ALIA Inaugural Library Design Awards 2017

By Australian Library and Information Association

You don't need a good-looking building to deliver a great library experience, but a fabulous building certainly attracts attention.

The 33 entrants in ALIA's inaugural Library Design Awards, presented earlier this year, all reported a significant increase in membership and usage. And when you have an outstanding building, it also raises the profile of the library within its school, community, campus or organisation. Indeed, it was the PR value of library design that underpinned ALIA's decision to launch this new awards program.

The Information Resource Centre, Carey Baptist Grammar School in Melbourne.

The idea for a set of Australian Library Design Awards was first discussed in 2013 and the prompt for the discussion was the investment in Australian public libraries and their success in the international public library design awards. However, while some councils were investing millions in new libraries, others expected their library teams to work with outdated premises and with furniture and fittings that were no longer fit for purpose. ALIA's Australian Public Library Alliance could see a number of benefits from initiating a Library Design Awards program.

The obvious benefit was to acknowledge and reward the investment of the funding body, the creativity of the architect and designer, and the work of the library team. However, by highlighting outstanding examples of library design, the awards could also flag the opportunity for others to follow a similar path. They would challenge civic, school, academic and organisational pride and beg the question "why don't we have a library like that?".

St Stephen's School, Duncraig, Perth.

Although the conversation originated with public libraries, the Library Design Awards were clearly suited to other types of libraries and, in the event, there were four categories for the awards – public, school, academic and special – with a fifth award for the ALIA Members' Choice.

Through the entry process, ALIA gathered pictures, stories, specifications and outcomes relating to 33 new build and refurbishment projects. These were all submitted on the basis that they could be shared widely. As a result, images and text remain available on the ALIA website. These can be used by library managers to create mood boards and proposals to sell their own ideas to their funding body.

The Learning Hub, St Andrew's Anglican College, Peregian Springs, QLD.

The launch of the awards, with Architecture AU as media partner, spread the message among the design community about the potential for libraries to be an anchor within community, business and education settings. Through its website and social media, Architecture AU is the main news source for the industry, with more than 50,000 followers. Last, but not least, the program generated media coverage about the cutting-edge activities – analogue and digital – taking place in libraries.
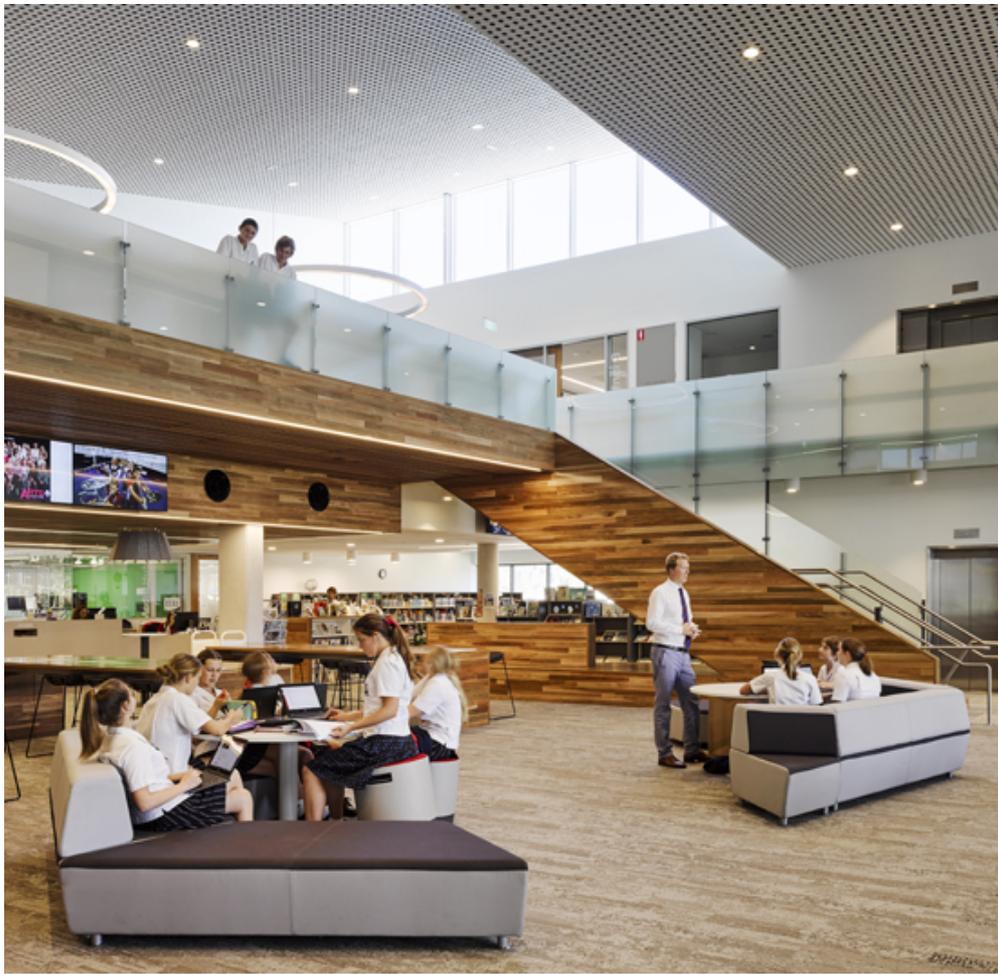
The original idea was to present the awards at a special reception, but the ALIA steering committee came up with a much better plan – to make the awards part of a one-day conference to celebrate library design. The City of Melbourne and Raeco came on board to sponsor the event, which took place on 19 June, at Library at the Dock.

Hanley Learning Centre, St Joseph's Nudgee College, the winner of the school library award.

The Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Robert Doyle, welcomed the 100-plus delegates at the start of day and the keynote speakers were Professor Rob Adams, Director City Design and Projects, City of Melbourne, and Karen Latimer, Chair, UK Designing Libraries Advisory Board. The other distinguished speakers were architects, interior designers and library managers.

The award winners were announced mid-afternoon by Janine Schmidt, Chair of the judging panel, and they were presented by ALIA President Vicki McDonald. The winners were: St Joseph's Nudgee College, Hanly Learning Centre, Queensland (school); City of Perth Library (public); John Philips Library, Western Sydney University (academic); Arup, Sydney (special); and Geelong Library and Heritage Centre (ALIA Members' Choice). Highly commended libraries in the schools category were: All Hallows' School, Potter Library, Queensland; Brisbane Girls' Grammar School, Research Learning Centre; Carey Baptist Grammar School, Information Resource Centre, Victoria; St Andrew's Anglican College Learning Hub, Queensland; St Stephen's School Junior School Library - Duncraig Campus, Western Australia.

The Learning Hub, St Andrew's Anglican College, Peregian Springs, QLD.

The winners took home a stylish handcrafted trophy, each individually created by American glass artist Brian Corr, working out of Canberra Glassworks.

Potter Library, All Hallows' School

ALIA CEO Sue McKerracher confirmed the success of the first awards program. She said:

> 'Feedback from the winners, nominees, judges, conference delegates, committee and speakers has been enormously positive. We intend to repeat the awards on a two year cycle, with the next presentations in 2019. There is some tweaking to do. We would like to recognise refurbishments as well as new builds, and make sure it's not all about the size of your budget.'

Several of the nine judges, including Anne Girolami, ALIA Schools Group Convenor, from Mercy College, Coburg, have already confirmed that they will be part of the 2019 panel.

You can view the full gallery of ALIA Library Design Award nominees for 2017 on the ALIA website **https://www.alia.org.au/awards/library-design-awards-2017**. Any questions about the awards, contact **advocacy@alia.org.au**.