decor are familiar						
	Seating is provided to allow the person living with dementia to sit quietly by themselves or with a small number of others						
8. PROVIDE A VARIETY OF PLACES TO BE ALONE OR WITH OTHERS	The space promotes easy and comfortable interaction with people of different ages and interests						
Copyright © 2015 UOW		Total Scores	0	0	0	0	0

Scoring Key	
Disagree	0
Partially agree	1
Agree	2

SUMMARY OF RESULTS	Dementia Friendly Community - Environmental Assessment Tool (DFC-EAT)	Approach to the entry	Entry space	Route to the destination	Destination	Route from the destination
	LOCATION	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Average scores in a sample of 10 banks	70%	37%	78%	73%	74%
	Average scores in a sample of 7 council buildings	68%	54%	67%	77%	76%
	Average scores in a sample of 3 libraries	45%	72%	76%	76%	77%
	Average scores in a sample of 10 shopping malls	68%	49%	67%	70%	65%
	Average scores in a sample of 10 medical clinics	68%	47%	60%	76%	72%
	Average scores in a sample of 10 small shops	73%	51%	74%	56%	67%
	Average scores in a sample of 10 supermarkets	49%	45%	53%	63%	51%

