



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

# Official Committee Hansard

## SENATE

ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNICATIONS, INFORMATION  
TECHNOLOGY AND THE ARTS REFERENCES COMMITTEE

**Reference: Role of libraries in the online environment**

THURSDAY, 8 MAY 2003

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**SENATE**  
**ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNICATIONS, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**  
**AND THE ARTS REFERENCES COMMITTEE**

**Thursday, 8 May 2003**

**Members:** Senator Cherry (*Chair*), Senator Tierney (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Lundy, Mackay, Tchen and Wong

**Substitute members:** Senator Moore to replace Senator Wong

**Participating members:** Senators Abetz, Allison, Bolkus, Boswell, Brown, Buckland, George Campbell, Carr, Chapman, Conroy, Coonan, Eggleston, Chris Evans, Faulkner, Ferguson, Ferris, Harradine, Harris, Knowles, Lees, Mason, McGauran, Moore, Murphy, Nettle, Payne and Watson

**Senators in attendance:** Senators Cherry, Tierney and Moore

**Terms of reference for the inquiry:**

To inquire into and report on:

The role of libraries as providers of public information in the online environment, having particular regard to:

- (a) the current community patterns of demand for public information services throughout libraries, including the provision of such information online;
- (b) the response by libraries (public, university, research) to the changing information needs of Australians, including through the provision of online resources;
- (c) possible strategies which would enhance the wider use and distribution of information resources held by libraries, including the establishment of library networks, improved online access in libraries, online libraries, and greater public knowledge and skill in using library resources;
- (d) the use of libraries to deliver information and services over the Internet to more effectively meet community demands for public information in the online environment; and
- (e) the roles of various levels of government, the corporate sector and libraries themselves in ensuring the most effective use of libraries as primary public information resource in the online environment.

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**Committee met at 9.27 a.m.****HALLIDAY, Ms Bronwyn Kaye, Director, State Library of South Australia**

**CHAIR**—I declare open this public hearing of the Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee and welcome everyone here today. At the outset, let me say how pleased we are to be in Adelaide as it will give us an opportunity to hear at first-hand the experiences of people living in South Australia in relation to both our current inquiries: into the Australian telecommunications network and into the role of the libraries in the online environment. We will start with the hearing in relation to our libraries inquiry and then we will switch to the telecommunications inquiry before returning later this afternoon to the libraries inquiry. This will take account of the availability of witnesses only at certain times.

I welcome Ms Bronwyn Halliday, the Director of the State Library of South Australia. Thank you for your time; it is very much appreciated by the committee. The committee has your submission before it, which we have already published. Would you like to make any alterations or corrections to your written submission at this stage?

**Ms Halliday**—No.

**CHAIR**—The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public but, at any stage, should you wish to give your evidence, part of your evidence or answers to specific questions in private, you may do so and we will consider your request. You are reminded that the evidence given to the committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. I also inform you that the giving of false or misleading evidence to the committee may constitute a contempt of the Senate. I now invite you to make an opening statement before we move to questions.

**Ms Halliday**—The State Library is responsible to the Libraries Board of South Australia, which also takes responsibility for all public libraries in South Australia. A separate submission on public libraries will be made later in the day. The State Library wants to highlight the four critical elements of our core business which enable us to serve the community in the new technological era. These four elements are referred to throughout our submission. Firstly, service provision is now considered as having a dual format. It is always physical and it is always virtual. Secondly, libraries can and will provide information services to all citizens if there is suitable infrastructure available. This requires efficient, effective, affordable and reliable broadband services throughout the country. Thirdly, libraries will provide services online but this has asset implications associated with the capacity to provide expensive digital imaging equipment and to change the staffing mix to serve this essential component of our business. Finally, there is the importance of strategic decision makers receiving advice from the leaders of the library community, particularly the Director-General of the National Library of Australia.

Libraries are a critical component of the knowledge and cultural economy of Australia. There is a critical mass of 138 public libraries in South Australia, with 10.9 visits to libraries in 2001-02. Given the untapped potential as a developer and champion of social capital outcomes, libraries are critical to enabling communities to survive and prosper. Libraries support lifelong learning, self-help, information, recreation and cultural pursuits. We provide services to 53 per

cent of the South Australian community on a regular basis. We are valued by all age groups, from young people to the aged, and by the isolated. We are a safe and friendly place for families.

Libraries are more accessible than schools, which have limited hours. Libraries have flexible opening hours and are open, on average, 40 hours per week. Each library has trained professional staff to assist people in the use of online material. Library membership and library usage increases dramatically with capital expenditure on libraries—\$94 million has been spent on capital works for South Australian libraries since 2000. Our state-local government partnership in South Australia is the envy of other states, and library building developments since 2000 have increased library membership by a minimum of 20 per cent in the libraries involved. South Australia needs more bandwidth. By combining additional bandwidth with that already available, libraries can share web services, market services and supply connectivity to government agencies, business and the community in isolated and rural areas.

The State Library of South Australia is a reference service for the South Australian community. Although we have significantly reduced our services in the last two years as a result of our building work, our physical patronage has declined only slightly while our online use of catalogues and database services has increased by at least 25 per cent for the last four financial years. Recent exit interviewing showed an even spread in the age range of users, from 15 years to over 70 years, with at least 10 per cent in each age group and 18 per cent in the 40 to 49 age group. Approximately half of our users classify themselves as students, whether they be secondary, tertiary or lifelong learners. In addition to the core library service of access to reference materials and other information, the State Library plays a critical role in developing the skill base of users. This is firstly in the use of technology, such as computers, and secondly in accessing the Internet and computer databases. This is a community service. The linking of the State Library and public libraries in South Australia has meant that all residents can access State Library services at no cost through their public library or from their own site. This in turn provides access to online databases.

The State Library of South Australia, like all other state libraries, is working to provide increasing amounts of material online to enable easy access from external sites. Increasing amounts of library resources are being dedicated to the digitisation of materials and the provision of materials electronically. Whenever a decision is taken about a service, there is always the question of how this service can be provided electronically. State and public libraries have been at the forefront of responding to the information needs of Australians through online resources. State libraries have constructed aids to navigation on their web sites. They offer options for the public to place inquiries over the web and/or by email and offer real-time question and answer sessions online, using online reference chat based software. Preservation libraries are generally placing a high priority on the digitisation and online provision of unique cultural materials in their collections. This involves significant cost in the purchase of specialised equipment.

The central requirements for enhancing the use and distribution of online information resources is fast, reliable and equitable access to the Internet throughout Australia. Currently speed and reliability vary greatly, especially in regional, rural and remote communities. Implementation factors vary from state to state but national agreement on the importance of online infrastructure and connectivity and a stated willingness to support funding bids would greatly assist the library industry to move towards these goals. The implementation of a national broadband network would enhance and support the wider use of resources. Libraries already

play a major role in the development of information literacy and basic IT skills, a prerequisite to effective use of today's online environment. This could be enhanced further through the delivery via libraries of national training initiatives to ensure Australian citizens are equipped to make use of available online resources and information.

Libraries are a trusted resource in the provision of information. Internet initiatives to support community demand include the following: development of online curriculum material for secondary schools, which of course supports students in remote areas; development of online guides to assist users with frequently asked questions; development of bibliographies of held materials; development of virtual tours of library collections, with supporting explanatory documentation; provision of online help to users; provision of training in the use of services; and the digitisation of frequently requested material, such as photographs.

Libraries are changing the staffing mix to include more information technology professionals to support these demands for online services. They are also providing professional development opportunities for staff in enhanced information technology skills. However, the impact of these initiatives can only be realised if there is access to affordable, fast and appropriate bandwidth. Support that the federal government can provide through making this bandwidth accessible is critical if libraries are to truly serve all members of the public and if the public is to truly have access to the information that it needs.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Ms Halliday. Could you explain a little about the benefits of the PANDORA system, what it is and how it could be extended through education programs?

**Ms Halliday**—PANDORA is a system that has been developed through the auspices of the National Library of Australia and it is supported by each of the state libraries. PANDORA stands for Preserving and Accessing Networked Documentary Resources of Australia. It is a common system that we all use so that our distributed collection—which means each of the states maintains its own sources of material—can be accessible throughout Australia. It is a common cataloguing system for unique Australian materials.

**CHAIR**—I wanted to ask you about your comment regarding changing your staffing mix to include information technology professionals. Exactly what has that meant for the State Library of South Australia and public libraries in this state?

**Ms Halliday**—The State Library of South Australia is ahead of the public libraries because of their limited staffing numbers in any case. We are looking very closely at our information technology team and our preservation and conservation team. We are changing that team so that they have a clear understanding of digitisation techniques. We are looking for library professionals with enhanced IT services so that we have the capacity to catalogue the material and describe it appropriately and also to understand the technology elements of making it available through digital systems.

In support of this change we have purchased a web management system which means that the minute we digitise one thing, it is available in multiple formats throughout our State Library networks. So we have made a conscious decision to change and enhance our information technology and preservation staff. We in the State Library of South Australia have also been engaged to write training materials for the digitisation of heritage materials. This has been

undertaken under the auspices of the National Library of Australia and it has been picked up worldwide now, because we are considered to be one of the leaders in the world of digitisation and microfilming.

**CHAIR**—Very impressive.

**Ms Halliday**—There are limited training programs for people in microfilming and digitisation. There is one course in TAFE here in South Australia, but it has been very difficult to have the capacity to expand that out to all the libraries that need it. So we have developed an online and residential training program.

**CHAIR**—I would like to get an idea of the services which the State Library provides direct to public libraries in South Australia. Public libraries here are run by local government; is that right?

**Ms Halliday**—Public libraries are managed by local government but they are funded jointly. The state government, through the Libraries Board, provides funding for materials and connectivity. The public libraries provide the infrastructure support, which is the staffing support and the buildings. That is why I made the point earlier about the expenditure of \$94 million in public libraries and library development in the last two years.

**Senator TIERNEY**—As we move around Australia we see that the links between the public library and the local libraries vary. The systems vary. I want to start by exploring how those links work in South Australia. You said your arrangement was the envy of the other states. What is it about it that makes it the envy of the other states? What do you do in South Australia that is so different?

**Ms Halliday**—I would like to raise a couple of elements here. The first is that there is a memorandum of agreement, which is for five years. We are in the third memorandum of agreement at the moment and we intend to enter into a fourth one in the next two-and-a-bit years. We are halfway through the current agreement. That memorandum of agreement sets out the relationship and the governance between the state government, through the auspices of the Libraries Board and the State Library, and local government, through their public libraries. That talks about funding levels for materials. The funding levels are set in advance and there is a built-in increase, which is a CPI increase. That funding comes through the Libraries Board to local government, which means that local government have certainty about their funding. In addition, some of the funding is centralised. We have a central purchasing unit and a central unit for negotiating large-scale contracts on behalf of public libraries. For example, we purchase 80 per cent of public library material centrally, which means that as the new Harry Potter book becomes available individual libraries are not purchasing, for example, 20 copies each, but 138 libraries are purchasing in excess of 1,000 copies.

**Senator TIERNEY**—They are printing 600,000 copies of that for Australia, by the way. There will be plenty of copies around.

**Ms Halliday**—Libraries are purchasing those copies at a very competitive price, because of the numbers we are purchasing. We are purchasing them already catalogued and already plastic wrapped. They are in libraries probably on the day that they are available in the bookshop.

**Senator TIERNEY**—How do they come already catalogued?

**Ms Halliday**—They come with a cataloguing record, which we purchase. The Public Libraries Automated Information Network Central Services agency, who are appearing before you later today, catalogue for all public libraries. There is a central cataloguing record which gets downloaded in real time, through a web based service.

**Senator TIERNEY**—Is that widespread now—the movement from publication to placing them in libraries?

**Ms Halliday**—I am not sure what you mean.

**Senator TIERNEY**—Is it widespread practice by companies that are publishing books to have them centrally catalogued? How does that work?

**Ms Halliday**—No, that is unique to South Australia.

**Senator TIERNEY**—Sorry. I thought you said it was coming from a publisher.

**Ms Halliday**—What happens is that the 138 libraries get their money. We have a central purchasing unit. Each month the libraries indicate what books they want to purchase. We place a bulk order. The books go directly to the libraries; they do not go through our central agency. One copy goes to our central agency, which loads the cataloguing record onto the system. The book is received in the library with the only requirement being to put the bar code on it at the library. It goes straight onto the shelves. It is generally wrapped in its plastic contact cover as well. That will generally happen on the day or the day after it is received in the bookshops.

**Senator TIERNEY**—That is very impressive.

**Ms Halliday**—It is a very fast service. We get very significant discounts on the books, depending on the number and the supplier.

**Senator TIERNEY**—Do the publishers have a problem with that? I am thinking that it is parallel to the release of films that end up in video shops. There is always that commercial aspect: they want people to spend money on it for a while before moving it on.

**Ms Halliday**—Libraries are very large purchasers from publishers. Publishers are generally very keen to get our contracts. Our public library service unit—and, as I said, they will be making a submission to you this afternoon—negotiates contracts with suppliers because we very rarely deal with the publishers; we deal with the suppliers and distributors. The unit also negotiates the contract for delivery of books and the contract with Telstra for the delivery of the Internet service to the library. We have a central unit which negotiates that on behalf of all public libraries. It is in that area that we have become the envy of the other states. We have a very friendly supportive relationship.

**Senator TIERNEY**—So you are saving effort at that level by doing it centrally. What are the financial links in all this with local government to the state government? What is the balance of

moneys for the local libraries in terms of where they access their money—from councils as compared with from the state government?

**Ms Halliday**—That is a question I would like you to leave until this afternoon. I could give you an answer, but I would need to check it. At the moment—

**Senator TIERNEY**—I take it that there is funding from both sources?

**Ms Halliday**—Yes.

**Senator TIERNEY**—I am interested in the balance between the two and how that has been trending over the last 10 years. Perhaps you could compare that to the other states.

**Ms Halliday**—The state government is responsible for materials so the materials that go into public libraries are funded by the state government. However, the infrastructure, meaning bricks, mortar and staffing, is funded by local government.

**Senator TIERNEY**—Who funds IT?

**Ms Halliday**—The web-based services are funded through the library resources which is the state government and that is because so much of our materials budget is now going into databases and the like. However, the computers—the IT hardware—tend to be funded through local government. Over the last 10 years, the trend has been for local government's contribution as a percentage to increase while the state government's contribution has decreased.

**Senator TIERNEY**—I am afraid that that is a sad nationwide trend. Does that create a problem for local libraries in that local government authorities have a lot of pressure on their funds to do various things around their local communities, and fixing the roads is usually a huge funding pressure? Is that creating a problem for the libraries in becoming a sufficient priority in the local area over roads, parks and all the other things local government does?

**Ms Halliday**—Absolutely. Part of my time as Director of the State Library is spent attending every opening of every public library and lobbying every mayor there. I see that as a critical part of my work. As we say in our State Library submission, libraries are an important component of the social capital of the community, and the social capital of rural communities can be quite depressed. Having said that, I am very proud to say that a number of rural libraries are being upgraded. As I said before, every time you upgrade a public library, there is a 20 per cent increase in its usage which never drops off and that is very significant.

**Senator TIERNEY**—That is very interesting. So broadly what is the reaction of the mayors when you lobby them to give it a higher priority?

**Ms Halliday**—I generally then get invited to speak at the mayoral dinner and I do that with great pleasure.

**Senator TIERNEY**—With all the councils there.

**Ms Halliday**—With various councils there. Certainly my local council is embarrassed that I am there and we have not had a new library for quite some time. However, it is certainly a role that we see as important. It is critical for people to have information. Use of the Internet is becoming more and more widespread and we see that particularly with the aged community coming in to use the library. Another concern we have—and any support the federal government could give in this area would be very important—is that as we open these libraries and as their use increases, our potential to supply the materials decreases. It has been sad for me to go to some of the new libraries and find that there are few books on the shelves because they are being borrowed constantly.

**Senator TIERNEY**—So what is the trend over the last 10 years in total library funding in South Australia in real terms including local and state sources? Is it going up or down in real terms? Where is it broadly?

**Ms Halliday**—I can only speak about the component that the state government provides to library services, because I just do not know enough about the local government component of it. In terms of the State Library, our budget has remained static or has decreased over the last 10 years.

**Senator TIERNEY**—So, even though we have come into the information age over that time, in real terms it has gone down?

**Ms Halliday**—That is right.

**Senator TIERNEY**—What is the explanation from the state government for that?

**Ms Halliday**—The state government has had other priorities which it considers to be more important. That does not mean that the State Library, its supporters, its board and various members of parliament have not been lobbying heavily, and I would like to think that that situation will change very soon.

**Senator TIERNEY**—So, even though South Australia see themselves as having a future in IT, in this very critical area of IT they have actually contributed zero—

**Ms Halliday**—No—

**Senator TIERNEY**—in that they have not made provision over the last 10 years for increasing funding to cope with this incredibly rapid change in technology in libraries.

**Ms Halliday**—There has been no addition, as I have said, to our budget. However, the state government has put \$41.2 million dollars into a new building which will enable us to provide services in a more cost efficient manner than we were able to in our previous building, which was 45 years old, because of cabling and so forth. But another component, which it is very critical to understand, is that the breakdown of our materials purchase has changed dramatically in the last 10 years. Previously, all of our materials purchase would have been in print based materials. It is now moving quite rapidly into electronic purchases and print based materials. Five years ago, something like five per cent of purchases were electronically based. They now make up 12 per cent, and I would expect that in the next five years they would move to 30 per

cent. That is because journals are increasingly becoming available online and, by providing them online, we can provide access to public libraries through licence agreements so that more people have access to the material and it is more accessible. We are always looking at accessibility. Our materials purchase has changed in that time frame, so that is another component that needs to be considered in the matrix of how a library provides its services.

**Senator TIERNEY**—You mentioned federal funding. Why should we do that, given that, firstly, this is a state responsibility and, secondly, we have given all the states \$30 billion in GST revenue to give them a growth tax which will help them to fund the things that they are responsible for? Why should we allow double dipping? That is my view; we are giving them money to do this.

**Ms Halliday**—There is another way of looking at it and that is that broadband services, or telecommunications services, are the responsibility of the federal government.

**Senator TIERNEY**—The legislation for them is.

**Ms Halliday**—So that, I think, very clearly falls back into a federal area. I do not think that I am in a position to comment on the South Australian government's priorities for funding.

**Senator TIERNEY**—I understand that, even though we have picked up that you would like to see them change a bit. The digitalisation question is a huge one facing the nation in terms of getting historical material online. You did mention an increasing amount is being put into this, but, given the scale of the task and the resources you have, are you really making a lot of headway? Can you provide us with a picture of what is happening in South Australia?

**Ms Halliday**—You have to understand that we will never make the headway that people like me would like. Having said that, we have made some significant changes. The first one, as I said, is to the way we manage our web based services. We have purchased a web manager—and it is one of the most expensive purchases of a web content manager in South Australia; so that we can manage our web based materials far more efficiently. We have also purchased—and I believe it is the only one in the country—a high-speed camera which enables us to digitise and microfilm at the same time. So we are moving ahead rapidly on that.

We manage our staff in such a way that that machinery gets used far more than in a standard 37½-hour week. So we are making significant inroads in that area. There are significant efficiencies associated with our web content manager as well. But the use of our online resources speaks for itself. They increase at the rate of 25 per cent per annum. We have just passed the nine million hits mark for the year, which means we have in excess of 25,000 hits per day on our website using our resources. We have in excess of 140,000 digitised photographs, which get used regularly, and we are working with education systems to ensure that we are providing curriculum based materials, because we are very conscious that students in particular like to get onto the Internet and play when in fact what they still need is an organised system to enable them to get to the information that is most relevant to them, and so we work on that basis.

**Senator TIERNEY**—I realise we have a problem with time, but I would like to explore the vertical links in the system. In a local government library, if they want to access material in the National Library, for example, what blocks are there in technology and access?

**Ms Halliday**—There are no blocks.

**Senator TIERNEY**—What about in bandwidth?

**Ms Halliday**—There are no blocks other than the capacity to provide the number of computers for the demand. So, assuming that there is a computer available, you should have no difficulty in actually getting onto the computer and logging in to the National Library database to get the material you want. In South Australia we have been very successful with our Networking the Nation grants, and we have been able to put Internet based computers into every public library.

**Senator TIERNEY**—So you can do this at the public library in the smallest town in South Australia that has a public library?

**Ms Halliday**—We have a couple of very small ones, and we provide additional funding to them because of their remoteness, but they include Woomera, which is a town that has been in the press recently—

**CHAIR**—And again today—

**Ms Halliday**—Yes, and Roxby Downs. Those towns do have access.

**Senator TIERNEY**—What about beyond there, in the smaller hamlets which do not have a public library? Do you have a program for providing for those very small places?

**Ms Halliday**—Into the homes?

**Senator TIERNEY**—No, I am thinking of settlements of maybe 100 people or something like that, where you might not have a public library.

**Ms Halliday**—The 138 public libraries that we have, which are based throughout local government areas, have been strategically placed, and you will find that there are not many areas, other than the very remote and sparsely populated ones, that do not have ready access to a library.**Senator TIERNEY**—People might have to drive a bit, though.

**Ms Halliday**—But they generally have to drive to get their shopping and so forth.

**Senator TIERNEY**—Yes, they have to do it at some time. Thank you.

**Senator MOORE**—I have a couple of questions I want to ask, but I understand you will be joining us this afternoon. Are you going to be with us on the site visit?

**Ms Halliday**—Yes, I will be taking you on the site visit.

**Senator MOORE**—I have a couple of specific questions about staffing and broadband access and, if it is okay with the committee, I will ask you those questions then, to let you get away now.

**Ms Halliday**—Thank you very much.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much for your time this morning; it is very much appreciated by the committee. We will see you this afternoon.

**Proceedings suspended from 9.59 a.m. to 2.47 p.m.**

**BUNDY, Dr Alan Lindsey (Private capacity)**

**CHAIR**—I welcome Dr Alan Bundy to the hearing. Thanks for attending today; it is very much appreciated by the committee. The committee has before it your submission, which we have already published. Would you like to make any alterations or corrections to that written submission?

**Dr Bundy**—No, thank you.

**CHAIR**—The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public, but should you at any stage wish to give your evidence, part of your evidence or answers to specific questions in private, you may ask to do so and we will consider your request. You are reminded that the evidence given to the committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. I also inform you that the giving of false or misleading evidence to the committee may constitute a contempt of the Senate. I now invite you to make an opening statement before we ask questions.

**Dr Bundy**—Thank you, Senator. I will make a very brief opening statement. In my submission I did not attempt to home in on the terms of reference. I thought there was a possibility that you might not receive a broad picture of the public library situation in Australia in relation to public libraries overseas, so I would like to give you my assessment of where public libraries in Australia currently stand in terms of their capacity to deliver information services, particularly those of an online nature, to the Australian population at large.

The basis for the information which I have supplied is the *Directory of Australian Public Libraries*. I forwarded some copies of this to the committee. I think the information contained there substantiates the claims that I, as well as other witnesses, would make in relation to the capacity of Australian public libraries to deliver the services which the Australian population require, and which they are already doing to a large extent. But they do require in general broader support to do the job more effectively.

On page 2 of my submission I identify what I consider to be the major constraints to the achievement of the full potential of the public library network across Australia, in the context that public libraries in Australia are the most heavily used public agency. They are the most heavily trafficked buildings; they are the most appreciated service provided principally through local government, normally with the support of state government. Overseas there has been significant recognition of the potential role of public libraries, particularly in the UK, with the heavy investment in their People's Network, which is in fact on track and has been completed. I might have sent the committee a copy of a report which assesses the success of that program.

I would like to table something I received very recently about the new learning centre in Bristol in the UK, which really emphasises the end product of that investment by the national government in the UK. There are other countries also which I think are leaving Australia behind in considering this as a national issue. Finland and Singapore are examples, and New Zealand, although it has its own weaknesses in its public library infrastructure, in some respects is actually ahead of Australia in conceptualising a national information strategy.

I was speaking to the National Librarian of New Zealand last night at a function at the convention centre here. New Zealand apparently is about to adopt a library and information services commission, basically to try and bring together all the ends of the library issue, which reside in different jurisdictions in New Zealand, and even more so in Australia. That is one of the things we lack in Australia. Although the National Library does play a leadership role, it does not have the mandate to play the role that a national commission for libraries and information services plays in the US, plays in the UK and looks as though it is going to play in New Zealand.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. I am just reading this fascinating article about Bristol—£600,000 to install over 200 computers in the libraries in that one city, plus do staff training. That is fascinating. Thank you for this submission. It really is extraordinarily comprehensive, as Senator Moore has said.

**Dr Bundy**—I would like to table an article I wrote called ‘Changing lives, making the difference: the 21st century public library’, which again goes into the background of public library development and the current substance of the public library infrastructure. I would also like to table a report which I received only about two weeks ago from the UK, which is the first evaluation of the implementation of the People’s Network in the UK by a researcher. I think that indicates the return on investment. And I present for interest something that is in fact the same article in a journal that I publish on public libraries. That one does not need to be tabled, but you can have it anyway.

**CHAIR**—The People’s Network is such an ‘old Labour’ term, isn’t it?

**Senator MOORE**—Absolutely—and respect it!

**CHAIR**—I am surprised the Blair government would tick off on it.

**Dr Bundy**—They do have a Labour government in the UK.

**CHAIR**—It is very non-‘third way’. We have received evidence that each state seems to be doing something different on online access in terms of getting that online ability, ranging from the 64 extraordinary access centres in Tasmania through to the 90-odd centres in Western Australia—I forget what they are called—and the funding here through the State Library, in New South Wales through the State Library and in Queensland through the State Library. How do all these benchmark against the People’s Network as you understand it?

**Dr Bundy**—It is difficult to answer that in terms of specifics.

**CHAIR**—You can just take South Australia as an example.

**Dr Bundy**—South Australia actually benchmarks pretty well. One of the distinctive things about the South Australian system is that a condition of state government subsidy is that online access is free. This is why it is important that state governments maintain an involvement and investment in public library development, although I have indicated in my submission that there is a tendency for them to resile from that. I was recently in Queensland on a consultancy. It is ironic that Queensland describes itself as the ‘smart state’, yet it is doing the not very smart thing

of having a variation of charges of one level or another, largely driven by local government, which tends to have fairly narrow perspectives on its educational role in the community.

Queenslanders often have to pay to access online services in their public libraries. The same applies in Tasmania, unfortunately, as well. In South Australia it is free and it is a condition of subsidy that it remain free. In South Australia, a local authority could elect to impose charges but it would lose its subsidy. The subsidy is still large enough for that to be a very strong attraction. So there is variability. In the UK they are insisting that it will be free right across the country. That is fairly important because once you start delving into issues about whether a tourist coming in to use the Internet should be charged for email or for online reference services you get into very murky waters. It is quite consistent with the tradition of public libraries that that essential access should remain free at the point of use. Nothing is ever free; it is a question of whether it is free at the point of use.

**CHAIR**—People in Queensland and Tasmania indicated that the issue often is pressure from Internet cafes in the town about whether it should be free. The extent to which we should be providing a service to the backpacking tourist is another issue, certainly in Queensland. I do not know whether you have any comment on that.

**Dr Bundy**—I have read that the Premier here was saying, ‘I’ve looked at a number of small school community libraries in South Australia.’ These are normally joint use libraries between high schools and public libraries where they recognise that they cannot sustain two good libraries in a small community of maybe a thousand people. The best public relations thing that South Australia does is to provide this free access. I visited one recently in the Flinders Ranges, where the school principal said to me, ‘This is tremendous; we had a group of Japanese tourists in recently and they were impressed to find that they could use it.’ They also met the local kids as well. He said that they had a group of Swedes in the other day. That is tremendous public relations for Australia, and at such minimal cost.

The reality in Australia at the moment is that about \$40 billion is spent on education. I think \$30 billion is spent on public education and \$10 billion on private education. The total spent on libraries is \$500 million, which is about the budget of a large university. My argument is that the return on that investment far outweighs any consideration of whether you penny pinch and charge someone for using email. There are libraries that charge even for online reference services, which is quite inimical.

**CHAIR**—You say in your submission that in 1996 the federal government reduced funding for the online public access initiative from \$11.4 million to \$2.2 million. How much of that was put back in by the Networking the Nation initiatives?

**Dr Bundy**—I do not know.

**CHAIR**—We might work that out at some point.

**Dr Bundy**—It was not a good decision at the time. Unfortunately, some of the money was spent inappropriately. One of the problems that has occurred in rural areas is that money has been put into telecentres which should have been incorporated in public libraries, using a business model approach. It is very difficult to sustain a telecentre business in a small

community, and a number of them have failed. In Western Australia some have been wrapped up into small public libraries.

**CHAIR**—We had evidence from Deniliquin public library on the combined library and technology centre as well.

**Senator TIERNEY**—I had a chance last year to look at information policy in a number of countries, including New Zealand, Singapore, the UK and Germany. I will come back to New Zealand in a minute—and you might have an update because this was about 10 months ago. I heard what the UK government were saying was happening and I spoke to the principal operatives at local level and even to the e-Envoy. I spoke to government and opposition people. The rhetoric is terrific. The objectives are excellent but the delivery is not. As I said in an article published today in *Information Weekly*, the UK thought they had an information policy. They are trying to do it but there are terrible structural problems in the way their public service works to apply it. In your view of the People's Network—I know you have commented on this elsewhere—what is the strength of its approach? Where, realistically, are the British having difficulty applying that to the end of the line where people are trying to access information for various reasons?

**Dr Bundy**—You are quite right about the gap between the rhetoric and the reality. That applies to all nations which have tried to develop a national information policy.

**Senator TIERNEY**—It seems to be more so in the UK than anywhere else.

**Dr Bundy**—Yes. Although the People's Network has gone through a couple of iterations, the research report which I tabled indicates that there are results occurring at the user end. I am going to the UK fairly soon. I will be interested to talk to some colleagues as to how they find things are happening on the ground. The example that I tabled from Bristol indicates that the money is getting through. One of the critical things that they recognised in the UK in terms of how you do this is that it is not good enough just to spend the money on connectivity, broadbanding and technology; you have to spend it on staff training.

A major issue in Australia is the variability of staff to support these technological initiatives. There is a growing shortage of qualified librarians in Australia. The problem is more severe in rural areas. They have difficulty getting qualified librarians in Tasmania, the Northern Territory and parts of Western Australia, and it is going to become an issue in South Australia fairly soon. There has been a tendency by bureaucracies and governments—and this is true of Queensland, the 'smart state'—to say, 'The solution, the universal panacea, to all our educational issues is to throw money at technology.' That is only part of the issue.

As an example, I was speaking recently to the principal of a large primary school north of Brisbane. She said, 'We are being forced to spend money on computers that we do not want. We have other educational priorities. Not only that, we know that we are going to be lumbered with having to replace them in three years time.' That is a pretty fundamental area. There are an increasing number of commentators now who are saying that there is a tendency for governments for political reasons and bureaucrats for positioning reasons to say, 'We have a problem; let's throw technology at it,' but not to recognise or want to recognise that you have to involve people.

One of the problems that Australian public libraries are facing—whether it is with regard to children’s librarians to work with young kids before they go school in developing literacy or librarians working with senior citizens to help them develop their information technology capacity—is that there are not enough qualified people to do that. That is a generalisation. There are some places which are well staffed; there are other places which have very scant staffing. It is an issue more for rural and regional Australia and generally for the western suburbs in large cities.

**Senator TIERNEY**—I would like to come back to that point about illiteracy and libraries in a minute. With regard to the other national examples, you are very impressed with the New Zealand information policy. It seemed to me to be a very good libraries policy. It did not seem to be much more comprehensive than that, although they did start out to try to make it so. At the end of the day, they ended up with an online libraries policy. In New Zealand, it is a little easier to do things than here because they have a national government and the local level libraries; there are two levels only.

**Dr Bundy**—You are right, of course. The New Zealand policy was driven out of the Library and Information Association of New Zealand, with its political connections in Wellington. Although it might seem to be library-focused, what it is trying to achieve—the core of it—is knowledge access, knowledge content and knowledge equity. The knowledge equity issue is more about how people access the information they need than how they develop the skills to use it. This is a pretty profound educational issue which my university, with others, is grappling with—how we develop young Australians to have the awareness of information need, and the skills and capacity to use information effectively so that we can become an innovative nation. An innovative nation has to be underpinned by use of good information. We are in an innovation festival at the moment. The minister for education mentioned that a critical factor for Australia’s future is how Australians learn how to learn. Learning how to learn has to be underpinned by how people recognise a need for information and how they use information effectively. It is a strong coincidence.

Incidentally, I think one of the problems—and I refer to it in my report, and I think other submissions have made the same reference—is that universities and other agencies funded from the public purse or substantially from the public purse would like to do more in assisting the overall library infrastructure but, because of their own constraints, if anything there has been something of a pulling back from a fairly longstanding involvement in helping other agencies. In Sweden, for example, there is a requirement that the university libraries in fact support the public library system and are accessible to the public on the basis that they were paid for by the taxpayer.

**Senator TIERNEY**—If we could work our way back from the UK via New Zealand to South Australia, the evidence we had this morning indicated that in terms of public libraries in this state the actual total budget in real terms from all sources really had not moved much in 10 years, yet we have had the information revolution happen and a whole a lot of huge demands placed on libraries to change access sources. You are dismissing any sort of charging, so you are not seeing money come from the consumers. But local government, with all their competing demands—people like to have their roads fixed as well—would have difficulty expanding. So why isn’t the state government putting a higher priority on this when it has, as one of its

fundamental objectives, creating South Australia as an information technology state? Why isn't it putting an extra zack into this very vital area?

**Dr Bundy**—And it is not just South Australia; New South Wales stands out—

**Senator TIERNEY**—It has gone down actually.

**Dr Bundy**—as the state where the situation is in fact worse.

**Senator TIERNEY**—That is true.

**Dr Bundy**—Public libraries were developed after the Second World War in Australia as a funding partnership between state and local governments, because local government at that stage was weak and in fact did not even recognise that it should provide public libraries in the main. I think state governments recognised that the only way they were going to kick-start the development of a public library system in Australia to match that of the UK and other developed countries was to say, 'We will partner you.' The argument sometimes put forward of course is that the state governments have not reduced their funding but that local governments have found that their libraries are so popular, so heavily used and so important for the community that they have increased their investment. So there is a degree of financial sophistry involved in the whole argument. That is a great pity, because state governments have to provide leadership.

Then if you go to the national level there is actually very little leadership from the national government. I do not think in Australia, in the Australian constitutional context, you can get the same leadership that you might get maybe in New Zealand or the UK. But I think there is scope in Australia for the national government to show more concern about this issue, because it seems to me that the main characteristic of the 21st century is information overabundance, inequities in access to that information overabundance and inequities in people's capacity to utilise it for their own lives and for the benefit of society. That seems to me to be a fundamental national issue which the national government should concern itself with.

**Senator TIERNEY**—But we are blessed with a federation in this country. No matter what areas of government we go into—the environment or education—people say, 'The national government should take it over.' Having the whole country run from Canberra, quite frankly, horrifies me.

**Dr Bundy**—If I may interrupt, it is not a question of taking things over—I do not think that would be the right solution. Fundamentally, public libraries have to be within the mandate of state and local government. But I think there are areas, and the online environment is one, where more proaction by the national government—not necessarily at large cost—would persuade state and local governments that public libraries are important. It is about the message sent from the national government saying, 'This is important.' That is what has occurred in the UK: the national government has actually said, 'Public libraries are one of the core elements in delivering equity across the UK.'

**Senator TIERNEY**—Of course they are not blessed with states. Although, interestingly they seem to be creating them—

**Dr Bundy**—They are sort of moving that way.

**Senator TIERNEY**—Yes, they are. But that would then create a greater problem in them doing what you suggest they do. One of the things we have done federally is hand over our entire GST revenue to the states to give them a growth tax and say, ‘Really, you should fund what you are constitutionally responsible for.’ They are responsible for local government, through local government departments, and therefore for libraries. Then they come back and say, ‘Give us more money for this, that and the other.’ So it is a double-dip thereafter. I suppose that is where we have a problem.

**Dr Bundy**—That is one of the issues—Bronwyn Halliday may have referred to this this morning when she spoke to the committee—and it is about the marketing of the role of libraries and their image. There are people who still see libraries as places that just lend books but increasingly that is not the case. The picture is broadly a positive one across the country. There are some fantastic new library buildings being built, and obviously one at Caboolture fairly soon. Some of them are quite on par with the best libraries in Scandinavia and the UK, but there are many others which are quite mediocre and very limited in their capacity. The reason why my submission actually delved into the connecting aspects required to improve the availability of online resources to Australians as a whole is that it is tied to where the library buildings are, the staffing of libraries and, in particular, the space in libraries. I know of libraries which have had money knocked back for technology because they do not have the space to actually put in the terminals. There are currently 4,045 public Internet terminals in Australian public libraries—from my calculation from my directory. That is more than a doubling in about four years from 1,335. So progress is being made, but if you look at it on a per capita basis, that is not a large provision for the number of people that use public libraries and certainly for the Australian population as a whole.

**Senator TIERNEY**—If we put more and more of these terminals in over time, something has to give. If the total amount of money going into the libraries is not going up, the bandwidth is improved and people’s capacity to access massive amounts of bandwidth quickly goes up, aren’t you going to run into a situation where people will not actually use this resource economically because there is no cost attached to it at all?

**Dr Bundy**—Possibly. I tend to disagree with the statement that more money is not going into libraries; it is in certain places. If you look at the capacity of local government to support the libraries more effectively, the percentage of rate revenue that goes into local government libraries just in South Australia ranges significantly from less than two per cent in the case of school community libraries, although it is tending to increase, to about six per cent for metropolitan libraries and a little less for other country libraries. Around Australia, you will find a great variation in terms of the rate revenue that is actually going into the libraries. I think most local authorities do have the capacity to shift a percentage of their rate revenue into public libraries.

**Senator TIERNEY**—I think we discovered that the states were then cost shifting on that basis and drawing it out the other end in the sense of dropping their commitment because local governments were putting their commitment up.

**Dr Bundy**—I can understand why the local government associations would be very concerned about this perception of services.

**Senator TIERNEY**—It seems to me that we are putting a massive brake on all of this if we do not allow some other minor streams of funding that will actually help manipulate supply and demand a bit better. We were in Launceston a few weeks ago and they had a learning access centre and people were coming in. They were charging people, though it was not very much. They were charging on the basis that there were Internet cafes around the town complaining that if people could go to the centre for free they would not go and use the Internet cafes' services. So on that basis, it was a more competitive model, but it did not seem to be creating any problems.

**Dr Bundy**—It does create problems because there are always some people who are in fact inhibited from using things because of the charges. I am reminded that in New Zealand some of the libraries charge for the lending of videos, for example. I can remember being in one library where a small kid was looking at a video with a friend—I think it was a worthwhile video—and he said, 'I'd really like to borrow that but I can't because I can't afford to.'

**Senator TIERNEY**—A lot of people can afford to do it. There could be some system of exemption—for example, health care cards or whatever that we normally have exemptions for in this country—for those who really cannot afford things. Why could we not go down that path and put some more resources there?

**Dr Bundy**—You could certainly do that but when that actually happens or when you introduce a subscription charge for libraries—they tried this in Germany—it automatically results in a 20 or 25 per cent reduction in the use of the library. One of the things that we should be trying to encourage all Australians to do is to actually use a thing like a library more frequently, not to discourage the use of the library.

**Senator TIERNEY**—I was thinking more of the IT end of it which has capacity to increase costs dramatically, if it is not used in a reasonable sort of way.

**Dr Bundy**—There is no real evidence of this to date. The majority of libraries around Australia do not charge even for email access, but they do have to put some controls on usage simply because of the limited numbers.

**Senator TIERNEY**—Price is always a good control!

**Dr Bundy**—Prices are a control, but that is one that is fundamentally inequitable.

**Senator TIERNEY**—I was wondering why you were happy for the overseas tourists to do it. You said that the Japanese were amazed it was free—I bet they were! You would have to have a charging regime to start with; you would not just do it for tourists. But why shouldn't they pay?

**Dr Bundy**—With the amount of money that you charge and the administrative cost of the charging, it really is not worth while. But that is another issue.

**Senator TIERNEY**—Yes, you have to balance it.

**Dr Bundy**—I think the argument about Internet cafes is a bit of a furphy because, in fact, the bookshops could argue in just the same way. The evidence is that bookshops in the US—the Borders stores and that sort of thing—are working in association with public libraries because they can cross-market. The best shop window for a bookshop is a public library. There is a fair bit of evidence that people borrow books from public libraries and then end up actually buying one. Because libraries are caught in this bind—and my own library is in the same situation—one of the big issues in Australia, if you invest in online resources and technology, is that you then have limited resources for print materials, which may still be much in demand. Over the last few years in Australia there has been a relative reduction in the libraries' capacity to buy books. I think this is not a very desirable outcome, because there is increasing evidence that we need to get young children into public libraries to be exposed to reading before they start school. You may be familiar with the South Australian children's author Mem Fox. Her hobbyhorse is that we need to get children exposed to reading in the womb, because the rhythms actually have a positive effect—it is rather like listening to Mozart or something like that.

**Senator TIERNEY**—It has a great effect.

**Dr Bundy**—There is evidence now about the Bookstart Scheme in the UK, which also operates in a few local authorities in Australia. At the age of seven months every child receives a Bookstart kit to encourage parents to think about this issue, to give them advice on how they might read to their children and to introduce them to the public library. After being in place for 10 years, it is making a difference to literacy rates in the UK and the investment is remarkably cheap.

**Senator TIERNEY**—Could you provide the committee with some information on that, or the access point where we can find it in the UK?

**Dr Bundy**—If you look under the Children's Book Trust, which is one of the sponsors of this national scheme, you might find a reference. But I will also send something on to the committee.

**Senator TIERNEY**—Does the scheme have a name?

**Dr Bundy**—It is called the Bookstart scheme. In Australia there are a few local authorities running a scheme, like Moreland in Victoria—they call it Books for Babies; it has different names. There are several local authorities doing this. Among the authorities conducting it in Western Australia is the City of Stirling. This relatively modest investment has now been demonstrated to have a real return in terms of literacy. The most critical issue for Australia's children and their future is that they can actually read.

**Senator TIERNEY**—And the earlier, the better.

**Dr Bundy**—Indeed.

**Senator TIERNEY**—On a separate committee we were looking at parents as teachers as a likely initiative. The whole issue you just raised is something we will follow up in that committee. Could you draw me a picture of what I would be likely to find if I went into the smallest public library in the smallest town in South Australia. If I was trying to access online material, what would I find?

**Dr Bundy**—In South Australia you would be remarkably privileged. Like Sweden, South Australia has 40 per cent of its public library outlets as joint use libraries. These are libraries that combine high schools or area schools with the local public library. In terms of technology, they get a double whammy by getting it through the school system, which is filtered, and also through the public library system. The point of the comment about the Japanese was their surprise at the availability of this technology in a community of 800. If you go to other parts of Australia—Western Australia, for instance—you will find that a small public library in a community of 800 is part of the city manager's or the town manager's office, is open for a few hours and has relatively limited technological access. You might even find a separate telecentre trying to survive somewhere in the town. South Australia has found the best solution for small rural environments.

**Senator TIERNEY**—That is very impressive. How do they access that after school hours, or can't they?

**Dr Bundy**—With permission from parents. This is one of the issues: until school is out, they can only use the school provided filtered system. After 3.30 p.m.—I have not checked on this recently—my understanding is that with parental permission they can access the non-filtered public library system.

**Senator TIERNEY**—But after school hours in these smaller towns, how is it physically manned?

**Dr Bundy**—It changes at about 3.30 p.m., which is when they can shift over. It is an interesting situation where you combine an educational institution, which obviously has duty of care requirements. This is really just an extension of the issue about censorship, about materials which may have to be kept out of view, but public libraries face this in any case.

**CHAIR**—Another witness said that it was important not to have the online access centre on a school or TAFE site, because of the perception that it is an educational resource as opposed to a community resource, and argued that online access centres and libraries, generally, should be associated with a community centre as opposed to a school centre.

**Dr Bundy**—In South Australia, with this model of the joint use libraries, the library is usually on the edge of the campus. A number have been rebuilt recently and quite consciously positioned so that it is obvious where it is and that it is a community facility.

**Senator TIERNEY**—In these really small places, if I am a citizen of the town and I want to access the library outside school hours—at, say, 4.30 p.m. in the afternoon—can I do that?

**Dr Bundy**—You can go during school hours as well. They are open at any time during the day. In fact, they have longer opening hours—as a consequence of their dual function—than, say, a small public library in Western Australia which is just for the public.

**Senator TIERNEY**—But do they open after school hours?

**Dr Bundy**—Yes. Some of them maintain evening hours and some are even open on Saturdays and Sundays as well. It is an issue that I have raised previously that I think there is a lot of

potential for the South Australian model of the rural, school community library to be developed around Australia. It takes advantage of the fact that schools have a qualified teacher-librarian who also plays the role of public librarian. The South Australian system is the only politically mandated system in the world. It was mandated by a Labor government under Hugh Hudson, when he was minister for education and the arts. He said, ‘How are we going to get free public libraries to the community?’ At that time, the Commonwealth was putting a lot of money into school libraries, and he thought, ‘Aha!’

**Senator TIERNEY**—This was in the early sixties, I take it?

**Dr Bundy**—Yes, it was. The first one opened in 1977, so in effect he piggybacked on that.

**CHAIR**—There is a way to leverage money.

**Dr Bundy**—Indeed.

**Senator MOORE**—I think that is a true partnership.

**Dr Bundy**—It was.

**Senator TIERNEY**—This must have been when Gough Whitlam was throwing all that money around.

**Dr Bundy**—Yes. But on the whole, although there have been stresses, it has worked extremely well. South Australians in rural areas have remarkable technological access and also access to the total public library system of South Australia. Overall I think the system in South Australia probably has more strong points than any other system in Australia. It is stronger now than the Western Australian system in that sense.

**Senator TIERNEY**—It sounds like a good model for the smaller states. Have any of the others taken this up?

**Dr Bundy**—I get involved in a number of consultancies. In fact, I have just been asked to do one in New Zealand. The system of joint use libraries is expanding and, as I have commented in my submission, nine per cent of public library outlets in Australia are now joint use at one level or another. Some involve university libraries and TAFE libraries. The majority of them are small rural libraries between high schools. I think there is a case for doing a systematic analysis around Australia of the capacity to develop libraries like this. They are developing some in Queensland now, they have some in Tasmania and there are about 10 of them in Western Australia as well.

**Senator TIERNEY**—The school principals do not mind the public wandering around their grounds after hours?

**Dr Bundy**—It does present a challenge for some of them because, to some extent, they lose control of their facilities. On the other hand, as I said, I was recently in Quorn in the Flinders Ranges talking to a principal and he had only ever known this type of library. He had been in three of them. He said, ‘I can’t think of a reason why you wouldn’t do this in a small community.’ He was the person who told me about the Japanese and the Swedes coming in. He

said: 'It's tremendous. Our kids get to meet these international visitors.' So there are many other advantages to this type of library apart from the cost effectiveness of having an all-in-one facility in one building and with one access point.

**Senator TIERNEY**—For a small community it is very important.

**CHAIR**—My local state school in Brisbane has just erected a six-foot wall right around it to keep the public out.

**Senator MOORE**—Dr Bundy, could you give us a bit of an indication of your background? You obviously have a really strong background in this area. In your submission you are listed only as the editor of that magazine, which is a bit limiting, I think, in terms of your background in this area.

**Dr Bundy**—Thank you, Senator. I have worked in public libraries, TAFE libraries and university libraries in three states. Although I am not a public librarian I am committed to making public libraries as good as possible in Australia, so I have taken it upon myself to try and provide information about public libraries. At a national level, one of the problems is that public library development in Australia has really been segmented. It has been done state by state by state, and sometimes the states do not learn from each other.

**Senator TIERNEY**—We have noticed that.

**Senator MOORE**—Sometimes.

**Dr Bundy**—The Victorians say their model is the only model; in fact we all have something to learn. I have tried to provide a bit of an information bridge for the public librarians and local authorities in Australia. That is the reason I spend time doing these directories, which do not make any money, particularly when I give them away—I did not tell my wife about that, actually. I spend time doing these directories basically to try and let people know what is the current substance of the public library system in Australia: what it already does—and it does many fantastic things already.

One of the things about public libraries is the return on investment. The librarian of the St Louis Public Library in the United States has been doing research on this for a long time—about what is the actual return on investment in public libraries. Looking at five large systems in the US, he has demonstrated that the return is higher than the Dow Jones industrial average. In other words, for every dollar invested in a public library, he worked out, using a very conservative methodology, that in fact there was a return of from \$2.70 up to as high as \$5.50. He says that when he talks to businessmen he uses this as a graph, and he says they are amazed. That is the real return on investment, because the cost of the public library system to each person in Australia is about the cost of one book. It is a pretty good return for six cents a day—much cheaper than the ABC for example—and it is used by a lot more people.

**Senator MOORE**—That is the source of another inquiry as well. One of the things we have found in talking with librarians across a number of states—different sizes, different locations—is their shared passion and their commitment, and also the similarity of the issues they are facing.

**Dr Bundy**—I am pleased to hear that.

**Senator MOORE**—There is a great common good in what we have been hearing. One of the ongoing complaints is that they are limited in the way they can provide services in an online environment because of the cost of the licensing. We have heard from university librarians, we have heard from public librarians who say that their payment of a licence for journals or for information online is dictated by the cost; therefore they cannot open it. Is that something that you have addressed in any of the work you have done?

**Dr Bundy**—That is an issue as you say, Senator, for university libraries, which you can deal with from a consortial point of view. It becomes more of a problem when you cannot negotiate a consortial arrangement, where you have a vendor who is insisting on payment by article rather than payment for broad access. I think that is referred to in the submission from CLASA and PLAIN. That is an issue. I think we will work through some of these issues over the next five years. They are already starting to work through, because vendors are beginning to realise that their approach and their concerns have proved not to be valid. It is going to take some time for them to be worked through. But restricted access is an issue, yes. It is interesting looking at that directory now compared with the last edition four years ago. The number of full text databases in areas like health and law, for example, is immeasurably better in many public libraries in Australia—largely as the result of state initiated consortial arrangements.

**Senator MOORE**—There does seem to be that push. Each state has its own relationship with its state library and it is usually very positive. What we have been looking at is the relationship then with the National Library and the various consortia that are stimulated by the National Library. From your point of view, doing the kind of research that you do, how are they operating—things like Kinetica, the one that does the music, the different things we have seen there?

**Dr Bundy**—They are very significant. In fact Australia in many ways, in terms of its library development—despite its limitations—is actually at the cutting edge, partly because of the demographic characteristics of Australia. I think one of the issues about Kinetica—and I mentioned this in my submission—

**Senator MOORE**—is the cost.

**Dr Bundy**—is that for about \$2 million it could be made available to all Australians. That is peanuts, in effect, but I think the symbolism as well as the practicality of doing that would be extremely important. So that is an issue. You have a fantastic national resource there, which really cannot be accessed freely by libraries around the country and also by end users as well, which I think is a great shame.

**Senator MOORE**—One of the things that has amazed me when listening to the evidence being given by various librarians is that there is this shared passion and identification of shared issues, but I am not hearing a clear national voice. Librarians from Deniliquin, Townsville and all around the place are all identifying similar issues, but I am just wondering whether there is a lobbying power or body—one that is public. If there is, how can it be more vocal, even though they are used to speaking very quietly in libraries?

**Dr Bundy**—You are right—that is an issue for Australia. There have been various attempts to try to coalesce the national interest and public libraries. I guess it is most effectively done through the Council of Australian State Libraries at this stage. It has undertaken some initiatives. But some local public librarians do not see the relationship with their state libraries as a close one. It depends on the states. There are political and other tensions there, anyway. The Australian Library and Information Association claims a primary role and it has certainly been focusing on public library issues. I was national president of the association two years ago and it was certainly interesting itself very much in public library issues. So those are the two major bodies and they are, in fact, endeavouring to work together to try and push the cause. But you are right—there is no single body. I do find a limitation still, as the individual states will tend to work within their state boundaries and not communicate all that much across boundaries to actually see what is going on.

**Senator MOORE**—Is there any level of competition between the states? Generally, there is, but on this particular issue, is there any level of competition between them on their library issues?

**Dr Bundy**—No, I do not think so. I really cannot think of anything significant. There might be a degree of professional jostling, I guess, saying, ‘We do it better than you do.’ That is why I think South Australia, on the whole, when looking at what is actually delivered to the user end, is probably ahead of the other states, even Tasmania.

**Senator MOORE**—In terms of the process, I am interested in the various funding arrangements that operate across the states and the concept of having a national information policy of some kind. The national information policy as such has not come up very often as an issue. What has come up is training for the staff and getting the numbers of librarians. Your submission actually points out a fear about the numbers of professionally trained people in the field. Is there only the one place in South Australia that provides a degree course for librarians?

**Dr Bundy**—Yes—unfortunately, that is my university and it has just decided to stop that degree course.

**Senator MOORE**—I did not know that. Do you know the reason?

**Dr Bundy**—Basically, it is financial.

**Senator MOORE**—So, if I wish to be a librarian and I lived in South Australia, what would my training options be now?

**Dr Bundy**—If you had a degree you could do a postgraduate diploma and still qualify. But you would most likely go to Charles Sturt University as an external student, which is not quite the same as doing it locally. This is particularly an issue for public libraries, because public libraries tend to prefer the people who have done the undergraduate degree rather than the postgraduate qualification. The postgraduate qualification is only a one-year program and it does not really provide much in the way of practical exposure to library issues. Public libraries do not have a major training need after the degree course. So that is an issue.

**CHAIR**—Was there much student demand for the undergraduate degree?

**Dr Bundy**—Yes.

**Senator TIERNEY**—Why wasn't it economic if there is enough student demand for it?

**Dr Bundy**—There was enough student demand to justify retaining the course, but basically the university decided that it had other priorities. Unfortunately, it made the decision, which I did not think was appropriate, that it would discontinue the undergraduate program. Public librarians in South Australia who are concerned about succession planning would regard that with considerable regret.

**Senator MOORE**—From an outsider's point of view, it does seem interesting that the system in South Australia self-identifies as one of which other states would be envious—you have a very well-focused system and all of those things—yet the only undergraduate course to provide professionals for that good system has now ceased to exist. There seems to be a bit of an irony in that.

**Dr Bundy**—Complementary to that, in South Australia, the education of teacher-librarians qualified to run school community libraries is a significant issue because of the greying of the population. There is a problem across Australia—it is not unique to Australia; it is true in the US and other countries—that is rather like the greying of the profession of teaching. A major issue in the UK has been how people are going to implement the People's Network when, in fact, there has been a major loss of middle managers and others out of the system. I know that people in the UK have been very concerned about whether the public libraries have the capacity to pick up on the resources that were actually being provided by the national government.

**Senator TIERNEY**—In relation to your last point, this must be of great concern to the education department here. From where do they source their school librarians if the only course in South Australia has gone?

**Dr Bundy**—No, that course has not gone, but it is very limited in its capacity. One of the problems has been that people wanting to become teacher librarians have had to pay for the program themselves because it is a postgraduate program.

**Senator TIERNEY**—Is it a postgraduate diploma?

**Dr Bundy**—Yes. It is a fiscal issue for them. There is very little encouragement for teachers who decide that they are excited about what libraries are doing and who want to become teacher librarians to then become qualified.

**Senator TIERNEY**—That brings me to an issue I did promise to return to—the e-literacy skills of the librarians in your system. Could you draw us a picture of that and any concerns you might have in that area.

**Dr Bundy**—Libraries started providing computers 30 years ago. In fact, it was one of the very first professions to start grappling with the implications of technology. So I would not want to generalise and say that librarians are computer illiterate; a lot of them are very computer literate. Quite a lot of public libraries run the web sites for their local authorities and generally do a much better job of it than the IT specialists do. I think that is referred to in one of the submissions I

looked at, and I think that is generally true. So there is a lack of appreciation by local government of just how good librarians can be in that context.

**CHAIR**—And state government, too, I think.

**Dr Bundy**—Yes. The issue with public libraries is the lack of numbers of qualified staff to be proactive in selling the potential of the public library to the community. One major issue is the lack of children's librarians. You do need specialist children's librarians to work with the local teacher librarians, to work with other groups in the community as well, in terms of saying, 'How do we now systematically address the development of the literacy of young people in the community?'

**Senator MOORE**—How do you become a children's librarian?

**Dr Bundy**—That is another issue. My understanding is that there is not really much capacity now to become a specialist. In South Australia it used to be possible to do some electives in your undergraduate degree so that you could say you had specialised in the area. But a children's librarian in South Australia might well have to do some programs in a children's literature area rather than in the general undergraduate degree, which is being phased out anyway. So the training of children's librarians is an issue. On the other hand, on a positive note, my calculation is that the number of children's librarians identified as such—or young adult librarians—is increasing. But where they are getting them from, I do not really know.

**Senator MOORE**—And how they are identified as well.

**Dr Bundy**—Yes. There is a shortage in the US as well. They have to import their children's librarians from Canada. One of the issues that occurred is that the library schools in the US went overboard with a technological focus—the information focus—and often dropped the name 'library' from their programs, unfortunately. Canada was rather more conservative and as a result they are now producing the people that are in much demand in the US, and they can now freely move across the border.

**CHAIR**—We have come across that argument even in this inquiry—about whether it is information management or librarianship or whatever.

**Dr Bundy**—I think librarianship is a term which in fact is the holistic concept and does involve the issue of values. That is one of the reasons why librarians tend to be passionate about what libraries do, because there is a question of core values and that is the reason why there is this focus on equity. I heard a CEO of a local authority say that he really could not understand why librarians were so passionate about libraries. You could say that you have to be passionate about people, and passionate about people having the capacity to improve themselves.

**Senator TIERNEY**—Finally, I refer to Australia's responsibilities to developing countries and libraries in developing countries. Last year I led a parliamentary delegation to Nigeria. We were standing in a library in Abuja where they presented me with a book. Your first response would be to rush over and stick it on the shelves because two-thirds of the shelves had nothing on them. We did once have a program regarding surplus books. When you get to the 12th edition of *Samuelson's Economics* you can probably give away the 11th edition—we used to send those

overseas. Having regard to your long history in libraries, could you provide us with some perspective on how we can get back into such a program?

**Dr Bundy**—That scheme was called ACPAD. It meant that, instead of sending rubbish overseas, items were in fact carefully evaluated and were despatched centrally from Canberra. I had some interaction with Mr Downer about this as my federal member, and I tried to persuade both him and the government that this was very short-sighted. The total cost was miniscule and it did not do anything for Australia's image. East Timor is an example. Well-meaning people sent materials to East Timor, and I know people who have been there to try to organise these materials and a lot of rubbish has ended up there; this does nothing, basically, for these countries.

**Senator TIERNEY**—How long ago did this program disappear?

**Dr Bundy**—It was about a year after the Howard government came into office.

**Senator TIERNEY**—So when you put this to Mr Downer, did he have much interest in it?

**Dr Bundy**—I talked from an international perspective that it was important, but he simply said, 'We've got to cut things,' and he promised to investigate it.

**Senator TIERNEY**—This was part of the Beazley \$10 billion black hole, I take it.

**Dr Bundy**—Yes. It was at the same time that the money available for the online initiative was cut back.

**Senator TIERNEY**—So it was still the black hole exercise.

**Dr Bundy**—It was cut back as well.

**Senator TIERNEY**—A lot of things were cut back, and a lot of things have been restored in the past seven years out of that.

**Dr Bundy**—For example, my library, and any dynamic library, is always relegating materials—as you said, the 10th edition of *Samuelson's Economics* or whatever—that in fact other countries are begging for. We have no other way really of disposing of those materials other than to put them out for students to buy at a dollar a time. I would much rather they were going overseas where people actually want English-language materials, particularly to countries in our area such as East Timor, Fiji et cetera. But the cost of transportation is so large that it would be an impost on my university's library budget, which we just cannot afford.

**Senator TIERNEY**—It might be time for you to have that conversation with him again, and I might have a similar conversation and something might happen.

**Dr Bundy**—Okay, can I quote you when I go to see him?

**Senator TIERNEY**—Please do not; I am sure he will read the *Hansard* anyway.

**Dr Bundy**—Yes.

**Senator MOORE**—Dr Bundy, we have talked with librarians about whether the availability of Internet and online facilities in libraries has changed the population of people visiting them, and there have been mixed responses about that. Do you, with all research that you do, have a view about whether there are new and different people going into libraries as a result of the Internet facilities?

**Dr Bundy**—Generally it has proved to be a marketing magnet. I have certainly heard and read comments to the effect that it has broadened the lives of young people. One of the challenges for public librarians is the demographics of usage, in that middle-aged males tend not to use them directly; it normally tends to be the lady of the house who borrows the materials.

**Senator MOORE**—Like doctors.

**Dr Bundy**—That is right; indeed, that is a good analogy. Some public libraries are putting a lot of effort into creating special spaces for young people. For example, I have just visited a library at Teatree Gully here in South Australia, which opened only about two months ago, and it has a coffee shop in it.

**Senator MOORE**—Great.

**Dr Bundy**—It is rather like the Borders bookstores. Increasingly, public libraries are trying to provide those facilities, and when I went in there last week it was jam-packed with young people. I think the attraction was, in large measure, the technology, but I saw young people using the whole range of resources that a public library now provides. Books are still a very important part of the role of public libraries and always will be, but there are just so many other resources available as well.

**CHAIR**—We will have to get McDonald's in to sponsor some public libraries as well.

**Dr Bundy**—I think there has actually been some sort of discussion about what the implications of that might be.

**CHAIR**—You talked with Senator Tierney about the issue of teacher librarians being attracted to training. Has the introduction of full fees to the postgraduate diplomas changed the enrolment attractiveness of those courses?

**Dr Bundy**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Have you seen numbers and demand discernibly drop off?

**Dr Bundy**—My understanding is yes. This is of concern because, in South Australia, in the majority of the school-community libraries the teacher librarians now running them, who are also the public librarians, will be retiring in the not too distant future. The real issue is: who will replace them? A response in part to Senator Tierney's question is that what is tending to happen is that the education department has no alternative but to employ unqualified people. This is an important issue.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much for your evidence this afternoon. It has been very helpful to the committee. Thank you for your very detailed submission and for the presents.

**Dr Bundy**—That is my pleasure, thank you.

[3.46 p.m.]

**PAULL, Ms Tania Dawn, Associate Director, PLAIN Central Services; and Representative, Council of Library Administrators of South Australia**

**STREMPEL, Mr Geoffrey Paul, Vice President, Council of Library Administrators of South Australia**

**CHAIR**—I welcome our witnesses in relation to submission No. 146. Thank you both for your time this afternoon. It is very much appreciated by the committee. The committee has before it your submission, which we have already published. Would you like to make any alterations or corrections to that written submission at this stage?

**Ms Paull**—No.

**Mr Stempel**—No, we do not wish to.

**CHAIR**—That is good. The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public, but should you at any stage wish to give your evidence, part of your evidence or answers to specific questions in private you may ask to do so and we will consider your request. You are reminded that the evidence given to the committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. I also inform you that the giving of false or misleading evidence to the committee may constitute a contempt of the Senate. I now invite you to make an opening statement. Who wants to go first?

**Mr Stempel**—I will; thank you. I would like to start our opening statement by referring to a couple of the comments I heard in the question and answer session with Dr Bundy, who is well regarded here in South Australia for his information and knowledge of South Australian public libraries as well as nationally. I would like to pick up a couple of points that Senator Claire Moore made as well in relation to the passion that the profession holds around Australia and, yet, its at times disparate voice and lack of national cohesion on some issues.

I would echo the words of Dr Bundy in saying that South Australia in some ways has advantages from being a small state. We can operate as one network, and the public libraries of South Australia are a network. They get together on a regular basis, purchase library materials through PLAIN Central Services together, buy online resources together, buy Internet access together et cetera. The benefits we get from that are significant discounts and a degree of cross-subsidisation from metro to country which allows for free Internet access to be provided across the state, through an agreement between all the public libraries in South Australia.

We have a passion for the greater good of the community. This is one of the few professions where you will find there are working relationships with people across the nation, and even internationally, to acquire materials on loan for our customers at no cost to the end user. You would not find in too many local governments people wanting to share their graders or any of those sorts of things. Certainly public librarians have a long and proud tradition of sharing information and that has continued beyond the book into the online environment.

A national body has recently started which may have come onto your horizon while you have been touring the country. It is attempting to begin to provide a voice and it will be housed in Canberra to talk directly to federal politicians. That group is called Public Libraries Australia, and Tania and I have been foundation South Australia representatives to get that group off the ground. CLASA, the group that I represent, has been a funder to ensure that that group, hopefully, will become a single voice for public library issues on the national stage. Probably the important thing to say from our point of view about online access is that we are passionate believers in access to online information, particularly in small places with limited collections. You heard from Dr Bundy today about how that works in South Australia with our joint use libraries.

I think Senator Tierney asked, 'Give me an example of the smallest public library in South Australia.' If you went to a little town called Browns Well, about 35 kilometres south of Loxton, you would find a community with probably 20 houses that buses in its children and has, prior to council amalgamations, a total catchment of about 350 people in the council area. That has a school community library which has free access to the Internet. It opens outside of normal school hours as well as during school hours for people to access that. That school community library has access to that as a result of being part of a state-wide network and it has cross-subsidies to allow it to do that.

One of the challenges that we face is that we have had to fund all of our online access, state-wide network et cetera from within existing budgets. It is about recasting an existing shrinking pie, particularly when you look at the fact that we took the money for our online resources out of our print resources and when you look at the prices of library materials—and there is some debate about the impact of the GST on the price of library materials—but also what has happened with the Australian dollar. We have found a shrinking ability to buy library materials to meet the needs of our community and we have diverted a fair amount of our money into online access to information. That money is paying for the infrastructure and online databases.

We are passionate about online information because the information can be very current. It is also interactive with the authors or creators of the information. Information is all very well in a static form, but for somebody to be able to not just read a report but contact the author and begin a dialogue to be able to further their understanding is an important thing that the Internet has brought to us. Quite obviously, we know that a significant amount of the information on the Internet is to be questioned, and one of the things that we have attempted to do as a profession is to buy a number of online resources that are purchased on a consortium basis for all councils across the state and every public library. Some of the very small councils are paying less than \$100 a year to have access to some of the resources we have bought—online databases such as EBSCO and GALE Health and Wellness Resource Centre et cetera. People in those communities, as taxpayers in South Australia, are getting access to databases wherever they live, on a per capita basis, and therefore at very low rates of price to their local communities.

The difficulties that we face are that sometimes the technology means that we find it very hard to purchase databases that have a per use cost associated with them, because if we do that we find it really hard to control cost. Therefore we are buying databases that have a one-off fee attached to them at the start of the year for unlimited use. We have lots of other resources we would like to have access to, but a range of issues related to budget and technology et cetera have limited our ability to take more online access into our community. A number of us have had

a range of conversations about working toward an outcome whereby 10-plus per cent of all of our transactions with all of our customers happen without the person setting foot in the door. We believe that people's lives are busy and they are challenged with many different things that confront them and we would like to continue to value-add in their lives so that they continue to see the public library as a vital part of their daily information decision making, without necessarily having to front up to a building. The advantage is not only that lack of travel, but also the 24 by seven access. We are certainly passionate. We have embraced it. We think it is fantastic, but we are challenged by a significant number of issues that I have already heard you refer to with people before you today.

**CHAIR**—Thank you for this submission. It is fascinating trying to get a handle on how all the different libraries operate in each different state. South Australia seems to be a lot more organised than some states we have looked at in terms of how you have put it all together with a central library services system. You talk about how you have access to the Internet via a state-wide wide area network. Further on, you talk about the cost of broadband and the problems that is causing for libraries. Could you expand on what your network is and how the costs all fit together?

**Mr Stempel**—That is probably Tania's province.

**Ms Paull**—As Geoff mentioned, we originally went into providing Internet access through Networking the Nation funds, also creaming off some of those materials funds. We set up one network across the state, where we provide the communications costs and purchase the Internet bandwidth. We have provided that across all of our area. It is a combination of local hubs. When we started back in 1996, some communities did not have ISPs so we had to go into partnership with some very small companies—Camtech was one at that stage—and set up ISPs in local areas, especially on our west coast, in Ceduna, Port Lincoln and those sorts of areas. We have grown over the years. Most of it now is running through the Telstra broadband and we are moving in that direction. We are spending nearly \$900,000 on just that Internet access.

**CHAIR**—You talk about the rapid increases in demand, and on page 8 you have a very scary graph about the rapid increases in demand for broadband. What do you think that will mean for your budgets in coming years?

**Ms Paull**—This is our difficulty. The difference in how the Internet is used in libraries, in terms of relating it to a business model, is that a business user will have Internet access in their office and use it throughout the day on and off—there may be a total of two hours of use a day—whereas in a library it is a matter of continuous access all day, every day, so whatever the hours of opening you have solid use of that bandwidth.

**CHAIR**—And you are trying to pull out as much as you can in your half-hour.

**Ms Paull**—That is right. We are starting off with a two-meg link at the moment. We are currently in the process of increasing that to a two- to five-meg link. But we know that, as soon as we put that five-meg link in, all our users will just use that to capacity as well—what they were downloading in 10 minutes they will be able to download in one minute—so for us it is almost a never-ending goal. Whenever you change the access, they will use it to capacity. It is a very different model from the business desktop use that you have. So we feel that these figures

are really quite realistic as to the growth. We are also seeing that the Internet is more complex. More graphics with video streaming, music and all of those sorts of things are really what people are using.

**Senator MOORE**—And family histories.

**Ms Paull**—Yes. Digitising is another. All of the product needs much more bandwidth.

**Mr Stempel**—One of the things that is happening for public libraries is that we are going into the online world as publishers while using it ourselves for our business tools. Many of us are now going to online catalogues—local history digitisation of photos et cetera—which we are putting out there. That means many people are needing access to the Internet to use some of the tools that we are relying on this network to run for us.

**CHAIR**—On page 8 you talk about News Ltd's web site, and presumably Fairfax has the same thing because they charge me for it as well. I do not know what the answer to that is. Have there been any discussions as to those sorts of databases?

**Ms Paull**—Yes. We tried to negotiate a set fee. We asked if we could pay X amount of dollars per year, but they are not really interested in that because they feel we may overuse it, even though we say they can come back and renew it if we are overusing it. For us it is very difficult to have an unlimited charge by use because we may use the budget up within a month within a library.

**CHAIR**—Given that you are huge subscribers across your whole system to their newspapers, you would think that they would make an exception.

**Mr Stempel**—Interestingly enough, News Corp's first venture into online services to customers started here in Adelaide with a service called Presscom, which has been around a long time. In those days the reason why it was a fee per use system was that they said it was the only way that the technology would work. Now that the Internet has arrived, they have had to find a different argument to justify why it is still fee per use. I would like to see that changed.

**CHAIR**—They can always find an argument.

**Ms Paull**—I think there is some new technology—object codes—coming in whereby you may be able to download a section for free but if you want the whole article there is a way of charging. So it is about how the technology is working. That is the next move ahead.

**CHAIR**—I think the *Economist* does that with its web site.

**Mr Stempel**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—On page 7 you talk about online initiatives such as:

Implementing national standards for technologies such as XML and Z39.50, to enable users to search multiple websites from a single, familiar interface.

What is that all about?

**Mr Stempel**—I will start with Z39.50. It is a particularly peculiar library standard, which is an international standard, about the exchange of information between disparate library systems operated by different vendors. It would mean that I could use my screen here to be able to look at a university or anywhere else and do a search of their information and it would come back to me in an entirely intelligible form from myriad different vendors or suppliers. In some ways it has been a holy grail of library vendors. Although they are competing, because they are working in a sector which is strongly collaborative they have had to work within collaborative international standards because we keep saying we do not want to buy their product if our customers cannot look at the uni database or whatever. So that is what that standard is about. All of the library vendors will tell you theirs are Z39.50 compliant but, as with all standards, they have implemented them in slightly different ways. They are now revising them so that there is almost entire compliance around Z39.50.

**Ms Paull**—It is not becoming the main standard any more where XML is taking over that role. It was too difficult to get the systems to be compliant. It is not as important to the vendors as it used to be. As they have moved into web catalogues, the Internet technology and the standards around that through XML are really going to be the new way.

**Mr Stempel**—Z39.50 is almost 20 years old, so it has been overtaken by more recent technology.

**Senator TIERNEY**—Are you saying that the technology for the split charge system—if they want to download the first two pages free and then the other is at a cost—is going to be widely available soon, if libraries want to bring in such a system? In Launceston they were charging because they were competing with Internet cafes.

**Ms Paull**—It is something that they are looking at through the body that sets up ISBNs for books. It is like an object ISBN where you can add a component. I do not think it is in world production yet, but it is something they are working towards.

**Mr Stempel**—However, once again my comment about it is that what the technology may allow is not necessarily what the profession would prefer. We have always said that access to information is the job of librarians. Their job is not about lending books; it is about providing access to information regardless of the medium in which it comes. Given the fact that taxpayers have paid once for their library, we do not think that they should have to pay twice by having to download information at a cost. It is no different from lending them a book in that sense.

**Senator TIERNEY**—It is really.

**Mr Stempel**—It is hiring them a book.

**Senator TIERNEY**—I wonder whether you think it is time to rethink that in the information age—

**Mr Stempel**—I hear what you say, Senator Tierney.

**Senator TIERNEY**—because of the scale of capacity that people can download and, I suppose, in a sense abuse the resource because it is free. We heard today that in South Australia your resources in libraries in real terms have not gone up at all in 10 years.

**Mr Stempel**—That is correct.

**Senator TIERNEY**—Yet we have had the information revolution. You are obviously funding that out of reducing book budgets. You can use health care cards to give access to people who really cannot pay. By making this free, you are really subsidising people to buy their second cars, yachts or second TVs, while you are struggling for resources. Do you think that is really a sensible way to go in the information age?

**Ms Paull**—I suppose it depends whether you live in Burnside or Salisbury.

**Senator TIERNEY**—Yes, but I am saying that you could give concessions in the system.

**Mr Stempel**—I think we are touching on a fairly hot political debate—health care cards et cetera. If we had the same budget as Medicare, we would probably be having a different conversation.

**Senator TIERNEY**—You would not have the same costs, though.

**Mr Stempel**—Yes. I do not want to portray that we have not moved on professionally in rethinking these issues. They are hotly debated in the profession and we are looking always at the margins of how do the sacred cows not get protected for ever if the world has moved on. However, one of the issues we do face is that we appear to be having an economic drive towards perhaps leaving some people less able to provide for their own needs. I would not like to face the situation where somebody coming from the doctor with a child diagnosed with a disease comes to me and I would say, ‘Yes, if you would like to read articles about the disease, they are on the Internet. It will cost you \$4.50 a copy.’ That is not the way I would like to work. I have chosen to work in public libraries for a very good reason. I do not work in corporate libraries because I am passionate about providing access to all members of the community without asking them about their capacity to pay. That is why I have chosen the profession. I will continue debating the argument.

**Senator TIERNEY**—But you would not charge them \$4.50, would you? You might charge them a dollar. If they had a health care card, you would not charge them anything.

**Mr Stempel**—If it is full cost recovery—

**Senator TIERNEY**—I am not necessarily saying that it should be full cost recovery.

**Mr Stempel**—I chose the figure of \$4.50. Whatever figure—

**Senator TIERNEY**—You could actually manipulate supply and demand—

**Mr Stempel**—Yes you could.

**Senator TIERNEY**—and stop people using systems if you had a small charge. It is an amazing block sometimes.

**Ms Paull**—What happens in libraries is that those who can afford it move on to having Internet access at home and subscribing to those sorts of services themselves because they can. That is the changing world that going online provides you. The ones who can will have it at home and will use the gateways into libraries to access us.

**Senator TIERNEY**—It is 40 per cent of the community.

**Ms Paull**—That is right. But you have that 60 per cent of the community who may not have that access. The world is changing, but public libraries are primarily about providing equity of access and making sure that we do not end up with that digital divide. I think there is a real case for that.

**Senator TIERNEY**—What is wrong with what I propose? What digital divide does that create? If you implement it the way I suggest, how is there a digital divide? I am saying that people who can afford it should make some small payment, but those who cannot—those with a concession card or whatever—do not pay.

**Mr Stempel**—I would like to take this in a slightly different direction. I see one of the other roles of libraries as—

**Senator TIERNEY**—Before you take this in a different direction, could we have an answer?

**Mr Stempel**—This is the answer to your question. One of the things we do is not dissimilar to wine tasting. The vendor at the wine place is quite happy to give you all a free sample on the basis that if you like it you will buy some. We see ourselves as providing the free taste for people, and those who can afford it go on and buy it. Anecdotally, I could give you many examples of people who have come down and used us for a while and then we do not see them. Then occasionally we do seem them and we will say, 'I haven't seen you for a while.' They say: 'I have bought my own computer. What you showed me was fantastic.' This is a retired person who did not own a computer and was not at all interested, who got switched on, bought a computer and now visits me occasionally. One of the things you are wanting to do is get Australians connected and switched on to access to information—

**Senator TIERNEY**—With sufficient resources to do it. Our problem at the moment is that there will not be the resources.

**Mr Stempel**—I think it is a discussion that could go forever. There will always be people on either side of a philosophical debate and that is where it will stay.

**Senator TIERNEY**—It would be a pity if a mantra blocks extension of all this.

**Mr Stempel**—I agree with you, yes.

**Senator MOORE**—I won't enter that one because we could go for days on that. One of the things we have heard about is the fact that the infrastructure of hardware amongst libraries

comes from a whole range of different areas, some funded by the state, some through local government and some through Networking the Nation funding. The problem with the Networking the Nation funding is that it has a fixed life and you then have to go through the process, within your budget, of saying, 'Will we keep them?' And I am sure you do not get rid of them. So how do you plan, in terms of your wide network, with the Networking the Nation gift?

**Ms Paull**—It is a problem, but it is about education. We use Networking the Nation equipment for our country libraries. They all received between one and three PCs. We have encouraged them to then get into the budget cycles of their councils. We provided one upgrade within the life span of that—

**Mr Stempel**—And that was it.

**Ms Paull**—But it is very difficult for them, within these very small libraries, to find even \$3,000. So it is a little bit about education.

**Senator MOORE**—In a community of 300 people.

**Ms Paull**—Yes. It is a real issue.

**Mr Stempel**—I think it was a fantastic gift, and you do not look a gift-horse in the mouth. It was a one-off and that is the difficulty about it. However, it did leapfrog a whole lot of communities into the information age and gave them a three-year window to consider how they would fund it in an ongoing environment. So it did a couple of things: it dragged some people in and got them switched on and it saw their community using it. Lots of the elected members in those small communities had questioned whether their community would use it. When they saw the rate at which people were using the Networking the Nation PCs, they had no option but to fund replacements, but they had three years to think about how they were going to do it.

**Senator MOORE**—And those local government agencies use the figures that you provide? The data you provide is the best information?

**Ms Paull**—Yes.

**Mr Stempel**—I am one of the recipients of Networking the Nation PCs—so, yes.

**Senator MOORE**—That is good.

**Ms Paull**—I think it also generated some contracts. Some of the larger companies would say: 'We will do a special deal. We can see that it is a good thing.' There was a little bit of cooperation happening and purchasing across different local government areas. I think the MAPS contracts had some PCs on them. So a bit of cooperation was generated out of it.

**Senator MOORE**—What about the added cost of providing computers accessible to people with disabilities? Has that issue been taken up?

**Ms Paull**—It has been more at an individual level. Most local governments in South Australia have disability action plans and, through those, keyboard access, large monitors and adaptive technologies were added to at least one PC within most libraries.

**Senator MOORE**—I have asked two questions of previous witnesses. One has to do with how you monitor and maintain the training of staff, and we have heard from Dr Bundy about the issues in South Australia. The other question I tend to ask is about the different groups of people who are coming into the libraries. Has that been observed by you? What is your experience in South Australia? They are the two questions, so just have a go at them.

**Mr Stempel**—I will take the first question about training. It is an issue. CLASA is the professional association that undertakes a fair bit of that training. We meet on a quarterly basis and people come from across the state, for at least a day and sometimes longer. We make sure that we have professional development speakers et cetera. That is about the broad brush of where the profession is going, and we bring in people who are doing some interesting things nationally. At times, we cooperate with other states and get international speakers as well to let people know where things are going.

The day-to-day training—the ability to get your hands inside a PC, to write a webpage or those sorts of things—has really been through some professional development activities that have been collaborated on through networks of librarians who will undertake short courses, two-day seminars and so on. I think any profession, if it wants to continue to call itself a profession, needs to undertake continuing professional education. Within my council area, we have run a number of courses that have been developed by my staff, who are probably some of the best technology people in the state. We have then provided those to other councils as well. So there is some in-house training and some very formal modules of competency based training so that staff can prove quite clearly that they can use these databases, solve these problems or whatever it may be. We use in-house training, but we are fortunate in that we are a relatively large council.

**Senator MOORE**—In your experience, has that been shared across states? There does seem to be variation.

**Mr Stempel**—No. We have some dialogue with people interstate, and that is fantastic, but very little of that level of hands-on training has been transmitted from state to state.

**Ms Paull**—We have a lot of regional and country councils with one- or two-person libraries. It is very difficult for them to access that training or even to be released, particularly in school community libraries, for two days to come to Adelaide to do some training. Not much of it is really delivered online, even though it is about online materials. So there is a gap there. I do not think we are really targeting that training. There are IT courses around, but nothing is created particularly for library staff other than the in-house projects that Geoff has talked about.

**Senator MOORE**—What about the second issue: are there different people?

**Ms Paull**—Different access?

**Senator MOORE**—Yes.

**Ms Paull**—Previously, I worked at Salisbury public library, which is the major public library in South Australia. I really noticed the number of young men aged 18 to 25 coming in. That is a key group who usually leave the library once they are 15 not to be seen again until they are about 50. So that is a new group of users. Also, older people who have the time to learn are coming in for Internet lessons and email. They have a use for the Internet, particularly if they have to use some government services or if they would like to learn online banking and those sorts of things. I would say that the older age group is using email and services, while the younger age group is there for general Internet use. They would be two key areas.

**Senator MOORE**—And that is discernibly different from the previous situation?

**Ms Paull**—Yes.

**Mr Stempel**—It is almost a one-stop shop. People can go online to see what jobs are available; use the word processor to type out their resume and get that all organised; and then go off to apply for the position.

**Senator MOORE**—I am particularly interested in the issue of the Job Network stuff, given that so many people now are under a commitment to seek work and that a lot of the work is available through that process. Do people use the libraries for that purpose?

**Mr Stempel**—Very much so. One of the difficulties we face is that we get lots of people with very low computer skills. They are looking for unskilled work, but the only way to look for it is online.

**Ms Paull**—And then they cannot type their resume either.

**Mr Stempel**—We spend a fair bit of our time running courses about resume writing, how to use the Internet to search for a job and lots of those things to try to upskill that group of people.

**Senator MOORE**—Do you know whether there is any linkage with the local Centrelink network on that basis or any cooperative arrangements?

**Ms Paull**—No. We tried to do that at Salisbury but it is very difficult.

**Senator MOORE**—There is a big Centrelink office.

**Ms Paull**—It was too hard for the big Centrelink office. We were saying, ‘We are getting all your customers. Can we do something to help you?’ It was very difficult.

**Senator MOORE**—It was across information.

**Ms Paull**—There is huge potential. Libraries could do that. One other problem is that libraries often have very small spaces where their PCs are.

**Senator MOORE**—In the corner.

**Ms Paull**—Yes. Often when you are doing a resume or something work related you need a two-hour block and a more private space to do that thinking work and the writing. Internet demand means that you have a one-hour or 15-minute block and then you are off the PC. It is a bit of an issue that libraries do not have the capacity; you really need two areas.

**Senator MOORE**—But there is a need.

**Ms Paull**—There is a need.

**CHAIR**—I was listening to the minister for employment services on radio this morning advocating that people go to their public library to access JobSearch. I was wondering how much money Job Network has given you to do that. That is what I thought.

**Mr Stempel**—We are always pleased when federal politicians talk about their public libraries. We would just like them to fund them occasionally.

**CHAIR**—That is right, yes.

**Ms Paull**—That is a good partnership. There are lots of partnerships where public libraries could deliver a lot of things.

**Senator MOORE**—They are also often closely located to community centres.

**Mr Stempel**—Absolutely, and they have long opening hours. The libraries that I work in are opening after hours and evenings et cetera six or seven days a week so they could be a point of delivery in country towns for a whole lot of online services. We put submissions to the state government when they were looking at online service delivery that we would be quite happy to work with them on a fee basis—what it was worth—to work with the community. We would become a brokered delivery point—not a kiosk with no-one to teach people how to use online services but with people who can value-add and who have a commitment to information access. We are more than happy to explore realms outside books or whatever about how we can partner with governments to assist them to get service delivery into the far-flung regions of the state.

**Senator MOORE**—In Senator Tchen's absence, I will ask his question about whether the online facilities have created any tension in the library. As the new users are coming in, are there any differences in their behaviour? Are there any difficulties with other user groups or that kind of thing?

**Ms Paull**—All library users are quite demanding. Probably the only pressure is the number of staff you have. Browsing for a book can be an activity that you do on your own. So can using the Internet, but if you need help—and sometimes someone who needs help is a new user to the Internet; they do not know how to use a mouse or they do not know where their screen disappears to—it can be very time consuming, but so can assisting someone in the library to find their topic.

**Mr Stempel**—In response to the question about the clash of cultures between different users, yes, that is a potential problem, but we get the same problem when we run kids' activities and

there are 30 screaming kids and there is someone who wants to be very quiet in another corner. That is a traditional issue for us in managing different and competing needs.

**Ms Paull**—It is not new.

**Mr Stempel**—We have always had them and we attempt to manage them to the best of our abilities.

**Ms Paull**—Most libraries have set up their Internet access where it is very accessible to the staff so they can interact with all their user groups quite well.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much for your time this afternoon.

**Ms Paull**—Could we add one more comment on something that we have not really talked about?

**CHAIR**—You certainly can.

**Ms Paull**—One area that we are looking at is broadband access in country areas—the last mile and all those questions. If we look at our main regional areas, we see the Commonwealth Internet going in through Centrelink, health and education services, libraries and local government. There should be a way to aggregate that bandwidth to provide much better services for those areas, but we are all providing individual services. Libraries could help facilitate some of that aggregation and provide community access with some of the broadband that would not be used if you lumped it all together. That is one area to which libraries could contribute.

**Senator MOORE**—As a hub.

**Ms Paull**—Yes.

**Mr Stempel**—We had done that in the past when we first rolled out the Internet to tiny areas in country South Australia. We hooked up a couple of businesses and the local council office et cetera because they were the only Internet points in town. By inclination as a profession, we are about networking and sharing. We are used to doing things with not a lot so we are always looking for opportunities to work with other people.

**CHAIR**—That concludes today's proceedings. I thank all the witnesses for their informative presentations. The committee will now have a quick look around the new State Library building before travelling to Bunbury tomorrow to continue its hearing. I declare this hearing closed.

**Committee adjourned at 4.21 p.m.**