

BACK IN THE HABIT

In Victoria, the *Return Yourself to the Library* campaign is ramping up, encouraging patrons to rediscover their local public library after over 18 months of intermittent lockdowns across the state. **Brendan Eichholzer** discusses the genesis of the campaign, how it came to fruition and how it's going so far.

Return Yourself to the Library was developed in response to Victoria's second COVID lockdown in 2020. In February 2021, at a Public Libraries Victoria (PLV) Marketing Special Interest Group meeting, we spoke about the challenges facing libraries in terms of reopening, noting that foot traffic had fallen to 30–60% of the levels we'd experienced pre-pandemic.

We agreed that a statewide marketing campaign to entice users to return to the library now that the lockdown had ended would create a consistent message across the state and save us time, money and effort collectively. We set up a working group for the campaign and designed it around the phrase 'Return Yourself to the Library'.

Given each library service in Victoria would have individual goals around returning users to their library spaces, the concept was to design marketing collateral as templates. This meant that the items would be ready for smaller library services – that may not have staff with extensive design skills – to simply use them as delivered. Larger services could personalise the material to meet their needs.

The plan was to develop this template marketing collateral, a range of standard marketing copy and a series of 30-second videos for social media that featured an animated version of a nondescript stick figure exploring the wide range of services offered by public libraries. Knowing this was a large

task, we sought funding to engage a graphic designer and videographer for the campaign through a presentation at the PLV General Meeting in March 2021. There, 27 of the 49 library services across Victoria contributed \$32,000 to the campaign, enabling us to hire a videographer, animator and graphic designer, while leaving a small kitty for statewide advertising.

With the funding sourced, we began developing the collateral. The largest task was the videos, which would be based on different elements of public library services our users had missed, using information from Yarra Plenty Regional Library's



2021 user survey. The standout finding of the survey was that users had lost the habit of coming into the library, so one of our challenges was to highlight those benefits so that users would begin to return and build those habits back up.

Following delays caused by subsequent lockdowns, the campaign has now begun and, while still in its early phase, has received a positive

response from library users. The videos will continue to be released throughout the coming weeks and we're gaining traction online.

As much of the collateral has been designed around reaching library users in locations outside of the library, a strong outreach partnership approach to disseminating the collateral has been required to make the most of the campaign. This work has created new partnership opportunities moving forward throughout the community.

We hope that in the coming months users will begin to return themselves to the library and rebuild those reading, learning and community habits that they lost during lockdowns, and remember all the great aspects of their local public library service. *

The Return Yourself to the Library campaign settled on 10 story beats, filmed at library services across the state – metro, regional and rural – to showcase the breadth of service offered in Victoria:

- **Returning to the Library:** Goulburn Valley Libraries
- **The Library Collection:** City of Ballarat Libraries
- **Friendly Faces:** Geelong Regional Library Corporation
- **Storytime:** Maribyrnong Libraries
- **Connecting with Community:** Wangaratta Library, High Country Library Network
- **Events and Activities:** Darebin Libraries
- **Study Spaces and Learning:** Casey Cardinia Libraries
- **Technology Help & Access:** Moonee Valley Libraries
- **Makerspaces and Digital Services:** Yarra Plenty Regional Library
- **Inclusive and Welcoming Spaces:** Yarra Libraries

Check out the #ReturnYourself and #ReturnYourselfToTheLibrary hashtags on social media to view the videos as the campaign rolls out.

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