

STAFF PAPER



A New Strategic Direction for the National Library of Australia

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Roxanne Missingham is Assistant Director General, Resource Sharing Division, National Library of Australia. In this position she is responsible for the Kinetica service, which supports libraries and library users. The Division also includes PictureAustralia, Australian Libraries Gateway, Document Supply Services and resource sharing policy. She has a long career in libraries and IT focused on the development of digital delivery and digital services. She has been a library educator, library management and researcher. Active in the library profession, Roxanne was convenor of the Federal Libraries Information Network for 6 years and has been President of the ACT Branch of the Australian Library and Information Association. She has a Degree in Science, a Graduate Diploma In Library and Information Studies and a Masters in Public Administration. She has written extensively on the developments in digital reference and database services and changing needs of clients.

1 Abstract

The National Library is halfway through implementing its strategic *Directions for 2003-2005*. This public statement of the Library's aims and ambitions clearly focuses on developing new services and redeveloping existing services to create an environment where users are easily able to achieve two very basic things: to *find* the information resource that satisfies their research query and having found it, to *get* that resource. The emphasis on *finding* and *getting* is paramount in the redevelopment of the Library's website which was launched, in conjunction with a new online catalogue, on 3 December 2003. The website offers a one-search facility which moves the point at which the user has to make a choice from discovery to delivery. To support the effective finding and getting of information, the Library is implementing new services that connect the user directly with online content or in the case of physical collections, with online discovery and delivery options. Collaboration with other Australian collecting institutions is also a priority in the development of new services that bring together information resources from across the nation in a virtual national collection.

2 Introduction

“As a sector we need to look at the services we are providing to our users from the user perspective. We must move away from systems and services that can be used comfortably by library staff but that leave our users bamboozled and ultimately dependent on the mediation of library staff to find and get information resources.”

Opening address by Jan Fullerton, Director General, National Library of Australia, National Resource Sharing Forum, 11 November 2003, Canberra, Australia.

The National Library of Australia, in its key public statement of aims and objectives, *Directions for 2003-2005*, espouses the simple philosophy of making it easy for users to find and to get information resources. This is, however, a fundamental shift in direction away from services that have traditionally been developed by librarians for librarians, or at the very least, for library savvy users. With search engines offering people quick and simple access to information via the Internet, the National Library has adopted a new approach to its services in order to provide users with easy and direct pathways to trusted information resources. This is reflected in the redesign and redevelopment of the Library's website and the services offered via the website. New services are underpinned by the collecting and creation of digital content, with a shift in emphasis from the point at which the user needs to make a choice from discovery to delivery.

In developing new services, the National Library is able to build on the strong record of collaboration and resource sharing amongst libraries and other collecting institutions in Australia to provide users with one-stop access to information resources at a national level. In an environment where users are increasingly seeking instant gratification in their search for information and do not care where the information comes from, the Library is continually seeking new ways to meet these changing user demands within a collaborative environment.

3 Background

The National Library of Australia was formally created in 1960 with the passing of the National Library Act. The Library, however, traces its national functions back to 1901 when the parliament of the newly formed Commonwealth of Australia invested the

Commonwealth Parliamentary Library with responsibility for developing a national collection of Australian publications. The *National Library Act 1960* confirms the Library's collecting and preservation role, as well as defining its responsibility to provide access to its collections and information resources and leadership to the Australian library community. The Library is first and foremost a major research library and centre of scholarship, and its new directions are underpinned by the Library's strength in the area of its traditional library functions of collection building, description, access and preservation. The new directions are an extension of this role.

While its location in the capital of Australia, Canberra, with its small population of 350,000 has not affected collecting or leadership activities, the Library has been limited over the years in the delivery of its services nationally across a vast continent with a widely scattered population. The World Wide Web and other developments in Internet technology have provided the Library with a mechanism for successfully overcoming the barrier of distance for the first time. This has been assisted by the fact that Australians have been rapid adopters of the Internet. In 2002 forty six percent of Australian households and seventy two percent of businesses had a personal computer with Internet access¹. Australians have embraced the Internet as an information resource and expect to find the information they need online.

In developing and expanding its services, the Library has taken several key environmental and behavioural factors into account:

Users will increasingly seek information online and they will not care who holds this information

Users will want fast and easy access to information regardless of its source

Users will increasingly want to satisfy their information needs without mediation by librarians

Search engines will provide more efficient search capabilities, creating user expectations that information resources should be able to be located with minimum effort

Users will not persevere in their efforts to locate information in libraries if the task is too difficult in comparison to 'googling' on the Internet

4 Redevelopment of the National Library of Australia's Website

The Library has operated a website since 1995. Over this time it has changed from a place to find information about the Library into a primary means of online service delivery. Feedback from users during an evaluation of the website in 2001 was instrumental in influencing the Library to rethink its service delivery policies and to develop its services to enable the easy 'finding and getting' of information resources. Significant barriers to access were identified during the evaluation, including the fact that users did not understand the distinction between the website and the catalogue when searching for information. They were also confused by many services whose names did not reveal what the service was offering. And when users did locate information about relevant resources, they often found themselves at a dead end with no understanding of where to go to actually get the resource.

The opportunity to address the issues raised through the evaluation came in 2002 when the Library commenced a project to replace its integrated library management system, allowing significant improvements and flexibility in delivering the catalogue. The redevelopment of the website and the catalogue was exploited to include new and improved service delivery options, including an electronic call slip facility and a service called Copies Direct which gives users access to a single point for ordering copies of items discovered through the catalogue.

A new information architecture has been developed for the website that organises content into seven sections: *Find*, *For*, *Help*, *About Us*, *Visit Us*, *News & Events* and *Shop*. This is supported by a new graphic design and a range of navigation aids that provide a context for each page. Experienced users can go straight to known services that provide access to the collections such as the catalogue, collection guides and indexes and databases. The catalogue can be accessed via a single link but for users who do not know what a catalogue is, or want to access specific collections, a set of *Find* pages lead into the catalogue through a simple search box. The *Find* pages also provide access to material available online or from other collections. The terminology used – such as *Find Books*, *Find Pictures* – has proven to be very effective in usability testing conducted by the Library as part of the implementation of the new website.



The revitalised website is a key part of the Library's new user centred service model. An important feature is the new 'One Search' option which allows users to search across the catalogue, all the web information pages (including directories, finding aids, guides and the Library's Online Shop) and the other resource discovery services provided via the website. The aim is to simplify the website to the point where the user does not require specialised knowledge to search and make choices.

The screenshot shows a search results page from the National Library of Australia website. The browser window title is "Search Results - Microsoft Internet Explorer provided by National Library Australia". The address bar shows the URL: <http://www.nla.gov.au/apps/search/search?term=gum+blossom&action=FullSearch&node=search&image1.x=156&image1.y=9>. The page header includes the National Library of Australia logo and navigation links: HOME, CATALOGUE, ASK US, GUIDES, INDEXES & DATABASES, REGISTER, FIND, FOR, HELP, ABOUT US, VISIT US, NEWS & EVENTS, and SHOP. The search results are displayed under the heading "Search Results" and show the following categories:

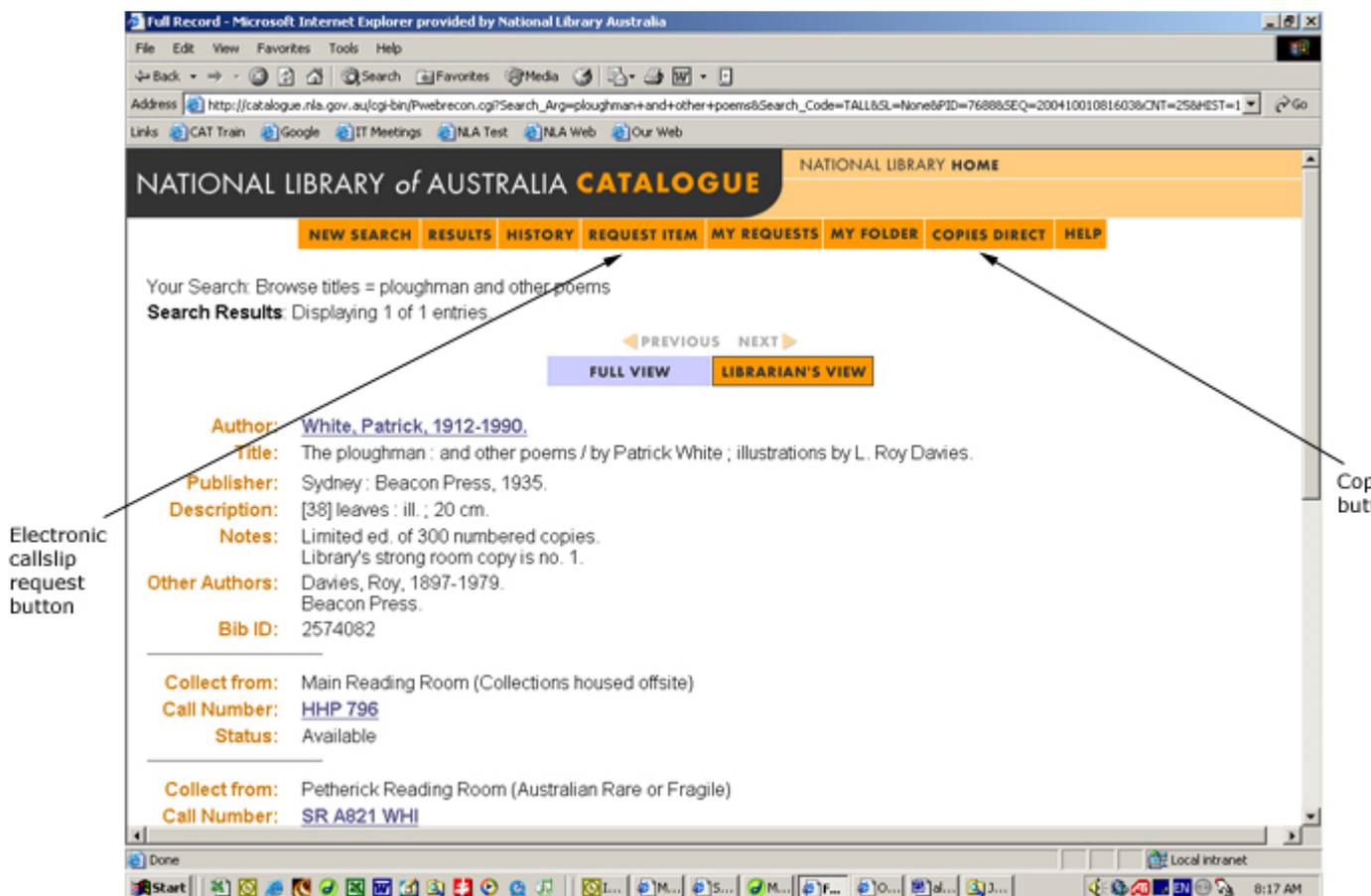
- Digital Collections - 2 found**
 - 1. **Fenton, G. C.** Gum blossom, South Australia [picture] /G.C. Fenton. [186-?] [details...](#)
 - 2. **Fenton, G. C.** Gum blossom, Western Australia [picture] /G.C. Fenton. [186-?] [details...](#)
- Whole Catalogue - 9 found**
 - 1. **Gibbs, May, 1877-1969.** *Bush babies* =*Bush babies* /May Gibbs. Tokyo :Mainishi Shinbunsha,1993. [details...](#)
 - 2. **Gibbs, May, 1877-1969.** *Gum blossom babies : words and pictures* /by May Gibbs. Sydney :Angus & Robertson,1922. [details...](#)
 - 3. **Gibbs, May, 1877-1969.** *Gum blossom babies /words and pictures* by May Gibbs. Sydney :Angus & Robertson,[1916](Sydney :H. & H. Printing) [details...](#)
 - 4. **Gibbs, May, 1877-1969.** *Gum blossom babies /words and pictures* by May Gibbs. Sydney :Angus & Robertson,[c1916](Sydney :W.C. Penfold). [details...](#)
 - 5. **Fenton, G. C.** *Gum blossom, South Australia*[picture] /G.C. Fenton. [186-?] [details...](#)
 - 6. **Fenton, G. C.** *Gum blossom, Western Australia*[picture] /G.C. Fenton. [186-?] [details...](#)
 - 7. **Gibbs, May, 1877-1969.** *Gumnut babies* /May Gibbs. Pymble, N.S.W. :Angus and Robertson,c2001. [details...](#)
 - 8. **Red-Gum Blossom.** *A little bit of laughter and life for the young* /by Red-Gum Blossom. Adelaide :Hussey & Gillingham,1912. [details...](#)
 - 9. **Gibbs, May, 1877-1969.** *May Gibbs' gum-blossom baby calendar*[chart] [Australia :s.n.,ca.1930?] [details...](#)
- Web Site - 3 found**
 - 1. **NLA News.** August 2002: 'Like a Hippo and Something Else': An All-Australian Bunyip Pantomime
 - 2. **Gateways - Issue 28.** July 1997
 - 3. **NLA Online Seminars - 'Private Lives Revealed: Letters, Diaries, History'**
- Manuscript Finding Aids - 1 found**
 - 1. **Papers of John Kendrick Blogg (1851-1936) - MS 9473**

At the bottom of the page, there is a section titled "Didn't find what you want? Here are some hints to help you:"

- Check whether you made a spelling or typing mistake.
- Try alternative spellings e.g. Ian instead of Ian.

In order to support the *getting* of information resources once the user has located an item in the Library's collection, there are choices within the catalogue entry for both onsite and offsite users. An electronic call slip facility allows users to request a copy of an item from the Library's closed stacks for use in a reading room. This can be done onsite or from the user's home, place of work or study. For users who cannot visit the Library in Canberra, there is a new Copies Direct service.

Copies Direct is an example of the importance given by the Library to making its collections and services available nationally. It provides a single entry point for users to request a copy of any item in the Library's collection. A simple web based form is used to request copies of journal articles, chapters of books or in some cases whole books, pictures, maps, manuscripts, sheet music and oral history transcripts and tapes. The user is charged the Australian standard inter-library loan fee and has a choice of delivery mechanisms-electronically via email or CD, by fax or by mail. Copies can be made of material which requires payment of a copyright royalty under an agreement between the Library and the (Australian) Copyright Agency Limited. The electronic call slip facility and the Copies Direct service ensure that the user has the option to get the item they need.



5 Development of digital collections

One of the most important aspects of the Library's move towards providing users with simple, direct and unmediated access to information is the provision of information resources in digital form. In particular the Library is focussing on three things: the creation of digital content through its digitisation program; the collecting of Australian publications in digital form and the purchase of online journal datasets. Underpinning the digital collections is a unique architecture for the management, discovery and delivery of digital materials. The Library has put considerable effort into developing and/or purchasing software that will facilitate discovery of and access to digital content by users. The main elements of the architecture are:

A *Digital Object Storage System* (<http://www.nla.gov.au/dsp#doss>)

A *Digital Archiving System* that provides staff with the tools to gather and manage archival copies of selected born digital Australian publications (<http://pandora.nla.gov.au/manual/pandas/index.html>)

A *Digital Collections Manager* database that records technical and management information about digital collection items (www.nla.gov.au/dsp#dcm)

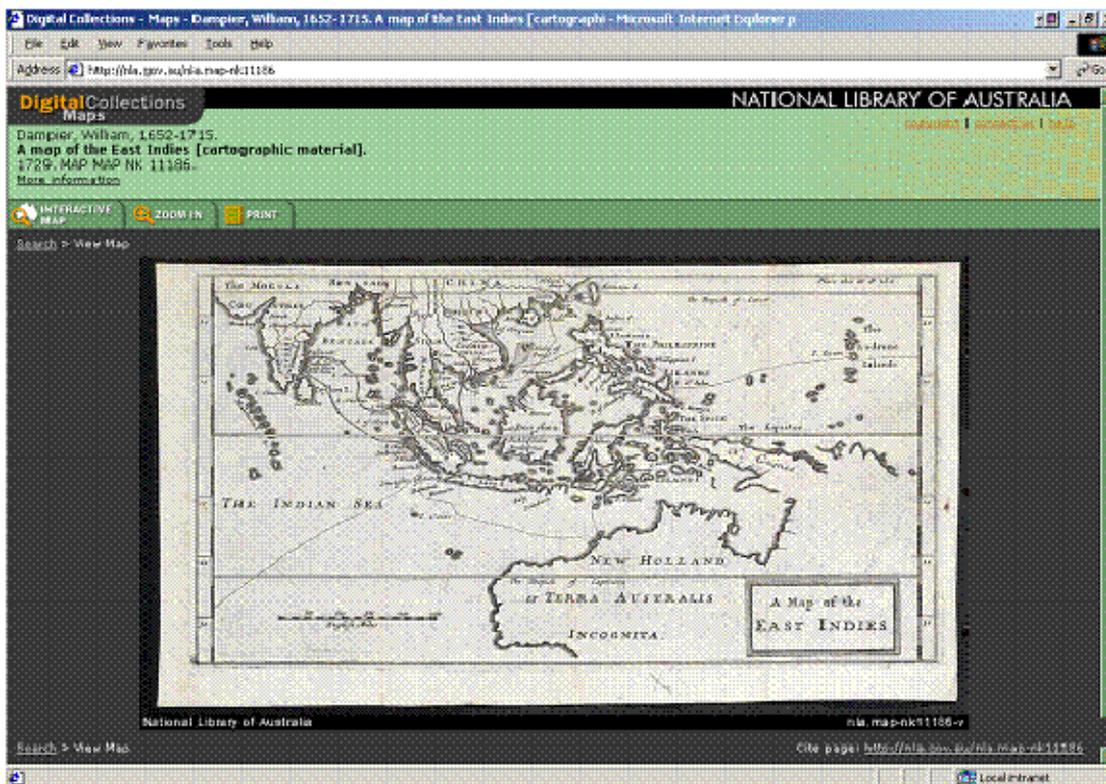
A *Metadata Repository and Search System* which supports searching and resource discovery (<http://www.nla.gov.au/pressrel/2002/teratext.html>)

A *Persistent Identifier Resolver Service* which allows digital collection objects to be accessed via the web regardless of changes in their web location (<http://nla.gov.au/initiatives/persistence.html>)

A series of *Delivery Systems* to enhance access to digitised versions of collection items (www.nla.gov.au/digicoll/)

The Library's digitisation program is an important aspect of its goal to make its Australian collection accessible nationally. Digitisation commenced in 1995 when the Library began routinely seeking permission to create digital versions of all pictures acquired for the collection. In July 2001 the digitisation program was expanded to include selected manuscripts, maps, books and sheet music. Other formats, such as newspapers, are currently under consideration. Items selected for digitisation are usually those that cannot be lent to users outside Canberra on inter-library loan, are significant historically or culturally or support the Library's collaborative digital services. Items digitised in the past year include the manuscript papers of early prime ministers, rare maps depicting early exploration of Australia and early twentieth century photographs of Australians in the Antarctic and in Europe and the Middle East during World War 1.

Users can find digital versions of items in the Library's collections either through a search of the website or catalogue, or a direct search of a collaborative digital image service such as PictureAustralia or a portal like AustraliaDancing. The Library has undertaken major work on developing delivery systems so that users can access the digitised versions of items with the same ease as if they were using the physical item itself. Each format has its own delivery system featuring navigation aids such as page turning, zooming and panning.



The Library also collects Australian publications in digital format. Collecting Australian publications is a major function for the Library and the collection of digital publications commenced in 1996. The Library has developed policies and procedures to ensure as far as possible that a representative selection of publications is available for current access and long term future access through the PANDORA Archive (<http://pandora.nla.gov.au/>). While much of what is collected is free and can be made available nationally, the Library negotiates with owners of publications that are fee based to ensure that as far as possible back issues or older works can be made available free, from an agreed date, to all Australians. The Library has also worked hard to secure collaborative collecting agreements with the seven state and territory libraries and other national collecting institutions who have similar collecting and preservation responsibilities.

Public access to the increasing number of Commonwealth Government publications in digital form is a priority for the Library. A project is in progress to encourage government departments and agencies to create suitable metadata for their digital publications and to inform the Library of new publications so that these can be archived in a timely manner.

The National Library and each of its partners selects publications for archiving based on agreed selection guidelines (<http://www.pandora.nla.gov.au/selectionguidelines.html>). A set of principles aimed at promoting the 'finding and getting' of these publications is observed including:

Each item selected is fully catalogued and forms part of the national bibliography

Permission is sought from the publisher/owner to ensure that as far as possible there is free public access to the item

Each item is quality assessed to ensure it is functional to the fullest extent (for example all multimedia features work; internal links retain their integrity)

Sufficient information about the properties of the publication are recorded so that in the future long term preservation strategies can be put in place

Each partner uses the PANDORA Digital Archiving System (PANDAS) developed by the Library to register selected publications, record management metadata, schedule for archiving and process and display them to the public. Archived titles are stored centrally on the Library's server. In December 2003 the PANDORA Archive contained 5,160 titles with 17.7 million files occupying 554 gigabytes of storage.

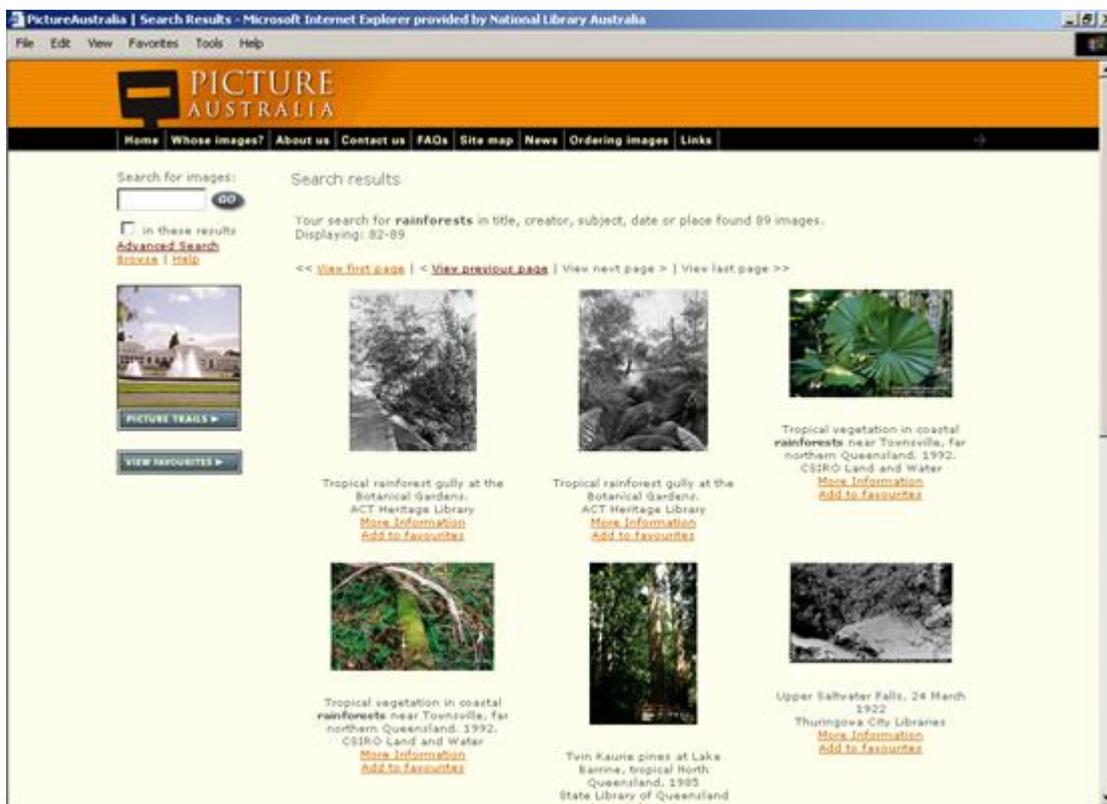
In addition to the creation and collection of digital materials the Library also purchases several large datasets of online journals for use in its reading rooms. While offsite access is not possible due to license restrictions, the Library ensures that it is able to supply copies from the online journals through its inter-lending service either directly to individuals or to other libraries, in accordance with the fair dealing provisions of the Australian copyright act. The Library has developed a set of principles that underpins its negotiations with vendors when purchasing online journals.

6 Collaboration for national resource sharing and delivery of information resources to users

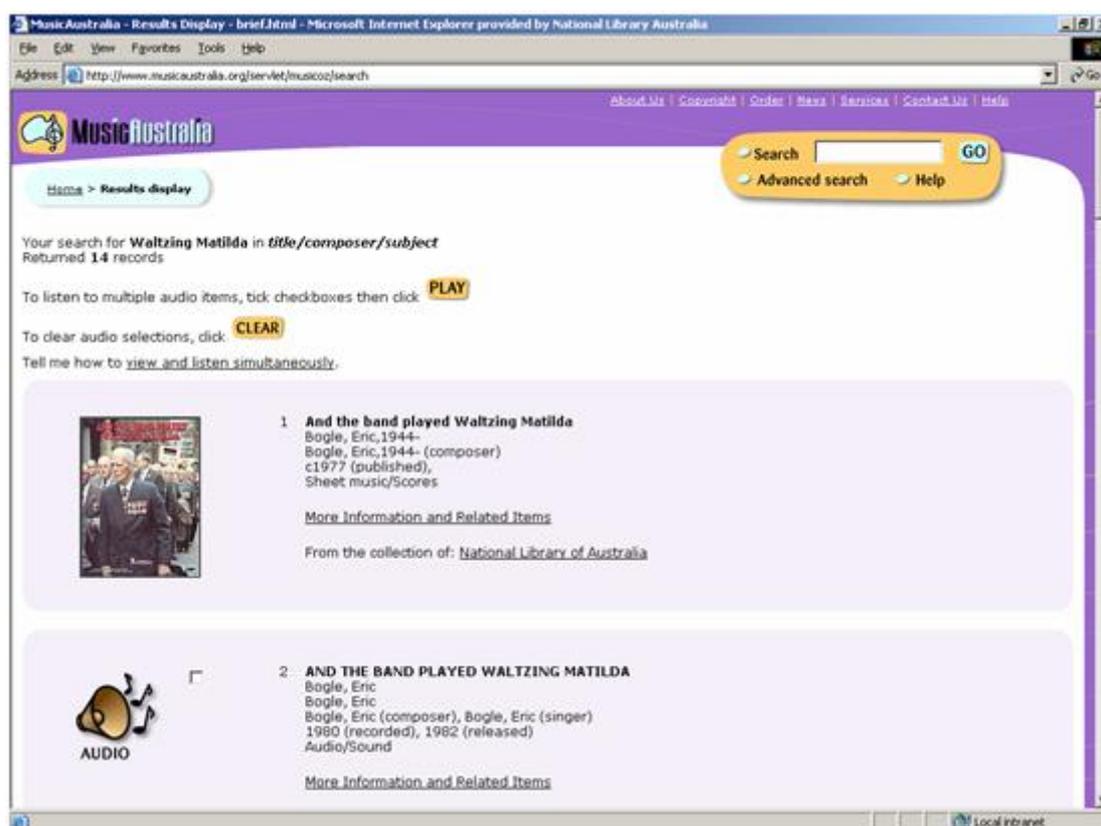
There is a strong emphasis on collaboration in the Library's strategic directions statement and this reflects the significance placed by the Library on working with other collecting institutions to facilitate the finding and getting of information at the national level. Working collaboratively not only ensures that Australians have the best possible access to the nation's information resources, but allows the participating institutions to share expertise and costs. The Australian library sector has a long and successful history of collaboration and resource sharing. At the core of this activity is the National Bibliographic Database which acts as a union catalogue of the holdings of most Australian libraries. It has 11 million records and over 33 million holdings statements and forms the core of the national inter-lending system. Over the top of this, providing a search, copy cataloguing and document supply service is the Kinetica service run by the Library. In addition to the National Bibliographic Database, Kinetica provides access to other union catalogues and services provided overseas including the Te Puna service from the National Library of New Zealand, the Singapore National Union Catalogue and the Research Libraries Group and OCLC catalogues.

Kinetica supports a high level of access to information resources in libraries with over 6 million searches and 250,000 inter-library loans per year. The service has traditionally been used by librarians on behalf of clients and its current user interfaces are not considered user friendly. The Library recognises that Kinetica is a major research resource and is seeking ways to expand access to the service by individual users in addition to library staff. An opportunity exists within the current phase of redevelopment of the Kinetica service which commenced in January 2004. The Library will include a simple search interface in its redevelopment of the service and although Kinetica will retain a core of charges to customer libraries to support the maintenance of the service, the Library will strive to provide free search access to the National Bibliographic Database.

The Library is also working closely with other collecting institutions outside the library sector in order to develop resource discovery services based on digital content being created and collected nationally. An example of this is the PictureAustralia service which was conceptually developed by the Library in collaboration with the State Library of New South Wales in 2000.. The decision to develop PictureAustralia as a cross-sectoral service reflects the Library's philosophy that the service should enable users to locate all digitised images of Australian life and culture, regardless of which institution has created or owns the images, through a single, simple search interface. Users searching PictureAustralia often find relevant images held by institutions that they would not normally associate the subject with – for example a search on rainforests reveals images held by nine participants, ranging from small public libraries to large universities and a major research organization. PictureAustralia has been received very positively and is heavily used by the general public. There are now 1 million images belonging to 30 galleries, archives, museums and libraries that can be accessed through the service, which receives an average of 45,000 searches each month.



Following the success of the PictureAustralia model, the Library has embarked on the development of MusicAustralia. While MusicAustralia emulates the concept of a simple, single search interface to sheet music and recorded sound, the Library is dealing with far greater challenges and complexities in developing a service that allows users to interact with the resources that they find. In its first phase the service will offer access to the digitised sheet music and digitised sound recordings and original digital compositions held by the Library, ScreenSound (the National Film and Sound Archive) and several other participating institutions.

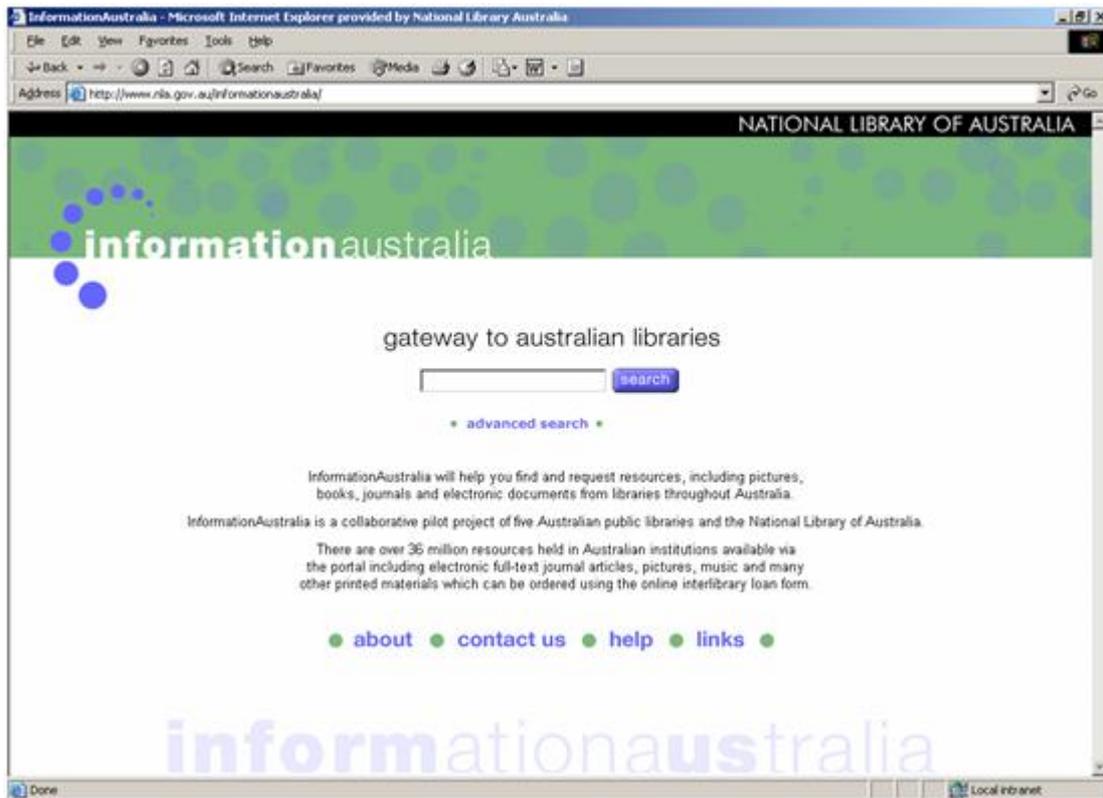


The Library is a member of the Council of Australian State Libraries and works closely with the state and territory libraries in order to share expertise and implement new services that could not easily be achieved by a single library working on its own. The AskNow virtual reference service, which has just completed its first year of operation, is an example of this. In line with the aim of assisting users to find and get information resources, staff from the participating libraries are rostered to assist users in searching for information resources on the Internet, at the same time teaching them Internet search skills. The service operates twelve hours a day, taking advantage of the different time zones across Australia. AskNow has just been evaluated and results show that the service is meeting the needs of a broad range of users. Challenges for the future development of the service include managing the increasing number of uses by school age children and ensuring that rural and regional users remain adequately represented. In the first year of operation AskNow received 40,000 queries, with 30 per cent coming from Australians living outside the city areas. This equates with the population distribution between city and rural areas in Australia.

Another new service that is directed specifically at public library users, but could equally be tailored for other user groups is *InformationAustralia*. It is a portal for use in public libraries to make searching for information resources in print and electronic form a simple one step activity for public library users.

During 2003 the Library has been working with public libraries to ensure that a basic set of Australian electronic resources can be purchased at a reasonable price through the Council of Australian State Libraries Consortium. The Library is now working with public libraries to improve access to these and other resources, including the Library's own

collection. Five public libraries representing both large and small, rural and urban areas are assisting the Library with the development and trial of the portal.



The overall objectives of the portal project are to:

Evaluate the need for access to Australian online and print resources by public library users

Develop a model for improved access for public library users to Australian print and online resources

Develop a business model to support this that includes access through inter-library loan to the Library's own collection

7 Conclusion

A recent external evaluation of the Library's onsite reference and collection delivery services assessed the impact on users of the recent changes very positively. The evaluation confirmed that the development of online collections and services has been warmly welcomed by users and has enabled them to feel more independent and in control of their research activities:

“Overall, three major factors have affected user behaviour over the past few years: the introduction of the e-call slip system, the technological upgrades and the increase in databases and online indexes. Together these have contributed to an increased sense of independence, an enhanced sense of achievement and a feeling of being in control of one's research options.”

Evaluation of the National Library of Australia's On-Site Reference Services and Collection Delivery, Leapfrog Research, June 2003 p. 22.

Changes in user behaviour have also been noticed through monitoring of the Library's key performance measures in its Balanced Scorecard reporting system. The use of services online via the website and the use of content in digital form continues to escalate, with an 150 percent increase in the use of online services and information resources over the past year.

The importance of the National Library's role in delivering innovative services to all Australians and providing leadership through collaboration across the library sector was acknowledged in a recent report on an inquiry held by the Australian parliament into the role of libraries in the online environment². The report recognised the importance of a national approach to the delivery of online services and the Library's key role within this.

While much remains to be done, the National Library is making significant progress towards achieving its new strategic direction based around providing services to users that are designed for users and that facilitate and enhance the process of finding and getting information resources.

8 References

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9 Footnotes

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<http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/4f377c757da4394fca256d97002c1a68?OpenDocument>

2. Australia. Parliament. Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee (2003). Libraries in the online environment. Canberra: The Committee, 2003.