
The Australian scene



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It's been over two years since a SCONUL delegation visited Australia. The Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) enjoyed hosting you and will be pleased to see you again. Sue Roberts compiled a report on the visit for SCONUL Focus, number 37 (2006). This short report updates some matters in Sue's report and describes new initiatives over the last two years.

RESEARCH QUALITY FRAMEWORK

Australian universities are preparing for the first Research Quality Framework (RQF) in 2008. It is roughly equivalent to the UK's Research Assessment Exercise. The federal government requires each university to establish an online repository containing evidence of research outputs that can be accessed by the assessment teams. This means that every university library is busy either establishing an institutional repository or adapting an existing repository to meet government requirements. Even better, the government has given funding for this to every Australian university through the Australian Scheme for Higher Education Repositories (ASHER) program. ASHER will provide \$25.5 million over three years to support the installation or upgrade of digital repositories for use in the RQF as well as technical and administrative support for digital repositories.

Many CAUL members are in good shape to meet this task through involvement in various government-funded institutional repository projects, including the Australasian Digital Theses Program (<http://adt.caul.edu.au>), the ARROW (Aus-

tralian Research Repositories Online to the World Project (<http://arrow.edu.au>), the Australian Partnership for Sustainable Repositories (<http://apsr.edu.au>) and the RUBRIC (Regional Universities Building Research Infrastructure Collaboratively) Project (<http://rubric.edu.au>).

ADT – THE AUSTRALASIAN DIGITAL THESES PROGRAM

The programme began as a project by seven CAUL libraries in 1998, expanded to all of CAUL in 2002 and again in 2006 to include the eight New Zealand universities. This 'union catalogue' of Australian theses was expanded in 2004 by the addition of metadata for all Australian higher-degree theses, and now includes records for 150,000 theses, of which 18,000 are open-access full text.

E-RESEARCH

Some CAUL members are very active in the e-research space. The federal government is guiding development through NCRIS (the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy; <http://www.ncris.dest.gov.au>). Most NCRIS initiatives are discipline-based and described as 'capabilities'. Examples include biosecurity and radio astronomy. One capability is called 'Platforms for Collaboration', to provide infrastructure support in three areas: national data management for management and use of research data; national high end computational facilities; and collaboration and interoperation infrastructure. This capability will be overseen by a newly created Australian e-Research Infrastructure Council, which includes Cathrine Harboe-Ree, the Monash University Librarian. The data management domain is CAUL's area of interest. We expect momentum in this area to increase in coming years. Australian government conditions for research grants are starting to require plans for management of research data and outputs.

CONSORTIUM PURCHASING

CAUL has administered a collaborative datasets purchasing programme (<http://www.caul.edu.au/datasets>) for over a decade through its CEIRC (CAUL Electronic Information Resources Committee). CEIRC provides services to CAUL, the eight New Zealand university libraries and over 25 government research libraries in Australia and New Zealand. In 2006, the CEIRC program was handling more than 140 databases from around 100 vendors.

The success of the programme stems from light governance, an opt-in/opt-out approach and a very hardworking team of two people in the CAUL office. An annual membership fee of less than \$2,000 supports the programme's operations and governance and all consortial savings are passed directly through to subscribers.

A review of CEIRC is underway. This review will look at programme viability, scope, systems and processes. The outcomes of the review will be known in early 2008.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Four members of CAUL received recognition for their contribution to student outcomes in higher learning through the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. The Carrick Institute (<http://www.carrickinstitute.edu.au/carrick/go/home>) was established by the federal government in 2004 to promote and advance learning in higher education. The institute provides grants, fellowships and citation schemes. Gaining recognition through citations is a visible way to demonstrate the impact of university libraries in learning and teaching.

ULA – UNIVERSITY LIBRARY AUSTRALIA – THE NATIONAL BORROWING SCHEME FOR AUSTRALIA'S UNIVERSITIES

ULA was launched in July 2001 to simplify in-person access to all CAUL's collections for any current student or staff member of an Australian university. Until then, regional borrowing schemes catered for state-based borrowing, but all else was bound by individual permissions obtained from the home university before visiting another. Now, proof of current membership of a university is all that is required. ULA protocols have in most cases superseded those of the regional schemes. Some universities charge a borrower registration fee (currently a standard \$50 annually) but borrowing is free. In 2006 there were 20,000 registered borrowers and 275,000 loans transacted under ULA.

CAUL STATISTICS

CAUL collects, collates and publishes university library statistics from Australia and New Zealand. Data back to 1983 is freely available from the CAUL website. From 2004, data can be manipulated interactively and comparisons made across institutions or years. The statistics reveal trends too: in 2006, the expenditure on e-resources was over \$100m (an average of \$2.5m per institution),

out of a total of \$209m (an average of \$5m per institution). Almost half the expenditure on resources is now for electronic information. (See <http://www.caul.edu.au/stats/>.)

CLIENT SATISFACTION AND CUSTOMER SURVEYS

From 2001, 34 CAUL libraries and two Council of New Zealand University Librarians (CONZUL) libraries have taken part in one or more customer and staff surveys developed by Rodski (now Insync Surveys) in consultation with CAUL. Former chair of the Best Practice Working Group, Felicity McGregor, University Librarian at the University of Wollongong, said: 'The Insync Surveys Library Client Survey has gained recognition as one of the few benchmarked surveys in the higher education sector and has been used extensively by the Australian Universities Quality Agency in its audits to comment on library performance. Internally, the survey is a vital tool for reporting library performance and measuring improvements over time.' For more information, go to <http://www.caul.edu.au/best-practice/CustomerSurveys.html>.

LIBRARY SERVICES TO OFFSHORE AND ONSHORE STUDENTS

Many CAUL members need to provide library services in other countries (offshore) and other Australian locations (onshore – for example, a university in Perth may have a campus in Sydney). Sometimes the library services are delivered through partners. CAUL has developed guidelines covering planning, services, resources, facilities and funding. The offshore scenario is addressed in CAUL's 'Principles for Library Services to Offshore Students to Support Teaching and Learning'. The onshore scenario is contained in CAUL's 'Principles for Library Services to Onshore Students at Remote Campuses to Support Teaching and Learning'. See the CAUL Website (specifically <http://www.caul.edu.au/best-practice/offshore.html>) for more details.