



Australian Library and
Information Association

Submission to the Australian Law Reform Commission's discussion paper relating to Copyright and the Digital Economy

28 August 2013

Introduction

Further to our submission, dated 31 July, this paper emphasises the serious concerns our members have voiced about library access to ebooks and e lending during a series of national think tanks held in Brisbane, Perth, Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and Canberra between February and July 2013.

About us

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is the professional organisation for the Australian library and information services sector. We provide the national voice of the profession in the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services to the nation, through leadership, advocacy and mutual support.

Purposes of our submission

Our submission has two purposes. The first is to establish ALIA's interest in the discussion and consultation around the digital economy for Australia and the essential equity role of libraries; the second is to make the case for consideration of equitable access for libraries to digital formats for information ie ebooks and ejournals.

We are happy for our submission to be made public.

Our position on access to ebooks and e lending

For the last 200 years, libraries have included a strong thread of social justice. They have been based on the notion of freedom of access to information and resources (FAIR) for everyone. ALIA's core values reflect our members' belief in:

- Promotion of the free flow of information and ideas through open access to recorded knowledge, information and creative works
- Connection of people and ideas
- Commitment to literacy, information literacy and learning
- Respect for the diversity and individuality of all people
- Preservation of the human record.

Central to our concern about access to ebooks and lending and the challenges being faced by library and information professionals is the restrictive practice by some publishers of refusing to allow libraries to acquire ebooks for lending:

- Concurrent with their general release
- At a fair and affordable price
- Under licences that acknowledge copyright law exceptions for libraries.

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) has produced an [issues paper](#) on this topic to provide information for our members about ebook issues and to formulate a set of key principles to guide the procurement and use of ebooks in all Australian libraries. A [website page](#) with links to reports from ALIA Think Tanks held around the nation over the last few months, and links to other advocacy documents on ebooks and lending, has also been created.

The international Federations of Library Associations (IFLA) has also written a [background paper](#) with a set of guiding principles intended to help libraries and library associations as they consider the issues surrounding ebooks in libraries.

Summary

The growing demand for ebooks presents challenges for all library and information professionals as they work to ensure equity of access to information and stories, whatever the format. It is essential that libraries establish their role and position in this new digital environment so that library users can continue to enjoy access to a wide range of content.

We seek support from the Australian Government, government agencies and other stakeholders to ensure that libraries can purchase ebooks from publishers on fair and reasonable terms.

Thank you again for your interest in this topic, which is of great concern to library and information professionals.

Sue McKerracher

Executive Director

Australian Library and Information Association

9-11 Napier Close Deakin ACT 2600

AUSTRALIA

p 02 6215 8222

m 0404 456 749

f 02 6282 2249

w www.alia.org.au

e sue.mckerracher@alia.org.au