



**grand designs**

With the changing face of Christchurch, we went in search of buildings that made us say "wow". From a cube cafe in the central city to a luxury loo at a lagoon, here are five of the best.

Words **Abbie Napier**

**Lincoln Library**  
**Address:** 22 Gerald St, Lincoln  
**Cost:** \$3.2 million  
**Owner/developer:** Selwyn District Council  
**Designer:** Warren and Mahoney  
**Builder:** Image Construction  
**Completed:** February 2014  
**Footprint:** 720 square metres



These days, a public library is basically a living room for the community. More than just books, the space needs comfortable seating, wifi and computers. It needs to be a place where children can practise their reading, students can study and travellers can research their next road trip. A library is inclusive, multipurpose and functional.

When Warren and Mahoney project architect Joseph Hampton started designing the Lincoln Library, he worked not only with the building's function, but with the input of a passionate rural community, the professionals who worked in the space and the council that owned it. The result, as he puts it, is an "elegant shed".

The design process began in 2010 and the project took more than three years to complete. The earthquakes meant a structural redesign, funnelling more of the

"modest" \$3.2 million project budget into making the structure safe, leaving precious little for luxury design features. Instead, Joseph says the library's beauty is in its function. Nothing is wasted and everything is flexible, from the internal walls to the electrical wiring.

"The librarians can move the space around and have flexibility in setting the space up," he says.

Instead of signage posting the way inside, each space is meant to naturally convey its purpose – the children's corner is bright and colourful, the work spaces are functional and everything is obvious.

The colour palette is minimalist to give it a greater life expectancy and the ceiling reflects the simple structure of the building.

Public buildings need to last. The library has sustainable solutions built in, keeping its running costs low. These

include a concrete slab to store heat, a hydraulic water-heating system and natural ventilation. The corrugated iron facade mimics one of the more common building materials used in the area for barns, sheds, and even housing. What's more, it will go the distance.

"The building kneels to the north and shelters itself from overheating, but it's open to the south, which gives it uniform natural light, which is great for libraries and reduces the electricity bill," Joseph says.

Lincoln's new library is bigger, better and more user-friendly than the tiny weatherboard house it replaced. In the past year, it clocked almost 90,000 visits – 35,000 more than its predecessor.

"If you keep things utilitarian, but functional and practical, you get the beauty of a building that expresses its own function, which is appropriate for a rural town."

