




Live at the Library – Forging geographic gaps and advancing community engagement

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Abstract:

State Library of Queensland would like to share the story of *Live at the Library*, a transformative initiative providing students and teachers in regional and remote communities with real-time access to library collections, resources, and staff expertise. Since its launch in October 2022, more than 10,000 students have participated in over 300 workshops, highlighting the program's success in bridging geographical gaps and increasing engagement with regional schools. This paper documents the journey and insights gained during the implementation of *Live at the Library*, offering a valuable template for libraries seeking to develop or enhance their own virtual engagement programs.

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State Library of Queensland assumes the crucial responsibility of ensuring all Queenslanders have equitable access to its valuable resources and collections, regardless of their geographic location. Though not the most expansive state geographically, in terms of land occupancy Queensland is indeed Australia's largest state, with an occupied area greater than that of the whole of Western Australia. It is also the most decentralised state, with most of its population scattered along the eastern coastline over a distance of 2,250 km. As such, State Library uniquely grapples with the challenge of serving a significant portion of its population residing outside the Greater Brisbane capital (*Fitzgerald et al., 2024*).

Live at the Library (*State Library of Queensland, 2023a*) stands as a transformative initiative that not only extends State Library's reach to remote and regional communities but also affords students real-time access to the library's extensive collections, resources, and the expertise of its staff. In this endeavour, State Library demonstrates its unwavering commitment to fostering innovation, sustainability, and community engagement through the provision of cutting-edge library services.

Conceived as an extension of the successful *Curriculum Connect* website (*State Library of Queensland, 2023*), a centralised resource platform that offers teacher-reviewed, Queensland-focused, and curriculum-aligned learning materials, the *Live at the Library* program virtually connects regional students with State Library's collections and expert staff in real-time. Through a series of interactive workshops, accommodating both primary and secondary students across all year levels, *Live at the Library* workshops allow exploration of State Library content from the convenience of their own classrooms, while adding Queensland stories and curriculum aligned content to enhance and localise their learning. Advanced technology, including the WolfVision EYE 14 visualiser camera, further enhances the "live" experience by providing access to high-resolution visuals and remote interactivity engagement options, such as zooming in and out on State Library content from their own computer.

As of 29 March 2024, since its launch in October 2022, *Live at the Library* has attracted interest from 91 schools across Queensland (5% of total operational schools), 83% of which are in regional areas as seen in Figure 1, resulting in over 6,700 students participating in more than 200 workshops (see Table 1.).



Figure 1
Year 1 – *Live at the Library* regional reach

My Google Maps
Live at the Library Bookings (*Google, n.d.*)

Table 1.
Program outcomes at 29 March 2024

	2022		2023			2024			
Delivery	T4	T1	T2	T3	T4	T1	TOTAL	Comment	
Workshops booked	48	24	76	49	36	34	267		
Workshops delivered	44	23	69	44	33	34	247	93% delivery low cancellation	
Students reached	1047	603	1585	1244	1130	1159	6768		
Schools									
Number of unique schools engaged (of 1814 Operational schools in Queensland)							91	5% Qld Schools	
New school workshops	22	6	35	10	11	7	91		
Returning school workshops	22	17	34	34	22	27	156	63% rebook rate	
Workshops									
Primary workshops	30	3	10	15	7	5	70		
Junior secondary workshops	12	11	18	16	21	7	85		
Senior secondary workshops	2	9	41	13	5	22	92		
Regional reach									
Regional workshops	39	22	56	37	25	27	206		
Metropolitan workshops	5	1	13	7	8	7	41		

With a 63% repeat booking rate, this program model is forging new relationships and extending engagement with regional schools, increasing the utilisation of State Library of Queensland’s *Curriculum Connect* resources, connecting teachers with curriculum-aligned programs and professional development opportunities, offering information literacy support for schools lacking qualified school librarians, introducing students and educators to State Library’s digital resources, promoting library membership, and increasing the use of digital collections in regional Queensland.

What is *Live at the Library*?

Live at the Library, is State Library of Queensland’s virtual schools’ engagement offer conceived to expand State Library’s reach to regional and remote communities and provide regional students the opportunity to engage with collections, resources and expert staff in real-time. Delivered through Microsoft Teams, *Live at the Library* profiles State Library content and staff expertise through the delivery of curriculum-aligned live online workshops for educators and students (primary and secondary years).

Queensland is a state in Australia. It is nearly five times the size of Japan, seven times the size of Great Britain, and two and a half times the size of Texas. As reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, results of the 2021 national census, found that just over half of Queensland’s population of over 5 million, lived outside of the capital city area of Greater Brisbane (*Snapshot of Queensland*, n.d.).

With a commitment to serve all Queenslanders, digital technology continues to provide new and exciting opportunities for State Library of Queensland to extend its reach and engagement across such a vast state. Engaging students and teachers with State Library's collections and services, always a priority for State Library, now has a renewed focus, to support regional connections for teachers and their students with State Library's content and a growing offer for schools. This has been developed as a phased approach.

The first phase focused on the development of *Curriculum Connect*, a website to house State Library's learning resources to make finding free, trusted, teacher-reviewed, classroom-ready, curriculum-aligned resources simple. With rich content and learning activities focused on History, Social Sciences, Visual Arts, Design, Science, English and embedding First Nations perspectives into the classroom, the website's primary audience has been teachers and educators.

Phase two of State Library's schools offer and the objective of *Live at the Library* was to provide engaging virtual opportunities to connect regional students to State Library of Queensland's collections and experienced staff. In its pilot offer, two unique experiences were delivered in Term 4, 2022 (October-November 2022) – targeting primary and lower-secondary students. Each workshop ran for 50 minutes and could be scheduled to best align with the lesson times of the school making the booking. Schools chose a morning or afternoon workshop on the date of their choice, nominated a block of time that best suited their class schedule and then selected their preferred workshop experience.

During the pilot offer, the two experiences available for booking were:

1. Live at the Library – Virtual Research experience

Designed to build research and information literacy skills of students while introducing them to the extensive online resources available through a free State Library membership. Workshops were personalised with the inclusion of collection items from State Library's archives, such as yearbooks, maps and photographs, relating to the town/history of the school, as demonstrated in the photos of a workshop delivered to The Gums State School (325km from State Library) in Figure 2.

Figure 2

*The Gums State School students looking at local history annuals held at State Library of Queensland.
Note: Images shared with consent by The Gums State School.*



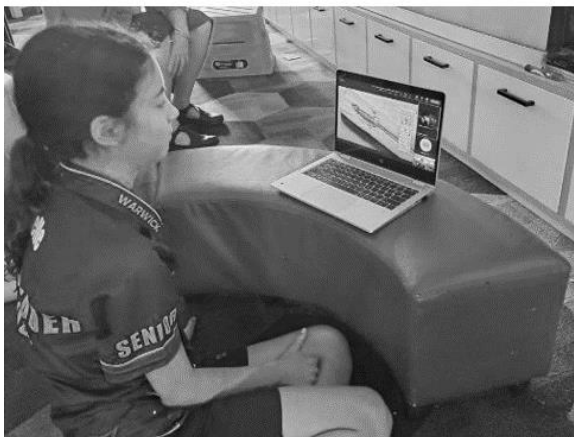
2. Live at the Library – Virtual Collection Curiosities experience

Essentially a virtual show and tell experience, this workshop also introduced the online resources offered by State Library coupled with the opportunity to explore and get ‘up close’ with a curated selection of State Library’s rare and curious items, including the world’s tiniest book, an Ancient Sumerian tablet and envelope, dated 2028 BCE, and pieces of trench art, demonstrating that State Library holds a wide variety of items in its collection in addition to books. Figure 3 shows students at St. Mary’s School in Warwick (156km from State Library) participating in a pilot Virtual Collection Curiosities experience.

Figure 3.

Students at St Mary’s School in Warwick participating in a Virtual Collection Curiosities experience and interacting with collection items through the WolfVision EYE 14 visualiser camera.

Note: Images shared with consent by St. Mary’s School, Warwick.



As seen in Figure 3 above, and Figure 4 below, these experiences were further enhanced by the incorporation of the WolfVision EYE 14 visualiser camera [\(GmbH, n.d.\)](#). Selected for its high-resolution features, including 1080pFHD resolution, 30 frames per second, 980 lines of resolution, 56x zoom and its ability to be controlled remotely, this technology has opened doors for regional students, by providing them the opportunity to view State Library’s rare and original collection items, such as manuscripts, realia and items typically only seen in a curated white gloves experience from their own classroom. In a library setting, a white gloves experience denotes the meticulous care and reverence accorded to precious collections. It involves handling delicate or rare materials with the utmost caution, often

necessitating the use of white gloves to prevent damage from oils and dirt, and to preserve the integrity and longevity of items being viewed. In donning white gloves, staff and visitors demonstrate respect for the historical, cultural, or academic significance of the collections they interact with, ensuring their safeguarding for future generations.

Enabling remote camera control and zoom functionality for State Library content introduces a heightened level of interactivity, fostering a sense of being physically present at State Library. This feature offers a truly intimate and immersive experience, allowing users to zoom in and out, revealing intricate details that are often overlooked by the naked eye, increasing access to collections while preserving their integrity.

Figure 4.

Ancient Sumerian tablet and envelope, dated 2028 BCE, State Library of Queensland



During the pilot phase, 44 *Live at the Library* workshops were delivered to 22 Queensland schools, over a period of 8 weeks, attaining a programming reach of over 9,552 km. Eighteen of the pilot schools, (88%), were regionally based (more than 100 km from Brisbane), demonstrating the keen interest of regional schools in the program. Participation numbers of 1,047 exceeded projected targets by 5%. Teachers and students provided consistently positive feedback on the *Live at the Library* workshops. Teachers noted appreciation for the program for a range of reasons including that it engaged students in history with artefacts that their students would never (otherwise) see as they have minimal chances to visit a museum or library due to their remote location, as evidenced in The Gum's State School Teaching Principal, Ros Bougore's statement below:

"Students really enjoyed the workshops; they enjoyed the historical artefacts. The workshop was appropriate to age level. Technology worked well. Presenters were pleasant, friendly, helpful and enthusiastic. Students were engaged, especially when the reference was made to the historical book about our school. 10, 10, 10, 10! Four students who watched workshops gave the following rating out of 10. From my point of view – well-presented, engaging, informative and I would like to see more."

An evolving offer

In response to feedback and the desire to create new workshops for Junior Secondary, and Senior Secondary student classrooms, the pilot offer has now evolved to include a suite of curriculum-linked *Live at the Library* workshops tailorable to classroom-specific topics, as demonstrated in Figure 5 below. For each workshop, students receive a customised research guide with direct links to the best online resources available through State Library for completing their assessment linked to the nominated workshop topic.

Figure 5.
New *Live at the Library* workshops offered from Term 1, 2023.



Research strategies: Years 10-12

Students learn practical skills and research strategies to guide and complete their QCAA research-based internal assessments.

This interactive workshop is perfect for student learning in any subject area. We take your students on a deep dive into using State Library's One Search catalogue to access an extensive suite of national and international journals, academic databases, eBooks, encyclopedias, news archives, and engaging collections of thousands of images, letters, artworks, diaries and artefacts to interrogate as sources.

Your students can ask questions and gain advice for completing their specific research inquiry, as we teach your class :

- how to access and navigate our catalogue and databases to find high quality sources
- practical research skills like how to use strategic keywords, filters and tags to discover and access information effectively.
- strategies for selecting and critically analysing sources.

[Book now](#)

Historical thinking: Years 7-10

In these interactive, Q&A style workshops, students gain real-world experience in analysing primary and secondary sources from State Library's heritage collection on the topics they are studying in the Australian Curriculum: History.

Students learn how to think like historians, discover practical strategies for their research, and develop their capability around ACARA's concepts for developing historical understanding:

- evidence
- continuity and change
- cause and effect
- significance
- perspectives
- interpretations and contestability.



The *Live at the Library* technology is also being used for event-style workshops, such as Professional Development webinars for teachers and special event broadcasts including author talks and events on commemorative days, such as Anzac Day, – increasing capacity for engagement with State Library of Queensland.

Typically, workshops are delivered one to one; one program officer at State Library to one school class. The addition of event style workshops to State Library's *Live at the Library* offer increases potential for reach and engagement by allowing multiple schools, multiple classes and multiple students/teachers to engage with State Library content together.

Each *Live at the Library* experience continues to be underpinned by the following drivers to:

- extend State Library of Queensland's engagement with regional and remote schools.
- increase the use of the *Curriculum Connect* platform and resources by teachers and educators.
- connect teachers to quality programs, linked to curriculum, which are relevant and engaging for students.
- increase information literacy support for students and teachers at schools that may not have qualified school librarians.
- introduce students and teachers to State Library's digital offer for Queensland residents, available for free with State Library membership.
- encourage and increase membership to State Library.
- increase usage of digital collections by students and teachers in regional Queensland.
- offer engaging experiences that capitalise on the *Live at the Library* format by personalising experiences for individual school groups.

The success of *Live at the Library* is its uniqueness.

Following the first anniversary of *Live at the Library*, State Library conducted a review of the program, integrating feedback from teachers and other stakeholders.

Review conclusions included:

- *Success is the delivery of a unique offer.* *Live at the Library* is distinct in offering teachers the opportunity to book a workshop on the topic their students are studying in their class, at the time of their workshop. This has proven highly valuable to students as they come to the workshop with background knowledge on the topic, which helps them engage with the collection items. In addition, they can ask questions and get specific help for the research assessment they are working on.
- *The opportunity to book a free workshop during their normal scheduled lesson time is valued.* This enables teachers and their students to participate in a reputable learning experience without the complexity involved in booking an offsite excursion or an alternate online experience that has to be booked at a fixed time.
- *The research guides make it easy for students to begin using State Library resources.* For each workshop, a student research guide is produced providing students with direct links to the best online content available for research into the topic they are currently studying. These guides are also made available on State Library's website (*State Library of Queensland, 2024.*) for all teachers to download and use individually with their classes.
- *Primary students have continued to enjoy our popular Collection Curiosities and Research Skills workshops.* The addition of a brand-new range of speciality workshops based on the History and Social Sciences (HASS) curriculum for each year level has strengthened the offer for Primary school teachers and their students.

- *The inclusion of Queensland content to lesson planning and learning.* It is the addition of Queensland stories, artefacts and locally held historical items that truly positions *Live at the Library* as invaluable, differentiating these workshops from anything similar in the market, making this offer unique for Queensland schools.
- *The ability to tailor workshops to address a broad range of Secondary research topics is highly valued.* More than sixty different topics from the Australian Curriculum (*Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2024*) and Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) Senior Syllabuses (*Queensland Government, n.d.*) have been covered in *Live at the Library* workshops, as noted in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6.
Some of the topics explored through *Live at Library* in 2023

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5th Century Athens • African-American civil rights movement, 1954–1968 • Alexander the Great • Ancient Australia • Ancient Rome • Australian Celebrations • Australian Identity • Australian Indigenous rights movement since 1967 • Black Death • Brisbane's live music scene • Building Australian Communities • China, 1931-1976 • Civil War and the breakdown of the Republic • Cleopatra • Coastal landforms • Cold War, 1945–1991 • Colonial Australia • Crime and sentencing in QLD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental movements since the 1960s • Establishment of a business • Family Life in Australia • First Australians and the First Fleet • Free Trade Agreements • Frontier Wars of Australia, 1788-1930s • Funerary Practices of New Kingdom Egypt • Funerary Practices of Old Kingdom Egypt • Globalisation • History of K'Gari. • Housing market trends and the Australian economy • Independence movement in India, 1857–1947 • Indigenous Rights and Freedoms • Individual behaviour • Investigating Significantly Historical Individuals • Iranian Revolution, 1977–1979 • Israel, 1948–1993 • Korean War • Making and transforming the Australian Nation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media representations of global issues • Medieval Europe • Negligence • Our Australian Nation • Persian Wars • Polynesian expansion across the Pacific • Radical Islamist terrorism since 1984 • Russian Revolution, 1905-1920s • Senior Research Strategies • Spanish Conquest of the Americas • Spartan Society, 700–371 BCE • Supply chain of chocolate • The Ancient World • The Industrial Revolution • The influence of others • Vikings • Women's movement since 1893 • World War 1
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Looking to go Live at your Library? Set-up, skills, resources, development and upkeep.

At the time of implementation, technologies employed in the delivery of State Library of Queensland's *Live at the Library* workshops drew from expertise across the academic world, interrogating best practice in university environments. Virtual reading rooms were not known to State Library, and Research Libraries UK was yet to release its Virtual Reading Rooms (VRRs) Toolkit (Cheung, 2023).

The technology obtained for *Live at the Library* program delivery was acquired with input from State Library's Audio-Visual technicians. All components were recommended and chosen based on their expertise in online delivery and engagement using Zoom during the COVID-19 pandemic, with plans for implementation on Teams post-COVID-19.

The following technical purchases are provided for the reader's consideration:

- *Camera acquisition* - WolfVision EYE 14 visualiser camera
Research initially undertaken to deliver on *Live at the Library* objectives identified the opportunity to leverage the technology of a high-zoom camera to engage students with State Library's collections.

This included an online meeting with Robert MacLean, Assistant Librarian, Archives & Special Collections, University of Glasgow Library. During this meeting, Robert shared the use of the WolfVision EYE 14 visualiser camera and its potential as a virtual research tool due to its ability to zoom in closely, with clarity, to collection material to enable close scrutiny.

Generally used in a lecture theatre, to broadcast finite items to a wider audience, following this meeting it was easy to see how incorporating this camera into our offer would be beneficial to our remote audiences. It should now be noted that similar equipment is recommended by Research Libraries UK if establishing a virtual reading room (Cheung, 2023a).

- *Broadcasting platform*

A review of the preferred platform used by Department of Education Queensland led the team to choose Microsoft Teams as the broadcasting platform to schools.

- *Mobile Broadcasting equipment*

To support the delivery of workshops, State Library procured a mobile broadcasting kit enabling presenters to enhance the webinar style of delivery to incorporate multiple cameras/inputs into workshop delivery.

State Library of Queensland's kit includes:

- A Blackmagic Design Studio Camera 4K Plus G2 (presenter camera)
- WolfVision EYE 14 camera (collection items camera)
- 3 x HP Laptops (12th Gen Intel(R) Core(TM) i5-1235U, 1.30 GH, 16GB RAM)
- A Blackmagic Design ATEM Mini Pro (live switcher)(4 inputs)
- 3 x lights (Nanlite LumiPad 25 High Output Bi-Colour Soft LED Panel)
- Sennheiser EW 112P G4 Wireless Omni Lavalier Microphone System
- A 72" Mobile TV Screen
- Supporting cables, tripod and light stands

Though the WolfVision EYE 14 camera can be used without the broadcasting kit, the ability to cue content and real-time switch between inputs increases the feeling of live delivery as seen in Figures 7-10.

Figure 7.
Mobile broadcasting kit

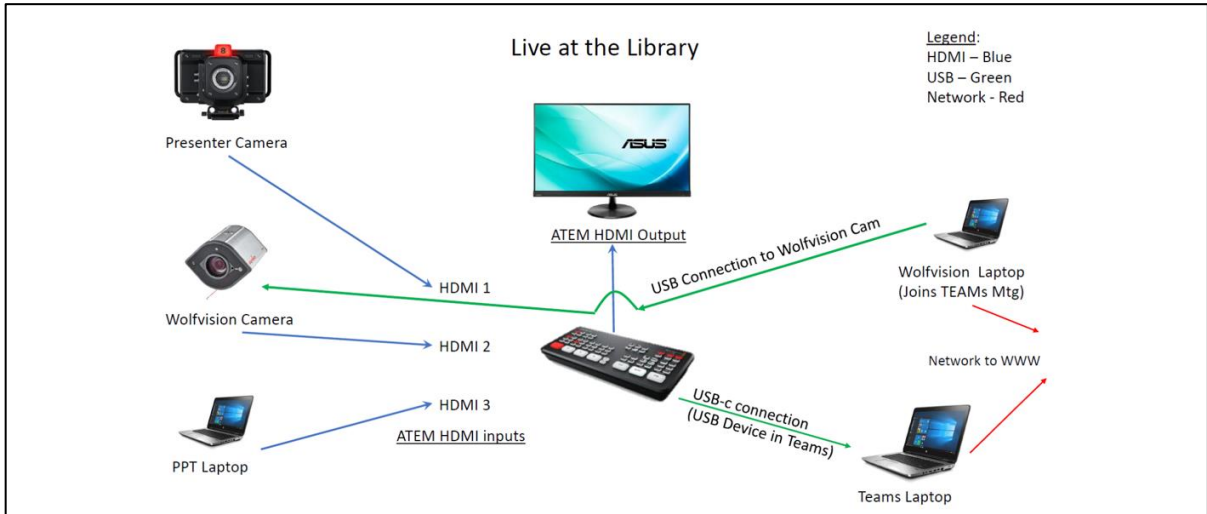


Figure 8.
4 inputs, plus sound monitoring.
Allows presenters to cue content before switching to live streaming.

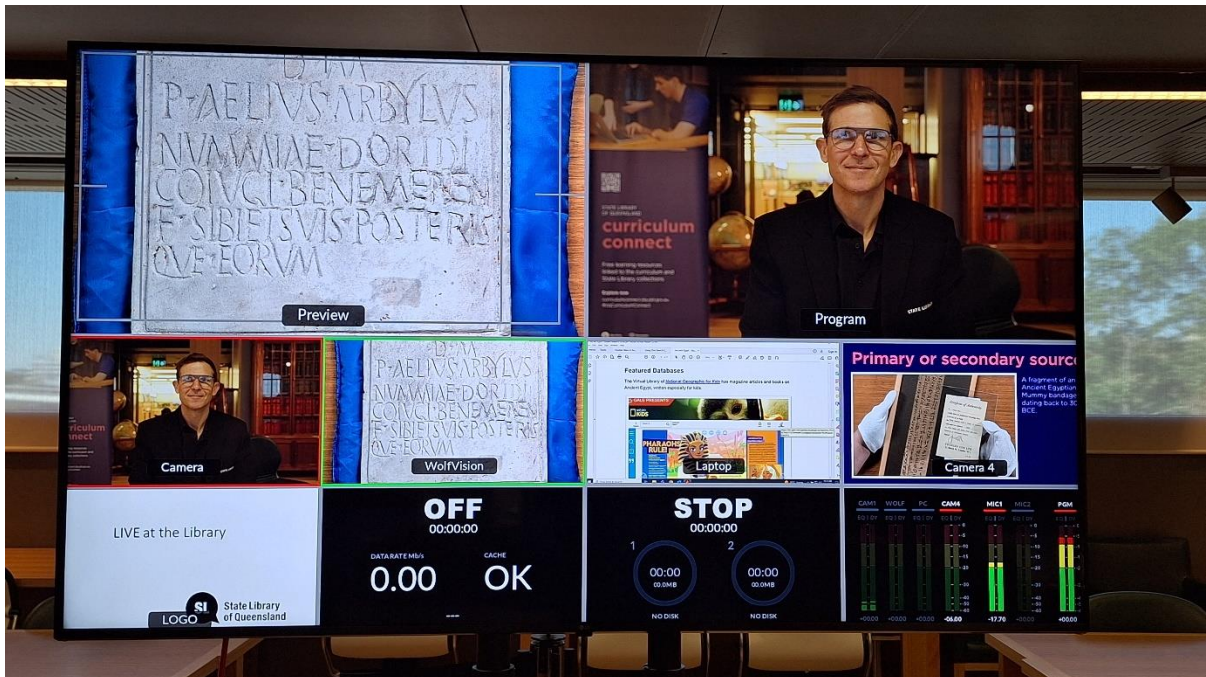


Figure 9.
Collection items under the WolfVision EYE 14 visualiser camera



Figure 10.
LIVE interaction with students



Figure 11.

Live at the Library backdrop

Enclosed space with glass windows provides the perfect LIVE backdrop – like a morning television show, as patrons pass by students can see their workshop is being broadcast LIVE from the library.



Considerations for implementation

Adapting State Library of Queensland's *Live at the Library* program would depend on a variety of factors such as the resources and technologies already available at other libraries, the size and scope of a library's collections, and their target audiences. Notwithstanding these considerations, the *Live at the Library* program provides a useful template and framework that could be adapted by other libraries looking to develop their own virtual engagement programs.

Other libraries could consider the following when implementing or adapting the *Live at the Library* program:

- Develop a clear objective and strategy for the virtual engagement program, including identifying the target audience and the key resources and expertise that will be showcased.
- Identify the appropriate technology and tools that will be used for delivering the virtual workshops.
- Provide training for staff on delivering live virtual workshops, handling collection items virtually, and using technology for remote delivery.
- Establish partnerships with schools and educators to promote the virtual engagement program and identify opportunities for collaboration.
- Develop a plan for evaluating the effectiveness and impact of the virtual engagement program on the target audience.

Additionally, the costs associated with acquiring the technology used by State Library to deliver its *Live at the Library* workshops need to be considered. While a suggested budget of \$15,000 AUD to acquire a similar technology set-up for *Live at the Library* delivery provides a good starting point, libraries may also need to consider these additional considerations when looking to implement or adopt the project:

- **Staffing and training:** Libraries would need to consider staffing and training requirements for *Live at the Library*, such as hiring staff with the necessary skills to manage and deliver the virtual workshops, and training existing staff to use the technology and tools required for delivery. Wages are not included in the suggested \$15,000 budget and would need to be factored in as additional costings, pending on number of workshops being developed and delivered.
- **Curriculum and content development:** Libraries would need to develop and curate curriculum-aligned content and resources for their *Live at the Library* workshops, which may require a significant investment of time and resources.
- **Outreach and marketing:** Libraries would need to consider how they will reach out to schools and educators and other identified audiences to promote their *Live at the Library* experiences, and how they will market the program to their target audiences.
- **Technical support:** Libraries would need to provide technical support for schools and educators and any additional audiences identified, who may encounter technical difficulties during delivery of *Live at the Library* workshops.
- **Accessibility:** Libraries would need to ensure that their *Live at the Library* workshops are accessible to all students, including those with disabilities or special needs, by providing closed captioning, audio description, or other accommodations as needed.
- **Budgeting and funding:** In addition to costs noted above, libraries would need to secure funding for the ongoing maintenance and operation of *Live at the Library*, as well as any additional costs that may arise from expanding or enhancing the program.
- **Space and handling:** Is there place for a dedicated space in one's library to create a broadcasting centre, eliminating the need for a mobile tech broadcasting kit or will libraries need to consider a set-up/pack-down model for delivery? Other considerations for the space include environmental constraints for handling collection items to ensure best practice when integrating collections into workshops.

Though an easy model to potentially replicate, implementing or adopting State Library of Queensland's *Live at the Library* program initially presents a significant investment of time, resources, and staff expertise, however, the potential benefits in terms of expanding library services and reaching underserved communities may make it a worthwhile endeavour.

State Library is enthusiastic about sharing the journey and insights gained from the implementation of the *Live at the Library* program and envision that their success will empower libraries to dare to harness technology's transformative potential, to bridge geographical divides, ensure educational equity, and enrich the library experience for all, irrespective of their location, thereby creating value for the communities they serve.

State Library is willing to share its knowledge and learnings gained through the start-up and development of the *Live at the Library* offer to interested libraries, and hopes that the model created provides a good starting point and example of how other libraries can use technology and virtual engagement to promote equity, inclusion and accessibility, and enhance access to their collections and resources.

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