

Protecting our digital heritage

Dr Kay Daniels, New Technologies Working Group

A national 'Roundtable on statutory deposit in the digital environment: cultural policy and copyright' was held in Perth in December 1998. At the roundtable, it was agreed that:

- electronic material (both analogue and digital) is a significant part of Australia's heritage, and the conservation of and access to such material needs to be considered as a national priority;
- legal deposit is one mechanism assisting long-term access to this material;
- the significance of this issue should be drawn to the attention of government, in the first instance through the Cultural Ministers Council; and
- appropriate strategic and collaborative responses should be initiated.

Participants agreed to establish the New Technologies Working Party. The working party consists of representatives from the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts; the Australian Publishers Association; the National Library of Australia; the National Film and Sound Archive; the State Library of Victoria; the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, and the Australian Interactive Multimedia Industry Association. The first task of the working party will be to develop a paper that outlines strategic responses to the challenges of statutory deposit and the associated aspects of long-term access to cultural heritage in digital formats. Derek Whitehead, deputy state librarian at the State Library of Victoria, will draft the first version of the paper. The final paper will be presented to the Standing Committee of the Cultural Ministers Council. ■

Recent hearings

A number of hearings affecting the university library sector have been conducted recently in the Australian Copyright Tribunal. They have included hearings between the AVCC (Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee) and Screenrights (the Collecting Society representing audiovisual copying) and the AVCC and CAL (the Collecting Society representing print copying).

Justice Burchett who presided over both hearings has released her judgments, a summary of which is available on the AVCC website.

Of particular interest to the library sector is the lack of a decision regarding the issue of digital copying. The judge declined to make a judgement on this issue, claiming that there is insufficient evidence to be able to make an informed decision about the cost of remuneration to the relevant collecting society. This has again delayed the ability of university libraries to move ahead on initiatives like 'electronic reserve collections'. The issue is to be further discussed at the next Board meeting of the AVCC and the AVCC's Standing Committee on Information Policy.

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