

Submission to the Evaluation of *Knowledge and Innovation Reforms*, Dept of Education, Science and Training

Council of Australian State Libraries
Ms Dagmar Schmidmaier, Chair
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Introduction

The Council of Australian State Libraries (CASL) is the peak body representing the National, State and Territory Libraries throughout Australia.¹ The comprehensive research collections and information services provided by these major publicly funded libraries constitute a key resource for the Australian scholarly community, which is often overlooked due to the divergent funding and governance regimes operating between the education and library sectors.

Although the *Knowledge & Innovation Reforms* relate primarily to the funding mechanisms and research outcomes achieved within the higher education sector and other research facilities, this submission highlights the link between the scholarly community and Council of Australian State Libraries in support of these initiatives.

Use of CASL Libraries by the Higher Education Sector

More than 50% of the clients using the National, State and Territory Libraries are students, equating to more than 2.5 million visits annually. Approximately 90% of this group are from the higher education sector, using the resources of the libraries for their research and education requirements. The Council of Australian State Libraries provides equitable access to collections and services irrespective of socio-economic, demographic or geographic divisions. Tertiary students and researchers are supported either directly, through the interlibrary loan or via the public library network of more than 1600 service points across Australia, no matter where they are based or how they are funded.

Most of the Council of Australian State Libraries are covered by Commonwealth and State legal deposit legislation, requiring all works published in Australia to be deposited in their libraries. These legislative requirements combined with the longevity of collection development and policies designed to preserve rather than discard information resources have resulted in Council of Australian State Libraries holding extensive and unique collections in many subject areas. While these collections span the full range of published and unpublished materials, Council of Australian State Libraries maintain particular strengths, in terms of original Australian research materials. Highlights include government publications; history; heritage; environment; maps; photographs; private archives and newspapers.

Additionally the Council of Australian State Libraries provides access to a wide range of Australian and international online databases, onsite in the libraries and offsite via library websites. They provide Internet access, online reference services and training in information literacy and research skills. CASL Libraries have been particularly active in the digitisation of resources to provide wider access to information via the web. Many of these digitisation

projects have been in partnership with sponsors or industry, or in collaboration with other libraries or organisations within the cultural and information sector.

Research Infrastructure

The National Library of Australia, supported by the other CASL Libraries, has been pivotal in the development, maintenance and infrastructure for the collaborative networks that support the whole library and research system across Australia. A prime example of this is the Kinetica database, which includes over 14 million bibliographic records with 36 million holdings from over 1,000 member libraries. Kinetica allows standardised and effective searching for materials held all over Australia. Associated services such as inter-library loan and document delivery services have been developed and refined over many decades and provide high quality services to libraries, universities and research facilities.

Projects such as the PANDORA online archive of selected Australian Internet publications and web pages, hosted by the National Library, will be a valuable future resource for researchers in many fields. Libraries have also been at the forefront of the application of metadata standards to allow federated searching across databases and providing portals to allow access to evaluated resources on the Internet.

Linkage and Collaboration

Libraries have historically been highly collaborative within their industry leading to the early take-up of networked technology and standards, and this cooperative experience has led on to successful partnerships with other industries and sectors. Active collaboration with the education sector has been underway in many forms for decades, with examples including the provision of training programs in information literacy and research skills for students at all levels. Many programs are also provided that are tailored to specific subject needs of educational institutions.

The Council of Australian State Libraries has established a working group with representation from all members, to actively promote partnerships between libraries and the education sector, and to increase recognition of shared objectives. A register of existing collaborative projects is at www.casl.org.au/projects detailing more than 70 projects nationwide.

In addition to these projects and programs, staff members from the Council of Australian State Libraries are experts in the vast collections of these institutions, supporting individual and specialised research needs of their clients.

A major recent report for the United Kingdom's Resource, The Council of Museums, Archives and Libraries called "*Collaboration between Libraries and the Education: Supporting the Learner*" November 2002, highlights the benefits to be gained by furthering the access and learning opportunities for the higher education sector through the library system. This report discusses the reliance of higher education on public library systems as academic libraries face budget restrictions and the educational environment and research aims diversify. These factors are also present in Australia and noted in research undertaken by the Australian Library Collections Task Force, www.nla.gov.au/initiatives/alctf are contributing to an ever-increasing percentage of students using CASL Libraries.

Conclusion

Important and innovative research outcomes are not derived solely from the support and funding provided within the higher education and research facilities sector. CASL Libraries, as a major information resource for the community, play a crucial role in supporting high-end research. Tertiary students are the largest client group served by the State, Territory and National Libraries and this is reflected in our services, collections and priorities. Continuing collaboration between the two sectors; expanded dialogue and increased recognition of the contributions made by the Council of Australian State Libraries will further strengthen and aid the objectives of the *Knowledge and Innovation Reforms*.

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End Notes:

1. CASL Members: State Library of Western Australia, State Library of South Australia, State Library of Victoria, Australian Capital Territory Library & Information Service, State Library of New South Wales, Northern Territory Library & Information Service, State Library of Tasmania, State Library of Queensland, National Library of Australia.
2. Council of Australian State Libraries Key Priorities, www.casl.org.au/key
3. "CASL Libraries 2003 – A Snapshot of their History, Services and Key Facts", CASL Secretariat.
4. Kinetica, National Library of Australia, www.nla.gov.au/kinetica.
5. Pandora Archive, National Library of Australia, www.nla.gov.au/pandora
6. CASL Partnerships between Libraries and Education, www.casl.org.au/projects
7. "Collaboration between Libraries and Education : Supporting the Learner", CIRT for Resource, The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries, United Kingdom, November 2002.