

Translating Traditional Contracts into Comic Contracts for Kids: The Initial Data from the Cockburn Toy Library Comic Contract

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Introduction/Origins of the Project¹

Since 2015, a group of researchers at UWA Law School and other schools at UWA has been producing and researching the impact of visual and comic contracts in different legal sectors.² While novel in approach a decade ago, the advance in legal communication and innovation has seen the exponential growth of visual and comic contracts, spanning consent forms, banking PDS contracts, service agreements and many more. The research in this innovative field now spans 13 diverse fields of research, from marketing, to medicine to psychology – and, of course, includes law.³

One of these many emerging fields of research in this project is in “Children

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¹ The CLT visual contract was funded by the Federal Governments Stronger Communities Grant R7 and a Stockland CARE Grant and produced by Alternative Contracting (www.alternativecontracting.biz) for the Cockburn Toy Library. The research into the contract and its focus group testing and impact is funded by Mission Australia under UWA research project **2022/GR000347**, and approved by UWA Ethics Approval 2019/RA/4/1/9340 ‘Visualisation of Contracts’, which is continued under UWA Ethics Approval 2023/ET000734 - Continuing Comic Contracting Testing. Quantitative data was collected at the meeting of the Melbourne Children’s Parliament on 2nd Nov 2022 with consent.

² See www.comicbookcontracts.com

³ For an overview of the transdisciplinary research and its champions, see <https://www.comicbookcontracts.com/our-people>

and the Law”, and centres on the application of comic contracts to help children engage with and understand legal agreements which affect them. The team has developed consent forms for mental health care for children (see the example from Mission Australia)⁴ and other consent forms for non-profit organisations such as Ruah Community Services,⁵ often translating traditional contract text into simpler text with images in order to make them more accessible. In 2022, the Cockburn Toy Library (CLT) contracted with Alternative Contracting (Alternative), to produce signage and visual contracts (also referred to as ‘comic book contracts’) which would be more appealing to children and multicultural users of CLT. Alternative works closely with the Comic Contracting team at UWA, and followed similar processes and approaches to contracts which were funded commercially, but unsuited for university research sponsorship.

On completion, the CLT visual contract was generously shared with the Comic Contracting team for focus group testing and data collection. The CLT visual contract is also currently the subject of impact testing alongside other visual contracts by the Comic Contracting team. Alongside other research projects, the CLT visual contract has helped to inform the growing research data on ‘contracting for children’, which has become a distinct research area in comic contracting.

This paper describes the process of the creation of the CLT signage and visual contract, as well as the subsequent focus group testing. It is co-authored by the President of the Cockburn Toy Library, Dr Barker, and the leader of the Comic Contracting team at the University of Western Australia, Prof Andersen. The paper will briefly position comic contracting in the legal innovation field, and then quantitatively and qualitatively assess the focus group feedback on the creation of the CLT visual contract.

This paper has limitations, as both authors are lawyers and not communication or translation experts. Thus, from the perspective of Translation Studies, we acknowledge that this paper is not well grounded on its conceptions of translation. The area clearly merits further research, but is outside the scope of this paper and the expertise of the authors. We are given to understand that the transposition of legal contracts from written

⁴ See <https://www.comicbookcontracts.com/mission-australia>

⁵ See <https://ruah.org.au/> and the visual contracts at

traditional form in legal language to a visual and narrative format constitutes a process of intersemiotic translation,⁶ in the classical sense described by Roman Jakobson, and we are aware that aspects of visual translation, multimodality, and accessibility as domains need further exploration.⁷ We invite any interested readers to join our team and contribute with this expert knowledge in further analysis. closely related to contemporary translation theory. This invitation does not only extend to the analysis of the contracts for children being discussed in the current paper, but others visual contracts created for a selection of audiences – from vulnerable to adult professional. The paper concludes with other potential applications of the format, and thoughts on the ongoing impact testing, along with general observations on the directions our research on ‘contracting with children’ is taking.

What is Comic Contracting?

The Comic Contracting team has worked since 2014⁸ on producing and testing processes for creating, as well as the impacts of, visual contracts in a plethora of different areas of law.⁹ The premise of the project is that visual contracts produce improved aspects of contracting, as compared to ‘traditional’ written contracts, in three specific areas of study:

- 1) first, all visual contracts aid engagement with contracts – that is, people will actually read them;
- 2) secondly, through this increased engagement as well as through increased clarity, visual contracts also increase comprehension of

⁶ Jakobson, R. (1959). On Linguistic Aspects of Translation. In Brower R. (Ed.), On Translation (pp. 232-239). Harvard University Press

⁷ As Lawyers, we are not familiar with the work of Kaindl (2004), Kress & van Leeuwen (2006), or Remael & Orero (2022) but welcome collaborators who are. We thank the reviewers for their insight.

⁸ See www.comicbookcontracts.com. From initial smaller cartoons of non-disclosure agreements, to multi-jurisdictional employment contracts, to large projects with banking disclosure schedules, the team has worked with a plethora of contracts.

⁹ For more information on comic book contracting see Zan, Kelly, Camilla Baasch Andersen, and Lisa Toohey. 2023. “Assessing the Efficacy of Visual Contracts: An Empirical Study of Transaction Costs.” *Applied Economics* 55 (40): 4712–26; Andersen, Camilla Baasch, and Robert De Rooy. 2022. “Employment Agreements in Comic Book Form – What a Difference Cartoons Make” In *Research Handbook on Contract Design*, 328–46. Edward Elgar Publishing; Andersen, Camilla Baasch, and Su Hsien Lee. 2022. “Facilitative Contracts with Visuals and Comics: Access to Justice and Steps for the Future.” In *Research Handbook on Contract Design*, 314–28. Edward Elgar Publishing; Andersen, Camilla Baasch, and Peter Corner. n.d. “Making Contracts Readable - Developing Contracts in Comic Book Form.” *Transnational Commercial Law Review* 1 (2): 24; Andersen, Camilla Baasch. n.d. “Musings on the Comic Book Contract Project and Legal Design Thinking.” *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* 12 (1): 39–45.

- contracts – people will actually understand them; and
- 3) finally, visual contracts are perceived positively by end users who prefer to engage with simpler, non-traditional contracts which make the effort to be well received – people will actually value them. The data collected so far has exceeded our expectations in supporting this, and across a multitude of contexts.

The project champions the use of visuals in legal communications, more specifically in contracting, to ease understanding, relationships and compliance. We discovered early on, that in achieving our results, we relied on key principles of relational contracting (which attracted a Nobel prize in 2016 for Hart & Holmstrom);¹⁰ If-Then thinking, which drives behaviour and consent;¹¹ and isolating bespoke pain points and risk, as well as necessary behavioural drivers. Data so far has shown a measurable economic benefit in the elimination of dispute resolution.¹² Broadly, the multifaceted and differentiated approaches to the variety of contract forms addressed by comic contracting thus far has employed very diverse approaches in pursuit of learning to improve legal communication in contracts. Thus, this project has relied on multidisciplinary approaches from the very start – not just from graphics and design, but from engineering, psychology, marketing and any other discipline needed to streamline contractual relationships and literacy. For example, expertise in finding pain points in finance and finance literacy were important to projects involving visual contracts for banking,¹³ whereas medicine and genomics expertise were needed in the example of the Genomics explainer for paediatrics.¹⁴

¹⁰ See, e.g., Appelbaum, Binyamin. 2016. "Oliver Hart and Bengt Holmstrom Win Nobel in Economics for Work on Contracts." *The New York Times*, October 10, 2016. Accessed January 24, 2024. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/11/business/nobel-economics-oliver-hart-bengt-holmstrom.html>.

¹¹ Keating, Adrian, and Camilla Baasch Andersen. 2020. "Engineering Visual Contracts: Using If-Then Thinking to Develop Behavioral Drivers for Imaging." *Journal of Open Access to Law* 8 (1): 1.

¹² Zan, Kelly, Camilla Baasch Andersen, and Lisa Toohey. 2023. "Assessing the Efficacy of Visual Contracts: An Empirical Study of Transaction Costs." *Applied Economics* 55 (40).

¹³ See Gignac, G. E., Gerrans, P., & Andersen, C. B. (2023). "Financial literacy mediates the effect between verbal intelligence and financial anxiety. *Personality and Individual Differences*", 203, the contract PDS can be viewed at: https://www.bankwest.com.au/content/dam/bankwest/documents/legal-library/PDS_20080125-110540.pdf

¹⁴ Butler G, Andersen C, Buttery J, et al "Design and evaluation of a visual genomic explainer: a mixed-methods study" *Archives of Disease in Childhood* 2025;110:151-157 available at: <https://adc.bmj.com/content/110/2/151.full> The contract can be found at: <https://www.comicbookcontracts.com/genomics-explainer>.

Comic Contracting has been involved with a variety of not-for-profit sponsors and is strongly associated with Access to Justice. The advantage of visuals in contracting, while beneficial to all groups in society, is especially felt when increasing access to justice for vulnerable groups. One of the early Comic Contract projects, the domestic carer employment contract for sponsors WAI¹⁵, gained recognition by the Queensland Supreme Court and formed part of a "Graphic Justice" exhibit in 2016.¹⁶ Ongoing work in this field is continuing, with the recent sponsorship of Ruah Community Services, who are sponsoring the Comic Contracting design and testing of a suite of contracts for their use in supporting vulnerable people in restructuring their lives.

While the Comic Contracting project was not initially tailored for 'contracting for children', it became apparent early on that the project's selected contracts involved developing behavioural drivers, which could also help shape children's understanding and behaviours in contracting – the CTL visual contract was one of these. The following work seeks to demonstrate that the contract is not just a set of rules, but operates as a relational framework for the behaviours needed to reduce, if not eliminate contractual disputes, as well as a helpful guide for involving children in the understanding of what is expected of them – in this instance, as users of the CTL.

The engagement with children in designing and testing visual contracts which helps inform and empower them has led to the Comic Contracting team developing a new silo for research in the field of visual contracts for children, which we invited Dr Barker to lead. The research from the CTL forms some of the initial data, alongside the sponsored research from Mission Australia and their visual consent for children's mental health care.

The Visual Signage – Origins of the Avatar Design for the Comic Contract

One of the most challenging aspects of creating visual contracts is the visual design of the so-called 'avatars' (the visual representation of the company,

¹⁵ See the contract at <https://www.comicbookcontracts.com/wais>

¹⁶ <https://www.sclqld.org.au/services/public-programs/exhibitions/graphic-justice-pictures-worth-1000-words>

its users/clients and other stakeholders where needed). Previous research by the Comic Contracting team has delved into many of the mistakes made in this space, on a very steep learning curve – prime examples include the avatar lessons learned on the award-winning Aurecon contract¹⁷ on multi regional imagery, as well as the lessons learned in the WAiS project on ‘knowing your industry’.¹⁸

The original project for CTL visuals, funded by Stockland CARE Grant 2022 and the Federal Stronger Communities Grant Program 2022, was to create 12 inclusive category signs for the CTL toy collection. As avatar design in visual contracts, as in other contexts, always proves tricky, as outlined in the examples above, the idea to precede creation of the visual contract by developing signage using initial ideas was generally well received by both Alternative and CTL.

One of the first steps in most processes involving visual or comic contracts is finding the key values and main pain points to develop the storyboarding and visual feel of the contract. The final version of the CTL visual contract ended up applying an avatar very similar to the first concept developed for the signage: a deliberately naïve hand drawn toy octopus figure (subsequently named ‘Octoplay’, see image 1). This ‘Octoplay’ emerged from a number of factors, one of which was the original vision for the project to create a welcoming space for members from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.¹⁹

The use of an octopus specifically was inspired by a childhood toy belonging to the children of the managing director of Alternative, chosen for its versatility, universal appeal and potential for actively posing it with a variety of toys.²⁰ When presented with the option for octopus-based imagery for CTL, the CTL management committee (the Committee) responded positively, noting the potential inappropriate associations between the imagery in the CLT’s old logo (a rabbit) and children, including adult toy

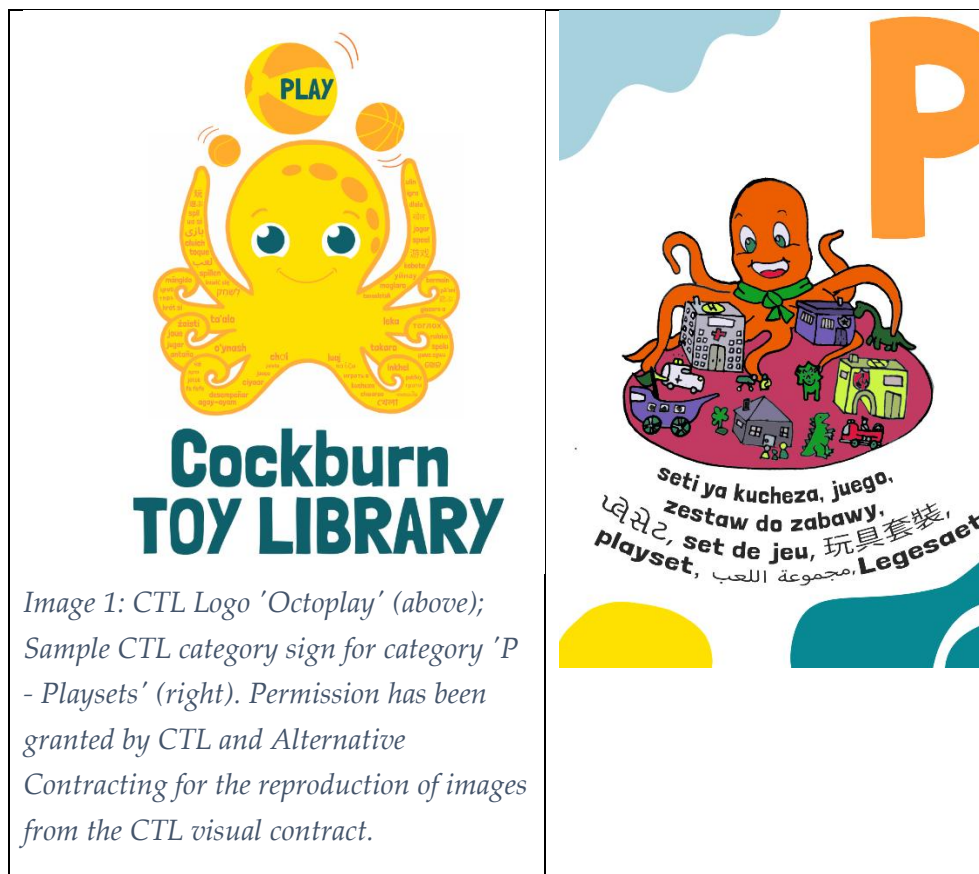
¹⁷ Winner of the 2019 Golden Quill in International Business Communications, an older version is available at: <https://www.comicbookcontracts.com/aurecon-contract>.

¹⁸ Andersen, Camilla Baasch, and Su Hsien Lee. 2022. “Facilitative Contracts with Visuals and Comics: Access to Justice and Steps for the Future.” In *Research Handbook on Contract Design*, 314–28. Edward Elgar Publishing.

¹⁹ Toy Library briefing document provided to Alternative via Email dated 11 March 2022.

²⁰ Referred to in Email R Barker to Alternative dated 4 April 2022.

inferences.²¹ An octopus image was subsequently used to create a new logo for CLT, designed by Curtin Business School students. This version of 'Octoplay' incorporated the word 'play' in multiple languages in the tentacles as the 'suckers'.



The Contract Design

The design of the CTL visual contract went through several stages, including simplification of the pre-existing traditional contract, communication of CLT's requirements to Alternative, development of the initial concept art and selection of artist, and the refinement of both the visual and text aspects of the new visual contract. All aspects of these changes and stages were driven by informed insight into the required conduct wanted by CTL, and what would be needed to communicate these expectations to parents as well as their children.

²¹ Referred to in Email R Barker to Alternative dated 13 June 2022.

The first step was revising CTL's existing membership contract (also referred to as their terms and conditions or terms of service). This pre-existing contract was significantly out of date.²² The President and the CTL Toy Librarian developed a simplified list of the 20 essential terms and conditions based on the pre-existing CTL contract and their experience in the day-to-day operations of a toy library (Annexure 1). This simplified list of contract terms was provided to Alternative along with other documents outlining CTL's background and mission²³ The parameters of the contract design was informed by the regulatory requirements of the components, and the industry pain points, as well as the behaviours needed to be compliance. For instance, the bundle of reference documents also included copies of CTL's Constitution and Helmet Waiver, which assisted in the development of the design by highlighting necessary behavioural drivers for safety and safety compliance.

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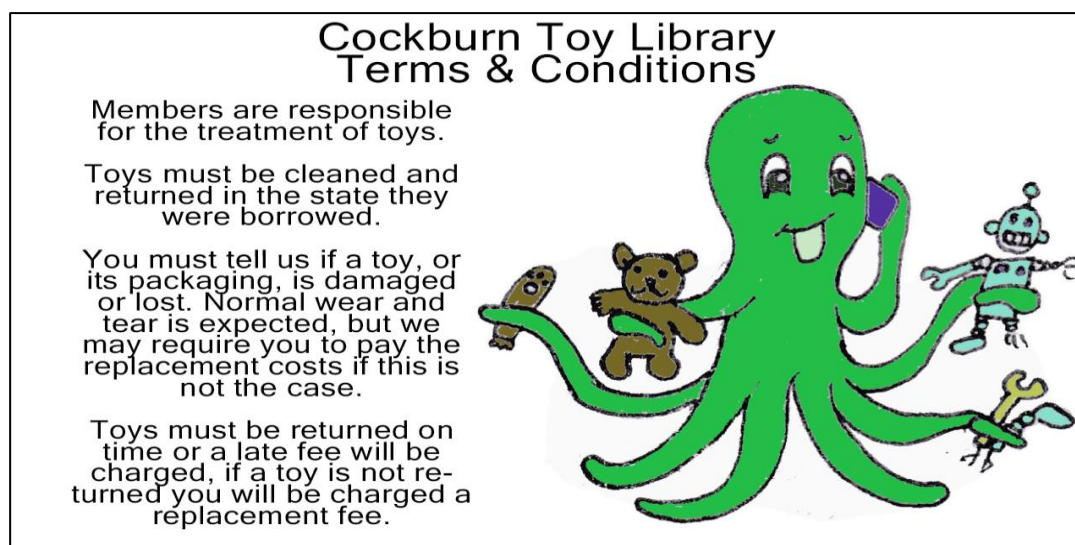


Image 2: Sample from first version of CTL visual terms and conditions tiles, showing terms related to cleaning toys and to broken, damaged and/or lost toys. Permission has been granted by CTL and Alternative Contracting for the reproduction of images from the CTL visual contract.

²² Referred to in Email from R Barker to Alternative dated 22 April 2022.

²³ See Emails between R Barker and Alternative dated 11 March 2022 and 5 May 2022. Toy Library briefing document provided to Alternative via Email dated 11 March 2022.

²⁴ Provided to Alternative via Email dated 5 May 2022. The helmet waiver is required by CTL's insurer.

The second key step was the selection of an artist and image style. Alternative presented two options to CTL.²⁵ The President, in consultation with Alternative, selected the work created by a young First Nations artist, Tanika King, in part because of the naïve ‘childlike’ hand-drawn images created by the artist (see Image 1). As outlined above, the octopus avatar for these signs was also used by the artists to produce the images for the resulting visual contract.

The visual contract itself went through three iterations. The first version was designed around a series of individual tiles which could be both displayed together at the toy library, as well as individually (see Image 2).²⁶ This was based on the original project description given to funders:

One thing that we will keep in mind with this second grant is it was technically for ‘pictorial signs’ with our key rules rather than a whole comic book contract. My thinking is that we would display both the whole contract (in A2 size) in the toy library as well as some specific rules/ terms extracted from the contract at key locations around the toy library. So no additional illustration needed – just the ability to isolate and print key rules (i.e., you must return the toys in a good, clean condition) so they can be displayed separately. We might also use these on social media when doing a blitz on compliance with some of these key terms.²⁷

Following feedback from the Committee (see below), a second version of the visual contract was created with a panel style comic (see Image 3).

²⁵ Referred to in Email from Alternative to R Barker dated 16 May 2022.

²⁶ Referred to in Email from R Barker to Alternative dated 27 May 2023.

²⁷ Referred to in Email from R Barker to Alternative dated 27 May 2023.

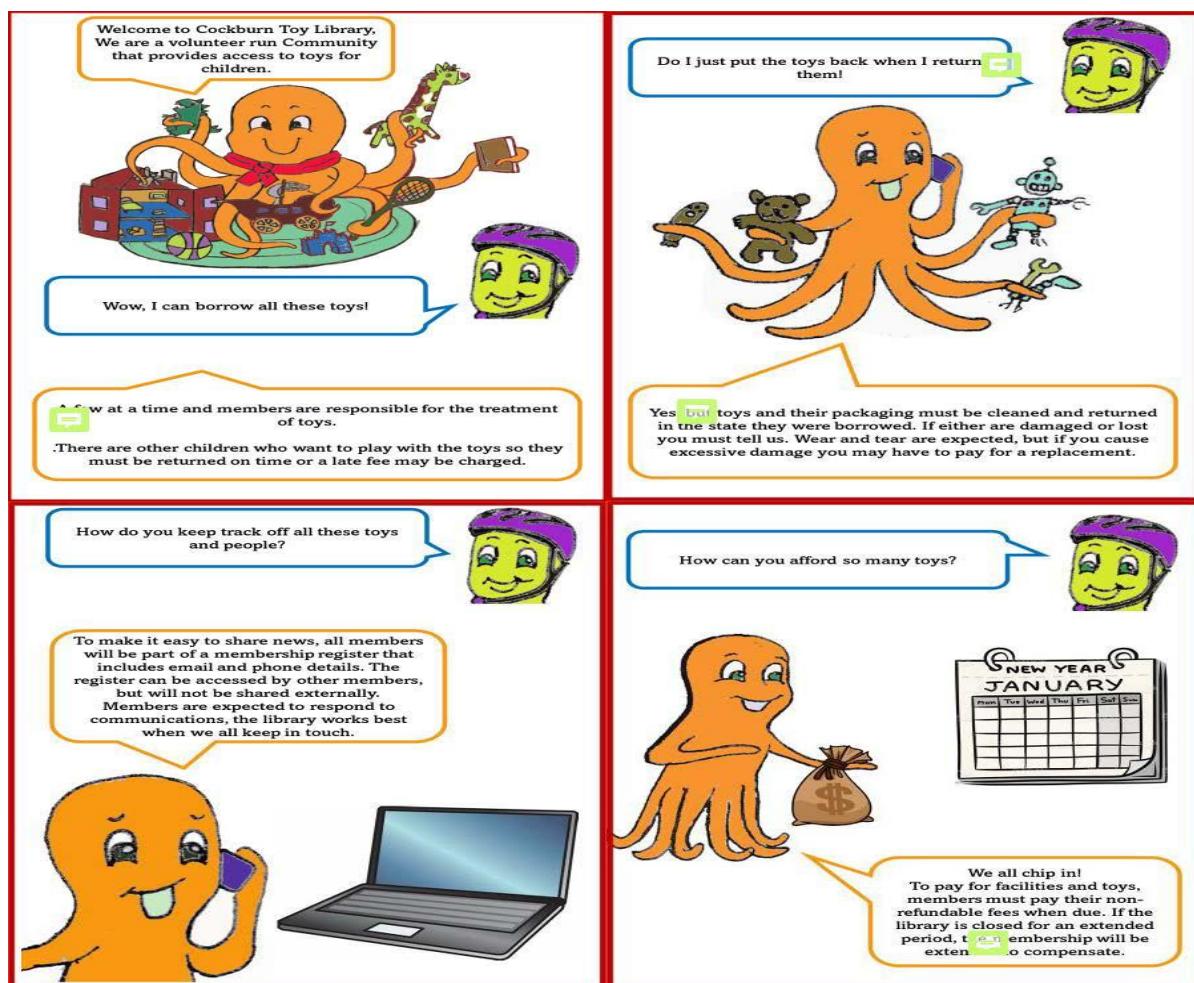


Image 3: Sample from second draft CTL visual contract. Permission has been granted by CTL and Alternative Contracting for the reproduction of images from the CTL visual contract.

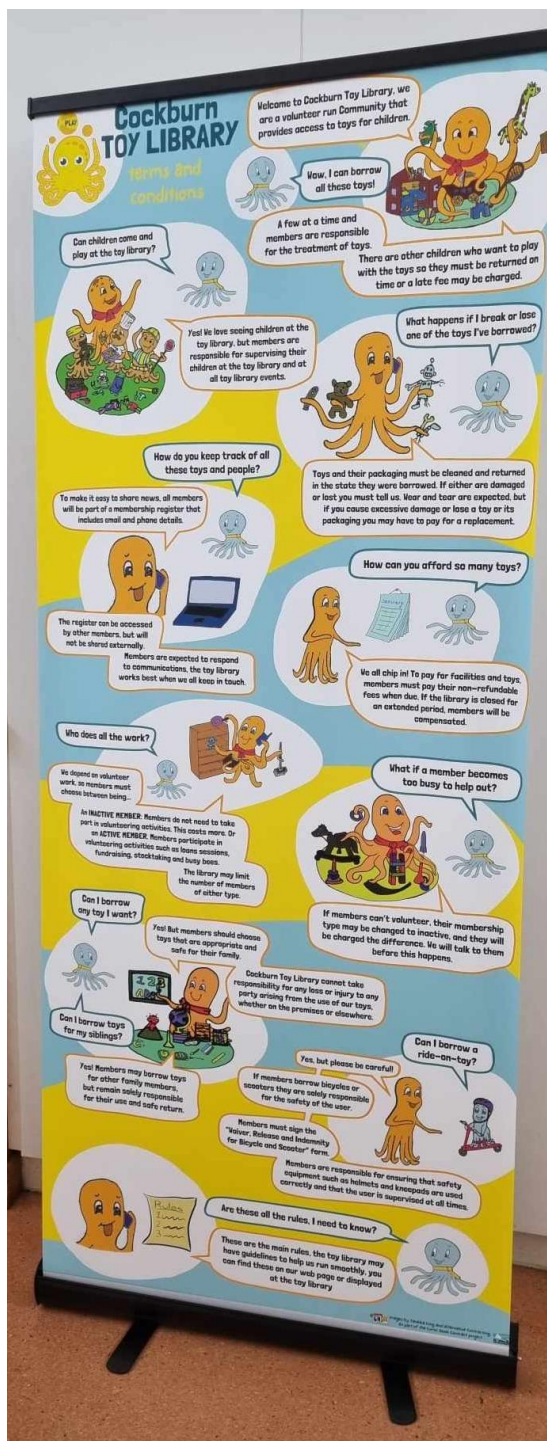


Image 4: CTL pull up banner visual contract. Permission has been granted by CTL and Alternative Contracting for the reproduction of images from the CTL visual contract.

Following an additional round of feedback, the final version of the visual contract was produced in two formats. First, a large banner format, with a flowing comic style conversation between a small and large octopus, for use as a pull up display banner in CTL's two locations and when attending events (see Image 4), and second, as an A5 booklet with one key term per page. This booklet is provided to members on joining CTL, and is designed for parents to be able to read with their children. At each stage of the development of the visual contract, CTL's President and Toy Librarian provided feedback on both the specific wording of the text aspects of the contract, as well as the pairings between the images and the text.

The Internal Focus Group and Impact Testing

Throughout the development of the CTL visual contract, Alternative sought feedback from the CTL Committee. At two committee meetings, the members of the Committee were provided with an opportunity to provide written feedback on both the category signs and draft versions of the visual contract. The feedback primarily focused on the choice of colours (in some cases theses clashed), the emotions being conveyed by the octopus avatar, and the choice of font.²⁸

In relation to the visual contract specifically, the Committee identified two specific pain points. The first pain point related to the format of the visual contract. In response to the first draft, members of the Committee noted that they had expected a more comic book style presentation, with a more conversational style and traditional comic book look.²⁹ Following the second draft, the feedback was more positive, but many still felt that the draft presented more like an illustrated children's book than a comic strip.³⁰ In response, a third version was produced, which had a more flowing comic book style.³¹ The comment regarding a child's picture book also inspired the re-formatting of the visual contract into the form of the A5 booklet, as outlined above.

Second, the Committee expressed concern about the 'quality' of the drawing. As outlined above, the CTL President and Alternative had selected the artist,

²⁸ Referred to in Email from R Barker to Alternative Contracting dated 7 June 2022.

²⁹ Referred to in Email R Barker to Alternative Contracting dated 13 June 2022.

³⁰ Referred to in Email R Barker to Alternative Contracting dated 17 June 2022.

³¹ Referred to in Email Alternative Contracting to R Barker dated 23 June 2022.

in part, because of the ‘childlike’ appearance of the artist’s hand-drawn images. However, the Committee and Toy Librarian were concerned that this looked ‘unprofessional’. This issue continued to be raised by the Committee on all drafts of the visual contract. However, the Committee’s response was more positive when the lines on the images were made thicker.³²

Subsequently, two focus groups were asked about the hand-drawn nature of the visual contract. Responses to both focus groups were recorded digitally using an online polling tool (Poll Everywhere) accessed via a QR code.

The first focus group consisted of 24 WA Toy Librarians and committee members of toy libraries located across Western Australia, see overview of all focus group questions in Annexure 2. Responses were collected at Toy Library Australia’s annual Western Australia Training Day in August 2022. In response to the question ‘Do you think the hand drawn images accurately communicate the brand of the Cockburn Toy Library?’, 14 (58%) responded ‘Yes’, 7 (29%) responded ‘Somewhat’, and only 3 (12.5%) responded ‘No’.³³ Other questions concerned the broader utility of visual contracting in this context, and responses were largely very favourable.

The second focus group consisted of 4 CTL members. Responses were collected following the launch of CTL’s visual contract at CTL’s Annual General Meeting in December 2022. 50% of respondents felt that the hand-drawn images ‘accurately’ communicated the brand of the CTL, while the remainder felt that the hand-drawn images ‘somewhat accurately’ communicate the brand of the CTL.³⁴

Following the implementation of the CTL visual contract, impact testing of the final pull-up banner and A5 booklet versions was conducted at Toy Library Australia’s annual Western Australia Training Day in August 2023. While some of the participants were the same as in the 2022 focus group testing, there were also a number of new participants. As with the previous impact testing, the question ‘Do you like the hand drawn childlike images?’

³² Referred to in Email from R Barker to Alternative dated 17 June 2022.

³³ Data obtained from surveys conducted within the CB Toy Library/Australian Toy Library by Dr Renae Barker, designed by the Comic Contracting team at UWA in accordance with the UWA Ethics 2019/RA/4/1/9340 The Visualisation of Contracts Project.

³⁴ Data obtained from surveys conducted within the CB Toy Library/Australian Toy Library by Dr Renae Barker, designed by the Comic Contracting team at UWA in accordance with the UWA Ethics 2019/RA/4/1/9340 The Visualisation of Contracts Project.

received a mixed response, with 4 (50%) of participants answering 'Yes', and 4 (50%) answering 'No'.³⁵

While responses to the naïve hand-drawn toy octopus was mixed across both focus groups and in impact testing, all respondents agreed that the visual contract made CTL more approachable to new members.³⁶ Similarly, all respondents in the 2022 focus group testing and 2023 impact testing conducted with WA toy librarians agreed that the use of a visual contract made CTL seem 'friendlier'.³⁷ In the CTL member impact testing, 2 agreed that a visual contract would make CTL seem friendlier, while two 'did not know'.³⁸

The researchers were also keen to know whether participants thought the CTL visual contract would be useful for children. In the 2022 impact testing, the WA toy librarians were asked 'Do you think children are more likely to understand a visual contract?' – 23 (95.8%) responded 'Yes', while only 1 responded that they 'did not know'.³⁹ In the CTL member impact testing, the participants were asked 'Will this contract be helpful for you in explaining our rules to your child?'. – one participant responded 'Yes', one responded 'No', while two 'did not know'.⁴⁰ Finally, in the 2023 impact testing with WA toy librarians, participants were asked 'Can you see a visual contract as being a useful tool for explaining the use of the Toy Library to children?' – 7 (88%)

³⁵ Data obtained from surveys conducted within the CB Toy Library/Australian Toy Library by Dr Renae Barker, designed by the Comic Contracting team at UWA in accordance with the UWA Ethics 2019/RA/4/1/9340 The Visualisation of Contracts Project.

³⁶ Data obtained from surveys conducted within the CB Toy Library/Australian Toy Library by Dr Renae Barker, designed by the Comic Contracting team at UWA in accordance with the UWA Ethics 2019/RA/4/1/9340 The Visualisation of Contracts Project.

³⁷ Data obtained from surveys conducted within the CB Toy Library/Australian Toy Library by Dr Renae Barker, designed by the Comic Contracting team at UWA in accordance with the UWA Ethics 2019/RA/4/1/9340 The Visualisation of Contracts Project.

³⁸ Data obtained from surveys conducted within the CB Toy Library/Australian Toy Library by Dr Renae Barker, designed by the Comic Contracting team at UWA in accordance with the UWA Ethics 2019/RA/4/1/9340 The Visualisation of Contracts Project.

³⁹ Data obtained from surveys conducted within the CB Toy Library/Australian Toy Library by Dr Renae Barker, designed by the Comic Contracting team at UWA in accordance with the UWA Ethics 2019/RA/4/1/9340 The Visualisation of Contracts Project.

⁴⁰ Data obtained from surveys conducted within the CB Toy Library/Australian Toy Library by Dr Renae Barker, designed by the Comic Contracting team at UWA in accordance with the UWA Ethics 2019/RA/4/1/9340 The Visualisation of Contracts Project.

responded 'Yes', with only one (13%) responding 'No'.⁴¹

The Focus Testing at Childrens Parliament

The initial focus group testing and later impact testing were both conducted with adults as respondents. While the CTL visual contract would always be agreed to by adults, it was nonetheless important to CTL that a contract used in a space regularly frequented by, and in a way targeted towards, children also be adapted and appropriate for their needs.

A sample of the CTL visual contract was presented to the Melbourne Children's Parliament in November 2022. The Melbourne Children's Parliament is a set parliament with children chosen by the organisation, and representative of diverse ages and demographics which we had no control over. Participants responded verbally, and a transcript was made and stored in compliance with ethics regulations. On the day of testing, 35 children were asked their opinions on four key aspects of the contract. The slide the children were shown is reproduced below (Image 5).

The children were asked to respond 'Yes', 'No' or 'Maybe' to the four questions, and their responses were intriguing.

Data obtained from surveys conducted within the CB Toy Library/Australian Toy Library by Dr Renae Barker, designed by the Comic Contracting team at UWA in accordance with the UWA Ethics 2019/RA/4/1/9340 The Visualisation of Contracts Project.

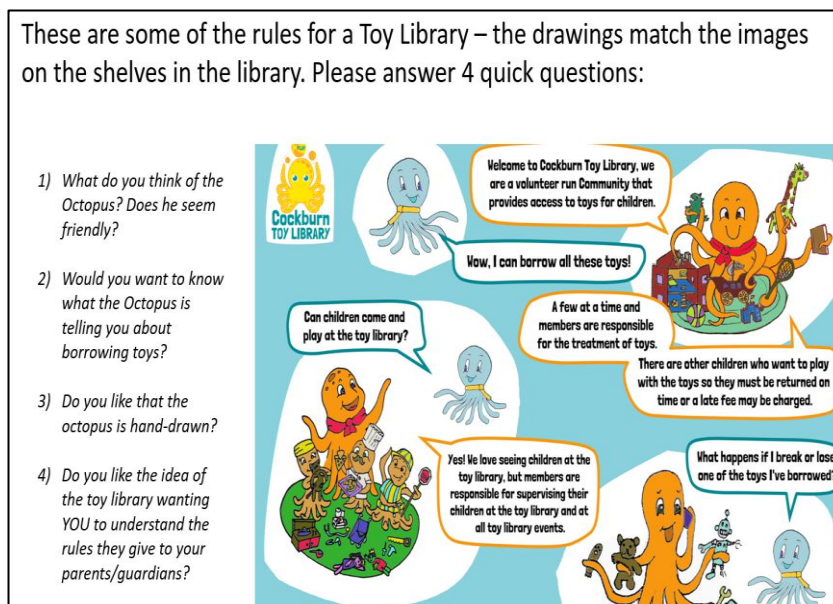


Image 5: Slide presented to Melbourne Children's Parliament participants. Permission has been granted from CTL and Alternative Contracting for the reproduction of images from the CTL visual contract.

One of the most positive responses received was that 75% of the Children's Parliament participants demonstrated an actual interest in knowing more about the toy library rules, as a response to Question 2.⁴² This was surprising, as the researchers had assumed children would not be particularly interested in rules. This positive response may have been linked to the overall popularity of the image of 'Octoplay' as being 'friendly', as per Question 1, where 86% of children responded 'Yes'.⁴³

As outlined above, one of the issues which had been discussed heavily during the initial conception of the image was the hand-drawn naïve lines of 'Octoplay'. Given the mixed responses received from adults to this style, the researchers were interested to investigate what children themselves thought of this approach. When consulted, the children responded well to the naïve images, with 71% of the children preferring hand drawn lines, where 22%

⁴² Data obtained from surveys conducted within the CB Toy Library/Australian Toy Library by Dr Renae Barker, designed by the Comic Contracting team at UWA in accordance with the UWA Ethics 2019/RA/4/1/9340 The Visualisation of Contracts Project.

⁴³ Data obtained from surveys conducted within the CB Toy Library/Australian Toy Library by Dr Renae Barker, designed by the Comic Contracting team at UWA in accordance with the UWA Ethics 2019/RA/4/1/9340 The Visualisation of Contracts Project.

expressed a clear dislike, and 7% were not sure.⁴⁴

The final question the Children's Parliament participants were asked was ultimately the one which led to the creation of the research silo in this area of visual contracting. Question 4 tried to gauge their perception of the children in seeing rules created for their insights, and whether they like the idea of inclusion. The responses in this category – interestingly – match the general perception data generated by the Comic Contracting project in all areas for adults as well, in that it shows the largest overwhelmingly positive response. 94% of the participants said they liked the inclusion and the idea of being targeted by comic contracts, and only 3% said they did not like this, with another 3% saying 'Maybe'.⁴⁵ On this basis, the Comic Contracting team continued with the development of the visual consent forms for the sponsored Mission Australia contract, which revealed a similar approval rating for the concept of creating contracts which can be read/understood by children where their engagement and involvement is central.⁴⁶

Findings and Data

The results from the focus group and impact testing of the CTL visual contract are promising, and provide both justification and direction for future work and research on visual contracting with children. While the sample groups were relatively small, the consistency of results is helpful in providing direction for future visual contracts and research. All groups found the use of visual contracts made the toy library seem 'friendlier'.⁴⁷ Adults also felt that it made CTL more approachable for new members – a key consideration for a community group such as a toy library.⁴⁸ Adults also

⁴⁴ Data obtained from surveys conducted within the CB Toy Library/Australian Toy Library by Dr Renae Barker, designed by the Comic Contracting team at UWA in accordance with the UWA Ethics 2019/RA/4/1/9340 The Visualisation of Contracts Project.

⁴⁵ Data obtained from surveys conducted within the CB Toy Library/Australian Toy Library by Dr Renae Barker, designed by the Comic Contracting team at UWA in accordance with the UWA Ethics 2019/RA/4/1/9340 The Visualisation of Contracts Project.

⁴⁶ Data obtained from surveys conducted within the CB Toy Library/Australian Toy Library by Dr Renae Barker, designed by the Comic Contracting team at UWA in accordance with the UWA Ethics 2019/RA/4/1/9340 The Visualisation of Contracts Project.

⁴⁷ Data obtained from surveys conducted within the CB Toy Library/Australian Toy Library by Dr Renae Barker, designed by the Comic Contracting team at UWA in accordance with the UWA Ethics 2019/RA/4/1/9340 The Visualisation of Contracts Project.

⁴⁸ Data obtained from surveys conducted within the CB Toy Library/Australian Toy Library by Dr Renae Barker, designed by the Comic Contracting team at UWA in accordance with the UWA Ethics

generally felt the visual contract would be helpful for children, and the children themselves liked the fact the toy library wanted them to understand the rules.⁴⁹

One comment received during the 2023 impact testing with WA toy librarians, however, suggests a perception that this understanding is only for older children: ‘Our member children are mostly too young to read, but can imagine older kids would!’ However, another participant commented: ‘Love this as a story book for kids so they learn to take responsibility for the toys too.’

Typically, toy libraries in Australia cater for pre-school aged children (0 – 6), although some toy libraries, including CTL, do cater for older children. When asked about the balance of text to images, 50% of participants in the impact testing felt there was too much text.⁵⁰ This may reflect their work with this younger, pre-reading, demographic.

The difference in perception of the naïve hand-drawn images between adults and children requires further research, but does indicate the importance of understanding the perceptions of the intended end user. In this case, the end users are ultimately the parents and guardians who agree to abide by the CTL terms and conditions. However, the perceptions of children are still important, as they are the end user of the *toys*, and are the ones who ultimately need to understand the requirement to care for them while in their home.

The visual category signs and visual terms and conditions have now been in use for over 12 months. They have been used in email newsletters to members highlighting key terms such as paying membership fees on time (see Image 6)⁵¹, as well as in response to member queries about refunds. The images have not yet been used on social media, though CTL intends to roll out the images on a new web page in 2024.

2019/RA/4/1/9340 The Visualisation of Contracts Project.

⁴⁹ Data obtained from surveys conducted within the CB Toy Library/Australian Toy Library by Dr Renae Barker, designed by the Comic Contracting team at UWA in accordance with the UWA Ethics 2019/RA/4/1/9340 The Visualisation of Contracts Project.

⁵⁰ Data obtained from surveys conducted within the CB Toy Library/Australian Toy Library by Dr Renae Barker, designed by the Comic Contracting team at UWA in accordance with the UWA Ethics 2019/RA/4/1/9340 The Visualisation of Contracts Project.

⁵¹ See Cockburn Toy Library Newsletter ‘The Toy Scoop’ 21 February 2023.

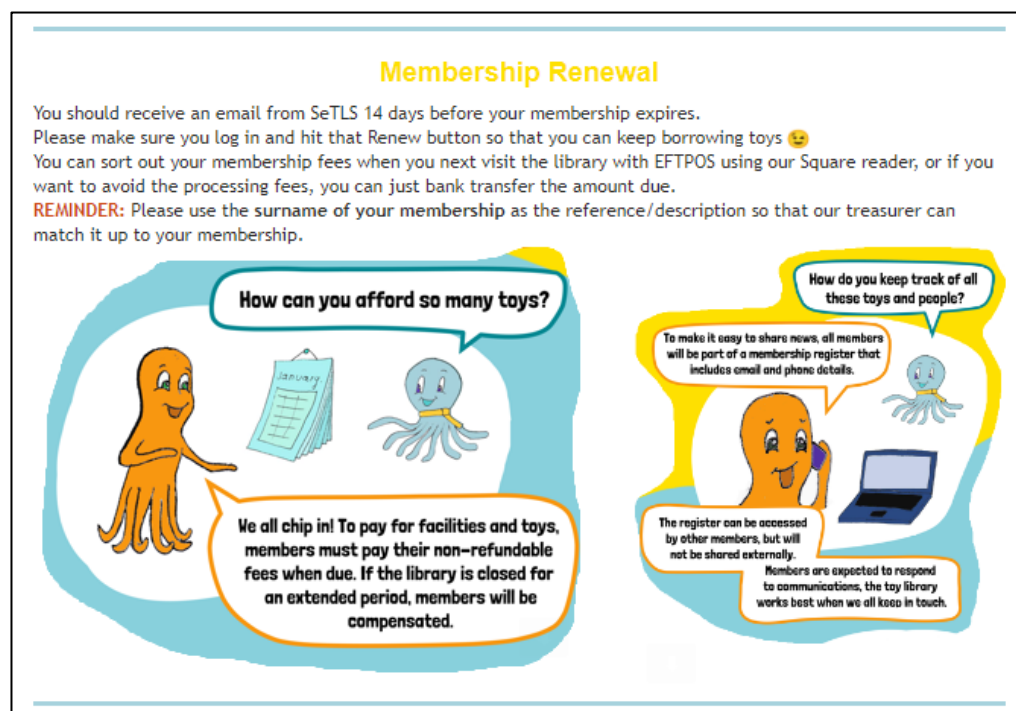


Image 4: Extract from CTL Toy Library Newsletter 'The Toy Scoop', 20 February 2023.

Permission has been granted from CTL and Alternative Contracting for the reproduction of images from the CTL visual contract.

Another piece of spontaneous feedback on the effectiveness of visuals as a method of communicating with children came from a committee member's child (pre-reading age 6). The parent reported that while in the toy library the child became excited and wanted to show the parent the category signs (see Image 7), and described the toy categories based on the images of the octopus in the signs. The parent sought the child's permission and filmed the second half of the interaction with the child running around the toy library pointing out the signs and describing the toys that could be found in each category based on the images, having never seen them before. The child was also able to use the signs and, based on both the images and the colour, correctly return toys to the shelf according to their toy category.⁵²

⁵² Permission was received from the parent to use a description of the video in research.



Image 5: Category signs in use at CTL (January 2024). Permission has been granted from CTL and Alternative Contracting for the reproduction of images from the CTL visual contract.

Conclusions

Throughout the life of the visual contracting project here at UWA, we have seen a variety of uses for visuals in contracting; from medical explainers to banking contracts to employment agreements, as set out in the introduction. And we have had some exposure to contracts for not-for profit organisations through the access to justice work. By using comics and visuals to ensure that younger audiences – who are typically not considered stakeholders in contracts – engage with contracts better, with clearer comprehension and perception, however, we have learned valuable lessons.

With the two projects for children, we find a new group of potential beneficiaries to visual contracts, for which we need some bespoke solutions. And we see a direct link between images and applications for vulnerable younger audiences. Some of these findings, especially on the benefits of childish or simple imagery, have benefitted subsequent visual contracting projects in the not-for profit sector, like the funded suite of contracts for RUAH. While RUAH's client base is adults, young adults and some children, current contract focus groups are broadly responding well to the images which are being incorporated in simple and colourful child-like styles –

subsequent research will examine this project in more detail.

In other words, our recent focus on visual contracting for kids is not just helping to support the future of visual contracts for children, but informing many aspects of visual design in legal communication for other groups as well. By including this focus on children, and departing from the previous focus of solely ensuring adults read complex agreements, we benefit all groups. This has been largely symptomatic for this research over the last decade – the broader and more transdisciplinary it gets, the better the benefits to all aspects of this innovation.

We are grateful for the opportunity to extend the project in this direction, and look forward to exploring more potential in this area. It seems even children can appreciate drawings... 😊

Annexure 1: Simplified version of CTL's Pre-existing contract

Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions

1. Members will pay the appropriate fee for their membership type when it is due.
2. Members are responsible for the supervision of their child/ren while on Cockburn Toy Library premises.
3. It is the member's responsibility to choose toys suitable to the age, skills and development of their child/ren, and to supervise the safe use of items borrowed from the Cockburn Toy Library.
4. Members must read and agree to the Waiver, Release and Indemnity for Bicycle and Scooters document. The member is responsible for child/ren wearing a helmet/s when using small bicycles, scooters, motorized or other wheeled toys.
5. Toys will be returned on time and in the condition they were borrowed.
6. Toys will be cleaned before they are returned.
7. Members will notify the toy library if parts of a toy are missing or broken.
8. If a toy, part of a toy or the packaging of a toy is lost or damaged, the member may be asked to pay the replacement cost for this item. Members will not be asked to replace toys or packaging where the damage is due to fair wear and tear as part of normal usage or play.
9. The Cockburn Toy Library may charge late fees for toys which are overdue and have not been renewed. Where a toy is not returned for an extended period of time the Cockburn Toy Library will deem the toy lost and may request that the member pay the replacement cost of the toy unless the toy is returned in good playable condition.
10. Cockburn Toy Library is a community organisation run by volunteers. All members are expected to be involved in community activities such as fundraising, stocktake, busy bees, stay & plays, Annual General Meetings and community days.
11. Members who hold a membership type that requires them to undertake volunteering duties (Active Membership type) are

responsible for nominating for and completing their volunteer duties. Members who do not comply may be required to renew as a non-volunteer membership type (Inactive Members).

12. Members who sign up to a volunteering Membership type (Active Membership) but wish to convert to a non-volunteering membership type (Inactive Membership) may request to do so and on the payment of an additional fee may convert to a non-volunteering membership type. The fee payable and whether or not the request is granted is at the discretion to the toy library committee.
13. The toy library committee may cap the number of members in any one membership type.
14. Cockburn Toy Library keeps a Member's Register, and members have access to the Member's Register, as outlined in the Associations Incorporation Act 1987. Member's personal details will be used for Cockburn Toy Library purposes only.
15. Members agree to receive communications by email and SMS.
16. Memberships are non-transferable, though members may permit other family to borrow from the one account. The member contacts remain responsible for making sure others using the account comply with these Terms and Conditions.
17. Memberships are non-refundable in the event a member ceases to use or cancels their membership prematurely.
18. Outside of regular closures (public holidays or Summer Holiday break) or ad hoc closures, if the Cockburn Toy Library will be closed for an extended period of time memberships will be extended by an equivalent period.
19. The Cockburn Toy Library Committee may from time to time create rules and policies for the efficient running of the toy library. Members will be notified of these rules and are required to abide by them provided that they are consistent with these Terms & Conditions and the Constitution.
20. Members of Cockburn Toy Library will abide by these Terms & Conditions and the Constitution, and understand that to the extent permitted by law The Cockburn Toy Library accepts no responsibility for any loss or injury arising from the borrowing and/or use of Cockburn Toy Library toys, whether on the toy library

premises, in transit, at the member's home or any other location, and whether used by a member or non-member of the Cockburn Toy Library.

Annexure 2: Questions used in Focus and Impact Testing

Focus Groups

Toy Library - 2168 Children's Parliament focus group

What do you think of the Octopus?

Does he seem friendly?

Would you want to know what the Octopus is telling you about borrowing toys?

Do you like that the octopus is hand-drawn?

Do you like the idea of the toy library wanting YOU to understand the rules they give to your parent/guardians?

WA Training Day (Possibly)

1. I understood what was expected of me after reading the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions.
2. I enjoyed the process of learning more about the Cockburn Toy Library.
3. I found that the format of the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions made me apprehensive.
4. I did not understand some parts of the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions.
5. The presentation of the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions made it difficult to keep focused.
6. I felt positive when reading the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions.
7. I found the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions easy to understand.
8. I had to re-read sections of the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions.
9. The Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions gave me a good impression that the Cockburn Toy Library values openness and transparency.
10. I would be able to explain to another person what the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions expects of me.
11. I felt negative when reading the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions.
12. I found that the format of the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions was patronising and that it was talking down to me.
13. This visual format is important to me to completely understand the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions.

14. I would recommend other Toy Library use this format to deliver information.
15. The format of the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions made me feel like a valued member of the Toy Library.
16. I still feel as though I need some aspects of the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions explained to me.
17. I found that the format of the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions was too difficult to complete reading.
18. I did not understand the details after reading the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions.
19. It took me longer to read the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions than I thought it would.
20. I liked the images in the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions.
21. I liked the brief blocks of text in the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions.
22. The images and text worked together to keep me engaged when reading the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions.
23. The format of the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions helped me to understand what is required of me.
24. I believe the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions is representative of the community's views and cultures.
25. I feel that the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions is friendly and approachable.
26. I believe the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions caters for my needs and understanding of the service.
27. I believe the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions could cater to the needs and understanding of the service for other adults.
28. I would feel comfortable using the Cockburn Toy Library Terms & Conditions to explain the terms of service to a child.
29. I think the Octoplay avatar is the right kind of image for this kind of Terms & Conditions.
30. I feel this visual terms & conditions is more accessible for those who do not have English as a first language.

WA Training Day 2022

Do you think the concept of a visual contract is appropriate for Cockburn

Toy Library?

Do you think the hand drawn images accurately communicate the brand of the Cockburn Toy library?

Do you think a visual contract will make the Cockburn Toy Library rules more approachable for new members?

Do you think the visual contract makes the Cockburn Toy Library seem friendlier?

Do you think children are more likely to understand a visual contract?

Impact Testing Groups

Member Survey 2022 AGM

Do you think the concept of a visual contract is appropriate for Cockburn Toy Library?

Do you think the hand drawn images accurately communicate the brand of the Cockburn Toy library?

Do you think a visual contract will make the Cockburn Toy Library rules more approachable for new members?

Do you think the visual contract makes the Cockburn Toy Library seem friendlier?

Will this contract be helpful for you in explaining our rules to your child?

Is there anything you would like add?

National Conference

Do you think the concept of a visual contract is appropriate for Cockburn Toy Library?

Do you think the hand drawn images accurately communicate the brand of the Cockburn Toy library?

Do you think a visual contract will make the Cockburn Toy Library rules more approachable for new members?

Do you think the visual contract makes the Cockburn Toy Library seem friendlier?

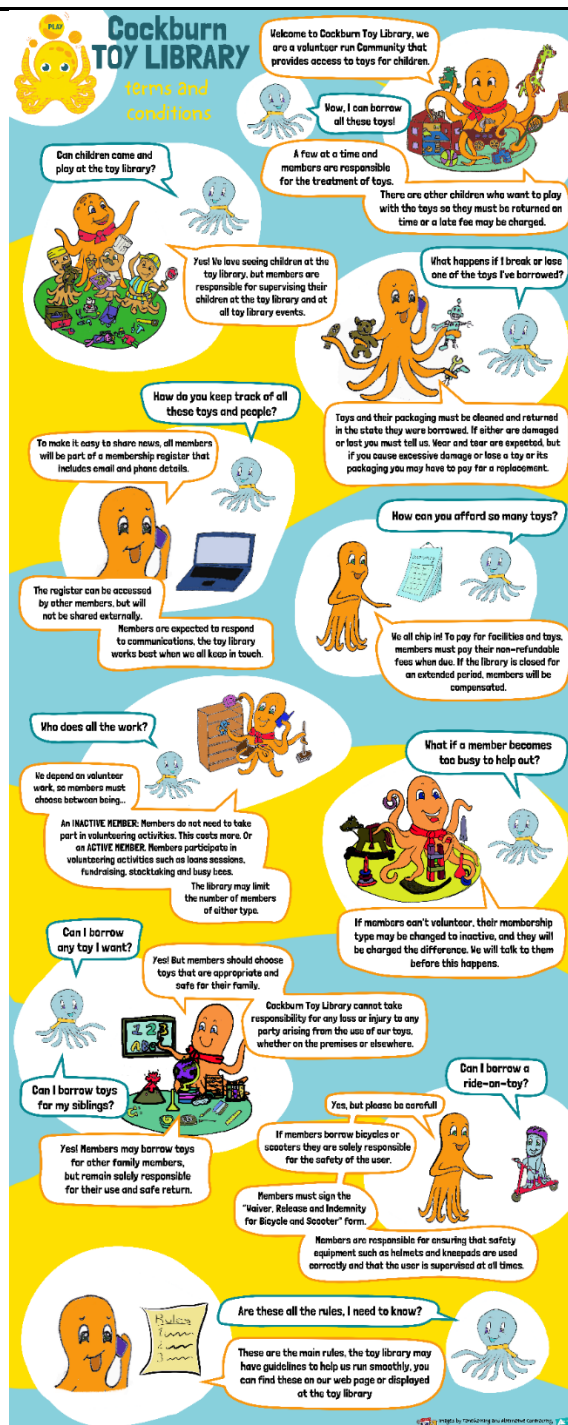
Do you think children are more likely to understand a visual contract?

WA Training Day 2023

1. Which did you prefer, traditional text based contracts or visual contracts containing text and images?
2. Do you think a visual contract will make the Cockburn Toy Library more approachable for new members?
3. Do you think the visual contract makes the Cockburn Toy Library seem friendlier?
4. Do you like the hand drawn “childlike” images?
5. How do you feel about the balance of text vs images?
6. What are the first words you think of when you see the Octopus Avatar?
7. Do you think the Octopus Avatar is appropriate for the Cockburn Toy Library?

8. Did imagery help explain content of the text?
9. Which format do you prefer Banner or Booklet?
 - a. Why did you prefer the Banner?
 - b. Why did you prefer the Booklet?
10. Would you like to implement a visual contract for your toy library?
11. Do you see a visual contract as a good way to manage potential issues with members?
12. Can you see a visual contract as a useful tool for explaining the use of the Toy Library to children?
13. Do you have any other feedback about the visual contract you'd like to share?

Annexure 3: Final Visual Contract for CTL



Abstract

This paper is an account of the creation of, and data collected from, the focus group and impact testing of the Cockburn Toy Library visual contract, which was one of the first ‘comic book contracts’ created for use with children (albeit signed by parents). The insight into its creation may explain how it sired future projects and initiatives in contracting for children in the visual contracting research space, and how we translate standard contracts into visual and comic contracts for everyone.

Keywords

Cockburn Toy Library visual contract; comic book contracts; visual contracting

Resumo

Este artigo é um relato da criação e dos dados recolhidos no grupo focal e no teste de impacto do contrato visual da Cockburn Toy Library, que foi um dos primeiros “contratos em quadrinhos” criados para utilização com crianças (embora assinados pelos pais). O conhecimento sobre a sua criação pode explicar a forma como inspirou futuros projetos e iniciativas de contratação para crianças no espaço de investigação da contratação visual e a forma como traduzimos os contratos padrão em contratos visuais e em quadrinhos para todos.

Palavras-chave

Contrato visual da Cockburn Toy Library; contratos de quadrinhos; contratação visual