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## CHAPTER 5 National, state and territory libraries: information for the nation

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‘It is the golden age in providing truly *national* access to our collections’, according to the National Library of Australia’s director general, Jan Fullerton (2005). Australians now have unrivalled access to library collections and services through their national, state and territory libraries, which provide services to people everywhere, supporting their study, research, work, business and leisure activities.

While the National Library has its origins in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library, which was established in 1901, most state libraries emerged from the early public libraries. Other countries have state libraries, but generally these fulfil quite different roles from those in Australia. In the United States, for example, they are usually small libraries that serve the legislature primarily. The State Library of Victoria grew out of the first state-supported public reference library, the Melbourne Public Library, established in 1854, and the State Library of New South Wales evolved from the Free Public Library, Sydney, which was founded in 1869. Other libraries emerged over the following decades. Based in capital cities, these ‘deposit libraries’ offer extensive onsite services for the public, including access to more than eleven million collection items (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005) and a vast array of digital resources. In 2003–2004 more than five million visits were made to the national, state and territory libraries. The deposit libraries also offer remote online access to a wide range of services enabling people living in rural and regional areas to take advantage of the important Australiana and many unique collections held by the national, state and territory libraries.

A major role of the deposit libraries is collecting and preserving Australia’s documentary heritage. Under national, state and territory legislation, publishers are required to supply (deposit) a copy of their publications to the designated deposit library in that state or territory and to the National Library, and in some cases copies must be forwarded to other libraries as well. This ensures that Australia’s research and creative output is available to all now and in the future. The national, state and territory libraries have a combined collection strength of more than twenty-five million items when Australian and overseas collections are taken into account. The collections include printed and online publications, pictures, maps, manuscripts, oral histories, sheet music and sound recordings. They form a significant information resource for the Australian community.

Another major role of the deposit libraries is providing leadership on key issues of importance at the national and state level respectively. A high level of cooperation exists among

the libraries, in particular through the organisation National & State Libraries Australasia (NSLA).

### **National & State Libraries Australasia (NSLA)**

The national, state and territory libraries collaborate on a wide range of services and projects in order to provide the Australian public with world-class access to information. Under the auspices of NSLA, the deposit libraries meet four times a year to develop policies, share information and agree on actions to achieve their strategic plan. The group adopted the name National & State Libraries Australasia in July 2006. Until then it had been called the Council of Australian State Libraries (CASL). The name was changed to more clearly represent the increase in membership since 2000 to include the national libraries of Australia and New Zealand.

Between meetings, activities are progressed through eleven working groups. In 2005, the National Library of New Zealand joined NSLA, after attending as an observer for several years. This broadening of the group enables Australian and New Zealand libraries to work on common issues more effectively. Recent collaborative activities include a major national travelling exhibition, National Treasures From Australia's Great Libraries, the NSLA consortium for purchasing electronic journals and the highly successful online chat reference service, AskNow! NSLA's key priorities are to:

1. Promote and advance the provision, awareness and use of library and information services by promoting the role of libraries in lifelong learning, particularly literacy; enhancing partnerships between the library, education and cultural sectors; demonstrating the value of libraries in the economic, social and intellectual development of the nation; and articulating the role and direction of libraries for community and government.
2. Strengthen the national information infrastructure and promote cross-sectoral collaboration to improve access to information services for Australians by enhancing access to selected Australian cultural collections, for example, Australian newspapers; extending the range of online information resources to the community through collaboration; promoting the use of open standards to improve access to information; and improving library services for indigenous people through the support of the National Policy Framework for Indigenous Library Services.
3. Represent member libraries in relevant matters of public interest by presenting a single voice to government and other relevant bodies.

For facts about the national, state and territory libraries see Appendix 1.

### **Collections: building and preserving**

National, state and territory libraries have a legislated mandate to collect and preserve a comprehensive collection of Australian documentary resources. The National Library Act 1960 sets out the National Library's core functions, the first of which is 'to maintain and develop a national collection of library material, including a comprehensive collection of library material relating to Australia and the Australian people' (National Library Act 1960, section 2). To assist

the National Library with its collecting function, the Copyright Act 1968 has a section on legal deposit which (as already noted) requires publishers of printed publications to give the Library a gratis copy for its collection. The state and territory libraries have similar state-based legislation. To fulfil its mandate, the National Library is committed to working with the state and territory libraries to ensure that 'a significant record of Australia and Australians is collected and safeguarded' (National Library of Australia 2006). While formal collecting agreements do not exist, there is an understanding among the deposit libraries that the National Library will leave some collecting areas to the state and territory libraries, for example, the publications of local associations and schools, and will not aim to collect as comprehensively in some other areas, such as state, regional and local government publications.

State library mandates are contained in state legislation, except for Western Australia where there is no legislation at present. The state library acts outline the role of the libraries in supporting their community and often contain provision for legal deposit. In South Australia, for example, the Library's role is:

- (a) to achieve and maintain a coordinated system of libraries and library services that adequately meets the needs of the whole community;
- (b) to promote and facilitate the establishment and maintenance of libraries and library services by councils and other appropriate bodies;
- (c) to promote a cooperative approach to the provision of library services;
- (d) to ensure that the community has available to it adequate research and information services providing access to library materials and information stored in libraries and other institutions both within and outside the State (Libraries Act 1982, section 7).

In the area of collecting original materials such as maps, manuscripts, pictures and the commissioning of oral history recordings, there is close cooperation among national, territory and state libraries. This cooperation is based on an understanding of the state, territory and national significance of people, places and events. Developing and preserving a national collection of documentary resources is a core function of the national, state and territory libraries and will continue to be a top priority for them in the twenty-first century.

The collections have developed in no small part due the acquisition by gift and purchase from the great collectors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In Sydney, for instance, the Mitchell Library's manuscript and printed book collection is based on the collection of David Scott Mitchell (1836–1907), Australia's first significant collector of Australiana. Mitchell bequeathed more than 67,000 items to the State Library of New South Wales (at that time known as the Public Library of New South Wales) in 1907. The Dixson Library printed book collection of more than 20,000 printed items acquired by Sir William Dixson (1870–1952) was another very significant donation. The collection contains material relating to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific with particular strengths in early navigation, geography, voyages of discovery and the spread of European settlement in the region. These two collections provide the basis for an outstanding historical collection for Australian research and scholarship.

In South Australia, John Andrew Tennant Mortlock (1894–1950), the eldest son of a wealthy pastoralist family, was a major benefactor. When he died in 1950 his estate was left jointly to his beneficiaries, the University of Adelaide and the Libraries Board of South Australia. His wife continued to support the State Library, annually donating children's books and providing funds that were used to purchase many rare books. The Mortlock Library of

South Australiana is named after these major donors. Collection strengths include rare books, children's literature, wine literature, shipping, maps, indigenous materials and family history.

Queensland has also benefited from the donation or purchase of the collections of individuals and corporations. The State Library of Queensland had its origins in the Brisbane Public Library, which was established in 1896 when the Queensland Government purchased the private collection of Mr Justice Harding. A century later, in 1988, James Hardie Industries Limited donated their library containing an extensive collection of Australian fine arts to the State Library of Queensland. The Australian Library of Art created from this donation includes books, exhibition catalogues, ephemera, posters and broadsides, manuscripts, artists' books and private press publications.

The State Library of Tasmania's WL Crowther Library recognises the donations of Sir William Crowther from 1964 to 1981. It is a rich collection of books, pamphlets, maps, manuscripts, photographs, works of art and museum objects, largely relating to Tasmania. The collection includes approximately 15,000 printed works, 4,000 photographs, 300 works of art and 400 objects. Subjects covered in the collection include whaling, the history of medicine, book-collecting and works printed in Pacific Island languages.

The State Library of Victoria's La Trobe collection encompasses a number of small collections focusing on Victoria and covering history, literature, culture, biography, travel and indigenous studies. The collection boasts 150,000 items published about or by Australians, with two special interest collections of theatre programmes and political ephemera.

In Western Australia, James Sykes Battye, Chief Librarian of the Victoria Public Library (later to become the State Library of Western Australia), began building a significant collection of Western Australian documentary heritage material in 1894. Battye is responsible for the acquisition of the *Pelsaert journal* and many other early newspapers, manuscripts and government records.

The National Library's Australiana collection has benefited from the acquisition of several major collections and significant individual items, many of which were purchased before the National Library had formally separated from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library. The desire to build a national collection and to record and preserve the nation's documentary heritage was present very early on. In 1907, the speaker of the House of Representatives and chairman of the Library Committee, Sir Frederick Holder, eulogised about developing 'a great Public Library on the lines of the world-famous Library of Congress of Washington, such a library, indeed, as shall be worthy of the Australian nation' (Osborn & Osborn 1989, p.12).

The Petherick collection of Australian and Pacific material was acquired by the National Library in 1911. It consists of approximately 10,000 books, 6,500 pamphlets, maps, manuscripts and pictures. Sir John Ferguson's collection was acquired in stages from 1946 to 1969. An extraordinary collection, it contains more than 34,000 books, manuscripts and paintings and is the largest private collection in the Library's possession. Subjects covered include areas relating to Australia and the Pacific, such as sociology, publishing history, poetry and economics. The collection of Sir Rex de Charembac Nan Kivell which comprises more than 15,000 early maps, manuscripts, books, oil paintings, watercolours, prints and photographs relating to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific was acquired by the Australian Government in two instalments in 1948 and 1962. Other items were acquired individually, the most famous being the purchase in

1923 of Captain James Cook's *Endeavour journal* (see <http://www.nla.gov.au/pub/endeavour/index.html>). It is significant that it was shortly after this purchase that the decision was made to adopt the title Commonwealth National Library.

In New Zealand, the National Library's collection had a similarly strong foundation of donations, in addition to an active acquisition program. The Alexander Turnbull collections commenced with a bequest from Alexander Horsburgh Turnbull in 1918. The Turnbull collection contains original material such as photographs, drawings and prints, oral histories, manuscripts and archives, and printed material – books, newspapers, maps, magazines and ephemera relating to New Zealand and the Pacific. It also contains the largest collection of early printed books in New Zealand, including early voyages, works relating to John Milton and the seventeenth century, and examples of fine printing from around the world.

Preservation of this vast array of material has always been an area of great strength and commitment for the deposit libraries. Each library routinely undertakes preservation work including rebinding, treatment of damaged materials and treatment of special format material such as maps and pictures. The National Library of Australia is committed to undertaking 'a leadership role in sharing our expertise' (National Library of Australia 2006) in preservation and it works with the NSLA libraries on a number of major preservation projects. Recent prominent examples of this are the National Plan for Newspapers (NPLAN 2005) and the Australian Network for Information on Cellulose Acetate (ANICA 2005) – the management of collections on cellulose acetate, which are under threat of deterioration from vinegar syndrome.

## Digital collecting and preservation

The emergence of information resources in digital format has presented the deposit libraries with a significant new collecting and preservation challenge. The internet has provided governments, researchers, businesses, special interest and community groups, and indeed anyone with an interest in creating and disseminating information, with a cheap and effective means of publishing. Collecting and preserving resources in digital format, however, is vastly more complex and costly than managing the equivalent collections in print (Sweeney 2001).

The National Library of Australia was one of the first national libraries to commence collecting digital resources and remains a leader in this field. In 1995, the National Library established Pandora: Australia's online web archive. It supports the collaborative collecting of selected Australian digital resources and the provision of access to those resources. The state and territory libraries are partners in this venture. Pandora hosts a significant collection of Australian electronic journals and selected websites documenting topical subjects such as Australian intervention in East Timor and the 2004 Asian Tsunami. In 2005, the archive held copies of more than 10,000 Australian digital resources. More than 20 per cent of these resources no longer exist in the public domain of the internet. The State Library of Tasmania manages its own digital archive known as Our Digital Island, but it works closely with the National Library on many aspects of digital collecting and preservation.

Since 1998, the National Library, in partnership with the National Film and Sound Archive, has been actively seeking the extension of legal deposit to cover Australian digital resources. While this is still being pursued at the national level, several state and territory libraries have successfully sought amendments to their legislation and instructions/guidelines for the state and

territory public sector. The National Library believes that the fundamental principles and objectives that underpin traditional legal deposit apply equally to digital resources and will continue to seek a legal underpinning of the Library's digital collecting role (Gatenby 2002).

In 2005, the National Library sought to extend its collecting of digital resources through its first 'whole-of-domain' harvest of Australian websites. More than 185 million unique documents were collected and archived from 811,000 sites, yielding 6.69 terabytes of content. The National Library aims to supplement the selective collecting undertaken for Pandora with periodic snapshots of the Australian internet domain (Koerbin 2005).

As it develops new strategies and directions for the twenty-first century, the National Library recognises the importance of working collaboratively, not only across the Australian library sector, but across the cultural and collecting sectors in general, and with other government agencies, publishers, academics and creators. The concept of the distributed national collection has assumed renewed relevance in the digital age, and the National Library is seeking new partners in recognition of the fact that in a networked digital environment many resources that once would have been available through libraries are now available via other organisations. Many Australian Government agencies and other institutions are investing heavily in the creation of digital information resources and information services based on these resources. To bring these groups together, the National Library has initiated a National Coalition on Maintaining Access to Australia's Digital Information Resources. The National Library of Australia, National Archives of Australia, the Australian Government Information Management Office, Australian Bureau of Statistics and Geoscience Australia are the initial members of the consortium, the aim of which is to develop a whole-of-government response to managing digital resources and to stimulate community advocacy of the case for managing and sustaining digital collections for the benefit of all Australians.

### **Access to collections and information services**

National, state and territory libraries provide extensive access to collections and services through their websites. Libraries provide access through their catalogues and other resource discovery services to material in their physical collections and digital resources including digitised copies of collection material.

Since 2000, following user feedback on its website and other online services, the National Library has been developing a new user-centred service model. This is a fundamental shift in direction away from services that traditionally have been developed by librarians for library staff and experienced researchers (Missingham 2004). Significant barriers to access were identified during the evaluation in 2000, including the fact that users did not understand the distinction between the website and the catalogue when searching for information and were confused by many different services whose names did not reveal to the user what the service was offering. The National Library's website has evolved over time from a place where users find information about the Library to a primary means of online service delivery. An opportunity to improve service to users came in 2002 when the National Library commenced a project to replace its integrated library management system, allowing significant improvements and flexibility in delivering the online public access catalogue. The redesign of the website and catalogue was undertaken holistically and features a 'one-search' option which allows users to

search across the catalogue, all web information pages and the other resource discovery services provided via the website. It also includes new service delivery options such as a remote access online book request facility and a service called Copies Direct which provides a single online point for ordering copies of items held in the National Library's collection.

The need to increase the effectiveness of resource discovery and delivery services for the public is also being addressed by NSLA through its Information Access Plan. The aim of the plan is to improve public access to information resources by simplifying service interfaces and integrating searches for resources where possible. The public library sector is integral to the success of the Information Access Plan and NSLA is working closely with public libraries to develop a workable and practical application of the plan. Initially, work is concentrating on areas where some immediate improvement to existing services can be made, for example, streamlining access to the indexes and databases created by NSLA libraries, and developing a single core set of internet subject guides. The National Library is taking the lead on the NSLA Information Access Plan initiative because it believes that if libraries do not make their services more user friendly and accessible then people increasingly will seek their information resources elsewhere. One of the more ambitious aspects of the plan involves the NSLA libraries investigating how they can expose Libraries Australia to their user community. The National Library is assisting with this by examining how its own users might benefit if it were to make the Australian National Bibliographic Database within the Libraries Australia service the primary search target for users instead of the Library's own online public access catalogue. The importance of moving forward in this way has been clearly articulated for the library sector by Jan Fullerton, Director General, National Library of Australia.

As a sector we need to look at the services we are providing to our users from the user perspective. We must move away from systems and services that can be used comfortably by library staff but that leave our users bamboozled and ultimately dependent on the mediation of library staff to find and get information resources (Fullerton 2003).

Reference services increasingly are being provided online. Such services have been offered by the national and state libraries since the mid 1990s, primarily through email and web forms. In 2002, NSLA launched a collaborative virtual reference service, AskNow! Answers are provided immediately by operators using chat software and searching the internet and library resources. All state and territory libraries, the national libraries of Australia, New Zealand and Singapore and fifteen public libraries collaborate to resource the service. The service is available from Monday to Friday, 9am to 7pm Australian Eastern Standard Time, with three operators (seats) answering questions simultaneously. More than 100,000 questions had been answered by August 2005, reaching those in metropolitan areas (60 per cent) and rural areas (40 per cent).

In addition to offering reference services online, deposit libraries are creating new spaces on the web for individuals to share information and create communities of interest. The State Library of Victoria's Centre for Youth Literature launched a youth literature blog in May 2005, Read Alert (<http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/about/centreforyouthliterature/youthlit.html>). It creates a lively interactive space where people can keep up to date with the latest information, current thinking and issues in youth literature.

### **Australia's national infrastructure**

The National Library plays a major role in the development of Australia's national information infrastructure. The work undertaken by the National Library in this area is fundamental to the achievement of the Library's key goal 'to provide rapid and easy access to the wealth of information resources that reside in libraries and other cultural institutions – and to break down the barriers that work against this' (National Library of Australia 2006). In pursuing this goal, the National Library has extended the concept of resource sharing and collaboration beyond the library sector to embrace a broad range of Australian cultural and collecting institutions. The National Library is now extending its services directly to individuals in recognition of the growing preference of many Australians using the internet for unmediated access to information resources. Infrastructure developments that support a high degree of access to national, state and territory library collections include Libraries Australia and PictureAustralia.

### **Libraries Australia: national access to forty million resources**

The National Library provides access to the nation's library collections through Libraries Australia, which replaced the Kinetica service in December 2005. Australian libraries have a long tradition of sharing their collections for the benefit of their users and Libraries Australia is the fundamental building block for resource sharing and collaboration among Australian libraries (Boston et al. 2005). It is an essential tool for the Australian library sector and supports resource discovery; cataloguing, through supply of records for overseas and Australian resources; and an online interlibrary loan system. In spite of the increasing number of resources available in digital format, a significant proportion of the collections of the deposit libraries and many other Australian libraries will continue to exist in physical form (Pearce & Gatenby 2005). Libraries Australia provides a simple, free search interface to forty million resources held by 1,100 Australian libraries. It is one of the most significant research tools available to Australian researchers and has been designed for ease of use by individuals who are accustomed to using search engines for resource discovery. The service offers searching across twelve databases, including the Australian National Bibliographic Database (ANBD). Records of catalogued resources held in the national, state and public library collections are held on the ANBD and are accessible through Libraries Australia.

In addition to providing a simple federated search facility, the National Library aims to provide users with the most direct form of access possible to the information resources they find through Libraries Australia. Although considerable work remains to be done in this area, Libraries Australia is providing users with direct online access to increasing numbers of digital resources. It also provides access to a range of options that allow users to seek a copy of other resources through the National Library's Copies Direct service, through standard inter-library loan or from online bookshops. And, where technically possible, users are alerted to resources held within their own local library. The most significant achievement, however, is the provision of a free search facility that provides all Australians with access to the combined collections of the Australian library sector and other collecting institutions such as that of the National Film and Sound Archive. The importance of free public access to Libraries Australia was acknowledged as one of the key recommendations of *Libraries in the online environment*, the

report tabled in 2003 by the Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee.

### **PictureAustralia**

PictureAustralia is a digital image service provided by the National Library that enables the digitised images of cultural institutions to be searched simultaneously. With more than 1.2 million images, the service commenced in 1998 as a pilot project called ImageSearch, involving the Australian War Memorial, the National Library of Australia and the state libraries of New South Wales, Tasmania and Victoria. Metadata are collected regularly and shared through a central repository. (Metadata are a major topic in Chapter 9.) All state and territory libraries now participate in the service and are experiencing significant growth in the use of their digital images as a consequence.

In 2006, PictureAustralia launched a new collaboration with Flickr, a popular digital image sharing space managed by Yahoo! The partnership enables individuals to contribute images to PictureAustralia by placing them in Flickr under two categories: 'PictureAustralia: Australia Day' and 'PictureAustralia: People, Places and Events'. The addition of photos from Flickr enhances the value of PictureAustralia to researchers and the general public by significantly expanding the number of contemporary images available through the service.

### **Other collaborative resource discovery services**

Access to resources in other subjects and formats is similarly available through collaborative online resource discovery services. MusicAustralia, launched in early 2005, has enjoyed considerable success in providing access to online and print music resources held in the national, state and territory library collections. Over 1.3 million page views were recorded in the first quarter of its release, from March to June 2005. The State Library of Queensland has also developed its own state-based version of the service, Music Queensland. In partnership with the Queensland Conservatorium of Music, the State Library of Queensland is recording versions of digitised sheet music which users can listen to online.

### **Relationship with public libraries**

State and territory libraries also support access to information and collections for residents of their states through their support for the public library network, as demonstrated already in Chris Jones' short summary in Chapter 1. Because state libraries are funded by state governments, the interconnection with public libraries is a critical part of providing effective library services to the public in each state. The National Library does not usually have a direct relationship with public libraries, but is committed through its work with NSLA to continually improving the public's access to information through the public library sector.

In Tasmania and the Northern Territory, public libraries are integrated with the state and territory systems. In the Northern Territory, public library services are delivered in partnership with the Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET), communities and local government. The Northern Territory Library provides support for professional development of staff in public libraries and directly manages two joint-use libraries, Taminmin Community Library at Humpty Doo and Nhulunbuy Community Library. It also provides services to remote

communities through a series of libraries and knowledge centres. The State Library of Tasmania delivers services through a network of libraries including forty-eight public libraries, the State Reference Service and the Heritage Collections. This model enables the public to access significant collections through integrated resource discovery services and state-wide subscriptions to electronic resources.

In other states, public libraries are supported through a range of programs including grants, circulating book collections, purchasing and training and development programs. The State Library of Western Australia supports a vast network of 239 public libraries spread across the state. It provides public libraries with collections of catalogued books and other materials. It also facilitates the provision of a wide range of information services to the people of Western Australia through the state-wide network of public libraries managed by local government. This gives people in remote locations access to regularly changing library resources and to online resources.

In South Australia, the State Library supports public libraries through Public Library Services, previously known as the Public Library Automated Information Network. It provides support for selection, acquisition, cataloguing and purchase of electronic resources, and runs a state-based catalogue, among other services. Major successful collaborative projects with public libraries in recent years include the '@yourlibrary' promotion, the Big Book Club and the Little Big Book Club (see <http://www.thebigbookclub.com.au/>).

The State Library of New South Wales provides support through Public Library Services with an advisory service on all aspects of public library provision for state and local governments. Subsidies and library development grants are also available for public libraries. Quality research and evaluation occurs through the State Library's Public Library Network Research Program, established in July 2002 to inform the promotion, planning, development and review of the NSW Public Library Network. Recent research projects include investigating the contribution public libraries make to sustainable communities and providing a means of quantifying that contribution; an assessment of the role public libraries play in supporting e-government initiatives and a guide for public library buildings in New South Wales.

Relationships between Victoria's forty-three public library services and the Library Board of Victoria and the State Library of Victoria reached a milestone with agreement on a new framework in 2004. It recognises commitment to delivering information services to the whole Victorian community. It proposes a new focus for collaboration in order to achieve increased community and government understanding of and engagement with libraries and greater efficiency and effectiveness of library services. The first phase will focus on the funds allocated to the Statewide Public Library Development Projects, the resources of the Public Libraries Unit and further development of Victoria's Virtual Library.

More than 330 Queensland public libraries are supported by the State Library through collection support, planning and specialist services including Community Services, Multicultural Services, Readers Services, Interlibrary Loans, Indigenous Services, Young People's Services, Local Studies, Family History, Mobile Libraries and Training. The State Library leads and facilitates the Smart Library Network, including the development and dissemination of models of best practice.

Development of closer relationships with public libraries, particularly through activities focused on creating a greater public awareness of libraries, such as the ‘@ your library’ campaign, is a growing trend. The framework adopted in Victoria provides a basis for extending access to services and creating new funding opportunities and is a model for the way forward for other state libraries.

### **Development of digital collections for national access**

The world wide web and other developments in technology have provided libraries with a highly effective mechanism for overcoming the barriers of distance that have constrained national access to its vast collections. This has been assisted by the fact that Australians have rapidly adopted the internet and other new technologies (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003). In this environment, one of the most effective strategies to provide users with simple, direct and unmediated access to information is the provision of information resources in digital form. To support this, the national, state and territory libraries all have digitisation programs in place.

Creating digital versions of resources in the National Library’s original Australian collections is an important way of improving national access to the collections and meeting the growing demand for access to online resources. In May 2005, the number of items digitised in the National Library’s collection reached 100,000. The Library is responding to user demand for increased access to digital resources by seeking to supplement its selective digitisation of original resources with large-scale digitisation projects encompassing resources such as out-of-copyright Australian newspapers and journals.

The State Library of New South Wales has launched a major digitisation program with their ‘atmitchell.com’ initiative (<http://www.atmitchell.com/>). The site won the Standard of Excellence, Government Category in the 2005 International Web Awards. It provides access to digitised collection material and interpretive content for educational use. Atmitchell.com builds on an already extensive image digitisation program that encompasses thousands of early photographs, manuscripts and maps.

The State Library of Victoria’s ‘slv21.com’ also demonstrates the move to a service model based on access to digital information. The new model enables all users freely to access information, increasingly in digital format, when and where they want it. It aims to open up access to collections, digitise resources and provide a new range of interpretative materials. Connections with educational environments, Years 6-12 and tertiary, enable the libraries to make a significant contribution to learning. The development is also underpinned by new financial models – offering opportunities to interact with other government organisations, donors and commercial organisations.

### **Supporting research at the national level**

National, state and territory libraries make a significant contribution to the provision of services and infrastructure to support research and scholarship in Australia. The national and state libraries are major research libraries in their own right and they have a vested interest in working with the research sector on infrastructure projects that will allow the Australian public to find and use Australia’s research output. The National Library’s role in this area has been

recognised by membership of the Australian Research Information Infrastructure Committee, which advises the Minister for Science, Education and Training on the medium term infrastructure needs of the research sector. The change brought about by documenting research and scholarship in the digital environment has created important strategic issues for research libraries and has led to the establishment within universities of institutional repositories as the means for long-term management of research output in digital form (Cathro 2005).

The National Library's role in three major infrastructure projects funded by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) as part of the Government's Backing Australia's Ability program is an example of its support for the research sector in areas where Library staff can offer significant professional expertise. In 2005–2006, the National Library participated in the ARROW project (Australian Research Repositories Online to the World), led by Monash University, testing software for institutional repositories and developing a federated search service (Campbell 2005); the APSR project (Australian Partnership for Sustainable Repositories), led by the Australian National University Centre for Cross Cultural Research (2004), supporting long-term sustainability of research output in digital form, including research datasets; and the MAMS project (Meta Access Management Systems), led by Macquarie University, which is developing a new conceptual architecture capable of supporting multiple, independent models for the authentication and authorisation of users accessing institutional and other repositories.

National, state and territory libraries are also involved with a wide range of activities supporting the creation of research. Some are funded by the Australian Research Council, for example, the State Library of New South Wales is a partner in the Dictionary of Sydney project which will develop digital multimedia resources about Sydney. The State Library of Western Australia has been a partner in the research project on the East Perth Power Station and the Electrification of Western Australia, creating scholarly outputs in print and digital form of historic heritage interpretation. In Victoria, the project Copyright and Cultural Institutions: Digitising Collections in Public Museums, Galleries and Libraries has been developing guidelines for cultural institutions. Primarily funded by the Australian Research Council, six cultural institutions, including the State Library of Victoria, have contributed to the project. In 2006, the National Library was a partner in the Ballets Russes and Australian Dictionary of Biography projects.

Support for scholarship also occurs through fellowships and awards. The National Library offers Harold White Fellowships for scholars and writers using the collection – covering a wide range of subject areas and resource materials. In addition, the McCann Summer Scholarships in Australian History and Literature support younger scholars undertaking research in Australian history and literature, and the National Library of Australia Folk Festival Fellowship funds a folk performer to research original source materials in the National Library folklore archives. State libraries in New South Wales and Victoria also fund research through fellowships such as the CH Currey Memorial Fellowship (for the writing of Australian history from original sources, preferably using the State Library of New South Wales' resources), the Nancy Keesing Fellowship (for research into aspects of Australian life and culture using the resources of the State Library of New South Wales), the National Biography Award (for a published work of

biographical or autobiographical writing) and Creative Fellowships (for original artistic work using the resources of the State Library of Victoria).

### **National planning: Peak Bodies Forum and a national agenda**

Coordination of all Australian library representative bodies is an activity that has recently moved to a more formal phase. The National Library has a long history of developing strategic alliances and partnerships for the benefit of the Australian library sector. A number of strong sectoral bodies exist that represent the interests of particular library sectors such as schools, universities, government, law, health and public libraries. The National Library brings these groups together annually at the Peak Bodies Forum to identify significant issues facing the Australian library sector. The aim of the forum is to develop a national plan of action to address those issues that representatives of the Australian library sector determine can be successfully managed at the national level.

Perhaps the most significant document on library issues and services in recent years is the October 2003 report of the Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee, *Libraries in the online environment*. The report contains eleven recommendations which reflect the key issues that emerged during the enquiry. Members of the community, libraries and associations were active in outlining major issues of access, funding and services.

The Australian Government responded to the report in June 2004. There was strong support for the principles espoused in the report relating to 'national information strategies'. The National Library in collaboration with the Australian library sector has made good progress on achieving the key recommendations. In particular, the National Library has revised its business model for Libraries Australia and now provides a free search interface for users to access through their local libraries or directly from their home, work or place of study; discussions have been held with the Australian Government Information Management Office about increasing access to government publications – a seminar, Digital Amnesia, was held in April 2005 highlighting issues of long-term access to government online publications and information services; and the Library hosted two national forums on site licensing (8 December 2004 and 12 October 2005) which has resulted in an agreement between peak library bodies and existing consortia to proceed with developing a national licence for a core set of databases. A national survey has been conducted to determine the most useful set of products for a national licence. Future work is planned on governance, costing and acquisition of products.

### **Delivering services to users in the twenty-first century**

At the launch of the free public interface to Libraries Australia in February 2006, Jan Fullerton, director general, National Library of Australia encapsulated service delivery to users in the twenty-first century when she said that 'Libraries Australia puts information into the users' space rather than the user having to come into the libraries' space.' The national, state and territory libraries will continue to work together to make their services and collections central to all Australians seeking information. However, the NSLA libraries will work increasingly with new partners both within and beyond the library sector in order to exploit new technologies and

infrastructure that will enhance the visibility and accessibility of their vast resources. Anne-Marie Schwirtlich, chief executive officer and state librarian, State Library of Victoria, has posed the question 'Why use the library when I could Google?' (State Library of Victoria 2004) The response of the NSLA libraries in the twenty-first century is to ensure that Australians are in fact finding and using library resources when they 'google'. It is important that NSLA libraries continue to develop services that connect their collections and services directly with users, and provide innovative spaces for individuals and communities of interest to interact with them.

One of the major areas of activity for state and territory libraries for the future is to build on activities addressing the information needs of indigenous Australians. In 2004, the State Library of New South Wales held a National Colloquium on Libraries and Indigenous Knowledge. Participants identified the key issues associated with understanding the intersection of indigenous and western knowledge systems. A national strategy to deal with the issues is being developed. Both the Northern Territory and Queensland have developed centres in indigenous communities to assist with knowledge development and further activities to assist community knowledge recording and sharing are planned, involving community consultation, volunteers and education agencies.

The national, state and territory libraries provide services to all Australians regardless of their location. The highly collaborative approach taken by the NSLA libraries provides a sound basis for continued success in the twenty-first century.

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