



BOOKLINE

September 2026

Newsletter of Friends of the Tauranga City Libraries Incorporated

Chairperson: Jill Best

Patron: Bill Holland

NEWSLETTER FOR SEPTEMBER 2026

Greetings – Can you believe we’re in the last quarter of the year and Christmas will be upon us before we know it. But before that we will have the grand opening of the new City Library on 16th October. At our last meeting we were given a sneak peek by video of the inside layout and the work that has gone into all the details that make a super Green Star, accessible library. It’s going to be a fantastic asset to Tauranga with more space for meetings and a special room called Creation Station, which has 3D printers, sewing machines, laser cutters and other gadgets so people can experience new things. Apart from the books, there is so much more to see so pop in and make use of it over the months ahead.

CHAIRPERSONS REPORT – Jill Best

Highlights for the year included:

- Oct 25, visit to Rotorua Library. We came back with several new ideas.
- Xmas party was well attended and enjoyed. Sobriety reigned in spite of annual threats to spike the punch!
- In May, Council announced an entirely unexpected intention to save money from the Annual Plan by closing the branch libraries on Sundays, and cutting the adult programmes offered by the libraries, particularly classes for adults about the digital world. We responded with a letter-writing campaign, and newspaper articles, with support from Grey Power and Tauranga Writers. The Sunday closing proposal was reversed, and the library has recently found a way to restore the digital literacy programmes too.
- We took part in the ten-year celebration of Greerton Library – yes, really ten years since it opened! It has been really well used, including by many classes from Greerton Village School across the road.

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Our two book clubs – at Papamoa and Greerton – are going well. Thanks to the convenors, Marian Gellert and Betty Hawker. Sadly, we had no involvement with the Summer Reading Programme, except to assist at the finale. A lively programme of speakers was offered. However general meetings are now reduced to bi-monthly as attendance has been low.

Thank you, Jennifer, for several newsletters during the year, keeping members in touch with news regarding FOL and the libraries. The FOL is now regularly advertised on the libraries' rolling screens, and in Grey Power magazine.

In the coming financial year, book groups and speakers will continue. We are about to sponsor a walker for infirm customers of the new library, and a programme of author talks.

The committee has been invited to a preview of the new library before it opens in October. And we will keep a close eye on Council plans for the libraries for the future.

Jim Clarkson, a Life Member and a past President of Friends of the Library, died in May 2026 aged 94. Some current FOL and Tauranga Library staff members will remember him. Although unable to attend meetings in recent years he retained his interest in FOL until his move to Auckland. We have sent our condolences to his family.

LIBRARY STATS

As promised some statistics for the end of the financial year and commentary, please feel free to share in Bookline.

July 2025 to June 2026

Visits to all Libraries	709600
Virtual Visits	1149535
Attendance at Programmes and Events	42063
Active borrowers	40264
Number of new borrowers who joined this year	6482
Physical Issues and renewals	1259817
eBook and e-audio Issues	210039
How many books in the collection	250,000
Interloan Requests	626
Pae Korokī visits to archives online	259,000

A year in review -

And just like that, June brought another financial year to a close — and what a strong year it has been for Te Ao Mārama – Tauranga Libraries & Community Hubs. We welcomed 709,600 visits to our libraries and saw 42,063 people take part in programmes and events, which is especially exciting because both figures are the highest we have recorded in the past five years. Our customers have also kept borrowing in a big way, with physical issues and renewals sitting at an impressive 1.26 million for the year.

That steady demand says a lot: even with more digital options available, people still value great collections, welcoming spaces, and the simple joy of finding their next good read. Perhaps it is our carefully curated collection of around 250,000 items, shaped by customer requests and holds. Perhaps it is the hard-working Mobile Library team, getting books, magazines and DVDs out to people across the community. Or perhaps Tauranga simply loves to read — and with so many young families, lifelong learners and retirees in our city, that feels like a pretty good explanation too. The 6482 new borrowers who got library cards this year would agree.

It was good to end the financial year on a positive note after a challenging 6 months. A huge, huge THANK YOU to Friends for your support and advocacy led by Jill and committee members. You really made a difference to turning Sunday closing into not Sunday closing after all.

Ngā mihi, Joanna (Library manager)

HOW LIBRARIES IN JAPAN ARE BEING REIMAGINED AS PILLARS OF COMMUNITY LIFE

Feb 2026

- **Libraries provide access to information, host events and create gathering spaces that encourage people to leave their homes and engage cognitively and physically.**
- **These cultural assets are becoming strategic enablers for building more connected, healthy and future-ready societies.**

Libraries across Japan are undergoing a quiet yet significant transformation. No longer viewed solely as repositories of books, they are increasingly being repositioned as part of infrastructure that strengthens social cohesion, supports healthy ageing and enhances societal resilience. Japan is one of the world's most rapidly ageing societies and while extending healthy life expectancy is a national priority, strengthening social connections has emerged as a critical lever. Research indicates that individuals who participate in community activities are approximately 18% less likely to require long-term care and have a 22% higher likelihood of longevity compared to those who do not. Social participation, therefore, is increasingly understood as a social asset and as a key determinant of health and well-being.

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Emerging evidence also highlights the potential role of libraries in this equation. A large-scale longitudinal study followed more than 70,000 adults aged 65 and older over seven years. The findings suggest that communities with richer library resources experience lower risks of functional disability. In areas with ten additional books per capita, the risk of functional impairment was approximately 34% lower. Furthermore, each additional library within a community was associated with a 48% lower risk of functional disability.

Libraries provide access to information, host events and create gathering spaces that encourage people to leave their homes and engage cognitively and physically. In ageing societies, such functions may carry broader public health and social resilience benefits so libraries across Japan are being reimagined as platforms for community regeneration. Elsewhere, libraries are strategically integrating health and social services. In Toyooka City, a community library Daikai Bunko was established in 2020 as a space where books function as an entry point to broader social support. The library incorporates consultations with medical professionals and applies the concept of 'social prescribing,' connecting individuals to community groups and local cafés. Notably, some former users now contribute to the library's operations, demonstrating how inclusive spaces can cultivate new forms of civic participation.

How do libraries become part of the future of social resilience?

As communities seek new forms of social connection amid demographic change and shifting social dynamics, libraries are emerging as more than book-lending institutions in Japan. They are evolving into foundational civic infrastructure capable of generating social capital and strengthening community cohesion. Efforts to position libraries as platforms for revitalizing local engagement are increasingly viewed as scalable and practical ways to advance inclusion and resilience. In this sense, libraries are not only cultural assets, but strategic enablers for building more connected, healthy and future-ready societies.

GENERAL & COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Oct 22nd – Committee meeting.

Nov 26th – Christmas morning tea.

CHRISTMAS

We will again have a Christmas party at Greerton Library with delicious food and beverages at 10.30am on Thursday 26th November.

HAPPY READING