

Lamm Jewish Library of Australia

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

About LJA:

Just a stone's throw away from Melbourne's CBD, in the suburb of Caulfield South, is the [Lamm Jewish Library of Australia](#). It offers visitors a range of services, including free Wi-Fi, access to PCs and iPads, newspapers, a collection of more than 44,000 printed publications, and a collection of rare items and community ephemera.

Library staff support patrons with historical, contemporary and literary Jewish research, and with genealogical enquiries privately and through schools doing 'trace-your-roots' projects.

The library acts as an important resource centre about all aspects of Judaism, Jewish culture, Jewish history, the Holocaust, Israel, Zionism and the Australian Jewish community. The library also serves as a community hub, facilitating talks, workshops, learning series, children's events and more.

About the team:

Library Director, Dr Merav Carmeli, leads a small team of librarians and volunteers. Nathaniel Pockras and Serena Carter serve as the current librarians, with Daniel Collins working as the library technician. There are also a number of volunteers who work through the library throughout each week.

Liberty

At a glance:

Chosen solution Liberty

Key objectives

- Engaging online catalogue for customers
- User-friendly cataloguing tool for library staff and untrained volunteers

Flexible Options EZRead, Overdrive, SIP2

Core Challenges

- Multiple collections from different sources
- User-friendly interface for easy navigation

Supported Users 4 library staff and over 10 library volunteers



Since our last case study:

The library has used Liberty as its library cataloguing and management system since 2012. It is central to the organisation of LILA's impressive collection of more than 44,000 books in English, Hebrew and Yiddish, encompassing a range of genres.

This same catalogue is also utilised by a few other community organisations, including the [Jewish Historical Society](#), the [Jewish Genealogical Society](#), and [The Kadimah Centre](#).

The original case study with the library was completed in 2016. When we reached out to the team to discuss the idea of an updated case study with a 'post-COVID' focus, Sonya (former LILA Librarian) kindly agreed to speak with us.

Pre-COVID the library was a bustling hive of activity with events and activities and many regular visitors to the library. However, over the last few years there's been many changes at the library, most, if not all, related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 2020 – 2021 Melbourne, Victoria (where the library is based) had a total of six government-mandated lockdowns which lasted a total of 262 days.

"The library was closed for between 12 – 18 months over the height of Australia's COVID pandemic" Sonya said. She added "We had some online events but didn't offer click-and-collect services because of the impact of the COVID restrictions on movement for people." The library's closure severely curtailed the services on offer.

"We've had lots of issues throughout the pandemic. Having the library closed for so long caused a rupture in the relationships we had with our patrons, it also caused a break in our services and offering. It was a big change to people's lives and their regular routines."

"Some of the biggest changes we've seen over the last few years relate to COVID-19, but also our building. We've made changes to our building access to improve security and safety, which has limited access for our patrons."



Looking ahead:

Post-pandemic the library is taking time to rethink who their patrons of the future will be. "We've noticed our returning patrons are leaning into research for family history, learning languages or converting to Judaism. We do have the largest collection of Hebrew language resources in Australia." said Sonya.

Currently, the team at LILA use their cloud-hosted Liberty system for cataloguing and circulation. Liberty's powerful Circulation Desk is used to process loans, returns, reservations, bookings and borrower payments. Administrators can create lending rules to establish borrower and Resource Loan Categories, lending periods, limits, and charges if applicable. Charges for overdue, rentals and reservations can be established and automated.

Liberty's cataloguing functionality allows resources (both digital and print) to be easily imported, created, edited and deleted.

"We are looking at digitisation and will want to think about using Liberty for these purposes." Sonya said.

Since the end of the pandemic, the library has returned to regular opening hours and programming, led by new Library Director, Dr Merav Carmeli. The LILA Learning Program, in addition to other new exciting initiatives have helped to bring patronage back to the library, and the number of members and event participants continues to grow.