

# The GLASS model could be your answer!

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**G**LASS (Government Libraries and Social Sciences) is a resource-sharing initiative between the libraries of GLINN (Government Libraries Information Network in NSW) and LOTSS (Libraries Of The Social Sciences). It provides group members with a web-based platform for easy access to a shared database of journal holdings and simple administration of inter-library loans.

The GLASS database (<http://www.glassdd.org>) was established in mid-2000 using software developed by Prosentient Systems. This New South Wales-based database and inter-library loans management system has been running successfully for five years. This resource sharing model is now being taken up by other networks.

The first network to use the software was GRATISNET (for health-based libraries, <http://www.gratisnet.org.au>). Other networks to subsequently adopt the model include LILLI (Legal Inter-Library Loans Interchange, [www.lilli.org.au](http://www.lilli.org.au)) comprising commercial law firm libraries from the Sterling group of Sydney law firm libraries (launched 2005), a network for emergency services called ALIES (Australasian Libraries in the Emergency Services, <http://www.alies.org.au>) and QSHARE (<http://www.qshare.org.au>), covering the Queensland equivalents of GLASS.

The web-based software is simple and easy to use and has given added value and support to its client members. It's user friendly, affordable and offers a great variety and coverage of specialty journals that may otherwise be inaccessible. Resource sharing allows member libraries to build their collections in their primary subject specialties, relying on other members for 'free' (after annual subscription) access to secondary resources. A library's holdings are exported to the database on joining.

Libraries in a network are ranked according to a formula based on how many loan requests have been set and received. The rankings work effectively to prevent members from being swamped with demands for inter-library loans from their collections. When searching for a location for a desired title, the requesting library uses the first listed location. Subsequent listings can be used until the request is satisfied. In the case of the GLASS network, statistics are sent to the Steering Committee annually and rankings are adjusted accordingly.

The history of the GLASS network shows three key factors provided the impetus for launching the consortium.

1. During the 1990s most special libraries faced the prospect of diminishing real budgets. This was partly due to the rapidly increasing costs of journal subscriptions, fuelled by a falling Australian dollar. A rise in the cost of document delivery put extra pressure on special libraries.

2. The final straw was the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in July 2000. Faced with the logistics of juggling a combination of vouchers, invoices and credit card payments, many special libraries looked for a time-saving and cost-effective alternative. The benefits and low membership costs for inter-library loan consortia were increasingly attractive.
3. The health librarians' consortium, GRATISNET, successfully argued to the Australian Tax Office that a consortium should be exempt from the GST as inter-library loans were the core business of the consortium and the reason why the group was established. GLINN and LOTSS noted this decision and forged the GLASS consortium.

The GLINN and LOTSS networks are New South Wales-based. They are independent groups aligning to form the GLASS for the sole purpose of ILL resource sharing. The Inter-search software designer, Prosentient Systems Pty Ltd, was approached about our needs and agreed that the software could be modified to suit GLASS. A single database is shared with GRATISNET but each consortium's members are blocked from seeing the other's holdings.

After agreeing on our name, our logo was designed and a test site was set up. To assist communication, an e-list was established through ALIA, aliaGLASS. Eventually, after convincing enough libraries of the benefits, we passed the magic number of 40 participating libraries: the consortium was launched on 31 August 2000 — and GLASS became a truly useful resource for inter-library loans.

After five years, the GLASS consortium is successfully serving its members and has been well worth the time and energy expended in establishing and maintaining the network. We continue to recruit new members every year.

We have a Working Group that plays a vital role in the management of GLASS, meeting quarterly to discuss ongoing issues of policy and user concerns. The group also manages the rankings, organises the collection of statistics, maintains the database and oversees database enhancements.

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