



Australian Library and
Information Association

ALIA submission in response to the Australian Government Inquiry into Canberra's national institutions

April 2018

1. About us

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is the professional organisation and peak body for the Australian library and information services sector.

On behalf of our 5,000 personal and institutional members, we provide the national voice of the profession in the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services to the nation, through leadership, advocacy and mutual support. We represent school, public, academic, research, corporate, law, health, government, National, State and Territory libraries and the people who staff them.

2. Terms of reference

In our submission, we will be addressing the first three terms of reference:

1. creating a strong brand and online presence
2. experimenting with new forms of public engagement and audience participation
3. conducting outreach outside of Canberra.

3. National Library of Australia

The library sector across Australia is proud of the achievements of our National Library in Canberra. While it has no mandated responsibility for other libraries, the National Library has consistently demonstrated innovation, leadership and collaboration, contributing to advances in library work nationally and internationally.

3.1 Strong brand and online presence

Brand

The building itself is an iconic feature of the Canberra lakeside. During its 50-year history, it has contributed to a strong sense of place and recent refurbishments of the Reading Rooms and public spaces have only enhanced this position.

Using a combination of building graphic and typography for the National Library's logo has increased its impact, and this is reflected across website and print materials.

The National Library's exciting and ambitious exhibition program provides a leisure and learning opportunity for locals and an attractive draw for tourists. A succession of high profile exhibitions (Celestial Empire; Dombrovskis, Journeys into the Wild; 1968: Changing Times) and the renovation of the Treasures Gallery have built the National Library's brand as a serious contender for interstate and international visitors.

Online presence

Trove is the fourth most visited Australian Government website. It has nearly 250,000 registered public users and serves more than 20 million unique users each year.

3.2 Experimenting with new forms of public engagement and audience participation

Research engagement

The National Library has strengthened its position as an essential part of the humanities research infrastructure, through its outstanding collections of Australian and Asian works; its commitment to digitisation of priority sources, such as Australian historical newspapers, and through its investment in Trove, PANDORA and the Australian Government Web Archive. In addition to academic researchers, these sources are of enormous benefit to family historians, teachers, students, writers and entrepreneurs.

Volunteer participation

As well as the kind of volunteer and Friends programs one would expect in a cultural institution, there are some 2,000 volunteer members of the Trove community, who carry out newspaper text corrections. These corrections total nearly 265 million, since the project began 10 years ago.

3.3 Conducting outreach outside of Canberra

Legal deposit

Legal deposit legislation ensures that Australian publications are collected and preserved by the National Library of Australia. While other states and territories have arrangements for local creators, the National Library is the home of the national collection.

With the advent of e-legal deposit for electronic resources, the National Library in Canberra has become the engine room for the National eDeposit (NED) project of the National and State Libraries Australasia. This collaboration will result in a co-funded approach, reducing duplication and creating efficiencies for publishers and end users, wherever they are based in Australia.

Other services for publishers and the library community

Prepublication Data Services are free for Australian publishers and self-publishing authors, providing catalogue records to ease the shelf-ready process for libraries, library suppliers and other participants in the supply chain. This central service avoids overlap and creates a streamlined process for the publishing industry.

For more than 30 years, Libraries Australia has provided libraries nationwide with essential tools and resources, including interlibrary loans, document delivery, cataloguing and data management, and access to the Australian National Bibliographic Database, a pooled database of records and holdings maintained by the National Library.

Libraries Australia is an essential service used by more than 1200 state, territory, public, academic, research and special libraries. It provides an efficient, informed, national approach to back-of-house library processes.

In the same vein, ALIA is pleased to partner with the National Library of Australia to set service-level standards and recommended prices for interlibrary loans through the Inter Library Resource Sharing code, and to contribute to the international metadata movement through our joint ALIA/NLA Australian Committee on Cataloguing.

Indigenous collections and services

The National Library has this year recruited an Indigenous Curator, to implement the Library's strategy for further work on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collections and services. The Library works closely with AIATSIS in this arena, which extends well beyond the boundaries of the ACT.

Cultural sector

In addition to acting as the agency for Community Heritage Grants, the National Library has been an active member of GLAM Peak since its founding in 2015. The Trove team has supported the delivery of workshops for staff and volunteers from galleries, libraries, archives and museums in 10 regional locations, in every state and territory during 2017-2018.

Asia Pacific neighbours

The National Library supports the collection of print and electronic resources in the Asia Pacific, through involvement with the Internet Archive and the Archive-It initiative. It also maintains an office in Jakarta to further this agenda.

Fellowships and scholarships

Individual grants provide an opportunity for researchers, writers, artists and other creators from across Australia to take advantage of the National Library collections in situ, to create new works and advance scholarship.

4. Summary

On behalf of our members, representing libraries Australia-wide, ALIA can say that the National Library of Australia plays a vital and unique role in supporting library and information professionals nationally and internationally.

- No other institution in the library sector could fulfil the roles and activities adopted by the National Library over five decades.
- The organisation has shown extraordinary foresight, creativity and invention in the way it has developed its digital services and its online presence, almost exclusively from core operational funding.
- The National Library has been recognised by peers around the world for its leadership and innovation, acting as a flagship example of Australian style and ingenuity.

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