

The Senate

Environment, Communications,
Information Technology and the Arts
References Committee

Libraries in the online environment

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Recommendations

Recommendation 1.

The Committee recommends that the National Library of Australia receive additional funding to provide improved access to Kinetica for all Australian libraries and end users. [see paragraphs 3.14 and 5.8]

Recommendation 2.

The Committee recommends that whenever the Australian Government advertises its electronic services, it adds a statement to the effect that further information can be obtained from the local public library. [see paragraphs 3.24 and 5.14]

Recommendation 3.

The Committee recommends:

- (a) the continuation of the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Community Heritage Grants digitisation program; and
- (b) the addition of a new National Heritage Grants program for peak cultural institutions to assist in the digitisation of their collections. [see paragraphs 3.34 and 5.11]

Recommendation 4.

The Committee recommends that the Australian Research Information Infrastructure Committee consider the question of the availability online of Australian postgraduate theses as a matter of priority. [see paragraphs 3.37 and 5.12]

Recommendation 5.

If there are no alternative funding mechanisms for ongoing research into the identification and testing of adaptive technologies for the use of online equipment in public libraries by persons with disabilities, the Committee recommends the funding of another round of AccessAbility grants. [see paragraphs 3.64 and 5.15]

Recommendation 6.

The Committee recommends:

- (a) that the Cultural Ministers' Council appoint a standing libraries working group to provide regular reports on library and information matters which need to be addressed as a priority;

(b) that the proposed Cultural Ministers' Council standing libraries working group develop, in consultation with other interested parties, a national information policy; and

(c) that NOIE be required to consult with the appropriate national library representatives on all matters of substance affecting the library community and the online provision of services. [see paragraphs 4.10 and 5.16]

Recommendation 7.

The Committee recommends:

(a) that the Australian Government negotiate with telecommunications carriers to establish an 'e-rate' or discount rate for broadband access to public libraries and that, if negotiations are not successful, consider imposing a requirement on carriers under the Universal Service Obligation arrangement; and

(b) that further funds be allocated under an expanded National Broadband Strategy for expanding broadband access in libraries. [see paragraphs 4.35 and 5.6]

Recommendation 8.

Noting the requirement that the *Copyright Amendment (Digital Agenda) Act 2000* be reviewed after three years of operation, the Committee recommends that that review consider the Act's extension to digital material. [see paragraphs 4.47 and 5.17]

Recommendation 9.

The Committee recommends:

(a) that the National Library of Australia identify a number of key databases for which national site licencing might be desirable; and

(b) that additional Australian Government funding be extended to the National Library of Australia for this purpose. [see paragraphs 4.56 and 5.10]

Recommendation 10.

The Committee recommends:

(a) that the National Office for the Information Economy (NOIE) continue to consult closely with the library community over the development of the register of Australian Government publications;

(b) that NOIE publicise the availability in public libraries of the online register; and

(c) that NOIE commission research to ascertain the level of public awareness of government information and the means of access thereto. [see paragraphs 4.65 and 5.9]

Recommendation 11.

Where there is shared responsibility for public library funding between state and local government, the Committee recommends that the States significantly increase their share of public library funding, moving towards matching local government levels of contribution. [see paragraphs 4.104 and 5.18]

PREFACE

Terms of reference

On 25 June 2002 the Senate referred the following matter to the Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee:

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 through 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 role of various levels of government, the corporate sector and libraries themselves in ensuring the most effective use of libraries as a primary public information resource in the online environment.

The Senate originally asked the Committee to report by the last sitting day in March 2003 but it subsequently agreed to extend the reporting deadline until 16 October 2003 to allow the Committee to give the issues raised during the inquiry its fullest consideration.

The inquiry

The Committee invited written submissions from interested individuals and organisations by an advertisement in the national press in July 2002, with an initial request that submissions be lodged by 16 August 2002. Invitations for submissions were sent direct to each State Premier and Chief Minister as well as to some 500 local councils throughout Australia. Submissions were subsequently received from 155 submitters, several of whom provided the Committee with additional material and supplementary submissions during the course of the inquiry. Submitter details are shown in Appendix 1.

In order to gain a better appreciation of the issues, the Committee undertook a series of 15 public hearings with some 67 witnesses, which involved visiting locations in every state of Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. Evidence was also taken from the Northern Territory by teleconference. Details of these hearings are shown in Appendix 2.

The Committee wishes to highlight that its program of hearings was essentially held in conjunction with its inquiry into the Australian Telecommunications Network, which was referred to it by the Senate on the same day, 25 June 2002. This approach was undertaken for two reasons. Firstly, while the terms of reference were relatively distinct, there was some element of overlap in terms of the need for the Committee to examine the proper role of Government in the delivery of online services. Secondly, the terms of reference for both inquiries had particular resonance in rural and regional areas and, as a matter of practicality, the Committee wished to maximise the value of any travel it undertook to such areas by combining the evidence-collection process.

In retrospect, this proved a sound decision with the Committee able to see at first hand how the deficiencies in infrastructure for the delivery of telecommunications services such as broadband in many rural and remote areas had impacted on the capacity of the local library to provide appropriate services. One consequence of this approach, however, was that Committee members on occasion sought comment about an issue relating to this inquiry from witnesses giving evidence to the Australian Telecommunications Network inquiry. While those contributions are not listed in the Appendixes to this report, as they will be formally acknowledged as witnesses to the other inquiry, the Committee has sought in this report to include such witnesses' contributions where relevant.

The Committee sought to supplement the formal discussions of the public hearings with site visits and associated informal briefings where possible. These are listed in Appendix 3. Given their informal nature, no Hansard transcript was taken and no specific details of these visits are included in this report.

In the course of the hearings, a number of documents were tabled for the Committee's information. These are listed in Appendix 4.

Acknowledgements

The Committee wishes to express its appreciation for the cooperation of all witnesses to its inquiry, whether by making submissions, by personal attendance at a hearing or, as in many cases, by giving both written and oral evidence. It also wishes to express its appreciation to those who hosted the Committee during site inspections, which added greatly to the Committee's appreciation of the issues being discussed at the formal hearings.

The Committee also records its appreciation to the officers of the secretariat who assisted with the conduct of the inquiry and the drafting of this report.

Senator John Cherry
Chair

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

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

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

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

8 Eva Cox, *A safe place to go: libraries and 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

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 2001¹⁴ 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.

13 Colin Mercer, *2020 Vision: towards the libraries of the future*, Libraries Working Group, Cultural 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.

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

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

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 Stempel, 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

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

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.

CHAPTER 2

LIBRARIES IN THE ONLINE WORLD

Introduction

2.1 Access to information online is now a standard expectation of libraries. To remain relevant in the 21st century, and to continue to play their accustomed role in the provision of information resources, libraries of all types have had to accommodate user-access PCs, to support connectivity, to develop digital content and facilitate access thereto, and to develop new skills in their staff and users. In doing so, they have had to maintain their traditional print resources as well, cope with additional connectivity charges and balance expenditure on print versus electronic content.

2.2 Perhaps most importantly, however, in the new digital environment, public libraries in particular have a most significant role to play in ensuring access to online information for those without private access. And by access, we mean more than the provision of an Internet-connected PC, but also assistance to find the required content.

2.3 Equity of access to online information is equally an issue for libraries in the higher education sector, with the rapid move to the provision of learning materials online. It has led to the opening of computer laboratories with 24 hours per day, seven days per week access, and much more pressure on library and academic staff alike to instill in students a critical awareness of the quality of information now readily to hand via an unregulated Internet.

Provision of online services in libraries

2.4 Public libraries have traditionally been early adopters of online information provision. Most had moved to online catalogues, well before public access to them was envisaged; most introduced CD-ROMs soon after they became available. It is unsurprising, therefore, that they should promptly seek access to the Internet for their staff, and the public.

2.5 In 2003, the Council of Australian State Libraries issued statistics on public access Internet terminals in public libraries. In 2000, there were 3,011 public access terminals in public libraries across Australia; 63 per cent of service points had Internet terminals.

2.6 Completely up to date figures were not available, however the Committee did receive indications of the rapid increase in connectivity. The National Library informed the Committee that in mid-2002, 100 per cent of libraries in New South Wales and Victoria were connected to the Internet; connection rates for the other states were 95 per cent in Tasmania, 78 per cent in South Australia, 77 per cent in the

Northern Territory, 74 per cent in Queensland and 45 per cent in Western Australia.¹ By the time of its submission to the Committee, the State Library of Queensland indicated that 80 per cent of Queensland libraries had Internet access.²

2.7 While physical access might not yet be possible Australia-wide, where PCs with Internet connection are available, they are well used. Mr Elwin, CEO of the Wimmera Regional Library Corporation in Victoria, commented that their pods of six computers were always full, from the moment they opened the doors.³

2.8 Ms Rae, CEO of the Central Highlands Regional Library Corporation in Victoria, outlined her experiences with Internet access PCs, in an environment in which there were 31 library access points, 15,000 library PC users, an average population per free PC of 3,500 and 64 per cent home Internet access. She reported a high level of usage of the facilities but that minimal numbers of potential users were turned away because there was not a booking available.⁴

2.9 Some evidence was presented showing that there was an insufficient number of public library terminals to meet demand. Most libraries operated booking systems for online use, and many had time limits. Dr Bundy reported a 2001 survey which indicated that Australian public libraries lacked at least 3,866 public Internet workstations to meet their aspirations for their communities.⁵ It is unclear whether public access demand has almost peaked, and whether any new users who are attracted to the Internet in public places are offset by the numbers acquiring home access.

2.10 While access at some level was generally available via library services (even if this meant once a fortnight via satellite hook-up in a mobile van), the Committee's attention was regularly drawn to inadequacies in the quality of Internet access in some places, particularly where only dial-up access was available. In one case cited, a one-megabyte file took eight hours to download.⁶ The spectre of users sitting reading newspapers at terminals while the information they were seeking appeared on screen is not one calculated to engender enthusiasm on the part of other would-be users, or legislators. While any free public Internet access must be regarded as better than

1 *Submission 19*, p. [3].

2 *Submission 104*, p. [2].

3 *Evidence*, p. 192.

4 *Evidence*, p. 161.

5 *Submission 3*, p. 8.

6 Ms Iuretigh, Warren-Blackwood Economic Alliance, *Evidence*, Australian Telecommunications Network inquiry, p. 605.

none, we need to bear in mind certain minimum access standards, as technology and funding permit. This matter is taken up in Chapter 4.

Libraries versus other online access options

2.11 In Chapter 1, the Committee noted the efforts already made to increase individual and community access to the Internet. The majority of programs appeared to target physical access needs, and did so primarily by means of access centres, including telecentres and regional access centres which provided free or inexpensive Internet connections. In some cases, these centres could be found in the same street or even in the same building as a public library, which may have provided free Internet access. The question for the library community – and for the Committee – was why an established, widespread and heavily used resource as the public library system should not have been at the very heart of this technological largesse. As noted, many libraries did ultimately benefit from NTN initiatives, particularly in South Australia, Queensland and Victoria, but not before a considerable level of duplication had been created, with occasional ill feeling on both sides. The precise extent of duplication of public access online service provision is not clear.

2.12 While most libraries were of the view that they were the most appropriate location for Internet access, this was not a view shared by all. The main argument of librarians in support of their claim was that library staff were always on hand and able to assist users. Other witnesses cast doubt on this. The Committee was told that at a meeting of the Library and Information Service of Western Australia, the lack of suitable training and, in some cases, aptitude, of librarians to provide realistic levels of assistance to people unfamiliar with computing was discussed.⁷

2.13 Restricted opening hours on the part of some libraries was also advanced as a reason for 'rival' public Internet access provision. This argument may have some merit, in some cases. The Committee was told that most metropolitan libraries, and many libraries in large regional centres, now provided extended opening hours covering evenings and weekends, but this is not universally the case.

2.14 It is not clear, however, that all alternative Internet access points have more generous opening hours. Even those which do, often operate with part-time staff, assisted by volunteers, who may have the technical skills to assist users but who may lack training in information seeking.

2.15 Faced with a competitor down the street, and despite their frustration at being overlooked, most librarians acted pragmatically. In the case of Mathoura, where a new

7 Mr Barker, Council on the Ageing, *Evidence*, Australian Telecommunications Network inquiry, p. 59.

CTC/RTC building was opened, the Central Murray Regional Library Service had a library incorporated; the library provided half a wage and for that got full-time library hours and multiuse of the facility's training rooms et cetera.⁸

2.16 It is clear to the Committee that no location should – or could – have monopoly rights to free or inexpensive Internet access provision. Home Internet access is becoming more common, with cable or optical fibre connections for broadband already being built into new housing estates. Public provision will ultimately be via whatever location best suits the local community and that may vary. Co-location of telecentres with Medicare and Centrelink offices, post offices, libraries or TAFE all have some merit. In the course of its telecommunications inquiry, the Committee learnt of some really practical partnerships in remote locations: in remote Georgetown, Queensland, for example, a multi-purpose building housing a geology museum, terrestrial centre, library and Internet cafe was about to open. Internet access was to be free for residents but tourists were to be charged.⁹ While such joint-use facilities might present some interesting administrative challenges, they clearly have much greater prospects of survival than stand-alone operations.

2.17 The Committee nevertheless accepts the argument of librarians that, at present, to get the best out of Internet content, the assistance that can usually be provided via a professional information broker in a library location is highly valuable. It notes, however, a few contrary views. Ms Scott of the Council on the Ageing suggested that, while public libraries were fine for information searching, particularly with sympathetic librarians on hand to provide training and support, many older people would be reluctant to do their Internet transactions in a public library for reasons of security and lack of privacy and indeed, many public libraries had firewalls in place to prevent such transactions. She added:

[Internet access in libraries] is still not the answer for providing access for people who cannot afford access at home. It is one of the answers. Other answers include telecentres, Internet cafes, Post Office kiosks and heaps of other suggestions. They all go some way towards achieving the objective.¹⁰

2.18 In the view of the Committee, none of these other options would necessarily provide improved security or privacy over libraries, nor would supportive human assistance always be available for those who need it. Perhaps part of the answer lies in providing more Internet terminals in a variety of locations, and more privacy around them, wherever they are located.

8 *Evidence*, p. 203.

9 Ms Sutcliffe, Gulf Savannah Development, *Evidence*, Australian Telecommunications Network inquiry, p. 426.

10 *Evidence*, Australian Telecommunications Network inquiry, p. 58.

Changing library use patterns

2.19 In the course of its inquiry, many libraries presented the Committee with results from their own surveys of their users and non-users, following their introduction of online access. One of the more comprehensive of these surveys was that conducted by Mr Gary Hardy of the Centre for Community Networking Research at Monash University. Internet users at 25 Victorian public library services and the State Library during one week in September 2002 were questioned, with some 2442 valid responses being received. Amongst other findings, this survey showed that public libraries were important in bringing new users onto the Internet. Over 48 per cent of respondents indicated that they had been using the Internet in public libraries for less than 12 months; 50 per cent indicated that they believed they would continue their online access via libraries well into the future. The largest percentage of users, at 33.2 per cent, was in the 25-39 age bracket. Fifty-four per cent of respondents received no income, or an income of less than \$26,000 p.a.; 12.8 per cent of respondents were unemployed, 6.3 identified their occupation as 'home duties', 24.9 per cent were students, and 10.5 per cent were retired. A majority used public library access because it was their only option, and because it was either free or cheap. An encouraging number commented that they used library access also because of the 'pleasant atmosphere' and staff assistance. These responses suggested to Mr Hardy, and to the Committee, that the underlying 'safety net' rationale for the provision of public online access in public libraries is working in practice.¹¹

2.20 The State Library of South Australia reported the results of a recent exit interview, which showed an even spread in the age range of users, with at least 10 per cent in each age group; 18 per cent in the 40-49 group; 17 per cent in the 20-29 group; and 16 per cent in the 16-19 group. Fifty per cent of those users classified themselves as students (secondary, tertiary or lifelong learners).¹²

2.21 Libraries also presented much evidence, both from surveys or anecdotal, of changing library patronage following the introduction of public access Internet terminals. Singleton Shire Council told the Committee that in the previous year, 56 per cent of its new library members stated they had joined 'because of the Internet'. An almost universal outcome was the greater use of the PCs by teenage boys and young men, who by and large were not library patrons in the past, unless they were students.¹³

2.22 Another category of new public library Internet user was the older person who was initially encouraged to go online for communication purposes. Again, the same

11 *Submission 94a*, pp. 2-7.

12 *Submission 147*, p. [4].

13 See, for example, Mrs Alexander, Library Manager of the Banana Shire Council, *Evidence*, p. 277; Ms Bauer, Caloundra City Librarian, and Mrs Pestell, Pine Rivers Shire Library Service, *Evidence*, p. 328.

message prevailed: once a person entered the library to learn how to email the grandchildren travelling overseas, the opportunity for him or her to be assisted to explore the Internet as a means of finding out aged pension eligibility details, visa requirements, or explanations of medical terms was opened up.

2.23 Local public library staff reported occasional tensions between new users, in particular teenage boys, and other users. Some indicated that the newcomers could occasionally be harnessed to help less experienced users with their PC problems, while others saw their occasional rowdiness as little different from the user management problems posed by noisy small children. What was generally acknowledged was that, once those persons were in the library, they became aware of the other resources on offer and frequently became regular patrons using a variety of library services.

2.24 The Committee has every confidence in the ability of library staff to manage the new-user phenomenon and to build on it. Much more worrying issues are the non-users, and provisions must be made to ensure that they are not excluded from access to information.

2.25 The new online users of public libraries may have quite differing expectations from the 'traditional' user of what the public library can provide. The City of Swan Library in Western Australia was one to comment on the expectation of its young users that they could locate all their informational requirements through the Internet.¹⁴ Another difference to which library representatives drew the Committee's attention was the expectation that information should always be delivered immediately. Libraries have recognised that they still have much to do in assisting their users to a genuine level of information literacy, an issue which the Committee addresses in Chapter 4.

Effects of remote access to library services

2.26 While many witnesses were able to discount the notion that the Internet would do away with the need for libraries, they did point to major changes in library operations and management that it might bring. Several libraries, or library systems, discussed the impact of their provision of remote access to the library via their websites on library use in person. If in-person patronage declines, this might have implications for space requirements; and with less face-to-face interaction, it may well have implications for the type of person attracted to the profession.

2.27 Evidence on the effects of remote access was mixed, as might be expected in this transitional stage. The State Library of Victoria reported that onsite visits were just beginning to show a downward trend, while remote access was increasing, as more and more users opted for the convenience of 'visiting' the library at a time and place to suit themselves. Remote (or online) visits surpassed onsite visits for the first

14 *Submission 143*, p. [1].

time in January 2002; email reference inquiries are now increasing at a rate of 30 per cent per annum and web site traffic is showing a projected increase of 20 per cent per annum.¹⁵

2.28 A similar pattern was noted at the State Library of South Australia, where physical patronage had declined over the last two years, but online use of the catalogue and databases had increased some 25 per cent in each of the last four years.¹⁶

2.29 The Council of Australian State Libraries (CASL) told the Committee that the number of clients using library services at onsite venues had declined by 4.2 per cent over the last three years, while demand for Internet access to library collections, catalogues, databases and services had increased exponentially. On average, visits to CASL library websites were increasing at 68.41 per cent per year; yet in the year to June 2000 there were still more than 6 million visits to CASL libraries.¹⁷

2.30 At the local library level, however, it appears that in person library visits, lending and use of online services are all increasing. Ms Horn described the situation at Yarra-Melbourne Library, where residents' access to PCs is much higher than the national average, at around 80 per cent, yet the usage of all library services was increasing.¹⁸

Effects on the role of library staff

2.31 With the advent of online public access terminals in libraries, there has been a need for a level of technical expertise not previously required to such a degree. Libraries have been obliged to employ or contract in IT experts, to share technicians with other local government offices, and/or to provide additional IT training for their staff. While new recruits to the profession may take new technology for granted, having been brought up and studied in an electronic world, not all library staff have welcomed the changes.

2.32 The Committee was particularly interested to learn how library staff were adapting to the online revolution, particularly given the ageing demographic of the profession.¹⁹ Not surprisingly, the evidence it received indicated attitudes ranged widely, from Luddites to technophiles. Many staff have taken the changes in their stride, while some have experienced more difficulty in adapting. Mr Hardy of Monash

15 *Submission 126*, p. 3.

16 *Submission 147*, p. [4].

17 *Submission 127*, p. 5.

18 *Evidence*, p. 19.

19 See, for example, *Evidence*, p. 173.

University related the story of a user having to show a reference librarian how to access the Internet; he pointed out that there were still pockets of librarians who have resisted learning online skills because 'that was not what they signed up for and that was not what they wanted'.²⁰

2.33 The Committee was told unequivocally of the heightened expectations of library staff from library users. 'The public are expecting all library staff to be highly skilled in accessing electronic databases, internet searching, repairing and trouble-shooting equipment, as well as having plenty of time to spend assisting library users.'²¹

2.34 Ms Parer of the James Cook University Library described some of the changes in role:

From a professional point of view, we find increasingly that librarians, irrespective of their client group – universities, public libraries or whatever – are really no longer what you would call the old type of librarian. That is why we are called 'infohelp staff'. Half of the time we are computer technicians. I answer questions about every aspect of computer use, such as: 'How do I put double spacing into Word?', 'How do I set up an Excel spreadsheet?', 'How do I download this from the Internet?' or 'How do I scan this and put it in Photoshop and then into a Word document?' Sometimes I wonder whether I am a computer expert or a librarian, particularly when it comes to helping people find information online.²²

2.35 Others such as Mrs Alexander, representing the Banana Shire Library Service, did not believe the roles had changed, just the manner in which libraries delivered the goods: 'Technology sources the info but it does not find it, so our role has not changed – we still help people to find the information.'²³ She added that the techniques now varied with online search capabilities being a lot more sophisticated than going through catalogues or hard-copy indexes – but in the end, in a small regional library, the situation remained as always: 'we are a small area ... we can expect to be all things to everybody'.²⁴

2.36 The Committee sought views from the library representatives who appeared before it on the impact of online services on their workload. When asked whether PCs in the library had increased workload, Ms Holschier of the Central Murray Region Library Service replied, 'Astronomically'.²⁵

20 *Evidence*, p. 61.

21 City of Stirling Public Libraries, *Submission 63*, p. 1.

22 *Evidence*, p. 269.

23 *Evidence*, p. 274.

24 *Evidence*, p. 275.

25 *Evidence*, p. 205.

2.37 This caused the Committee to question the effect of online provision on library staffing levels. The answer was not clear from the evidence presented. ALIA submitted that the library workforce, as derived from the ABS, comprised 9,592 staff in public, or local government, libraries; 2,248 staff in national/state libraries; and 4,298 fte staff in university libraries.²⁶ With the extended opening hours offered to accommodate the increased demand for online access in the evenings and weekends, it appears many libraries are turning to casuals.²⁷

2.38 A perhaps less welcome change in staff duties has emerged. Apart from having to control access to online terminals by operating booking systems in many libraries, staff have had to take on what was described as a 'policing' role – that is, asking users to vacate their terminals when their time is up; checking they are not accessing the wrong things; or changing settings.²⁸

Partnerships

2.39 A major change to libraries in the online era is that an increasing number of them are no longer stand-alone institutions. For small centres, connectivity costs require them to share computing resources with a range of other organisations. This may be the local council, but increasingly it may be an otherwise unrelated organisation. Some branches of the Central Highlands Regional Library Corporation, for example, shares with a NTN-funded community enterprise centre, with the inevitable tensions created by their being free access to the library terminals but charges for the NTN ones.²⁹ Two other branches combine with visitor information centres, with all the difficulties of ensuring that everyone's priorities are met. Undeterred, the Corporation CEO Ms Rae indicated she was hoping to incorporate a rural transaction centre with one of her branches as well.³⁰

2.40 In another example of a practical partnership, the Upper Murray Regional Library enjoyed joint support from both New South Wales and Victoria, despite the legislative hurdles that presented for New South Wales which had to provide its funding via a grant.

2.41 Yet other partnerships were the joint school-community libraries in rural South Australia. The Committee was told that 40 per cent of South Australian public libraries were joint use facilities with schools, with the library generally being consciously positioned on the edge of the campus so that it is obvious it is a

26 *Submission 93*, p. 16.

27 Ms Halliday, *Evidence*, p. 340.

28 Ms Rae, *Evidence*, p. 160.

29 *Evidence*, p. 161.

30 *Evidence*, p. 163.

community facility. The dual function enables them to provide extended opening hours, including in some instances evenings and weekends. Dr Bundy told the Committee that the system of joint use libraries was expanding, with nine per cent of public library outlets being joint use at one level or another.³¹

2.42 While not exactly a partnership, the James Cook University Library's strong relationships with the local community was also noted by the Committee. It offers online catalogue access, a large collection of printed books and journals and ABS data on a walk-in basis and, for an annual subscription of \$110, borrowing rights.³² The library also uses its discretion to provide access to online databases and articles to the professional community.

The physical impact of online services in libraries

2.43 While the Committee saw examples of splendid new library buildings in its inquiry, many older library buildings were never designed with computers in mind. As Ms Sutherland of the Shorelink library group told the committee:

There is a great need in the public library for capital works funding to increase the capacity of buildings in order to operate in this new environment. In the last 20 years we have moved our book stock to make room for two computers here and three computers there. It is a very piecemeal approach. We just do not have the physical capacity.³³

2.44 Mr Murrell of the West Gippsland Regional Library Corporation was another to make the point that the design of public libraries to handle the online environment was going to be a major issue for libraries in the coming years. He explained that the responsibility for keeping the 230-odd Victorian public libraries infrastructure current was with local government. The Victorian Government had come to their assistance with a Living Libraries program for refurbishment and new public libraries infrastructure, providing \$12 million over three years on a matched funding basis, but even that had limitations. In Mr Murrell's estimate, it would cost about \$45,000 for the space to house three Internet PCs with public access.³⁴

2.45 The State Librarian of South Australia, Ms Halliday, told the Committee that her state had committed \$41.2 million to a new building, which would enable her to

31 *Evidence*, p. 353.

32 *Evidence*, p. 260.

33 *Evidence*, p. 136.

34 *Evidence*, p. 18.

provide services in a much more cost efficient manner, compared with those in its 45-year old predecessor.³⁵

2.46 An ageing building infrastructure which restricts the number of computers able to be housed, or located sufficiently far apart to provide a modicum of privacy, is the reality many library services and their users face. It is likely that use of such facilities is more limited than might otherwise be the case. On the other hand, it has been shown that every time a public library is physically upgraded, there is a 20 per cent increase in its usage which never drops off.³⁶

2.47 The Committee is concerned that, despite a few shining examples to the contrary, there has been an overall failure to maintain public library building stock, and that failure is in part a result of the overall decrease in state government funding for public libraries in recent years.

The print versus online dilemma

2.48 Results of user surveys also confirm what one might have suspected, intuitively – some people will always prefer to use print material, others will always prefer online, still others want information first and foremost and are not particular about the format in which it comes. And, despite users' format preferences, much material will only be available in a single format. Which means that for the foreseeable future, libraries will have to continue to handle and provide access to both print and electronic resources. The Committee recognises that the need to handle both print and electronic resources is placing considerable pressure on library resources. The view advanced by Mrs Awcock, Chairman of CASL, was that the digital world would never supplant the world of print but that they would reach a balance.³⁷

2.49 That said, financial imperatives will ensure that choices will increasingly have to be made between formats. An immediate decision facing all libraries, whatever the trend of their funding, is the relative proportion of expenditure on electronic versus print materials. Where users show a preference for print materials, should this be accommodated, even at additional cost? Traditional reference material, such as directories and encyclopaedias, are increasingly being made available electronically, which should ensure their currency – but this is less relevant for a user researching aspects of ancient or medieval history.

2.50 Dr Bundy made the point that, if libraries invest heavily in online resources and technology, they then have limited resources for print materials which may still be much in demand. He noted that over the last few years in Australia, there has been a

35 *Evidence*, p. 339.

36 *Evidence*, p. 338.

37 *Evidence*, p. 48.

relative reduction in libraries' capacity to buy books - a trend he deplored, as it particularly disadvantaged young children who needed to be exposed to reading before they started school.³⁸ He particularly commended the various bookstart schemes run by a few local authorities across Australia, in which a modest investment in giving advice to parents on reading to children and using the public library has born dividends in terms of children's literacy.

2.51 There was an expectation in some quarters that the arrival of e-books would herald the demise of the library as we know it, but to date that fear has not been realised. The technology appears not to have advanced sufficiently to make the reading of a book sufficiently enjoyable for e-books to need to be considered seriously by libraries as yet. People still seem to like the physical medium of the book. As Ms Lim of the Shoalhaven City Library told the Committee:

the technology is not quite there. It is not as comforting on the eyes ... we have an ageing population who are the ones who are probably going to be using it. It is not going to be a comfort for them. You cannot really feel comfortable lying in bed with an e-book.³⁹

2.52 The Committee was told that Shorelink was successful in obtaining a grant from the State Library to trial e-books as a means of improving service to people restricted to their homes and as an alternative to large-print collections.⁴⁰ The cost of downloading was understood to be a problem, however.⁴¹ But as publishing becomes more expensive, and downloading becomes cheaper, the situation may change.

2.53 Libraries have had to face a most serious situation in terms of their provision of periodicals for users. Until quite recently, users would have had access to print copies of a large range of titles. Now, many libraries can no longer afford to subscribe to the printed version, but have been offered cheaper rates for more titles if they subscribe electronically. This has, in effect, forced their hand in favour of the electronic version, but the choice has brought with it a huge range of problems, discussed further in Chapter 4.

Recreational versus informational use of public libraries

2.54 In the course of the Committee's inquiry, there was some debate about the varying uses of public libraries, and whether it was possible or desirable to distinguish between them. A key question is whether it serves any purpose to distinguish between 'information seeking' and "mere" 'recreational' use. The question of whether the rise of the online environment will change the proportion of one or the other is also relevant.

38 *Evidence*, p. 351.

39 *Evidence*, p. 14.

40 *Evidence*, p. 128.

41 *Evidence*, p. 14.

2.55 'Recreational use' can be fairly readily understood to be the borrowing of books, CDs or videos, or web surfing, yet even here, for young children or migrants, there is an element of self-improvement and self-development in the activity. Even the playing of games on the Internet could be categorised as a learning experience, at least initially. Genealogical research, which appears to be increasing in popularity, has a strong 'recreational' element, yet such use of libraries can only be considered positive. Information seeking is somewhat harder to pinpoint but can be remarkably trivial, as in the examples advanced as evidence of the success of the newly introduced online reference service, AskNow!, discussed in Chapter 3. On the other hand, it can be much serious, as in the case of the user attempting to find out the requirements for a 'do it yourself' divorce.

2.56 Representatives of many of the libraries who gave evidence to the Committee provided anecdotal evidence of the library activities of their users in the electronic era, while others described the outcomes of formal user surveys. Mr Hardy of the Centre for Community Networking Research at Monash University provided the results of a week long survey in September 2002 of public access Internet users in 25 public library systems in Victoria, plus the state library. By far the greatest use was email, though as Mr Hardy pointed out, this may have been for many diverse purposes. Other major uses were job research, academic-related research, banking, news and reference, personal interest and hobbies, and travel information and hobbies. An apparent mixture, in short, of recreational and informational use.

2.57 Significantly, in the view of the Committee, only a low level of use was made of government online services.⁴² This may be changing, however. The recent ABS survey of Internet use amongst Australian adults presented a more positive picture, showing that over three million persons accessed government services for private purposes in 2002, up 676,000 on the previous year. It is unclear how many did so via a public library terminal.⁴³

2.58 The review of the NSW Library Act also considered the recreational versus informational use question and concluded, as has the Committee, that there is little merit in attempting to differentiate use.

42 *Submission 94a*, pp. 8-9.

43 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Household Use of Information Technology*, cat. 8146, 2003.

CHAPTER 3

ONLINE LIBRARY INITIATIVES

National Library initiatives

3.1 The National Library of Australia (NLA) is the one public library directly funded by the Australian Government. In accordance with the *National Library Act 1960*, its role is to collect, preserve and make available Australian and other information resources in a wide range of formats; to support the Australian library system in bibliographic, metadata and directory services; and to contribute to international developments in library and information service in areas such as the development and promulgation of standards.

3.2 In its *Electronic Information Resources: strategies and action plan 2002-2003*, the NLA clearly outlined many of the changes the Committee is grappling with, in this report. Of particular interest to the Committee include the implications of the commercialisation of the Web, the increased use of the Web without intermediation by libraries, the development of portals as interfaces to information, the development of virtual reference services, and the issue of intellectual property rights. Firstly, however, the Committee will consider some of the more traditional functions of the NLA and how they are being handled in an online environment.

Kinetica

3.3 Since 1981, in fulfillment of its national support function, the National Library has provided an online national bibliographic database. In March 1999, it launched Kinetica, an Internet-based service which provides access to the national database, making it possible to search for any item and locate which library in Australia holds it. It also provides cataloguing options for Australian libraries. New records can be added, or records obtained for local catalogues. It also supports a document delivery system. Over one thousand Australian libraries' collections are represented on Kinetica, which contains over 35 million titles.¹

3.4 Kinetica is available directly to users in some libraries and it is technically possible to use it from home or office, anywhere in Australia. It was created as a cost-recovery service, however. The current funding model is based on payments from libraries, so universal access is effectively unavailable as most libraries are unable or unwilling to devote funds to making access more freely available.

1 *Submission 104*, p. [1].

3.5 Ms Maslen of the Kinetica Advisory Committee described the way the funding worked:

The way Kinetica funding works now is based on libraries paying subscriptions or fees that are generally proportional to use, and so the library I work in and all other Kinetica members pay to use the service. Most libraries are unable to afford to fully open up that access to all comers – even to their own users. Indeed, next year, as part of the Kinetica developments, there will be a trial of a public libraries portal that is experimenting with this opening up of access to a range of databases, including Kinetica, through public libraries. But, under the current funding model, that cannot be supported.²

3.6 The Committee received mixed evidence on the level of demand for direct public access to Kinetica. A common practice was depicted by Mrs Doe, of the State Library of Tasmania, who indicated that when users required specific titles or articles not available within the State Library, library staff would search Kinetica, locate it and request it on the user's behalf; she did not believe there was public demand for direct access.³ Mrs Schmidt, representing the Australian Subject Gateways Forum, told the Committee that the Canadians had free use of their national bibliographic database and felt that Australians should do likewise.⁴ Dr Bundy also believed it was a great shame that such a 'fantastic national resource' could not be accessed freely by libraries and end users around the country.⁵

3.7 It seems to the Committee that Kinetica still has some way to go in terms of end-user friendliness, a point recognised by the Kinetica Advisory Committee and being addressed. In terms of library access, however, the Committee received unequivocal evidence that libraries which would be considerable beneficiaries from the service felt constrained from using it, on cost grounds. Ms Holschier of the small Central Murray Regional Public Library explained to the Committee that her library service was only a low order user of Kinetica for inter-library loans purposes, adding:

it is not economically viable for us to pay a huge fee for the number of times we would use it, when we cannot get any [cataloguing] credits. Nevertheless, if we could afford it we would use it. We have a very good local history collection because our area is pretty old, and there are some unique records that are very valuable to local historians and family history researchers, and it would be valuable if we could get our unique set of

2 *Evidence*, pp. 85-86.

3 *Evidence*, p. 228.

4 *Evidence*, p. 119.

5 *Evidence*, p. 355.

records onto Kinetica, so that the nation would have access to them ... But we do not have the resources or the budget to do that.⁶

She explained that her library accessed what it needed from Kinetica through other agencies such as ILANet in the State Library of NSW or through a neighbouring larger library, and just paid for what it needed.

3.8 Even libraries which did use Kinetica grumbled about its costing structure. The Committee was told, for example, that Newcastle Region Library paid \$15,000 per annum, or 2.4 per cent of its budget, on Kinetica, and regarded it as a valuable service, but felt that it was inappropriate to be charged as much to delete a record, and thus maintain the integrity of the database, as to add one.⁷

3.9 A complaint about Kinetica came from Parramatta City Library, which found that even in the heart of metropolitan Sydney, response times were so poor that the service was compromised. It cited response times of more than 20 minutes, and stated that the simple process of adding a record could become so slow that staff either worked outside normal working hours or simply did not support the national database by adding local publication records.⁸

3.10 While the Committee has not examined in detail the complaints from librarians about specific aspects of the Kinetica service, we would urge the National Library to address the various issues that have been raised. Indeed, we understand that the National Library is in the process of gradually addressing these complaints, but draws these comments to the attention of the Library, including comments that the Kinetica system was so inadequate that many libraries preferred to duplicate effort by cataloguing onto their own systems rather than using Kinetica.⁹

3.11 Mrs Schmidmaier, NSW State Librarian, voiced her strong support for this piece of library infrastructure:

for the benefit of access to Australian information for Australians, it is really important that participation in [Kinetica] is not made prohibitive by the costs of putting information in and accessing it. That is a very strong recommendation from the way we look at it and from our relationship with public libraries. If they are telling us that they cannot afford to use Kinetica, that goes against the whole philosophy and rationale for the existence of that national bibliographic database.¹⁰

6 *Evidence*, p. 218.

7 *Evidence*, pp. 444-45.

8 *Submission 76*, p. 4.

9 See, for example, Mr Goodwin, *Submission 90*, p. [1].

10 *Evidence*, p. 107.

She clarified that her main concern was not so much access to the database as additions to it, so that the basic record of what is published in this country should be as complete as possible.

3.12 Ms Maslen of the Kinetica Advisory Committee voiced the opinion that Kinetica was a key component of Australian public library infrastructure to which all Australians should have access, freely.¹¹ Mrs Schmidt, representing the Australian Subject Gateways Forum, also strongly supported the free use of Kinetica, explaining that it would provide enhanced access to all the primary library holdings in Australia, whether print or digital.¹² And as Ms McPherson of CAUL pointed out,

The point about Kinetica is that it is one of those things where the whole is much more valuable than the part. The whole as a public good has a value which is greater than probably the value any library would put on it if they were only looking at their own use.¹³

3.13 The Director-General of the National Library explained that any activity not covered by cost recovery was borne by the Library, so to make Kinetica a truly accessible service would require the Library to devote a large percentage of its budget to the service, to the detriment of other activities, or it would require a subvention from government. Mr Toll of the National Library informed the Committee:

at the moment it would cost the National Library about \$4½ million to make the system available free of charge to the existing number of users. If there was a greater number of users, that figure may be greater. With the software licences – both the application software and the system software – generally speaking, those licences do have limits in terms of the number of users, concurrent users or whatever the arrangement is. Therefore, you would expect that most of those would need to be renegotiated. There would also be the issue, at incremental points, of having to upgrade the computing infrastructure in order to carry the additional load that would be encountered.¹⁴

3.14 The Committee agrees with Dr Bundy and others that Kinetica is a 'fantastic national resource' and that its ongoing development is extremely important. Accordingly the Committee recommends that the National Library receive additional funding to provide improved access to Kinetica for all Australian libraries and end users.

11 *Evidence*, p. 86.

12 *Evidence*, p. 119.

13 *Evidence*, p. 120.

14 *Evidence*, p. 96.

The National Collection of Australian Online Publications

3.15 Noting that the volume of electronic resources being made available through the Internet is beyond the ability of any one library to collect and preserve, the NLA sees the need to ensure that important documentary heritage resources continue to be available for public use through a system of distributed archives. The NLA is building a national collection of selected Australian electronic resources, a collection formerly known as PANDORA (Preserving and Accessing Networked Documentary Resources of Australia). A common cataloguing system for these unique Australian materials ensures that they can be easily accessible throughout Australia.

3.16 A number of witnesses spoke of the importance of this digital archive, which contains aspects of Australian culture ranging from The Wiggles to the Real Jeff Kennett website.¹⁵

3.17 A number of challenges faces the NLA in its role here. Perhaps the most difficult is the current lack of legal deposit obligations for Australian electronic resources, a matter the Committee will address further in Chapter 4. There are many other significant issues to be addressed, including the development of guidelines for national collaborative archiving and preservation of a range of electronic resources; collaboration with publishers to promote best-practice guidelines; the development of streamlined, user-friendly access methods; and the handling of dynamic databases.

Other collaborative efforts amongst libraries

AskNow!

3.18 Library opening hours were frequently mentioned as a limitation on the utility of libraries as public information access points. As the Committee has reported in Chapter 2, libraries have recognised this and those in larger centres are increasingly opening extended hours, to meet the needs of a more varied clientele than before. None as yet, to the best of the Committee's knowledge, opens 24 hours per day, seven days per week. For persons with other means of access to the Internet, however, library web-based services are available around the clock on a self-help basis. In addition, since August 2002, the Council of Australian State Libraries (CASL) has been trialling a collaborative virtual reference service, called AskNow! The CASL Chairman, Mrs Frances Awcock, told the Committee that the service operated between 9am and 7pm across Australia, staffed on a roster basis amongst the participating libraries, and that it was highly successful in attracting the 18-35 year-olds, the very group that libraries find hardest to attract.¹⁶ It offers a live chat service with a reference librarian, who is able to 'push' relevant web pages to the questioner for joint browsing, discussion and, hopefully, resolution of the query.

15 See for example, *Submission 73*, p. [3].

16 *Evidence*, p. 42.

3.19 The Library Council of New South Wales outlined why this service was so important:

This new service channel will enable libraries to meet existing clients' needs immediately; build relationships with new users; and increase information literacy as librarians guide the client through search strategies and resources in real time, on line. Libraries will benefit through using staff skills in the online environment; broadening awareness of library collections and services; minimising development costs by sharing expertise and technology; and promoting libraries' collective strengths by applying the best of what libraries and librarians have to offer in terms of evaluating, organising and making accessible information in online and paper based collections.¹⁷

3.20 The Committee commends this most worthwhile initiative, while noting that participating librarians will need to be alert to the distinction between proffering resources and excessive spoon-feeding or even 'completing' school and higher education projects. And, more importantly, this service presupposes good access to the Internet and hence is of little value to those on the wrong side of the digital divide.

3.21 The Committee was also concerned to learn that licensing rules were impeding the operation of the service. Mrs Doe of the State Library of Tasmania explained that if Tasmanian librarians were dealing with a query from, say, the Northern Territory and could identify an electronic resource that would satisfy the query perfectly, they could not always transmit the relevant pages because under their licensing rules, only the Tasmanian public has the right of access.¹⁸ This matter is considered further in Chapter 4.

Promotional activities

3.22 During this inquiry, the Committee was impressed by the number of initiatives in place to assist the public to engage meaningfully in the online world. It was concerned, however, that so many of these innovative and helpful approaches appeared not to be widely known. How to find an Internet access terminal was a case in point. NOIE has made available a NetSpots directory, both electronically and via a telephone hotline, which provides details of the nearest terminals, including those located in libraries, to the would-be user, their opening hours, and charges if applicable.

3.23 Many library witnesses told the Committee that their user and non-user surveys regularly showed that many people were surprised to learn that libraries did more than lend books. The need to promote the growing range of library services

17 *Submission 130*, p. 21.

18 *Evidence*, p. 229.

seems pressing and is beginning to be recognised and acted upon. CASL is sponsoring a major national campaign called @your library, based on a model used in the USA, to coordinate the promotion of libraries.¹⁹ In South Australia, the State Library has initiated a 2003@your library promotional program, involving all libraries in the state. Wattle Park library told the Committee that it was promoting its services via this approach.

3.24 To the best of its knowledge, there has been no promotional activity by either the Australian Government or any state government, to advocate the use of public libraries as sources of government information. This is disappointing, at a time when more and more government information is being made available electronically and a majority of the population still does not have online access at home. A recent ABS survey showed that some 21 per cent of Australian adults accessed government services for private purposes via the Internet in 2002 but only six per cent did so via a public library computer.²⁰ The Committee recommends that whenever the Australian Government advertises its electronic services, it adds a statement to the effect that further information can be obtained from the local public library. It encourages state governments to do likewise.

PictureAustralia

3.25 Libraries, art galleries and museums across Australia have considerable collections of visual material, material which until recently could not easily be shared with others outside of the host institution. A collaborative effort between the National Library, the state libraries, the National Archives, the Australian War Memorial and a growing number of other institutions has ensured that this is changing. PictureAustralia was formally launched in September 2000, after a two year pilot project. Each collaborating institution pays a small fee to belong.

3.26 Mr Bertie of the State Library of Victoria explained how PictureAustralia operated. It is an Internet-based service that allows users to search many significant online pictorial collections at the same time. Images are captured digitally according to agreed standards but remain on the server of the host institution; they are described using agreed metadata standards, with the metadata stored in a single repository.²¹ Images found through PictureAustralia may be reproduced for research or study purposes, with proper attribution, though for commercial use or publication, copyright permission must be sought.

19 *Submission 127*, p. 9.

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

21 *Evidence*, p. 34.

Subject gateways

3.27 Themes reiterated by many witnesses to the Committee's inquiry were the exponential growth of the Internet, the amount of unreliable material it contained, and the difficulty at times of pinpointing wanted information. As Ms Thorsen of the Australian Subject Gateways Forum told the Committee, search engines such as Google claim to index some three billion pages and are reasonably sophisticated in their search mechanisms, however the average information seeker is generally not. Keyword searching often results in huge numbers of 'hits', many of which are of questionable quality.²²

3.28 One approach libraries are taking to assist Internet users is the development of subject gateways, which 'evaluate, identify, collect, describe and then make available resources that are considered to be of high quality and key resources in particular subject areas'.²³ Many have been developed with the assistance of Australian Research Council grants, and most are hosted by academic libraries which pay upkeep costs. Gateways that are part of the voluntary Australian Subject Gateways Forum are generally free, concentrate on Australian content, and do not duplicate existing resources. In the case of WebLaw, a legal gateway, some 22 institutions are involved, each specialising in a particular aspect of the law, and building links to documents or sites not open to normal web browsing.

3.29 One problem that the representatives of the Australian Subject Gateways Forum identified was the inability at present to search across multiple gateways, as is possible in the UK with the Resource Discovery Network. With more and more research of an interdisciplinary nature, cross-gateway searching would be of considerable benefit.

3.30 Subject gateways are but one facet of the research information infrastructure, for which a holistic approach is under consideration. A framework proposed by the Higher Education Information Infrastructure Implementation Steering Committee is to be implemented by a high-level Australian Research Information Infrastructure Committee chaired by Professor Hume, Vice-Chancellor of the University of New South Wales, with the aim of better managing Australia's research information and improving access to it by using emerging technologies.²⁴

22 *Evidence*, p. 118.

23 *Evidence*, p. 118.

24 Dr Brendan Nelson, *Boosting Australia's research infrastructure*, Media Release 14 Aug 2003.

Digitisation developments

3.31 Many libraries, by chance or design, are the repositories of extensive hard-copy and often fragile local history collections, including maps and manuscripts. The National Library commenced digitising some of its collections in 1995. The State Library of NSW is marking the centenary of the opening of the Mitchell Library in 2010 with a program of digitisation initiatives, including the digitisation of its Matthew Flinders collection in 2001. Flinders' diaries, logbooks, charts, personal artefacts and portraits are now available via the web, making this unique material accessible worldwide to support education, scholarship and community interest. The Committee notes with interest that this project was made possible by private sector sponsorship; it further notes that in its first year, it proved remarkably popular, with over 50,000 page views.²⁵

3.32 Similar digitisation activity was reported by many other libraries and library systems. James Cook University Library, for example, has digitised its collection of historic photos of the environmental campaigns in the Daintree and made them available to a wider audience through its own web pages and through PictureAustralia. It is also working on the digitisation of some 32,000 photographs of Townsville, and with the assistance of two persons employed under the Community Jobs Plan, is scanning the Nelly Bay archives. In each case, the library has complied with the standards and assigned metadata as required by the National Library.²⁶

3.33 While digitisation is seen as immensely important by libraries, and is valued by users, it is beyond the resources of many libraries to undertake, unaided, and few have the profile of the Mitchell Library to attract corporate sponsors. Even the NSW State Librarian commented:

there is no funding for this area of activity. Our focus, on the national scale, and with our state and national colleagues, is on the material that is unique to us which will add to the knowledge of Australian history and social life. We contribute to that through a range of initiatives. However, they are the sorts of things that are very difficult to fund within our current normal budgetary environment.²⁷

3.34 The importance of preserving local history items and making them more widely available digitally has been recognised, with the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, in partnership with the National Library of Australia and the National Archives of Australia, offering Community Heritage Grants to assist in the digitisation of such resources. The Committee recommends:

25 *Submission 130*, p. 8.

26 *Evidence*, p. 263.

27 *Evidence*, p. 107.

- (a) the continuation of the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Community Heritage Grants digitisation program; and,
- (b) the addition of a new National Heritage Grants program for peak cultural institutions to assist in the digitisation of their collections.

3.35 The fact remains, however, that nobody can afford to digitise all the records of the past. CASL representatives pointed out that libraries needed to set priorities in choosing material to digitise, just as they do in collection building, and that items of national and state significance should take priority.²⁸

3.36 Digitisation is important for much more than local history collections, of course. One glaring gap in the Australian context pointed out to the Committee by many witnesses was the unavailability online of postgraduate theses presented to Australian universities.²⁹ Each university is responsible for its own postgraduate theses. The Committee was told that CAUL had set up an Australian digital theses project in 1997, but that there was not a lot of data in it.³⁰ Many university libraries were, however, creating e-print repositories of research articles produced by their own researchers.³¹

3.37 The Committee notes the recent formation of an Australian Research Information Infrastructure Committee (ARIIC),³² intended to act on recommendations for managing and using the vast amounts of research information generated by Australia's universities and research organisations. The Committee recommends that the ARIIC consider the question of the availability online of Australian postgraduate theses as a matter of priority.

3.38 There is a growing demand for digitised content at the desktop, including pre-digital newspapers and journal articles. The Committee's attention was drawn to a commercially available service provided by RMIT Publishing and the Copyright Agency Ltd, in cooperation with the National Library, which provides digital images of a wide range of Australian journal article indexed in the Australian Public Affairs Information Service and the Australian Medical Index.

3.39 This throws into sharp focus the question of what information should be freely available, and what is deemed to be 'value-added' and can legitimately be charged for. A further question, in the form of the mechanics of charging so as to reduce the administrative burden, must then be addressed.

28 *Evidence*, p. 48.

29 See, for example, *Evidence*, p. 297; p. 416.

30 *Evidence*, p. 416.

31 *Evidence*, p. 297.

32 Dr Brendan Nelson, *Boosting Australia's Research Infrastructure*, Media release 433/03.

Other cooperative arrangements

3.40 As many witnesses remarked, libraries have a strong tradition of cooperation, born perhaps out of necessity, but noteworthy, nonetheless. Cooperation has taken many forms, including for example the cataloguing, inter-library loans and digitisation initiatives facilitated by the National Library and described above. But a wide variety of cooperative and formal consortia arrangements have been initiated by libraries to help them make their funding stretch further and to serve their users better. The Committee draws attention to just a few of them.

3.41 One example is the Shorelink cooperative library network on Sydney's lower north shore, which was formed 20 years ago to service five councils. With only some 221,000 residents across the five councils, it would have been expensive individually to set up infrastructure from scratch but by spreading the fixed costs across a broader resident base it has enabled member councils to provide a better standard of service. Jointly, they are able to open 69 hours per week.

3.42 Also in New South Wales, the Metropolitan Public Libraries Association and the Country Public Libraries Association banded together to organise the first consortia purchasing deal for Kinetica, which provides financial benefits as well as advantaging both their members and end users.³³

State library networking initiatives

3.43 As the Committee noted in Chapter 1, in both New South Wales and Victoria, each library service is responsible for the total provision of library services. With the advent of the Internet, it was obvious that the regional and rural libraries would be disadvantaged, if they had to bear the full cost of connectivity. So each state came up with a means of dealing with the issue.

3.44 NSW.net is an initiative of the State Library of New South Wales. It has managed an ISDN network for councils and public libraries across NSW, and provided subsidised access to the Internet, since 1997, and is continuing to monitor and trial other access options such as ADSL. Free public access Internet terminals, including one per branch with adaptive software, have been installed in 'virtually' every public library in the state. In addition, NSW.net provides free access to two online bibliographic databases for all NSW public libraries and helps coordinate consortia purchases of additional databases. It also supports the Rural Link project, to establish online access via satellite in remote communities.³⁴

33 *Evidence*, p. 129.

34 *Submission 130*, p. 15.

3.45 Most recipient libraries spoke warmly of the initiative, though some smaller rural communities had experienced telecommunications problems because the local telephone exchanges could not cope.³⁵ Ms Wallace of the Metropolitan Public Libraries Association suggested that, while there might not be huge financial incentives from belonging to NSW.net, the attraction of the content that was available through the consortium was significant, as was the opportunity to be part of technology trials and to be at the forefront of what was being offered.³⁶

3.46 The funding for NSW.net came from the state government. The rationale for rolling out a connection to councils as opposed only to libraries was that councils would then be more willing to pick up the ongoing costs once the initial infrastructure had been rolled out. There was some suggestion that the sustainability of the network in the longer term was in question.³⁷

3.47 VICNET is a division of the State Library of Victoria, one of whose activities is to supply infrastructure and bandwidth to most of the public libraries in Victoria. It is basically a cost-recovery service. Mr Bertie, representing the State Library, explained that communications suppliers had been prepared to offer a good deal because of the aggregated market, but that they had had very limited success with the major telecommunications companies.³⁸ The relationship is purely commercial, and there is no special e-rate offered.

3.48 While a former general manager of the project, Mr Gary Hardy, explained, that in their haste to implement online services in libraries, they may have proceeded suboptimally,³⁹ at least a basic level of online access has been provided via this service.

Development of users' online skills

3.49 In this relatively early stage of the information revolution, the first requirements for would-be Internet users are basic IT skills. These are a 'given' for most students, but not for older persons who may have retired from the workforce before the advent of computers. NATSEM modelling in 2000 found that retirees were the most disadvantaged population group in terms of home Internet access, with some 63 per cent of them projected to be without Internet access at home this year.⁴⁰ Even if this proves to be pessimistic, there is clearly a huge group of potentially

35 See for example, *Evidence*, p. 105, pp. 132-33.

36 *Evidence*, p. 133.

37 *Evidence*, p. 104.

38 *Evidence*, p. 35.

39 *Evidence*, p. 56.

40 R. Lloyd & O Hellwig, *Barriers to the take-up of new technology*, Discussion Paper 53; NATSEM 2000, p. 28.

disadvantaged citizens unable to participate in the online world without considerable assistance. And that assistance means not only providing access to an online computer, but also training in its use.

3.50 Libraries can provide an excellent environment for older persons to be exposed to computers and the Internet, given their reputation as safe, centrally located, welcoming places where one-on-one support, or the reassurance and encouragement of group classes, can take place. And libraries are already well patronised by older Australians. Many library witnesses outlined the programs they were running for seniors, and the obvious popularity they enjoyed.

3.51 The Internet can seem inordinately complex for novice online information seekers. At a simplistic level, 'surfing' the Net can be appealing to many, but actually using it to find necessary information can be a challenge. This was recognised early as governments contemplated the capabilities of the Internet as a vehicle for the provision of government information. A *Strategic Framework for the Information Economy* outlined the issues:

One of the more daunting aspects of the Internet is the sheer volume of material it carries. Along with the problems in locating information that is useful or relevant, there may be difficulties in verifying the authenticity or currency of the information. This is of particular concern in relation to information on medical treatments, for example. It may be that people start to make more use of professional information brokerage services, or 'single entry point' gateways and web-rings. Public libraries have traditionally performed this type of intermediary role – consideration needs to be given to a greater expansion of this role in the online environment.⁴¹

3.52 The other group of users for whom training in advanced searching skills, rather than keyboarding skills per se, is highly desirable is the student population. Many of the academic librarians who gave evidence to the Committee recounted disheartening tales of the propensity of students to search superficially and to take whatever information came to hand easily. In the Committee's inquiry, librarians frequently commented on their users' apparent preference for simplistic information-seeking approaches. As Ms McPherson, President of the Council of Australian University Libraries, commented:

librarians have a grave concern about the quality of information that people use and what we can deliver to them. Despite the training we do in skills and information literacy with students, a number of recent research studies show that students nevertheless prefer Google [a search engine] because it is easy

41 *A Strategic Framework for the Information Economy: identifying priorities for action*, Canberra, 1998, p. 9.

and uses only a few keystrokes. The fact that ... only nine per cent of journals are available in the public Internet fazes them less than the fact that they seem to get a lot of returns for a few keystrokes. That is a constant battle. The more that we can do through things like subject gateways and the development of customised interfaces, which deliver an information environment particular to their discipline or their department or to their needs at the moment, the more we are able to close that gap. It is not just a matter of increasing their skills; it is also a matter of decreasing the skills that they need to access the information.⁴²

3.53 The Committee was heartened to learn of the numerous efforts of librarians to work with academic staff in developing genuine i-literacy programs for students. As Mrs McCarthy of the Queensland University of Technology told the Committee:

We do skills training where we work in partnership with colleagues within the rest of our division, with people in the IT area and with instructional designers. We also work in an orientation situation where we have an integrated orientation program that covers information literacy skills, IT literacy skills and academic literacy skills, and our librarians teach across all three of those areas on a regular basis ... It is a very changed role for the librarian these days.⁴³

3.54 As Ms McPherson of CAUL pointed out, increasing Internet users' skills is only half the battle; much can also be done via subject gateways, web portals, and well-constructed metadata to decrease the skills required to search for information electronically.⁴⁴ In Chapter 4, the Committee considers the support for such initiatives recently announced by the federal Minister for Education, Science and Training.

Projects for special groups

Indigenous Australians

3.55 If online access can be difficult for the general community, the situation for indigenous Australians is considerably worse. The Committee was encouraged to learn, therefore, of the development of indigenous knowledge centres in Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia. Three were being developed in the Northern Territory; while five were in operation in Queensland by April 2003, with six more scheduled to open within 12 months, and a total of 31 to be established by 2005.⁴⁵ As the Queensland State Librarian explained, the intention was to work with the communities concerned to develop services to meet their needs, which might not

42 *Evidence*, pp. 122-3.

43 *Evidence*, p. 307.

44 *Evidence*, p. 123.

45 *Submission 103*, p. 7.

be for a traditional library service *per se* but ongoing training, homework centres for children and cultural revitalisation.⁴⁶

3.56 In the Northern Territory, the three proposed knowledge centres are designed to provide quite different types of services: one at Wadeye is being located with a rural transaction centre, and is oriented towards the provision of information on what is happening in the rest of the Territory; another at Galiwinku is more culturally based and hopes to engage in e-commerce; while a third, at Anmatjere, has a strong leaning towards the provision of tourist information.⁴⁷ These three, and future, knowledge centres will also incorporate 'traditional' library services but, as Mr Beale of the Northern Territory Library and Information Service pointed out, with low literacy levels in Aboriginal communities, such traditional services are largely inappropriate.⁴⁸

3.57 Even more encouraging was the effort being made to integrate the delivery of federal- and state-funded services to indigenous communities in Queensland. Ms Giles-Peters told the Committee that the State Library had employed an Aboriginal library manager who could work with the Aboriginal Coordinating Council, the Island Coordinating Council, ATSIC, the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, the Department of Education, et cetera, to achieve that end.⁴⁹

3.58 In the university sector, the initial challenge for prospective indigenous students is to access online handbooks and complete enrolment procedures online, as is now the norm. Mr Oates of the Indigenous Learning Centre of Central Queensland University explained that his centre took on that task for prospective students. He pointed out that across the country, there were about 36 Aboriginal resource centres in universities with 24-hour access computer labs but that they were of little support to the many external students. In his view, NTN money would have been better spent giving IT support in the home by way of equipment loans via the relevant university library to every one of the 4,500 Aboriginal students who were successful in continuing at university.⁵⁰

3.59 Mr Oates was highly critical of the assumption that the way to access Aboriginal communities was through the community organisations. He told the Committee that 'If you put the NTN connection in one of the organisations, the others get their noses out of joint and will not use it.'⁵¹ On the other hand, however, he applauded the Indigenous Collections Management Project, a collaborative project between the Distributed Systems Technology CRC, the Smithsonian Institute's

46 *Evidence*, p. 317.

47 *Evidence*, p. 142.

48 *Evidence*, p. 142.

49 *Evidence*, p. 318.

50 *Evidence*, p. 287.

51 *Evidence*, p. 287.

National Museum of the American Indian Cultural Resources Centre and his own organisation. The intention of the project is to create a 'virtual' keeping place by collaborating with indigenous communities or custodial organisations in preserving resources, developing content description, culturally sensitive access provisions and appropriate metadata models.⁵²

Persons with physical disabilities

3.60 With current building requirements, access to public libraries for people with physical disabilities tends not to be a problem. Older-style libraries may present problems but resourceful library managers have sometimes been able to overcome the problem by working with community mobility services.⁵³

3.61 The Committee was told of a huge range of resources which have been developed to help people with disabilities in their online access. They include screen magnifiers, screen readers, voice recognition software, alternative keyboards, alternative pointing devices, trackballs, touch screens and many others.⁵⁴

3.62 In each of 1998-99 and 1999-2000 the Australian Government provided \$1.5 million to the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts for an AccessAbility program to support innovative projects that help people with disabilities gain improved access to online information and communications services. The program was wound up in May 2002.

3.63 One of the projects to receive funding under the AccessAbility program was a study of online services for people with disabilities in Australian public libraries, by researchers from Monash and Charles Sturt Universities and VICNET.⁵⁵ The study found that a great deal of excellent adaptive equipment and software existed for use by persons with a range of different disabilities, but it needed to be selected with great care for a public library setting and it needed to be practical and easy for librarians to support. No one piece of equipment could cater for all needs so compromises were necessary. The study recommended that libraries seek partnerships with local disability organisations to assist in training. Library accessibility issues remained. And, sensibly, the study concluded that the initiative of placing at least one PC with adaptive technology in each public library should be the subject of simple but regular evaluation of its use. The study also identified the absence of suitable web sites for people with low literacy skills.

52 *Submission 153*, pp. 14-15.

53 See, for example, *Evidence*, p. 11.

54 See, for example, Willoughby City Council, *Submission 40*, p. 3.

55 K. Williamson et al., *Online fairways for people with disabilities: achieving par in public libraries*, http://www.dcita.gov.au/Article/0,,0_1-2_3-4_111395,00.html

3.64 The Committee perceives an ongoing need for the identification and testing of adaptive technologies for the use of online equipment by persons with disabilities and of the use of such equipment in public libraries. If no alternative funding mechanisms for such research are in place, the Committee recommends the funding of another round of AccessAbility grants.

Seniors

3.65 NOIE insists that older Australians are steadily increasing their Internet use⁵⁶ yet this is from a very low base. Even the most recent statistics indicate that they are considerably less likely to use the Internet than their younger brethren. While Internet usage by seniors may be increasing, that usage is primarily for email purposes.⁵⁷ In itself, this is not a problem. Seniors may move on to other online activities once the initial fear and perhaps distrust of the new medium evaporates and they become familiar with the technology. Most public libraries have seen the need to encourage seniors' online usage and have offered individual or group training. The Library Department of the City of Armadale in Western Australia was one of many library systems to run free 'Surfing Seniors' courses, which proved highly popular and were booked out weeks in advance.⁵⁸

3.66 Another initiative which the Committee observed in action was the COIN program in Rockhampton, a joint effort of the Rockhampton City Council and the University of Central Queensland, funded through a Families and Communities grant under the Families and Community Networking Initiative. COIN was established to provide training in interactive communication technologies, initially to 'at risk' groups within the community and in particular, to senior citizens, in advance of the provision of facilities in the proposed new library.

3.67 In 2000, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission reported on the accessibility of electronic services for older and disabled Australians. It found that a substantial number of older people simply did not see sufficient benefit in new technologies to invest effort in using them. This attitude is perfectly reasonable on the part of the people concerned, but is of some concern, pragmatically speaking, for governments seeking to achieve cost savings or more effective service through new technologies. Of more concern, however, is whether people are being excluded from

56 NOIE, *Older Australians Online*,

http://www.noie.gov.au/projects/access/Connecting_Communities/older_aust.htm

57 *ibid.*

58 *Submission 77*, p. 3.

online services and information because of avoidable barriers to access, such as cost, lack of training or limited or inadequate public access facilities.⁵⁹

3.68 The Seniors Online Strategy, a partnership between the NSW Government and Microsoft Australia, was launched in March 2001. Microsoft is committing \$500,000 in software and licences over a three-year period to complement \$1.7 million from the NSW Government. Seniors Online is both promotional, outlining the benefits of computer and Internet use for seniors in their daily lives, and practical, providing specific training courses for older people to help them come to grips with new technology. A specific web site <http://www.seniorscard.nsw.gov.au> has been set up to enable seniors to update their Seniors Card membership details and to access whole-of-government information and services.⁶⁰

Persons from a non-English speaking background

3.69 Public library access to multilingual information is highly variable throughout the country. In localities with large, well-established foreign-born communities, provision may be quite good in a range of formats, including the Internet, but for small communities with few speakers of a particular language, the position is fairly dire. Each state has taken steps, individually, to improve information provision for its non-English speaking residents. Where the level of literacy in the first language is an impediment, access to information resources is usually mediated via a health care worker, social worker, librarian or settlement officer.

3.70 The Victorian Open Road project [<http://www.openroad.viv.gov.au>] is a prototype project which has attracted attention. Computers purchased as part of a statewide rollout of public access workstations by VICNET were pre-configured for multilingual web browsing; a training program was developed to provide library staff with skills to assist their users locate and access web pages in languages other than English; a web directory was developed to provide access to quality online resources in 12 community languages; and a website providing access to information about multicultural library services was also developed.⁶¹

3.71 Queensland has recently launched a multicultural bridge site, which has information about libraries and accessing information in 14 community languages, as well as links to foreign language newspapers and radio broadcasts. It brings everything together in the one place to make it easier for librarians and home-based users alike.⁶²

59 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Accessibility of electronic commerce and new service and information technologies for older Australians and people with a disability*, HREOC, Sydney, 2000.

60 See <http://www.microsoft.com/australia/empower/projects/seniorsonline.asp>.

61 *Submission 112*, pp. [4-5].

62 *Evidence*, p. 317.

3.72 In New South Wales, NSW.net–distributed computers were all pre-configured for multilingual web surfing in common community languages.

3.73 The Victorian Government has funded Skills.net to provide grants to community organisations to provide training in the use of the internet and access to the Internet. Specific target communities are those who might not otherwise use the Internet. Training to date has been provided for 80,000 Victorians at 380 across the state; approximately 10 per cent of Skills.net providers are delivering training and access to people from non-English speaking backgrounds.⁶³

3.74 The Committee was also told of a South Australian State Library initiative called the English Language Learning and Information Service. People whose first language is, say, Mandarin, can learn English from volunteers in the library and in exchange, teach on a voluntary basis people who want to learn Mandarin.⁶⁴

3.75 At the individual library level, the Committee was told of the role of the Singleton Library in providing Internet access and developing a special web site to help integrate the Kosovars into the local community during the Singleton Safe Haven Project.

3.76 A joint submission from multilingual consultants in the state libraries of Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland gave the Committee considerable insights into the problems involved in providing Internet access to linguistically diverse users. Public libraries provide access only to the languages that come pre-configured with the PC operating systems and web browsers installed, which immediately limits the range of languages available; many existing library catalogues also do not support multilingual records.⁶⁵

Public/private sector initiatives

3.77 In the course of its inquiry the Committee could not fail to note the commendable tendency of library managers everywhere to cooperate in an attempt to stretch their operating dollar further. As we noted previously, Australian corporations have a poor track record of philanthropy generally, and that extends to the library sector. So it is with considerable pleasure that we make mention of just a few extremely worthwhile private sector collaborations with libraries. In doing so, the Committee would also like to encourage more corporations, especially those with a vested interest in online technology or communications, to consider similar benevolence.

63 *Submission 126*, p. 5.

64 *Evidence*, p. 47.

65 *Submission 112*, p. [4].

3.78 The Council of Australian State Libraries told the Committee its members had been involved in more than 134 sponsorships, partnerships and joint projects with the corporate sector, valued at more than \$6.6 million, since 2000.⁶⁶ These projects covered many areas of library activity, from the promotion of literacy through, amongst others, the Nestle Write Around Australia project, conservation, digitisation and training.

3.79 The BHP Billiton Skillsnet projects are a shining, and award-winning, example of what can be achieved. The Queensland project, involving the State Library of Queensland, BHP Billiton, Ipex and Telstra, provides free computer and Internet training to rural and regional centres across the state.⁶⁷ BHP Billiton contributes significant funding, while the State Library staff provide the tuition. The New South Wales project complements the rollout of Rural Link broadband connectivity to rural and remote communities across the state. The project provides training products, services and support to participating public libraries to improve their capacity to deliver Internet training to their local communities, and has a strong information literacy component. Most encouragingly, the Committee learnt that every effort is to be made to integrate training with other local Internet providers and educational agencies.⁶⁸

3.80 Sponsorship from Mr James Fairfax AO enabled the New South Wales State Library to create and make available worldwide in 2001 an electronic archive of the papers of Matthew Flinders held in the Mitchell Library. His private diaries, logbooks, charts, personal artefacts and portraits are now available on the web, thus helping to ensure the preservation of the originals as well as extending access to these heritage materials.⁶⁹

3.81 Another government-private sector initiative is the Seniors Online Strategy, mentioned above, a partnership between the New South Wales Government and Microsoft.⁷⁰

3.82 In yet another worthwhile initiative a major US database provider, Dialog, has provided access to its databases worth US\$1 million to Australia's 14 library schools to enable librarians in training to gain some of the skills they will require in the workforce.⁷¹

66 *Submission 127*, p. 9.

67 *Submission 103*, p. 7; *Submission 155*, p. [3].

68 *Submission 130*, pp. 17-18.

69 *Submission 130*, p. 10.

70 See <http://www.microsoft.com/australia/empower/projects/seniorsonline.asp>

71 *Evidence*, p. 417.

Overseas initiatives

3.83 The Committee did not make an extensive study of library provisions in other parts of the world. It reports here some of the overseas library initiatives that were described to it and which may have some merit in the Australian context.

United Kingdom

3.84 Libraries in the United Kingdom (UK) have received an enormous boost in recent times thanks to a major government initiative to bring Internet access and online services to the whole UK population. Entitled the People's Network, and lottery funded, it was designed by the Library and Information Commission, now Resource: the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries. Some £120 million over three years has been invested in installing PCs and broadband network connections in public libraries and in training library staff how to use it. Services are free, or at minimal cost, including email.

3.85 An early review of the People's Network by Professor Peter Brophy of Manchester University was extremely positive, finding that it was being used, and used by disadvantaged groups in the community without other ready means of Internet access. While acknowledging that it was too early to extrapolate nationally, Professor Brophy believed there was encouraging evidence that the People's Network was meeting the needs of the less advantaged sectors of society. He also found that there was a positive knock-on effect on reading and other general library use, with an estimated 40 per cent of non-members of libraries joining the library after using the People's Network facilities there.

3.86 In his review, Professor Brophy also addressed the question of why libraries were chosen to house the network. He found that, apart from the sheer 'reach' of the public library system, with its 4,488 branches across the UK, the atmosphere in libraries was less off-putting than other alternatives:

it is all too easy to underestimate the importance of a sympathetic environment in which to try out PCs for the first time, or to practice IT skills. For many people the fear of 'making a fool of myself' or breaking the machine by doing the wrong thing is a major turn-off. Creating supportive and encouraging settings is a substantial issue.⁷²

3.87 A related lottery-funded project is to accelerate the rate of digitisation of important materials, and Resource is working with a number of other partners on reader development projects and online cultural programs.

72 Peter Brophy, *The People's Network: a turning point for public libraries*, Resource, 2002, p. 14.

3.88 Another development in the UK was the 19 March 2002 announcement of a strategic alliance between the British Library and the Higher Education Funding Council for England, to ensure adequate recognition of the fact that academic research accounts for some 50 per cent of the British Library usage, and that that research was dependent on the resources provided by the Library. Key areas for future collaboration include developing e-learning resources, contributing to the e-university and working with the public library network.⁷³

Canada

3.89 Mrs Schmidt, representing the Australian Subject Gateways Forum, told the Committee that Canada has a national bibliographic database, similar to the National Library's Kinetica, which is provided free of charge to all Canadians to use.⁷⁴ And in another worthwhile initiative, Canada has developed a National Site Licencing Project which has made desktop access to electronic versions of research databases in science, engineering, health and environmental disciplines available for 64 participating universities across the country.⁷⁵

Singapore

3.90 With a population of just over four million, Singapore has provided \$1 billion since 1996 to develop its library infrastructure, content and literacy programs.⁷⁶ Even more has been spent to integrate public libraries and education at a very high level with high level government support⁷⁷ with the result that information literacy rates are already 55 per cent and rising.

3.91 The Committee was told that it was the national goal of Singapore to build an e-inclusive society, where everybody is able to reap the benefits of ICT, with technology accessible and affordable to all, regardless of age, language, social background or ability. Training centres have been established in libraries to equip people with basic computer and Internet skills. All members of the national library system have access to an eLibraryHub, a community and content portal holding some 10,000 electronic books, 13,000 electronic magazines, journals and databases, 900 video-on-demand titles and 700 CD-Rom that are streamed through the Singapore ONE network.⁷⁸

73 *Submission 127*, p. 11.

74 *Evidence*, p. 119.

75 See <http://www.cnslp.ca>.

76 *Submission 126*, p. 7.

77 *Evidence*, p. 92.

78 *Submission 77*, p. 3.

New Zealand

3.92 New Zealand has recently enacted a National Library Act 2003, S22 of which establishes a Library and Information Advisory Commission, consisting of up to six members and with the National Librarian as ex officio member. The Commission's purpose is to provide advice to the Minister on library and information matters, including access to services and the role of library and information services in the cultural and economic life of New Zealand. The minister called for nominations for the Commission in June of this year.⁷⁹

United States of America

3.93 The Committee was told that most schools and libraries in the USA are provided with a special discount rate to obtain affordable telecommunications and Internet access.⁸⁰ The Schools and Libraries Support Mechanism, popularly known as the e-rate, makes technology such as the Internet affordable for every public school and public library in the USA by providing discounts on eligible services. Libraries and schools in low-income urban communities and rural areas qualify for highest discounts to assure that every American, regardless of age, income or location, has access to the essential tools of the information age. Established by the Telecommunications Act 1996 and funded at up to US\$2.25 billion per annum by contributions from the telecommunications companies, the e-rate provides discounts of between 20 and 90 per cent on the costs of telecommunications, Internet access and network wiring. The e-rate is administered by the Schools and Libraries Division of the Universal Service Administrative Company, a not-for-profit corporation overseen by the Federal Communications Commission.⁸¹

79 See http://www.natlib.govt.nz/en/whatsnew/minister_nominations.html

80 *Submission 135*, p. 6.

81 <http://www.sl.universalservice.org>

CHAPTER 4

SOME CHALLENGES OF THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

A national information policy?

4.1 A considerable number of witnesses to this inquiry pointed to the need for a federally-enunciated statement encompassing, variously, such themes as e-government, content creation and delivery, the quality of information, universal access to information (social inclusion), metadata and interoperability, and information literacy. While there was a distinct lack of uniformity about what exactly was required, it was obvious to the Committee that there was a desire for some overarching national approach that went beyond the connectivity issue and that recognised a legitimate role for libraries in the information age.

4.2 The Library Board of Victoria submitted that the Australian Government should be leading the further development of the Australian library network in the online environment. It called for the Australian Government to facilitate the development and implementation of a national information policy, incorporating national strategies for connectivity, content and competencies, yet developed with the capacities of smaller public information bodies in mind. It pointed to the example of Singapore, with a population of some 4.1 million, but which has developed a national information strategy and has provided, since 1996, \$1 billion to develop its library infrastructure, content and literacy programs.¹

4.3 The lack of recognition of the key role public libraries play as information access points was a matter frequently raised with the Committee. Many libraries which advocated the development of a national information strategy did so in the hope of redressing that situation.² Mr Bentley of the Wolanski Foundation stressed that any such national information management plan not be based on the interests of the dominant sector, the ICT industry.³

4.4 Dr Alan Bundy was another to note that the lack of a national information strategy was a major constraint working against public libraries and preventing them from achieving their full potential 'to information-enable' Australians.⁴ In evidence to

1 *Submission 126*, p. 7.

2 See, for example, Joint Library Advisory Committee, Newcastle Region Library, *Submission 100*, p. [4]; Metropolitan Public Libraries Association, *Submission 114*, p. [4]; Australian Subject Gateways Forum, *Submission 75*, p. 4.

3 *Submission 117*, p. 21.

4 *Submission 3*, p. 2.

the Committee, he pointed out the desirability of a unified national approach to libraries, drawing together the loose ends residing in different jurisdictions. He added:

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.⁵

4.5 The Committee notes that the Howard Government has not been disposed in the past to accept recommendations that it develop a national library or information policy. In its formal response to a 1991 report from the House of Representatives Standing Committee for Long Term Strategies, *Australia as an Information Society: the role of libraries/information networks*, it stated:

A national information policy would quickly become out of date and would not have the flexibility to meet changing needs and circumstances.⁶

The response further indicated that the government was satisfied with de facto national library policies developed by the library community and felt that the development and provision of library services could well be managed by the Cultural Ministers Council and the Online Government Council.

4.6 The Committee has observed, and its observations have been reinforced by the libraries and others who gave evidence to it, that libraries seem to be the poor relations when it comes to attention from these councils or from NOIE. While initially such neglect was perhaps understandable in the enthusiasm to spread the IT message and get Australia 'connected', it is less so now that there is a growing realisation that what constitutes genuine access to information transcends connectivity.

4.7 The lack of a single federal entity with responsibility for information policy was an issue frequently raised with the Committee. NOIE was regarded by many as too close to the ICT sector. As Ms Swan of Information Edge told the Committee:

I think NOIE could possibly be expanded to make sure that it has the necessary skills and advocates involved to push the knowledge. What we are really talking about here is the delivery of knowledge via libraries in an online world. Unless you have somebody who understands how knowledge is harnessed in an online world – how it gets into databases, who delivers it, what the quality of the databases is, how much they cost and all those things – you could not do it necessarily with the current people involved. But as long as NOIE was expanded to include those skills, fine ...⁷

5 *Evidence*, p. 344.

6 Senator Richard Alston, Minister for Communications and the Arts, Government response to the report, *'Australia as an Information Society'*, tabled 15 May 1997.

7 *Evidence*, p. 419

4.8 The Committee supports in principle the notion of a broad national information policy. But unless hard funds were to be attached to it, it would be merely aspirational. Nor does the Committee feel disposed to advocate adding layers of bureaucracy. It recognises that the library voice is somewhat diluted at present in federal fora and believes that the time has come for the Cultural Ministers' Council to again turn its attention to libraries and to consider again the need for a national information policy statement.

4.9 In saying this, the Committee is aware that the Cultural Ministers' Council established a National Collections Advisory Forum in 2002, comprising nine members, including one librarian. The Forum was to bring both industry and community perspectives to Australian, State and Territory Ministers on policy and planning for the gallery, library, archives and museums sectors with regard to the Distributed National Collection. It was stressed that leadership and national coordination of strategic initiatives are essential to the longer-term development of the sector; the Forum was to report to the Council within 12 months on the feasibility or otherwise of establishing a national industry body to represent the library, archives, museum and gallery sectors.

4.10 In the view of the Committee, this is a valuable initiative but one with too broad an agenda to be of assistance to the pressing needs of libraries now. It therefore recommends:

- (a) that the Cultural Ministers' Council appoint a standing libraries working group to provide regular reports on library and information matters which need to be addressed as a priority;
- (b) that the proposed Cultural Ministers' Council standing libraries working group develop, in consultation with other interested parties, a national information policy; and,
- (c) that NOIE be required to consult with the appropriate national library representatives on all matters of substance affecting the library community and the online provision of services.

Connectivity and bandwidth

4.11 Libraries and library systems around the country operate in very different circumstances, by reason of geography, funding, and in some cases, historical accident. While online access is increasingly, though not universally, available in libraries, the quality of that access, how it is achieved, and its cost, varies considerably and results in huge disparities in service levels across Australia. At the one extreme, there are a number of areas in far north Queensland such as Croydon, Burketown, Cape York and the Torres Strait without a reliable electricity supply and for whom any kind of online interaction is problematic.⁸ In metropolitan areas particularly,

8 *Submission 103*, p. [4].

where access per se is no longer such a major issue, access reliability and cost are the current challenges, as is the matter of bandwidth.

4.12 In its submission to the Committee's inquiry, NOIE summed up the bandwidth issue:

Bandwidth capacity is likely to be a major issue for libraries both now and into the future as the expectations and demands of library users become increasingly sophisticated in terms of their access to online information and services. Public Internet access via narrowband connections will not enable users to access content and applications involving large files, photos, graphics, video, online courses, games, etc.⁹

4.13 NOIE indicated that at April 2002, while 57 per cent had narrowband home Internet access, only an estimated six per cent had broadband access and that broadband Internet access 'may be beyond the reach of many Australians for some time to come' and hence public libraries and other community organisations were likely to play an important role in the provision of public access to online information and services into the future. NOIE went on to add:

The challenge for the library sector and for State and Local Government funding agencies will be to respond to future demands and acquire the necessary bandwidth at an affordable price.¹⁰

4.14 While dial-up Internet access is almost universally available, it is simply not adequate for library user needs. High speed Internet access is available through a range of technologies, including ADSL, ISDN and satellite. At the end of 2002, ADSL was available at some 260 rural exchanges; its limitation, however, is that it is only appropriate for those within 3.5 cable kilometres of an enabled exchange. Telstra is testing 'mini' ADSL devices which will extend this range. The ISDN option, with extension, may work up to 18 kilometres from the exchange, and provides 128 kbps. Beyond that, satellite is so far the only real option.

4.15 International surveys show that broadband access costs in Australia are quite high by world standards. The International Telecommunications Union in a recent publication, *Birth of Broadband*, reported that Australia was the seventh most expensive country for broadband access of the 30 major nations surveyed, as assessed by percentage of monthly income required to download 100 kilobits: 0.44 per cent in Australia compared with 0.12 per cent in the USA. The most affordable broadband services were in Japan, Korea, Belgium, Hong Kong, Singapore and the United States. The survey also confirmed the relatively low rate of broadband use in Australia, which

9 Submission 12, p. [4].

10 Submission 12, p. [4].

ranked 29th on the table of 30 countries in terms of broadband subscribers, with only 1.4 per 100 inhabitants.¹¹

4.16 In the following paragraphs, the Committee considers some of the Internet choices various libraries have made, the problems they have encountered, their levels of satisfaction, and the costs involved.

4.17 Mrs Schmidmaier, NSW State Librarian, explained to the Committee that in some cases in the IT roll-out to rural libraries, they had found that the local telephone exchanges could not cope with the connections they wanted to put in. Even in the Australian Government-funded Rural Link program to provide connectivity to small communities of less than 2,000 people, difficulties were being experienced with a whole range of technologies including satellite and wireless.¹² Mrs Schmidmaier estimated that half the towns selected were affected by technical barriers, but that negotiations were underway with Telstra to upgrade facilities.¹³

4.18 Because of the relatively short distances involved, metropolitan libraries are technically able to use ADSL networks. Yarra-Melbourne moved to an ASDL network in 2001 and found it much more reliable and faster, and generating fewer complaints.¹⁴ Holroyd Library in Western Sydney, which at the time of its submission to the Committee had a 64kbps ISDN line, has considered its upgrade options. To increase to a 256kbps connection would cost over \$40,000 p.a. and only give 20 concurrent users a speed equivalent to a 19.2kbps modem. ASDL would provide sufficient speed to allow users to use the Internet productively but use cannot be capped, so the library could find itself severely over budget if users downloaded too much.¹⁵

4.19 In Victoria, a division of the State Library, VICNET, supplies infrastructure and bandwidth to most of the public libraries on a cost-recovery basis, while the Rural Libraries Online project provides satellite access to key points within public libraries in rural Victoria. Mr John Murrell of the West Gippsland Regional Library Service told the Committee that to improve broadband access to the eight of the 12 static libraries in his region via microwave or wireless links would cost \$900,000.¹⁶ Mr Elwin of the Wimmera Regional Library Corporation explained that they use a Telstra ADSL broadband service to the two largest centres, Horsham and Stawell, but were unable to extend it to other centres such as St Arnaud as Telstra would not modify the

11 As quoted in Crowe, D, *Broadband costs among world's highest*, Australian Financial Review, 18 Sep 2003.

12 *Evidence*, pp. 105-06.

13 *Evidence*, p. 110.

14 *Evidence*, p. 28.

15 *Submission 52*, p. 6.

16 *Evidence*, p. 19.

local exchange unless they could guarantee 20 commercial customers.¹⁷ Ms Makin, representing the Public Libraries Association, said her Wodonga-based pilot project funded through NTN cost \$8.58 a megabit for data, or about \$7,000 a month to keep two mobile libraries operating Internet access.¹⁸

4.20 In NSW, NSW.net subsidised Internet access for the smaller regional libraries. In the case of Central Murray, the true cost of ISDN was \$750 a month; but with the subsidy, they paid only \$333. This gives them 3 gigabytes, but as they are using more than that, they are moving to ADSL via NSW.net. But for the Mathoura branch, only a dial-up 56K modem link was available and there was no prospect of any improvement.¹⁹

4.21 Turning to examples from Queensland, the Whitsunday Shire Council spent \$70,000 to put in a fibre-optic link within Proserpine; but connections to Cannonvale library using Telstra ISDN were not good, at \$5000 p.a.²⁰

4.22 South Australian libraries originally went into providing Internet access through NTN funds, with a statewide Wide Area Network. In its submission to the Committee, the central Public Libraries Automated Information Network, or PLAIN, indicated it was then investigating moving from ISDN access to ADSL and satellite technology. Witnesses told the Committee that they were spending nearly \$900,000 on Internet access for a two-megabyte link, and were about to upgrade to a five-megabyte 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.'²¹

4.23 Given the volume of Internet use public libraries represent, the Committee investigated whether any favourable treatment had been able to be negotiated. Mr Bertie of the State Library of Victoria told the Committee:

One of the activities of VICNET is to supply infrastructure and bandwidth to most of the public libraries in Victoria. We have had very limited success with the major telecommunications companies in getting anything like the American concept of an e-rate, a reduced rate for a public institution. We have had success working in partnerships with some of the major communications suppliers, where they are prepared to join us as a

17 *Evidence*, p. 186.

18 *Evidence*, p. 439.

19 *Evidence*, p. 217.

20 *Evidence*, p. 251.

21 *Evidence*, p. 364.

commercial exercise ... Suppliers have been very willing to enter into negotiations, join us and work with us, because we have the aggregation.²²

4.24 Mr Hardy of Monash University was not hopeful of progress, telling the Committee, 'the carriers ... in our experience are a fairly hard-hearted bunch'.²³ The experience of the representatives of the newly-formed Public Libraries Association was that they have been talking to Telstra, but had encountered a chicken and egg situation - they needed a network before they could get a discount, but they also needed some promises of a discount to establish an Australia-wide network of potentially 1700 public libraries, which would provide the critical mass the states lacked.²⁴

4.25 It is clear that the bandwidth expectations of public library users are higher now. As the Monash survey indicated, some 47 per cent of users wanted to download music but couldn't.²⁵ The Shorelink libraries, using Telstra frame relay and HDSL, exceeded the 10-gigabyte capacity within a year and when they upgraded to a 20-gigabyte line, they had instances of exceeding capacity within the first three months of the upgrade. They have no download cap, and are required to pay a higher marginal rate if they exceed their contracted capacity.

4.26 Public libraries are under enormous pressure to continue to invest in expensive ICT infrastructure to meet the demand for broadband speed and not all are coping. The Municipal Association of Victoria told the Committee that certain libraries – Swan Hill, North Central Goldfields, Wimmera and Campaspe - in rural Victoria could not afford the ongoing maintenance costs of rack equipment associated with the recent satellite technology rollout.²⁶

4.27 Mr Hardy of Monash University summed up the issue:

the key issue for public libraries ... is bandwidth. There really needs to be some way of either getting a discounted bandwidth provision to the library systems of Australia or some way of assisting them to aggregate their demand so that they can bring that bandwidth cost down. From talking to my colleagues at VICNET, I know they are putting bigger pipes into the libraries. I think the average rate of increase in bandwidth use across the libraries in the last few months has been something like nine per cent. The bigger the pipe, the more people will use it but, unfortunately, the more the libraries have to pay.²⁷

22 *Evidence*, p. 35.

23 *Evidence*, p. 61.

24 *Evidence*, p. 433.

25 *Evidence*, p. 58.

26 *Submission 124*, p. 4.

27 *Evidence*, p. 56.

4.28 As the Committee noted in Chapter 1, the Australian Government recognised its responsibilities in getting Australia online through the Networking the Nation initiative and the Social Bonus funds. There may be an ongoing role for the Australian Government in this area. The Committee heard the views of Dr Williamson of the Library Board of Victoria:

the online environment is so complex and requires such infrastructure that there is an obvious role for the Commonwealth to play, particularly in the funding and development of the infrastructure ... It is not to relinquish the significant resource development that has already happened and the significant level of cooperation among libraries but to recognise that in the new environment and the online environment there is a role for national coordination and national leadership, which I think logically and sensibly sits with Commonwealth government.²⁸

4.29 Similarly, CASL Chairman Mrs Awcock stated:

there is very unequal distribution of online access across the nation. We think it is fundamental to get it right, and that definitely seems to be a Commonwealth responsibility. If we can fix up the telecommunications across the country so that people in Warnambool and Darwin and Western Australia from one end to the other right across to Queensland and New South Wales and down to Tasmania have all got a similar opportunity to access the online resources – to find information through retrieval systems, through availability, to use it and evaluate it – then we are much better off as a nation.²⁹

4.30 Ms Halliday, Director of the State Library of South Australia, pointed out that online services were in demand in libraries, and libraries were a trusted source of information, with staff trained to help, but those libraries required access to 'affordable, fast and appropriate bandwidth'; federal government support was critical to make that bandwidth available.³⁰

4.31 The Committee supports the principle of equitable access to online services for all communities in Australia, including the provision of appropriate public access Internet terminals with broadband access. It believes that, through its constitutional responsibility for telecommunications, the Australian Government has a role in achieving this. While the NTN initiative was successful in getting the ball rolling, its limited recognition of the possibilities offered by the network of public libraries as sites for online access was regrettable, in hindsight. Further, it was perhaps overly optimistic to expect that ongoing running costs and technology upgrades could and would be funded by local government. And this is at a time when the demand for online access has accelerated, and when government provision of government

28 *Evidence*, p. 37.

29 *Evidence*, p. 40.

30 *Evidence*, p. 335.

information through the online medium has also accelerated. Local government can legitimately feel it has been left holding the baby. With Australians' fondness for the adoption of new technology, it is highly likely, in the longer term, that private broadband Internet access will become relatively commonplace. It is unlikely ever to be universal, so public access will always be required. In the interests of equity, and in recognition of the fact that states and local government are not equally in a position to meet the vastly differing costs of provision of online access, it is incumbent upon the Australian Government to continue its support.

4.32 How best to provide that support equitably is a difficult question. The Committee considered whether in the first instance, and as a stop-gap measure, a renewed round of NTN grants might be required. It acknowledges that recurrent funding would be more desirable, but difficult to achieve in the present economic climate. If the government were disposed to follow this path, preference should be given to rural and regional communities which are prepared or able to co-locate services in any meaningful way to each community: for example, library-online access centre; library-school; library-community centre-rural transaction centre. Other priority candidates would be rural and regional communities having major technological problems with access now.

4.33 A possible approach for ensuring affordable broadband for public access in libraries would be the extension of universal service obligations. Under such an approach, a national tender for the provision of such services could be advertised, with the cost borne as a levy on all telecommunications carriers. A difficulty with this approach would be that telecommunications technology is advancing at such a pace – and with it demand for broadband - that any requirement could be out of date within a very short period of time. The need to provide broadband to different centres not currently served by terrestrial broadband links might further complicate this issue.

4.34 The Committee notes that the United States has established a low cost price for public library Internet access. The Committee considers that there is a reasonable case for requiring telecommunications suppliers to offer an e-rate, or special discount, to schools and libraries, based on the United States experience. To date, broadband access for libraries has been funded mostly through government funding programs. However, as these programs (e.g. Networking the Nation) have tended to be one-off or of limited duration, they have not provided a viable long-term funding source for what is a rapidly growing cost item for overstretched libraries.

4.35 The Committee recommends:

(a) that the government negotiate with telecommunications carriers to establish an 'e-rate' or discount rate for broadband access to public libraries and that, if negotiations are not successful, consider imposing a requirement on carriers under the Universal Services Obligation arrangement; and,

(b) that further funds be allocated under an expanded National Broadband Strategy for expanding broadband access in libraries.

Intellectual property issues

4.36 As the Copyright Agency Ltd (CAL) told the Committee, the objective of protecting the private rights of copyright owners through copyright is 'to enrich society and the public good by encouraging and fostering original cultural, educational and scientific expression'. CAL supports the continuing need to protect copyright works, in order to encourage intellectual creative effort and investment, but also recognises the need for exceptions to copyright for the public benefit.

4.37 The need for such public benefit exceptions from copyright has been recognised internationally, initially in Article 9(2) of the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, and subsequently in the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS) Agreement (part of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) and the WIPO Copyright Treaty 1996, to all of which Australia is a party. These agreements outline a three-steps test to identify legitimate exceptions to copyright owners' rights, namely:

- they apply only in special cases;
- they do not conflict with the normal exploitation of the work; and
- they do not unreasonably prejudice the legitimate interests of the author.

4.38 Copyright in Australia is governed by the federal Copyright Act 1968. Major changes to this legislation were required when photocopying became cheap and widely available, a situation which has some similarities with the present digital revolution. Following a 1976 review, library exemptions were included in the legislation, allowing, amongst other things, the free copying of a 'reasonable portion' (up to 10 per cent) of a work, plus the copying of entire works in circumstances where copies were not commercially available.

4.39 It has been recognised that in the electronic environment, there is a far greater potential for copyright to be infringed. The question was closely examined in the late 1990s by, amongst others, the Copyright Law Review Committee and proposed government amendments to the legislation were reviewed by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs. In its explanatory memorandum to the Copyright Amendment (Digital Agenda) Bill 1999, the government outlined its general position, that 'libraries and archives should be able to use the new technologies to provide access to copyright material for the general community, as long as the economic rights of owners of copyright material are not unreasonably prejudiced'. Others feared that the bill would permit libraries to become documentary delivery services on a commercial scale, avoiding copyright. Providing certain copyright exemptions for for-profit libraries was also hotly contested.

4.40 The Copyright Amendment (Digital Agenda) Act 2000 was enacted, taking effect from March 2001. Amongst other things, it permits libraries to reproduce works digitally for 'administrative' purposes; to make a digital preservation copy of a work, (provided that users cannot make electronic copies thereof); and to make digitally

published articles available online to a client, again so long as they are not further digitally reproduced or communicated. A library may copy or communicate to another library an electronic article, or a part of a work, for two purposes: to include in that library's collection; or to supply to a client for research or study purposes. It may not provide an article or part of a work that is commercially available on its own.

4.41 In the view of the Australian Copyright Council, 'Australia has a comparatively generous set of library provisions' compared with other countries.³¹ The Committee, however, is inclined to the view that the current balance between the rights of copyright owners and access to information by users in the digital environment is an acceptable one, and that the current 'fair dealing' exceptions in current copyright legislation should not be overridden by contract provisions in licences for online resources.

4.42 After the 1975 *Moorhouse* case, libraries have been wary of being sued for failing to 'police' their users closely with regard to those users' activities in possible breach of copyright at photocopiers or, now, via scanners and email. The Digital Agenda Act lessens their concerns, by providing that libraries will not be held liable for copyright infringement by users, provided that appropriate signage is in place.³² However libraries are right to be cautious, following the recent high-profile legal challenges over MP₃.com and Napster in the USA.

4.43 In the Committee's view, rather than seeking protection solely in legislation which is inevitably a slow process, copyright owners should continue to look to technology to protect their interests, if they fear they are under threat. The Committee was told of many innovative methods being used to protect material, including 'fingerprinting', 'tagging' and anti-copying devices³³ and viewing for time-limited periods.³⁴

4.44 In this context, the Committee notes the growing number of commercial online services which make copyright payments for the reproduction and communication of copyright works: ABIX; EdResearch Online; Infotrieve; Informit; ilanetweb; ProQuest; and many others. Informit, for example, is the online service provider from RMIT Publishing and is the largest Australian database provider, offering three subscription-based full-text online services; ilanetweb is a business unit of the State Library of New South Wales which provides access to web-based database services on a pay-as-you-go basis.

4.45 Section 210 of the Copyright Act requires the legal deposit, without charge, of certain types of published material with the National Library of Australia. Similar

31 *Submission* 128, (attachment), p. 1.

32 *Submission* 128 (attachment), p. 27.

33 *Submission* 128 (attachment), p. 9.

34 Mr Taylor, *Submission* 72, p. 4.

legislation exists in the states, in respect of the state libraries. This is to attempt to ensure that comprehensive collections of published material are maintained for posterity. But the requirement to deposit does not currently extend to digital material. In Victorian legislation, for example, the Committee was told, a 'publication' is defined as a physical item.³⁵ Representative of the National Library of Australia explained the difficulties this presented for the PANDORA project (described in Chapter 3) as the library had to seek the permission of website owners to capture and archive the material. They noted that while most owners were cooperative, not all were.³⁶

4.46 Representatives of the National Library told the committee that it was currently seeking the extension of legal deposit to cover digital material.³⁷ While supportive of the general concept, the Committee notes that there are a large number of issues to be resolved, not least the matter of storage, and clarification of the place of origin of a website. It further notes the divergence of views on the matter between the relevant Australian Government departments. As Ms Fullerton, Director-General of the National Library, told the Committee:

we have support from the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts – their intellectual property people are supporting the extension of legal deposit to cover [digital] material. We are aware that the Attorney-General's Department is not of the same mind at this stage, but we hope that they may be persuaded.³⁸

4.47 In its inquiry, the Committee did not consider the question of legal deposit in sufficient detail to form a definitive view on the matter of its extension to digital material. It notes, however, that the requirement that the *Copyright Amendment (Digital Agenda) Act 2000* be reviewed after three years of operation and recommends that that review consider this issue.

Licence agreements

4.48 The online revolution has brought with it enormous changes in publishing practice, to which libraries have had to adjust. Whereas in the recent past, a library might have held print subscriptions to a certain number of journals, it may no longer find it financially possible to maintain the increasingly high cost of hard copy. And, in certain cases, hard copy may no longer be available. Suppliers now offer online 'deals', offering, for example, online subscriptions for 90 per cent of the print cost or, at a modestly higher cost, access to many more online titles as well. But these licence agreements come with conditions attached. They typically restrict access to specific users, and in some cases, to specific sites – in the case of university libraries, which

35 *Evidence*, p. 33.

36 *Evidence*, p. 98.

37 *Evidence*, p. 98.

38 *Evidence*, p. 99.

are the most severely affected by the change, access is allowed to current members of the university community, namely the staff and students. Members of the public or even university alumni who may have access to the university library no longer have access to the online subscriptions, unless the library has the infrastructure in place to register the person as a guest, or visitor, or unless the library is prepared to do the search for the visitor. It is unclear how common this latter practice is.³⁹

4.49 Licence agreements have also played havoc with university libraries' reciprocal borrowing schemes.

4.50 Further problems are experienced by students who cannot access their parent library because they are located elsewhere. Medical students doing their obligatory year in a teaching hospital are a case in point, with library staff at times having to go to great lengths to convince journal publishers that there are authentication processes in place in hospital libraries to exclude the non-students from access to online journals to which the university only has subscribed.

4.51 The online subscription costs are substantial. Newcastle University pays nearly three-quarters of a million dollars per annum for ScienceDirect. And they take up an increasing proportion of the library resource budget – in the case of the Queensland University of Technology, from 15 per cent in 1996 to 56 per cent in 2002.⁴⁰ The Auchmuty Library at the University of Newcastle moved from around 5,000 print subscriptions three years ago to packages of over 35,000 online subscriptions, a valuable increase in content but which they can offer to a more restricted group of users.⁴¹

4.52 Public libraries are unlikely ever to be in a position to purchase access to highly specialised publications and nor are small employers. So when students graduate, they may be extremely limited in their capacity to stay up to date, legally, via the library sector. Rather than encourage graduates to overcome this lacuna by sourcing publications from university colleagues, possibly in breach of copyright, many university libraries have suggested that national site licences for suites of journals should be negotiated.⁴² The Committee notes that this is the case for academic libraries in Canada, for example.

4.53 The Committee notes that some overseas jurisdictions, including Finland and certain US states, have entered into contracts with online publishers that provide access to all residents in their jurisdiction. The Committee further notes that the Australian Government's Department of Health and Ageing has started the ball rolling in Australia by approving a national subscription to allow free public Internet access

39 See, for example, *Evidence*, p. 262.

40 *Evidence*, p. 297.

41 *Evidence*, p. 450.

42 See, for example, *Evidence*, p. 310.

to the internationally respected Cochrane Library of medical information. As the minister noted when announcing the decision, Australians will now be able to read for themselves on www.update-software.com/cochrane/ the best and the latest evidence and to use that information to make informed health care choices.⁴³ The Australian Government-owned National Institute of Clinical Studies manages and pays for the subscription, having been granted Australian Government funding for that specific purpose.

4.54 Not all witnesses were equally enthusiastic about national site licencing, however. While recognising that 42 Australian universities have better bargaining power than one, Ms Clark of the University of Ballarat feared that vendors might increase prices when faced with a purchaser monopoly. She nevertheless agreed that, whatever the downsides, national site licencing was 'the only way to deal with the equity issues in terms of information provision'.⁴⁴

4.55 Not all publishers or suppliers are amenable to licence agreements which permit unlimited yearly use for a one-off fee. Dr Bundy highlighted the very real problem of databases which have a 'per use' cost associated with them, as it is so difficult for libraries to control costs. However valuable the information such databases might contain, most libraries avoid them if they can, in preference for more popular consortia-purchased – and therefore cheaper – resources.⁴⁵ There are, however, many developments which may lessen the problems. As the licencing market matures, subscribers are much more aware of the conditions which are acceptable and those which are not. With the added financial clout of consortia purchasing, there is more prospect of being able to negotiate improved terms and conditions.

4.56 The Committee recommends:

- (a) that the National Library identify a number of key databases for which national site licencing might be desirable; and,
- (b) that additional Australian Government funding be extended to the National Library for this purpose.

Australian online content

4.57 For academic and research libraries, there is another related matter to be considered. It is often, implicitly or explicitly, a condition of academic advancement that academics publish in peer-reviewed journals. And these journals are increasing only available, in practical terms, via online subscription as the cost of hard copy is

43 Senator the Hon. Kay Patterson, *Access to international research for all Australians*, media release 15 July 2002.

44 *Evidence*, p. 179.

45 *Evidence*, p. 363.

untenable. To all intents and purposes, government funded research may often just disappear. As Ms Swan of Information Edge told the Committee, 'Our research is done, paid for and virtually thrown away.'⁴⁶

4.58 The problem has been recognised for some time, including in the federal government's paper, *Backing Australia's Ability: an innovative action plan for the future*, released in 2001, and the Chief Scientist's 2000 report, *The Chance to Change*. Advice was sought from, inter alia, the Higher Education Information Infrastructure Advisory Committee, which reported in November 2002.⁴⁷ That report noted the problems also drawn to the Committee's attention:

Development of the national research information infrastructure has been somewhat uncoordinated and largely regarded as the responsibility of individual institutions. Collaboration among libraries has improved the effectiveness of institutional investment and, combined with access to libraries internationally, provides some Australian researchers with the majority of published information required for their research.

This access is not universal and some researchers, particularly those at smaller or regional institutions and those in specialised or emerging disciplines, often have difficulty accessing required information resources. Their difficulties are compounded by changes which are occurring in the scholarly communication process. Although there are now improved mechanisms for discovering the existence of information resources, access to them is often restricted by cost, licences and other conditions.⁴⁸

4.59 The report noted the growth, internationally, of attempts by academics to regain control of scholarly publishing, such as the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition. It further noted that technologies now exist to revolutionise the ways in which research information is created, manipulated and published. Priorities it advanced included subject gateways, research information skills training, e-print repositories, digital theses and e-publishing of Australian research. Key messages were that Australia should not act unilaterally as its combined output was too small to influence the international scholarly communication environment; that there needed to be national coordination and setting of priorities; and that there needed to be considerable government investment to ensure progress – the sum of \$20 million was advocated.⁴⁹

46 *Evidence*, p. 419.

47 Higher Education Information Infrastructure Advisory Committee, *Research Information Infrastructure Framework for Australian Higher Education: final report*. November 2002.

48 *ibid.*, 1.4-1.5.

49 *ibid.*, 1.16.

4.60 The advisory committee metamorphosed into an implementation steering committee, which reported in May 2003⁵⁰ and which recommended, inter alia, the formation of yet another committee. On 14 August 2003, the Minister for Education, Science and Training announced the formation of the Australian Research Information Infrastructure Committee (ARIIC) to 'act on recommendations ... for managing and using the vast amounts of research information generated by Australia's universities and other research institutions' and committing funding of \$22 million for 2003-04.⁵¹

4.61 While the Committee has some reservations about the extent of the deliberative process, as opposed to actual action on the ground, it welcomes the funding committed to improving access to Australian information resources. It notes that the pace of technological change will always mean that today's information access solutions will be suboptimal tomorrow, but that should not mean action is always deferred.

4.62 Apart from these developments in the academic sphere, federal government agencies themselves produce a large number of databases and other publications which, it is contended, should be available free of charge to all Australians, who have already paid for them once, through their taxes. The Committee was told that one such database, Streamline, was even threatened with closure before obtaining a last minute reprieve. While many departments have quite comprehensive web sites, providing links to large numbers of their publications, other government agencies are limited in what they provide online. Nor does there appear to be any uniformity in what is made available or for how long. One notable and commendable exception is the Australian Bureau of Statistics, whose library extension program was warmly regarded by all.

4.63 In another development, the closure of the Australian Government bookshops was announced in the May 2003 federal Budget. This decision was taken primarily to cut costs, the tradeoff being faster and free access online. As Ms Swan of Information Edge told the Committee, however, online versions of the massive reports issued by agencies such as the Productivity Commission are not practical to download and are all but impossible to handle online.

4.64 In a related development, the Committee is aware that a Legislative Instruments Bill is currently before the federal Parliament. The purpose of the legislation is to bring together all Australian Government legislative instruments in a register which will be freely accessible online. This is perhaps a tacit recognition that, in their totality, these instruments have never been readily available, through the bookstores or elsewhere; it is also a recognition of the basic principle that Australians have a right to be able to find what the law is without major difficulty.

50 Report of the Higher Education Information Infrastructure Implementation Steering Committee, 19 May 2003, <http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/otherpub/heiiisc03/default.htm>

51 Dr Brendan Nelson, *Boosting Australia's Research Infrastructure*. Media release 433/03.

4.65 The Committee understands that NOIE has been tasked with developing a register which will include the existing publications held by the bookshops and will provide linkages to departmental publishing sites, including to the proposed legislative instruments register. It is seeking to develop agreed standards for the description of the information across agencies and to ascertain the most appropriate search mechanisms. The Committee further understands that NOIE will go ahead with an initial version of its register and improve it over time, rather than wait for the perfect technological solution at some indeterminate time in the future. The Committee recommends:

- (a) that NOIE continue to consult closely with the library community over the development of the register of Australian Government publications;
- (b) that NOIE publicise the availability in public libraries of the online register; and,
- (c) that NOIE commission research to ascertain the level of public awareness of government information and the means of access thereto.

Seamless access

4.66 By and large, library users at all levels do not want to have to juggle multiple passwords to access databases, or to remember different searching strategies. Information which is simple to access will be used, even if it is inferior to what might be available with greater effort.⁵² While libraries at all levels are actively engaged in developing and running programs to assist users to come to grips with the intricacies of the online revolution, they have accepted the inevitable that they need to put in an equivalent effort into making a diverse range of information easier to access.

4.67 To some extent, by simply putting it online and trusting to the efficacy of general search engines, they have won part of the battle. In 1999-2000, all 20,970 items in the Sir William Dixon Collection of Printed Books had electronic records created for them and usage of the collection has increased by 400 per cent since that time.⁵³ But only a modest proportion of available online information can be accessed in this way, with the contents of what is sometimes known as the 'deep Web' accessible only through other approaches.

4.68 Some 20 years ago an international standard, Z39.50, was developed by database vendors to enable users to perform a single search of multiple databases and to receive intelligible responses at the desktop. A more recent development is XML, which provides interoperability between systems, giving a standard format and a standard layout so that any document that has been created in XML can be downloaded – the old problems of a site created by an Apple computer and failing to

52 See comments from University of South Australia Library, *Submission 32*, p. 5.

53 *Submission 130*, p. 12.

be accessed by using an IBM web server are, in theory, a thing of the past.⁵⁴ And new technologies are constantly evolving.

4.69 Although much work has already been done to facilitate access to government websites, problems remain. The Committee was told, and from its own experience is aware, that www.gov.au is 'a nightmare to search'.⁵⁵ Ms Parer of James Cook University Library elaborated on the need for the right infrastructure – not just the fibre optics and the channels, but the search engines. She did not believe the government had an appropriate search engine across all of its online web sites to enable users to search for government information easily.⁵⁶ As the Committee noted above, NOIE is working to rectify this. The Committee encourages it to do so as a matter of some priority.

Online services and charges for users

4.70 Most public libraries are legally constrained by their enabling legislation to provide 'core' services free of charge. Depending on the relative affluence, or philosophical bent, of each library, some make extremely generous provisions for all their users, well over and above core services, while others charge usually modest amounts for 'non-core' services. In between lie the libraries where staff use their discretion about who to charge, and for what.

4.71 From what the Committee has been able to gather, access to the Internet is free, generally speaking, in all states but Queensland and Tasmania, where modest charges are levied. In the Burdekin Shire, for example, charges were \$2.20 per half hour. In South Australia, a local authority could elect to impose charges but would lose its state government subsidy.⁵⁷ In some cases, free access is provided to some services but not others, with the City of Sydney charging \$2 per hour for general Internet searching but nothing if the search is restricted to available databases or if the library staff do it.⁵⁸ Some libraries permit users to download to disks or to email search results to themselves at home or work, while others, particularly smaller library services such as the Central Highlands Regional Library Corporation, do not allow users to bring in their own disks as they do not have adequate virus-checking capacity.⁵⁹ Most provide printing and word processing facilities, but only some charge for them. Still others provide different services at different terminals, with the Western Australian State Library having seven terminals for unlimited Internet searching and 43 with restricted access to the library catalogue and selected databases. Almost all operate booking systems, for varying amounts of Internet access time, from

54 *Evidence*, p. 395.

55 *Evidence*, p. 415.

56 *Evidence*, p. 270.

57 *Evidence*, p. 345.

58 *Evidence*, p. 113.

59 *Evidence*, p. 160.

one day to one week in advance. Some libraries charge modest amounts for training in Internet use, such as \$3 at Wingecarribee Shire Library, though it appears that the majority provides free one-on-one training or assistance.

4.72 By and large, the librarians who gave evidence to the Committee were staunch advocates for the free provision of online services in general. Mr Stempel, of CLASA, told the Committee:

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.⁶⁰

4.73 In a similar vein Ms Forte, WA State Librarian, told the Committee, 'It certainly is a fundamental principle of public libraries that access to information in all its forms should be free to citizens and that there should be equity of access to that information.'⁶¹

4.74 While the Committee is in wholehearted agreement with the broad principle of free access, it is increasingly obvious that there have to be limits. The role of a public library is not to enable its patrons to download the latest blockbuster. Even universities are having to watch ICT usage. The Committee was informed that Newcastle University has implemented a monitoring process whereby all students must register before they use any online service; their quantum of usage is monitored and anyone who exceeds reasonable use is brought in for questioning.⁶²

4.75 Free access was universally permitted for at least one category of users, namely job-seekers using the Jobsearch network. The Committee notes that even here, one library has placed time limits on the use of the Jobsearch network, albeit fairly generous ones of 90 minutes access per person per week.⁶³

4.76 The provision of free email services is one of the more contentious 'user pays' issues. In the Committee's experience, a slim majority of the library services which provided evidence to this inquiry levied charges for the use of email from library terminals. The State Librarian of NSW was one to express the view forcefully that the library's focus was on providing information access, not a postal service; after finding out that backpacker hostels were putting up signs telling visitors to do their email at the State Library, she has ensured that Hotmail access has been restricted to a terminal in the library cafe.⁶⁴

60 *Evidence*, p. 366.

61 *Evidence*, p. 387.

62 *Evidence*, p. 461.

63 *Evidence*, p. 323.

64 *Evidence*, p. 113.

4.77 Caloundra City Libraries representative, Ms Bauer, expressed a view espoused by many of the smaller libraries that email was a 'perfectly legitimate' use of library facilities. Her libraries provide a free 15-minute Internet terminal which is widely used for email purposes, and they also provide training in email use. Many older users learn to use the Internet solely to send emails, but they do so in the public library because they feel comfortable there in a community learning environment.⁶⁵

4.78 The Committee tends to the view that email is not a core service of public libraries, which do not, after all, provide free telephones for their patrons' use. It recognises that the provision of email and assistance in its use is an inducement to many non-Internet users to 'give it a try' and is a good starting point for other online activities. It also sympathises with the view advanced so eloquently by Dr Bundy, that 'once you start delving into issues about whether a tourist coming in to use the Internet should be charged for email ... you get into very murky waters', that charging for email was penny-pinching, and that the public relations value of free email was tremendous, and at minimal cost.⁶⁶

4.79 Clearly, the exact nature of the services provided, the core/non-core divide and the charges levied or not levied are not uniform across the country. The Committee is of the view that the relevant library representative organisations should regularly issue statements relating to the basic level of provision to which each library, whatever the requirements of its enabling legislation, should strive to attain. The Committee's basic position is that no Australian should be denied access to the world wide web through an inability to pay. It recognises, however, that uncapped use of the Internet in the library situation is untenable, and modest charges may be required in some circumstances to control demand. Equity target groups should of course be excluded from such charges.

4.80 However one views the philosophical desirability of requiring users to pay for the non-core services they use, it seems to the Committee that the administrative costs of collecting small amounts of money might outweigh the practical benefits of modest charging regimes. It notes, however, that most libraries have already coped with this issue when they instituted charging regimes for overdue books, and have persisted with the practice, though perhaps with a deterrence agenda in mind. If technology, in the form of smart cards or other devices, lessens the administrative burden of handling small amounts of money, then the acceptability of modest charging regimes might increase.

Funding

4.81 As the Committee reported in Chapter 1, 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

65 *Evidence*, p. 327.

66 *Evidence*, p. 345.

one-third of that of local government, with quite extensive variation between the states. States also fund their state libraries. The Committee endeavoured to find out whether library funding, from whatever source, was trending upwards, downwards, or remaining stable in line with inflation; it also considered whether current demands on libraries required addition funding or merely reprioritisation of existing funding. And, given the divided responsibility for library funding, the Committee also considered if, and if so how, any change could or should be brought about. Much evidence it received was anecdotal but at least reflects the perceptions of the managers concerned.

4.82 Dr Bundy pointed out to the Committee that public libraries in Australia were highly dependent on the public purse, with government funding as a percentage of total income ranging from 89.1 per cent in Victoria to 97.8 per cent in Tasmania.⁶⁷ Library income raised from user charges, bequest funding or corporate sponsorship is insignificant. Dr Bundy has calculated that the total annual cost of public library provision in Australia is about \$560 million, or about 6 cents per person per day; it is typically less than 6 per cent of a council's rate revenue and about 0.2 of one per cent of state government outlays.⁶⁸

4.83 Despite some excellent one-off initiatives, state government support for public libraries has been trending downwards. As Councillor Carland, Chairperson of the Shorelink Library Network in New South Wales, expressed it, 'state government funding has been going backwards ... it has been falling at a fairly steady clip of about one per cent a year for the last decade – down from about 20 per cent to about nine per cent in New South Wales, and New South Wales has historically been on the low side of the national scale'. He indicated that by comparison with Victoria, where state funding has slipped from one-half to a quarter, New South Wales was down from 20 per cent to nine per cent.⁶⁹

4.84 A representative of the Municipal Association of Victoria, Mr Edwards, confirmed that in that state, they had moved from a period in the mid-1970s of almost 50:50 library funding from state and local government, to the present position of 25:75. He stressed that local government appreciated that 'the bucket of public funds is a finite size' but pointed out the competing priorities faced and the enormous challenges of meeting recurrent costs.⁷⁰

4.85 The State Librarian of South Australia, Ms Halliday, claimed that the South Australian library funding arrangement was the envy of other states. A five-year memorandum of agreement exists between the Library Board of South Australia and local government over funding, which is set in advance and is linked to the CPI and

67 *Submission 3*, p. 5.

68 Alan Bundy, 'Changing lives, making the difference: the 21st century public library', *APLIS*, 16(1) March 2003, p. 39.

69 *Evidence*, p. 128.

70 *Evidence*, pp. 21-22.

which therefore provided certainty for the libraries concerned.⁷¹ She indicated, however, that over the last ten years, the trend observed in other states of a decreasing state government contribution vis-a-vis that of local government also pertained in her state, particularly because of the requirement for local government to pick up the IT hardware costs.⁷²

4.86 Comparisons among the states can be misleading, however, because of the differing library models concerned. It is primarily because of these differing state arrangements for library services that library funding has not been a 'lead item' for the Australian Local Government Association in the past.⁷³

4.87 State governments have been supportive of online initiatives. The Committee was told that of the \$13.95 million state government funding for public libraries announced in New South Wales in 2002, some \$8 million was for NSW.net.⁷⁴

4.88 The old notion of state government funding on a strict per capita basis to provide public library services for residents of eligible local authorities exclusively has long since been abandoned, if not under the strict letter of the law. In New South Wales, part of the motivation for the current review of the NSW Library Act was the question of whether the current funding formula of per capita payment, base grant and loadings for isolation, population distribution and demographic composition could or should be prescribed in the legislation.

4.89 Additional complicating factors are the desirability of reciprocal access and borrowing rights, given that many people work or study and reside in different local government areas. The Committee notes that only some 75 per cent of NSW local authorities are party to the reciprocal membership agreement.⁷⁵ The position becomes even more complex if one endeavours to obtain strict funding parity for the reciprocal borrowing rights that sometimes exist between public libraries and school, TAFE or university libraries.

4.90 The availability of information via library websites has itself caused a major questioning of the per capita funding principle. Unless the library site does authentication checks as to the identity of a would-be electronic user, it could well be providing services to residents of other countries, let alone other councils. A representative of the University of Queensland told the Committee that, while that university had 30,000 students, its website registered use by some 340,000 PCs in 2002. And as cooperative licence agreements to share resources increase, this will

71 *Evidence*, p. 336.

72 *Evidence*, p. 338.

73 *Evidence*, p. 24.

74 *Evidence*, p. 130.

75 Library Council of New South Wales, *Public Library Services in New South Wales: networking the community in the 21st century: Review of the Library Act 1939*, Sydney, [2001].

increasingly blur distinctions amongst users. It seems to the Committee that a pragmatic approach is required here, with public libraries to provide services equally to all comers without question, unless and until it becomes obvious that particular users are abusing the system.

4.91 In the course of its inquiry, the Committee received a great deal of information on the increased costs associated with online provision in libraries. The general impression it received was that libraries have had to fund online access from within existing budgets and that they have had to divert money from other activities to do so. As Mr Stempel of CLASA remarked, 'It is about recasting an existing shrinking pie.'⁷⁶

4.92 It should be self-evident that it costs more to run a library that supports online services. There are hardware, software and connectivity costs, content costs and staff time and training costs that are add-ons, not to any significant extent replacements for, previous expenditure. If pressed, libraries can contain costs but in ways which might prove ultimately unacceptable to the user public. They can, for example, stop purchasing print copies of journals, at the risk of alienating the public which might not be entitled to online access. They can place technical or other caps on downloads, to contain costs. They can provide slow (and cheaper) download speeds, to discourage overuse. In the longer term, all of these, and similar, measures would probably be counter-productive.

4.93 A considerable funding challenge in the online environment in the public library context is the physical infrastructure. Library buildings dating from the 1950s and 60s may not lend themselves readily to housing or connecting computers, nor to providing private areas around terminals, computer training rooms, et cetera. The Committee was heartened to see or hear of the many new library buildings recently opened or in planning or under construction. The fact remains, however, that many are not up to standard.⁷⁷ And after carving out space for PCs, many share the problem of the Deniliquin Library which was described as 'bursting at the seams'.⁷⁸

4.94 This problem has not gone unrecognised. The South Australian Government has provided some \$94 million towards library capital works in that state since 2000, and the other states have also supported library infrastructure.

4.95 It is hard, if not impossible, to put a price tag on the cost to government of an ill-informed society. In the view of the Committee, given that government information is increasingly being disseminated online, it is incumbent upon governments at all levels to do all in their power to facilitate access to that information. If, in the process, they facilitate access to other information, encourage lifelong learning, support community cohesion and so forth, so much the better.

76 *Evidence*, p. 363.

77 See, for example, *Evidence*, p. 349.

78 *Evidence*, p. 203.

4.96 Given the funding crisis many public libraries are facing, some witnesses to the Committee's inquiry questioned whether libraries should get more seriously into fund-raising. Elizabeth Swan of Information Edge thought so, suggesting that they could charge for hosting local business portals, venue hire, and that they could develop partnerships or seek sponsorships from local industries.⁷⁹ The Committee does not discount these ideas for the libraries for which they might be appropriate. It suspects, however, that the libraries whose need is greatest are probably those least capable of raising funds.

4.97 Funding has been more readily available at all levels of government for special projects. In Queensland, for example, the Committee was told that the state government had made 'a considerable amount of money' available to develop indigenous knowledge centres and indigenous library services.⁸⁰ But as the State Librarian, Ms Giles-Peters, stressed to the Committee, the key issue was sustainability:

It would be ideal to be able to plan these things up front and say, 'Let's look at the longer term and certainly the sustainability of these projects.' I think we are all aware of projects that have very short life spans. Things happen and then they die, and the communities actually get quite fatigued: 'Here comes another project where you've got the equipment but we do not have the money to employ people. The equipment breaks down; we do not have the expertise in the community to actually fix it.'⁸¹

4.98 The call for awareness of the need to plan for sustainability was echoed throughout the Committee's public hearings program. Again and again, the Committee was told that hardware had arrived courtesy of grant initiatives, without obvious thought being given to how the recurrent issues of maintenance, upgrading, connectivity charges and training were to be handled.⁸²

4.99 Another point that was raised with the Committee was that, as Councillor Carland of the Shorelink Library Network indicated, governments were expecting more of libraries these days. As he saw it, both state and federal governments were putting more of their client activity online, but that the consequent demand on library services was not being explicitly recognised in increased funding. Local councils, he maintained, 'have been fairly stoic over the last decade in picking up the slack' but that was unsustainable in the longer term.⁸³

4.100 Rather than look at ways of boosting overall funding levels, there has been a tendency to look at ways to reduce costs. While the Committee has not made a

79 *Evidence*, pp. 418-19.

80 *Evidence*, p. 317.

81 *Evidence*, p. 318.

82 See, for example, *Evidence*, p. 432.

83 *Evidence*, pp. 137-38.

detailed study of the economics of library service provision, it suspects that one obvious first step is to consider the small size of some local government councils and to encourage greater cooperation amongst them. The Committee was impressed with the regional library services covering several councils in some states, notably Victoria.

4.101 With the growing demand for broadband access, it has been recognised that there are many opportunities for improving the synergies between public libraries and other services, such as health and education.

4.102 As the Committee has discussed, part of the solution for the ongoing handling of telecommunications charges is to aggregate demand, then approach the networks for a discount. Representatives of the newly formed Public Libraries Australia association stressed the enormous opportunities presented by aggregating the purchasing power of some 1,700 libraries but also pointed out that in order to achieve that level of aggregation, some \$1 million over five years would be required to set up the necessary network.⁸⁴

4.103 While the Committee can see the logic of this approach and does not doubt the energy and commitment of its proponents, it suspects the territorial imperatives of the divided funding structure of public libraries will ultimately defeat such a proposal. It sees more merit in aggregating demand across services at the regional or state level, and ironing out any discrepancies in service provision to less affluent communities through the mechanism of the state libraries. If demand aggregation, for broadband or content, is seen to be the way forward, the Committee believes the responsibility must lie with an expanded role for the National Library which, through CASL, can most readily affect change, if funded to do so.

4.104 The Committee concludes that local government is now carrying a disproportionate share of public library funding, compared with the more equitable situation of the 1970s, when state governments contributed up to 50 per cent in some cases. It is incumbent on state governments to recognise the important role public libraries play in providing equitable access to online information by ensuring that they receive adequate support. Where there is shared responsibility for public library funding between state and local government, the Committee recommends that the states significantly increase their share of public library funding, moving towards matching local government levels of contribution.

Information literacy

4.105 One message which resounded throughout the Committee's inquiry was that online connectivity and content provision alone were not the ultimate answer to society's needs. An ability to identify, locate, evaluate and use information effectively was also vital. This is where libraries have a highly significant role to play. It has been regularly shown that information seekers regularly take the line of least effort. In the case of Internet searches, the majority of users never go past the first ten 'hits',

84 *Evidence*, p. 433.

regardless of their quality. And information which can be provided immediately to the desktop is preferred over 'better' information which takes longer to provide.

4.106 In October 2001, the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) adopted a policy statement on information for all Australians, which includes the following:

Information literacy is a prerequisite for: participative citizenship; social inclusion; the creation of new knowledge; personal, vocational, corporate and organisational empowerment; and learning for life.⁸⁵

4.107 As ALIA recognises, the achievement of information literacy for all Australians clearly requires the input of more agencies than libraries. Libraries are highly significant players, however, as they are one of the very few relevant organisations to which a majority of the population belongs. They already make a highly valuable contribution, unobtrusively, to an information-literate Australia but must be able to maintain and improve their services, particularly with regard to training and outreach activities, to continue their good work.

Staff training

4.108 If libraries are going to remain relevant in the 21st century, one imperative is well-trained staff. Numerous studies have shown that the calibre of the staff has always been a significant factor in library usage. The Committee was informed that the average age of professional librarians is in the mid-forties, so apart from ongoing professional training to maintain relevance in the online age, the profession at large needs to consider succession planning, the quantum of staff required and the appropriate training for the added challenges of the online library.

4.109 In the course of its inquiry, the Committee detected an element of concern being expressed about the present undergraduate and postgraduate library courses. It was felt that library schools were moving towards information management training more generally and the library component was shrinking, with little specific training for people in a public library environment.⁸⁶

4.110 Dr Bundy was particularly concerned for the future of the joint school-community libraries in South Australia, as the majority of teacher librarians now running them were expected to retire in the not-too-distant future and, without trained replacements coming through, he feared that the education department would have no alternative but to employ unqualified people.⁸⁷ He also lamented the phasing out in South Australia of the general undergraduate library degree, which he argued was preferred as a qualification by public library employers for its practical exposure to

85 *Submission 93*, p. 6.

86 *Evidence*, p. 62.

87 *Evidence*, p. 360.

library issues, rather than the one-year postgraduate diploma. He asserted that there was sufficient student demand to justify retaining the course, but the University of Adelaide decided it had other priorities.⁸⁸

4.111 Concern was also expressed at the drop-off in numbers of students undertaking postgraduate diplomas, following the introduction of full fees for those courses. Higher education statistics appear to lend support to these concerns, showing a drop from 331 students enrolled in 'library/archival studies – other postgraduate' in 1998 to 226 in 'librarianship, information management and curatorial studies – other postgraduate' in 2002.⁸⁹ The number of students enrolled in bachelor level library courses has also shown a steady decline in recent years.

4.112 Continuing professional education and staff training more generally are vital for an ageing workforce, and particularly given the new demands of the workplace. The Committee was encouraged to learn that even relatively small library systems saw staff training as a priority issue. Ms Holschier, the Central Murray Regional Library representative, told the Committee:

I have insisted that our staff be really well trained – otherwise, it becomes too stressful for everybody – so they have done 'train the trainer' courses. Even though they know how to use the Internet, it is not the same thing as being able to help somebody else learn to do something. So we have invested in quality training, and I think it has paid off for our customers as well as our staff.⁹⁰

4.113 State libraries have been remarkably supportive of their public library networks in terms of training. In Queensland, the Committee was told that it had been a priority area in the last two years⁹¹ and many Queensland rural libraries expressed their gratitude for the help received.

4.114 The Director-General of the National Library of Australia, Ms Fullerton, stressed the need for more access to IT resources for librarians, so that they could keep their skills levels up and be in a better position to communicate with, and develop skill in, the user community:

If [librarians] themselves have very limited access to online resources and online information, they cannot possibly hope to have a high level of competency themselves, and they need to have it.⁹²

88 *Evidence*, p. 357.

89 *Selected Higher Education Student Statistics, 1998 and 2002*.

90 *Evidence*, p. 208.

91 *Evidence*, p. 313.

92 *Evidence*, p. 93.

4.115 Other witnesses made the point that, especially in rural and regional areas, there was little opportunity for staff to access the continuing education needed to cope with 'gateway to resources' role, rather than simply the building of collections.⁹³

4.116 It appears also that there is very unequal provision of continuing education across the profession. Mr Stempel, representing the Council of Library Administrators of South Australia, outlined the in-house practical training courses on writing web pages, manipulating the insides of PCs and hands-on searching of databases provided within his large council area.⁹⁴ This seems to be the exception rather than the rule, however.

4.117 Many witnesses pointed to the difficulty for library staff in one- or two-person country libraries to be released to access training in the city.⁹⁵ Technology has provided a way to overcome this problem in relation to ICT. The Committee was told of an online tutorial available for purchase from Monash University. The tutorial contains about 30 modules which users work through at their own pace, then do a test to qualify them for an Australian Computer Driving Licence. An international version also exists. Ms Mackenzie, representing ALIA, indicated that ALIA was purchasing it for members, as it sees that as part of its role in their continuing professional development.⁹⁶

4.118 In academic libraries, however, a more extreme situation prevailed. Because of the nature of the work, and the earlier take-up of IT, librarians have been obliged to develop not only personal online skills but also high-level information literacy teaching skills. Mrs McCarthy of the Queensland University of Technology indicated that many of her professional staff were undertaking postgraduate courses in higher education to equip them for their role as educators.⁹⁷

93 *Evidence*, p. 172.

94 *Evidence*, p. 370.

95 See, for example, *Evidence*, p. 173; p. 370.

96 *Evidence*, p. 82.

97 *Evidence*, p. 306.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Perhaps the most striking impression the Committee has formed in this inquiry is that Australia is remarkably well served by its current library services. Constrained for space and funds and beset by technological problems though some of them may be, their representatives gave considerable time and effort in assisting the Committee by way of submissions and oral evidence. Most have given considerable thought to the issues confronting libraries in the online environment and have already taken many practical steps not only to survive but to prosper and to better serve their communities into the future. They are strongly committed to serving their users and their propensity to band together and to share resources was an object lesson in what can be achieved by cooperation across jurisdictional boundaries.

5.2 A common refrain was the lack of recognition library services receive for the valuable role they play in the community. Libraries are merely taken for granted, not valued. Sadly, the Committee has to concur that this is the case. Amongst some sections of the populace, there remains the perception that all libraries do is lend books. The reality is far different. Particularly in rural and regional Australia, the library is in some cases the one remaining piece of infrastructure so it takes on the role of technology access centre, meeting place, social support system.

5.3 The Committee cannot stress more strongly the importance of the role of libraries in Australian society. The perception that private access to online services would replace, or at the very least radically reduce, the need for libraries was regularly reported to the Committee. This is clearly not the case. In the first instance, libraries contain a wealth of information that will never be digitised and available online. And secondly, even with an increasing level of online access in the home, public Internet access will continue to be required in perpetuity on equity grounds. In the Committee's view, it is preferable that that provision be in an environment where professional assistance in finding information (rather than strictly ICT assistance) is available – namely, in libraries. That so many library users with personal Internet access continue to use library resources is testimony to the value-adding role libraries play in the online environment.

5.4 While it is probable that some kinds of library usage will drop off in the future as more services and more content are provided online, the library's role as a safety net for those Australians without personal Internet access will continue in perpetuity, and must be supported. Libraries too will be involved in providing assistance, either in person or through websites, to the world wide web.

Connectivity

5.5 Perhaps the most significant practical issue confronting all libraries today is their capacity to make suitable provision for their users' online access and to sustain that provision. There are still technological black spots which need to be addressed; and there is the pressing need to provide greater bandwidth to enable users to make full use of the ever-increasing range of online services. While it is almost certain that raw bandwidth price will continue to fall, it is likely to be more than offset by demand growth.

5.6 In view of the pressing need for improved broadband access in the nation's public libraries, the Committee recommends:

(a) that the Government negotiate with telecommunications carriers to establish an 'e-rate' or discount rate for broadband access to public libraries and that, if negotiations are not successful, consider imposing a requirement on carriers under the Universal Service Obligation arrangement; and

(b) that further funds be allocated under an expanded National Broadband Strategy for expanding broadband access in libraries. [see paragraph 4.35]

Content

5.7 As the Internet is largely unregulated, libraries have a role in negotiating for, selecting and promoting worthwhile online content for their users while at the same time balancing online provision with the more traditional resources. To be affordable, online content will increasingly have to be purchased through consortia arrangements.

5.8 The Committee recommends that the National Library of Australia receive additional funding to provide improved access to Kinetica for all Australian libraries and end users. [see paragraph 3.14]

5.9 The Committee recommends:

(a) that NOIE continue to consult closely with the library community over the development of the register of Australian Government publications;

(b) that NOIE publicise the availability in public libraries of the online register; and

(c) that NOIE commission research to ascertain the level of public awareness of government information and the means of access thereto. [see paragraph 4.65]

5.10 The Committee recommends:

(a) that the National Library of Australia identify a number of key databases for which national site licencing might be desirable; and

(b) it recommends that additional Australian Government funding be extended to the National Library for this purpose. [see paragraph 4.56]

5.11 The Committee recommends:

(a) the continuation of the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Community Heritage Grants digitisation program; and

(b) the addition of a new National Heritage Grants program for peak cultural institutions to assist in the digitisation of their collections. [see paragraph 3.34]

5.12 The Committee recommends that the Australian Research Information Infrastructure Committee consider the question of the availability online of Australian postgraduate theses as a matter of priority. [see paragraph 3.37]

Promotion

5.13 Although public libraries are used by a majority of the Australian population, their ability to assist their users to harness the potential of online services has not been adequately recognised. There should be much more promotion of what libraries have to offer, above and beyond their role as a supplier of recreational reading.

5.14 The Committee recommends that whenever the Australian Government advertises its electronic services, it adds a statement to the effect that further information can be obtained from the local public library. And it encourages the states to do likewise. [see paragraph 3.24]

Skills

5.15 The Internet is a dynamic and ever changing medium. Library staff need ongoing skills training to stay up to date and to be able to assist their users efficiently. The Committee is impressed with the profession's commitment to training and with the efforts it is making to promote skills in users. Technology is advancing so quickly that ongoing and regular professional development will be necessary. In particular, developments to assist disabled Internet users are constantly being upgraded. If there are no alternative funding mechanisms for ongoing research into the identification and testing of adaptive technologies for the use of online equipment in public libraries by persons with disabilities, the Committee recommends the funding of another round of AccessAbility grants. [see paragraph 3.64]

National leadership

5.16 The Committee recommends:

(a) that the Cultural Ministers' Council appoint a standing libraries working group to provide regular reports on library and information matters which need to be addressed as a priority;

(b) that the proposed Cultural Ministers' Council standing libraries working group develop, in consultation with other interested parties, a national information policy; and

(c) that NOIE be required to consult with the appropriate national library representatives on all matters of substance affecting the library community and the online provision of services. [see paragraph 4.10]

Legal deposit

5.17 In its inquiry, the Committee did not consider the question of legal deposit in sufficient detail to form a definitive view on the matter of its extension to digital material. Noting the requirement that the Copyright Amendment (Digital Agenda) Act 2000 be reviewed after three years of operation, the Committee recommends that that review consider the Act's extension to digital material. [see paragraph 4.47]

Funding

5.18 The Committee concludes that local government is now carrying a disproportionate share of public library funding, compared with the more equitable situation of the 1970s, when state governments contributed up to 50 per cent in some cases. It is incumbent on state governments to recognise the important role public libraries play in providing equitable access to online information by ensuring that they receive adequate support. Where there is shared responsibility for public library funding between state and local government, the Committee recommends that the States significantly increase their share of public library funding, moving towards matching local government levels of contribution. [see paragraph 4.104]

Appendix 1

List of Submissions

- 1 Mr Aldo Taranto
- 2 Mr Ron Lomax
- 3 Dr Alan Bundy
- 4 Great Lakes Library Service
- 5 Maclean Shire Council
- 6 Hay Shire Council
- 7 Ms Ruth Campbell-Hicks
- 8 City of Sydney
- 9 Banana Shire Council
- 9a Banana Shire Council
- 10 Longreach Shire Library
- 11 Whitsunday Shire Council
- 12 National Office for the Information Economy (NOIE)
- 13 Wingecarribee Shire Council
- 14 Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation
- 15 National Working Group for TAFE Library Services
- 15a National Working Group for TAFE Library Services
- 15b National Working Group for TAFE Library Services
- 16 Pine Rivers Shire Council
- 17 Ms Annie Weaver
- 18 Defence Science and Technology Organisation Research Library
- 19 National Library of Australia
- 19a National Library of Australia

- 20 LEARN Network (South Australian TAFE Learning Resource Centres and Libraries)
- 21 City of Fremantle
- 22 Pormpuraaw Community Council
- 23 Mr Colin Dunnett
- 24 Macquarie Regional Library
- 25 Council of the Shire of Cardwell
- 26 Crookwell Shire Council
- 27 Gannawarra Library Service, Shire of Gannawarra
- 28 Friends of Nunawading Libraries
- 29 Victorian Association of TAFE Libraries
- 30 Shoalhaven City Library
- 31 Darwin Public Libraries
- 32 University of South Australia Library
- 33 Unley Library Service
- 34 Victoria University of Technology
- 35 Ms Jane Florance
- 36 Maitland City Council
- 37 Ms Stephanie McDonald
- 38 Ms Phillipa Webb
- 39 Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation
- 40 Willoughby City Council
- 41 Monash Public Library Service
- 42 Hawkesbury City Council Library Service
- 43 Interim Steering Committee, Public Libraries Australia
- 44 William Grundt Memorial Library

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- 45 Mount Gambier Public Library
 - 46 Richmond-Tweed Regional Library
 - 47 Macedon Ranges Shire Council
 - 48 Dr M. M. Brandl
 - 49 Penrith City Library
 - 50 Beaudesert Library
 - 51 Caloundra City Libraries
 - 52 Holroyd City Council
 - 53 Ms Mary Anne Temby
 - 54 Southern Tablelands Regional Library
 - 55 Shire of Broomehill
 - 56 Country Public Libraries Association of NSW
 - 57 Geelong Regional Library
 - 58 Monaro Regional Library and Information Service
 - 59 Johnstone Shire Council
 - 60 Australian School Library Association
 - 61 Law School and Medical Library, University of Western Australia
 - 62 Ms Tabitha Merrell
 - 63 City of Stirling Public Libraries
 - 64 Central West Libraries
 - 65 Queensland Public Library Association
 - 66 Cottesloe, Peppermint Grove and Mosman Park Library
 - 67 Lismore Public Library
 - 68 Salisbury Public Library Service
 - 69 Parkes Shire Council
 - 70 Council of School Library Associations of South Australia

- 71 The Buddhist Discussion Centre (Upwey) Ltd.
- 72 Mr Chris Taylor
- 73 Mr Colin Fong
- 74 Association of Parliamentary Libraries of Australasia (APLA)
- 75 Australian Subject Gateways Forum
- 76 Parramatta City Library
- 77 City of Armadale
- 78 Manjimup Public Library
- 79 Singleton Shire Council
- 80 Ipswich Library and Information Service, Ipswich City Council
- 81 Victorian Public Library and Information Network (VICLINK) and Country Public Libraries Group (CPLG)
- 82 City of Norwood, Payneham and St Peters Library Service
- 83 Corporation of the Town of Walkerville
- 84 Ms Tracy Bushell
- 85 State Library of Tasmania
- 85a State Library of Tasmania
- 86 Queensland University of Technology Faculty of Information Technology
- 87 Central Northern Libraries
- 88 Mr Martin Field
- 89 Shorelink Library Network
- 89a Shorelink Library Network
- 90 Mr Richard Goodwin
- 91 Victorian Association for Library Automation Inc.
- 92 Australian Libraries Copyright Committee
- 93 Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)

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- 93a Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)
- 93b Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)
- 94 Centre for Community Networking Research, School of Information Management Systems, Monash University
- 94a Centre for Community Networking Research, School of Information Management Systems, Monash University
- 95 Federal Libraries Information Network
- 96 Prospect Library
- 97 School Library Association of Queensland
- 98 Central Highlands Regional Library Corporation
- 99 Wimmera Regional Library Corporation
- 100 Newcastle Region Library
- 101 City of Bayswater
- 102 Campbelltown City Council
- 103 Library of Queensland
- 104 Kinetica Advisory Committee, National Library
- 105 City of Cockburn Public Library and Information Service
- 106 Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service
- 107 Break O'Day Council
- 108 Hurstville City Library and Information Service
- 109 Ms Elizabeth Swan
- 110 Buloke Shire Council
- 111 Richmond-Tweed Regional Library Tweed Shire
- 112 Online Projects Team, Vicnet, State Library of Victoria
- 113 Baulkham Hills Shire Library Service
- 114 Metropolitan Public Libraries Association
- 115 Australian Institute of Criminology

- 116 Armidale Dumaresq Council
- 117 Wolanski Foundation
- 117a Wolanski Foundation
- 118 Noosa Council Library Service
- 119 City of Nedlands Library Service
- 120 The City of Joondalup
- 121 Cambridge Library
- 122 Mr Anthony Schlink
- 123 Council of Australian University Librarians
- 124 Municipal Association of Victoria
- 125 Australian Broadcasting Corporation
- 126 Library Board of Victoria
- 127 Council of Australian State Libraries
- 128 Copyright Agency Limited
- 129 UNILINC Limited
- 130 Library Council of New South Wales
- 130a State Library of New South Wales
- 130b State Library of New South Wales
- 131 Rockingham Regional Campus Community Library
- 132 State Library of Western Australia
- 133 Central Murray Regional Public Library
- 134 Prince of Wales Hospital
- 135 Wattle Range Council
- 136 Hastings Council – Corporate and Community Services Division
- 137 ACT Department of Urban Services
- 138 Townsville Public Library Service

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- 139 Community Tele-Services Australia Inc and the Communications Experts Group Pty Ltd
- 140 Burdekin Shire Council
- 141 Town of Victoria Park
- 142 Northern Territory Library and Information Service
- 143 City of Swan
- 144 Australian Library and Information Association (Victorian Branch)
- 144a Australian Library and Information Association (Victorian Branch)
- 145 Western Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc.
- 146 Council of Library Administrators of South Australia and PLAIN Central Services
- 147 State Library of South Australia
- 148 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Library Extension Program
- 149 Australian Local Government Association
- 150 Cooloola Shire Council
- 151 Crookwell Shire Council
- 152 The University of Newcastle
- 153 Central Queensland University
- 154 Syntropy Pty Limited
- 155 Queensland Government

Appendix 2

Witnesses at public hearings

11 October 2002 – Wollongong

Wingecarribee Shire Council, Library and Information Services

Mrs Janice Cruickshank

Shoalhaven City Library

Ms Noela Lim

26 November 2002 – Melbourne

Australian State Libraries

Mrs Frances Awcock

Library Board of Victoria, State Library of Victoria

Mr Michael Bertie

Dr Vicki Williamson

Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation

Mr Peter Carter

Municipal Association of Victoria

Mr Troy Edwards

Ms Clare Hargreaves

Ms Barbara Horn

Mr John Murrell

School of Information and Management Systems, Monash University

Mr Gary Hardy

27 November 2002 – Canberra

Association of Parliamentary Libraries of Australasia

Ms Nola Adcock

Ms Roslynn Membrey

National Library of Australia

Ms Jasmine Cameron

Ms Janice Fullerton

Mr David Toll

Australian Library and Information Association

Ms Christine Mackenzie

Ms Susan Magnay

Kinetica Advisory Committee

Ms Janet Maslen

28 November 2002 – Sydney

Shorelink Library Network

Councillor Craig Carland

City of Sydney

Mr Patrick Condon

Council of Australian University Libraries

Ms Madeleine McPherson

State Library of New South Wales

Mrs Dagmar Schmidmaier

Australian Subject Gateways Forum

Mrs Janine Schmidt

Ms Barbara Thorsen

Shorelink Library Network

Ms Helen Sutherland

Metropolitan Public Libraries Association

Ms Meredith Wallace

28 March 2003 – Canberra**Northern Territory Library and Information Service**

Mr Antony Beale

National Working Group for TAFE Library Services

Ms Helena Zobec

22 April 2003 – Ballarat**University of Ballarat**

Ms Judith Clark

Central Highlands Regional Library Corporation

Ms Julie Rae

23 April 2003 – Mildura**Wimmera Regional Library Corporation**

Mr Russell Elwin

Central Murray Regional Public Library

Ms Joycelyn Holschier

24 April 2003 – Launceston**State Library of Tasmania**

Mrs Cathy Doe

28 April 2003 – Cairns**Townsville City Council**

Mrs Christine Bendle

Whitsunday Shire Council

Mrs Anna Derham

Mr Royden James

Burdekin Shire Council

Mr Daniel Mulcahy

James Cook University Library

Ms Dagmar Parer

29 April 2003 – Rockhampton

Banana Shire Council

Mrs Linda Alexander

Central Queensland University

Mr William Oates

30 April 2003 – Caboolture

Caloundra City Libraries

Ms Louise Bauer

Queensland University of Technology

Associate Professor Christine Bruce

Mrs Jennifer McCarthy

Mr Michael Middleton

Ms Carolyn Young

State Library of Queensland

Ms Lea Giles-Peters

Ms Vicki McDonald

Mr Arto Rissanen

Pine Rivers Shire Library Service

Mrs Melindie Hunt

Mrs Rosalind Pestell

Mr Richard Sayers**8 May 2003 – Adelaide****Dr Alan Bundy****State Library of South Australia**

Ms Bronwyn Halliday

Council of Library Administrators of South Australia

Ms Tania Paull

Mr Geoffrey Stempel

9 May 2003 – Bunbury**State Library of Western Australia**

Ms Claire Forte

Mrs Carol Newton-Smith**19 May 2003 – Sydney****The Wolanski Foundation**

Mr Paul Bentley

Syntropy

Mr Neville Buch

Mr Matthew Tutaki

Information Edge

Ms Elizabeth Swan

20 May 2003 – Newcastle

University of Newcastle

Mr Gregory Anderson

Ms Lynne Benton

Wagga Wagga City Council

Mr Robert Knight

Board of Public Libraries Australia Ltd

Ms Lynne Makin

Newcastle Region Library

Ms Noelle Nelson

Appendix 3

Inspections

28 March 2003

National Library of Australia, Canberra, ACT

8 May 2003

State Library of South Australia, Adelaide, South Australia

9 May 2003

Bunbury Public Library, Bunbury, Western Australia

Appendix 4

Exhibits

23 April 2003 - Mildura

Wimmera Regional Library Corporation

A printout of the Wimmera Regional Library Corporation's webpage.

Chart entitled *Broadband Satellite Options for St. Arnaud*.

28 April 2003 - Cairns

James Cook University Library (Cairns Campus)

A comprehensive description relating the activities of the JCU Library to the Committee's terms of reference.

8 May 2003 - Adelaide

Dr Alan Bundy

- *Directory of Australian Public Libraries*, Sixth edition, edited by Alan and Judith Bundy, Auslib Press 2003
- Paper delivered by Dr Alan Bundy at the annual general meeting of the Friends of Mitcham Library Service (SA), Adelaide 31 July 2002 entitled *Changing lives, making the difference: the 21st century public library*
- *The People's Network: A turning point for public libraries*, published by Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries, London, 2003
- Article entitled *Delivering Learning: Bristol's new learning centres*, source not given.

