

A VISION FOR SLV



KATE TORNEY, CEO of the State Library of Victoria, previously had a long career with the ABC. Her myriad career roles include working as a radio and TV reporter, producer, executive producer and editor, bureau chief and finally as Director of News. Kate is also a keynote speaker at the ALIA National 2016 Conference in August. We caught up with Kate to find out how she's enjoying the SLV.

WHAT ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YOUR PREVIOUS ROLES AND YOUR CURRENT ONE?

Both the ABC and the State Library are much loved cultural institutions with rich history and tradition. They each play an important role in shaping our community and they are both grappling with the challenges and opportunities of digital disruption. The greatest difference is the pace of change; libraries in Australia are leading the world in new ways of working and delivering services and there are great lessons for other sectors in the library transformation here.

WHAT MOST EXCITES YOU ABOUT YOUR ROLE AT SLV?

The people – I work with an extraordinary group of highly talented colleagues and I am keen to celebrate their expertise. The collection – every day I discover new treasures and I am keen to continue to encourage the public to explore the 5 million items the library holds. The space – it's the most beautiful building in Australia and our \$83.1m redevelopment will focus on new spaces and programs for children and young people, entrepreneurs, new galleries, the refurbishment of the original reading room, Queens Hall and the establishment of the Centre for Digital Living.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES THAT YOUR LIBRARY WILL FACE OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS? HOW DO YOU PLAN TO OVERCOME THOSE CHALLENGES?

We face wonderful challenges - managing the increasing demand for our services both on-site and on-line, and continuing to build an organisational culture which embraces change because we are all living and working in a world in which technology will continue to transform our lives. Smart prioritisation, investment in technology and strong communication will be critical for all libraries in the future.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES THAT OUR INDUSTRY FACES IN THE FUTURE?

The library transformation story in Australia is a great one and we need to share it more broadly. To secure and grow the future of libraries across the nation we need to work together and celebrate the great achievements at a local, state and national level. We need to raise our voices!

HOW DO YOU THINK THE WAY THE PUBLIC ENGAGES WITH LIBRARIES WILL CHANGE IN THE FUTURE?

Technology is already changing the relationship we have with the public. Digital access will be critical.

WHAT IS YOUR KEY FOCUS AT THE MOMENT WITH THE SLV?

We are currently reviewing our strategy and ensuring that the needs of the people we serve are at the heart of all we do. This is a key priority. This will underpin the approach of our \$83.1m Vision 2020 Redevelopment Project.

YOU CAME FROM THE FAST-PACED WORLD OF TELEVISION AND NEWS. WAS THERE ANYTHING THAT SURPRISED YOU ABOUT YOUR NEW SECTOR?

The wonderful humility of the sector. I work with incredibly innovative and talented people who are quietly transforming libraries and in doing so, they are changing lives. We need to celebrate this leadership at every level.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF THE SLV THAT YOU MOST LIKE TO SPEND TIME IN?

There are too many to list. It is such a glorious space. I do love walking through the La Trobe Reading Room – under our famous Dome – each morning before opening time. It is perfectly still and it’s a reminder that we are custodians for a short time in the history of these great institutions. It’s a great privilege to be in this role.

HAVE YOU READ A GREAT BOOK LATELY THAT YOU'D RECOMMEND TO OUR READERS?

Hope Farm by Peggy Frew. 



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