

# The Law Library of Victoria Strategy 2016-2021

Updated May 2018



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# Foreword

In early 2016, as chair of the Law Library of Victoria Committee, it was my privilege to launch a five-year strategy to guide the Library's activities and priorities from 2016-2021. Now in 2018, I am delighted to present an updated version of that strategy, made possible and necessary by significant progress and achievements at the Library over the past two years.

This progress was confirmed by an independent assessment of the Library's performance against the Strategy 2016-2021, by former QUT academic and special library consultant Dr Gillian Hallam.

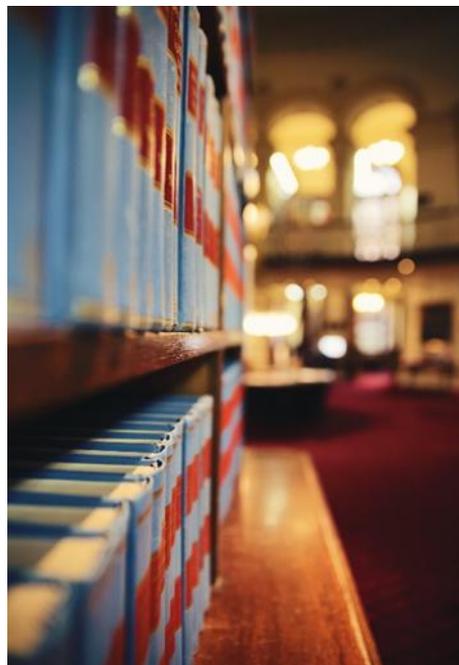
Following on from that assessment, which followed two years of hard work and concerted effort on the part of Law Library staff, the Library's director sought to update the strategy to better reflect plans for the years ahead that build on this strong foundation. The updated strategy contained in this document was approved by the Law Library Committee on 23 May 2018.

As we progress through 2018, the Committee is focused on supporting the Library through the next critical phase in its evolution – to obtain independent legal status for the Law Library of Victoria, rather than the current arrangement which prohibits the Library from entering into contracts and other factors that hamper the full realisation of its vision to be the preferred resource for the Victorian legal community and an aspirational model for other libraries.

This is a bold vision, but the Library staff have already shown in spades their willingness to pursue a vision that would see the Law Library of Victoria become a multi-dimensional, dynamic and modern resource that caters to the judiciary and legal profession like no other.

The uniting of all jurisdictional libraries to create one central library that anyone can visit, supported by libraries within the Victorian courts and VCAT, was only the first phase in the evolution of the Law Library of Victoria. As we embark on the next critical phase, this updated Strategy 2016-21 will be an important guide.

**The Honourable Justice Cameron Macaulay**  
**Chair Law Library of Victoria Committee**



## Director's letter

This refresh of the Law Library strategy, which will guide our work until 2021, acknowledges the progress we've made since 2016 when the strategy was launched, and the rapidly-changing environment we work within.

In the past two years we've seen use of our services increase 67 per cent and visitor numbers increase 90 per cent. We have refreshed our website and since then visits to our website have doubled. We've also reached our 1000 followers Twitter milestone.



These milestones, achievements and changes in demand for our service, and many other factors, caused us to reflect on how we needed to update the strategy's objectives and actions. Having clear direction for our Library over the coming years, flexible enough to respond to opportunities and changes in our broader environment, is critical in developing a sustainable, customer-centric and modern library service.

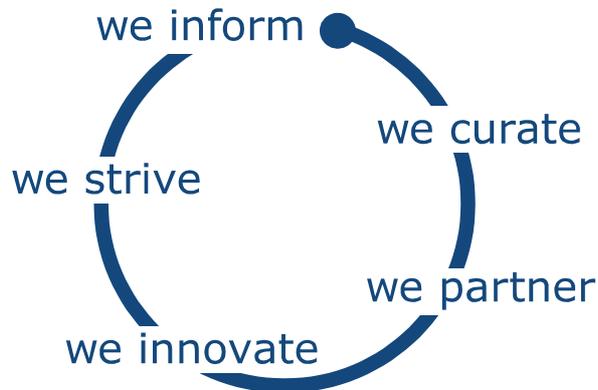
As we move towards a time when the Library has independent legal status, enabling us to enter into contracts in our own right, employ our own staff and other benefits, it's easy to forget how far we've come already. Since the Law Library of Victoria commenced operations in 2014, we have:

- created a Committee to oversee the management of the Library
- created a staff structure with all court library staff reporting to the Director, Law Library of Victoria
- negotiated and managed publication purchasing on behalf of the courts
- created and adopted a Collection Policy
- documented a framework outlining the library services available to different categories of users, such as judicial officers, Court Services Victoria staff and external members of the legal profession.

I would like to thank the Law Library Committee for their support and guidance and the dedicated team of Law Librarians who every day aspire to improve the way we offer our services and perform our role as custodians of a vast collection of resources. With their ongoing commitment and plans in progress to seek independent legal status for the Library, I feel inspired and confident that the strategy outlined in this document will deliver on its intentions.

**Ms Laurelle M Atkinson**  
**Director, Law Library of Victoria**

# Values



# Vision

We are the preferred resource for the Victorian legal community

We are an aspirational model for other libraries

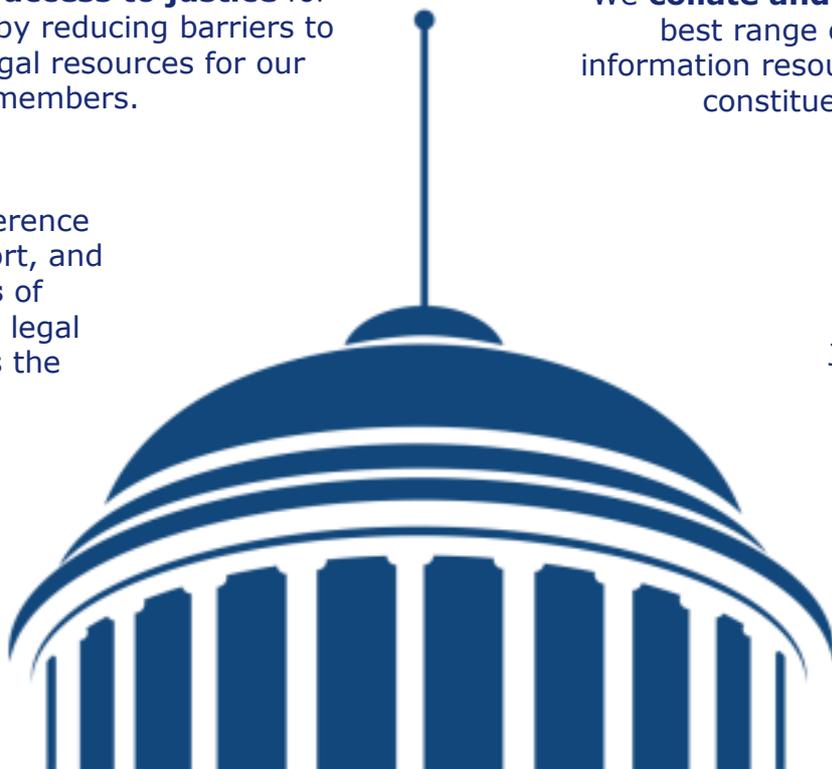
# Mission

We **improve access to justice** for all Victorians by reducing barriers to access to legal resources for our members.

We **collate and curate** the best range of legal information resources for our constituents.

We assist with reference and research support, and **improve skills** of members in using legal resources across the community.

We provide **services that support** the administration of justice in Victoria.



# Environment

The Law Library of Victoria aims to be a modern and comprehensive legal information resource for the judiciary and VCAT and the legal profession.

We aim to increase access to justice and support the administration of justice in Victoria by reducing the cost of legal information, enabling access to our renowned collection and by delivering outstanding services and engagement with the community.

This helps create a more informed and skilled legal profession with lower overheads and reduced costs to clients, improving the affordability of legal professional help for all Victorians.

## Challenges

### **Need for independent status for the Law Library of Victoria**

There has been strong support for the new model of the Law Library of Victoria, such that the model is in use before the entity of the Library legally exists. This causes some challenges with governance, procurement and services, which will be resolved with the legal establishment of the Law Library of Victoria.

### **Crowded landscape of information resources**

With a continuous stream of new information resources amongst a constantly evolving legal environment, now more than ever librarians need to hone curatorial skills to select high quality, authoritative sources of information. The Library navigates an increasingly complex environment with high cost licence agreements competing for limited resources.

### **An unquenchable demand for services?**

As the Library builds its brand amongst judicial officers and CBD-based practitioners, demand for services has increased by around seventy percent in 2017 compared to the previous year. The next phase of Library establishment will extend services to practitioners throughout the State. It is critical that service design falls within available resources, or that additional funding is secured to cater for additional service.

### **Management of a rare and valuable heritage collection**

Representing centuries of law and precedent, our nationally-significant collection of Victoria's legal information heritage needs care. We are challenged in our ability to manage this work while meeting the many other needs of our Library users and the need to nurture the development of the emerging digital library service.

# Strategic Priority 1: Digital Library

Our vision includes being the preferred resource for the Victorian legal profession. We achieve this by building a great website that provides quick, easy access to quality digital information. To become a library service that is an aspirational model for other library services, we continue to improve the way we procure, manage and promote digital resources.

We want people to know that when they come to our website, they are visiting our biggest and best library branch – a place where they'll be able to access all their legal information needs, and find all the support required so that they are confident in knowing what information to use, when, and how to find it.

## **Our objectives:**

### **Develop the website into the primary resource for legal information**

- Expand the level of content available on and via the website to cater for the information needs of all Victorian practitioners
- Promote the Library's website as the primary resource for important and unique content on Victorian law
- Minimise duplicate content on digital platforms

### **Provide members with seamless digital access to the collection**

- Create an environment where exclusive content can be made available to authorised users
- Transition services to a predominantly self-service model
- Integrate with vendor platforms as much as possible

### **Develop quality information management practices that enables the most effective use of our limited resources**

- Make better use of library management system capability
- Use effective tools to manage the research request service

# Strategic Priority 2: Collections

The Library implemented a new Collection Policy in early 2015, updated in March 2018, which underpins the management and development of the Library collections. The Library has been working on aligning practices and procedures with this policy.

By managing all jurisdictional subscriptions on behalf of the Victorian Courts, the Library gains significant purchasing power and an ability to manage relationships with publishers more strategically. In 2017, our combined buying power resulted in subscription costs that were substantially lower than recommended retail price.

## **Our objectives:**

### **Be trusted by Victorian practitioners to curate a high quality, reliable and authoritative collection of legal research material**

- Make informed purchasing decisions based on the Collection Policy
- Transition purchasing, where appropriate, to digital material: reducing duplication, and extending licences for increased access by practitioners
- Maintaining great relationships with vendors

### **Preserve the print collection as a resource for current and future generations, so that local organisations do not need to have a print library of their own**

- Take necessary steps to halt the deterioration of library material of enduring value
- Assist partner organisations with streamlining or decommissioning their legal print collections on request

### **Implement a coordinated approach to collection management and development for streamlined and cost-effective practices**

- Partner with other law libraries as part of a national scheme of holdings
- Improve our application of technology and innovative solutions to our standard operating procedures

# Strategic Priority 3: Services

In recent years, libraries around the world have re-aligned services to new standards and a modern dynamic service environment that requires different capabilities, skills and expertise from our librarians.

In this customer-centric and digital world, the librarian is a partner with the business it serves. Our service framework builds on our achievements to date, responding to and shaping demand.

## **Our objectives:**

### **Reflect the interests of the jurisdictions and the profession and provide clear accountability structures to manage demand for services**

- Developing and implementing a service plan being guided by committee members and library advisors
- Sufficiently plan operational structures so that fluctuations of demand are met and expectations of users are well managed

### **Make the best use of available resources to meet the needs of library users**

- Manage digital and physical library spaces so that members can access required content easily
- Guide users to access the best quality and most relevant resources held in the library's collection, or to external sources when needed

### **Stimulate interest in advances in Victorian legal knowledge to promote the administration of justice**

- Automate the compilation of library resource guides and other publications, and provide alternate ways of accessing that content
- Integrate research guides through all services

### **Develop the skills and knowledge of librarians to keep current with developments in technology, law and librarianship**

- Continue to invest in the professional development of all team members
- Apply and share learnings to improve the extension of services to users.

# Strategic Priority 4: Engagement and education

The Library enhances its reputation for reliable, high-quality services by engaging strategically with the community through a calendar of events. These events, attended each year by many hundreds of Victorians, extend knowledge of Library services and how to access them, as well as providing opportunities for Library members to interact in a collegiate environment.

## **Our objectives:**

### **Create an entity status enabling us to meet the expectations of the legal community**

- Finalise partners and legal, financial and governance arrangements
- Preserve and extend existing revenue streams
- Promote the new entity to raise awareness of services and collections
- Use the entity to contract for goods and services
- Find opportunities to benchmark our collection and services

### **Preserve the heritage collection, and make Victorian legal resources more accessible**

- Promote the significance of the collection in the Australian context and in Victoria's history
- Provide an avenue to channel funds from grants and donations

### **Provide opportunities for library members to interact in a collegiate environment to engage the profession**

- Invite members of the profession to contribute content to the library website
- Collaborate with external groups to stage library events, including music, art and exhibitions

### **Enrich and develop members' legal research skills and knowledge**

- Determine and fulfill members' needs to improve their research skills and capabilities in CPD compliant training
- Improve awareness of Library education events to increase judicial officer and staff attendance
- Understand learning outcomes in order to deliver training and research skills using a wide variety of platforms