

AUSTRALIAN
PUBLIC LIBRARIES
STATISTICS
1996 - 97
to
1998-99

ACT Information Management & Libraries

2001

Foreword

Australia's public libraries are a vibrant and dynamic part of our community life. They provide access to a diverse range of information and meet users' business, recreational and educational needs.

The growing diversity of how information is provided - in print, on microform, on CD-ROMS, online databases and via the Internet - has increased the role of public libraries as reliable, easy to access sources of information.

The Council of Australian State Libraries (CASL) is the peak body representing the State and Territory libraries and the National Library throughout Australia. CASL members also represent the interests of the public library networks within their States and Territories.

The Australian Public Libraries Statistical Survey is a CASL project that identifies and measures the usage and activities of Australia's public library services. The survey highlights the range of services our public libraries provide and the support for public libraries by State and Territory and local governments.

The Survey complements culture and recreation statistics compiled by the National Centre for Culture and Recreation Statistics of the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and builds on Cultural Ministers' Council Libraries Working Group publications *Navigating the Economy of Knowledge* (1995); *State of the Nation* (1996) and *2020 Vision* (1996).

CASL publishes national public library statistics on a regular basis, and highlights are accessible on the CASL website. (<http://www.casl.org.au>)

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1 Selected National Statistics

Australia's Public Libraries are a significant component of the Cultural and Information industry providing services throughout Australia to the community. This is highlighted by the selected national statistics included in Table 1.

These statistics show that expenditure on public libraries has increased from \$456m in 1996-97 to \$489m in 1998-99, a 7% increase. The return to the community on this investment is valued to be in excess of \$1 235 million.

These funds were used to deliver public library services to over 6.6 million people each month.

Access to services was provided through a network of 1,625 static and mobile libraries throughout Australia, one service point for every 13,036 persons. These are open for an average of 31 hours per week with 24% open more than 45 hours per week.

Public Libraries are an important community access point to the wealth of information available via the Internet, with 53% of service points providing public Internet access compared to 18% in 1996-97.

Library collections of more than 31.8 million items (1.9 items per person) were made available for the use of the community and over \$73 million was spent in 1998-99 on ensuring that these collection remain up to date and relevant. 50% of public library collections are more than 5 years old.

Librarians responded to 8 million requests for information from the community.

168 million items were lent to the 9.5 million registered members of the library, 8.9 items for each person in Australia.

These services were provided by 6,000 staff (fte¹) staff employed in Australian Public Libraries.

¹ fte - full time equivalent staff

1.1 Table 1 – Selected key national indicators.

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
Services			
Total Loans	160,277,548	163,435,210	168,045,422
Value of items lent ²	n.a.	n.a.	\$1 235m
Loans per head of population	8.8	8.7	8.9
Loans per hour open	64.9	65.0	65.8
Total information enquiries	n.a.	5,988,491	8,125,541
Information Enquiries per 10,000 persons	n.a.	4,342	4,650
Internet terminals per 10,000 persons	0.38	0.64	1.20
Customers			
Customers per month (excluding WA)	5,627,448	6,249,288	6,679,619
Customer visits per head of population	4.08	4.44	4.23
Registered Library Members	9,495,282	9,231,590	9,585,262
Members as a percent of total population	52%	49%	51%
Percent Adult Members	n.a.	75%	76%
Percent Junior Members	n.a.	23%	23%
Percent organisations & other members	n.a.	1%	1%
Resource Collections			
Total number of library materials	36,767,511	37,308,960	31,799,118
Library materials per head of population	2.01	1.99	1.90
Total library materials expenditure	\$65,482,901	\$70,875,153	\$73,588,653
Library Materials expenditure per capita	\$3.58	\$3.78	\$3.88
Percent of resources purchased in last 5 years	n.a.	51%	50%
Service Points (including each mobile library as a single service point)			
Number of Service Points	1,675	1,628	1,625
Population served per service point	10,930	11,505	13,036
Service Points per 10,000 persons	0.91	0.87	0.86
Ave. hours open per week per service point	29	30	31
Libraries open more than 45 hrs per week	n.a.	25%	26%
Libraries open 30 to 44 hrs per week	n.a.	35%	38%
Libraries open 10 to 29 hrs per week	n.a.	27%	25%
Libraries open less than 10 hrs per week	n.a.	13%	11%
Percent of service points with Internet terminals	18%	36%	53%

² Based on an estimated average value of each item of \$7.35. This value is the depreciated value of items held by the ACT Public Library. Actual values of individual state collections cannot be imputed from this figure.

Expenditure			
Total Expenditure on Public Library Services	\$456,326,411	\$468,380,169	\$489,383,692
Public Library expenditure per capita	\$24.93	\$25.00	\$24.80
State Government Expenditure as a percent of total public library expenditure	22%	23%	22%
Staff			
Total Staff (full time equivalent)	6,031	6,208	6,060
Population served per staff member	3,035	3,017	3,130
Staff members (FTE) per 10,000 residents.	3.29	3.31	3.19
Loans per full-time equivalent staff member	26,574	26,328	27,732

2 Public Libraries Services in Australia

Public Library services are delivered by a variety of administrative arrangements. These vary both between and within each State and Territory, ranging from services wholly delivered by the State / Territory through to services wholly delivered by local government.

2.1 Australian Capital Territory

The Australian Capital Territory is a single administrative entity that combines both State and Local Government functions.

ACT Information Management & Libraries specifies and monitors the delivery of a range of library and information services including public library services. Other services include the Assembly Library, the ACT Heritage Library, Women's Information & Referral Services and Government Publications. The section manages the assets of the library, collects and analyses performance measures, benchmarks services and develops policy and advice for government.

ACT Library & Information Service delivers Public Library Services, along with the ACT Assembly Library, Women's Information & Referral Centre and Heritage Library Services to the government and community.

2.2 New South Wales

In 1996/1997 there were 97 public library services in New South Wales with 292 branches, making a total of 389 service points. The library services include a mixture of independent (or stand alone) library services operated by a single local government authority and regional libraries where up to 12 local councils have entered into an agreement to provide a combined service. All 177 local councils in NSW have adopted the *Library Act 1939*.

While the State Library of New South Wales is responsible for administering the *Library Act 1939* and *Library Regulation 1995* which places some requirements on local government, local councils and their library services are autonomous and self governing. The State Government funds public library services via a subsidies and grants program. The subsidy payments are based on population, isolation, and demographic factors. The grants include the annual Library Development Grants program.

Public Libraries Branch

The State Library, Public Libraries Branch manages the administration of the grants and subsidies program, legal compliance with relevant legislation and provides a range of services to the New South Wales public library network.

Branch responsibilities include:

- management of the allocation and payment of subsidies and grants
- monitoring public library compliance with the *Library Act 1939* and the *Library Regulation 1995* and providing advice and guidance
- collecting, collating and distributing public library statistical and other information
- management of the Library Development Grants program
- providing a continuing education/training/seminar/workshop program for public library staff
- providing information and advisory services on all aspects of the provision, control and management of public library services

- managing a research program on behalf of the public library network

The Public Libraries Branch has 11 EFT (equivalent full time) positions comprising the manager, consultants, research librarian, purchasing coordinator, clerk and clerical officer. The six consultants provide specialist advice in the areas of technology; evaluation; reference/information services, children's and young adult services, multicultural services, and library promotion. The Branch reports to the Director, Library and Information Services Division, State Library.

2.3 Northern Territory

The Northern Territory is unique in the range of services and support provided to public libraries, including those in small and remote Aboriginal communities. The Northern Territory Government, through Northern Territory Library and Information Service (NTLIS), provides up to 85% of direct and indirect funding to enable the operation of all Territory public library services.

NTLIS provides a centralised model of support to the Public Library Network of the NT (PLNT). The PLNT network comprises 27 public libraries of varying sizes, ranging from the Darwin Public Library Information Service, with 4 branches servicing a population of 72,000 to Peppimenarti a small remote community with a population of 249. In addition, some centralised support services are provided by NTLIS to a number of secondary schools and college libraries within the Territory.

The support delivered by NTLIS to the libraries in the Territory includes \$3.098 million Operational and Developmental Library Grants Programs, a \$1 million library resources allocation, technical and professional support, technology services, including the new *Virtua* Library Management System and professional skills development.

A Country Borrowers Service is operated for those living in small and isolated communities and stations unable to access public libraries. The service is operated in conjunction with the Alice Springs and Tenant Creek Public Libraries in the centre and by NTLIS in the Top End. The service provides a regular exchange of books and other resources to individuals on a free basis.

Recent initiatives to assist with the development of the public library network in the NT have included:

- Establishment of an Aboriginal Reference Group and an Aboriginal Heritage Officer position. Both will advise NTLIS on the development of culturally appropriate services and service models;
- Trialing of mobile library services in remote and Aboriginal communities;
- Internet development project in partnership with the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory to provide training and support for all council libraries with access to the Internet; and
- Funding of feasibility studies into the development of Indigenous Knowledge Centres proposed to incorporate three main elements - a knowledge centre to foster community learning, a museum focused on sharing cultural and historical information in a multimedia context, and a keeping place for the safekeeping of sacred objects.

Other services provided by NTLIS include the Northern Territory Library, Parliamentary Library Service and the Government Libraries and Information Service (GLIS). The GLIS, which was established in 1998, comprises 5 specialised library clusters (Law & Justice;

Education; Natural Resources & Environment; Planning & Development; and Arts & Culture) providing a seamless information service to government agency staff throughout the NT.

2.4 Queensland

123 Queensland local governments and three Aboriginal community Councils offer free library services throughout Queensland.

The Library Board of Queensland administers the library service through the Cash Grants scheme to Independent public library services and through the operations of the Country Lending Service.

The cash grant scheme provides funding on a weighted per capita formula to 38 library services. The grant is tied to the purchase of library stock with up to 5% being available for the processing of library materials.

The Country Lending Service libraries receives subsidy in kind whereby 81 local governments with populations of 20,000 or less are allocated a minimum of one book per capita by the Public Libraries Division of the State Library of Queensland. These books are exchanged on a minimum basis of 25% per year. The exchange rate varies according to population size from a one yearly exchange turnover to a 4 yearly rate.

The Public Libraries Division provides:

- advisory and consultancy services and training on all aspects of library management, including special needs services
- statewide distribution of resources to meet the needs of the whole community, including specialised resources, reference services and interlibrary loans
- facilitation of public library networking and resource-sharing throughout Queensland, including effective application of information technologies to enhance accessibility to global resources

2.5 South Australia

There are 138 public libraries in South Australia, representing 69 Local Government Authorities. In the cases where no council exists, the Libraries Board of South Australia provides the full operational subsidy.

Forty-nine of the rural libraries in South Australia are in very small communities. In order to provide appropriate services to these communities, the Libraries Board and the local government authority join with the Department of Education, Training and Employment to operate very successful School Community Libraries.

The State Government of South Australia provides funds for the provision of public library services through a five-year agreement between the State Government and the Local Government Association of South Australia. The Agreement is due to be renegotiated before June 30th 2000.

The funds allocated to public libraries by the South Australian Government are administered by the Libraries Board of South Australia, under the **Libraries Act 1982** and the *Public Libraries, Audio Visual and Community Information Agreement*. From these funds, the Libraries Board allocates to libraries an untied operating grant, a materials grant and fixes the PLAIN Central Services budget. The majority of the materials grant is spent through the PLAIN system, to capture maximum discounts and efficiencies through economies of scale.

PLAIN Central Services

PLAIN the *Public Libraries Automated Information Network* is the computer system purpose built in the late 1980's and early 1990's to manage the increasingly complex task of

centralised selection, acquisitions, cataloguing and distribution for South Australian libraries. PLAIN Central Services, the organisation, undertake these roles on behalf of client libraries, with the librarians in the field managing their collection development activities and leaving the actual acquisitions, cataloguing and distribution to the staff of PLAIN.

The PLAIN system provides on-line Inter-Library Loans and a sophisticated statewide delivery system. Staff at PLAIN undertake a wide range of research and development roles with public librarians from the field. PLAIN Central services also provides the statewide Video and Film booking service, which was transferred to PLAIN in late 1994.

2.6 Tasmania

The State Library of Tasmania provides for the development and operation of statewide library and information services to meet the information, educational, cultural and recreational reading needs of the Tasmanian community. All public libraries are managed and funded by the State Library service.

Services are delivered through a network of seven city libraries; forty-one branch libraries; and seven reference and specialist collections including the State and Launceston Reference Libraries, the Parliamentary Library, the Tasmaniana Library, the WL Crowther Library, the Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, and the Department's Library and Information Centre (DETCCD LIC).

All libraries are linked through the Tasmanian Automated Library and Information System (TALIS) network, a library management system which includes an integrated catalogue and electronic information databases.

Resources include lending and reference collections, electronic information, free public access to the Internet, Tasmaniana, collections of rare and specialist items, education resource and media collections, and a range of electronic information resources.

Library services are provided for customers with special needs including people with disabilities and people speaking languages other than English, through the use of special format resources, specialised equipment and delivery services. Delivery of specialised format resources to the homebound is provided by volunteer couriers.

The State Library is administered within the Education Department. The Tasmanian Library Advisory Board provides a channel of communication from the community to the Minister.

A levy on local government for the delivery of services is based on the *Libraries Act 1984* which requires each municipality to pay an annual contribution towards the provision of library services. The amount payable is "equivalent to 0.35 cents in the dollar of the total of the adjusted assessed annual value of all leviable land in the municipality".

State and public library services are fully integrated with a number of services provided or coordinated centrally such as purchasing, processing, cataloguing, systems support, staff training, reference and information services, and inter-library loans. Administrative and IT support are provided within the Education Department.

2.7 Victoria

There are 42 public library services in Victoria, covering all 78 municipalities. Two types of public library services operate in the State: single service municipalities (26) and regional library corporations (16). Single services are run by their municipalities and are mainly located in metropolitan Melbourne. Regional libraries are two or more councils which have agreed to provide services jointly. Fifty-two of the state's 78 councils are in regions which are mainly located in outer metropolitan Melbourne and country Victoria. Regional library

corporations are constituted under the **Local Government Act 1989** and have the same operating and reporting structures as municipal councils.

The **Office of Local Government** is part of the Department of Infrastructure. Responsibility for core public library funding programs was transferred to the Office after the last state elections in May 1996. In late 1997, the Office also assumed responsibility for funding programs for people with print disabilities (Braille and Talking Book Library – Association for the Blind and the Talking Book Library – Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind). For all intents and purposes, these two libraries are treated as if they are public libraries.

Library grants are administered through Funding and Service Agreements with each council, regional library corporation or institution.

In 1996/97 and 1997/98 the Victorian State Government made two special grants available totalling \$1.1 million to be used to increase the purchase of library books and materials. This has had a significant impact, especially in smaller country libraries.

Other program areas at the Office include public library statistics and benchmarks, regional library corporations legislation including governance issues and compulsory competitive tendering. Ongoing networking with public libraries, the State Library of Victoria, and key industry groups is a priority area.

The **State Library of Victoria** has responsibility, through the Library Board of Victoria, for overall policy directions for library services in the State. The Board has recently published the Victorian Libraries Policy 1998.

In collaboration with the public library network the State Library coordinates a range of programs aimed at enhancing the state-wide provision of library services. These state-wide programs, with a budget of nearly \$1 million include: marketing the public library network; a comprehensive training and development program for public library staff; disability services; children's services; and services to users of languages other than English.

2.8 Western Australia

Public library services in Western Australia are provided through a partnership between the State Government, represented by the Library Board of WA, and local government authorities. The local government authority provides the library building, staff and operating costs, while the Library Board is responsible for acquiring and preparing shelf ready stock delivered to public libraries. The Library Board also provides extensive catalogues, indexes, training, consultancy, regional subsidies and back-up services in the form of special collections, information and reference services and inter library loan services.

Library materials are supplied to public libraries at a minimum standard of 1.25 per capita, with the minimum size being 1,025. Library stocks range from this minimum in small country libraries to 60,000 in the largest libraries. The public library stock is treated as an integrated state-wide collection and remains the property of the Library Board of WA. Stock is not allocated to a library on a permanent basis, but is circulated throughout the State on a regular basis at an agreed annual turnover percentage. This enables library collections to be constantly refreshed with different stock (new and used) and ensures that the collection is not "read out". The Library and Information Service of Western Australia (LISWA) acts as a clearinghouse for the circulation of the stock between libraries.

There are 144 local government authorities in Western Australia, including Christmas Island and the Cocos Islands. These authorities operate most of the State's 234 public libraries. In addition some other organisations are recognised as "participating bodies" and they provide specialised services to people with visual impairment (through the Association for the Blind) and library services in prisons.

3 Data Sources

This statistical report has been compiled on behalf of the Council of Australian State Libraries (CASL) by ACT Information Management & Libraries using data supplied by the authority responsible for public library services in each State and Territory.

The data used to prepare this report is available at <http://www.act.gov.au/actinfo/policy>. If this data is to be used to compare library services with each other the widely varying social and geographic criteria applying from State to State and within each State must be recognised. These conditions create differing demands and needs which effect the type and scope of public library services provided. Further difficulties in comparing data are caused by the diverse service delivery methods used to provide public library services. It should be noted that the data may vary from that published separately by the States.

For further information on the data please contact the relevant State or Territory authority. These are:

ACT Information Management & Libraries
Urban Services
L7 Macarthur House
PO Box 158
Canberra. ACT 2601.

Public Libraries Branch
State Library of New South Wales
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

Northern Territory Library and Information Service
Department of Corporate and Information Services
GPO Box 42
Darwin NT 0801

Public Libraries Division
State Library of Queensland
PO Box 3815
South Brisbane Qld 4101

PLAIN Central Services
8 Milner St
Hindmarsh SA 5007

Public Library Services
State Library of Tasmania
91 Murray Street
Hobart Tasmania 7000

Office of Local Government
Department of Infrastructure
Level 19 Nauru House
80 Collins St
Melbourne Victoria 3000.

The Library & Information Service of Western Australia
Alexander Library Building
Perth Cultural Centre
Perth WA 6000