

**COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN STATE LIBRARIES
NATIONAL PUBLIC LIBRARIES FORUM
STATE LIBRARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA
11 – 12 May 2000**

Background

The Council of State Libraries (CASL) convened a national public libraries forum in Adelaide on 11-12 May 2000. The Forum was planned to bring together representatives from all levels of the public library sector in Australia. Representation included those from all state libraries, state government agencies with public library responsibilities, the various state public library associations, local government librarians and the National Library of Australia. A list of participants is at Attachment 1.

The agenda (Attachment 2) was developed in consultation with all states and was based on current developments and the challenges currently facing public libraries in Australia.

The forum was coordinated by Northern Territory Library and Information Service (NTLIS) and chaired by Director, Lea Giles-Peters. The State Library of South Australia and Plain Central Services also provided assistance with the provision of facilities, presentations and other administrative support. Brenda McConchie, AIMA Training and Consultancy Services Ltd facilitated the forum.

Prior to the meeting considerable work was undertaken by all states with the preparation of papers addressing each of the agenda items. Copies of these state papers are available from NTLIS and an overall summary of key issues are at Attachment 3.

1. 2020 Vision Revisited

The Libraries Working Group of the Cultural Ministers Council 1996 publication *2020 Vision Towards the Libraries of the Future* analysed the opportunities and challenges and outlined a vision for the impending development of Australian public libraries. The Forum revisited this document.

It was agreed that progress had been made in many of the identified challenge areas including:

- Greater participation in the education sector
- A rapid increase in the use of telecommunications to obtain and deliver services electronically
- Closer work with local communities particularly through the facilitation of access to local heritage and history

It was noted that *2020 Vision* had emphasised that libraries should explore their vision with 'vigour, courage, sensitivity, authority and confidence'. The meeting agreed that this vision had not changed and it remained a challenge for Australian public libraries.

2. Future Directions for Public Libraries – *pushing the boundaries – how far is too far?*

The State Library of Tasmania (SLTAS) presented a paper on key technological innovations in that state. The library had played a major role in the development of the government online project *Services Tasmania Online*. Library involvement in such an initiative had highlighted the skills of librarians and their value to this type of project. It was noted that being located within the same department as education had ensured a close working relationship between the sectors and a blurring of the boundaries between TAFE, schools and libraries. This had assisted with service development and delivery to the education sector.

There was discussion on the reach and influence of the public library network, which included the National Library of Australia, the 8 state and territory libraries and almost 1700 public libraries throughout Australia. This formed a cooperative network of public library service development and delivery based on equity of access and free access to services. It was agreed that it was important to actively promote this network and its achievements to the community, government and the private sector. The reach and influence of the public libraries as a network and their ability to attract national funding and sponsorship was relatively untapped and a mechanism to do this should be explored further.

Examples of developments in public libraries included the potential for the library to become a broker of services and a market place. It was agreed that the following was required:

- A coordinated approach to attracting government/corporate funding – libraries should become more involved with projects for local, state and Commonwealth governments to support government online initiatives.
- A closer relationship with the education sector, including an active promotion of the lifelong learning concept. (An overview of the work of the CASL Working group on Partnerships in Libraries and Education was provided to participants).
- Ability of library managers to recognise and take up business and commercial opportunities including a focus on tourism and retailing. Examples included book shops and cafes within libraries, a library in a small rural town garden centre, and the use of a major regional library as a TAFE training centre.
- Training the public in the use of technology and electronic information resources and services and training library staff to embrace the IT side of libraries were being worked on by all of the participants.
- The promotion of local history provided a great opportunity for public libraries to engage in community development and interest. Libraries have useful and unique collections supporting local history and in many cases, the technology to provide access to them electronically.

All of the above examples were seen as a strategic way to increase the profile and broaden the client base of public libraries. What was necessary was an articulated protocol for government and business to engage with a network of public libraries.

The discussion concluded with a note that there was a need to strengthen public libraries through a strong viable network and that much of the future of public libraries may be dependent on its development.

3. State Presentations

A summary of key service delivery issues in each state presented by delegates with brief detail and action as appropriate follows:

3.1 Impact of the GST

The impact of GST on inter library loans was discussed and information on ILL practice between libraries was briefly discussed. It was agreed that considerable work was being done nationally by all libraries and CASL to prepare for the advent of the GST and that the Forum could add little at this stage to this effort.

3.2 Online legal issues such as copyright, Internet protocols and electronic licenses

The development of a code of practice including a disclaimer for Internet use and access being undertaken in South Australia. Other states had also been considering this issue and it was agreed to forward this information to PLAIN Central Services who will develop a national standard disclaimer.

There was major concern about the proposed Copyright Amendment (Digital Agenda) Bill and the impact on people in regional areas and the proposal that library users be required to pay to view information on a computer screen. The next CASL meeting was to consider further

action. Cathy Doe agreed to forward information to delegates to assist with lobbying members of parliament.

Action:

1. **All states to forward information on current Internet disclaimer practices to Shane Cathcart, PLAIN Central Services for development of a national standard disclaimer.**
2. **Cathy Doe SLTAS to forward information to all on the Copyright Amendment (Digital Agenda) Bill**

3.3 Provision of Equitable Services for Indigenous Communities

The lack of and complexity of service delivery for Indigenous communities was highlighted and examples of various successful initiatives and current developments in the Northern Territory were provided. It was agreed to document information on successful national projects

Action:

Participants to send details on state initiatives for service delivery to Indigenous communities to Phillipa Scurrah NTLIS who will compile information for distribution

3.4 Provision of services to Multicultural Communities

Many of the concerns were similar to those relating to service delivery for Indigenous Australians. It was agreed to circulate information on successful initiatives in NSW and Victoria.

Action:

SLNSW and SLV to circulate information on successful multicultural projects

3.5 Information Technology

Clients now expected greater access to technology and electronic services. Associated with this were staff and client training requirements and the need for changes in design of library buildings. The relevance of public libraries in an online environment given that many people can now bypass the library and access information direct was also important. SLNSW was currently developing toolkits as part of the NSW Net project to provide public libraries with the capacity to respond quickly to challenges presented by the expanding telecommunications network.

3.6 Relationships with all Levels of Government

The increased focus by Commonwealth and State governments on rural and regional issues has provided a key opportunity for the library sector to seek funding to expand service delivery to these areas. (See further detail at Agenda Item 13.)

3.7 Professional Education and Training of Library Staff

Education and recruitment of staff with an appropriate mix of skills was a key concern and many considered that the courses currently being offered at academic institutions did not meet the need for staff with broad ranging skills. (See further detail at Agenda Item 8.)

3.8 Marketing

Techniques were required to transform information services by the introduction of merchandising and other to make libraries more appealing to a wider range of clients. (See further detail at Agenda Item 9)

3.9 Consortia Purchasing

It was considered that purchasing of a full range of library materials, not just electronic licenses, could take place at a national level. (See further detail at Agenda Item 11.)

3.10 Changes to Library Legislation and Funding Agreements

These were presently under review in a number of states, based on amalgamations and changes to funding formula.

3.11 Role of libraries in the Economic and Social Development of Communities

The SLNSW/Eva Cox project *Public Libraries -Social Capital Indicators* and the development of a qualitative framework to determine the value social capital were outlined to the meeting. It was agreed that information on this should be shared to test the applicability of the research in other states.

Action:

Kathleen Bresnahan SLNSW to circulate information on the *Public Libraries - Social Capital Indicators* project to other interested states.

4. PLAIN Central Services

The meeting adjourned to PLAIN Central Services where lunch was provided and a demonstration of the new P2 system took place. This system attracted quite a deal of interest and questions and many were impressed with the opportunities it provided with the ease of selection and acquisitions of resources.

5. Is there a National Public Library Agenda?

It was agreed that there was a national agenda for public libraries and there was also the recognition that there were many areas in which cooperation could take place nationally. A key concern was the need to support economic and community development through a strong, viable public libraries network. This network could be brought about by the cooperation of all stakeholders, improved telecommunications and relevant content.

There was a strong belief that Australian public libraries as a network had a very strong product to offer government and business but it had not yet been properly articulated. Nor did those who could use it as a service partner such as local, state or Commonwealth government fully understand its potential benefits to the Australian community. The network of libraries was considered to represent a five billion dollar investment and their potential impact on economic and social development was largely untapped.

It was acknowledged that representatives from all levels of government and jurisdictions were required to work together to actively promote the key strengths of the national public library network which included:

- the potential value of 1700 service outlets throughout Australia;
- the high level and equity of service provided by public libraries;
- the considerable investment in existing public library infrastructure;
- the strong client focus in public library services;
- equity of services;
- the potential for partnerships and alliances; and
- a strong focus on and connection with communities and their sustainability.

6. Proposal to Establish an Australian Public Libraries Network

The meeting agreed that a consultancy should be undertaken to develop a brief for the business case for an Australian Public Library Network a body that would represent a coordinated voice and promote the interests of all public libraries in Australia. An initial task of the consultancy would be to assess the potential viability of such a network and take into account an aggregation of what currently exists; a service delivery point for distributed services and a communication channel for all public libraries. Existing models of representative library bodies in Australia such as CASL and

the Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) could provide a useful starting point in considering the business case for the establishment of a body to represent Australian public libraries.

It was agreed that the establishment of a national network would take a great deal of planning and coordination and was seen as something in which CASL and other key stakeholders would be required to play a major role.

A Steering Committee comprising Suzanne Lollback, Alice Springs Town Council, Chris Williams, State Library of New South Wales and David Toll, National Library of Australia was tasked with developing a draft consultancy brief. The Steering Committee was selected to represent the tiers of government involved at the meeting. The draft business case will be circulated for comment, and forwarded to CASL to be discussed at the October 2000 meeting. Potential funding sources to undertake the consultancy would include CASL members, public libraries and state and local government.

Action:

Development by Steering Committee of a brief for a consultancy to investigate the business case for the establishment of an Australian Public Libraries Network.

7. Industry Presentation – *Bibliograph* Statistical Package

Trevor Allred provided a demonstration of the Bibliograph statistical package from the USA. This statistical package has provoked a lot of interest amongst Australian libraries and subject to funding many were keen to consider it more closely.

8. Statistical Data Collection and Benchmarking

There was a presentation from ACTLIS on the current national data collection undertaken on behalf of CASL. This engendered considerable discussion on the data that was being compiled and the best use of that data in promoting the role of libraries in the economic and social development of communities. (See Agenda Item 3 regarding SLNSW research project).

Whilst the meeting was supportive of the data being collected it was agreed that greater qualitative analysis of this information was required. It was considered that the national data collection and qualitative values should be able to tease out the market place of the library and provide an indication of the various segments of the community that use it. This information would be invaluable in the promotion of library and information services to government, the business sector and the broader community.

The development of 5-6 standard service questions for client feedback surveys in conjunction with reporting against performance indicators was supported. All states were to provide information on current surveys to Graham Dudley, DOI, Victoria to assist with the development of a standard set of survey questions and performance indicators to be used by all public libraries.

Other issues discussed included:

- *Best value* and best practice were now taking the place of competitive tendering in Victoria
- Agreement that quality benchmarking should be an objective for all libraries
- On-line lodgement of statistical returns

Action:

- 1. All states to provide information on current client feedback surveys and performance indicators collected to Graham Dudley, DOI, Victoria.**
- 2. Graham Dudley to develop a draft standard set of survey questions and performance indicators to be used by all public libraries.**

9. Professional Education and Training

SLNSW gave a presentation on the post graduate program it had developed in partnership with the University of Technology Sydney. There had been a very positive response by both students and SLNSW staff to this course. NTLIS held electronic copies of the course overview and would circulate copies to any interested participants.

SLTAS indicated concern about the aging profile of library staff in Tasmania as the library school no longer operated in the state. It was considered that due to all the advances associated with the provision of *Networking the Nation* funding there may not be sufficient staff to provide the services demanded as a result of the technological advances.

The meeting agreed that it was not only librarians that will provide the skills needed to manage public libraries in the future. These skills include awareness of client service delivery requirements, community development, marketing, leadership and management. The balance and mix of professional and paraprofessional library staff, as well as other staff is an important consideration. Related areas are arts management, information management and technology, knowledge management, records management and archives.

The meeting was advised that SLSA was preparing a paper for the next CASL meeting on workforce planning. This would outline the current situation with details on workforce profiles and the future skills needs for library staff. It was agreed that it would be appropriate to make comment to CASL on national training issues and suggest appropriate strategies. All states agreed to forward information on current state issues to Judy Peppard, SLV who will draft a paper for circulation to participants prior to forwarding it to CASL and the ALIA Board of Education for information.

Action:

All states to forward information to Judy Peppard for inclusion in a paper for CASL and the ALIA Board of Education identifying national training issues for library staff and suggested strategies.

10. Marketing

A presentation on the *Libraries Victoria* marketing campaign highlighted many of the positive aspects of a well planned and coordinated state wide campaign. It had included the development of style guides, marketing guidelines, training assistance for library staff, standard information for CEO's and other policy makers. The overall campaign was aimed at a target audience of young male non users, those potential administrators and decision makers of the future.

It was acknowledged that marketing and changing of the public image of libraries is a key issue. Trying to sell a role identifying public libraries as cutting edge information providers was important. The proposed APLN could take a role in the development of national marketing strategies, although state based initiatives would continue to be important.

11. Reference Services

CASL has recently approved the establishment of the Reference Issues Working Group that is convened by Roxanne Missingham of the NLA. Terms of Reference for the Group were due to be considered by CASL at the May meeting. This Working Group is considering issues associated with the possible provision of a national 24 hour reference and information service. David Toll advised that the NLA was doing a lot of lead work in this area. The NLA was currently participating in an international project with the provision of a 24 hour online service managed between the Library of Congress and ten other libraries around the world. The meeting agreed to forward suggestions on how to collaborate on the provision of a national service to Roxanne Missingham.

Action:

All states to forward suggestions for national reference service to Roxanne Missingham NLA convenor of the CASL Reference Issues Working Group

12. Consortia Purchasing

There was considerable discussion about the possibilities of national consortia arrangements for all public libraries. It was acknowledged that there were some highly successful models operating amongst some major USA libraries. Trials were already being undertaken within various states. The key issue was whether there was potential to undertake national deals that will lower the costs of various services, such as targeted commercial data sets, and provide a consistent service to library users.

The meeting was advised that the development of consortia with the National Library and state libraries had been supported by CASL in principle, but there is much development work and research to undertake first. To date the CASL Consortia Working Group had undertaken considerable work to identify models and options and investigating issues concerning governance, content, funding and access and delivery. It was considered that it may be possible to extend this project to the public library network but this involvement and its extent would need to be considered on a state by state basis. It may be possible to include some key public libraries in the proposed pilot. In the first instance it was agreed that states would forward details of current consortia arrangements to Geoff Stempel, Onkaparinga, who would compile the information into a brief paper for the Consortia Working Group.

Action:

- 1 All states to forward information on current consortia arrangements to Geoff Stempel, Onkaparinga,**
- 2 Geoff Stempel to prepare brief for the Consortia Working Group.**

13. Sources of Funding

NTLIS distributed a table produced for the CASL Working Group on Partnerships in Libraries and Education on potential sources of funding for projects. SLTAS advised of the *Easy Grants Information Service* that it was currently using that provided tailored information on all forms of grants programs, both government and the private sector.

There was discussion about the direction of some of the projects funded under the *Networking the Nation* program. It was agreed that the national public library network would have been a far more effective method of delivering many of the programs that had been funded to date. It was considered that libraries had lost many opportunities as initial funding rounds had in many instances directed grants to smaller community groups. Some of these projects had not been successful and there was concern about wasted opportunities for the library sector. It was considered that this may have been avoided had public libraries been in a position to far more actively promote the network and that existed around Australia and the value it could add to programs.

General discussion on other research projects currently being undertaken by the public library sector led to agreement that this information should be compiled and distributed. It was agreed that the CASL web site would be the most appropriate location for the information.

Action:

- 1. Participants to forward suggestions on accessible sources of funding to Jennie Renfree NTLIS to forward to CASL for inclusion on its web site**
- 2. Cathy Doe to circulate information on the *Easy Grants Information Service***
- 3. Information on major research projects being undertaken to be provided to Jennie Renfree, NTLIS to prepare for inclusion on CASL website**

14. Critical Success Factors

Due to an extended session based around the development of the APLN the meeting was unable to consider this item further.

15. Role for CASL in Representing Public Library Issues

It was acknowledged that CASL had played a major role in convening and supporting the forum. Many of the outcomes of the actions proposed by the meeting would assist the various CASL working groups with further planning to the benefit of all public libraries. Whilst the plans to develop a business case for an Australian Public Library Network may ultimately lead to the establishment of a new organisation that would represent the views of all public library stakeholders, it was agreed that CASL still had a major role to play.

Whilst funding arrangements differed slightly in some states, most state libraries (which along with the National Library are also part of the public library network) played a role in both funding and supporting public libraries, to varying degrees. Thus CASL still represented the majority of stakeholders within the public library network. However it was agreed that it was important to involve other stakeholders such as local government. This would be the responsibility in the first instance of the state representatives. Local government was seen to be a potential champion of the public library network and one with whom the APLN should work closely. It was also a long term potential source of funding support.

16. Development of Action Plan

The Action Plan is at Attachment 4. A number of the issues raised during the two day meeting were seen as being dependent upon the establishment of the Australian Public Libraries Network so they are not reflected in the Action Plan. All participants agreed that it was vital to have achievable outcomes and to work to ensure that these outcomes are met.

17. Other Business

All participants agreed that the meeting had been invaluable and expressed the desire to continue to work together and with other stakeholders such as local government to achieve a strong national well defined product to market to the Australian community, all levels of government and the private sector.

David Toll of the National Library of Australia advised that the library would be in a position to play a supporting role during the development of the APLN. It was agreed that it could take 12-18 months for the APLN to be established with a small secretariat and that the support of CASL, NLA and all other stakeholders was important to ensure a successful outcome for all public libraries.

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**COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN STATE LIBRARIES
NATIONAL MEETING OF PUBLIC LIBRARY DIRECTORS
STATE LIBRARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA
11 – 12 May 2000
REVISED AGENDA**

Thursday 11 May

- 9.00 – 9.15 Introduction (Chairperson, Lea Giles-Peters)
9.15 – 10.45 State Library Directors and Officers meeting
- 10.45 – 11.00 *Morning tea (joined by Public Library Association members from each state)*
- 11.00 – 11.45 2020 Vision revisited
11.45 – 12.45 Future Directions for Public Libraries – *pushing the boundaries – how far is too far?*
- 12.45 – 2.15 *Lunch at PLAIN Central Services*
- 2.15 – 3.45 State presentations –key service delivery issues in each state to be presented by National, State and public library delegates. (Including co-operative ventures and partnership arrangements details).
- 3.45 – 4.00 *Afternoon tea*
- 4.00 – 5.00 Is there a national public library agenda?

Friday 12 May

- 8 00 – 9 00 Working breakfast and Industry presentation – *Bibliograph*
Statistical package
- 9.00 – 9.45 Statistical Data collection and Benchmarking
9.45 – 10.15 Professional education and training
10.15 - 10.45 Marketing
- 10.45 – 11.00 *Morning tea*
- 11.00 – 11.25 Reference Services
11.25 – 11.45 Consortia purchasing
11.45 – 12.15 Sources of funding
12.15 – 1.00 Critical Success Factors
- 1.00 – 2.00 *Lunch*
- 2.00 – 2.45 Role for CASL in representing Public Library issues
2.45 – 4.15 Development of Action Plan
4.15 – 4.45 Other Business

National Public Libraries Forum - Summary of papers provided by participants

1. 2020 Vision revisited.

- Good time to review
- NSW.net to achieve some of the aims

2. Is there a national public library agenda?

- Commonality in public library operations – advantages in National coordinated approach
- Link state based electronic public library networks
- Share Federal community development funds

3. Statistical Data Collection and Benchmarking

- Quality benchmarking should be an objective for all libraries
- Application of Best Value Principles to local government/public libraries?
- On-line lodgement of statistical returns
- Working to develop and refine performance measures
- Review of statistical collection – are these “right”?
- Need to revamp to make more meaningful and comparisons easier
- Winner of Best Practise Award for Benchmarking (WAPL)

4. Professional Education and Training

- Consensus of the effectiveness can lead to strategies and actions for addressing shortcomings
- Change in focus from “professional” to “Managerial” – courses in Grant applications, GST, Management skills etc
- Active staff exchanges between public libraries and State Library
- Mailing services/ Chatrooms to generate discussion
- Use of external experts – targeted needs

5. Marketing

- Need for National marketing campaign.
- State and National libraries sharing in a more formal way
- Marketing Interest Group and joint MPLA/CPLA marketing strategy (NSW)
- Tendering for development of a Marketing Plan – Tas, QLD
- Target non-users

6. Reference Services

- Increased use via electronic means
- Relationships between State and local library for provision of Ref services.
- CASL Working Group on Reference Issues
- Collaborative Digital Reference Service – ref services anytime, anywhere
- Use of electronic resources/ services eg LIAC, HIS, INFOCUS
- How do we make the virtual librarian a reality?
- Static staff – fewer librarians – not embracing new technologies
- Fee based?
- Unreal expectations from clients regarding on-line information presentation

7. Consortia Purchasing

- Concerns with purchasing of targeted commercial data sets – CASL Working Group
- Formation of telecommunications purchasing consortia for regional/rural residents (NSW)
- Consortia purchasing used for electronic resources in NSW, TAS, QLD, WA
- Good and bad aspects
- Budgetary timetables – not coordinated with publishing timetables

8. Sources of Funding

- General concern with levels of funding
- 3 year funding agreements with State/Territory governments – methodology under review.
- Some funding from industry /outside sources – MBF, Reader’s Digest, Nestle, bequests
- Role of Grants and other sources of funding - RTIF
- State governments controlling library issues but not providing necessary funding.

9. Critical Success Factors

- “being to the community you serve what they want”
- Funding by all levels of government
- NLA using Balanced Scorecard performance management methodology.
- Technologies available
- Collection – relevant and up-to-date.

10. Role of CASL in representing Public Library issues.

- issues linked – “champions” for fostering the development of public library systems
- CASL does not include all players within its aegis
- Need for more forums
- Recognition of equality – State Library provides different service

11. Other Issues

- Major report into Service Delivery Strategies for Victoria Public Libraries
- Internet access to government information
- Development of Transaction centres – one stop shops – within libraries
- Learning Centres – joint-use facilities
- Indigenous Libraries Unit to meet information needs – refinement of service delivery
- Service delivery to remote areas
- Partnerships with other service providers