

**Re-imagining Libraries Project 8 – Description and Cataloguing
Report to the Libraries Australia Advisory Committee (LAAC) on the project and
workshop on making collection lists searchable through Trove.**

Background

1. Project 8 of the NSLA Re-imagining Libraries (RL) Program aims to improve access via *Libraries Australia* and *Trove* to documentary heritage materials especially unique materials, by using more productive and streamlined ways of processing and cataloguing. Most NSLA libraries have important heritage research collections that are not accessible at the national level; instead, access is via lists of the contents of the collections that are only available at the local library level. In recognition of this situation, the Project 8 Work Plan [www.nsla.org.au/projects/rls/description-and-cataloguing] includes an action to make collection lists searchable through *Trove*.
2. In March 2010 NSLA agreed to fund the National Library to employ a project officer to develop models and guidelines for converting collection lists into bibliographic data for national, online access. Funds were also requested to hold a workshop to present the outcomes of the project.

The project

3. Linda Newbown, who works in the Library's ILMS team, was assigned to the project, which she worked on full-time for 12 weeks ending in late June. The key deliverables identified for the project were:
 - improved understanding of the current situation in member libraries concerning collection lists and the nature of the lists;
 - an analysis of systems issues associated with local library systems, *Libraries Australia* and *Trove* that are relevant to the conversion of lists;
 - documented models for converting lists into searchable data for national online access, and guidelines for choosing and applying the models;
 - conversion of a number of lists to test the models;
 - a workshop involving all Group 8 member libraries to present outcomes from the project and to seek endorsement of the project report.
4. Linda carried out the project by gathering a wide range of examples of lists from most member institutions and identifying representative examples that could be

used as case studies. She researched the local system situation by sending a questionnaire to member libraries and following up where necessary by telephone, and by visiting two institutions. She worked with *Trove* and *Libraries Australia* staff to understand the functionality and bibliographic standards associated with the national resource discovery systems. Conceptual metadata models for converting lists were developed based on the research undertaken and were tested out against the list selected for case study purposes. Linda also tested the data models by conversion of seven of the case study lists. Some of the seven lists were converted to more than one model for comparison and all converted data was returned to institutions owning the lists. Use of selected contributed lists for case study purposes proved to be an effective way of maximising understanding of the issues in a short period of time. Linda also wrote the project report and helped to organise and conduct the lists workshop.

Outcomes of the Lists Project

Key findings

5. The key finding from the research undertaken during the project was that member libraries hold many lists that are accessible at the local level only, that the lists come in a wide variety of formats and styles, and that several factors need to be taken into account when determining the best way to convert lists to data that can be searched through national discovery services. The main ones are the nature of the lists and the characteristics of the data recorded on the lists; local cataloguing system constraints, *Trove* and *Libraries Australia* functionality and the bibliographic standards required; and practical considerations to do with the readiness of each institution to implement a lists conversion project.

The project report

6. The report will soon be available from the RL web site at www.nsla.org.au/projects/rls/. All deliverables identified for the project were achieved and the project report provides a detailed record of the outcomes and of information collected during the course of the project. In particular, it:
 - explains the proposed metadata models (see below) and the main advantages and disadvantages of each (chpt. 3);
 - explores the nature of lists and provides examples of the types of lists that can be found in libraries (chpt. 4);
 - provides essential background information on *Trove* and *Libraries Australia* functionality that both enables and inhibits access to metadata created from lists (chpt. 5);

- explains the extent that configuration of local catalogues can determine which data models can be applied (chpt. 5);
 - provides guidelines and advice on selecting the appropriate metadata model to use (chpt. 6);
 - provides guidelines on planning a project and getting started and the key steps involved in applying the conversion data models (chpt. 7).
7. An appendix to the report tabulates all the lists collected from member libraries and provides very useful commentary on the key features of each list.

The data models

8. The four data models proposed for improving national level access to information about collections that is contained in lists are outlined below.

Model 1 – *List can be discovered but not searched*: List is scanned to create a non-searchable digital image that is placed on a public web site and attached to a collection level record that is made available through local and national discovery services.

Model 2 – *List can be discovered but searched only through Trove*: List is converted to a machine-readable form and placed on a public web site where it can be indexed by *Trove*. It is attached to a collection level record that is made available for searching through local and national discovery services but the contents of the list itself can only be searched via *Trove*.

Model 3 – *Content of list is incorporated into an enhanced collection level record and can be searched*: the list data is recorded in searchable fields in a collection level record which is made available for searching through local and national discovery services.

Model 4 – *Data for items on the list is converted to individual records that can be searched*: the lists data is in a structured format that allows individual records to be created for items using a bulk record creation method. The individual records are made available for searching through local and national discovery services.

The workshop

9. The workshop was held at the National Library on August 26 and 27. Twenty four people attended with all member institutions represented except for New Zealand and the Northern Territory.
10. The key objectives of the workshop were to:

- present the draft Lists Project Report to Group 8 members for endorsement before submitting it to NSLA;
 - consider the relevance and implications of the Lists Project findings for the goals of Group 8 and for the Group's Action Plan;
 - clarify whether there are any significant barriers to Project 8 achieving its goal of national, online access for heritage collections represented by lists;
 - discuss progress with the survey of processing manuscript collections (Action 5 of the Group 8 Action Plan) and discuss follow-on actions;
 - learn more about what is happening in individual member institutions with regard to sharing bibliographic data at the national level.
11. The agenda for the workshop was shaped largely around the structure of the Lists Project report and was designed to ensure the contents of the Report are understood and to provide plenty of time for discussion. A practical session on how to go about applying the different data models to lists was included to some "hand on" experience. The agenda also included discussion of the implications of the Lists Project for providing access to collections of pictures and whether we need to reconsider Action 2 in our Action Plan (which concerns documenting streamlined ways of describing pictures), and a presentation by Marie-Louise Ayres, Senior Curator of Manuscripts at the National Library, on the survey on the state of archival control of manuscripts collection development and processing (Action 5 of the Group 8 Action Plan.)
12. Discussion was wide-ranging over a number of topics. Two key issues arose from the discussion relating to collection lists.

(i) How to expose non-MARC and non-standard metadata for collections at the national online level

Not all NSLA libraries have MARC based cataloguing systems and some have not contributed records for their heritage collections to *Libraries Australia*. This poses an obstacle to Group 8 achieving its goal of national online access to "hidden" heritage collections. Local practices have developed to compensate for the inability of library systems including *Libraries Australia*, to deal with records describing hierarchical collections that involve a range of relationships.

There are several issues to do with record linking which remain obstacles to sharing metadata associated with collections. Different local systems structure data differently and use different record identification standards for instance, which makes it difficult to extract and export the data, and to convert it to MARC form for

loading onto *Libraries Australia*. The MARC standard itself does not support encoding of large archival collections well so libraries resort to recording data in Institution Specific fields. Currently, migration of data to *Libraries Australia* can result in the loss of data that would be required for bibliographic linking.

The data models proposed in the Project Report are still relevant for libraries which are not MARC based in that, instead of using the models to create MARC records, the models could be used to create records in any recognised bibliographic standard. However, non-MARC libraries need to consider the strategy for exposing their collections at the national level if they continue to create non-MARC records. *Libraries Australia* needs to be involved in determining this strategy and have advised that they will work with NSLA libraries individually to address data issues.

(ii) Documenting guidelines for applying Model 2 – documents indexed by Trove

At the Workshop the SLWA and ACT Library Service shared their experience with making existing lists on their web sites available for indexing by *Trove*. Both libraries agreed to trial the new service prior to the workshop to assist *Trove* with its implementation. The Project Report includes detailed requirements for preparing lists for indexing by *Trove* and guidelines on how to overcome some problems with how the indexing works. It was agreed that to avoid pitfalls associated with using *Trove* indexing of large numbers of web pages, public documentation is required to support use of the service.

Workshop outcomes

13. The workshop objectives were met and in particular, the project report and the data models were endorsed. In addressing the objectives a number of follow-up actions and were identified.
 - (i) All member libraries will audit their collection lists and develop an implementation plan for converting their lists for discovery at the national level, taking into account the advice contained in the Lists Project report (chapters 6 and 7). NLA will develop a template to use for the audit.
 - (ii) All member libraries that have records in their local systems for heritage collections that have not been contributed to *Libraries Australia*, will contact *Libraries Australia* staff to discuss options for contributing the records.
 - (iii) Recommend to *Libraries Australia* that, taking into account the information in Chapter 5 of the Lists Project report on catalogue relationships and the functionality and standards issues that enable and inhibit sharing of metadata for collections, guidelines be issued to assist libraries in creating records for uncatalogued

collections so that the records can be contributed to the national service without requiring manual manipulation and loss of data.

(iv) Recommend to *Trove* that they prepare public documentation on Data Model 2 (Trove Indexing of web documents) to assist libraries to prepare documents and to achieve the best search results from using the model.

(v) A review of the Project 8 Action Plan will be carried out in light of workshop outcomes to ensure remaining actions are still relevant and a priority. (It is likely that some actions will be refocused and others from the workshop added.)

(vi) Guidelines for taking different approaches to controlling pictures collections, including the archival collection level approach and the item level approach, will be developed taking into account systems requirements and implications for digitisation of collections.

Recommendation

The Libraries Australia Advisory Committee to note the report.

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