



ALIA 2006 Biennial Conference



Australian Library and  
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## Workplace Practice

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#### Biography

Debrah has worked in the private sector and across the three spheres of government. She is currently the Director, Library and Extension Services for the Australian Bureau of Statistics, a position she has held twice: 1994-1997 and 2006- . From 2003-2005 she was Director, Information Resources Management for the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and from 1997-1999, Director Public Library Services at LISWA (now SLWA).

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**Biography**

Mary is the Director, Information Services, for Geoscience Australia. She has worked across the three spheres of government including CSIRO and the ATO and was Business Manager of ACTLIS (1997-2001) and Director, NTLIS (2002-2003). She was also the Executive Director, aima in 2001 and is currently a Board Member of the Aurora Foundation.

## **The Australian Government Libraries Information Network (AGLIN): Our role in 'connecting government'**

### **Abstract**

The Management Advisory Committee (MAC) advises the Australian Government on matters relating to the management of the Australian Public Service (APS). In 2004 it published 'Connecting Government: Whole of Government Responses to Australia's Priority Challenges'. This report describes whole of government approaches for the APS, emphasising coordination and collaboration. 'Whole-of-Government' co-ordination for the APS is intended to achieve effective outcomes for key government policies and services that cut across a number of portfolios, resulting in improved policy development, program delivery and support to clients. This paper outlines how the members of the Australian Government Libraries Information Network (AGLIN) do and can further contribute to the work of government agencies particularly in regard to information service delivery, information management and information infrastructure in a whole of government way.

## **Background**

The Management Advisory Committee (MAC), a forum of Secretaries and Agency Heads established under the Public Service Act to advise the Australian Government on matters relating to the management of the Australian Public Service (APS), first met in 2000. MAC is charged with advising the Government on matters relating to the management of the APS. Although it has no statutory powers or executive functions, it does provide a forum for Secretaries and heads of major agencies to discuss significant issues of topical and long-term interest to the APS. One of these key interests is a *whole of government* perspective to the management and delivery of government programs and services. In April 2003, MAC commissioned the *Connecting Government: Whole of Government Responses to Australia's Priority Challenges* report in response to what they saw as an increasing demand for the APS to work together on issues crossing traditional boundaries. The report was published in May 2004.

*Connecting Government* is, or certainly should be, of key interest to librarians, information managers, knowledge managers, records managers and other information professionals. Notably, chapter four of the report focuses on 'information management and infrastructure' across government.

## **Whole of Government: Definition**

So what is 'whole of government'? In this paper we use the MAC definition:

Whole of government denotes public service agencies working across portfolio boundaries to achieve a shared goal and an

integrated government response to particular issues. Approaches can be formal and informal. They can focus on policy development, program management and service delivery (APS/MAC, 2004: SOF p. 2).

## **Aim of this Paper**

The aim of this paper is not to debate the pros and cons of whole of government nor the achievement of it (or not) across government. In presenting this paper at Click06, our aim is twofold:

1. to raise awareness of the *Connecting Government* report (specifically the section on information management and infrastructure) among information professionals and its implications for us as practitioners; and
2. to raise awareness of the Australian Government Libraries Information Network (AGLIN) and how it does and could further contribute to the work of government agencies, particularly in regard to information service delivery, information management and information infrastructure in a whole of government way.

Working more successfully across Australian government agencies, other jurisdictions and the private sector relies on better information sharing and requires structured approaches to the collection, reuse and sharing of data and information. (APS/MAC, 2004: SOF, p. 6).

## **Information Management and Infrastructure in Government**

(An overview of APS/MAC, 2004, Ch. 4).

### ***Three key roles of and for information***

In discussing information management and infrastructure in government, the Connecting Government report stresses three key roles of and for information:

- Providing information is a key government function.
- Information is essential to enable agencies to produce the government's expected outcomes and to meet community expectations.
- Increasingly, effective sharing of information is critical to the success of government outcomes.

### ***Why Government agencies need to share information***

The report also outlines why Government agencies need to share information, describing these under four broad categories:

- Dealing with an emergency
- Integrating information holdings
- Integrated service delivery
- Managing areas of joint activity

The record shows that in all of these areas, there have been both successes and areas for improvement.

### ***Current state of information and data sharing, standards and protocols***

The Connecting Government report outlines the current state of information sharing, data sharing, and standards and protocols across Australian government:

### ***Information sharing***

Occurs mainly within individual programs, is adhoc, and occurs most often between individual employees. There is little structured information exchange beyond projects or formal arrangements. The recognition of the need to work in clusters to achieve common and interrelated goals is however growing.

### ***Data sharing***

Existing data collections are underused and there is a vast, untapped potential for the reuse of existing information.

### ***Standards and protocols***

Agencies are increasingly recognising the need for whole of government standards and protocols for information exchange and taking steps such as the Technical Interoperability Framework developed under the auspices of the government's Information Management Steering Committee (IMSC). (The IMSC is a MAC subcommittee which considers and proposes strategies for the development of shared information infrastructure, architectures and protocols).

### ***Meeting the Needs of Whole of Government Information***

The Connecting Government report suggests several key strategies to improve cross-agency information sharing, stating that their adoption (or furthering) will ensure that the "APS maximises its business return on its information resources":

- Plan to share information.
- Adopt whole of government information principles.
- Adopt protocols for information shared across public and private sectors.

- Establish rules that govern information and knowledge sharing.
- Establish clusters to improve information sharing, better responsiveness and better decision making
- Create a single reference point for whole of government information
- Extend the role of the IMSC
- Adopt the concept of 'create once, use many times'
- Improve access to, and discovery of, information within government
- Manage agency data in a consistent framework
- Include consideration of information needs in business and project plans
- Use collaborative workspaces and tools for information management
- Engender a supportive culture and improved information management skills

Having outlined the key points of the Connecting Government report, how does AGLIN contribute to whole of government objectives and how could it further do so in the future? First, some background about government libraries and then about AGLIN.

### **Australian Government Libraries**

AGLIN is of course a network made up of and representing various types and sizes of government libraries. In 1995, Roxanne Missingham, the then Convenor of the Federal Libraries Information Network (FLIN), outlined the functions, significance and value of Commonwealth government libraries. These remain relevant to this day. Some of Roxanne's key points (Missingham, 1995), all of which

achieve whole of government objectives, include:

- Government libraries collect comprehensively within subject areas specific to their department's sphere of work and these information resources are available to be used by other government departments and agencies. This avoids unnecessary and costly duplication of resources.
- Government libraries access the resources of other libraries through the Australian inter-library network. This cooperative system ensures that government libraries utilise their human resources and administrative budgets in a cost-effective way, efficiently meeting the needs of users across government.
- Specialised holdings of government libraries, such as unpublished research reports commissioned by parent agencies, are unique and valuable resources for all Australians and form part of the distributed national collection.
- Government libraries are committed to using, advocating and contributing to the development of information technology that improves the distribution of information to the community and enhances easy access.
- Government libraries maintain and provide a proactive service to their organisations which assists these organisations meet their corporate objectives and stay at the leading edge of their area(s) of responsibility.
- Government libraries have a broader role within their organisation beyond just the provision of document and

information services from a collection. They operate as an information consultant to the organisation, manage information from an end-user perspective, and provide all or most of these services:

- the retention of the organisation's corporate memory through preservation and archival activities;
- provision of advice on IT, IM, and KM trends and contribution of expertise in these areas;
- provision of information literacy and other related programs which encourage information self-sufficiency and informed use of information, thus contributing to the skills development and capacity of individuals working within government organisations;
- liaison between the organisation and the wider community (for example, the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Library Extension program (LEP)).

### ***Government libraries - the current landscape***

While some Australian Government libraries are well supported, progressive and progressing, others are not. The current landscape includes:

- Shared services models – for example, Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) where the Library provides services under a Service Level Agreement to other agencies such as Centrelink.
- Agency (and subject) specific – eg. Geoscience Australia and Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) where libraries support the business of one agency

where the subject may represent a portfolio within government.

- Reduced footprints – Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFaT), Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF), and Department of Finance (DOF) where their libraries have lost space, eg collections have been moved (sometimes to out-of-the-way basements).
- Constant reviews – eg. FaCSIA currently being reviewed again!
- Reduced funding – money diverted away from the library into other information management or information service programs within departments and agencies.
- Closures or large reduction of service – Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH) Library is a recent example.

### **Australian Government Libraries Information Network**

AGLIN began as the Federal Libraries Information Network (FLIN) which was formally established in May 1993 after discussions during the late 1980s and early 1990s on the need for a body to co-ordinate Commonwealth Government Libraries. At the end of 2003, the name was changed to Australian Government Libraries Information Network (AGLIN) to reflect contemporary government terminology and to better position the Network for the future.

However, it should be noted that AGLIN is an independent organisation, and is neither endorsed nor funded by the Australian Government.

## **Mission and Aims**

**AGLIN: working together  
to enhance and promote delivery of  
library services  
to Australian Government.**

(AGLIN Mission Statement)

AGLIN's aims are to:

- *Represent* the interests and concerns of member libraries and information services in wider government forums
- *Develop and implement* co-operative schemes and resource sharing activities among Australian Government libraries and information services
- *Serve as a forum* to consider and reach consensus on issues and policies which affect Australian Government libraries and information services
- *Promote:*
  - improved access to information by Australian Government agencies and their staff
  - research and development in the application of new technologies and information systems relevant to Australian Government libraries and information services, and
  - improvements in the management of Australian Government libraries and information services.
- *Provide expert advisory services* to its members and other organisations as appropriate in such areas as:

- cost effective procurement of library materials, systems and other services
- guidelines and standards for library management in strategic planning, and
- performance measurement, staff development and training, marketing of library services and other matters.
- *Foster and facilitate the dissemination of Australian Government publications* to the wider community by:
  - ensuring appropriate bibliographical control is achieved for all publications of Australian Government agencies
  - supporting the maintenance of library deposit arrangement for all Australian Government agency publications, and
  - promoting the use of appropriate commercial distribution arrangements

## **Governance**

AGLIN is managed by an Executive in accordance with its Constitution <[www.nla.gov.au/aglin/constitution.rtf](http://www.nla.gov.au/aglin/constitution.rtf)>. The Executive is drawn from the general membership, is elected at the Annual General Meeting and is further supported by nominated State and Territory representatives.

## **Membership**

Currently, eligibility for membership of AGLIN is restricted to Australian Government information services whose parent body is required to submit a financial report to Parliament under the provisions of either the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997* or the *Commonwealth Authorities*

*and Companies Act 1997* as amended. Such information services are eligible to join AGLIN as Full Members, and their staff to participate in activities co-ordinated by Task Forces and the Executive.

AGLIN has its own website and members have access to a mailing list server. Until July this year AGLIN did not charge fees for membership. Following an 'in principle' agreement at the 2002 AGM, the Executive investigated various fee structure models to offset the costs involved in managing consortia deals and providing services. From 1 July this year membership fees came into place on a tiered framework dependent upon size of the acquisition budget of an organisation.

### **AGLIN and Whole of Government**

So how does AGLIN contribute to whole of government objectives and initiatives? By its very membership, aims and activities, AGLIN *is* a whole of government activity in and of itself, meeting or moving towards many of the strategies outlined in Connecting Government.

Within the context of "the collection, reuse and sharing of data and information" as outlined in the Connecting Government report as being required for successful whole of government work and outcomes, AGLIN contributes in the following ways.

### **Collection of data and information**

- Libraries Australia
- Training needs assessment [in progress]

- Data on AGLIN members [in progress]

### **Reuse of data and information**

- Defence Standing Offers (DSOs)

### **Sharing of data and information**

- Resource Sharing Network
- Libraries Australia
- ILL Code
- MOUs
  - National Site Licence Forum
  - Industry / professional associations

There are several Taskforces attached to the AGLIN Executive. AGLIN Task Forces are sub-committees appointed by the Executive to progress particular projects or investigate various issues of interest that can be seen to support the three categories of the collection, reuse and sharing of data and information. Currently these are:

#### *Defence Standing Offers (Reuse)*

Defence Standing Offers are intended to promote effective, efficient and Department of Finance and Administration (DoFA) compliant purchasing for Government libraries, by pre-selecting panels of approved suppliers of serials, non-serial publications and library support services. Negotiations have taken place for renewal of the existing DSOs.

#### *Consortia (Sharing)*

In recent years, consortia have emerged as an effective way of containing the escalating costs of library resources, in particular those in electronic format. The AGLIN Consortia Task Force was formed in 2003. Following extensive

discussion and input from other consortia, it was decided that an AGLIN consortium would require dedicated support staff to continue in the long term. In 2004, therefore, the Consortia Task Force concentrated on progressing this proposition, with the initial focus being on development of a corporate governance framework.

An Action Item from the National Site Licensing Forum held at National Library on December 8 2004 - AGLIN action (3) stated that:

AGLIN will facilitate a reference group of existing consortia who will develop a proposal for a core set of Australian electronic resources for a self-funded national site license, to be provided through the library sector to its users. The reference group will also define the audience for this core dataset.

The National Licensing Forum met on 3rd July 2006 to work on the RFT documents which will be circulated later in 2006.

*Training and Development (Sharing)*  
The principle driving this group remains the belief that librarians need to re-

position themselves to continue to add value to their organisations, clients and the profession. The Taskforce is very active organising major events, such as the annual two day AGLIN Conference, training sessions and organising Information Sharing Forums which have covered a diverse range of interesting and contemporary topics, often in conjunction with other groups such as the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), Institute for Information Management (IIM), ACT Knowledge Management Forum (actKM), and the Records Management Association of Australasia (RMAA).

This group has also been investigating Memorandum of Understandings with industry and other professional associations to reduce the cost of training for members and is hoping to announce its first initiative at its 3rd Annual Conference in July 2006.

### **Strategic directions of AGLIN**

In 2005, mindful of the current landscape in which government libraries operate, AGLIN undertook an extensive strategic planning exercise which identified eleven objectives.

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Action (to date)</b>
Continue to develop professional development opportunities	Training & Development Taskforce
Expand the consortia arrangements to deliver savings and value for money	AGLIN representative on National Licensing Forum Consortia Taskforce
Develop Standing Offers	Taskforce

Objectives	Action (to date)
Raise AGLIN's profile - within government, within the library and information profession and with other associations and professional bodies	Invited Key Note speaker at AGLIN Conference is a Senior Government Executive. Present paper at Click 06.
Increase AGLIN membership & participation	Benefits outlined in membership
Move to a fee-based membership model to provide funds to better develop and deliver AGLIN's services	Instituted 1 July 2006
Add value for members	(In progress)
Continue to conduct and Annual Conference	27-28 July 2006
Advocacy – represent government libraries in all relevant forums and inquiries	Submission to inquiry on Parliamentary Papers. (This is just one example).
Explore partnering with other organisations and associations	MOUs
Identify and share best practice	Annual Conference, website

Table1: Eleven strategic objectives of AGLIN

These objectives will be confirmed (or otherwise) during a session conducted by AGLIN with Guy St Clair, an internationally recognised expert in knowledge services (which he defines as the convergence of information management, knowledge management, and strategic learning), scheduled to be held in September 2006.

Some of the questions which need to be answered by AGLIN are:

- Are these objectives realistic?
- How does AGLIN know it's doing the right thing?
- Has the Australian Government got value for its money from its libraries?

How do we measure this? Who do we ask?

- Have we got the right model(s)? Who do we validate this with?
- Who are our champions in Government? How do we get them on board? How could we utilise them to support/promote AGLIN's aims and activities?

### Conclusion

It is evident AGLIN has had varied success to date in contributing to the work of connecting government, particularly in regard to information service delivery, information management and information

infrastructure in a whole of government way.

AGLIN has had a long and successful history of collecting and sharing information, but less of a history in information reuse. AGLIN needs to quickly demonstrate a commitment to, and activity in whole of government ways of working and outcomes to ensure that the “APS maximises its

business return on its information resources” as well as maintaining a strong and viable presence in the Australian Government. It is also recognised that AGLIN needs to develop and strengthen its advocacy role within government and other spheres of influence. The future of Australian government libraries relies on it!

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