



## Stonnington Libraries Online Literacy and Development (SOLID)

### Program

Charlotte Aberhart, Stonnington Library and Information Service, Melbourne

### ABSTRACT

Over 2015 Stonnington Libraries developed and rolled out the Stonnington Libraries Online Literacy and Information (SOLID) Program, an in-house digital literacy staff training program. The program was developed from ideas gained from library staff attending the 2014 ALIA conference and the *ANZ 23 Mobile Things* session. It was created to enable staff to increase their skills and confidence in the areas of library online resources, mobile technologies and social media. The modules also included information on current library trends, including the move to eGov and the role of public libraries in addressing issues caused by digital isolation. This was particularly relevant in up skilling staff in the lead up to the National Year of Digital Inclusion in 2016. The program was delivered in five modules: Tablet Basics, eBooks & eAudiobooks, eReference, Social Media and Online Media.

Over a period of seven months, digital literacy was the focus of Stonnington Libraries in-house professional development and it created a culture of shared learning with formal and informal training opportunities. All modules asked for written feedback and this was consistently positive, with recognition that the learning was relevant and assisted staff with their daily work practice. It also has increased staff

confidence in assisting and promoting library online resources, reflected in an increase of the usage statistics for online resources.

It is recognised that public libraries have a pivotal role in assisting the community with the increasing shift of services' online and the emergence of new technologies. The skills and expertise of public library staff need to be constantly evolving and adapting to meet the community needs. As the online environment is constantly developing, this work was not a stand-alone project, but has been implemented into Stonnington Libraries professional development program to address the future needs of staff in these areas.

## INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Stonnington Libraries Online Literacy and Information Development (SOLID) program was created to ensure Stonnington Library staff are equipped to adapt and evolve with the changing online environment. This paper will detail the origins of the program, how it was structured and delivered, and what it achieved. The paper will also highlight recommendations for other library services that are considering creating a similar program and provides access to the planning methods and content of the SOLID program.

Stonnington Library and Information Service is a library service operated by the City of Stonnington. Located in Melbourne's inner east, the City of Stonnington consist of the suburbs of Prahran, Windsor, South Yarra, Toorak, Armadale, Malvern, Malvern East, Glen Iris and Kooyong. Stonnington has an economically and culturally diverse population, servicing long established residents of the area, a transient youth demographic and also community housing estates.

The library service consists of four libraries, Malvern Library, Prahran Library, Phoenix Park Library and Toorak/South Yarra Library, and the Stonnington History Centre. The Service currently has seventy two employees, fifty one permanent full-time and part-time employees and twenty one casual staff. The employees are in the majority a female demographic and a range of ages, however overall it is an ageing work force.

The library service has been evolving as the use of new technology becomes integral to the wider community. The library service introduced eBook lending in 2013 with Bolinda Digital and currently has two eBook providers, BorrowBox (Bolinda Digital) and Axis 360. Although online visits and downloading of eLibrary

products have become more popular, traditional borrowing and library visits remain steady. There was a total of 997,919 loans taken out in 2014/2015 and 622,447 individual visits were made to libraries, representing a 3.2% increase from the previous year. The service held 508 events and activities in 2014/15, up 72 on the previous year, attracting 16,301 children and adults. This indicates that the library service is adding to its traditional core business of the lending of items, to delivering more programs and being a community space. (City of Stonnington, *Annual report 2014-2015*)

### ORIGINS OF THE PROGRAM

Three influencers combined to give Aberhart the impetus to create the SOLID

Program:

- ALIA National Conference 2014
- Uptake by public of mobile devices
- Promotion of eLibrary products.

The SOLID program originated at the ALIA National 2014 Conference in Melbourne. Charlotte Aberhart attended a session on *ANZ 23 Mobile Things*. The *ANZ 23 Mobile Things* program was established by ALIA NGAC (Australian Library and Information Association New Generation Advisory Committee) and New Professionals Network NZ. The groups combined to offer an Australian/New Zealand course based on the *23 Mobile Things* course by Jan Holmquist. The *23 Mobile Things* course is an

online learning course on mobile technologies where people worked collaboratively online “*exploring the potential of mobile tools for delivering library services.*”

Abigail Willemse (New Zealand) and Kate Freedman (Australia) worked together to make the content relevant for Australia and New Zealand. The course was run from May-November 2013 with over 775 participants. After Aberhart attended the session she had the idea of applying this module based online learning approach to Stonnington Libraries. She saw that tailoring the modules to be on topics specific to Stonnington Libraries, and rolling it out only to Stonnington Libraries’ staff, would make the program relevant to staff at her workplace.

Stonnington Libraries in 2014 was also being faced with an increasing demand for assistance with mobile devices from the public. Mobile device ownership took off in 2012- 2013:

*“Analyst firm Telsyte reported that 2.4 million tablets were sold in Australia in 2012, and this annual figure would increase to 7 million by 2017. In that time tablet penetration is expected to climb from 22 per cent to 70 per cent in Australia.”*

(Moses, 2013)

Library staff found they were being increasingly asked for help with new devices. Colloquially it was noted that often the devices were gifts, with a large increase in requests for assistance coming after Christmas. It was also noted that the devices were given to parents by their children, or they might have “inherited” a device after children upgraded, and that the recipients’ families did not have time to help them learn the new device. As libraries are seen as a safe and trusted place to ask for assistance, people were increasingly approaching library staff for help. Therefore library staff were being faced with questions on areas outside of their traditional work

skill sets, and were requesting training on mobile devices to up-skill them in these areas.

Additionally at this time Aberhart's role was that of Online Services Librarian, and part of her position description was the promotion of eLibrary products. Aberhart had found that the most useful way to promote library products or services was through word of mouth interaction with library users. Her thinking was an effective way to promote eLibrary services was to ensure library staff were confident in teaching the public these services.

### GOALS OF THE PROGRAM

In creating and implementing the SOLID Program, Stonnington Libraries identified goals that it wanted to the program to achieve:

- Standard level of knowledge for all staff
- Creation of a shared learning environment
- Utilise RFID environment
- Improve digital literacy outcomes for staff and the public

To ensure a standard level of knowledge the program was undertaken by all staff employed in the library service: the library managers, librarians, library technicians, library officers and library administrative staff. The program was written to address the needs of all the employees as *library professionals*, regardless of their qualification level or experience. To put it simply, a goal of the program was to teach library professionals what they needed to know to do their jobs with confidence.

To achieve the goal of a shared learning environment, all staff went through the program over the same seven month period. For some staff already confident in the topics covered the work was not difficult, and they were able to complete the modules quickly. These staff were then encouraged to assist their less confident colleagues in completing the work, and teams worked collaboratively to ensure all members finished the modules. This also created a conversation throughout the libraries on the topics being covered in each module. The SOLID program was added as an agenda items to all team meetings, and a discussion would be had around the content and feedback given on the modules.

When Stonnington Libraries migrated to the RFID environment reducing staff hours was not part of the planning for this shift. One of the goals of RFID was to free up staff from the time consuming work of checking items in and out, to allow them to use their skills in more useful and productive ways. Staff would be able to spend time offering library users more valuable interactions from a customer service perspective; one of these areas being inquires relating to eLibrary products and mobile devices. This shift was also reflective of the changing nature of the reference inquiry, as the demand for traditional reference inquiries was dropping, and questions relating to library online resources, mobile technologies and social media were increasing. The SOLID program was designed to ensure that staff were supported in this change of skill set in the evolving public library environment.

The final, broader goal of the program was that through up-skilling library staff in these areas, this would subsequently increase digital literacy for the broader Stonnington community. It has been acknowledged that public libraries are one of the few safe, and free, spaces where people can to ask for help. With the directive

for government services to be Digital First by 2017 " *By December 2017, Australians will be able to fully complete the vast majority of their business with government online,*" (Peake, 2016) increasingly people are turning to public libraries for help navigating this shift. By Stonnington Libraries conducting this training program in 2015, it was on the forefront of ensuring its' staff were equipped for the National Year of Digital Inclusion in 2016 and is in strong position to assist those at risk of digital isolation.

### STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAM

The SOLID program was delivered through five modules, with six weeks allocated to each module:

Module 1: Tablet Basics	6 March – 17 April
Module 2: eBooks & eAudiobooks	17 April – 29 May
Module 3: eReference:	29 May – 10 July
Module 4: Social Media	10 July – 21 August
Module 5: Online Media	21 August – 2 October

Allowing the staff six weeks to complete each module was a conscious decision to ensure staff had time work at their own pace and in the style best suited to them. For some staff that already saw the online environment as a challenge, it was important to ensure they did not feel vulnerable or stressed. The modules were

designed to be no more than five hours to complete, this varied according to confidence and skill levels. Some staff completed the modules in the first week and others needed the deadline and submitted on the last day. To ensure the environment of shared learning staff were not able to access the next module until the scheduled date.

To deliver the program the modules were created in a Word document and saved into shared network drive (X: drive). The instructions were:

- Step 1: Select SOLID Folder : X:\Library Files\SOLID Program
- Step 2: Select Module 1: Tablet Basics and open
- Step 3: Save As into your Staff Folder: X:\Library Files\Staff Folders\.....
- Step 4: Complete exercises, readings and workplace scenarios

Delivering the program through a cloud based client such as Dropbox or Google Docs was considered. However it was decided to deliver the program in Word documents and via the shared drive for a number of reasons. One was ensuring ease of access - staff did not have to create passwords or remember log-ins, which can often block positive attitudes to training. It also meant that staff had to do at work rather than home, as the City of Stonnington encourages a healthy work/life balance. It eliminated the issue of what the Council IT Department allows access to, which is often problematic for public libraries within local government confines.

It also represents the concept of *incidental learning* that was part of the structure and content of the SOLID program. Incidental learnings were steps that were included in the modules that taught staff a task that needed reinforcing. For example - getting staff to use the *Save As* function was to rehearse good file

management practice, as historically some staff would occasionally overwrite or save shared file in inappropriate locations.

The modules consisted of:

- readings
- hands-on exercises
- workplace scenarios.

The readings were on broader topics related to the subjects. For example in the module on eBooks and eAudiobooks, the reading was on the general context of eBooks and licensing issues in public libraries, and the ALIA report *Comparison of eBooks and eLending in Australian Public Libraries 2013 v 2014*. By including these readings it ensured staff had not just the base skills but also a broader knowledge of these topics at a higher level.

The hands-on exercises were designed to give staff practical experience on mobile devices, eLibrary products and social media sites. For example in Tablet Basics staff were given step by step instructions on how to complete basic iPad tasks. The steps were simple and walked staff through the exercises.

Exercise: Delete your photos

Step 1: Touch **Home** button and unlock iPad (using Passcode 8\*\*\* if on Branch iPad)

Step 2: Open **Photos** App



Step 3: Touch on your images to open

Step 4: Touch on **Trash** icon and **Delete** photo

Step 5: Go back to **Camera Roll** and touch **Select**. Touch on your remaining

images and touch on **Trash** icon (top left) to delete multiple images.

This style reflects the goal of ensuring all staff had a base level of knowledge, factoring in those that had no or little experience on mobile devices. At the end of each exercise was a workplace scenario. This was a hypothetical situation where the staff would be encouraged to think about what they had learnt and apply this is a “real-world” work place situation. From the Tablet Basics module:

*“Task 3: Scenario*

*You are helping a library user install a Library app onto their iPad. The installation fails and a message comes up saying there is insufficient storage available. What would you suggest the library user do to enable them to install the app?”*

*(Write answers here)*

---

The rationale behind this was to encourage library staff to think about what they just learnt and also show that they had understood. It was considered important that the module was interactive and that staff had to show their learnings.

Once completed the module was emailed back to Aberhart. It is important to note, and this was emphasised to library staff, that the modules were not marked. Asking staff to submit them was to create a record that the work had been completed and to gather feedback. This was important to allay concerns of those that had

weaknesses in some areas, to feel their level of competence was not being assessed.

## CONTENT OF THE PROGRAM

In deciding on the content for the SOLID program, the planning staff started by listing all the topics covered in *ANZ 23 Mobile Things*, and then brainstormed a list of topics relating to daily work practice. Added to this list were subjects gathered from the Hands-on Technology sessions run by Stonnington Libraries. Hands-on Technology is a fortnightly library program where library users book an hour of one-on-one time with a librarian, to get assistance with any technology related question they have. The data gathered from these sessions was that people generally asked for assistance with iPads, creating social media accounts and eLibrary products (mainly downloading eBooks). Aberhart and her colleague then grouped the topics into subjects, and decided on the most useful and relevant ones to be included in the program. ([See Appendix 1](#))

## IMPORTANCE OF FEEDBACK

Feedback was an important tool and useful product of the SOLID program. Asking for feedback enabled staff to have input into the program and to give them an opportunity to contribute to the program staff training. Staff submitted feedback with each individual module and after the program was completed. The feedback with each module asked staff what more they would like to know on the topic covered,

which provided extremely valuable data for future planning for the SOLID program. ([See Appendix 2](#)).

In February 2016 Aberhart created an online survey to gather more feedback on the SOLID program. There were 34 responses from a staff pool of 72, the survey was not mandatory and was anonymous. The survey asked staff to rate their confidence in key areas before and after completing the program. It has to be noted that ideally a survey should have been conducted before the start of the program in 2015 and then repeated after the program was completed. This learning will be fed into future planning for the SOLID program.

The results gathered showed a marked increase in confidence in the areas surveyed.

*Question 1: Before completing the 2015 SOLID Program, how confident you were assisting library users to download Library eBooks?*

Not Confident	Fairly Confident	Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident	Weighted Average
26.47%	26.47%	26.47%	14.71%	5.88%	2.47
9	9	9	5	2	

*Question 2: How confident you are now in assisting library users to download Library eBooks?*

Not Confident	Fairly Confident	Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident	Weighted Average
2.94%	11.76%	20.59%	47.06%	17.65%	3.65
1	4	7	16	6	

This shows an increase in average of 1.18 in staff confidence in downloading library eBooks. A more valuable improvement to note is that before completing the program five staff members rated themselves as ‘Very Confident’ in downloading eBooks, and after the program sixteen rated themselves as ‘Very Confident’. This is a successful outcome for the library service from a customer service perspective, as it means that library users are going to encounter staff that can provide high level of assistance when they initially ask for help.

*Question Three: Before completing the 2015 SOLID Program, how confident were you in giving library users basic iPad assistance?*

Not Confident	Fairly Confident	Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident	Weighted Average
15.15%	24.24%	24.24%	24.24%	12.12%	2.94
5	8	8	8	4	

*Question Four: How confident are you now giving library users basic iPad assistance?*

Not Confident	Fairly Confident	Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident	Weighted Average
2.94%	8.82%	17.65%	50.00%	20.59%	3.76
1	3	6	17	7	

This shows an increase of 0.82 in staff confidence in giving library users with basic iPad assistance. Again the most pleasing improvement to note is that eight staff rated themselves as ‘Very Confident’ in this area, which more than doubled to seventeen after the program.

*Question Five: How frequently would you access eLibrary resources to assist with a reference enquiry before completing the 2015 SOLID Program?*

Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Almost every inquiry	Every enquiry	Weighted Average
3.03%	57.58%	33.33%	6.06%	0.00	2.82
1	19	11	2		

*Question Six: How frequently do you access eLibrary resources now to assist with a reference enquiry?*

Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Almost every inquiry	Every enquiry	Weighted Average
0.00	32.35%	44.12%	20.59%	2.94%	3.59
	11	15	7	1	

This shows an increase of 0.77. And the most positive result is the increase from two staff members saying they would use eLibrary resources ‘Almost Every Enquiry’ to seven after the program.

These statistics show an obvious improvement, and the written feedback provides additional support that the goals of the program were achieved:

Goal: Standardised level of knowledge for all staff:

*“Even though I was already quite familiar with the topics covered in the SOLID modules, I very much appreciated the clarity of explanation on everything throughout! It was perfectly pitched allowing for learners of every level to further learn!”*

Goal: Shared learning environment:

*“I liked that we had plenty of time and that we weren’t being marked. I was happy to work through it with a team mate who didn’t feel confident and was quite worried about it.”*

Goal: Utilising RFID environment:

*“After the SOLID program, I increasingly use the library website to assist customers and also give them more of a framework to explore when they go home. When talking to customers about using our apps, I ask them to tell me which kind of device they have, then show them the specific help files on the website for that kind of device so they can sit down with a step-by-step guide.”*

Goal: Improve digital literacy:

*“I use the eLibrary resources more often now to answer reference inquiries. I use some of the skills that I learned in tablet basics to help people that I have had in 'Hands on Technology”*

*“[I use] e books and e audio very frequently, explaining and demonstrating 'e-library' section of website to patrons when signing up membership.”*

LEARNINGS AND OUTCOMES

In the creation and delivering the program, a number of practices were used that made the SOLID program a success:

- creating a positive learning environment

- rewarding and encouraging staff
- support from library management

At all times there was an attitude of ensuring the program was seen as enjoyable, that it was non-punitive and that staff weren't being judged or competence levels assessed. Of the seventy three staff at Stonnington Libraries, sixty seven completed the whole five modules. Of those that did not complete the whole program, they all did some or a majority of the work. This was seen as a positive outcome as they learnt some of the information, which benefited their learning.

After the program was completed the staff's work was acknowledged and rewarded. Library Management approved the purchase of 8GB USBs, printed with the SOLID acronym and sent to each staff member with a personalised card. The feedback from this was positive and staff commented that it made them feel valued. All staff received the USB, including those that did not complete the entire program.



The support by library management in purchasing the USBs also represents another learning, that support from management and team leaders is important for the success of the program. Stonnington Libraries management lead by also completing the modules, and supporting team leaders to ensure staff had the time to complete the work. Casual staff hours were budgeted for to allow permanent staff extra time off desk to complete their work if required.

Creating a shared ownership of the program is a learning that will be built into the SOLID program in future. As Aberhart had the initial idea, she also wrote all five modules and administrated the program. This was a time-consuming work commitment, and at times it was difficult for Aberhart to balance her other work commitments. For other public libraries considering running a similar program it is recommended to share this work load amongst staff members, a practical way to do this would be a have a team of people create the modules. This would also increase the shared learning experience in that other staff members would be seen as champions for the program.

## CONCLUSION

The SOLID program has been implemented into the ongoing staff professional development program at Stonnington Libraries. It was not a 'one-off' program. It will be run bi-annually in the same five module format on the topics of Tablet Basics, eBooks & eAudiobooks, eReference, Social Media and Online Media. It was decided to do the program every second year to not cause over-exposure or staff fatigue for the program. It is thought that allowing two years will ensure that technology has developed and the training is kept relevant and up to date with emerging trends.

When the SOLID program is rolled out in 2017, a team of senior librarians will be responsible for creating the modules, and Aberhart will coordinate the program.

The SOLID program is available to all public libraries under a Creative Commons license. Aberhart presented the SOLID program at the SLV Future is Now Mini-Conference in Melbourne in May 2016 and seven Victorian library services asked for the program. There is hope and potential for Victorian public library services to collaborate on a training program similar to SOLID in future.

The Modules are accessible via the Drop-box link : <http://tinyurl.com/jrfyj39>

Stonnington Libraries have concluded that the SOLID program was a successful and useful way for the Library Service to address the training needs of its staff. Rather than generic training, the fact that the program was tailored to the Library Service and created by a team member meant it was useful and relevant. The practices of being positive, rewarding and creating shared learning environment added to the work culture of the library service as a whole. It is been encouraging to see the ongoing interest and conversation that continues around the program in 2016. Staff consistently refer back to the modules and it is often heard in conversations and meetings: “what we learnt in SOLID”. Stonnington Libraries now has a consistent and effective professional development program to ensure the staff’s skills continue to develop with the rapidly evolving online environment at present and into the future.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- create a positive learning environment
- encourage and reward staff
- ensure support from library management
- create shared learning environment by all staff completing in same time period
- ensure all staff do program
- undertake a whole staff survey prior to undertaking program
- share ownership and workload with a designated team
- consider delivering on shared network drive (over cloud based software)

## REFERENCES

*City of Stonnington, Annual report 2014-2015*, viewed on 18 May, 2016,

<http://www.stonnington.vic.gov.au/Vision/Annual-Report>

[About us: ANZ 23 Mobile Things](#), retrieved 16 May 2016

[23 mobile things: exploring the potential of mobile tools for delivering library services](#),

2013, retrieved 16 May, 2016

Moses, Asher, *Tablets to reach 70% of Australians by 2017*, 2013, retrieved 12 April

2016, [http://www.smh.com.au/digital-life/digital-life-news/tablets-to-reach-70-of-](http://www.smh.com.au/digital-life/digital-life-news/tablets-to-reach-70-of-australians-by-2017)

[australians-by-2017](http://www.smh.com.au/digital-life/digital-life-news/tablets-to-reach-70-of-australians-by-2017)

Peake, Ross, *Digital first strategy shifting public services online*, retrieved 20 April

2016, [http://www.smh.com.au/it-pro/government-it/digital-first-strategy-shifting-](http://www.smh.com.au/it-pro/government-it/digital-first-strategy-shifting-public-services-online)

[public-services-online](http://www.smh.com.au/it-pro/government-it/digital-first-strategy-shifting-public-services-online)

## Appendix 1

### Module One: Tablet Basics

- Installing and troubleshooting apps
- Camera & Photos
- Apple ID & iCloud
- Location Services and Privacy

### Module Two: eBooks & eAudiobooks

- eBooks with Borrowbox
- eAudiobooks with Bolinda Digital and Borrowbox
- eBooks with Axis 360
- eBooks and eReaders ( including DRM, Adobe Digital Editions & Adobe ID)

### Module Three: eReference

- eReference inquiries
- LOTE enquiry
- Online Readers Advisory
- Digital Literary and eGov

### Module Four: Social Media

- Facebook

- Twitter
- Pinterest
- Instagram

### Module Five: Online Media

- Zinio
- Freegal
- beamafilm
- Streaming Services (Netflix and Spotify)

### Appendix 2

*Please take some time to think about this module and provide feedback. What did you like/dislike? What did you find most useful? How would you apply what you have learned to your work practice?*

*What areas in {module title} would you like to learn more about?*

