



Prior to the establishment of a public library in 1977 there were many small commercial lending libraries in the Willoughby area and the Free Library Movement initiated small community libraries at Artarmon, Naremburn, Northbridge and Castlecrag, which were funded by Committees and helped by Council.

A Children's Free Library near Chatswood Station and the School of Arts Library in Victoria Avenue near the site of the present library served Chatswood.

The School of Arts Library: The first lending library in the Willoughby City area was that of the School of Arts, which was built in 1875 on Mowbray Road. The School of Arts moved into a new building on Victoria Ave in 1910 where it operated until 1977.

Although an entry in the Willoughby Council Minutes of 1876 refers to a resolution "to establish a public library", and legislation establishing rate supported free library systems was passed in NSW in 1939, Willoughby was one of the last municipalities to do so.

Willoughby City Library: Willoughby City Library, also called Chatswood Library, opened at 407 Victoria Avenue on the 5th September 1977. It was designed by Edwards, Madigan, Torzillo and Briggs. The first Chief Librarian was John Flint who began planning the library and the library collection in the old School of Arts building in 1972. John Flint remained in charge of the library till 1995. The library cost approximately \$1200 000 and was planned for an eventual membership of 30 000 with accommodation for 100 000 books.

Shorelink Library Network: In 1983 Willoughby City Library joined the Shorelink computer network with Lane Cove, Manly, Mosman and Stanton (North Sydney) Libraries. This network gave the library members access to the combined stock of all five libraries and their branches through the use of a single membership card.

In 1996 a major refurbishment designed by Stephenson & Turner occurred. This refurbishment incorporated a new loans and reference desk.

Over time, Chatswood Library proved to be extremely popular, attracting members not just from the Willoughby City area, but from all over Sydney. By June 2002 the library had 62,348 members and the library stock was at 221,864 items. The library had outgrown its premises and planning for a new library began in earnest.

On Thursday 7 June 2007 the old Chatswood Library closed its doors and reopened on 2 July 2007 in the **Mandarin Shopping Centre**. Despite being half the size of its previous location, the temporary facility was able to house more than 60% of the collection onsite, whilst the remaining 40% of the collection was accessible to customers via request. Chatswood Library remained in its temporary premises for approximately four years whilst a new library was built, as part of the Civic Place Project, at the old location on Victoria Avenue. By the end of August 2011 the library had 72 389 members and the library stock was at 275,600 items.

Chatswood Library on The Concourse: The new central Chatswood Library at The Concourse opened its doors to the public on Monday 19 September 2011. A record 4077 people visited the library on the first day of opening, borrowing 6,753 items.



At 5,000 square metres, the new library at The Concourse is three times larger than the former library building on Victoria Avenue and is one of the largest in New South Wales. The Design Architects were fjmt, the Construction Architects were Toland and the builders were AW Edwards.

The central Chatswood Library complements Willoughby's network of branch libraries at Artarmon, Castle Cove, Naremburn, Northbridge, West Chatswood and the community library at Castlecrag.

Chatswood Library, run by Willoughby City Council, is designed to provide dramatically increased reading space and stock. As of 30 September 2011, Chatswood Library offered an extensive collection of 229,067 items of the total Willoughby Library stock of 276,269 items. This includes an extensive community language collection in 12 languages, spaces for children with a large story time and craft area, private study rooms, training and meeting facilities, a computer room as well exhibition facilities. Within the first few weeks of opening, total membership of the library had increased to 73,811.

Chatswood Library also offers an extensive Local Studies collection comprising contemporary and historical information about the region as well as genealogical resources.

Popular learning and recreational programmes such as Baby Bounce, Storytime for Preschoolers, School Holiday Activities, Book and Movie Lovers' Clubs, Talks@Willoughby, English Conversation Classes and Internet & Local Studies Tutorials are all offered at Chatswood.

The Automated Materials Handling System (AMHS): is one of only two in Australia, and the only one within New South Wales. The system returns books and sorts them into appropriate bins for loading onto trolleys for shelving.

Six RFID Self Check Loans Machines: allow customers to issue and renew materials themselves. These self check machines currently account for over 80% of all issues.

An automated cashless system for printing and photocopying has been introduced.

The Watercourt: Artist Wendy Mills was commissioned by Council in 2010 to create an artwork for this space. Her work is called *Visiting Enki* and refers to an ancient Sumerian story recorded in one of the earliest known writing systems. The queen of heaven, Inanna, travelled in her sky boat to visit Enki, the god of wisdom who dwelt in a watery abyss. Over a convivial dinner Enki gave Inanna divine decrees about civilization and culture. The following morning he regretted this gift but she had already departed. He commanded her boat be pursued and set upon by sea monsters, but eventually relented to protect the ancient decrees. Inanna was then free to deliver them to her own city where she established a new centre of civilisation and culture.

Library and Community Learning facilities at Willoughby City have been introduced by staff and volunteers under the direction of the following Library Managers:

John Flint: May 1972 – July 1995
Marcia Waller: Feb 1995 – June 1995
Mary Sullivan: June 1995 – July 2000
Frances Sims: July 2000 – July 2008
Michele Burton: January 2009 – present

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