Public Libraries Victoria

DEFINITION OF BASIC AND VALUE ADDED SERVICES

All individuals need to have access to the information which will satisfy their personal needs.
Local government authorities have an obligation to provide basic public library services free of charge.

Basic Public Library Services

Basic public library services are those which:
1.   Provide free entrance to the library;
2.   Provide access to the library's information resources, regardless of the format in which material is held, and including print, tape, disk, CD ROM and networked electronic resources;
   I.   Free access to networked information resources must be provided at each library branch to a level sufficient to meet a reasonable volume of demand.
   Because circumstances differ from one library to another, a formal quantitative benchmark has not been developed.
   II.   Libraries may charge for some forms of Internet use, where the nature of the use is not primarily focused on information. Such uses include receiving and sending e-mail, Internet chat, game sites and financial transactions. If a library decides to charge for these facilities, it can determine the level of the charge.
   III.   In order to meet equity, disability and related requirements, libraries must consider providing more liberal access to some members.
3.   Provide assistance with the use of the collection and with reference enquiries;
4.   Provide training in the use of public access catalogues;
5.   Lend items from the collection to members of the public for specific periods of time;
6.   Educate the public in the effective use of public libraries;
7.   Provide special programs such as story-telling;
8.   Provide any additional service which enables access to other basic services (For example, books on wheels services and bulk loans).

Value Added Services

Libraries sometimes charge for services which provide greater ease of access, convenience or private benefit, and which may attract additional costs to the library service provider.

These services are distinguished from the basic services listed above. They may have a higher level of value added by the library. Other services include:
1.   Use of remote online resources where access is only obtainable by payment of a specific per use charge, but excluding use of online resources which are paid for by subscriptions, site licenses or other non-use based charges;
2.   Providing access to loans from collections outside the public/State library network, such as academic, government or special libraries;
3.   Reserving specific items in library collections;
4.   Providing printed or electronic copies of materials held or accessed by the library;
5.   Providing for public use standard office software, such as word processing and database software;
6.   Requiring staff to undertake research, to write reports, or to provide other high level support;
7.   Providing any service which attracts an external service charge, eg on-line database searching, speakers, theatre performances.

In the case of services not defined as basic, individual library service providers should be free to determine those services which would attract a charge, providing that due consideration is given to the possible impact on neighbouring library services caused by such decisions.

(This definition is based on that developed by the Australian Council of Libraries and Information Services and was endorsed by the Victorian Public Library and Information Network in December 1996. It was modified in May 1999 to incorporate a clarification on access to Internet services).