

RE-IMAGINING LIBRARIES: USING A COLLECTIVE WEALTH OF RESOURCES AND KNOWLEDGE

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Re-imagining Libraries is about transforming the way we offer our services. Ten libraries across Australia and New Zealand are working together to harness the resources and knowledge in their libraries to enable their libraries to better meet the needs of our users in our ever changing environment.

National & State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) represents the National, State and Territory Libraries of Australia and New Zealand. We collaborate to improve access to library services and to strengthen our information infrastructure. Members are: ACT Library & Information Service, National Library of Australia, National Library of New Zealand, Northern Territory Library, State Library of New South Wales, State Library of Queensland, State Library of South Australia, State Library of Tasmania, State Library of Victoria, and State Library of Western Australia.

The decisive step to work together is a strong demonstration of the commitment the NSLA libraries have to change and the need to collaborate. NSLA identified in *Libraries in the digital environment* (2006) that the digital environment is fostering convergence across all sectors, including business, education and industry[1]. For the library sector, the need to align strategic directions is essential to address the challenges proffered by the new technologies and changing community demands. In *The Big bang: creating the new library universe* (2007), NSLA articulated these drivers as the need to unleash our resources to make them universally discoverable and immediately available[2]. Online users need to be recognised as equally significant as our users' onsite, and changes in demands mean these users should be met in their spaces where they can actively contribute and interact with our collections.

The strategic initiatives identified in the *Re-imagining Library Services strategic plan* (2008) focus on the services that NSLA desire to transform collaboratively; core services where the challenges can be tackled jointly on a national and international level [3]. Acknowledging that Australians and New Zealanders turn to the internet as a first choice for information, to obtain services and to access global culture, NSLA faces a major challenge and a major opportunity to adapt services to better meet community expectations. While onsite use of our libraries is increasing, so too are the needs of our

users continually shifting with the potential capability offered through the growth and maturation in information technology. With the growing ability of people to switch easily between library content, websites, search engines, wikis, blogs and social networking sites, the demand to review our services is intensifying. The speed with which new information can be created and disseminated has to be embraced as an advantage, and that our libraries welcome our consumers also as creators and producers.

The burgeoning of service reassessment is everywhere, with all library sectors reconsidering their operations and delivery to their users. In the re-evaluation of how libraries operate, engage their users and provide access to information, we also need to consider who should be doing what. A simple efficiency is to reduce the duplication of effort, and distinguish which entities are best positioned to respond to challenges. In the presentation *Current social, policy and technology influences on libraries and the relevance of libraries in this environment* (2009), Michalko emphasised unbundling the functions of libraries, to identify the appropriate level of organisation to engage with specific tasks[4]. At the local level, libraries should focus on the provision of personal needs and space, but importantly it is at the higher or collective level, that libraries should address the questions of developing new information resources and services, and tackle the system infrastructure for online services. Collaboration provides increased power, as similarly appreciated at the national level by the federal Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research:

Collaboration stretches our research dollars further, spreads risk, favours serendipity, propagates skills, and builds critical mass. It is increasingly the engine of innovation[5].

For NSLA, the ultimate purpose in undertaking Re-imagining Libraries is to enable everyone to take full advantage of our content, collections, services and expertise. The principle of equitable access to information underpins these goals. It is the collective strength of NSLA libraries that provides the most effective means to achieve the required transformation. Furthermore, NSLA has a successful track record of joint initiatives that have responded to the impact of new technologies and community expectations.

The libraries of NSLA invested in a number of remarkable and transformative services over the last two decades. PANDORA, Australia's Web Archive, is a growing collection of Australian online publications, established initially by the National Library of Australia (NLA) in 1996, and now built in collaboration with NSLA libraries and other cultural collecting organisations[6]. MyLanguage is a national portal providing access to over six-million information links in over 60 languages: search engines, web directories, government websites, digital library projects and syndicated news headlines. This portal was developed as a way of enriching Australia's linguistic and cultural cyberspace, as a gateway to multilingual information resources. While development of MyLanguage is based at the State Library of Victoria, the portal is a joint partnership between seven State and Territory libraries in Australia[7]. Picture Australia began in 1998 as a pilot project involving the Australian War Memorial, NLA, and the State Libraries of New South Wales, Tasmania and Victoria. Following the very positive response to the prototype, PictureAustralia was expanded into a service for many libraries, galleries, archives and museums[8]. Across Australia and New Zealand, the AskNow Chat Service (<http://www.asknow.gov.au/about-us.html>) was established in 2002, staffed by a roster of librarians from NSLA and public libraries to provide information and research assistance in real time. A similar

service AnyQuestions commenced in New Zealand as collaboration between the National Library of New Zealand and the Ministry of Education (<http://www.anyquestions.co.nz/>). The two national libraries of NSLA also achieved a world first by linking their two document delivery utilities, the NLA's Libraries Australia Document Delivery and the National Library of New Zealand's Te Puna Interloan[9]. The service provides access to the resources of almost 900 Australian and New Zealand libraries, providing a combined resource of over 56 million items.

The accumulated resources of NSLA are noteworthy, providing substantial strength to deliver the Re-imagining Libraries program. Based on 2008-2009 figures, the total asset value of NSLA collections is AUD\$4.3 billion. Annually AUD\$26.7 million is spent purchasing collection resources. Current usage of NSLA libraries is also extensive with visits by 7.7 million people in 2008-2009, and websites receiving 132 million page views in 2007-2008[10].

In shaping the objectives for Re-imagining Libraries, NSLA's vision is to become leaders in empowering people to create, discover, use and transform our collections, content and global information resources. To achieve this, NSLA libraries want to offer people a more consistent experience, easier access to services and greater independence to our users. All the resources and services of our libraries will be available to all; we will use shared approaches, and make it simpler to navigate our services. NSLA will offer improved delivery systems, and allow people to contribute and share their content and creative expression. To ensure our libraries can achieve these goals, NSLA libraries are building a culture to support innovation, exploration and emerging technologies. We need to be agile, flexible and responsive, to shift our expertise towards developing metadata services, enhancing content and participating in community outreach. We will work towards shared services to expose our content through more discovery tools and external online resources. Aiming to make our content accessible to everyone, discoverability will be increased by new metadata services and partnerships while back-of-house operations will concentrate on improvements in rationalising duplicate acquisitions, efficient cataloguing and description processes, and moving more of our unique collections to digital format.

With a vast audience already using the NSLA libraries, the decision to reconceptualise our libraries is a remarkable and ambitious undertaking. Re-imagining Libraries is a three to five year strategic programme, which commenced July 2008 with a suite of projects to translate the goals of Re-imagining Libraries into tangible deliverables. The projects focus on specific targets, with each project lead by one or two NSLA libraries. Each project is supported by a project group of representatives from the other NSLA libraries – to clarify the project's scope, investigate and plan the work to be undertaken, and to share responsibility and accountability for the workload. Driving the work of Re-imagining Libraries is the dedication, expertise and goodwill of many staff who are investing time and effort, in most cases in addition to existing workloads. More than 100 staff from the ten libraries are directly involved in the Re-imagining Libraries projects, with many more supporting the project representatives within their own institutions. Working together is facilitated through teleconferencing, web-conferencing, emails and a few face-to-face meetings. An array of web 2.0 tools assist scheduling and sharing: GoogleDocs, GoogleSites, PBWiki, and Doodle polls. Utilising project management techniques, components of work are apportioned within the project group – sharing the load and exploiting the available expertise to achieve the best outcomes. Whether the projects are

resulting from an 'all-hands-on-deck' approach or through the work of one library on behalf of others, the labour contribution to Re-imagining Libraries is tremendous.

With projects there is always the need for risk management. For the Re-imagining Libraries program, the risks relate predominantly to the dependence on human resources. Each participating NSLA library needs to manage resourcing for the projects whilst also delivering priorities within the individual institution. A careful balance between the drive of NSLA initiatives and internal assignments is required, often mitigated by the distribution of tasks and internal negotiation. The gathering of resources within project groups further allows the pooling of capability across the libraries, providing greater knowledge and experience than the single institution may possess. A vital factor for success in the projects has been maintaining staff engagement and ensuring clear communication on many levels. The members of NSLA play a significant role both in the provision of clearly articulated direction, and in reiterating the importance of the NSLA program to their staff. Concise documentation is used by project groups to specify the work undertaken and make certain all staff involved share an understanding of the aims, scope and outcomes to be achieved.

In project management timeframes can often present a threat; however with Re-imagining Libraries it has been acknowledged up front that collaboration requires time, to develop the shared commitment and agreement to the objectives. Furthermore, in establishing the program as a three to five year strategy, NSLA has recognised each partner's ability to implement the outcomes from Re-imagining Libraries may not be identical. The change management process in each library will be administered internally, as each library will work within the needs of its own jurisdiction, organisation structure and culture.

Re-imagining Libraries is transforming key areas in the ways that NSLA works together. The NSLA Consortium have worked together for over a decade, in negotiating access, licensing and pricing with suppliers of electronic collections and determining selection criteria in evaluating the new electronic collections for purchase. The focus to date has been the take up of products reflecting the individual library's budget, collection policies and priorities. To further this work, the NSLA consortium is now working within Re-imagining Libraries to develop a costed model for a national set of e-resources, with the aspiration of providing all Australians with access to these resources regardless of location. This model would reduce the need to seek these resources from each other or elsewhere.

A national set of collaborative collection principles was endorsed in March 2010, to maximise the collection power of NSLA libraries. The principles include a commitment to the provision of the widest possible range of resources, and to providing access via collaborative collecting and shared delivery mechanisms to build efficiencies and eliminate unnecessary duplication. This includes acknowledging and pursuing repatriation opportunities, with an agreed approach to retention and disposal. While these agreed methods will be undertaken within the existing legislative frameworks applicable to each particular library, and with respect to the legal deposit roles of the NLA and state libraries for Australian and state material, the potential is immense[11]. Work has already commenced with serials, with the identification of duplicate titles and holdings. The aim is for one library to hold the full run and last copies of a serial title, for the provision of document delivery. This allows other libraries to dispose of the duplicate holdings elsewhere. Repatriation may be required to ensure the serial title may be complete, and the responsibility for different serial titles will be shared across the participating libraries to evenly distribute the storage requirements. This shared repository approach will ensure faster supply to users as title owners will be easily identified, as will the holdings details.

Technological developments are furthering the ability of NSLA libraries to deliver to communities. The most visible advance to date is Trove, developed by the NLA to provide a single point of access to the resources of the deep web [12]. Trove currently provides integrated access to approximately 90 million items from a range of resources, such as the pooled collections of NLA's earlier services including the ANBD, Picture Australia, Pandora, Music Australia and the Australian Research Online program.

The Australian Newspapers beta site is also incorporated into Trove. The Australian Newspaper Plan is an ambitious, ongoing program designed to collect and preserve every newspaper published in Australia, guaranteeing public access to these important historical records. It is a free online service that enables full-text searching of newspaper articles published in each state and territory from the early 1800s to the mid-1950s. In November 2009, the newspaper site was integrated into Trove after an initial beta launch as a separate service[13]. PapersPast (<http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast>) offers a very similar service for New Zealand newspapers and periodicals.

External web resources are similarly incorporated, with access to the resources of OAlster, OpenLibrary, Hathi Trust, Library of Congress and Wikipedia. Pulling all the resources together ensures that relevant information is not missed in a search, by reducing the need to search across separate discovery services. Yet it also answers the ongoing management issue of the spread of effort required to maintain the separate services with the integration into one. Trove enhances ease of discovery by providing improved relevance ranking, refinement by facets, grouping of editions and exploitation of thesauri.

Supporting access to resources in Trove, other work in Re-imagining Libraries is investigating the efficiency of our processes to catalogue and describe our collection items, with a particular emphasis on our hidden collections to make them discoverable online. The inclusion of searchable descriptive lists for larger collections into Trove will unveil parts of our collection previously unknown to the public. Scrutiny of the processes involved in the creation of records will also streamline and improve the timeliness and effectiveness of providing user access. In particular specific item formats, such as pictures and maps, are being analysed, as are archival processing practices, to determine ways to increase our performance.

As a means of unleashing our collections, a new focal point is the ways NSLA communicates about copyright and the permissible use of items. One action is a web service NLA has developed that uses a set of rules based on Australian copyright law, and metadata from the catalogue record, to determine whether a work is in copyright. While it is important to note that the copyright status will only be accurate if the relevant data in the catalogue record is accurate and complete, the integration of this service into Trove will provide many users with an understanding of which works are in copyright, and which are not[14]. Other work with copyright is shifting the NSLA libraries away from the traditional role of gatekeepers of information, where the mystery of our collections has been tied up in the need to consult with library staff to understand the access rights surrounding materials and to know what permissions are required. NSLA libraries are incorporating plain English messages about copyright, both online and onsite, to make it clear to the user what they can use and how they can use it within copyright legislation. Utilising positive messages, we are focussed on what users can use and how they may use it, rather than providing details of what they should NOT do or providing confusing guidance. This will provide greater independence to our users, and alleviate the need for staff mediation where it is unnecessary.

Web 2.0 developments also allow us to enhance the wealth of collections and resources owned by NSLA with the ability to engage to a greater extent with users online. By capturing community created content, new context will be added to our collections while additional content will augment our cultural understanding. The range of possible engagement extends from annotations on digital items, to tagging and reviews, and repurposing our content. A mashing and hacking event, LibraryHack, is planned for the end of 2010 as a way to create a wealth of content and provide great exposure to the libraries and their data. This event will be built on the model of the Government 2.0 Taskforce competition Mashup Australia - where library collections data and other datasets are made available for re-mixing and re-purposing by anyone[15].

Just as expectations about the use of our collections are dramatically altering, so are the hopes for the continuum of searching and requesting. With the growth of facility in the digital environment, the need to move seamlessly from searching to requesting is in greater demand. Towards this end, NSLA is looking to innovative models for solutions to improve access to e-resources, especially those e-resources subscribed to by NSLA member libraries and Australian public libraries. NLA is examining the potential of Trove to support a user-centric approach to the discovery and access of these e-resources, whereby users can link to those articles which they are entitled to access by virtue of their library memberships and their libraries' licences[16]. Development of this functionality is scheduled for late 2010, with the aim that by mid-2011 users will have direct access to the full articles, reducing the need for requests and supply by document delivery.

NSLA is also reviewing the coordination of delivery of physical and digital items. NSLA libraries aim to provide people with unmediated access to digital content from NSLA libraries, and to develop collaborative ways of working that will ensure both digital and physical resources will be delivered within a determined timeframe regardless of origin. We want to be able to provide users with what they want, when they want it and where they want it. An initial step towards this has been agreement by the NSLA libraries to key lending principles, outlining our commitment to open our collections, both physical and electronic to enable greater access to our rich resources through document delivery. A

crucial element of this is support for the creation and dissemination of surrogates whenever originals cannot be made available, with a preference towards delivery of digital copies and digital delivery. Of course these principles are governed by the usual caveats in place for libraries as we are bound by copyright, licensing and donor considerations that govern access to certain materials.

As another part of the delivery review, the State Library of Western Australia (SLWA) is about to commence a trial of home delivery services, for Western Australian users only. This pilot has the main purpose of testing the feasibility of the service for NSLA adoption. Items available will be sheet music and items that are usually available for inter-library loan. Requests will be lodged online, as will the payment of a minimal fee. The duration of the trial is six months, and is being marketed accordingly to avoid creating expectations of a continued service if the pilot proves unrealistic. However, this is a tremendous ground-breaking move for NSLA, and attention is centred on this trial as the implications for the NSLA libraries are significant.

In terms of digital delivery, while NSLA has committed to moving forward it is recognised that each NSLA library will need to progress towards implementation within its own jurisdiction. Two libraries have made significant headway in digital delivery – NLA and the State Library of Victoria. NLA's provision of Copies Direct is a fast, easy and inexpensive way to get copies of articles, chapters of books, photographs, pictures, maps, manuscripts, music, and sound recordings. As a similar service, Direct Delivery at the State Library of Victoria is set to commence later in 2010. The other NSLA libraries are endeavouring to work closer to these models over the next few years.

On the same continuum of search to request, consideration needs to be given to the ability to ask for assistance. In the re-examination of reference services, NSLA libraries have analysed the fundamental values underpinning the provision of information and research services, and in a similar fashion to other service areas are developing a set of principles to support a NSLA-wide approach. The primary aim of information and research services at NSLA libraries is to support users to find, access, and effectively use resources in our collections, from anywhere, and for whatever purpose they choose. Together the libraries are developing appropriate support mechanisms to place our professional knowledge of library collections, search tools, research strategies, and the broader structure of the information sector at the disposal of our users. This will include support for user self service and self sufficiency wherever possible through developing user friendly information systems, and creating online learning materials to better enable users to undertake their research in a self guided fashion. Where we provide direct assistance to our users we will aim to support future self-service by treating the information services transaction as a learning opportunity. With acknowledgement of the growing expertise online, we will facilitate information sharing between our users and provide easy access to assistance by making our information services available at our users' point of need. We will also provide further avenues of referral if we are unable to satisfy people's information needs or are not the most appropriate agency to provide assistance.

For NSLA, Re-imagining Libraries is instigating transformation. Easy access to digital collections is inevitably driving changes in the roles of staff and the mix of expertise employed in our libraries. Simultaneously our culture is shifting. We are letting go of our traditional roles to embrace new skills and roles, with attention centred on user needs rather than the requirements of the organisation. We are learning to trust our users both in opening our collections up to them, and in welcoming the

valuable content they can contribute. As individual organisations we are working outside of our normal boundaries to grasp the greater opportunities. Realising that there is little allowance for the time to perfect, we will accept beta as satisfactory to ensure timely response to user needs. Underpinning all work, we recognise we must be flexible and agile in our environments of changing priorities and shifting technology.

For users, NSLA will provide more of our collections online to be easily used, adapted and transformed. More of the community's collections, comments, contributions and expertise will enrich our collections. More online tools will be freely available to take and use, and more widgets will link to our services, from external web pages, social networking sites and other services. Our research expertise and deep collection knowledge will be available when it is needed. There will be easier and central discoverability of information and collections, backed up by faster digital and physical delivery. Less registration and authentication will make our libraries more welcoming to all users. NSLA is maximising its collective wealth of resources and knowledge to better meet the needs of our users.

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