

2009 CDNLAO COUNTRY REPORT



NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

1. GENERAL OVERVIEW

The National Library of Australia had its origins as the library of the federal Parliament, established in 1901. With the passing of the *National Library Act 1960* it formally separated from the Parliamentary Library in 1960.

The National Library of Australia plays a major role nationally in supporting education, innovation, scholarship and creativity by providing access to a comprehensive and diverse collection of Australian and overseas documentary resources.

The Library issues a strategic directions statement every three years outlining its vision and desired outcomes for the period ahead. The most recent is for 2006-2008 (<http://www.nla.gov.au/library/directions.html>) Directions for 2009–2011 will be available shortly.

The Library reports to government annually through its *Annual Report* <http://www.nla.gov.au/policy/annual.html> and to a broader readership through the *Year in Review* (www.nla.gov.au/pub/yearinreview)

The Library measures its activities through the Balanced Scorecard Management reporting tool.

2. NEW INFORMATION PRODUCTS

Newspaper Digitisation

Good progress is being made with our major digitisation project which, in its first phase, aims to digitise 4 million pages of out-of-copyright Australian newspapers, with the inclusion of *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Over 360,000 pages providing access to 3.3 million articles in 26 newspaper titles are now available in a freely accessible test service open to the public. The Library has implemented innovative web technologies that enable users to interact with the service and data in new and exciting ways. Users are able to correct the electronic translated text and add information about articles in the form of subject tags. No other newspaper service in the world currently offers this level of user interactivity. Since being made available to the public in late July, the service is experiencing around 29,000 full text keyword

searches per day with many more users simply browsing. To date over 720,000 lines of text have been corrected and 15,000 tags added to articles.

Audio on the Web

In 2008 the Library made the first selection of audio recordings available online as the first stage of a complex and ambitious project to improve access to this part of our collection. Currently 700 audio recordings are available for streaming or downloading.

3. NEW INFORMATION SERVICES

Reference Services

The National Library of Australia provides reference services from its seven reading rooms in Canberra to about 670,000 visitors each year. Although we have been experiencing increased visitor numbers, onsite reference transactions are declining. In the last six months, reading room visitation increased by 6% (340,000 July-December 2008) but the number of onsite reference enquiries declined by 11% (9,900 July-December 2008), illustrating that users are increasingly becoming self-reliant information seekers.

The Library answers offsite reference services from Australia and overseas. We have been experiencing increases in off-site enquiries of about 3% per annum, but over the last six months the number of requests has increased by 14%. This increase appears to be a result of our catalogue records being exposed to Google as well as to utilities such as OCLC.

The Library is reviewing reading room staffing to ensure the most appropriate deployment of staff. Logging all staff interactions with users in reading rooms over two weeks, found that only 10% of interactions were true reference enquiries; 88% of interactions were quite basic requests, with 38% relating to collection delivery (including the issuing of collection items); 26% related to equipment use, 12% being user registrations and 12% directional enquiries. This research confirms our plans to develop a tiered service model in reading rooms.

The Library surveyed users of its offsite reference service in 2008. The most significant findings were that respondents were highly educated (43% were post-graduates and 20% undergraduates) and a surprisingly large proportion were based overseas (32%). Their main reasons for using the Library were private research (32%), followed by family history research (20%), work-related research (17%) and research for a publication (14%). A pleasing 92% rated the Library's offsite reference service good or better, with 48% rating the service excellent, and 70% stating that they were very likely to use the service again. The research confirmed that the key issues of importance to users were: quality of information supplied, prompt response, quality of staff, and referral to other resources. The research found a clear linkage between use of the Library's website and offsite reference services,

with 74% of respondents accessing the website either before or after using the offsite reference service.

In June 2008 the Library implemented the RefTracker software to achieve efficiencies in the management of offsite reference enquiries. The software is developed specifically for library purposes and is easily customised.

The Library released its redeveloped eResources service in August 2008, enabling registered users to access subscription electronic resources from offsite, as licences permit. Currently about 60 electronic resources are available. An associated redevelopment which allows users to register online has led to a fivefold increase in user registration. As the majority of these new users are not based in Canberra, we assume their primary reason to get a card is to access eResources remotely.

Lending, including interlibrary loan

The National Library of Australia operates a closed stack storage system. Users are making greater use of the ability to pre-order material electronically using the e-Callslip system which is available 24/7. User surveys indicate that accessing the traditional physical collection continues to be one of the key reasons for visiting the Library. Last year the Library handled 230,481 onsite delivery requests across seven reading rooms. Over the past six months there has been an increase of 20% in collection usage (131,000 requests July - December 2008). Under the Library's Service Charter 90% of items stored onsite are delivered within 45 minutes and 90% of items stored offsite are delivered within 90 minutes of courier cut off times (three times daily). Most items stored onsite are delivered within 30 minutes or less.

Our Document Supply Services handles requests from libraries and directly from individuals. Last year the Library handled 30,681 requests from libraries and 7,246 from individuals. 15% of requests originate from overseas and 52% of all requests are for material from the Library's overseas collections.

The Library has implemented the Relais Enterprise document delivery system to automate workflows and manage requests. The system interoperates with other ISO/ILL management systems such as OCLC WorldCat Resource Sharing. Wider exposure of the Library's bibliographic records in WorldCat has resulted in a 9% increase in document delivery requests from libraries (15,932 requests July-December 2008).

The Library complies with the Australian Interlibrary Resource Sharing Code and offers three levels of service: Express - delivery within 2 hours for a charge of \$39.60; Rush - delivery within 24 hours (\$26.40); Core - delivery within 4 working days (\$13.20).

There has also been an increase in requests received directly from individuals through the Library's Copies Direct service. Between July and December 2008 there was a 75% increase in requests received directly from individuals (3,866 requests).

4. NEW AND ONGOING PROJECTS

During 2008-09 the Library will be working with partner libraries in the National and State Libraries Australasia consortium on ten projects which form a major initiative, 'Re-imagining Library Services' <http://www.nsla.org.au/projects/rls/> .

The project aims to better meet the needs of Australians for access to library services in the digital age. This is a major commitment for the Library which is leading projects entitled:

Open borders (with National Library of New Zealand)

This project seeks to remove access boundaries between the online services of the NSLA member libraries, by accepting the registered users of one NSLA member library as a registered user of the others, in a manner analogous to the reciprocal borrowing schemes created by some groups of libraries.

Flexible cataloguing

New tools and technologies for describing published materials and unique heritage items are to be explored and tested, to streamline the processing of material and make it available to the general public more quickly.

Connecting and discovering content

A reference group has been set up by the National Library so the work on its Single Business Discovery Project can be shared with all of the NSLA members. In addition to combining different types of content from its currently separate services such as Libraries Australia and Picture Australia, the National Library will experiment with web tools such as the ability to add comments so that there are more pathways for the general public to use the unique collections of the NSLA libraries.

5. MAJOR EVENTS

The year 2008 saw the National Library of Australia celebrate the 40th anniversary of the opening of its building on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin in Canberra. The National Library is a landmark building in Canberra's Parliamentary Triangle. To celebrate the 40th birthday of the National Library's building, the Library held a day of celebration on 25 August.

6. PARTICULAR REPORT

6.1 OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE

The Library has been a long-term user of open source software to support generic Internet services and software development. More recently the Library has actively investigated the use of open source software to support core Library activities. In 2006-07, the Library successfully completed a project to define the IT architecture that will be needed to support the management, discovery and delivery of the Library's collections over the next three years. The project report identified the use

of open source software as an important tool for building and maintaining digital library services with the capability and flexibility required by the Library. Examples of the Library's current use of open source software include the use of Lucene for database searching and VuFind for the public search interface to our catalogue.

- 1 In 2005, the Library undertook a procurement exercise to select a search system capable of supporting both the Library's extensive metadata collections and its growing collections of full-text material. The Library adopted the open source search engine software called Lucene. This software not only met the Library's functional requirements but also offered better performance than a range of commercial software systems. It was also the only economically feasible solution for the Library as all the commercial products had per document licensing that tied the cost of the software to the number of documents that were to be searched. The Library's Web Archive contains in excess of one billion documents and none of the commercial solutions would licence this number of documents for a cost within the Library's budget constraints.
- 2 The Library's catalogue is the primary mechanism for providing effective user access to its collections. Unfortunately many users find the typical online public access catalogue such as that provided by the Library as an unfriendly and sometimes frustrating tool to use when compared with a modern Internet search engine such as Google.
- 3 In late 2007, a small team comprising staff from Information Technology, Collections Management, and Reader Services was formed to evaluate an open source online catalogue called VuFind. Using this software they were able to rapidly develop a replacement online catalogue for the Library. It combines the functionality of a traditional library catalogue with features found in modern web applications, and aims to make Library resources easier to discover and request.