

An abstract graphic consisting of several overlapping, thin, grey circles of varying sizes, creating a sense of depth and movement. The circles are arranged in a roughly circular pattern, with some overlapping others, and they are positioned on the right side of the page, partially behind the main title text.

Re-imagining library services

Strategic plan

National & State
Libraries Australasia

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1. Foreword

National & State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) represents the National, State and Territory Libraries of Australia and New Zealand. We collaborate to improve access to library services, to strengthen our information infrastructure, and to provide a single voice to governments, cultural and education sectors and other relevant bodies.

Members are:

ACT Library & Information Service
National Library of Australia
National Library of New Zealand
Northern Territory Library
State Library of New South Wales
State Library of Queensland
State Library of South Australia
State Library of Tasmania
State Library of Victoria
State Library of Western Australia

Strategic rethinking of our services emerged from our major policy statements: The Big Bang, June 2007, which describes the shared challenges in shifting to the digital world; and Libraries in the Digital Environment, August 2006, which outlines our position in the digital agenda. This Plan is the result of subsequent workshops and research we undertook to identify where we can collaborate effectively to achieve a common vision of services in the digital age. It outlines how we will re-imagine services for our libraries over the next five years.

We agreed that we would value everyone who uses our libraries equally, whether onsite or online, recognising that their expectations and purposes will be diverse. We made a commitment to building collaborative services guided by existing research and data, rather than undertaking new research. Acknowledging that we operate within different policy and jurisdictional environments, we also chose not to include all our services in the Plan but to focus on those where we can transform our services collaboratively.

In August 2007 we contracted Deloitte to act as consultants to the process of developing this Plan. We established a Re-imagining Library Services Expert Advisory Group, published a Provocation Paper, and met with our Information Access Plan Review Group and invited experts to develop our strategic directions. Deloitte, Prue Mercer (Convenor of the Re-imagining Library Services Expert Advisory Group) and Kate Irvine (NSLA Secretariat) jointly prepared this document on our behalf.

Each project outlined in this Plan will be managed by one or two lead agencies, under the governance of NSLA. Project teams will be established across our libraries and we may engage external expertise.

We recognise that parts of this Plan have implications for other organisations, particularly public libraries, and we will invite their participation and communicate our progress.

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2. Executive summary

This Plan outlines the way in which we will embrace new opportunities in service delivery. We will be active, leading, visionary and collaborative in meeting the challenges ahead.

What does change look like?

Our new vision is:

In collaboration, the National, State and Territory Libraries of Australia and New Zealand will become leaders in empowering people to create, discover, use and transform our collections, content and global information resources.

We will deliver this vision through three strategies:

- *One Library* will put people at the centre. We will redefine services to provide a consistent and easy experience across our libraries.
- *Transforming Our Culture* will change our culture and workplace. We will promote a new culture which supports new services, innovation and emerging technologies.
- *Accessible Content* sees collaboration as the key to liberating our content. We will empower everyone to find, share and create content.

How do we get there?

There are ten projects within the NSLA Re-imagining Library Services Strategic Plan:

1. *Do it now!* – initiatives to improve services immediately
2. *Open borders* – opening up access to e-resources and services across our libraries
3. *Virtual reference* – integrating virtual reference as a core function, with a new business and resourcing model
4. *Delivery* – developing a standard service model for user-requested document supply
5. *Community created content* – identifying and implementing a framework and tool set for everyone to create and transform online content
6. *Changing capability and culture* – developing a framework for new work environments
7. *Collaborative collections* – delivering efficiencies through collaborative collecting
8. *Flexible cataloguing* – designing improved business processes for collection management
9. *Scaling up digitisation* – demonstrating the economic benefits of mass digitisation and defining best practice in management of digital collections
10. *Connecting and discovering content* – enhancing metadata and making collection holdings more visible and linked online.

3. Introduction

Australians and New Zealanders turn to the internet as a first choice for information, to obtain services and to access global culture. Production of books and printed material continues to increase each year. Publishing agency Bowker (bowker.com) reports seven years of print publishing increases up to 2004, a slight drop in 2005 and an increase again in 2006; estimates are that the amount of digital information produced by 2011 will be ten times that produced in 2006 (emc.com). This expanding world of digital and print information represents both a major challenge and a major opportunity for libraries to adapt their services to better meet community expectations.

With the widespread availability of public internet, digital information and search engines over the last decade, we have responded to the impact of new technologies with a number of remarkable and transformative services (as described in [Libraries in the Digital Environment](#), August 2006). Collaborative and innovative examples are PANDORA's preservation of significant websites, access to digital images through PictureAustralia, virtual reference on AnyQuestions and AskNow, and the online interlending gateway between LibrariesAustralia and Te Puna. Individual libraries have undertaken significant digitisation programs, web services development and e-content initiatives, alongside print collecting, preservation and storage, as well as building redevelopments.

At the same time, onsite use of our libraries is increasing, with an 11% increase in total visits in 2006-07. People value the welcoming community space provided; the exhibitions, education and event programs; the opportunity to work in groups and gather with friends or colleagues; and access to computers and wireless networking. Libraries as places are unique: they are free public spaces that are centrally located, open long hours, and belong to the community.

Rapid changes in information technology are continually shifting the needs of our users and driving the need to review our services. People are not just consumers of content, but creators and producers who can switch easily between library content, websites, search engines, wikis, blogs and social networking sites. The speed at which new information can be created and disseminated has become an advantage for researchers, students and businesses. Participation in sharing and creating content online and the development of an open information culture, as exemplified by Wikipedia, confirms an altered conception of information or knowledge as something which is produced and published only by experts.

In [The Big Bang: creating the new library universe](#), June 2007, we set out the shared challenges of this new environment and made a commitment to reshape core services and explore new approaches to all parts of our libraries, building on the foundation of our mature collaborative framework. In particular we aspire to keep transforming our capability and culture and keep encouraging flexibility and innovation. The ultimate purpose in undertaking this work is to enable everyone to take full advantage of our content, collections, services and expertise, and to support the economic prosperity and social inclusion goals of the Australian and New Zealand governments. The principle of equitable access to information underpins these goals, ensuring that our citizens can successfully and competitively engage in education, research, innovation and creative expression.

This Plan defines our collaborative strategies for fundamentally shifting our services to the digital world. In committing to this shared vision of transformed services we will remain at the heart of our communities while fulfilling our role to make knowledge available to all.

4. Vision

*In collaboration, the National, State and Territory Libraries of Australia and New Zealand will become **leaders in empowering people to create, discover, use and transform** our collections, content and global information resources.*

Our vision puts people at the centre of our services and focuses on making our content available to all. While each of us operates within a different local environment, commonality of purpose, shared commitment to change, and a successful track record of joint initiatives over a decade open up avenues for significant collaboration that will transform our libraries. By leveraging the collaborative opportunities in this Plan, we have the leadership and the capability to achieve our new vision.

In delivering the vision, we recognise the importance of the following value propositions.

Make way

People want services to be welcoming and easy to use. They want to be independent and to access professional expertise only when and if it is required. Access to our services must be at the point of need, recognising that this point is shifting rapidly and unpredictably.

Come on in

Many who visit our buildings are not using our physical collections. Information-seeking happens online, yet the number of people coming through the doors is increasing. The public values the welcoming community space we provide.

Liberate our expertise

As we enable everyone to create and organise digital content, our expertise will move towards developing metadata services, enhancing content and participating in community outreach programs and shared services.

Use our content

Our collections are here to be used and they must be easy to find. We will accelerate the digitisation of our unique content so that this can sit alongside the explosion of born-digital information.

5. Strategies

We will implement our vision through three strategies: One Library; Transforming Our Culture; and Accessible Content.

1. One Library

Our One Library strategy will provide a more consistent experience, easier access to services and greater independence. By opening our borders, the resources and services of our libraries will be available to all, both online and when visiting our buildings. Shared approaches will make it simpler to navigate our services and to use our content, while still recognising the local library source. Technology gives us the opportunity to provide services globally as well as locally, and improved delivery systems will enable access to materials wherever they are needed.

People want to contribute and share their content and creative expression. We recognise that this contribution will enhance the cultural value of our collections and we see our role as making this available. We will implement the newest tools for collaborative work now and invest in a longer term strategy to capture cultural memory.

Strategic outcomes

- A consistent experience across our libraries
- Improved delivery of content and resources
- Ability to create, transform, use and share content

2. Transforming Our Culture

Our strategy is to ensure that the evolution of our culture reflects the way people interact with our content and services. We will become agile, open, flexible and responsive, and let go of our traditional role as gatekeepers.

We will address the new characteristics and capabilities required and propose a new mix of roles and structures that will continue to evolve over time. Our expertise will move towards developing metadata services, enhancing content, and participating in community outreach programs and shared services. Our new culture will support innovation, exploration and emerging technologies.

Strategic outcomes

- The development of a new organisational design
- Capability to deliver the Re-imagining Library Services vision
- A culture of innovation and exploration

3. Accessible Content

Collaboration is the key to liberating the potential of our content in the digital world. By cooperating in the management of born-digital information, by rationalising duplicate acquisition and improving cataloguing processes, and by moving more of our unique collections to digital format, we will make our content accessible to everyone.

New metadata services and partnerships will increase the discoverability of our content online. We will expose our content through more discovery tools and external online resources.

Strategic outcomes

- Improved access to our content
- Increased efficiencies through collaborative collection development
- Increased amounts of digital content
- Improved management of digital and physical content

6. Projects

We will deliver our strategies through ten projects:

1. *Do it now!* – initiatives to improve services immediately
2. *Open borders* – opening up access to e-resources and services across our libraries
3. *Virtual reference* – integrating virtual reference as a core function, with a new business and resourcing model
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10. *Connecting and discovering content* – enhancing metadata and making collection holdings more visible and linked online.

Each of these projects aligns with one or more of our strategic outcomes.

Strategic outcomes	Projects									
	1. Do it now!	2. Open borders	3. Virtual reference	4. Delivery	5. Community created content	6. Capability and culture	7. Collaborative collections	8. Flexible cataloguing	9. Scaling up digitisation	10. Connecting and discovering content
A consistent experience across our libraries	x	x	x	x	x	x				x
Improved delivery of content and resources	x			x	x		x		x	x
Ability to create, transform, use and share content.	x		x		x				x	x
Development of a new organisational design			x	x	x	x		x	x	
Capability to deliver the vision		x	x	x		x		x		x
A culture of innovation and exploration	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Improved access to our content	x		x				x		x	x
Increased efficiencies through collaborative collection development		x		x			x	x	x	
Increased amounts of digital content					x		x		x	
Improved management of digital and physical content	x			x	x		x	x	x	x

Project 1 – Do it now!

Lead agency – State Library of Victoria

This project will improve our services immediately by making our content easier to use and providing a welcoming environment with free wireless broadband access in our buildings.

We will establish free onsite wireless access as standard. It will be open to all without the need for registration. We recognise that some of us already provide this, based on the principle of free internet access being a fundamental part of our service.

The second part of the project will ensure everyone knows what they *can* do with our content. We will re-write communications and implement ways to make copyrighted materials openly accessible, and pilot a copyright algorithm developed by National Library of Australia that enables automated prediction of content copyright status.

Project 2 – Open borders

Co-lead agencies – National Library of Australia & National Library of New Zealand

This project will open up access to the content and services of our libraries to everyone. It will provide the functionality of one library card across our libraries using new technology solutions.

We will find a way, through separate national sub-projects, to identify and provide seamless access to our suites of electronic resources. This will include considering the possibilities of integrating with existing Australasian initiatives that are developing technical platforms for shared identity and access management systems.

An important further element will be to articulate and develop common access policies for the onsite and online services of participating libraries, to enable people to move easily between our libraries.

The project will also research access opportunities for us in the use of mobile broadband services and make recommendations for shared development. This will ensure a common approach to these services as they develop.

Project 3 – Virtual reference

Lead agency – State Library of Victoria

This project will investigate and implement the next generation of virtual reference services.

It will put these services firmly onto an evolutionary path as part of our continuous improvement. We want to integrate virtual reference as a core function within our services, with a new business model and a new resourcing commitment. The first stage will define the scope of the service, develop the new business model and start this transition.

We envisage that virtual reference may be available on multiple technology platforms (such as email, instant messaging, voiceover internet telephony, mobile phones, and with direct linking from each library catalogue, web page and onsite computer) and be actively promoted and marketed.

Project 4 – Delivery

Lead agency – State Library of Western Australia

In the age of new online services, people want simple and quick options for the delivery of library content. This project will develop a standard service model for us to deliver digital copies and physical books directly to people at their home or place of choice. It will enable improved options and speed of delivery.

The ability to discover our resources through search engines and catalogues is improving rapidly and we must complete the information cycle by putting access to our content into people's hands, when and where they want it. When a digitised version of an item is not immediately available we need to supply it quickly and in a useful format.

Project 5 – Community created content

Co-lead agencies – State Library of Queensland & National Library of New Zealand

We will develop a sustainable framework for individuals and communities to build personalised digital library spaces where they can create, tag and protect content and share it with family, peers and groups. People will be able to create mashups of community content with our content and contribute this to new stores of community memory.

This project will research, develop and implement a distributed set of tools and operational frameworks to enable a consistent experience across our websites. Everyone will experience similar applications, rules and protocols regarding the creation and contribution of content.

Where the creator agrees, the content can feed into community, institutional and preservation repositories, using open licensing agreements.

Project 6 – Changing capability and culture

Lead agency – State Library of South Australia

We will create a culture that encourages innovation, exploration and agility.

Easy access to digital collections is inevitably driving changes in the roles of staff and the mix of expertise employed in our libraries. No job will be unchanged. We will do some things differently, we will strive to do some things better, and some things we have always done we will no longer do.

As we enable people to create, re-use and organise digital content themselves, our expertise will change and move towards further developing information technology, digital content and metadata services, enhancing content and participating in community outreach programs and shared service frameworks.

The use and appreciation of our buildings as public space is growing while information-seeking moves more towards digital services. We will review staffing and role structures to provide welcoming community spaces with information services available when they are needed.

Project 7 – Collaborative collections

Co-lead agencies – State Library of New South Wales & State Library of Queensland

We work in extremely similar collection environments, providing access to a large body of common material. We select, preserve and manage multiple physical and digital collections with a level of duplication. Reducing multiple copies and further developing consortial relationships with other libraries or with publishers and suppliers will achieve economies of scale.

This project will identify options to reduce the duplication of resources within the context of our collection and access responsibilities, and to build a collaborative approach to collecting both published and unpublished materials. We will scope and analyse potential business models that will deliver efficiencies.

Project 8 – Flexible cataloguing

Lead agency – National Library of Australia

This project will improve access to our published materials and unique heritage collections by finding faster, simpler and more cost-effective ways of cataloguing and processing each item.

We will explore how new technologies and tools, the expanding functionality of our library systems, and using data produced through the entire supply chain of the item can contribute to more efficient ways of describing our collections and making them available to the community.

This project will consider appropriate standards for different categories of material and will look for productivity gains through collaborative approaches and re-engineered business processes.

Project 9 – Scaling up digitisation

Co-lead agencies – National Library of New Zealand & National Library of Australia

To deliver the digital content that people expect and to maximise access, we need to increase the digitisation of our collections and implement optimal business models. We have an opportunity to expose and make accessible our 'long tail' by digitising the unique and special format resources we keep as part of our role in preserving community memory.

We need to demonstrate the economic benefits of mass digitisation, to make the business case for a significant national investment strategy and to develop policy frameworks to assist prioritisation at a national and collaborative level.

This project will have two parts. The first part will show the economic value of mass digitisation of our unique and heritage collections, the second part will explore best practice ways of managing digital collections. The options for management will examine partnership and collaborative opportunities, storage and repository options, integration of digitisation into all workflows and services, digital lifecycles and ongoing digital preservation, intellectual property, and the value of thematic and other approaches to digital projects.

Project 10 – Connecting and discovering content

Lead agency – National Library of Australia

We are committed to making all collection holdings visible through LibrariesAustralia or the New Zealand equivalent. This project accelerates this process, providing strategic focus for us to increase resources and achieve significant improvements to coverage and quality of data. This will improve the ability to discover the items that are held in our collections.

Alongside this, we will develop new approaches to connecting our content through enhanced metadata services and new links from online resources, such as Wikipedia, and non-library discovery tools. We will investigate how we and public libraries can take advantage of the proposed service to ensure links are maintained rather than transitory. We will also examine the benefits of a common catalogue interface across our libraries.

This project will include the development of a national metadata store, with analytic content, research outputs and other materials. It will explore feasibility through case studies, plan the development of a service framework, explore how libraries can leverage from the store, and pilot the service.

7. Achieving success

The Re-imagining Library Services Strategic Plan articulates our vision for the delivery of our services and provides a robust action plan for achieving this vision. The following factors will contribute to our success.

1. Collaboration

Only through collaboration will we achieve our vision. We will leverage our collaborative effort to realise the increased opportunities of the digital environment.

2. Commitment

We must commit to this Plan by providing the resources and support required for success. Commitment must be long term and sustained as change on the scale proposed requires significant time and effort.

3. Innovation and exploration

As embracing the digital world involves the implementation of new roles, service models and emerging technologies, our culture must adapt to support innovation and exploration.

4. Agility and flexibility

Due to the size and speed of change proposed, the success of the implementation of change will depend largely on our agility and flexibility.

5. Refresh and revisit

Given the constantly changing nature of the digital landscape it is vital that we revisit and refresh the Re-imagining Library Services Strategic Plan on a regular basis.