



Supporting Australian libraries

INTRODUCTION

Libraries Australia is an essential pillar of our national information infrastructure, and reflects the endeavour of hundreds of Australian libraries to provide support for the activities of libraries and their users.

Its roots are in the Australian National Bibliographic Database (ANBD) and the National Union Catalogue bibliographic services hosted by the National Library, which commenced in 1981. These services were established to support the description of books, journals, and other items held in Australian libraries and they continue to be the key bibliographic support service within the Australian library sector.

In 2006, after 25 years of building a significant public utility, access to the National Union Catalogue through Libraries Australia became freely available.

SUPPORT FOR LIBRARY USERS

- discovery of information resources relevant to Australia through a single simple search, without the need to go to multiple catalogues
- location and availability details of items close to an individual's place of work, home, study or research
- links from global discovery services such as Google or WorldCat.org to Libraries Australia and local library catalogues
- a growing record of non-English language resources, such as Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Greek, Cyrillic, Tamil, Arabic, Hebrew and indigenous terms, for our multicultural community
- a virtual place which brings together collections of the work of authors, artists, and academics spread across Australian memory institutions including archives, museums, galleries as well as libraries
- inexpensive delivery of print items, via the national library-to-library network for use anywhere in Australia

SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH

- a showcase of Australia's creative endeavour and scientific research to a global audience

- a vehicle for the disclosure of cross-disciplinary resources to inform investigation and experimentation
- a means of exposing and delivering “the long tail” of Australian library collections¹, from 1796 to now, for use in research, learning, and the study of local history
- a long term benchmark of the intellectual output of a nation, created by authors, academics and artists
- a common point from which to focus on the content of special libraries such as health, government, law, music, business and education

SUPPORT FOR LIBRARIES TO MANAGE THEIR COLLECTIONS

- enables libraries to analyse, manage and develop their print collections
- encourages the inclusion of records of licensed and locally created digital materials (Australiana)
- provides an alternate port-of-call in the event of temporary failure of a local library system
- manages the sharing of bibliographic records between local, national and international catalogues using record import and export services
- facilitates access to the largest bibliographic database in the world - WorldCat
- arranges for major search engines to syndicate Libraries Australia data, so that Australians find local library collections

SUPPORT FOR FUTURE INNOVATION

- as library collections make the transition from mostly print to mostly digital, the unique Libraries Australia platform can be used to trial innovation to ensure libraries remain functionally relevant
- illustrates advice on, and testing of, new standards in the international library network such as Resource Description & Access
- forms a true metasearch platform which can support different types of data, different forms of content, different approaches to navigation, and integration of commentary and metadata from national and international sources

WANT TO READ MORE?

This document is an overview of the *Libraries Australia Value Statement* and should be read in conjunction with the *Libraries Australia Strategic Plan 2007-2010* available at: <http://www.nla.gov.au/librariesaustralia/laacpapers.html>.

¹ Australian National Bibliographic Number: <http://nla.gov.au/anbd.bib-an40672949>