



Business Case for the Development of an Australian Public Libraries Network

First Progress Report, 15 June 2001

Status of the Project

Libraries Alive! formally commenced work on this Project on the 21st May 2001.

The key question posed in our Project Brief is:

What business case exists for the creation of a new national body to represent and promote the interests of public libraries in Australia? ¹

The broad aim of the Project is to:

Investigate and propose a sustainable business case for a body to represent and promote the interests of public libraries in Australia. ²

We have adopted a dual approach to this assignment:

- Researching background to the formation and subsequent disappearance of the Confederation of Australian Public Libraries Associations (CAPLA), to determine the relevance of the CAPLA model to the current situation
- Identifying alternative models
- Quantifying the social and economic benefits of the public libraries network, in order to present them to organisations outside the library sector who may be interested in using the network.

In adopting this approach we propose modifying the Project methodology to partially overlap the research and consultation phases (Phases 1 & 2). Currently we are in what could be described as the 'conceptualisation' phase (Phase 0?), which concentrates on two questions:

¹ Expression of Interest document (EoI): Expression of interest – consultancy to investigate the business case for the development of an Australian Public Libraries Network, January 2001. p. 1

² EoI, p. 2

1. Why would an Australian public library join an Australian Public Libraries Network (APLN)?
2. Why would a non-library organisation use the distribution channels of an APLN?

Because we are looking at these questions in tandem we are overlapping the research phase of the Project with the consultation phase, so we can explain to libraries on the one hand how the distribution channel might be perceived by those who wish to use it, and on the other to organisations outside libraries on the potential of the network.

The body (CAPLA) that was proposed in 1995 to represent public libraries embraced objectives that are consistent with the objectives of this Project. CAPLA seemed to take a sensible approach in recognising the strengths of existing bodies, and we are interested to learn why it did not succeed.

Our primary focus is on national organisations, especially federal government bodies. Public libraries' strong local focus and the varying degrees to which they are supported by their State libraries makes it important for us to support local public library 'branding' and promotional initiatives that are already successfully in place, e.g., [librariesvictoria](#).

The emphasis we are placing on this Project is activity-oriented rather than advocacy-oriented. Our initial focus is on those organisations with a requirement for national distribution of information (e.g., Dept of Health and Aged Care (DHAC) for community health, Environment Australia for land and water care information)

We are looking at the attractiveness of the network to people who might wish to use it nationally, and also looking for incentives (professional and financial) for libraries and library bodies to participate in the activities of the network.

The views of federal bodies such as the Dept of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) and the Dept of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DOCITA) could be material in influencing this project. We have not yet turned our attention to private sector bodies (eg, library suppliers, Telstra) that could benefit through use of the network.

The roles of key national peak bodies and their existing channels for communication and partnerships with the public library sector are being explored. Our first meeting with the Executive Director, ALIA was held on 8 June, and we will be meeting with the Executive Director, Australian Local Government Association on 22 June.

With multiple organisations already representing the interests of public libraries (e.g., CASL, MPLA, CPLA, ALIA) we are acutely aware that the reasons for setting up another body will need to be compelling given the level of overlapping representation

already evident. Any nationally representative organisation will need to be able to support the interests of State, regional and locally based organisations.

The attractiveness of the network to external organisations will be directly proportional to the number of libraries participating in its activities. Our job is to find incentives for both parties – for the first group to use and the second to provide.

We are seeking to test the proposition that a national network of public libraries will be attractive to both the ‘owners’ of the network (libraries) (for initiatives such as cooperative purchase, attracting external funding, developing uniform performance measures, and staff development) and to its potential ‘customers’ (the information and service providers, and potential funding sources).

We are continuing the research, working through the background material and we plan to consult with organisations likely to be interested in such a network.

We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss our preliminary findings with the Project Steering Committee around the end of June 2001.

Conceptualisation – Scoping the Project

Defining the scope of this Project is not easy, so we have sought to do it by posing what we consider to be key questions. We welcome validation of our process and its content by the Steering Committee.

Questions:

- What are “the interests of public libraries in Australia”?

Assumptions:

- *Lobbying, Higher profile, recognition of social and economic benefit conferred on the Australian community by public libraries*
 - *Strategic planning; identification and carriage of national issues*
 - *Better communication and cooperation among public library bodies*
 - *Community of interest – e.g., cooperative purchasing, benchmarking, staff development*
 - *More funding; alternative funding*
- Why do public libraries need a new body to represent them?

Assumptions:

- *If public libraries can be presented as a cohesive united organisation (‘single point of contact’) then it will be easier to attract the support of organisations*

that wish to use the public libraries network for national (plus state or regional) distribution of goods and services. APLN as “seller”

- *Single point of contact will facilitate negotiation on behalf of public libraries for, for example, funding or cooperative purchasing. APLN as “buyer”.*
- What can the public libraries network offer?
 - *The business case for the body rests on selling the capabilities of the network to organisations with an interest in using the public libraries as outlets*
 - *Identify organisations likely to be interested; quantify their interest; feed into business case*
- Who are the customers?
 - *Anyone interested in national, State or regional distribution*
- Why would they buy?
 - *Widespread distribution channel*
 - *Access to distribution in communities otherwise difficult or expensive to reach*
 - *Social and community benefit (government)*

Conceptually we are making the assumptions that:

- It is possible for Australian public libraries to form a network and support a representative body (referred to as ‘APLN’ for convenience)
- APLN will be attractive to other organisations that wish to use public libraries as an outlet for information or services
- By forming such a body, the public libraries ‘network’ is strengthened (e.g., professionally, financially, and in profile (visibility))
- The costs of organising can at least be covered by revenue from services of the organisation, and
- APLN will have both a physical and a virtual presence.

Implications for libraries for this approach:

- Mechanisms to ensure that the information or service is distributed to those for whom it is intended
- Ability to advertise and promote such services appropriately (e.g., on premises, with outreach services, electronically on Website)
- Space to display and hold stock (Note: no cash or money transactions are envisaged)
- Staff awareness and training.

In the consultation phase of this Project it will be necessary to promote the:

- Benefits of joining APLN to the library community
- Benefits of using APLN to the non-library community

We will need to look at the name, branding, packaging and promotions aspects in these contexts.

Consultation phase to include discussion with the bodies noted in the Brief³, but also to include:

- National Library of Australia
- Australian Local Government Association
- Dept of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA)
- Dept of Transport and Rural Services (DTRS)
- Dept of Health and Aged Care (DHAC)
- Dept of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DOCITA)

Discussions with the Departments would canvass the concept of an APLN as a distribution channel, and contribute to the development of the business case.

A later stage of the Project might include consultation with additional departments such as Family and Community Services (FACS), Environment Australia (EA), Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries (AFFA) and perhaps Industry, Science and Resources (DISR).

Activities to 15 June

- Preliminary discussions with Chris Williams, 10 April 2001
- Meeting with Project Management Committee, 21 May 2001
- Obtaining and reviewing papers nominated in the Brief
- Locating “other materials relevant to national public library agenda” (EoI, p. 4) (literature search)
- News item about the Project approved by Steering Committee and submitted to *Incite*
- Met with Jennefer Nicholson, Executive Director, ALIA, 8 June 2001
- ‘Snapshot Report’ to Chris Williams, 12 June 2001

³ EoI, Section 4, p. 2

- Received copies of recent relevant papers from Jennie Renfree, Northern Territory Library and Information Service, 12 June 2001
- Received an annotated bibliography of recent relevant papers compiled for us by Alison Jones, ALIA Administrative Officer (Education and Training), 15 June 2001
- Scheduled a meeting on 22 June with Ian Chalmers, Executive Director, Australian Local Government Association

Immediate Tasks

- Review background papers already in hand (see attached list of papers provided by the Steering Committee or identified by the Project team to date)
- Obtain and review other material specified in the Brief (EoI, p. 3)
- Identify latest statistical information on Australian public libraries (various sources)
- Compile list of stakeholders and individuals to be consulted, in addition to those nominated in the Brief
- Meet with Project Steering Committee in late June for progress report and validation of approach and findings.

Ian McCallum & Sherrey Quinn
Directors
Libraries Alive! P/L
15 June 2001

Appendix 1. Papers for review (at 15 June 2001)

This list of papers will be augmented during the Project. It does not yet include:

- citations provided by ALIA on 15 June, or
- the “various strategic directions statements and other relevant material from State, Territory and public libraries” nominated in the Project Brief.

Those papers which have already been reviewed are marked with an asterisk (*).

- * Australian Library and Information Association (1999) *Beyond 'Networking the Nation' - strategies for public library development in Australia: a discussion paper*. ALIA, September 1999
- * Australian Library and Information Association (1999) *Strategies for seeking government support for public libraries in Australia: a background paper*. ALIA, September 1999
- * Australian Library and Information Association (2001) *ALIA Groups: Sixty-four new ALIA groups to choose from!* (brochure received 8 June 2001)
AustraliaSCAN 2001. Libraries: a top-line report, prepared for librariesvictoria. AustraliaSCAN, Albert Park, 2001
- * Bundy, A. and J. Bundy (1999) *Directory of Australian public libraries. 5th ed.* Auslib Press, 1999
- * Bundy, A. (1999) *How far they have come - how far they must go: Australian public libraries at century's end*. Public Libraries National Conference, Perth, WA, 14-17 November 1999. Conference Proceedings (Promaco Conventions Pty Ltd; Reprinted with permission by Auslib Press, Adelaide, 1999). p. 245-254
- * Bundy, A. (2000) *Into the 21st century - what are the needs? [Editorial] APLIS: Australasian Public Libraries and Information Services*, vol 13, no 4, December 2000: 139-145
Bundy, A. (Ed.) (1995) *Public libraries - what are they worth? Proceedings of the 2nd National Public Libraries Conference, Sydney, 12-15 November 1995*. Adelaide, Auslib Press, 1996
- * Bundy, A. (2001) *Library and Information Week 2001 pamphlet – Australian Public Libraries Survey, July 2000*
- * The Confederation of Australian Public Libraries' Associations: a national voice for public libraries - Report of the Working Party [includes the Charter]. In Bundy, A. (Ed.) *Public libraries - what are they worth? Proceedings of the*

2nd National Public Libraries Conference, Sydney, 12-15 November 1995.
(Adelaide, Auslib Press, 1996) p. 166-174

- * Confederation of Australian Public Libraries' Associations (1995) Minutes of the Confederation of Australian Public Libraries' Associations first annual general meeting at Public Libraries Conference, Tuesday 14 November 1995. In Bundy, A. (Ed.) *Public libraries - what are they worth? Proceedings of the 2nd National Public Libraries Conference, Sydney, 12-15 November 1995.* (Adelaide, Auslib Press, 1996). p 165-166
- * Council of Australian State Librarians (1999) *Australian public libraries - statistical survey 1996-97 to 98-99.*
<http://www.act.gov.au/actinfo/policy/libstats/> (sighted 4 June 2001)
- * Council of Australian State Librarians National Public Libraries Forum, State Library of South Australia, 11-12 May 2000. [Summary report and background papers]
- * Fielding, E. (2000) *The role of the public library in a networked environment: a review of the literature.* Australian Library Journal, vol 49, n0 4, November 2000, p. 327-56
- * Fitch, L. and Warner, J. (1997) *Dividends: the value of public libraries in Canada.* Book and Periodical Council. Library Action Committee
- Haratsis, B. (1995) Justifying the economic value of public libraries in a turbulent local government environment. In Bundy, A. (Ed.) *Public libraries - what are they worth? Proceedings of the 2nd National Public Libraries Conference, Sydney, 12-15 November 1995.* (Adelaide, Auslib Press, 1996) p. 96-103
- Harris, K. (1998) *Open to interpretation: community perceptions of the social benefits of public libraries.* (Community Development Foundation, 1998). British Library Research and Innovation Centre Report 88.
- Holt, G. E. (1997) *As parents and teachers see it: the community values of a public library.* The Bottom Line: Managing Library Finances, vol 10, no 1, 1997: 32-5.
- Holt, G. E.; Elliott, D.; Moore, A. (1998) *Placing a value on public library services.* Public libraries, March/April 1999: 98-108
- How far have we come? How far can we go? Public Libraries National Conference, Perth, WA, 14-17 November 1999. Conference Proceedings.* Promaco Conventions Pty Ltd; Reprinted with permission by Auslib Press, Adelaide, 1999
- * IER Planning, Research and Management Services; Cameron Consulting Services and C. N. Watson and Associates (1998) *The library's contribution to your community: a resource manual for libraries to document their social and economic contribution to the local community.* Southern Ontario Library Service, Gloucester, Ontario, Canada, 1998

- Latham, M. (2000) Libraries in the 21st century learning society. *APLIS: Australasian Public Libraries and Information Services*, vol 13, no 4, December 2000: 146-151
- Libraries, Australia* (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 8561.0 - to be released 27 June 2001)
- Linley, R. and Usherwood, B. (1998) *New measures for the new library: a social audit of public libraries*. (British Library Board, 1998; British Library Research and Innovation Centre Report, 89)
- * McClure, C. R. Fraser, B. T. Nelson, T. W. Robbins, J. B. (2001) *Economic benefits and impacts from public libraries in the State of Florida. Final report to the State Library of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Florida Department of State*. Florida State University. School of Information Studies. Information Use Management and Policy Institute, November 30, 2000 (Revised January 2001)
- Matarasso, F. (1998) *Beyond book issues: the social potential of library projects*. (Comedia, 1998)
- Matarasso, F. (1998) *Learning development: valuing the social impact of libraries*. (British Library Board, 1998)
- * Mercer, C. (1995) *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 by the Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, Griffith University, March 1995
- * Mercer, C. and Smith, M. (1996) *2020 vision: towards the libraries of the future; a strategic agenda and policy framework for Australia's State and public libraries*. Prepared for the Libraries Working Group of the Cultural Ministers' Council for the Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy, September 1996.
- Nicholson, M. (1991?). Notes from a presentation on 'Marketing Your Library.'
- * Siegmann, K. The librariesvictoria experience; three years of marketing Victorian public libraries. *The One Umbrella Report - Newsletter*, vol 1, no 4 http://www.oneumbrella.com.au/newsletter_v1n4.html (sighted 14 May 2001)
- The Strategy Shop (2001) *Issues for Victorian public libraries in 2001*. The Strategy Shop, prepared for the State Library of Victoria and the Department of Infrastructure, 11 April 2001
- Usherwood, B. and Linley, R. (1999) New library - new measures: a social audit of public libraries. *IFLA Journal*, 25, (2), 1999: 90-96