

21 November 2013

## AUSLIB CONFERENCE PAPER LIBRARIES INSIDEOUT

This document has been prepared by Peter Moeck Architect in association with Gregg Mitchell Director of Orbit Design and Groundplay and Scott Reed Director of Resource Furniture. The purpose is to reflect on six years of jointly executed projects for 6 libraries across 3 states in reference to the how we work and the lessons learnt.

### From the Inside Out

The clear message to convey in this Paper is that the design of Library and Community Hubs must be approached from the inside out. Unfortunately, we continue to observe numerous examples of beautiful architectural boxes that bear no relationship to the functions that they accommodate. We need to understand the fundamentals of how people connect and engage with the environments that they inhabit.

Our experience is that design solutions that are grounded in a holistic understanding of the values and objectives that support the brief requirements, can lead to well placed and resolved functional and spatial relationships that make the resultant building and facilities easy to use because the flow is intuitive.

### Collaborative Approach

We believe a collaborative multi-disciplinary approach that combines architecture and interiors, branding and identity and purpose designed fitout provides the combination of skills needed to consider design solutions, alternatives and options in a holistic manner. This approach delivers excellent value at the outset of a commission to define the brief, illustrate concepts and provide a likely order of costs.

### Virtual Tour

Our multi media presentation will provide a virtual tour of six projects undertaken in collaboration or individually by the parties to this Paper. This will illustrate redevelopments that have delivered outstanding results for their local communities. The portfolio is listed below.

Mount Gambier Library SA	1900sqm new build	Brown Falconer, Orbit, Groundplay, Resource	2009
Strathalbyn Library SA	1000sqm adaptive reuse	Brown Falconer, Orbit, Groundplay, Resource	2011
Port Pirie Library SA	1100sqm additions	Kirkbride Boyce, Orbit, Groundplay, Resource	2010
Whitlam Library NSW	870sqm internal rework	Flightpath, Orbit, Resource	2013
City Library Melbourne VIC	2400sqm internal rework	City of Melbourne, Orbit, Resource	2012
Boyd Southbank VIC	1500sqm adaptive reuse	City of Melbourne, Orbit, Resource	2012

### Spatial Literacy

We believe that good design can have a transformative impact on the lives of those who use the space because the environments that we inhabit affect how we learn and live. Our skill is that we are spatially literate. This means that we are competent and confident in the shaping of space because we can use the perspectives of space to communicate, reason and problem solve. We think and visualise in three dimensions.

Spatial literacy is a powerful tool. It is fundamental to problem solving in a variety of contexts that include life, physical and intellectual spaces. It is the ability to move from description through analysis to inference and solution and then to reinvent and reshape. This is a shared journey with our clients, with whom we develop trust and rapport based on open and honest communication.

### Building Social Capital

The objective common to all of the community projects that we are involved with is to build the social capital of the local and regional communities. There is an increasing desire to collocate a range of diverse services and collaborate across disciplines.

The Library and Community Hub model that provides access to a range of services for every member of a community of every age and ability is an increasingly desired outcome. It has great potential to build social connections, address early childhood literacy, provide access to health, multicultural and youth services and life long learning.

This endeavour is successful when the vision is developed in close consultation with all stakeholders led by committed and passionate locals who will own the process and the outcomes. This local team who seek to constantly reinvent programs and seek new opportunities to broaden the engagement will build community.

Like anything that is successful, it is about the right people. In this context, the spaces that are created need to accommodate flexibility and adaptability in order to respond to constant change.

## Identity

Creating an identity for a Library offers an opportunity to build connections with community because it provides people with a sense of pride and ownership. Library and community purpose buildings endure. They should be physically placed at the heart of a community.

The development of a brand that connects with built form and fitout is an opportunity to reflect what is unique about the location and to express the purpose of the project. The results that are seamlessly integrated often reflect an early start that connects with the ideas and elements identified during a Feasibility Study.

First impressions are important. The physical and visual presence of the architectural solution and brand become recognised and linked to place and purpose. This identity can develop a life of its own because the seamless integration of the brand across signage, way finding, library card, newsletters, website, promotional materials, sponsored vehicle, mobile library, posters, bookmarks and nametags sends an impressive, consistent and professional marketing message.

Identity does not need to look to the past for inspiration or seek to be site or regionally specific. It can be a simple idea well expressed, a notion or a thread. It can tell a story and be something that takes time to discover. The audience is diverse. The role of the designer is to tease out something new and unique to enhance and engage with the community experience.

## Inspired Fitout

Innovation arises from collaboration when ideas are openly shared. By actively listening and contributing, a cohesive team can work together and try new approaches, test ideas, adapt and continuously improve existing systems.

The catalyst for the Inform range developed by Resource Furniture was the Mount Gambier Library. The team passionately believed that there was a better way to store, display and move collections shelving. The development process included the detailed review of ergonomics, understanding the psychology of retailing and how to create an environment that was intuitive to use with clear and consistent visual communication. This project has become a benchmark for an inspiring, acclaimed and uncompromised fitout.

To seek new ideas and to challenge what becomes the accepted practice is how great outcomes are born. A collective of architectural, identity and furniture design disciplines has been formed. We enjoy working together and we operate individually and collaboratively. Go to [www.librariesinsideout.com.au](http://www.librariesinsideout.com.au) for more.

## Lessons Learned

Everything we do is about people. We must place ourselves in the shoes, hearts and minds of those for whom we are problem solving.

The one constant is change. The ability to visualise new solutions to the challenges of tomorrow will require spatial literacy to be an integral part of the tool kit.

We need to work from the inside out. Design testing of solutions is only useful when we get down to the details. Placing furniture in spaces demonstrates alternative uses, flow patterns and functional relationships. This needs to happen at the outset of the project and the building envelope that encloses the activities needs to support and reflect the functions it contains so that the entire package is easy and intuitive to use.

We believe in continuous improvement. Being curious and inquisitive drives best practice outcomes.

Innovation happens when we hack and reshape to problem solve and this is particularly successful across disciplines. We will take on the challenge to invent, prototype, test, improve and implement new ideas. We recognise that failure is part of this process and how we learn. We are not afraid to try, to imagine, to discover and to explore.

## Useful Information

The Council of Educational Facility Planners International [CEFPI] Australasia Region is holding the annual conference in Adelaide from 25-28 May 2014. The themes for this conference are Upside Down, Inside Out and Joined Up. A stream within the latter theme is to explore Libraries in different contexts as Community Living Room, City Library, School Library and Tertiary Learning Centre and Student Hub by undertaking a city walk. Peter Moeck Architect and CEFPI SA Chapter Chair will precede this walking tour with a virtual tour of acclaimed Mount Gambier Library. Refer to [www.cefpi.com.au](http://www.cefpi.com.au) for further details.