

Inquiry into the Role of Libraries in the Online Environment  
Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and  
the Arts References Committee

## **Submission**

**from**

**Council of Australian State Libraries**

**August 2002**

Ms Frances Awcock  
Chair  
Council of Australian State Libraries  
State Library of Victoria  
328 Swanston St  
Melbourne VIC 3000  
Ph. 03 8664 7505  
Email. [casl@slv.vic.gov.au](mailto:casl@slv.vic.gov.au)

## Contents

Part 1 : Executive Summary

Part 2 : Terms of Reference

- a. Current demand for public information services
- b. Libraries response to changing information needs
- c. Strategies for enhancing use and distribution of information resources
- d. Libraries increasing their effectiveness at meeting community demands for information
- e. Roles of government, corporate sector and libraries in the provision of primary public information resources

Appendices

- 1) Council of Australian State Libraries : Membership and Key Priorities
- 2) British Library Media Release, 19 March 2002.

## **PART 1 : Executive Summary**

### *CASL Libraries and the provision of information*

The Council of Australian State Libraries (CASL), as the peak body for the State, Territory and National Libraries, supports the provision of information and library services across Australia through collaborative partnerships, cooperative policy development and representation.

CASL Libraries serve all Australians, providing equitable access and an extensive range of information services including essential support to the formal education sector; specialised services for scholars; preservation and expertise in Australia's documentary heritage; law, consumer health and genealogy resources; support for life-long learning initiatives; and much more. Services are provided for clients who visit library onsite facilities; for those using library websites; and for those contacting their library by email, phone or fax. More than 6 million clients visited CASL Libraries in the year to June 2000 (ABS Cat No 8561.0) and use of library websites is increasing at a rate of more than 68% per year.

### *Changes in information seeking behaviour*

With significant changes in information seeking behaviour in Australia and around the world caused by the rapidly expanding use of the internet, libraries have responded by making their catalogues and collections available online; by initiating and funding infrastructure changes; by entering into a range of collaborative projects; and by adapting their services to the new community demands. Their success is shown in the increasing demand for services and content through library websites and the ongoing realignment of organisational structures to fit the new environment.

### *Recommendations to support Libraries in the online environment*

This submission concentrates on selected recommendations that are critical for delivering enhanced public information services across Australia for the next ten years. As a national body, these recommendations reflect the broad issues that impact on all CASL member libraries.

The two Key Recommendations that need to be addressed by the Commonwealth government concern online infrastructure for equitable access to information, and funding and recognition for libraries for the essential support they provide to the education sector. Further recommendations concern issues of connectivity, content, competencies, funding for sustainability and promotion.

There are also opportunities for libraries to develop joint or collaborative partnerships with the corporate sector to achieve some of these objectives.

## **Key Recommendations to be addressed by the Commonwealth Government**

---

### Online Infrastructure

1. Accelerate the development of online infrastructure to provide equitable access for rural, regional and remote communities.

### Funding for Support of the Education Sector

2. Provide funding and recognition of CASL Libraries as an essential support to the education sector.

## **Further Recommendations**

---

### Connectivity

1. Fast-track the move towards a national broadband network.
2. Shared access to existing public networks.
3. Commitment to ongoing maintenance of a comprehensive online infrastructure.

### Content

4. Expand and accelerate digitisation projects
5. Enhance metadata standards and enforcement
6. Collaborative electronic archiving
7. Encourage the public and corporate development of online Australian content.
8. Enhance access to electronic resources through public libraries by expanding consortia purchasing of databases.

### Competencies

9. Develop a major national training and support initiative for public library networks.

### Funding for Sustainability

10. Ongoing maintenance and upgrading of online infrastructure and local hardware.

### Positioning, Recognition and Promotion

11. Develop a National Information Policy to acknowledge the role of libraries in provision of public information, and to promote the alignment of libraries and online information in the public mind.
12. Targeted promotion of libraries as community information and transaction centres.

## PART 2 : Terms of Reference

### a) Current demand for public information services

Libraries in Australia, and across the world, are undergoing a shift in the demand for their services with the widespread use of the internet for information seeking. The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that 47% of Australian adults accessed the internet in 2000 and one third of households (2.3 million) had internet access at home (ABS Cat No. 8146.0). These numbers are continuing to grow and have had significant effect on how libraries provide information services. CASL Libraries are now providing an increasing range of services through their websites and via phone, fax and email, as well as refining and developing a long tradition of service to onsite clients.

#### *Current demand for online and onsite library services*

The number of clients using library services at onsite venues has declined slightly (by 4.2% over the last three years, on average, across CASL Libraries), while the demand for internet access to library collections, catalogues, databases and services has increased exponentially. On average, the visits to CASL Library websites are increasing at a rate of **+68.41%** each year and this trend is expected to continue.

CASL Libraries are digitising Australian content and making it available online, encouraging and supporting private and public development of Australian online resources, and bringing international resources to Australians. In addition to making the content available, they also provide expertise in selecting resources and searching effectively. In 2001-2002 financial year, there was a total expenditure of **\$1.626 million** by CASL Libraries on online, CD-Rom and other electronic information resources for use by clients.

As libraries work to make their resources and services available online they also continue to maintain and develop their service to onsite clients. Though the overall number of onsite client visits has declined, there were still more than **6 million visits** to CASL member libraries (not including the public library networks) in the year to June 2000. This number rises to 99.4 million visits for the same period when the visits to public libraries across Australia are included (ABS Cat. No.8561.0)

#### *The role of libraries in effective online information retrieval*

The demand for library services is also affected by the need for effective results. As more people gain access and begin to use the internet for a wider range of purposes, there is a continual process of learning and assessment of the types of information that can be most effectively retrieved via the internet. Some types of information can be retrieved through broad searching of the web, some require access through library or other sites that direct clients to appropriate search strategies or quality databases, and some need the active intervention of information professionals.

Assessing the quality and authority of information and knowing whether your information seeking has retrieved the best possible result requires expertise and experience. Libraries and library websites are gateways to effective information retrieval.

## **b) Libraries response to changing information needs**

CASL Libraries have responded to the changing information environment through establishing and upgrading technical infrastructure; realigning organisational structures; developing new skills; initiating collaborative partnerships and sponsorships; digitising high use or fragile resources; and researching client needs.

Examples of these initiatives include:

### 1. Infrastructure

- Upgrading bandwidth and access options for public library networks.
- Establishing and expanding organisations to lobby for funding for statewide internet access, to distribute funding, manage rollout of infrastructure and content (e.g. VICNET, NSW.Net, and others).
- Digitising collections, especially high use or high profile items. (More than 590,000 items have been digitised by CASL Libraries, as at June 2002)
- Expansion of internet and electronic resources and facilities for onsite clients.
- Upgrading Inter Library Loan infrastructure to provide desk-top delivery of electronic documents.

### 2. Online Information Services

- Catalogues, National Bibliographic Database
- Content creation including image databases, newspaper indexes.
- Government information services
- Electronic information request services, including email “quick response” services and a trial of “Live Reference” interactive reference service
- Password access to databases purchased by libraries
- Recommending and selecting websites according to specified criteria and providing web portals
- Multilingual searching capabilities and disability access software

### 3. Collaborative Projects

- Corporate sponsorships/partnerships to support training initiatives, digitisation projects, websites, major purchases, education programs, indigenous services, etc (total of 134 sponsorships/partnerships arranged by CASL member libraries since January 2000).
- Consortia purchasing of databases by CASL and public library networks, particularly those that promote Australian content.
- Content creation in partnership with other institutions, e.g. ABS, AustLit Gateway.
- Joint databases and digitising projects e.g. Picture Australia.
- Access and Standards for broad catalogue searching, federated searching (e.g. Z39.50), metadata
- Archive projects e.g. Pandora Electronic Archive

### 4. Skills

- Developing functional and technical literacy for staff
- Developing information literacy and search skills in clients
- Expanding marketing and client research expertise in CASL Libraries
- Developing information literacy skills in Indigenous communities

## **c) Strategies for enhancing the use and distribution of information resources**

### *Online Infrastructure*

The central requirement for enhancing the use and distribution of online information resources is fast, reliable and equitable access to the internet throughout Australia. Currently speed and reliability vary greatly especially in rural, regional and remote communities. Implementation factors would vary from state to state, but national agreement on the importance of online infrastructure and connectivity, and a stated willingness to support funding bids, would greatly assist the library industry in moving towards these goals.

### *Content Creation*

Australian content online is essential in the changing information environment. CASL Libraries are involved in many in-house and partnership projects to produce Australian online information resources but the demand is extensive and will continue to grow as information seeking focuses primarily on the internet.

### **Key Recommendation No.1**

Accelerate the development of online infrastructure to provide equitable access for rural, regional and remote communities.

### **Further Recommendations**

#### Connectivity

1. Fast-track the move towards a national broadband network – for faster and more reliable internet access for metropolitan, regional and rural libraries.
2. Shared access to existing public networks (e.g. nationwide networks developed for other government purposes)
3. Commitment to ongoing maintenance of a comprehensive online infrastructure.

#### Content

4. Expand and accelerate digitisation projects, including development of national standards - to make more content available online, to assist transferability of data and to expand options for using a single search across multiple databases.
5. Enhance access to important online content, especially Australian content, through partnerships with other institutions.
6. Enhanced metadata standards for websites, catalogues and databases to allow single-search or federated searching, plus strategies to ensure the standards are applied.
7. Collaborative archiving of electronic information for preservation and access.
8. Encourage the public and corporate development of online Australian content, including supporting cross sectoral partnerships and collaborative agreements.
9. Enhance the access to electronic resources through public libraries by expanding consortia purchasing of databases.
10. Review Copyright legislation to cope with the changing demands of electronic formats.

## Competencies

11. Development of a major national training initiative for public library networks in technical and research skills in the online environment, to maximise the effective use of online resources.

## **d) Libraries increasing their effectiveness in meeting community demands**

### *Supporting the education sector*

To increase their effectiveness in meeting community demands, CASL Libraries need commitment to sustainable funding for their current role in the provision of public information. The biggest client group using CASL Libraries is students in the formal higher education system (an average of **51% of clients** across Australia). This is not currently recognised in government funding allocations. Students use CASL Libraries for access to high use resources that may be on loan or missing from educational institution libraries, for the study environment they provide and for the level of assistance they receive from library staff. In the United Kingdom, the role of the British Library in supporting the education sector has been recognised through a strategic alliance with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (see Appendix 2).

### *Promotion*

In addition, there is a need to realign the general public's image of libraries with the changing information environment. Non-users are largely unaware of the advantages in accessing quality online information either through a library website or onsite. There is also the option of expanding the role of public libraries through their promotion as centres for community information and transactions.

### **Key Recommendation No.2**

Funding and recognition of CASL Libraries as an essential support to the education sector.

### **Further Recommendations**

#### Funding for Sustainability

12. Ongoing maintenance of online infrastructure and local hardware upgrades in public libraries.

#### Positioning, Recognition and Promotion

13. Develop a National Information Policy to acknowledge the role of libraries in the provision of public information, and to promote the alignment of libraries and online information in the public mind.
14. Targeted promotion of public libraries as community information, and local government transaction centres.

## **e) Roles of government, corporate sector and libraries in the provision of primary public information resources**

### *Role of Government*

The role of the Federal Government in the achievement of these strategies is to provide funding and broad support for the recommendations. In particular :

- i) Sustainable funding for online infrastructure and related projects
- ii) Recognition and funding for CASL Libraries as essential support to Australia's higher education system
- iii) Development of a National Information Policy

State and territory governments will continue to have a significant role as their library networks consider how to implement these initiatives.

### *Role of CASL Libraries*

With sustainable funding and support from government, CASL Libraries will continue to adapt to the new environment, to explore opportunities and to enhance services and collections.

A number of initiatives are already underway to promote libraries more broadly in the community and to reposition them for the future. CASL is sponsoring a major national campaign called @YourLibrary, based on a successful model used in the USA and other countries, to coordinate promotion of libraries.

Cross-sectoral initiatives, such as the National Bibliographic Database, also work towards greater cooperation between libraries, maximising the use of available resources and providing equitable access.

### *Role of the Corporate Sector*

CASL Libraries have a distinguished record in engaging with the corporate sector with a total of more than 134 sponsorships, partnerships and joint projects entered into since January 2000, valued at more than **\$6.6 million**.

These partnerships have allowed the development of new services, exhibitions and projects such as the Nestle Write Around Australia project and the BHP Billiton Skills.net training project for rural and regional areas; education projects; indigenous initiatives; innovative approaches to the design and dissemination of information; digitisation of unique collections; conservation of priceless and irreplaceable items of Australia's heritage; and the promotion of libraries through many sectors of the community.

CASL Libraries will continue to expand and pursue partnerships with the corporate sector, working towards successful outcomes for both the corporate sector and for libraries.

## **Appendix 1.**

### **Council of Australian State Libraries : Membership and Key Priorities**

The Council of Australian State Libraries (CASL) is the peak body representing Australia's State, Territory and National libraries. The members are the CEO/State Librarians of the following major library services :

- Australian Capital Territory Library Service
- National Library of Australia
- State Library of Tasmania
- State Library of Victoria
- State Library of New South Wales
- State Library of Queensland
- Northern Territory Library and Information Service
- State Library of Western Australia
- State Library of South Australia

These libraries collect the documentary heritage for their state or territory, provide reference services, and support the provision of public library services to the people of Australia.

In particular, the Council of Australian State Libraries works to :

1. Promote and advance the provision, awareness and use of library and information services.
2. Strengthen the national information infrastructure through cross-sectoral collaboration.
3. Collaborate with the public library network to improve services to the community.
4. Formulate common plans, policies and programs for library services
5. Represent the interests of libraries in matters of public interest

CASL is chaired by Ms Frances Awcock, Chief Executive Officer and State Librarian at the State Library of Victoria.

## **Appendix 2.**

**British Library Media Release, 19 March 2002 :**

### **Strategic alliance emphasises British Library's central role in support of higher education**

19 March 2002 :: Posted by British Library Press & Public Relations

A strategic alliance, linking the British Library and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), was announced today. The BL/HEFCE agreement signals a new commitment to providing the best possible information for the academic and research communities and life-long learning.

The link between HEFCE – the body responsible for distributing public funds to universities and colleges in England and a key player in developing higher education policy – and the British Library – the nation's leading research library – emphasises the commitment of both organisations to ensure the quality and cost-effectiveness of UK information provision.

Key areas for future collaboration include: research, scholarship and heritage; developing relationships with business to enhance the UK's international competitiveness; and widening participation in higher education – for example by developing e-learning resources, contributing to the e-university and working with the public library network. BL and HEFCE will also work together on new technologies and best management practice.

Commenting on the agreement Lynne Brindley, Chief Executive of the British Library, said: 'The Prime Minister has already described the Library as a 'beacon of excellence' and this is well recognised within the UK research sector. Academic research already accounts for some 50% of British Library usage, whilst our document delivery services save the HE sector many millions each year. This alliance demonstrates the need for the British Library and HEFCE to work together to deliver major benefits to higher education – by developing the national collection; enhancing our catalogues to improve access, and by modernising our services.

\*Source: Prime Minister's October 2001 speech on public service reform.

Sir Howard Newby, Chief Executive of the HEFCE, said: 'The world class research carried out in UK higher education is dependent on resources provided by the British Library. This agreement cements and celebrates the relationship between the Library and HE. It prepares the ground for further joint activity to ensure that UK researchers have the resources they need, and to hold our lead in exploiting the full potential of new digital information sources.'

Baroness Blackstone, Minister of State for the Arts, concludes: 'The British Library plays an important role in safeguarding the nation's cultural heritage, supporting Science, the Arts and Humanities and in making its collection widely accessible. We recognise the vital importance of the Library to higher education and welcome the contribution this alliance will make to fostering learning, supporting research and contributing to the success of British industry.'

For more details please contact:

Valerie McBurney in the British Library Press Office on 020 7412 7112, email:

val.mcburney@bl.uk.

Information is also available from the HEFCE Press Office. Contact Roger Grinyer on 0117 931 7307 or Julian Burnell on 0117 931 7431.

#### Notes for editors:

1. About the alliance. The overall purpose of the alliance is to ensure that best possible information support is provided for the UK higher education system – particularly for research, scholarship and heritage, for learning and widening participation, and for business, innovation and the community. The statement of strategic alliance will be used as the framework for future collaboration between the British Library and HEFCE. It will also be used as the context within which specific joint actions, projects or programmes will be negotiated and agreed. Overall, the alliance aims to: - Promote specific collaborations and undertake special projects in support of the BL and HEFCE's common purposes. - Ensure that strategies are mutually informed by the relevant developments in both bodies and within their respective networks. - Develop mutually beneficial information exchange and sharing of expertise.

To achieve their aims the British Library and HEFCE will: - Ensure an annual workplan is agreed and resourced. - Arrange for quarterly monitoring by a joint senior group. - Set up special meetings on specific topics as agreed. - Agree working groups and one-to-one links. - Carry out a formal annual review of the alliance at CEO level.

2. British Library collaboration with higher education. The British Library is involved in a number of projects to improve links with the HE sector, including: Joint sponsorship of the Research Support Libraries Group (RSLG) – a strategic advisory group on research support libraries, chaired by Sir Brian Follett. Set up by the four UK higher education funding bodies, in collaboration with the British Library and the national libraries of Wales and Scotland, the group will advise on the development of a national strategy to ensure that UK researchers in all disciplines have access to world class information resources.

The Digital Preservation Coalition – a new group formed in July 2001 to ensure that the archiving of 'born digital' items is kept on the policy agenda. The group is a consortium of 19 major UK organisations including the Library and JISC. Further information about its work can be found at [www.jisc.ac.uk/dner/preservation](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/dner/preservation). Provision of the zetoc current awareness service for all academics and researchers in higher education. zetoc is a fully searchable database of 17.5 million citations of journal and conference papers derived from the world's 20,000 most important research journals with an integrated current awareness service, alerting users to new information in specialised subject areas of their choice. The result of close collaboration between the British Library, MIMAS (Manchester Information and Associated Services) and JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee), zetoc was first made available to the UK academic community in Autumn 2000. HEFCE/BL sponsorship of a BL/Higher Education taskforce. A high level joint task force was set up in September 1999 to ensure more effective and efficient overall provision in the context of a distributed national collection of research resources. Three studies were agreed initially, with a fourth commissioned in 2001. A summary of the outcomes and conclusions of each of the studies and the Task Force's overall conclusions and recommendations to the Research Support Libraries Group is

available at: [http://minos.bl.uk/concord/pdf\\_files/blhe-overview.pdf](http://minos.bl.uk/concord/pdf_files/blhe-overview.pdf) Concordat with the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) – The British Library signed a Concordat with the AHRB in November 2001 to help the two organisations identify shared strategic priorities. Areas of common concern include the collection and development of research resources and how they may be made more accessible. The agreement runs

initially for three years (from December 2001) but with the intention of subsequent review and renewal.

Concordats with individual Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The Library has a number of formal bilateral agreements for co-operation with individual HEI's. These include agreements with the University of Sheffield and SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London) and a new agreement with Royal Holloway, University of London, to be signed on 14 May.

International Dunhuang Project. The International Dunhuang Project (IDP) was established in 1993 following a meeting of conservators from all over the world to promote the study and preservation of manuscripts and printed documents from Dunhuang and other Central Asian sites through international co-operation. The secretariat, at The British Library in the Oriental and India Office Collections, works with HEFCE to develop and promote the project. HEFCE funds the post of Network and Digitisation Manager to explore and develop collaboration between IDP and other organisations in the UK and abroad, including the National Library of China. More information on IDP is available at: <http://idp.bl.uk/>

3. The e-university is the working title of a collaborative project by the UK higher education funding bodies to establish a new way of providing HE programmes through web-based learning. The project is designed to give UK higher education the capacity to compete globally with the major virtual and corporate universities being developed in the United States and elsewhere. For further information see the website at: [www.ukeuniversitiesworldwide.com/](http://www.ukeuniversitiesworldwide.com/)

4. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) distributes public money for teaching and research to universities and colleges. In doing so, it aims to promote high quality education and research, within a financially healthy sector. The Council also plays a key role in ensuring accountability and promoting good practice. Further information is available at: [www.hefce.ac.uk](http://www.hefce.ac.uk)

5. The British Library is the national library of the United Kingdom and one of the world's greatest libraries – offering a wider range of services than any other library. Every working day services are offered in 16 reading rooms and study areas and there are more than half a million reading room visits each year. Over 4 million documents are supplied to remote users annually and some 3 million separate items are added to the collection each year. The catalogue records produced by the Library are made available worldwide. For more information see the Library's website at [www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk).

© The British Library 2002

From : [www.bl.uk/cgi-bin/press.cgi?story=1231](http://www.bl.uk/cgi-bin/press.cgi?story=1231)