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Toolkit for Co-designing Public Library Spaces

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*In collaboration with the **State Library of NSW***
*Funded by the **Australian Research Council and SLNSW***

OVERVIEW

Explain about the project:

- Team
- Funding
- Motivations

Overview of the *Designing for Communities with Communities* workshops

Introduce the *Codesigning Public Library Spaces Toolkit*

- Planning codesign workshops
- Workshop templates
- Activity cards
- Codesigning with young people

Project Team

CSU

Philip Hider

Jane Garner

Hamid Jamali

Simon Wakeling

State Library of New South Wales

Kate O'Grady

Community Participants

Industry Partners

Hollie McPherson (Fairfield),
Carina Clement & Cecelia Steele
(Albury)

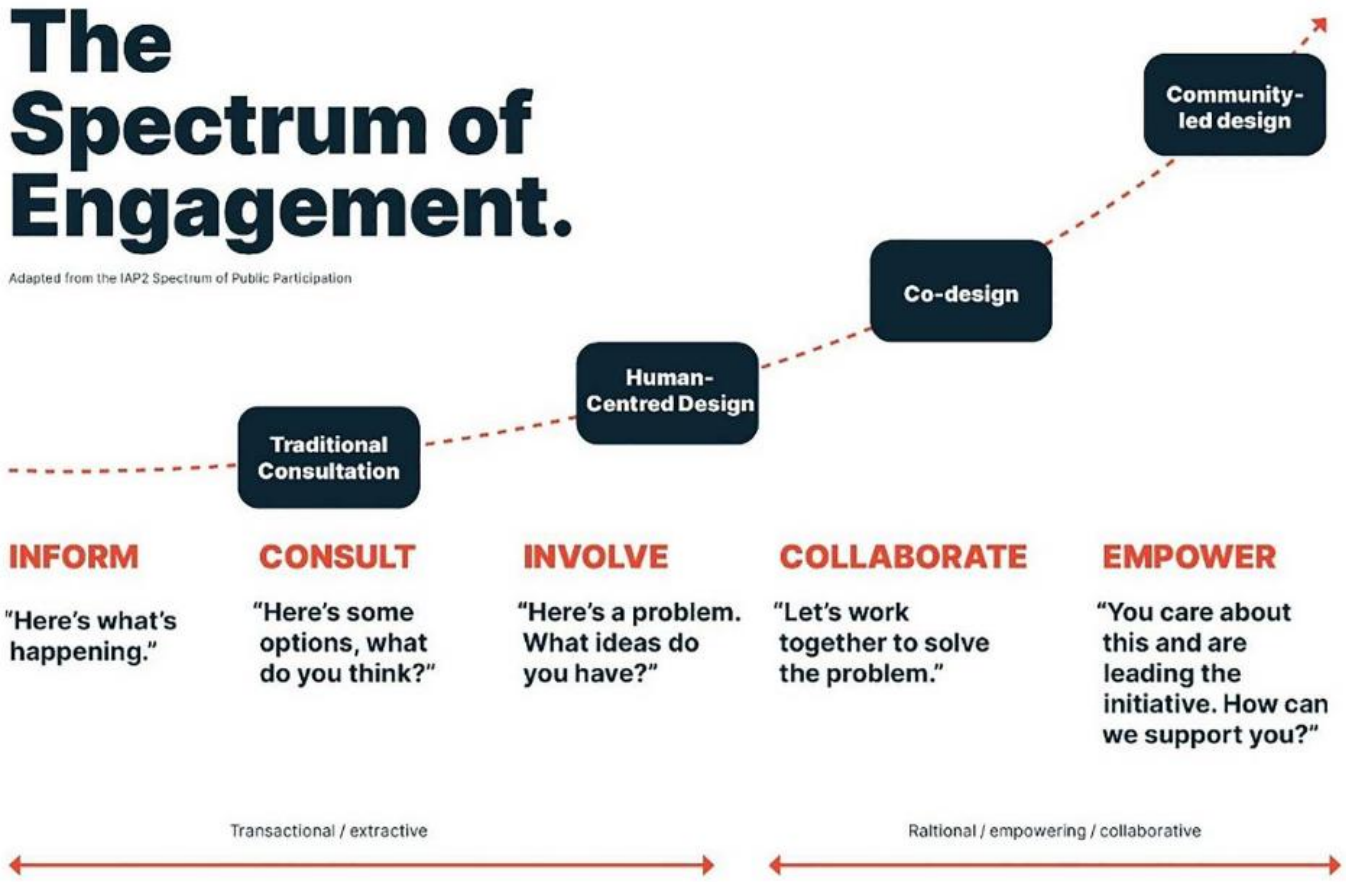

Figure 1. 'Spectrum of engagement'.
Source: Portable Australia Pty Ltd. Used with permission.

Project aimed to investigate how public libraries can effectively collaborate with their community members in designing their new spaces

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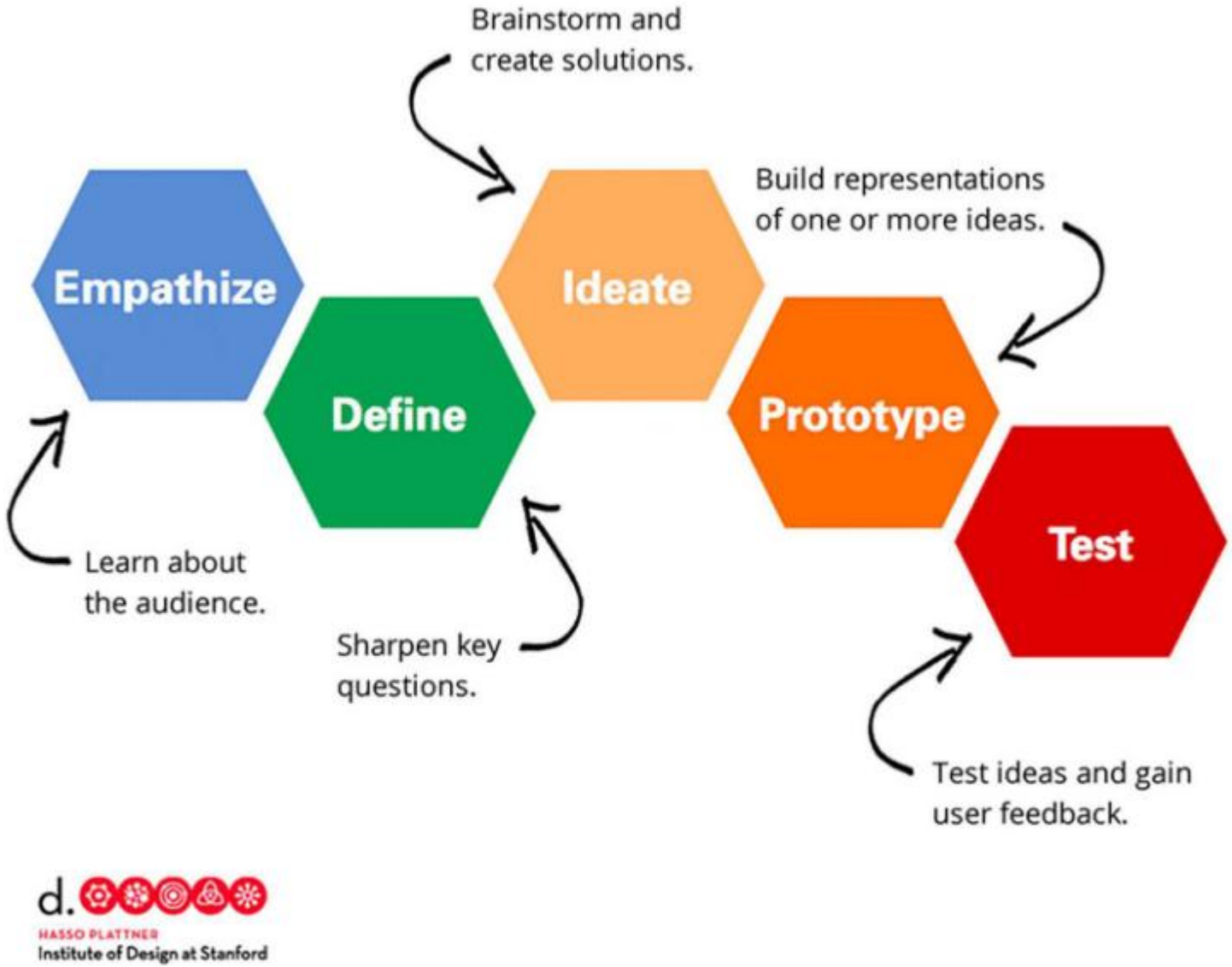
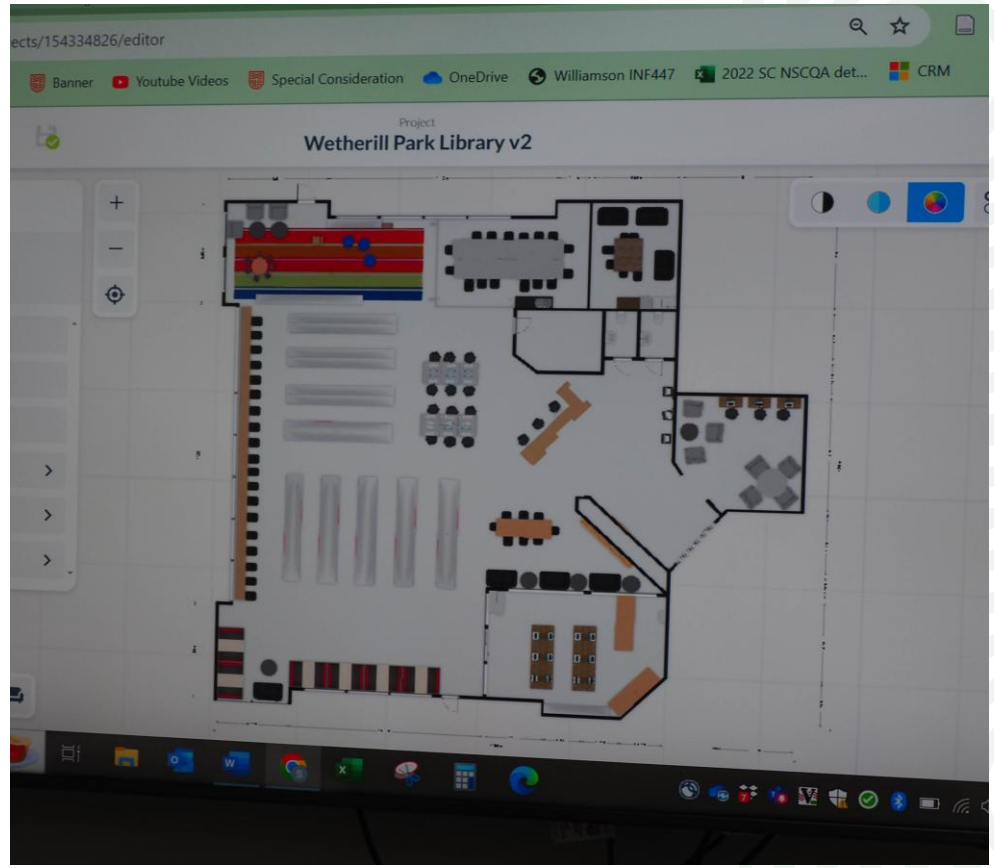


Figure 2. Design thinking phases.

Source: Stanford d.school. Accessed via https://dschool.stanford.edu/resources. Used with permission.

Design ideas and prototyping



What we did

Case studies of 'codesign interventions' in the redesign of two public libraries:

- Wetherill Park Library in City of Fairfield, Sydney and
- Lavington Library in Albury

Wetherill Park (Q1 2024):

3 workshops with community members and staff

Lavington (Q2 2024):

3 workshops with community members and staff

2 codesign session with kids

1 with teens

Workshops

Workshop 1:

Generate ideas for the new space

Workshop 2:

Create a 2D floor plan

Workshop 3:

edit the layout in 3D using floor planning software, create mood boards for aesthetic choices

Before You Begin: Critical Planning Decisions

What is the **scope and intention** of your co-design?

- Idea generation only — or are you aiming for shared decisions/consensus?

How much **influence** will participants genuinely have on the outcomes?

What **project stage** will co-design feed into — early concept, or final refinement?

These choices shape **who you invite, how you frame the workshops, and what is feasible**

Setting Up the Right Conditions

Facilitator role is critical — ideally neutral, skilled in managing group dynamics

Recruit a small, diverse group — typically 8–12 participants is ideal

In-person, hands-on venue — spacious, accessible, not abstract or online

Schedule **multiple sessions only if prototyping / consensus is expected**

Allow **1–2 weeks between workshops** for synthesis and preparation

Introducing the Toolkit

- A practical resource developed from real NSW public library co-design projects
- Supports libraries to **plan and run co-design workshops confidently and safely**
- Designed for refurbishments or focused area redesigns — flexible, not one-size-fits-all
- Not a theory document — intended for **direct use by library staff**

What the Toolkit Provides

Step-by-step guidance from early planning through to workshop delivery

Structured templates and modular activity cards

Guidance on **working with different participant groups, including children**

Emphasis on **inclusive, practical, and realistic co-design — not just idea collection**

Workshop templates: Three-workshop version

Template A

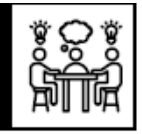
WORKSHOP 1	3 hours
Introduction	20 mins
Tour of library	15 mins
Icebreaker	20 mins
Spatial awareness: Local Spaces	20 mins
BREAK	15 mins
Brainstorming activity	30 mins
Idea development activity	30 mins
Idea evaluation activity	20 mins
Wrap up	10 mins

WORKSHOP 2	3 hours
Introduction/recap	15 mins
Evaluation: Areas Evaluation	30 mins
Spatial planning: Bubble Diagramming	40 mins
Spatial planning: Space Allocation	20 mins
Spatial planning: Furniture & Fittings	20 mins
BREAK	15 mins
Spatial planning: Grand Design	30 mins

WORKSHOP 3	3 hours
Introduction/recap	15 mins
Spatial planning: Bubble Diagramming	60 mins
BREAK	15 mins
Aesthetic ideation: Mood Boards	60 mins
Evaluation: Dotmocracy	10 mins
Wrap up	20 mins

Workshop templates: Two-workshop version

Template B



WORKSHOP 1	6 hours including lunch break
Introduction	20 mins
Tour of library	15 mins
Icebreaker	20 mins
Spatial awareness: Local Spaces	20 mins
BREAK	10 mins
Brainstorming activity	30 mins
Idea development activity	30 mins
Idea evaluation activity	20 mins
Lunch	30 mins

continued over

WORKSHOP 1	*continued*
Evaluation: Areas Evaluation	30 mins
Spatial planning: Bubble Diagramming	30 mins
Spatial planning: Space Allocation	20 mins
Spatial planning: Furniture & Fittings	30 mins
BREAK	15 mins
Spatial planning: Grand Design	30 mins
Wrap up	10 mins

WORKSHOP 2	3 hours
Introduction/recap	15 mins
Spatial planning: 3D Editing	60 mins
BREAK	15 mins
Aesthetic ideation: Mood Boards	60 mins
Evaluation: Dotmocracy	10 mins
Wrap up	20 mins

Workshop templates: One workshop version

Template C

WORKSHOP	3.5 hours
Introduction	15 mins
Icebreaker	20 mins
Spatial awareness: Local Spaces	20 mins
BREAK	10 mins
Brainstorming activity	30 mins
Idea development activity	30 mins
Idea evaluation activity	20 mins
Aesthetic ideation: Mood Boards	60 mins
Evaluation: Dotmocracy	10 mins
Wrap up	10 mins

Activity cards: types and examples

- Icebreakers
- Spatial awareness
- Brainstorming
- Idea development
- Idea evaluation
- Area evaluation
- Spatial planning
- Aesthetic ideation
- Evaluation

Activity card

Activity type: Brainstorming

Name: Crazy 8s

Recommended time allocation: 30 minutes

Aims: To identify a large number of ideas for the library design, with outputs in the form of an A4 page per participant, each with eight ideas.

Instructions

Ask each participant to jot down 8 features for the new library onto a piece of paper which has been folded into 8 squares. This can be done with three folds (each time folding the longest edge), with the paper then unfolded to leave the fold marks (see image).

Participants should undertake this activity individually and write one idea in each 'box'.

Allow 8 minutes for the individual brainstorming, and then ask each participant to present their ideas to the group.

Materials / resources

- A4 paper (one sheet per participant)
- Pens

Notes

This activity encourages the generation of large numbers of ideas.

Participants should be encouraged to consider concrete spaces and areas for the library.

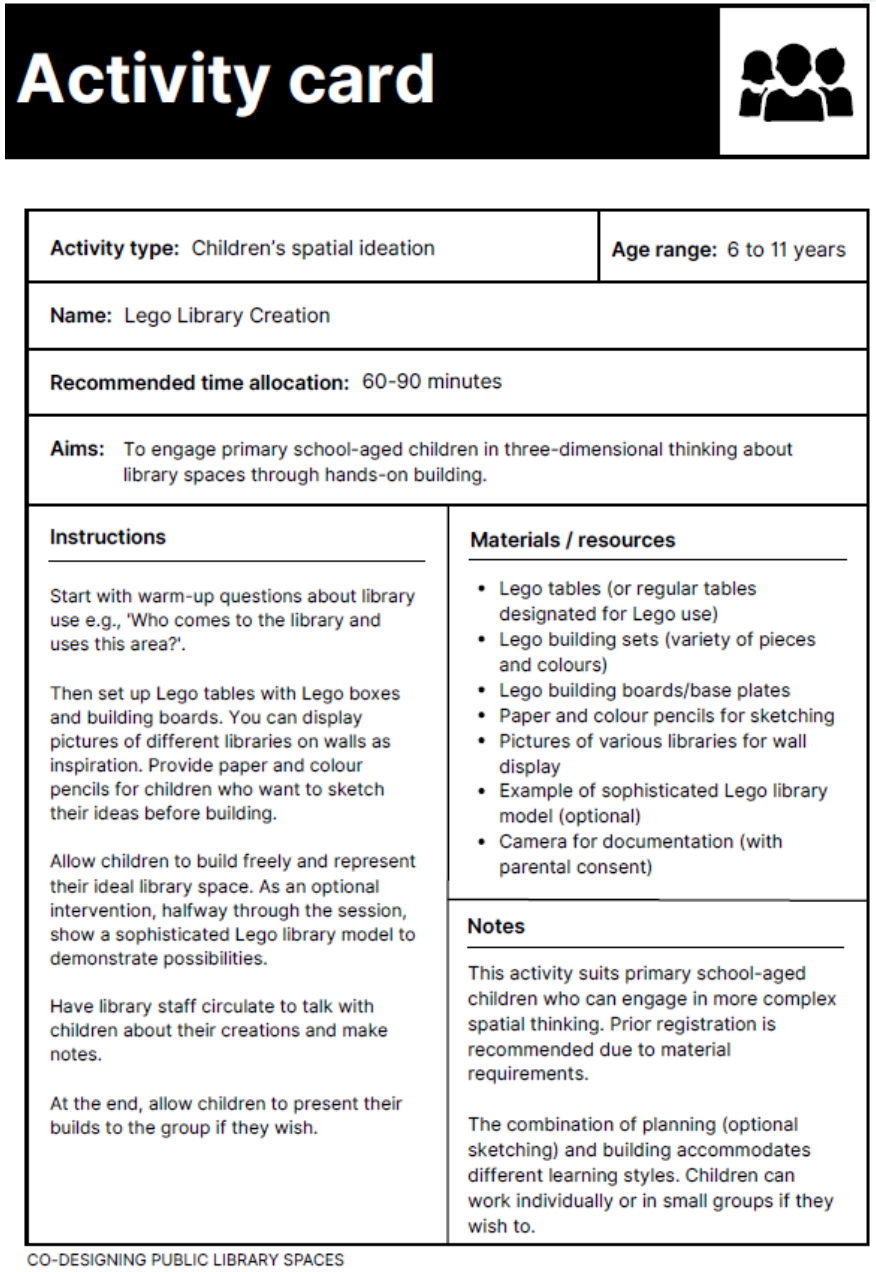
CO-DESIGNING PUBLIC LIBRARY SPACES

Codesigning with kids

- Some key considerations
- Age-appropriate approaches
- Session length
- Focus on ideation
- Facilitation requirements
- Parental involvement
- Artifacts as conversation starters
- Staffing requirements
- Documentation
- Integration with overall co-design process

Children codesign activity cards

- Eight activity cards
- All of ideation type
- Different age groups (from 3 to 11)
- Including
  - Your favourite place
  - Lego building
  - Dream library drawing...



Activity card

Activity type: Children's spatial ideation

Age range: 6 to 11 years

Name: Lego Library Creation

Recommended time allocation: 60-90 minutes

Aims: To engage primary school-aged children in three-dimensional thinking about library spaces through hands-on building.

Instructions

Start with warm-up questions about library use e.g., 'Who comes to the library and uses this area?'.

Then set up Lego tables with Lego boxes and building boards. You can display pictures of different libraries on walls as inspiration. Provide paper and colour pencils for children who want to sketch their ideas before building.

Allow children to build freely and represent their ideal library space. As an optional intervention, halfway through the session, show a sophisticated Lego library model to demonstrate possibilities.

Have library staff circulate to talk with children about their creations and make notes.

At the end, allow children to present their builds to the group if they wish.

Materials / resources

- Lego tables (or regular tables designated for Lego use)
- Lego building sets (variety of pieces and colours)
- Lego building boards/base plates
- Paper and colour pencils for sketching
- Pictures of various libraries for wall display
- Example of sophisticated Lego library model (optional)
- Camera for documentation (with parental consent)

Notes

This activity suits primary school-aged children who can engage in more complex spatial thinking. Prior registration is recommended due to material requirements.

The combination of planning (optional sketching) and building accommodates different learning styles. Children can work individually or in small groups if they wish to.

CO-DESIGNING PUBLIC LIBRARY SPACES

Project’s scholarly outputs

Hider, P., Garner, J., Godfrey, A., Jamali, H. R., & Wakeling, S. (2024). **Designing for Communities with Communities: A Public Library Codesign Project**. *Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association*, *73*(2), 148–176. https://doi.org/10.1080/24750158.2024.2332973

Wakeling, S., Garner, J., Hider, P., Godfrey, A., & Jamali, H. R. (2025). **Evaluating the Effectiveness of a Public Library Codesign Workshop Process**. *Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association*, 1–33. https://doi.org/10.1080/24750158.2025.2540229

Jamali, H. R., Wakeling, S., Hider, P., & Garner, J. (2025). **Using codesign for the development of children and young adults’ spaces in public libraries**. *Public Library Quarterly*, Early Cite.

Hider, P., Wakeling, S., Jamali, H. R., & Garner, J. (2026). **Planning and using library codesign: Towards a toolkit for public libraries.** *Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association*, 75(1), 66-84

Toolkit for Codesigning Public Library Spaces

How we designed the workshops

Evaluation of the different activities and overall participation

About the kids' and teens' sessions

Evaluation of the overall utility of the codesign

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Co-designing public library spaces toolkit

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https://pls.sl.nsw.gov.au/managing-my-library/buildings-and-spaces/co-designing-public-library-spaces-toolkit