The Big Bang: Creating the new library universe

Encouraging flexibility, rapid response and innovation within the library sector

National & State Libraries Australasia 2007–09

New technologies are impacting on every aspect of libraries. We have responded by implementing an extraordinary range of continuous improvement and innovative projects, building on the foundation of decades of collaborative technology and standards. We have created new services and made key parts of our collections available globally.

We are now in a position to explode and reshape our core services, resourcing and infrastructure; to explore radical new approaches across all parts of our work; and to fundamentally shift our libraries to the digital world. Our response to the environment is maturing and we must re-examine our collections; the services we provide to library users; our preservation and digitisation responsibilities; operational priorities; and workforce planning.

The rate of change will accelerate in our organisations during 2007–09.

The Big Bang is for everyone working in National & State Libraries Australasia libraries. It sets out the challenges for our libraries, a set of key operating principles endorsed by all the members, and NSLA strategies and actions for 2007–09.

> **Access is our primary driver.**

> **Digital is mainstream.**

> **No job will be unchanged.**

> **New web technologies and community digital content are shaping user expectations and behaviour.**

> **Some things we have always done, we will no longer do.**

> **Experimentation and risk are necessary.**

> **People want services and spaces to be welcoming and easy to use. They want to be independent.**

What are the challenges in the new library universe?

Access

In this information-saturated world, how do we unleash resources to make them universally discoverable and immediately available?

User expectations

Young people lead the way in adopting new technologies. How will we meet their expectations? Are we preparing for the impact of the ageing of the population and the imminent retirement of the baby-boomer cohort? Providing online services extends our clientele globally – are we designing flexible and appropriate services for local, national and international users?

Online library users

What can you get in the physical library that you can't get online? Are online users valued equally? How effectively can users get to online library content and services through search engines? How does increased broadband access in homes and workplaces change what we provide online?

Physical spaces and services

What can our services and spaces look like? What do our clients want? How can we be more flexible and welcoming? What are the lessons from the commercial sphere, from overseas, from other parts of the public sector? What are our responsibilities in literacy and learning?

Mass digitisation

How will this be achieved, and how do we build an effective search and access capability? How do we ensure a collaborative approach to fragmented digitisation efforts?

Social networking

Are we meeting online library users in their spaces? Are we utilising technologies to enable them to interact and contribute, to tag and flag, to build and personalise their own collections?

Publishing

Publishing has changed significantly with online publications, transient web content, and print-on-demand options.

Skills and capability

Library domain capability, including communication, technology, research and analysis skills and knowledge, and innovative thinking – how do we acquire this capability, manage it, develop it, and use it most effectively?

Collaboration and resource sharing

What challenges lend themselves to joint national or international projects? Do we have the mechanisms in place to build effective resource-sharing services in the digital environment?

Agility

Have we built organisational structures that can support rapid-response projects?

Innovation

Innovative ideas can come from inside or outside the library sector. How can we harvest these ideas? Can we challenge our traditions and assumptions?

Literacies

An increased range of literacies is needed to maximise the economic and cultural potential of the digital age. How will we contribute knowledge and expertise to foster the joy of reading in the community and develop the skills to be confident users of information?

Tackling the challenges

In November 2006, NSLA members endorsed 12 principles to address these challenges. These are not comprehensive, but they can help us begin to reshape our services and collections.

NSLA is working to ensure that library services are easy to use and intuitive, allowing library users to be as independent as possible.

Reshaping our collections

1   Resources in electronic format will be acquired in preference to print, where available. Collection development policies should reflect this preference.

2   NSLA recognises that commitment to consortium purchasing of electronic resources provides greater purchasing power, and therefore increased access, for all. NSLA libraries should consider consortium purchasing of electronic resources wherever practicable.

3   Hard-copy serial holdings will continue to be minimised.

4   The key acquisition and cataloguing responsibility and priority for each NSLA library is the unique and heritage materials relating to that jurisdiction. These materials might be in any format.

Finding our collections

5   Cataloguing of other collections will be minimal, within accepted standards.

6   NSLA libraries will work towards all collection holdings being visible through Libraries Australia or LibrariesNZ.

Delivering our collections

7   The key digitising priority for each NSLA library is the unique and heritage materials relating to that jurisdiction.

8   Interlending and online document delivery will be used for low-use items in preference to duplicate purchasing, unless the item has significance for the local or distributed national collection.

9   Interlending and online document delivery services should aim to maximise access, to eliminate user charges and to automate processes to increase efficiency.

Collecting and preserving our digital heritage

10 NSLA libraries support the development of a national infrastructure of trusted digital repositories as crucial to preserving our digital heritage.

Expanding user expectations

11 Mediated online information services will be expanded and strengthened.

12 NSLA libraries will provide and maintain digital space for community creativity and contributions.

Strategic planning for the new environment has begun, collaboratively through the NSLA and within each library service.

NSLA strategies
for 2007–09

Reshaping our collections

> NSLA Libraries will reshape their collections, guided
by Principles 1–4.
Project responsibility: All NSLA Libraries

> A core set of e-resources will be defined for Australia
and New Zealand.
**Project responsibility: National Library of Australia, with the
NSLA Consortium to assess and advise; NSLA to approve**

Finding our collections

> NSLA will assess whether Libraries Australia and
LibrariesNZ can be the first point of search for all library
users. Assessment to be completed by 2009.
**Project responsibility: National Library of Australia; National
Library of New Zealand; all NSLA Libraries**

> NSLA will assess the impact of changes to Anglo-American
Cataloguing Rules (AACR) on cataloguing.
**Project responsibility: All NSLA Libraries to send representatives
to Australian Committee on Cataloguing meeting in Brisbane
in September 2007; NSLA working group may be established
following this meeting**

> NSLA Libraries will encourage collecting institutions
in their state or territory to implement open source.
Project responsibility: All NSLA libraries; NSLA Chair

Delivering our collections

> Digitisation of newspapers
**Project responsibility: All NSLA libraries; project convened
by the National Library of Australia**

> Rethinking Resource Sharing Working Group
**Project responsibility: Group convened by the National
Library of Australia; collaboration with ALIA**

> Investigating home delivery
Project responsibility: Rethinking Resource Sharing Working Group

> NSLA Libraries will accelerate digitising efforts.
Project responsibility: All NSLA libraries

Collecting and preserving our digital heritage

> Investigation of shared tools for managing or curating digital
heritage, and assessment of national and international efforts
**Project responsibility: National Library of Australia;
National Library of New Zealand**

> NSLA Libraries will continue to collaborate on
web preservation.
Project responsibility: All NSLA libraries

> Recognition of digital repository achievements in other parts
of the library sector, such as university libraries
Project responsibility: All NSLA libraries

Expanding user expectations

> Re-imagining Library Services Project, 2007–08
**Project responsibility: NSLA Chair and Secretariat;
all NSLA libraries**

> Scope cost and implications of collaborative internet guides
**Project responsibility: NSLA Information Access Group;
all NSLA libraries**

> Scope federated Australian Memory and Digital
New Zealand projects
**Project responsibility: NSLA Information Access Group;
all NSLA libraries**

> Use the New Zealand Digital Content Strategy to inform
the advocacy and development of an Australian framework
**Project responsibility: NSLA Chair, as ex-officio Director of
Collections Council of Australia**

> Contribute to Australian Research Council Linkage Project
'Cultural Collections, Creators and Copyright', led by the
University of Melbourne
Project responsibility: NSLA, on behalf of member libraries

> Contribute to Australian Research Council Linkage Project
'Australian Information Searchers', led by Swinburne University,
and other research projects, and consider the findings and
emerging issues
**Project responsibility: State Library of Victoria, as a member
of the 'Searchers' project; all NSLA libraries**

National & State Libraries Australasia

NSLA represents the National, State and Territory Libraries of Australia and New Zealand. We are collaborating to strengthen the information infrastructure; to improve access to library services; and to provide a single voice for member libraries to governments, the cultural and education sectors, and other relevant bodies.

It is a forum for strategic and innovative thinking, advocacy and cooperation.

All NSLA members endorse *The Big Bang* and will be working to incorporate these directions into strategic planning during 2007–08. Some of these directions entail collaborative or joint projects, and some will be developed wholly within each library service.

In August 2006, NSLA published *Libraries in the Digital Environment* for stakeholders and interested parties outside the library sector. It describes our key achievements, the body of work for libraries and our aspirations for the national digital agenda. *The Big Bang* is a companion document to Libraries in the Digital Environment.

NSLA member libraries

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

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References

These five papers/speeches/productions have been influential in 2006–07. They are available on the NSLA website.

> 'Resource Sharing and Library Delivery Services', Lori Bowen Ayre, June 2006, galecia.com/included/docs/Ayre_DeliveryTrends_2006.pdf

> 'Libraries and the Long Tail', Lorcan Dempsey, April 2006, dlib.org/dlib/april06/dempsey/04dempsey.html

> 'Libraries and the Creative Economy', Charles Leadbeater, Library of the 21st Century Symposium, February 2006, slv.vic.gov.au/programs/events/2006/symposium/economy/leadbeater.html

> 'Library 2.0 Theory', Jack Maness, June 2006, webology.ir/2006/v3n2/a25.html

> 'Web 2.0 … The machine is Us/ing Us', Mike Wesch, You Tube, January 2007, youtube.com/watch?v=6gmP4nk0EOE

Companion paper

Libraries in the Digital Environment, NSLA, August 2006, nsla.org.au/publications/papers/