

# The travelling librarian and the lost tribe of train: public library research into lending aboard trains

Ben Hinton  
*Playford Library, South Australia*

---

## Abstract

In theory, public libraries serve the entire spectrum of the local community. But for the majority of potential clients whose waking life is structured by standard business hours, the library is not accessible. At best the local library (of fixed place and four walls) is open only one night a week after 5pm, or at worst is closed after hours. Even more temporal for the working majority are so called mobile libraries, whose book-shelves-on-wheels shift to different scheduled locations throughout the business hours of any given day.

Enter: the Travelling Librarian. Travelling, the Librarian can lend to a captive audience of clients willing to forgo the pleasure of browsing. Although without shelves, the Travelling Librarian is able to overcome many of the logistical challenges posed in the environment by strategic use of the structure of the transport system. From research to practice this paper further describes the process and problems of attempting to trial such a service on the TransAdelaide train system in Adelaide, South Australia - specifically the experiences of developing cooperative relationships with TransAdelaide and attracting funding for Public Liability Insurance.

