

TROVE – A PROGRESS REPORT

Introduction

Trove is the Library's flagship service for discovering content within Australian collections. It has already become an essential starting point for discovering information about Australia and Australians. Trove offers a single search across 90 million items, including books, video and sound files, images, manuscripts, original research and newspaper articles. Many of the items are available for viewing online; and others are found in Australian library collections.

After being in prototype for seven months, Trove was released as an ongoing service in December 2009. Feedback from the unofficial launch which was blogged on 4 November 2009 is still being received:

"I just stumbled across the trove today, and am particularly appreciative! Thank you to all those involved for making this great website". (24 March 2010).

A number of improvements to Trove have been made since the October 2009. They include:

- A new look and feel for the user interface
- User capability to add tags and comments to any format of material in Trove
- Implementation of user registration, which allows users to invoke the "in my libraries feature" and to be identified as the creator of tags and comments which they add
- Improved printing facilities
- Improvements to the display of digitised newspaper articles
- A "Cite this" feature
- Provision of Copyright Status information
- A number of changes behind the scenes to make the service more robust.
- Allow the user to hide those result set zones which they do not need.

Users can optionally register with the service and specify a list of "my libraries" to do a search restricted to material available in those libraries (with the option of including material found online). These libraries can be changed at any time.¹

¹ "Trove: An Update", Warwick Cathro, *Gateways*, nla.gov.au/pub/gateways/issues/104/intro.html.

Trove has replaced the Libraries Australia free search service and the Register of Australian Archives & Manuscripts. The National Library is in the process of replacing the separate Australian Newspapers interface, with an anticipated completion by the end of April.






Usage

The usage of Trove has been steadily increasing since it was moved out of prototype status on 3 December. The usage now exceeds 12,000 visits per day, or 60,000 searches per day:



While registration to use the service is optional, more than 9,000 users have done so including those who had already registered for the Australian Newspapers service. Trove users have been identified as being located in 205 countries, although 65% of the usage is coming from Australia.

It is possible to view user interaction activity from the Trove Home Page, including:

-  the most recent searches and viewed works
-  the most prolific newspaper text correctors, month by month
-  the most recent works merged or split
-  a tag cloud showing the tags added in the most recent hour, day, week or month
-  the most recent comments added to records.

Feedback

Trove has received an overwhelming amount of feedback, with many compliments but also some suggestions for improvements. Researchers in the United States wrote:

"I just wanted to take a moment to thank you for this amazing resource. I am a theatre historian trying to research a few American minstrel performers who spent extended periods of time performing in Australia. I was despondent of finding any information on their time there until I stumbled upon this resource, and what a find! I have spent a great deal of time in a wide variety of databases, and I do not believe I have ever found anything as useful or comprehensive. I love that I am able to search newspapers, books, diaries, etc. all at the same time. As someone teaching at a university with somewhat modest financial resources for our libraries, I welcome the access to vital information. I have been telling all of my fellow scholars about Trove, and will be using it as a model of what can be for years to come."

"This is so COOL! Finally, all that metadata pays off!"

Ideas for improvement are being reviewed continuously:

"Why can't I keep using the Libraries Australia site - all I want is to find books and journals not all this other stuff."

"I am a researcher who has found using the Libraries Australia site very accurate and useful for tracking bibliographic queries accurately. By contrast Trove seems very good at throwing up lots of references but not good at finding the one needed at the top of the pile. Using the advanced search requires tiresome entry of indexing terms and doesn't seem to produce much better results. Why not use just an old fashioned search box with index term options and allow searching of exact terms? Or am I missing something? Hope this is helpful feedback!"

Impact

Several major issues have emerged as a result of the new displays in Trove of bibliographic data from the National Bibliographic Database. They are:

1. the lack of updates applied to holdings, which is particularly noticeable for public libraries. A range of factors are at play here, including the outsourcing of cataloguing to third party providers. Collection turnover is viewed as more important than retention, even of contemporary works of enduring literary value, but holdings are not being updated.

The Trove team has addressed this in the short term by adding an explanation to the Trove FAQ.²

² The Frequently Asked Questions are available at <http://trove.nla.gov.au/general/about>.

“You say my local library has this book, but it isn’t in their catalogue. Why is your information wrong?”

Trove shows you which Australian libraries hold a book or other collection item. This information is supplied by libraries through the collaborative network "Libraries Australia".

This information is not always up to date. For example, where libraries discard items from their collections, information relating to these discards can sometimes take a considerable period to be reported to the National Library. In these cases some collection items are wrongly shown in Trove as being held by a library.

The National Library is working with other Australian libraries to improve the currency of library holdings, and is now planning to increase these efforts.”

In the medium term, the Trove team in conjunction with the Libraries Australia Office expects to implement a series of activities to encourage and support more responsive updating of holdings.

2. The lack of currency of URLs.

We estimate that there are more than half a million broken URLs, such as for digitised images, in Libraries Australia which are manifested in Trove as well. This has arisen in lot of cases where libraries have changed their domain names without implementing a resolver service, and as a consequence, several thousand links can be broken with one small change. URLs which are linked to items such as images which were for sale have caused particular angst.

The Trove team and the Libraries Australia team are working on a set of tasks firstly to remove the problem, and secondly to try to reduce its severity in the future.

3. An increased demand for self-borrowing.

Clients both familiar and unfamiliar with the Libraries Australia InterLibrary Loan/Document Delivery service have requested the ability to place an order through their local library for items they find. This function is currently only available in the subscription service, and therefore requires a review of the service model.

Recommendation

The Libraries Australia Advisory Committee to comment on the report.

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March 2010