Conceptualising the learning organisation: Creating a maturity framework to develop a shared understanding of the library's role in literacy and learning

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Abstract:

Although they sit outside the formal education sector, libraries are intrinsically centres of learning where people can engage with knowledge and ideas and acquire the literacy skills that are essential for active participation in an increasingly digital society. In Australia, National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) has acknowledged the need to not only better understand the general concept of 'the library as a learning institution', but also to help the individual NSLA libraries specifically identify their capabilities in this arena.   The NSLA Literacy and Learning project aimed to improve the members' organisational comprehension and practice as learning institutions and to help them conceptualise their ability to deliver literacy and learning programs that will benefit their staff and their communities.

The NSLA concept of 'learning institution' encompassed the two discrete lenses: the internal lens of the library's own organisational understanding and practice, and the external lens of the clients who engage in the literacy and learning programs delivered by the library. The ultimate goal was to develop a matrix which could enable libraries to assess their perceived levels of maturity as learning institutions along a continuum of 'emerging' to 'active' capabilities. The matrix should also serve as a tool for shared understanding about the NSLA's own strategic directions in the literacy and learning space. This case study

documents the evolving process of developing a learning institution maturity framework for libraries that considers individual, team and organisational learning, as well as clients' interactions with the organisation, with the goal of developing a framework that has the potential to measure the value of learning and growth in both the library's staff and the library's communities.

Keywords: Libraries, Learning, Learning Organisations, Maturity Model, Australia

Introduction

Learning is intrinsic to human existence. Not a day passes without us learning, be it by absorbing new information or developing a new skill (OECD, n.d.). Learning does not need to be directed or delivered through a classroom or training session; we learn through experience and through the interests we develop. Within the context of the 'emergent curriculum' of the Early Years Learning Framework, Australian early childhood experts recognise the importance of children developing their learning skills through play (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2009). Beyond this, the OECD has adopted the notion of learning 'from cradle to grave' to support and encourage lifelong learning, which is understood to incorporate three different forms of learning: formal, non-formal and informal, which provide definitions for learning throughout the school years and beyond.

> *Formal learning* is "always organised and structured, and has learning objectives. From the learner's standpoint, it is always intentional: ie the learner's explicit objective is to gain knowledge, skills and/or competences" (OECD, n.d.). Formal learning is usually delivered by a qualified teacher and leads to some kind of recognised qualification.

> *Non-formal learning* is "organised and can have learning objectives" (OECD, n.d.). These organised sessions are often delivered by teachers or individuals with demonstrated experience in the subject or field. Examples of this style of learning are activities such as Scouts or special interest courses that do not result in certification or qualification (Eaton, 2010).

> *Informal learning* is defined as: "never organised, [it] has no set objective in terms of learning outcomes and is never intentional from the learner's standpoint. Often it is referred to as learning by experience or just as experience" (OECD, n.d.).

It is through non-formal and informal learning channels that libraries have an important role to play. In 2008 the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) in the United Kingdom released the document 'Inspiring learning – an improvement framework for museums, libraries and archives' (MLA, 2008). Libraries and other cultural institutions were encouraged to rethink the way they deliver services to the community, and to focus on becoming learning institutions. Likewise, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (ILMS) in the United States released the document 'Museums, libraries and 21st century skills' in 2009 (ILMS, 2009). This also focussed on supporting museums and libraries in envisioning and defining their roles as institutions of learning in the 21st century.

As information and communications technologies continue to develop, the role of libraries continues to evolve. It is argued that, far from making libraries and librarians obsolete, the Internet has made them increasingly necessary. Libraries provide access to 'reliable' and authoritative resources which are critical in any learning environment and they help learners of all ages develop the information literacy skills required to function effectively in an online world. Libraries also offer the perfect space for informal learning: as community focused organisations, they attract a varied audience and offer learning opportunities through resources and programs, with the expertise of staff to support those searching for knowledge. Accordingly, they offer both the physical and virtual environments in which non-formal and informal learning is possible.

Libraries throughout Australia are demonstrating that they have a role in lifelong learning. Many libraries are engaged in both non-formal and informal learning by offering training services or providing environments and opportunities for learning. Libraries are often in a position to provide venues for other institutions to offer non-formal programs, as well as developing and running their own programs. With the roll out of the National Broadband Network (NBN) across Australia several libraries have become 'Digital Hubs', receiving government funding to provide training in information access at various levels and with a wide range of devices. At the local level, public libraries, such as Gungahlin Library in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), provide feature collections for special interests and "rooms for learning opportunities for the community, e.g. creative writing, playgroups, seminars and workshops" (ACT Libraries, 2013). At the national level, a significant project has been undertaken by National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) to conceptualise the library as a learning organisation and to create a maturity framework to develop a shared understanding of the library's role in literacy and learning. The research work has been coordinated by the NSLA Literacy and Learning Group.

The role of learning in National and State Libraries Australasia

National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) represents the national libraries of Australia and New Zealand, and the State and Territory libraries of Australia. These libraries work collaboratively to strengthen the information infrastructure in Australia and New Zealand, to share expertise and work together on joint projects to achieve more than each library could on its own. NSLA also provides a single voice for members to governments, stakeholders and to other parts of the library, cultural and education sectors. NSLA operates under a Memorandum of Understanding (National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA), n.d.) which defines the objectives, the conditions, rights, practices and responsibilities of NSLA Members.

In June 2007, NSLA published a paper titled 'The Big Bang: Creating the new library universe' (NSLA, 2007) which outlined the case for change for the library sector, with the impact of new technologies, and set out an agenda for NSLA libraries to pursue in order to encourage 'flexibility, rapid response and innovation within the library sector" (NSLA, 2007). The title of the paper was, itself, a provocation, echoing Schumpeter's notion of 'creative destruction' (Schumpeter, 1942) and a number of challenges were presented which could be almost read as a manifesto for change:

- Access is our primary driver
- Digital is mainstream
- No job will be unchanged

- New web technologies and community digital content are shaping user expectations and behaviour
- Some things we have always done, we will no longer do
- Experimentation and risk are necessary
- People want services and spaces to be welcoming and easy to use. They want to be independent.

A year later NSLA published 'Re-imagining library services - strategic plan' which outlined a new vision: "In collaboration, the National, State and Territory Libraries of Australia and New Zealand will become leaders in empowering people to create, discover, use and transform our collections, content and global information resources" (NSLA, 2008). It also articulated a series of ten projects based on three core strategies:

- One Library will put people at the centre. We will redefine services to provide a consistent and easy experience across our libraries
- Transforming Our Culture will change our culture and workplace. We will promote a new culture which supports new services, innovation and emerging technologies
- Accessible Content sees collaboration as the key to liberating our content. We will empower everyone to find, share and create content.

There was a level of pragmatism to the project list: it was very content-oriented, collection-based, and focussed on building NSLA libraries' capacities to respond to the challenges of delivering library resources in a networked world. The project work represented the foundation stones on which true 21st century library services could be built.

By late 2010, the initial ten projects had progressed well and some were retired, thus creating space for new projects and working groups. Significantly, a Literacy and Learning Group (LLG) was initiated to identify opportunities for NSLA libraries to take a leadership role in literacy and learning. At the LLG's project initiation workshop in May 2011, the group's challenge was to identify issues at a whole of society level where NSLA libraries could genuinely influence positive and productive outcomes. This was achieved through the process of defining critical questions, articulating problems at a societal level and reviewing assumed causal links in order to create a priority list of strategies and actions. The critical issues were distilled to the following statements:

- Society does not have a 'habit of learning'
- Society thinks that learning only happens in a formal learning environment
- Low literacy leads to low participation in society.

A large part of this process was predicated on the question 'why NSLA libraries?' – meaning what specific and unique value could NSLA libraries add to the very rich ecosystem of community learning? The key ways in which libraries could make a difference were identified as:

- Libraries are more than transactional organisations – they can support new habits of learning. They are trusted and non-judgemental places to create and experiment; they are open warehouses where opportunities can be tested and new skills explored. They can encourage risk-taking, playfulness and new ideas. They can promote stories, wonder and surprise
- In libraries, there is no hierarchy of learning; all learning is valid and valued, and

- Libraries can actively connect people to other agencies and pathways.

NSLA's updated strategy, 'Re-imagining Libraries 2012-2016', released in May 2012, acknowledged that "the first plan reshaped services, developed skills and capabilities, established shared strategic directions, and built a trusted framework for collaborative work"(NSLA, 2012a). The context for the update included changes to publishing in the 'joined-up' digital world', the drive for greater efficiency and effectiveness, building partnerships and changing expectations in a world where "service development is adventurous and agile". Importantly, from the perspective of the new Literacy and Learning Group, the new strategy highlighted the sharpening focus on the central role of libraries in enabling people to learn and to develop the skills to engage with knowledge and ideas and to participate actively in the digital society.

This led to the development of a 'Position statement on literacy and learning'(NSLA, 2012b), referencing Howard Rheingold's definition of literacy as "a skill that includes not only the individual ability to decode and encode in a medium, but also the social ability to use the medium effectively in concert with others" (Rheingold, 2012) and stating that "NSLA libraries are well positioned to bring learning networks together, acting as catalysts for dynamic community enterprise" (NSLA, 2012b). The LLG's work "combines advocacy (promoting the important role of libraries in both formal and informal education) with development of organisational capability as learning organisations, and best practice for library programs and partnerships" (NSLA, 2011).

The idea for a 'maturity matrix' to support the development of NSLA libraries' capabilities as learning organisations sprang almost fully formed from the LLG's collective imagination at its face-to-face meeting in June 2012. The initial discussions identified that the process should be self-evaluated and reviewed by peers, that it should scale from emerging to developing to active learning institution, and that it would need the 'bifocal' view of an internal and a public lens. The matrix concept was formalised into a Work Package document with the aim of improving "NSLA Libraries' organisational understanding and practice as learning institutions and their ability to deliver literacy and learning programs to staff and public"(NSLA, 2012c). The desired outcomes were to develop a greater understanding of each NSLA library's capability on the continuum of development from 'emerging' to 'active' learning institution, to consider the potential pathways towards maturity and to introduce improved strategies for evaluating the libraries' literacy and learning programs.

Learning organisations: a review of the literature

As a first step in the Literacy and Learning Group's learning organisations project, an exploratory literature review was undertaken. This review commenced with a broad examination of the concept of the 'learning organisation' in order to gain an understanding of the guiding principles for organisational learning and the attributes of successful learning organisations. A further avenue of investigation was the theme of frameworks for organisational learning, to discover what assessment tools and measurement instruments may contribute to a deeper understanding of maturity models.

The concept of the 'learning organisation' emerged around 30 years ago in response to the need for companies to develop strategies for sustainable competitive advantage and continuous improvement in an increasingly unpredictable business environment (Skyrme,

2010). Garavan (1997) argued that the business world of the 1980s was characterised by the drive for increased efficiencies, resulting in leaner organisations which proved to have little capacity to manage the technical and financial challenges they faced. This led to the move towards organisational development and growth, with a strong emphasis on staff development and individual learning. The attributes of a successful organisation were understood to encompass flexibility, employee participation, teamwork, staff development and continuous learning. Although many of the resources on learning organisations were published in the 1990s, in recent years there has been a renewed interest in organisational development as a 'future proofing' strategy to encourage creativity and innovation, to manage dynamic change and to enhance workforce capabilities.

A key definition of the learning organisation is presented by Peter Senge, whose seminal text 'The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization' (Senge, 1990, 2006) has guided both academic and commercial interests in organisational learning and knowledge development.   According to Senge, learning organisations are:

> Organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to learn together.
>
> (Senge, 1990, p.3)

In the literature, however, there is no singular notion of 'the learning organisation': Senge's propositions represent "a composite theoretical ideal" (Garavan, 1997, p. 19), while other writers focus on different components of the organisation, such as the human resources construct of learning (Pedlar, Burgoyne, & Boydell, 1991), the competitiveness that it might achieve (Hayes, Wheelwright, & Clark, 1988; Slater & Narver, 1995), or the specific functions of the business itself (Lessem, 1990). While early explorations concentrated on the corporate entity, there was clearly considerable diversity in terms of both the size of companies and their organisational climate or culture. Further complexity was added as a result of a lack of understanding about the relationships between the organisation and its members, and the dynamics of teamwork.   There was very little clarity about the nature of the learning process, with questions focusing on: What is learning? Are there different levels of learning? How does an organisation facilitate or inhibit learning (Jones & Hendry, 1992).

Senge identified five 'disciplines', ie a series of principles and practices, that underpin the learning organisation: Personal mastery, Mental models, Shared vision, Team learning, and Systems thinking. A strong belief in people as the active force of the organisation is central to the discipline of personal mastery: the organisation's commitment to and its capacity for learning can be no greater than that of its individual members: "organizations learn only through individuals who learn" (Senge, 1990, p.139).   Mental models are the deeply ingrained assumptions and generalisations that influence the ways individuals view, understand and interpret the world. In a learning organisation, diverse views are not only recognised and respected, but also encouraged to foster a clearer understanding of interrelationships and patterns of change across the organisation.   New ways of viewing the environment can then lead to the development of a shared vision. This collective vision is rooted in the diverse personal visions which are synthesised so that people are connected and bound together by a common aspiration, creating a spark and level of excitement which lifts up the whole organisation. This then forms the foundation for team learning: talented teams are made up of talented individuals, and through the alignment and development of the

team's capabilities there is the potential to achieve the collective goals. Systems thinking represents the 'fifth discipline': this involves the ability to see the interconnections between the different elements, to integrate them and to find novel ways to solve problems and implement change.

The interest in exploring applied research approaches led to the work of Pearn, Roderick and Mulrooney (1995), whose ideas build on Senge's theories. The authors concurred that there was value in understanding how organisations as a whole can learn. It was acknowledged that while some organisations were much better at learning than others, learning was critical to an organisation's ability to survive and thrive into the future (Pearn et al., 1995). A model was introduced to consider two key dimensions: the general environment and structure of the organisation, and the people. The two dimensions were further expanded into six factors which Pearn et al believed were integral to the learning organisation: Inspired learners, Nurturing culture, Vision for the future, Encouragement of learning, Supportive management, and Transforming structures. There was a strong focus on the enhancers and support mechanisms that facilitate sustained continuous learning, and on the inhibitors or blocks to learning that need to be identified and removed. As an acronym, these six dimensions generated the INVEST model (Pearn et al., 1995). The six factors were mapped to a maturity framework with four progressive levels (foundation, evolving, developing and mature) which could be used to conceptualise the individual learning organisation. The authors devised a set of tools which provided "processes, exercises, and associated instruments… designed (and tested) to allow an organisation or group to examine the concept, make out a case in their own terms, and build an understanding of what form of learning organisation they wish, or indeed need, to be" (Pearn & Mulrooney, 1995, p.5).

The building blocks required to establish and sustain a learning organisation have been widely discussed in the literature. Garvin (1993) believed that the learning organisation should be meaningful, manageable and measurable (the three Ms); he underscored the critical importance of shared understandings about the concept, clear operational guidelines for practice and effective tools for measurement to assess the organisation's rate and level of learning. The need for an inbuilt and ongoing process of evaluation was stressed by Gardiner and Whiting (1997), while benchmarking was promoted by Bennett and O'Brien (1994) and Phillips (2003). It has been argued that there are significant challenges in moving from theory to practice without appropriate measurement tools. "Measurements must be taken to assess the current culture, learning attitudes and learning disabilities in an organization, in order to determine which actions to take to manage the progression towards a learning culture" (Campbell & Cairns, 1994, p.10).

There are a number of instruments that have been or are being used to gather data about the attributes of learning organisations, including:

- Learning Organization Survey (LOS) (Garvin, Edmonson & Gino, 2008)
- Learning Environment Questionnaire (LEQ) (Armstrong & Foley, 2003)
- Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ) (Marsick & Watkins, 2003; Nthurubele, 2011; O'Neil, 2003; Watkins & Marsick, 1997)
- Learning Company Questionnaire (LCQ) (Pedlar, Burgoyne, & Boydell, 1997)
- Learning Climate Questionnaire (LCQ) (Pearn & Mulrooney, 1995)
- Learning Performance Index (LPI) (Conference Board of Canada, n.d.)

Typically, the instruments encompass a large number of statements using a Likert scale to capture the responses. The categories of learning organisation attributes may be weighted to reflect the varying levels of significance of each factor. These instruments can play an important role in helping those working with the concept of the learning organisation to 'reduce to practice': Calvert, Mobley and Marshall (1994) acknowledged that it was an enormous task to just visualise what a learning organisation might look like, and the ability to create and sustain learning organisation is even more daunting.

One pragmatic approach has been the development of maturity models which can articulate the different stages that organisations may progress through on their journey to becoming a mature learning organisation. The maturity models present the characteristics of a learning organisation in a matrix format, with the incremental levels moving from a neutral base point where all organisations begin, through the different stages of development. In a cross-institutional study in the UK construction industry, Chinowsky, Molenaar and Realph (2007) proposed a five level maturity model to map the characteristics of leadership, infrastructure, communication, education and culture across the dimensions of the organisation, the community (professional groups or communities of practice within the organisation) and the individual. A four-level framework for learning and development was developed by Mallon, Clarey and Vickers (2012): the High Impact Learning Organization (HILO) Maturity Model defines the levels as Incidental Training, Training and Development Excellence, Talent and Performance Improvement, and Organizational Capability Development. The NSLA project team also examined the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2012) which comprises seven standards grouped across three domains of teaching, mapped to four different career stages. The value of a maturity model lies in the ability for organisations to evaluate where they currently stand and to identify the areas that require attention and investment to achieve their goals.

Despite the fact that interest in libraries as learning organisations emerged in the late 1990s, there is a paucity of literature on this topic. Rowley (1997) applied the principles of learning organisation theories to the library context, stressing the role of adult learning, Kolb's learning cycle and individual learning styles. Rowley raised questions about creating the ethos of the 'corporate' learning organisation in the public sector environment where libraries are situated, as well as the challenges of aligning the LO concepts to the 'shamrock' organisational structure of the typical library, with core workers, contract workers and flexible workers. The efforts of libraries to consider themselves learning organisations were outlined by Giesecke and McNeil (2004), with a detailed case study presented on the work undertaken at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Library to utilise Senge's model of the five disciplines, the development of a shared vision and the promotion of individual and group learning, to "create the learning organization" which might help the library adapt to a rapidly changing environment.

Fowler (1998) and Tan and Higgins (2002) also addressed the issue of the academic library as a learning organisation. The university library was examined as a model for innovation, with specific attention paid to the factors of continuous learning, team learning and shared vision across three levels of library activity: individual, departmental and organisational (Fowler, 1998). Tan and Higgins (2002) sought to discover whether the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) Library in Singapore could be categorised as a learning organisation. In this exploratory study the researchers developed a 15-factor instrument drawn from earlier research activities. It was felt that although the study helped library management identify some of the organisation's strengths and weaknesses, there were some

research limitations that limited its validity. Beyond this, a number of other papers have considered various aspects of learning organisations within the library context (Arabito, 2004; Jain & Mutula, 2006; Marcum, 1996; Riggs, 1997; Sutherland, 2003; Wittkopf, 1995; Worrell, 1995), but these writings tend to be more descriptive than analytical.

The process of developing the maturity model

The NSLA project managers prepared a detailed project brief to guide the development of the maturity model (NSLA, 2012c). As noted earlier, the maturity model was to be designed as a tool to help NSLA libraries' improve their organisational understanding and practice as learning institutions and their enhance their ability to deliver literacy and learning programs to staff and to the public. It was agreed that the notion of the library as learning institution encompassed:

- Engagement in the delivery of literacy and learning programs within and for its constituent communities, and
- Constantly evolving organisational understanding and practice, whereby the adaptive power of learning can drive the delivery of the best outcomes for the library's communities.

The working group believed that the development of maturity model could help achieve a number of objectives within the NSLA Literacy and Learning Work Group Package:

- To increase the understanding of each NSLA library's capability on the continuum from 'emergent' to 'active' learning institution
- To recommend strategies to improve the NSLA libraries' capability and maturity as learning institutions
- To enhance the evaluation of literacy and learning programs
- To more effectively disseminate current exemplary practice and to stimulate ideas for future practice.

It was further anticipated that the maturity framework would directly contribute to the continued contribution of NSLA libraries to literacy and learning programs in the community by enabling the libraries to create toolkits, develop learning plans, to build and strengthen partnerships and to advocate to government and key stakeholders (NSLA, 2012a).

The literature review directly informed the work undertaken to develop the learning institution maturity framework. The project team noted that organisational learning theorists and practitioners are united in their views that, while there are processes and values that are common to the notion of the learning organisation, there "is no right model" nor any "cookbook approach" for the ideal learning organisation. Senge states that "it has always been clear that there are no magic bullets for building learning organisations: no formulas, no three steps, no seven ways" (2006, p.283). While the uniqueness of every context was clearly stressed in the literature, it was also found that the focus was predominantly on internal factors within corporate entities. The paucity of discussion about the outward facing features of service organisations in the public and not-for-profit sectors led to concerns about the relevance of the commercially targeted focus of the greater part of the literature on learning organisations. The working group firmly believed that context of library services required a dual lens that could encompass both the internal organisational perspectives and the external community perspectives.

The complexity of the task was acknowledged: the multi-layered concept of a learning organisation in the business sector needed to be modified for the library environment and distilled into a "simple, elegant, logical and memorable framework" (NSLA, 2012b). It could be argued that the iterative nature of the project activities effectively modelled the concept of an evolving learning organisation. The design of the framework built on the preliminary desk research which investigated and examined the principles, values, models and characteristics of learning organisations. The findings were summarised and then progressively explored and discussed by members of the working group through conference calls, Skype meetings and face-to-face discussions. The structure of the framework commenced with the five disciplines presented by Senge (1990) (Systems thinking, Personal mastery, Mental models, Shared vision and Team learning), viewed from the three different perspectives of individuals, teams and the organisation, then mapped incrementally to four levels of maturity. These four levels were initially guided by an adaptation of the work undertaken by Chinowsky et al (2007). This draft framework was then further refined through an analysis of the INVEST model (Pearn & Mulrooney, 1995) (Inspired learners, Nurturing culture, Vision for the future, Enhanced learning, Supportive management, Transforming structures), to be mapped to four levels of maturity (Foundation, Evolving, Developing and Mature).

The INVEST model presupposes an understanding of Senge's concepts. The underlying principles of this model reflect four main themes:

- A vision of the future which guides – and indeed inspires – all the stakeholders, including employees, partners, clients and communities
- The organisational capacity for renewal and transformation, so that change is achieved continuously (ie without waiting for a crisis to loom or occur which could generate a sense of panic)
- A commitment to encouraging and sustaining the learning of all members of the organisation: 'our people are our greatest asset'
- The creation of an organisation that provides increasing satisfaction and fulfilment to all stakeholders and supports the sharing of common values.

As the NSLA model was further refined, the working group kept their sights on the dual perspectives of both staff and the public. Firstly, the matrix was developed for the internal lens to consider the library staff, the library as an organisation, and its organisational culture. Secondly, attention was paid to the external lens to contemplate the library's interface with the wider communities it serves and the programs and services it provides. Significantly, at a critical phase of the project there was an opportunity for members of the group to come together to workshop the evolving framework, to deconstruct some of the elements and to share ideas about how to best articulate the dual lenses of the internal and community perspectives. As the workshop was held at the State Library of Queensland in Brisbane, members of the library's learning team were invited to participate as critical friends who could provide a valuable 'real world' viewpoint as they considered the relevance of the research activities to their own practice as community learning facilitators.

The workshop was successful in enabling the group to build shared understandings of the issues and to resolve a number of perplexing issues. There had been a degree of consternation associated with a perceived blurring of boundaries between the six elements of the INVEST model, for example between 'Inspired learners' and 'Enhanced learning', between 'Vision for the future' and 'Nurturing culture', and between 'Supportive

management' and 'Transforming structures'. It was agreed that the model could be simplified by reducing the six elements to three:

- Learning and learners
- Vision and culture
- Management and structure.

The nomenclature for the four level framework was also modified to reflect the three dimensions of higher learning: knowing, doing and being (Barnett & Coate, 2005), with the foundation level presented as 'starting'. The workshop was particularly helpful in enabling the team to identify and describe the attributes to be included in the external lens, with specific attention paid to marrying the structure and language of the external lens with those of the internal lens.

The final version of the NSLA Learning Institutions Maturity Model was drafted in late February 2013 and is presented in Appendix 1. The maturity model is envisaged to be a living document which will continue to evolve over time.

Conclusion

The development of the NSLA Learning Organisation Maturity Model has been a stimulating journey undertaken collaboratively by the representatives of national and state libraries who are responsible for literacy and learning programs, and enhanced by the additional dimension of in-depth research into the concept of learning organisations. The iterative process of creating the maturity matrix over a period of months led the working group to the position where they could introduce it to the NSLA member libraries. In order to test the maturity model, each member of the LLG agreed to trial the matrix in some way in their organisation. It was clear that each library would have a slightly different application for the tool. Some believed that the internal lens would be the best starting point, as it is challenging to be recognised as a learning institution if the learning principles are not applied in day to day practice. The flexibility of the matrix ensures it can be applied at an individual or team level, as well as at the organisational level. In Western Australia the matrix was offered not only to the State Library of Western Australia, but also to the public library network to trial. This approach promised to give a clear indication of how the matrix might be applied in the public library setting by those who have not contributed to its development. When introduced to ACT Libraries, the matrix immediately sparked interesting discussion about how different parts of the same organisation may actually be at different levels of maturity. In the coming months, the LLG will focus on developing further strategies to monitor and evaluate the application of the maturity model in order to build an evidence base which will help member libraries move incrementally through the matrix and develop as learning organisations.

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Domains	Starting	Knowing	Doing	Being
Learning and learners				
Internal	• The concept of 'learning' is generally equated with 'training' • Few resources are allocated for learning and development • Staff perceive operational activities to be more important than learning • Staff feel time poor but recognise their need to grow and develop • There is a general desire to build understanding and to do things differently	• There is an awareness of the value of learning • Staff are included in the dialogue about identifying learning needs • The need for learning and development is acknowledged, but the area is under-resourced • The complex nature of learning is recognised	• There is a clear understanding of the importance of meeting learning needs across the library • Individuals assume responsibility for their own learning • Appropriate resources are allocated to meet these needs • Processes are in place to support formal learning activities • The value of informal learning is recognised • Technology, tools and processes are used to support the sharing of knowledge and expertise	• People represent the active force of the library • Learning and development are integral to the library's future • The ability to question, challenge, experiment and reflect is accepted practice • All staff have their own personal development plans • Opportunities for learning and mentoring are embedded in the daily operations of the library
External	• The library focuses on transactional service provision for individual, passive clients • Library staff act as gatekeepers to expert service • A general sense of arrogance prevails: 'we are here for you, you will come to us' • Complacent attitudes block the ability to address the barriers that exist • There is a desire to build understanding and to do things differently	• Members of the community are aware of their specific learning needs • Community learning needs are identified through dialogue and consultation • Staff work with clients to develop options and choices for new learning opportunities • The library is recognised as a venue where community members can meet and share ideas; it is viewed as a good place to learn	• Library staff believe they can contribute to other people's learning • The library is recognised as contributing to the achievement of community goals • Partnerships are developed to support strategies for collaboration within the community • There are opportunities to work with community groups to co-create collective learning programs	• The library works with the community: programs and services are underpinned by community consultation • Community learning is embedded in all aspects of the library's services and programs • Multiple learning approaches are available: onsite, offsite, online, participative, collaborative and social • The community supports and advocates for the library as a centre of formal and informal learning

Domains	Starting	Knowing	Doing	Being
Vision and culture				
Internal	• The library is aware of the need for a new vision and mission in order to move away from 'traditional' library services • There is an expressed desire to align individual personal vision with the library's vision • People are aware that there are multiple ways of looking at complex issues • Staff are keen to build an organisational culture that enables knowledge and experience to be shared across the organisation	• The organisation's current culture is discussed and critiqued • The library develops and implements a vision that explicitly includes the concept of learning • Organisational culture encourages people to share best practices, to help one another and to learn collectively	• The organisational culture is open, with staff productively sharing their knowledge and ideas • Organisational values and goals are articulated across all levels of the library • Staff at all levels understand that ideas are improved when shared • New ideas are championed and tested • There is respect, trust and interaction between senior managers	• There is full commitment to the development of people in order to achieve the goal of organisational excellence • The library has a clear, evidence-based understanding of the vision • Staff at all levels support and contribute to the culture of openness, learning and continuous improvement • Commitment to the vision is reflected in the energy, passion, excitement and sense of responsibility
External	• The library has limited appeal to many community groups • The existing boundaries between the library and the community are questioned • Staff believe that there is a role for the library to play in delivering learning programs to the community • There is an awareness that there is more than one way of looking at complex issues and that the views of the community should be canvassed	• The vision values clients as potential partners, with increased focus on their learning needs • There is open discussion about the value of collaboration with the community • Staff and clients work together to explore ideas for programs and services	• There are high levels of respect, trust and interaction between the community and library staff • The library actively works to foster and support community partnerships • The community regularly approaches the library with ideas for new programs and services	• The vision extends beyond the library and is shared with and embraced by the community • The library's values and behaviours drive and support community learning • The library is valued as an active force in the community; it helps to solve community problems, with evidence that programs and services make a real difference to people's lives

Domains	Starting	Knowing	Doing	Being
Management and structure				
Internal	- The organisational structure reflects functional hierarchies - Library operations are conducted in silos - Managers focus on monitoring and controlling the business processes - Staff have no sense of responsibility for the results of the team or the organisation - There is a desire to explore new organisational structures	- Managers understand the dynamic complexity of the organisation and consider the interconnections between the different areas of the organisation - Managers are receptive to new ideas and are responsive to the processes of change - Managers foster a climate where personal learning is valued and the status quo can be challenged	- Focus on the organisational factors that stimulate improved performance, to create a working environment that is rewarding and satisfying - Responsibilities are shared and decision making is devolved to the appropriate staff - Managers openly discuss learning needs with their staff - Structures and tools allow staff to collaborate and effectively integrate new knowledge into the library	- An organisational structure which fosters autonomy and multi-functional team working - Managers actively support and encourage their own and other people's continuous learning - The management team ensures that appropriate structures and resources empower all staff to contribute to achieving the library's vision
External	- The potential for increased client engagement is recognised - The library realises that it needs to change to meet community needs - The library introduces formal feedback mechanisms to obtain client feedback	- Staff have the opportunity to work directly with clients to understand their needs - The library accepts that clients have the right to influence service levels - The library regularly seeks feedback about community expectations	- Managers recognise that staff engagement is integral to successful community learning - Staff skills and expertise are aligned with clients' learning needs - Resource allocation supports community-based learning activities - The contribution of clients is actively sought and is highly valued	- Flexible, client-focused organisational structures - Library engages directly with the community through dialogue and creative problem solving - Clients are valued as collaborative creators of information resources and co-developers of knowledge - Evaluation and impact assessment are embedded in planning and delivery of programs and services