CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   As a former President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, once said, 'Information is the currency of democracy.' The Unesco Public Libraries manifesto of 1994 elaborated on this:

> Freedom, prosperity and the development of society and of individuals are fundamental human values. They will only be attained through the ability of well informed citizens to exercise their democratic rights and to play an active role in society. Constructive participation and the development of democracy depend on satisfactory education as well as on free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information.

> The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision making and cultural development of the individual and social groups. This manifesto proclaims Unesco's belief in the public library as a living force for education, culture and information, and as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women. Unesco therefore encourages national and local governments to support and actively engage in the development of public libraries.[1]

1.2   Similar sentiments were echoed by many participants in the committee's inquiry. Dr Bundy, for example, submitted that 'the free flow of information, and the capacity of people to use that information, remains the cornerstone of a thriving economy, culture and democracy'.[2] So much seems uncontentious, in the Australian context. But how should we ensure that free flow of information, and what role do libraries currently play in the process? And what role might they play in the future, in an online environment? That is the subject of this report.

1.3   In this inquiry, the committee has taken a broad approach to the term 'public information', taking it to mean any information made freely available for public use, but also including information made available for a fee. The term 'online environment' has been taken to include any relevant Internet-enabled operations. The committee has

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1   As quoted in Alan Bundy, *Changing lives, making the difference: the 21st century public library,*Paper presented 31 July 2002 to the Annual General meeting of the Friends of Mitchell Library, p. 1.

2   Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee, Reference: Role of Libraries in the Online Environment, *Submission* 3, p. 1. [Hereafter *Submission* or *Evidence* indicates submission or evidence to this inquiry, unless otherwise stated]

concentrated its attention on public libraries but where relevant has addressed specific issues relating to school, academic and specialist libraries. The committee has not excluded from its consideration the online provision of government and private services, as they appear to be inextricably linked to the provision of information per se.

Public library provision in Australia

1.4   Public libraries in Australia are a relatively recent development. The State Library of Victoria, founded in 1856, claims to be the oldest free public library. Until the 1930s, the typical local library, if one existed, was a School of Arts Library or Mechanics Institute, open to subscription only. Following the Munn-Pitt Report in 1935, library services were established by legislation: in New South Wales in 1939; Queensland and Tasmania in 1943; Victoria in 1946; Western Australia in 1951; and South Australia in 1955.

1.5   Broadly speaking, these state library Acts establish boards or councils to promote, provide and maintain library and information services for the people, while local government Acts empower councils to construct and provide public libraries. Variations in funding levels and services depend in part on the organisational arrangements between the state and the local libraries, and in part on the policies and priorities of both the state and local governments of the day. Funding can vary considerably, from year to year. No legislation requires a local government authority to provide a library service but virtually all choose to do so. A common requirement is that all core services must be free. 'Core' services were fairly easy to define in the mid-20th century and covered, for example, the right to borrow books and to be assisted to find information. The concept of a 'core' service is less clear today and has been increasingly the subject of review as in the current case of the New South Wales Library Act.

1.6   By 1975, it had become apparent that library service across the country was uneven. A federal committee of inquiry was set up to report, inter alia, on the role of libraries in serving the information and recreation needs of the community, and on their future roles. Its 1976 report, *Public Libraries in Australia*, known as the Horton Report after its chair, Alan Horton, highlighted the need for even and equitable development and funding for libraries. It also raised the lack of a central coordinating body to advise government; the need for improved staff training; and the need for cooperation with other services.

1.7   Governments of all persuasions have hastened slowly to respond to calls for improved library services. In the case of the Horton Report, two interdepartmental committees mulled over it and 67 months elapsed before the then federal government

accepted two of its 53 recommendations, one of which was to endorse the National Library's proposal to develop an Australian bibliographic network.[3]

1.8   A similar fate awaited the inquiry into the future development and role of libraries by the House of Representatives Standing Committee for Long Term Strategies. The report was tabled in 1991; the government's response was tabled on 15 May 1997.[4] Again the response was not supportive of many of the Long Term Strategies Committee's recommendations. The call for a national information policy was rejected on the grounds it would quickly go out of date and would not have the flexibility to meet changing requirements.   Many other recommendations were rejected on the grounds that the primary responsibility for the action lay with the states or with local government, and not with the Australian Government.

1.9   Advances in information technology in the 1990s led to another series of analyses of the opportunities and challenges facing the library sector, by the Libraries Working Group of the Cultural Ministers Council. The resulting final report, *2020 Vision: towards the libraries of the future*, explored themes still relevant to this Committee's inquiry:

- how will we manage the abundance of information provided by the new technology?
- how will we identify and serve the needs of the information poor?
- how will we pay?

The spread of library services

1.10   At the end of June 2000, there were 505 local government public library services with 1,510 library locations; a national library; and state or territory libraries in each state and territory. Fifty-two per cent of the population were library members. And they were not inactive members: in the year 1999-2000, there were some 99.4 million visits to national, state and local government libraries, an 11 per cent increase over 1996-97 figures.[5] As Dr Bundy pointed out, there are more public library outlets than there are McDonalds.[6]

1.11   In addition to this extensive public library network, there is a considerable network of libraries in schools and tertiary institutions, catering specifically to staff and students, but nevertheless part of the nationwide inter-library loans system and in

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3   House of Representatives Standing Committee for Long Term Strategies, *Australia as an Information Society: the role of libraries/information networks,* AGPS, Canberra, 1991, pp.3-4.

4   Senator Richard Alston, Minister for Communications and the Arts, *House of Representatives Standing Committee for Long Term Strategies,' Australia as an Information Society: the role of libraries/information networks: Government response 199.7*

5   Australian Library and Information Association, *Submission 93,* p. 3.

6   *Submission 3*, p. 1.

many cases open to browsing and, in the case of a few joint use facilities, borrowing, by the general public. ALIA told the Committee that, based on information published in 2001, there were 41 university library systems with 231 locations, 100 TAFE institutes with about 1,000 campuses, and some 9,596 school libraries. Thirdly, and also part of the national network, there are some 1,125 libraries attached to hospitals, art galleries, private companies, government departments et cetera, with extensive specialised collections.[7]

Library uses and users

1.12   Libraries can be many things to the majority of Australians who belong to them: community centres, leisure centres, access points to the 'information superhighway', business and research centres, education centres and retail centres. The range of library services extends far beyond the traditional role of lending books. Libraries themselves are widely regarded as safe places for social interaction, and are perceived as places where all people have a right of access, regardless of circumstances or background.[8]

1.13   The demographics of public library users has been widely studied. One New South Wales study drawn to the Committee's attention showed, not unexpectedly, that some 27.8 per cent of the users surveyed were over 60 years of age, while school children comprised 24 per cent of users. One of the more interesting studies to look at non-library users was that by Colin Mercer, *Navigating the Economy of Knowledge: a national survey of users and non-users of State and public libraries,* commissioned by the Cultural Ministers Council. Mercer found that, of the some 50 per cent of non-users of libraries, over half were nevertheless supportive of libraries. One group of non-users, comprising 19 per cent of the non-user cohort, he categorised as the 'privatised' non-user who displayed a preference for, and capacity to, provide for his or her own cultural needs. However, he identified one group of non-users, the 'actively uninterested', comprising 10 per cent of the non-user cohort, mainly young males, who attributed no general social importance to the library, and 'by cultural disposition and ethos, they could be interpreted as actively resisting what they see as an embodiment of middle class values'.[9]

Library funding

1.14   The federal government's contribution to libraries is primarily concentrated on the university libraries and the National Library, whereas the states' overall contribution to public libraries is about one-third of that of local government, with

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7   ALIA, *Submission 93,* p. 15.

8   Eva Cox, *A safe place to go: libraries amd social capital,* University of Technology Sydney and State Library of NSW, Sydney, 2000, p. 8.

9   Colin Mercer, *Navigating the economy of knowledge: a national survey of users and non-users of state and public libraries.* Prepared for the Libraries Working Group of the Cultural Ministers' Council, March 1995, p. 23.

quite extensive variation between the states. States also fund their state libraries. The most recent comparable figures available to the Committee showed that the National Library received some $39 million in funding from the federal government; the state and territory libraries some $152 million from their respective governments; public libraries some $477.9 million, mainly from local government; while universities received their $409.6 million from the federal government.[10]

1.15   What the differing structural and funding arrangements mean is that, like so many other facets of Australian life, the provision of library services is uneven across the country. The Committee notes that the state libraries which gave evidence to it were all making strenuous efforts to attempt to ensure that their rural and regional libraries were compensated for their disadvantage, but the fact remains that not all states are equally well endowed, not all states equally value the provision of library services and, despite the great potential of online services, the tyranny of distance still affects service provision.

1.16   Government funding forms the basis of library budgets, with bequests and corporate donations playing an insignificant role in Australian library operations. While libraries raise some income from charges to their users, this has been estimated at less than ten per cent of their total income.[11] With the exception of the National Library, there is currently no recurrent federal funding to public libraries, with the only federal support coming in the form of one-off grants such as NTN or digitisation projects.

1.17   Public library funding varies from state to state, with a mix of local and state government involvement running at ratios from 7.5:1 to 9:1. This variation is due in part to the differing models of support for public libraries in each state. In the Western Australian model, for example, local government is responsible for the provision of premises, staff and operating expenses, while the State Government provides the library stock. In South Australia, the Libraries Board and the local governments administer state government funding; a Public Libraries Automated Information Network provides a centralised selection, acquisition, cataloguing and interlibrary loan service. In Tasmania, the State Library provides an integrated library and information service for the whole of the state. In New South Wales and Victoria, each library service is responsible for the total provision of library services, while support from the state and local governments comes via subsidies, grants and materials. In Queensland, local government funds library service with the help of a recurrent state government grant, weighted per capita, and equivalent to about 25 per cent of costs; smaller councils with populations below 20,000 may join the Country Lending Service of the State Library, while councils provide staff and building costs.[12]

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10   As quoted in ALIA, *Submission 93,* p. 15.

11   Dr Bundy, *Submission 3,* p. 5.

12   Dr Bundy, *Submission 3,* pp. 5-9.

1.18   In the absence of any agreed statement of basic minimum requirements for public libraries, each library community is, broadly speaking, at the mercy of its local council when it comes to seeking funding to meet its online and other resource requirements. And some local councils' priorities are filling in potholes or collecting garbage, not connecting its citizens to the world wide web.

1.19   It is against this background of varied funding arrangements and adequacy that libraries have been faced with the need to incorporate online services.

The online revolution

1.20   Until the 1990s, the core business of libraries revolved around the printed word. Fairly quickly, however, this was to change. An early indicator was the growing presence of online catalogues and the acceptance by libraries and users alike of the CD-ROM for information which needed regular updating. Sales of encyclopaedias in CD-ROM format exceeded those sold in print by 1993.[13] From the mid-1990s, as the Internet began to penetrate globally, an increasing flood of resources became available through this new medium.

1.21   The advantages of the Internet for the dissemination of information became apparent. The Australian Government made a commitment to provide all appropriate government services online by the year 2001[14] and now, all levels of government are increasingly providing their basic public information online, sometimes exclusively so. From the government perspective, the reasons are obvious. The information is 'born digital' so can be transmitted readily; it can be updated easily as required; it is, or should be, always up to date; it presents administrative savings; it is potentially available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. From the public's perspective, there are other advantages as well. For those with Internet access, the information comes to them. And even with public-sourced Internet access, the information is arguably more readily available than before.

1.22   The kind of information we are referring to here may be the fairly routine government-citizen interaction kind – the bus timetables, social security entitlements, visa conditions, et cetera - information that has traditionally been disseminated via a telephone information line, a service counter or a pamphlet. The provision of such information online means that we can potentially access it in a more flexible manner, in our own time, and from our own homes, towns or villages, whether they are in the heart of the city or in the remote country. This information revolution has been heralded as the end of the tyranny of distance which has plagued Australia from the start.

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13   Colin Mercer, *2020 Vision: towards the libraries of the future*, Libraries Working Group, Cutural Ministers' Council, 1996, p. 5.

14   See *A strategic framework for the information economy*, Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Canberra, 1998, p. 28.

1.23   The information revolution spreads well beyond such basic levels of information provision, of course. Its capacity to facilitate formal study and to promote lifelong learning has been widely recognised, as has its capacity to provide new forms of recreational activities. These changes have had a profound impact on libraries. While their staple 'borrow, read and return' functions remain, they have been obliged to extend their coverage to provide online access, and develop expertise in providing both online resources and the skills to access them efficiently.

Connecting Australia

1.24   In a 1998 document, *A Strategic Framework for the Information Economy – Identifying Priorities for Action*, the Australian Government outlined a number of guiding principles for Australia in the information age, including:

> All Australians - wherever they live and work, and whatever their economic circumstances – need to be able to access the information economy at sufficient bandwidth and affordable cost; and need to be equipped with the skills and knowledge to harness the information economy's benefits for employment and living standards.[15]

1.25   The online environment presents governments with challenges undreamed of by the framers of the Australian constitution, which granted telecommunications powers to the Australian Government yet health and education, for example, to the states. Technological convergence has ensured that governments have been obliged to consult and coordinate their online approaches across constitutional boundaries. A peak ministerial forum across the Australian, state, territory and local governments, the Online Council, was formed in 1996 and in the following year, the National Office for the Information Economy was established to coordinate the online policy challenges.

1.26   Very briefly in this Chapter, the Committee will canvass the major developments in the provision of online infrastructure, the 'connectivity' issue.

1.27   The Internet is an international network of computer networks, which enables users to access remote computers across the world. Connection to the Internet is generally via a PC, communications software and a telecommunications link, although alternative access methods are constantly emerging. Access may be via dedicated telecommunications networks, or via commercial network providers who may charge by the time connected.

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15   *A strategic framework for the information economy*, Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Canberra, 1998, p. 6.

1.28   Australians have a strong track record in the early uptake of new technology.[16] If the use of the Internet follows the trends of use of other technologies, such as colour television, mobile phones, DVDs, demand is likely to increase dramatically. In the case of access to the Internet, the most recently published figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, relating to 2002, [17]show that 58 per cent of Australian adults had used the Internet in that year compared with 31 per cent in 1998. Some 46 per cent of households had home Internet access, compared with 16 per cent of households in 1998.

1.29   Not surprisingly, Internet access was most strongly correlated with medium to high household income, with the presence of children in the household, with employment, and with residency in metropolitan areas. The highest rate of Internet usage amongst adults (84 per cent) was in the 18-24 years age group, while only 13 per cent of the 65 and over age group had used the Internet (a modest increase on the 6 per cent in this age group who had used the Internet in the week before the Census in 2001). The use of the Internet was strongly related to educational attainment: 88 per cent of persons with tertiary qualifications had used the Internet in 2002. Males overall (at 61 per cent) were slightly more likely than females (56 per cent) to use the Internet. Only 16 per cent of Indigenous Australians had used the Internet in the week before the Census in 2001. The most common location to use the Internet was at home, at 43 per cent. Library Internet access was used by only 6 per cent of adults overall, though this figure would almost certainly be significantly higher had statistics for children been included.

1.30   More localised surveys have also shown an accelerated rate of Internet take-up. The Committee was informed that in Western Australia, for example, a November 2002 survey showed that half the state's regional households had home Internet connection, with 80 per cent making use of it more than twice a week. Even usage rates in the Pilbara (70 per cent) and the Kimberley (64 per cent) bore out the observation of a clear correlation between remoteness and the need for Internet access. Twenty per cent of persons without home access were accessing the Internet via libraries, telecentres, schools or workplaces.[18]

1.31   Whatever the precise figures, the implication is the same. As recently as last year, 42 per cent of the Australian population did not use the Internet. And those who did use it, did so primarily for email, chat sites and general browsing.[19] If these figures are a true reflection of Internet usage, and if the trend towards the provision of certain

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16   J. Wright & J Peasley, *Bushtrack to Superhighway*: *public access to electronic information,* Libraries Working Group, Cultural Ministers Council*,* 1995, p. 11.

17   Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Household Use of Information Technology,* Cat. 8146, 2003.

18   Mrs Siekierka, *Evidence*, Australian Telecommunications Network inquiry, p. 656.

19   Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Use of the Internet by Householders, Australia, November 2000,* Cat. 8147.0.

information *only* via the Internet continues, a highly inequitable situation appears to be emerging – the so-called 'digital divide'.

1.32   Government policy appears to be premised on the continued rapid uptake of personal or household Internet access, a premise which on the evidence available to date is correct. Nevertheless, there has been a recognition that household Internet access will not be available to all in the foreseeable future and hence of the necessity, on equity grounds, of providing public access, either free of charge or at minimal cost.

1.33   An early effort to provide public access to information technology was the allocation of $2.8 million for the provision, by the Department of Primary Industries and Energy, of telecentres and telecottages in various rural and remote locations in the early 1990s. According to the Public Libraries Association, few of these survived beyond the four-year funding period.[20]

1.34   The *Creative Nation* statement of 1994 recognised the potential threat posed by a lack of online access:

> It is clear that it will be some years before all Australian homes have the interactive facilities needed to receive many electronic services. The Government will work with the States to form local access points to enable Australians to participate fully in open learning opportunities, government services, small business support, electronic communications, community networks and other opportunities for personal development. In particular, the 1,400 public library service points throughout Australia provide a major opportunity for linking communities to network services, such as those available through the Internet.[21]

1.35   In the mid-1990s, the Libraries Working Group of the Cultural Ministers Council strenuously advanced the cause of libraries as central places of provision in the public access stakes:

> The Australia-wide network of local public libraries can provide the skeleton to build a truly national distributed access network to the 'information superhighway'. Public libraries have an existing infrastructure which includes communications and resource sharing networks, staff and facilities. This skeleton infrastructure is in places more like a network of bushtracks (low speed modem access), however it forms the basis for the development of a well-used superhighway of broadband telecommunications.[22]

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20   *Submissions,* p. 253.

21   *Creative Nation: Commonwealth Cultural Policy,* Department of Communications and the Arts, 1994.

22   J. Wright & J Peasley, *Bushtrack to Superhighway*: *public access to electronic information,* Libraries Working Group, Cultural Ministers Council, 1995, p. 3.

1.36   A major effort to get the nation online came in the form of grant funding via the Networking the Nation program (NTN), an Australian Government program funded from the first partial sale of Telstra. The initial $250 million in 1996 was intended to bridge the gaps between urban and rural Australia in terms of the range, availability and costs of telecommunications and information technology services. A further $670 million was allocated for similar purposes under the 1999 Social Bonus programs following the sale of the second tranche of Telstra.

1.37   The Committee was advised that libraries were excluded from eligibility for the first round of NTN grants,[23] but thereafter they were not neglected. NOIE informed the Committee that some major online projects in the library sector had been funded under NTN. $3.48 million was provided under Victorian Rural Libraries Online, to ensure the delivery of online information and Internet services to all branch libraries in the communities of rural Victoria, at local call access rates. Under Queensland Local Government Building Community Capacity, $1.7 million was provided to improve library Internet access by replacing early model computers at libraries serving communities in 72 rural and remote shires and by providing disabled access. In South Australia, the Regional Internet Access Project provided $1.5 million for free public access to the Internet at 91 public libraries, 12 regional development boards and some remote communities.[24]

1.38   Public Libraries Australia was critical of NTN funding, asserting that it had 'achieved only fragmented, patchy and often duplicated connectivity across the country that does not even come close to representing a national electronic network'.[25] Not all were ungrateful, however. Mr Strempel, Vice President of the Council of Library Administrators of South Australia, told the Committee:

> 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 fund replacements, but they had three years to think about how they were going to do it.[26]

1.39   In the course of its inquiry, it became evident to the Committee that, just as the provision of public library services varies from state to state, so does the provision

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23   State Library of Queensland, *Submission 103,* p. 5.

24   National Office for the Information Economy, *Submission 12.*

25   Public Libraries Australia, *Submission 43.*

26   *Evidence,* p. 369.

of public online access. This in itself is not a major problem, so long as access is provided, and it could well be argued that different models of provision suit different localities better. There does appear to be a level of duplication that, with the value of hindsight, would have been better avoided. In the remainder of this chapter, the committee will consider some examples of the rollout of public online access services in non-library situations, particularly in more difficult, remote or less populated areas; in Chapter 2 it will consider what libraries provide, and their claims to being the more appropriate public online access location.

1.40   The Committee was told that in Western Australia, a network of telecentres has been established in small communities, providing a service centre with PCs online, and support staff who provided basic IT training. Telstra Country Wide formed a number of alliances with telecentres and was delivering some retail services through them.[27]

1.41   In Tasmania, the State Library has carriage of the online access centre project, with funding provided under NTN. Preference was given to community applications for centres that would co-locate with an institution that already had an existing 64K line, which generally meant schools or libraries. Online access centres have been strategically placed across the state, some in quite small villages. They charge nominal fees and, depending on the size of the centre, provide PCs with Internet connection, printers, scanners, and a paid coordinator as well as volunteers. The communities have welcomed them, according to State Library of Tasmania representative Mrs Doe, who also suggested the duplication with online provision in libraries was not a problem, as the online access centres were used as training centres for library technicians amongst others, and training was being provided on accessing library databases and catalogues. As well, the presence of a co-located online access centre freed the located library PCs from email users.[28]

1.42   The future for the online access centres, and particularly the stand-alone ones in more remote locations, is uncertain. As the Committee was told in its telecommunications inquiry:

> The problem is, of course, that the federal government funded online access centres for one year and then assumed that communities would somehow discover a huge pot of money which would allow them to continue the operations of these facilities. ... The state government has come in and assisted them, but my concern about the future operation of these centres is that they are often the only Internet access within my small towns ... online access centres require significant funding for upgrading to keep the equipment at a standard that makes it worth while using it, and communities are really struggling to make that happen.[29]

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27   Mr Punch, *Evidence*, Australian Telecommunications Network inquiry, p. 624.

28   *Evidence*, p. 224.

29   Ms O'Byrne, *Evidence,* Australian Telecommunications Network inquiry, pp. 398-9.

1.43   The point was made that in small communities, the infrastructure did not always permit easy colocation points. While most communities had schools, they were not always centrally located; also 'there is a percentage of the population who are of an age that does not feel comfortable going onto a school site'.[30]

1.44   The Committee was told that, in Victoria, the majority of public Internet access terminals were not in libraries but in community and neighbourhood houses.[31] This has come about in part because there is not a library branch in every town in Victoria, often because of historical accident. In some cases, the local progress association might have built a library in a town of 3,000 people in the 1950s, while another town of the same demographic might be visited by a mobile library three days a week.[32] In at least one instance, the Committee was told that the local telecentre had had difficulty trying to find its role in the community and was about to close.[33]

1.45   As well as the NTN-funded Internet access centres, there are commercial Internet cafes in the more popular tourist locations, also potential competitors for library online business though arguably complementary in their services.

1.46   The Committee will consider further in Chapter 4 the problem of sustainability of these and other online initiatives. And it will also consider in that chapter the growing issue of bandwidth.

Conclusions

1.47   The Committee is undertaking this inquiry in a period of rapid technological change. The means of accessing online information are in a constant state of evolution (palm pilots, mobile phones etc); they are becoming less dependent on a fixed location; and are arguably becoming more affordable. More and more information is being made available for online access, and an increasing number of Australians are accessing it online. For the foreseeable future, however, there will be a continuing need for quality public access to the Internet to bridge the 'digital divide' and to ensure that as many citizens as possible are included in the online world.

1.48   Libraries have traditionally performed a valuable role in the provision of all manner of information, in an accessible, safe, non-judgmental and supportive environment. In Chapter 2, the Committee will consider how libraries are changing to meet the online challenge.

1.49   During its extensive program of visits and public hearings, the Committee could not fail to be impressed by the number and quality of innovative Internet assistance and training programs offered by libraries and the steps many have taken to

30   Ms O'Byrne, *Evidence,* Australian Telecommunications Network inquiry, p. 399.

31   Mr Hardy, *Evidence*, p. 60.

32   Mr Hardy, *Evidence*, p. 61.

33   Dr Brandl, *Submission 48,* p. 2.

facilitate access to content. It outlines some such developments in Chapter 3 of this report.

1.50   Despite the best efforts of so many, however, there is no overall Australia-wide strategy for online information provision. Some people are missing out, and there are pockets of resistance from technophobes. In Chapter 4 of this report, the Committee will consider some of the challenges which need to be addressed before the online information revolution can reach all Australians in a fair and equitable manner. It will also consider the ongoing need for traditional information-provision mechanisms. In Chapter 5, the Committee will reach its conclusions and draw together its recommendations.