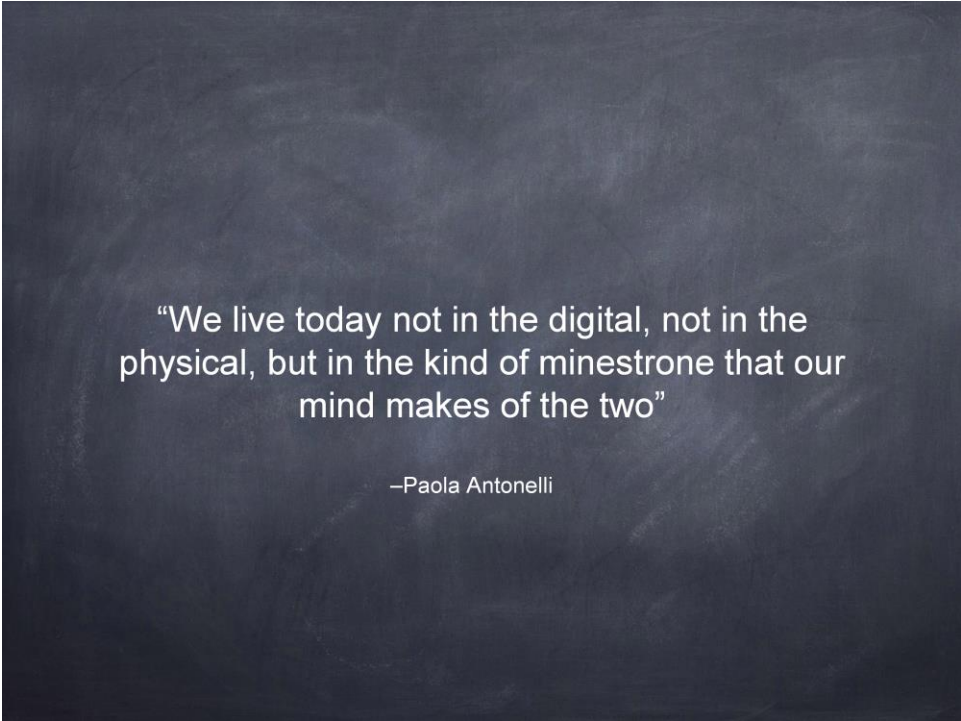




# Building blocks to better libraries

RACHAEL CILAURO  
MELBOURNE LIBRARY SERVICE



"We live today not in the digital, not in the physical, but in the kind of minestrone that our mind makes of the two"

—Paola Antonelli

Today i would like to start with a **quote** from one of my favourite italians that **really** stayed with me throughout this research project. (read quote = we live today **not** in the digital, **not** in the physical, **but** in the kind of minestrone that our mind makes of the two). As a digital

art curator Paola Antonelli understands and **explores** the relationship between the physical and the digital. That's what i will be talking about today. The **exploration** of digital worlds inside our real world libraries and how **we** can use the digital of games like Minecraft to build **great** public library spaces.

Rachael Cilauro

RMIT UNIVERSITY

Youth and Children's Librarian



A little bit about **me** first - My name is Rachael Cilauro - this was a project i undertook within my masters program at RMIT..i took the opportunity to study the public library and young people whom i worked for - When this project started i was a **youth and**

**children's librarian**....working at the  
Melbourne Library Service...a public  
library service situated in this amazing  
city of Melbourne.

## MELBOURNE LIBRARY SERVICE



Connect - Read - Learn - Create

situated in the heart of the city of melbourne - which as some of you made know has been made a City of Literature. Melbourne library service has 5 branches plus an extensive virtual library centred on blending **the physical and the digital** in library space. We have

the brand new Library at the Dock -  
pictured here - focused in this new  
realm of digital and real library space. I  
recommend visiting - its a **remarkable**  
library building. This study will be set at  
the other end of the library spectrum at  
one of the oldest library spaces - North  
Melbourne Library which has been  
operating as a library service since  
**1905!**

## North Melbourne Library



[www.MelbourneLibraryService.com.au](http://www.MelbourneLibraryService.com.au)

North Melbourne Library is a multi-use, **busy**, progressive and **vibrant** neighbourhood library. Adored by its patrons North Melbourne is a key community space within the neighbourhood. Particularly for its young people. Here we are here opening after our

last refurbishment...

## NORTH MELBOURNE LIBRARY



A bit about North Melbourne Library  
According to the City of Melbourne  
economic and demographic profile  
has a high proportion of children  
under 12 years and number of  
school students  
is now one of the most dynamic  
and complex small areas, noted for

its mixture architecture, retail, warehouses and factories. North Melbourne still retains some of its public housing and a strong migrant mix too. It has a blend of middle class to low-income families.

The library has strong community partnerships with primary and secondary schools and these are seen as an asset to the library. Programs are run for pre-school children daily and SHP for young people. Prior to this program the library ran practical literacy based or craft activities for YP.

# Young People of NORTH MELBOURNE LIBRARY

"this library is cool because it's not getting shushed all the time. Some libraries are all stiff – but this one is relaxed and you can hang out"

"...makes such a big difference if the librarian understands what we are doing"

(Case Study Participant, 2013).

This program marked a change in programming for young people. Over my year as a Childrens and Youth librarian I formed a bond with YP in the community - would come n to the library after school to talk, share information, educate us about the digital spaces.. This

group introduced us to a a new craze taking over their school..... Minecraft! YP were playing it everywhere they could, at home, at school, on trams, outside the library inside the library. on phones, on computers - on our comptuers. building, making, playing, talking and sharing.

North Melbourne Library became a Minecraft meeting point.

As recorded in case studies you can see shere some quotes here that YP really highlighted the importance of Librarians understanding the cultural needs of YP.

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE PLAYING GAMES



AND THEY WANT TO  
TEACH US  
HOW TO PLAY!

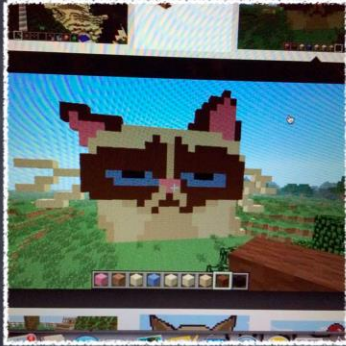
Key to this relationship was that the YP wanted to educate!

The building of the gaming day saw a turning the tables on the traditional teaching model at school - where YP were in the driving seat and knowledge holders of all things Minecraft..

The building of Minecraft Day was centred around a working group of young people who were apart of the planning, creative

process and implementation of the gaming day. This working group were a varied collection of young people from the North Melbourne community, a mix of genders and socio-economic groups and sub-cultural interests. The group was energetic in conversation and dialogue with us as Librarian regarding a Minecraft gaming day. They would drop in after school every day with new ideas and updates on the game.

# What is



# Minecraft?

Minecraft doesn't lead you through the same experience every other gamer has, what you get is yours alone (Johnson, 2010, p.1).

Now before i start talking about the gaming program - SOME of you may be asking BUT WHAT IS MINECRAFT?

Minecraft started small as a indie game - (which is a game that doesn't have big gaming house financial backing - but this indie game as of late 2013 it has sold over 33 million copies worldwide, on PC,

Xbox and mobile.. I read yesterday actually that Microsoft is looking to buy MC - the face of this indie game is certainly going to change.

Im going to break down my explanation of Minecraft into its simplified form. Minecraft is like lego. But on a virtual screen. You can build, create, plan, play, make things with blocks.

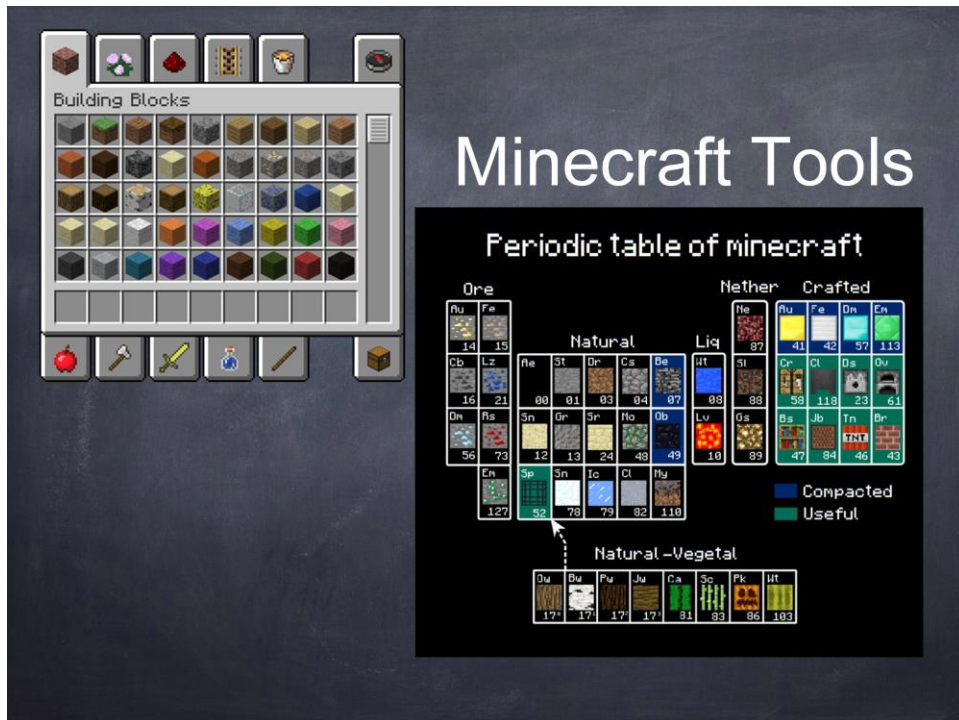
You can create buildings, people, things inside worlds..... as you can see here even angry cats.

The creative space is endless.

You only have to google Minecraft Libraries - to see the amazing wonder of buildings and worlds that people have created.

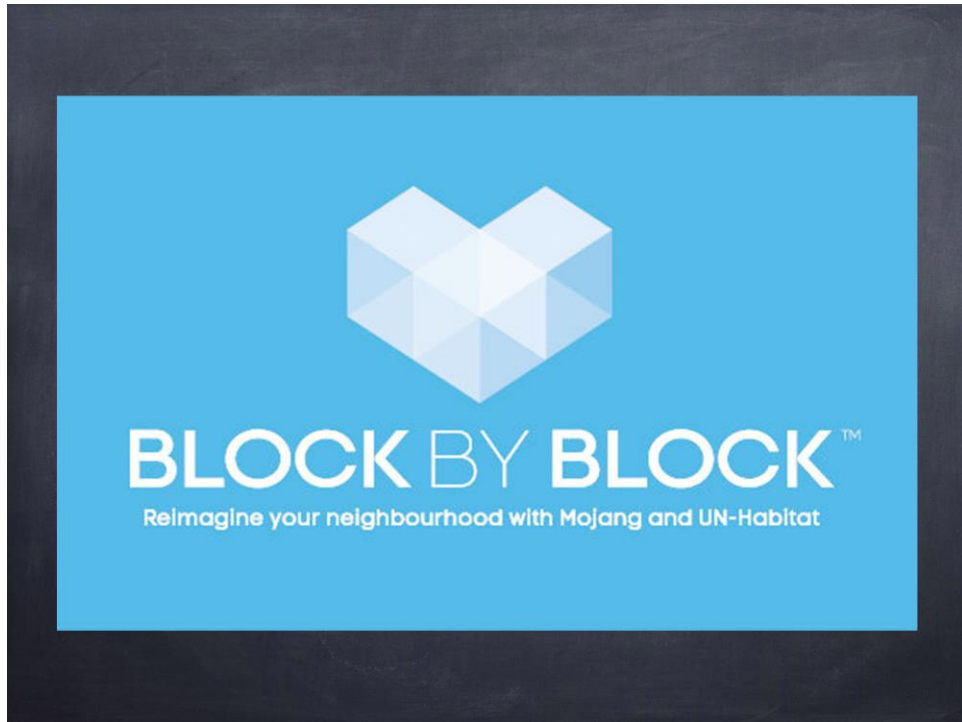
Minecraft is a unique game as its focus is on discovery, not accomplishment, in the way

that traditional games based on points and levels function: for example Donkey Kong and Super Mario Brothers, do not. The look and the end product of the Minecraft game are secondary to the gameplay itself – the player's imagination is what creates the games enjoyment. Minecraft is a creative, educational game that has surprising longevity in an ever-changing world of virtual games.



In Minecraft you can build by yourself or together, on a server which means you do not have to be in the same place to share the experience. IGD for libraries this year is creating a 'Minecraft - Hunger Games' around the globe..this is something for young

people to participate in your libraries.  
Minecraft can now be seen in schools  
in some maths classes....Minecraft is  
unique in its ability to educate and still  
be fun at the same time!



I wanted to quickly highlight one of the ways in which Minecraft is being used for community engagement and development programs around the world. I URGE YOU TO LOOK AT BLOCK BY BLOCK WHICH IS A PROJECT BY UN HABITAT TO INVOLVE

CITIZENS OF 3RD WORLD  
COUNTRIES IN PUBLIC SPACE  
DESIGN. THEY ARE USING  
MINECRAFT WITH YP TO RE-  
DESIGN PARKS and public space ..



YOU CAN SEE ONE HERE. top  
being the playground pre design  
and below in min craft - THESE  
PROJECTS ARE TRUELY  
AMAZING AND FOR ME REALLY  
CAPTURE THE POTENTIAL OF  
VIRTUAL TOOLS LIKE  
MINECRAFT TO IN REAL WORLD

SITUATIONS.



FROM THIS WE begin to understand the attraction of Minecraft for young people. Its a place where they create anything in their own digital spaces; a blending the real and virtual world . And this is really indicative of young people's engagement with

technology is all-encompassing; from internet searching, YouTube, music downloading, mobile phones, online communications and endless social media sites, the list of interface options and the complexity of the associated devices keeps growing

..... this program is designed to enter public libraries into this world.

Libraries within Minecraft as one young person stated had 'endless possibilities'.

## Library YP + librarians = MINECRAFT GAMING DAY



'I had to think about what people were  
doing in the library  
and then think about Minecraft that way.'

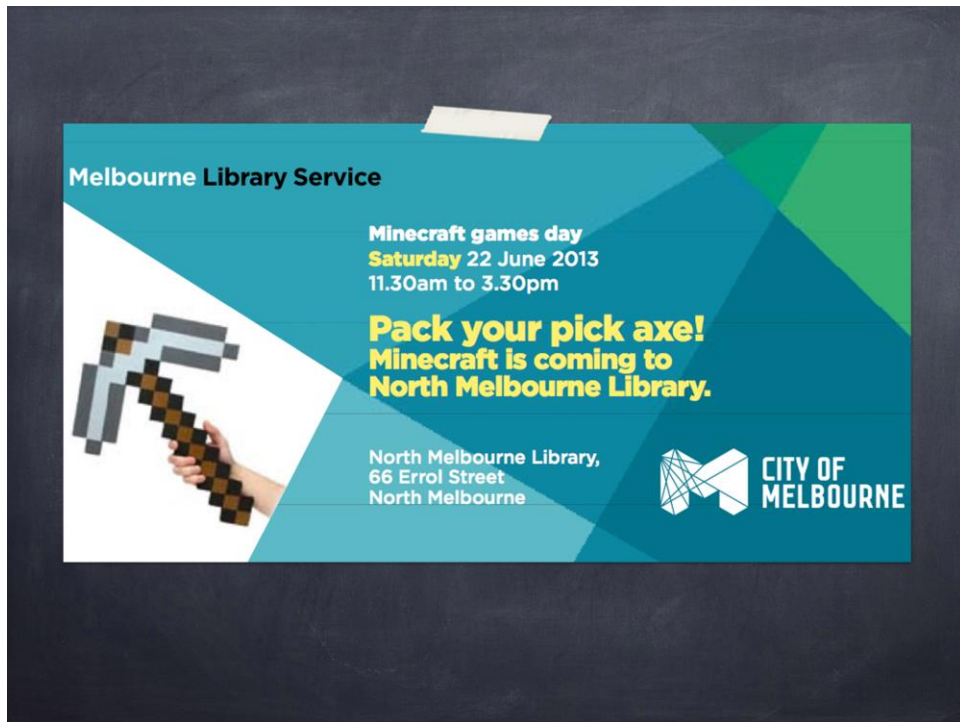
(Case Study Participant, 2013).

FOR US as a LIBRARY SERVICE:  
we wanted to take this knowledge  
and gaming enthusiasm and make  
it about libraries. as librarians we  
love libraries AND we loved that  
young people loved our library too.  
We focused on ONE DAY of  
healthy competition - we selfishly

focused the games day in on our interests which was of course libraries! If young people could design a library what would it look like? How would it be different to their own library?

We created a brief to direct YP to think about library spaces critical examine NM library and to design their ideal library space - a virtual library planning tool. A little spoiler alert.....

**LIBRARIANS MADE IT IN!**



The YP working group designed and created the technology support for the day - they managed servers, the virtual architectural required for the day. YP were in control of the space and what was needed to make it a success. Different to traditional library events, this

gaming day received much of its publicity through word of mouth within local school grounds.

Many young people came into the library to enquire about the day that they had 'heard about on the street or at school'. IMPORTANTLY YP were the key drivers in marketing and making this event a success.

## TECHNOLOGY FAIL?



'We had a bit of a fail day because the technology and wifi was dropping out'

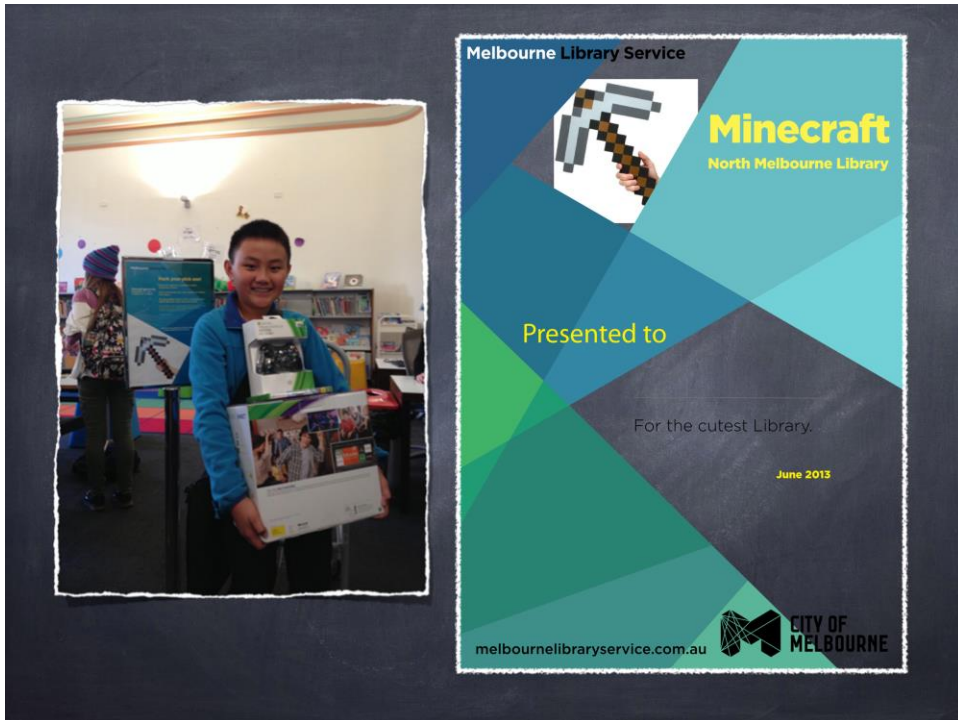
(Case Study Participant, 2013).

All young people were happy to help out with technology crises when they presented themselves and often quick to offer support. Around half the young people did not bring their own laptops, the library supplied these allow them to access the game and participate in

the day.

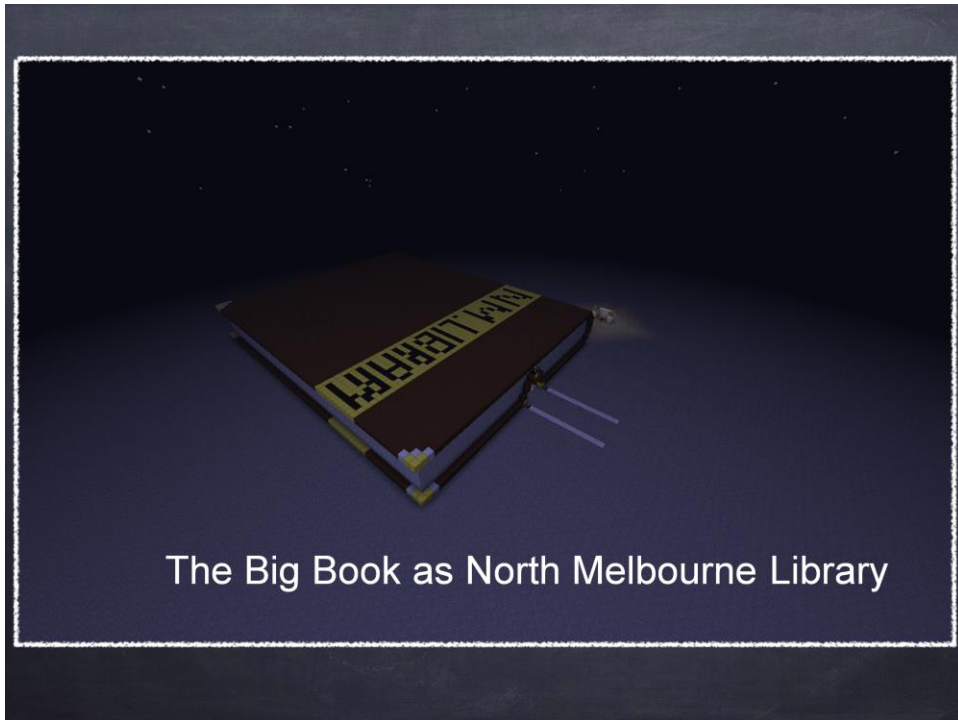
Young people were happy to design in groups or solo, just to be involved seemed to be the overarching mood.

You can see above that there were a few OHS nightmares - these technology mishaps didn't get in the way of the fun!



Afterwards I had a chance to reflect on the fact that each YPerson build a whole library eco system in a few hours. was truly amazing. As 4pm rolled around the young people were given the final call for designs, the library was closing very soon. It was announced that prizes were to

be given out so a group of 'judges' (librarians on duty) were to come around to each child and review their library. This was a perfect opportunity for the young people to articulate their designs, why their library looked and felt a certain way. These young people were creative, interested and genuinely brilliant with their thoughts about library spaces.

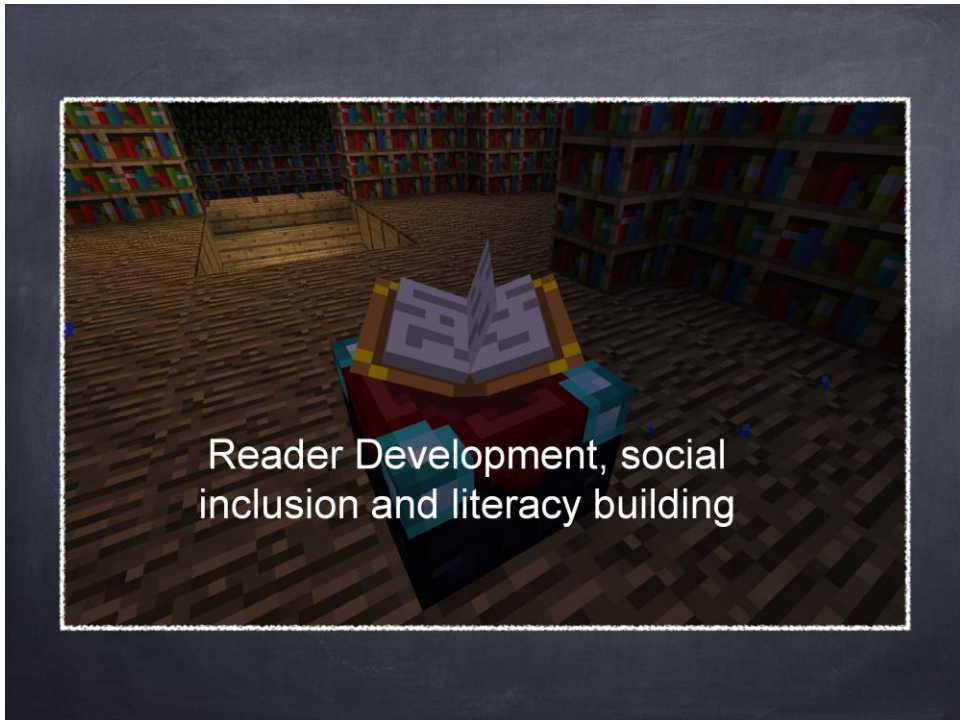


For North Melbourne Library the Minecraft Program was a success, in terms of the crowd participation, attendance and the genuine excitement of young people.

i wish i could give you a tour of all the libraries but this is one of my

favorite -

NM library was re-designed into a large book with the entrance way within the pages- you entered this library and a librarian greeted you -As you entered the library it was a modern, sleek building minimalist furnishings but with library functionality. This to me did look like a vision of the new Library at the Dock! it was an exciting glimpse into the future. You can see it just outside but the creator thought of everything even a little outhouse with a FULLY stocked library.



So now you should be sold on Minecraft as a brilliant engagement tool for young people - and possibly the key to the future of libraries....

ill will talk about my research questions and conclusions....  
First question related back to

traditional library goals -

Can we use virtual worlds and games like Minecraft to achieve traditional library goals such as Reader Development, social inclusion and literacy building?

Are we using YP as community  
builders in our public libraries?



secondly - Are we fully using YP as  
community builders in our public  
libraries?

Can public libraries cater for gaming technologies and virtual worlds that YP exist in?



Finally - Can our public libraries cater for gaming technologies and virtual worlds that YP exist in?



Minecraft Gaming day  
built a relationship between  
The library  
Parents  
Community members  
Young People

The gaming day created opportunities for interaction not just between librarians and young people: it also fostered a relationship between North Melbourne Library, parents and the local community. Many parents were interested to finally

understand what all the Minecraft fuss was about - many were overwhelmed by the creativity of their children the gaming day there was a learning acquired by parents of young people attending the gaming day.

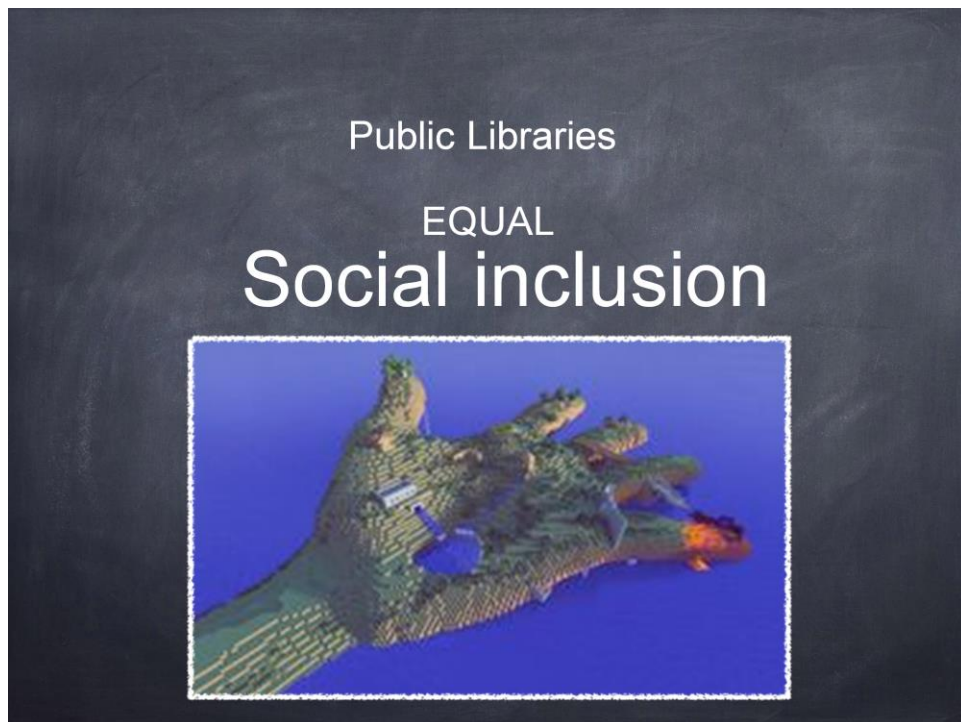
Minecraft helped parents to not only understand the online behaviour of young people but also involved them in the process.

Parents, like librarians, became a part of the learning and social fabric of the day.

Many library patrons visiting the library

remarked on, and were interested in, the program in the library. It broadened their understanding of young people and broke down previous assumptions they may have had about young people in the library.

Many adult borrowers on the day began discussing their own gaming interests and how these could inform future library programs.....finally social inclusion



North Melbourne Library became a conduit for gaming technologies for young people who did not have access to Minecraft or gaming at home. During the focus group some participants remarked that they did not have access to a computer or any technology. There

was a sense of isolation from not being able to understand or participate in peer group conversations and discussions about Minecraft. This is not uncommon as in 2010 a national study found that libraries provided a 'technological lifeline' to young people from low socio economic families; further to this:

Among young adults (14 to 24 years of age) in households below the federal poverty line, 61% used public library computers and the Internet for educational purposes. These statistics suggest that young people continue to turn to libraries for access to technical

resources and opportunities (Tripp 2011, Pg 6).

Social inclusion is an important part of the role that public libraries play providing access and a connection for young people to games and other cultural touch points for their generation. The library becomes a space outside school and home to integrate and participate with their peer groups through the use of new technologies; providing social support and a space for young people to interact with each other, a levelling of class, ethnicity and social hierarchies.

# LITERACY BUILDING



Minecraft day was a great kicking off point.  
It gave me the chance to enquire about what they  
were reading, watching, learning, doing etc.  
(library staff member, 2013).

The day also allowed librarians to integrate with young people and to use this new connection for traditional library capacity building measures such as information sharing, social support and to encourage learning. And as we can see by this quote a way to connect

and build literacy learning.

One remarkable fact is that Minecraft manages to maintain educational properties whilst still being of interest to youth.

# TECHNOLOGY vs The LIBRARY

'The Internet at the library isn't rocket fast at the best of times, let alone with 30+ laptops running at once.'

Library Staff Member

A large part of the success of the Minecraft Gaming Day was the management of the facilities and technology.. There were quite a few instances of young people losing their creations due to computers shutting down or just not performing, often because the extra

computers that were used were old or not appropriate for gaming use. Young people with their own computer terminals were far better off in this program as they could control and understand the technology.

As seen before power was a continual health and safety issue throughout the day. One that wasn't planned for..



## Libraries, Minecraft and new technologies

One of the most illuminating discoveries in the building of a gaming day with young people was the study of the game Minecraft. Seeing a game and understanding how ubiquitous a game can become in youth culture was key to understanding the young people

themselves.

Three key points to summarize:

1. The introduction of minecraft and virtual gaming worlds into library programming does NOT replace the need for interactions between people. Virtual worlds in libraries are a part of the conversation not a substitute for it.
2. Minecraft as a planning tool that it a game is an excellent leveller of diverse communities of young people.

3. To successfully engage in virtual and real worlds with young people we may not need to provide technology; we may just need to be aware of it, support it and understand it.

Next Steps...

Minecraft in your  
library?

I have noted a few key take home points for Minecraft or other games in your library....

## Take home points for Minecraft gaming day

- Engaged Librarians
- BYO technology
- young people can help :)
- library as inspiration
- ask, share and play!

be engaged - listen to young people - they know what they are talking about!

BYO technology for programs - libraries offer technology...this combined with YP's is the best way to manage technology in libraries.

library as inspiration - think about library spaces when library programming. Young people love to have a voice in library design and programs.

ask, share and play! Play minecraft its the easiest way to understand it.

# Contact and Questions



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