



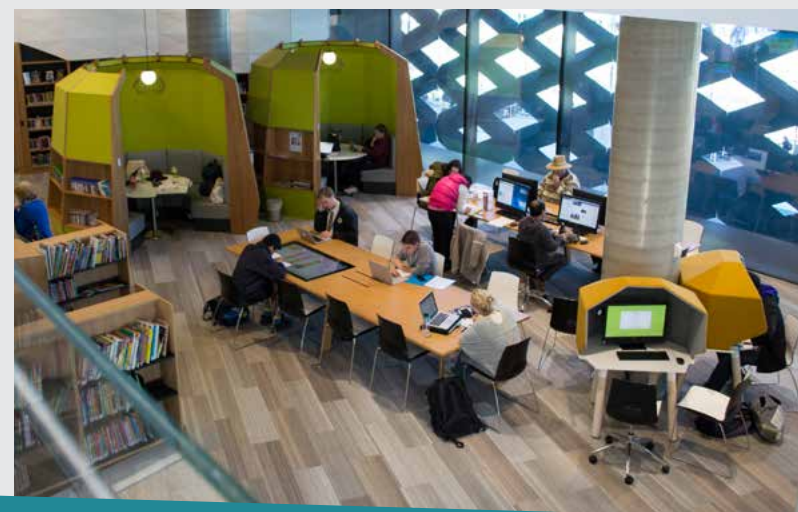
IMAGINE DISCOVER
CREATE
EASTERN REGIONAL LIBRARIES

REALM

case study

bibliotheca solutions allow Realm Library staff to focus on outreach

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transforming libraries



Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation (ERLC), a co-operative venture between three outer eastern Melbourne councils – Knox, Maroondah, and Yarra Ranges, is the largest library system in Victoria, Australia. Serving a population of 423,000 across all three councils, the regional library corporation is committed to redefining the role of libraries within its diverse communities, focusing on social connectivity, intellectual creativity, and instilling a passion for learning from the cradle to the grave.

Realm: a library like no other

In October of 2015, ERLC in partnership with Maroondah City Council unveiled the new Realm library, cultural, knowledge and innovation centre. Centrally located in the heart of Ringwood, adjoining the town square, Realm is so much more than just a library branch, it is a hub for community interaction.

The 3,400 square meter building with a bold, modern façade, features a Council Service Centre, BizHub, ArtSpace, and café in addition to its library collection area. Realm offers an exciting programme of events and activities, with something for all ages, from storytimes for tiny tots through technology workshops for seniors.

With a mission that extends beyond just loaning materials, it was important to Joseph Cullen, Eastern Regional Libraries CEO, to ensure that library staff were able to get out from behind the circulation desk to interact with patrons and visitors. To that end, Realm is equipped with three selfCheck™ 1000 kiosks, a seven bin RFID sorter, and RFID premium security gates.

"The selfChecks and sorter free up our staff to interact with patrons and the community in a

different way. They are able to move throughout the space and offer assistance where it is needed instead of being behind a desk," says Cullen.

By harnessing the power of RFID technology, bibliotheca's selfCheck kiosks provide a quick, intuitive, and immersive way for patrons to check out their own materials. Many items may be borrowed in one go, eliminating the need to scan individual barcodes, thereby making library queues a thing of the past.

“ We serve some very disadvantaged areas, places facing severe generational poverty, and some of the people there have never been to a library. So, we bring the library to them. ”

Technology gets staff out of the building and into the community

Realm is a state-of-the-art facility, but it is only one of Eastern Regional's fourteen branches. Though the Corporation's branches received two million physical visits last year, Cullen is well aware that not everyone is able to travel to a library location to take advantage of materials and services – that's why outreach is a large part of the Corporation's mission. "We serve some very disadvantaged areas, places facing severe generational poverty, and some of the people there have never been to a library. So, we bring the library to them," says Cullen.

[Learn more](#) about our selfCheck range.

ERLC operates a mobile library service in Knox that visits social housing, industrial parks, shopping centres and retirement villages.

ERLC also operates a Flexi-van which makes runs to various locations in Yarra Ranges on a biweekly basis. "We load up the van with children's selections and travel to primary schools that lack libraries, groups for teenage mothers, and remote areas where children may not have access to physical branches. The next week, the Flexi-van is stocked with adult selections and

driven to visit nursing homes, and locations that target other underserved adults," says Sarah Hopkins, Corporate Manager at ERLC.

"If you look at it as a number cruncher, as I am, you probably couldn't justify the service, but it's one of those where you have to take in the social benefits and the community outcomes for the councils. The loans will be nothing like the loans at an actual library, perhaps only a few hundred a week. But for those few hundred people who use it, it's huge. That service has a different dividend. It's a different service, but because it's highly valued, the councils are happy to support them," says Cullen.

ERLC is able to support those services, as well as others, including a dementia resources lending library, by taking advantage of technologies that free up staff time and reduce the amount of library funds that would otherwise be required to hire additional staff.

"Each selfCheck essentially functions as a full-time staff member," says Cullen. "They are reliable, and they never need sick-leave. Using the selfChecks for the mundane tasks of checking in and checking out materials enables us to use our staff's time for more valuable



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[Read more](#) about the selfCheck 1000.

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ERLC has also noticed an unexpected advantage of using bibliotheca's technology solutions to replace tasks that were previously handled manually. Implementing RFID technology, which allows multiple items to be automatically checked in, checked out, and sorted, has reduced the number of repetitive strain injuries experienced by library staff.

A new realm of possibility

ERLC may have completed its flagship Maroondah branch, but they have no intention of slowing down soon. A new programme in schools is generating thousands of new members every month, and Cullen is determined to find new ways to engage

this new generation of patrons.

“We're working on being more flexible and connected and reducing the barriers to using the library. We're constantly looking for ways to free up staff so that they can go out and do more outreach, and constantly updating technology so we can make it easier for everyone, ourselves included,” he says.



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