

‘Glad tidings, testimony and research’: sixty years of *The Australian Library*

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Sixty years of continuous publishing under the same title is a remarkable achievement in the uncertain world of journals. Since 1951, *The Australian Library Journal* has seen twelve editors, and numerous contributors and readers, bringing their individual approaches, perceptions and expectations to The Journal. It has been challenged with significant changes within the profession and in the publishing industry, as well as periods of financial constraints which can spell the demise of a serial publication. And yet it has survived. For this we are indebted to the determination and belief of its editors and the continued support of the Association and its members.

The title of this paper draws on a quote attributed to Ralph Beals from 1942, in which he described library literature as ‘Glad Tidings, Testimony, and Research’ (Powell 1997, 3). As this short history demonstrates, *The Australian Library Journal* has enjoyed its fair share of each, and successive editors have, with mixed results, struggled to achieve a balance between them. *The Australian Library Journal* has experienced long periods of stability and sense of purpose. On the other hand, it also reached so parlous a state that a former editor, Jean Whyte, was driven to write a searing criticism of The Journal, printed in its own pages. In keeping with the tradition of anniversary celebrations this article recalls the past of *The Australian Library Journal* through the words of its editors and contributors, and attempts, to paraphrase Whyte (1959), to serve as a record of their ideas and achievements.

Australian journal publishing

To situate *The Australian Library Journal* in an historical context it is useful to examine the development of Australian library and information science (LIS) journal publishing. Between 1964 and 1988 there was extraordinary growth in Australian LIS journals, easily matching the increase in LIS journals internationally (Maguire 1988). Already in its fourteenth year in 1964, *The Australian Library Journal* preceded any serious competition in the Australian publishing scene and has outlasted most. Possibly due to our relatively small population or our physical isolation from the main LIS publishing centres, Australian journals in the field have not sustained the same escalation as international LIS publishing. This growth and decline of Australian LIS journal publishing over the last 60 years is illustrated in Figure 1 (below).

The publications included in Figure 1 were first identified in *Ulrich’s Periodicals Directory* as having ‘scholarly’ or ‘refereed’ content, and this was followed by an examination of the publications for substantive articles. The journals that met these criteria were plotted against a timeline to show first publishing year and year of cessation, if applicable. In general, the publications excluded from the figure are newsletters and serial publications created for special interest groups and/or with a regional focus. Some of these newsletters began publishing more substantial articles, such as *Australian Special Libraries News* which dropped *News* from the title and is included in the Figure. Others such as *Scan*, a newsletter for school

libraries from New South Wales, has enjoyed a long publishing history in a similar form and is excluded from the Figure.

Figure 1 around here

With slow growth in the early years, the number of Australian LIS journals peaked at sixteen in 1985 and has declined to seven in 2011. The Figure illustrates the emergence of specialisation in librarianship in the founding of publications. School and children's librarianship is represented strongly, with *Access*, *Orana*, *Teacher & Librarian*, and *School Libraries in Australia* all entering the Australian LIS journal landscape between 1960 and 1975. Only the first, *Access*, is still published today. Over the same fifteen year period other special interest publications were established: *Australian Special Libraries*, *Australian Academic & Research Libraries*, *LASIE* (focusing on automated systems), *Script & Print* (bibliography and the history of the book), *Health Information Management Journal*, *Australian Law Libraries*, and *Cataloguing Australia*. In total, eleven new LIS publications were founded between these years – of which five have survived to 2011. The following fifteen years saw another six journals enter the field, with even less success in terms of longevity. Only one journal, *APLIS: Australasian Public Libraries & Information Services* established very late in the period between 1975 and 1990, is still being published.

In the context of Australian LIS journal publishing, *The Australian Library Journal* has been a spectacular success. However, The Journal's longevity was not always assured. For almost three decades *The Australian Library Journal* struggled to find a role. It published both news items and lengthier articles in an attempt to attract readers from all points of the librarianship compass; it changed publishing format and frequency; and a variety of editorial roles led The Journal through good and not so good times. There had been excellent issues in its early years, however it wasn't until 1980, when the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) began publishing *inCite*, a free newsletter for members, that *The Australian Library Journal* finally established an enduring scholarly format that is evident today.

1951-1974: The foundation years

1951 v1 n1	John Metcalfe
1954 v3 n2	Harrison Bryan
1957 v6 n2	R. (Ronald) M. McGreal
1959 v8 n1	Jean P. Whyte
1971 v20 n1 – 1974 v23 n11	W. L. (Laurie) Brown

John Metcalfe, the first editor of *The Australian Library Journal*, in his inaugural and unsigned editorial asked 'What could be more fitting or promising?' than this first issue coinciding with 50th anniversary of the founding of the Australian Commonwealth (Over to us 1951, 3). As the official publication of the Library Association of Australia, of which Metcalfe was the General Secretary, the quarterly journal was free with membership and its role, though not explicitly stated, was to contribute to the achievement of the Association's objectives.

Although publications for Australian librarians were in existence prior to 1951, they had been the product of State or special interest groups and their primary purpose was to inform readers of news, updates, and events (Biskup and Goodman 1982). An early attempt at an Association publication, *The Library Record of Australasia*, had commenced publishing in April 1901, only to cease fourteen months later. Metcalfe, mindful of this precedent, expressed hope for *The Australian Library Journal* and contemplated its success as depending on 'faith and good work' (1951, 3); a notion fully appreciated by editors who succeeded him.

Over the three years of his editorship, Metcalfe wrote more than 50 per cent of the Journal's content (Bryan 1972, 323), despite his appeal to members that 'half the Association writes it, all the Association reads it' (Over to us 1951, 3). His stewardship, vested in him by the Association, was not one of uncritical support and during this period he initiated 'one of the Association's bitterest and most long-drawn-out controversies: the shift to true tertiary qualifications for the profession' (Levett 2007, 336). Metcalfe was strongly opposed to the Association's role in registration examinations, which at the time was the accepted pathway to professional librarianship. That Metcalfe was soon to take up the position as director of the first university library school left the question open as to his motives in using *The Journal* as a forum for the debate. However, Levett reminds us that 'Metcalfe was a natural and instinctive protagonist' and the fact that the argument took place on the pages of *The Journal* could be perceived as a measure of success for both *The Journal* and its editor (2007, 336).

Metcalfe's successor as editor, with the second issue of 1954, was Harrison Bryan. The appointment of Bryan was an important step in the Association's development as a truly national body with *The Journal* moving from the control of New South Wales and Victoria to the 'hillbilly State' of Queensland. This decentralised approach was viewed positively by the new editor when he outlined his ambitions for *The Journal* and acknowledged his 'natural bias ... towards more articles of a professional nature ... [reports] of notable developments, including, particularly, valuable acquisitions' (Bryan 1954, 41).

Like Metcalfe, Bryan attempted to establish feature and news/notices sections. A regular column 'The Australian Library Scene' lasted for five issues before Bryan, in his own words, 'gave up. ... Repeated entreaties for copy fell on deaf ears' (1972, 232). A clearly frustrated Bryan in his final issue as editor wrote: 'Contributors and especially those who have never contributed may care to note that there is *nothing* at present in hand for the April issue' (233). Reflecting eighteen years later on his time as editor, Bryan's exasperation is revisited when he remarked 'it would astonish me to discover any more apathetic mass than the membership of our organization, at any rate fifteen or more years ago' (232). After two years at the helm, Bryan relinquished his role as editor because, according to the Publications section of 'Branch News' in *The Journal* 'Mr Bryan is going abroad' (1957, 43).

From the second issue of 1957 to the last of 1958, R. (Ronald) M. McGreal, the Honorary General Secretary of the Association, edited *The Journal*. It would appear that the original intention was to appoint a new editor quickly, however this didn't eventuate and the issues McGreal edited include substantial pieces by former editors, Metcalfe and Bryan, and McGreal's successor Jean Whyte. In an article

during this period, 'The profession of librarianship', Metcalfe returned to familiar ground as he argued against 'scholars and men of letters [who] have suggested that they should have refuge in librarianship without being librarians' (1957, 151).

When Jean Whyte accepted the editor's role in 1959, *The Australian Library Journal* was onto its fourth editor in eight years. Whyte's was a steadying hand. She led the Journal for twelve years and is credited by Borchardt for succeeding in 'raising the literary standard' (1989, 220). Over the period of her editorship, Whyte was responsible for publishing 73 issues totaling 4,517 pages (Whyte 1972, 234) – an enormous contribution, considering she encountered the same difficulty as Harrison Bryan in attracting copy. In her reflection on The Journal just two years after she had left the role, Whyte quipped that the LAA Examiners' Reports 'solved the problem of copy for one of the four issues each year' (1972, 234).

In her opening editorial, Whyte referred to 'the A.L.J.', the first time the Journal's title had been abbreviated. During the late 1970s *AustLibJ* had some currency, before reverting to Whyte's original acronym (without full-stops) *ALJ* in the early 1990s. Also for the first time is the mention of research: 'into, such areas as library philosophy and services, library techniques, the development of book resources, personnel development and education, and the Australian book trade' (Whyte 1959, 1). However, the primary aim of The Journal as Whyte saw it was to contribute to 'the establishment and improvement of libraries' (1959, 1) and the welcome copy that came with the LAA examination reports was dropped from The Journal's pages in 1960 because 'they would hardly improve the image of Australian librarianship in the eyes of an international audience' (Whyte 1972, 234).

Under Whyte's direction, *The Australian Library Journal* changed its publishing frequency from quarterly to bi-monthly, and finally to monthly with eleven issues a year. Advertising from book shops and library suppliers had been a feature of The Journal from the beginning, with 'Australia's leading booksellers' Angus & Robertson taking out a full page in the first issue to offer their best wishes. The switch to six issues a year presumably meant more content was required and a new feature was introduced to enable members to take out small and relatively cheap advertisements for 'positions vacant, books for sale, exchange etc' (*Changes in the Australian Library Journal* 1965, 215).

Events of a more significant nature accompanied the change to monthly issues in 1968. The Journal was expected 'to reach 5,000 copies per issue' including '300 subscriptions, most of them to libraries in other countries' and Whyte records a 'bank-up of articles awaiting publication'. While her editorial does not refer to the adoption of the first editorial policy for The Journal, which occurred in 1968, Whyte outlined several important functions and responsibilities, including: 'to record the Australian library scene, not only for the readers of today but also for the research workers and historians of tomorrow'; 'to provide a means of publishing articles on Australian librarianship or by Australian librarians'; and to 'serve the library profession in Australia and present Australian librarianship to the world more effectively than ever before' (Whyte 1968, 1). Reported in The Journal's pages was the opening of the new National Library of Australia building in Canberra on August 15th 1968 and the appointment of the first Professor of Librarianship, Professor Wilma Radford, at the University of New South Wales. Recalling earlier editors, the

article announcing the appointment was by Harrison Bryan who noted the retirement of the Director of the School, John Metcalfe.

Throughout her editorship, Whyte had strong support from regular columnists, including: Janet Hine, reviewer of reference books, Russell Cope, reporting on government publications, Geoffrey Farmer's 'Notes on Australian book design', and Laurie Brown's 'Public Library Scene'. But like her predecessors, Whyte struggled to attract sufficient copy to publish regular features announcing events and Australian library news (Whyte 1972, 236). In an examination of the content and authors of articles in *The Australian Library Journal* over its first 21 years, Whyte (1976a) notes the contributions of two editors, Harrison Bryan and W.L. Brown, who were responsible for 24 and 11 articles respectively. Other major contributors were R.L. Cope (18 articles), D.H. Borchardt (12 articles), and Janet Hine (11 articles). Whyte commented on the comparatively few articles about censorship and intellectual freedom in the first thirteen years of The Journal. However, the extensive content about library buildings and individual library services led her to recommend *The Australian Library Journal* as an invaluable source to researchers interested in building plans for this period. Looking for evidence of a broader view of librarianship, Whyte described the coverage of 'librarianship abroad' as 'paltry' (200), remarking especially on the poor coverage of American libraries and international organisations such as IFLA and UNESCO. Library management suffers a similar fate, described by Whyte as a 'non-preoccupation of Australian librarians' (211).

Moving her attention to different types of libraries represented in the articles, Whyte noted that 'special librarians ... write often about the problems of service'; there is 'a paucity of articles on ... college libraries', and children's services librarians 'are among the most enthusiastic and professionally dedicated in the country', contributing 64 articles over the 21 year period (203). Library collections of varying types accounted for a good proportion of content, as did automation. However, the foremost topic discussed in The Journal was education of librarians, with only three volumes of the journal without an article on the topic. It is perhaps ironic that very few of the research-based articles were written by staff or students of library schools, whereas academic librarians were strongly represented as contributing authors.

Whyte's sign off in 1970 (volume 19, issue 11) is without fanfare and less than 250 words long. Criticised at times by readers for 'publishing too many articles from university librarians, too many articles from South Australia ... and even for publishing too many obituaries' (Whyte 1972, 234), Whyte also gained enormous respect (Borchardt 1989; Levett 2007) and remained steadfast in her ideal for the publication. This is as evident in her final issue as her first, where she wrote: The Journal 'belongs to the librarians of Australia. It is their record of ideas and achievements and it is the medium through which Australia's place in international librarianship must be judged' (1959, 2).

Further changes to The Journal's format and content, a portent of 'the tabloid years', were introduced by Whyte's successor W.L. (Laurie) Brown in the first issue of 1971. A new printer had been engaged and The Journal was published on glossy paper. Brown reassures 'Librarians concerned with their serried ranks of bound serials ... that the format remains almost the same' (1971, 3). However, it would appear that the content was not; gaining approval from Metcalfe who remarked that The Journal

was 'becoming a good deal of a news magazine' (1972, 231). In this context it is remarkable that during Brown's time as editor The Journal's indexing was first noted, in the third issue of 1973, as *Library Literature*, *APAIS*, and *LISA*.

In his first editorial, Brown stamped his own style on The Journal by introducing themes for each issue, with number 1 being based around 'the Library Association of Australia. Where are we going?' (1971, 3). The Association is not alone in pondering this perennial problem of role and relevance to its membership, but the LAA was about to lose one of its primary functions, examinations for registration to the profession, and was considering a move to Canberra 'the source of all money'. In fact the Association's headquarters remained in Sydney until 1989. There was perhaps another reason for the introspection – the appointment of Allan Fleming, in 1970, to National Librarian. Fleming was not a librarian and on his appointment 'The profession and the LAA went into hyper drive ... The Journal's pages echoed to the indignant squawks' (Levett 2007, 340).

Brown stood down from the editorial position to take up the office of President of the LAA and although The Journal under his editorship bore hints of what was to follow, it was not until 1976 that *The Australian Library Journal* reached its nadir.

1975-1980: The tabloid years

1975 v24 n1	C. (Chintaman) V. Datar
1976 v25 n3	Adrian Read
1978 v27 n1 – 1979 v28 n20	Editorial Board (Chair Carmel Maguire)

The period from 1975 to the end of 1979 has been described by Harrison Bryan as 'the journal's tabloid period' (1980, 4) and commenting on The Journal in its 1976 form, Whyte wrote 'the temptation to pronounce the *Journal* dead is very strong' (1976b, 398).

C. V. (Chintaman) Datar envisaged 'no major change in editorial policy' in his first column (1975, 3), suggesting, as Metcalfe alluded to in 1972, the move to a less scholarly publication had already taken place. Themed issues continued, with the first under Datar being in the area of technical services. At this time the profession was facing two challenges that continue to this day, that of technology (Datar writes 'The future of cataloguing lies with computerization of some sort') and the propensity for the profession to create division within.

Datar also noted the appointment of a full-time Executive Director to the Association; it was John Vaughan. According to Whyte, Vaughan described The Journal as 'hopelessly fuddy-duddy', which suggests his influence in this 'tabloid period' (1976b, 398). However, Vaughan also presided over a number of significant developments in the Association, including proposing the election of office holders by members and its move within Sydney to better office accommodation in 1976. The tide of change within the Association appears to parallel concerns about the profession more generally and the new LAA President, former editor W.L. Brown, made his frustration with members clear in the first issue of 1975, stating they 'tend to emphasize their differences rather than develop their essential similarities into a perfected

professionalism' (1975, 4). While Brown did not refer to publications in his message, it is notable that between 1970 and 1975 seven new journals, all specialising in different aspects of librarianship, were established.

The fifth issue of 1976 and the Silver Jubilee year of *The Journal* rang in its tabloid period proper. Datar, in the first issue of the year, advised readers of a planned increase to *The Journal's* frequency to fortnightly 'to accommodate more news and advertisements' and he was clearly under some pressure to produce *The Journal* at reduced costs. He hoped 'to combine as effectively as possible cheapness of production with reasonable quality' (1976, 3). Adrian Read assumed the editor role for the third issue of 1976 and with it came more cost-saving; the return of matt pages, but retaining a glossy cover. In hindsight, the changes brought about as a result of discussion on the future of *The Journal* in 1975, including a survey of members, were ill-conceived and ultimately overturned. Datar wrote in the editorial of issue 1 1976 'After twenty-five years experience the journal is in a position to experiment' (3) and time found the experiment a failure.

Whereas the *Journal's* 25th anniversary celebrations were muted, Jean Whyte's article in the December issue was far from it. She criticised almost every aspect of *The Journal*, even when commenting on its strengths, which 'are precisely those that could be expected from a journal issued from the central office by an editor who is not a professional librarian' (1976b, 398). And while Levett referred to *The Journal* as a 'raffish tabloid' which reflected 'the optimistic early seventies' (1996, 3), Whyte was unrelenting in her censure. Format and content are condemned; the former for a 'jumpy' layout that 'seems designed to sell advertising', and the latter for its 'folksy' headings and content that 'should be concerned with professional problems, not with winning popularity'. For Whyte, *The Journal* had lost one of its core functions which, in her view, was to 'represent Australian librarianship to the world' (399).

Whyte's article drew out debate on the 'new *Australian Library Journal*' in subsequent 'Feedback' sections of *The Journal*, with one writer commenting that Whyte's 'statement sounds a little too elitist for comfort'. Another, evidently sensitive to George Orwell's work, wrote 'The journal reflects a new image – one that all information scientists should have for 1977, only seven years from 1984' (Feedback 1977, 5). Further opinion on *The Journal's* form included some qualified support, for example: 'The occasional articles are of high quality'; one correspondent reminded members of the Association that it is their responsibility 'to make the scholarly contributions'; and agreeing with Whyte, a writer described *The Journal's* content as a 'mess of ephemera' (Feedback 1977, 6). A number of these letters were published with a response from the editor (editorials had disappeared from *The Journal's* pages with the fortnightly publishing schedule). Read referred to expensive postage costs in reply to a suggestion to publish a scholarly quarterly in addition to a newsletter; an initiative that was realised in 1980. And in reply to a question about the submission of scholarly articles, Read wrote:

Direct requests for articles have a success rate of about 50 per cent – but this is as it should be: the best articles come from people who have something worthwhile to say and want to say it. There do not appear to be very many of these people in Australian librarianship. (Feedback 1977, 7)

Things were to get worse, however. Contributors throughout this period were encouraged to include 'illustrations, preferably glossy' with their copy and an issue cover in October 1977 depicted an attractive young woman wearing spectacles and a white tee-shirt that read 'Librarians are novel lovers'. A number of outraged readers sent letters to the editor deploring the cover as 'sexist' and 'cheap'. The replacement of Read, in 1978, with an editorial board chaired by Carmel Maguire was perhaps not surprising.

Although The Journal's format did not change for another two years, the Editorial Board actively sought feedback from members. A questionnaire was distributed with *AustLibJ*, as Maguire referred to it, in 1978. Maguire, reporting on the results of the 'reader survey', describes a disappointingly low and unrepresentative response rate (5%). Nevertheless, the data were analysed and the findings published the following year (Maguire, 1979). The majority of respondents (63%) wanted more 'major articles'. Asked to comment on the content of two specific issues, over 60% reported they had read the research articles and 'found them of interest' (151) with 'many calls for a more 'scholarly' journal' made in the 'other comments' section of the survey (154). In response to a question about the frequency of The Journal, nearly 36% of the sample preferred a quarterly publication schedule. The following year saw The Journal return to a quarterly publication and the launching of *inCite*, the Association's monthly newsletter.

1980 - : Maturity

1980 v 29 n1	Harrison Bryan
1981 v30 n3	John Levett
1991 v40 n1	Michael Talbot
1996 v45 n1	John Levett
2007 v56 n1	Ian McCallum
2010 v59 n3 -	Ann Ritchie

After a break of 23 years, Harrison Bryan took on the editorship for the second time. He described the Journal as 'Mark V' and remarked on the difficulty for the previous editors of effecting 'a marriage between the Daily Express style of news reporting and what is seen as a need to provide a vehicle for more substantial writing'. This new format of the *AustLibJ* aimed to provide 'the opportunity, once again, for Australian librarians to write at some length, not only for Australians but for a world audience, in a journal which is designed recognisably for that purpose' (1980, 4).

Bryan remained as editor for only six issues. According to Levett in his first editorial in the third issue of 1981, Bryan 'abandoned (to use his own words), his 'masochistic proclivities' regarding editorship of *AustLibJ* in favour of what would seem to some an equally uncomfortable position' the Director General of the National Library of Australia (1981, 71). Serials librarians were again reassured that the change of editor will not alter the size of The Journal and Levett commented on its role, contrasting it with the 'lustful, vociferous, and occasionally strident sibling, *inCite*' and its 'staid ... cousin'. Presumably this is a reference to *Australian Academic & Research Libraries* as Levett remarked on its 'admirers' regarding it as 'the scholarly Australian journal of librarianship, a claim we are not prepared to dispute' (71). He suggested contributions should 'vary, and embrace diverse viewpoints, including

those of the interested layman, the student, the scholar, and the grizzled practitioner' and would be judged for acceptance on 'competence, relevance, clarity'.

It is baffling that there is no mention in the editorials announcing Levett's departure (prior to or following) as editor after a decade with *The Journal*. During his time leading *The Journal* it had ceased being free with membership and became subscription-based; in his penultimate year the Association finally moved from Sydney to Canberra; and in 1990 ALIA House was officially opened. Dr Michael Talbot, 'scholar librarian, the historian-extraordinaire' (Levett 2006, 281) assumed the role quietly and made no changes to *The Journal's* format. Its frequency has remained quarterly since Bryan resumed as editor in 1980.

For the five years of Talbot's editorship *The Journal* continued to gather strength, attracting sufficient copy and publishing its most highly cited paper to date, an article by Christine Bruce in 1995. In his second year, Talbot acknowledged Levett's assertion that the '*ALJ* is not a scholarly journal' but goes on to state that 'publishing original research is a primary function of the *Journal*' (1992, 1). An unpublished Honours thesis which examined the content of Australian LIS journals found that in 1992 less than 20% of *The Journal's* articles were research articles (Haddow 1994). This small study's findings were confirmed later by Rochester, who investigated the content of *The Australian Library Journal* and *Australian Academic & Research Libraries* over the period 1985-1994 (1996). Rochester found 24% of total articles were research, the same proportion as an analysis of the *Canadian Library Journal* between 1981 and 1991, and not dissimilar to earlier studies by Peritz (1980), Nour (1985), and Feehan et al. (1987), which identified research content of LIS journals as averaging 19%, 24.4%, and 23.6% respectively. A sign of technological progress can be found in Talbot's editorial of 1992 in his advice to contributors that future submissions should be on disk as well as hard copy.

Talbot welcomed back Levett as editor in his final issue of 1995, in which he wrote 'the *ALJ* could hardly be in better hands' (1995, 171). Partly in answer to Talbot's last editorial where he pondered the role of *The Journal*, Levett resumed his editorship with a seven page piece on its future. He remarked on his role as 'only lately been filled by advertisement' and discussed the vexed question of subsidisation of *The Journal* by the Association. As well as submissions being 'of interest to our readership (essential) ... well-written ... and within the boundaries of good taste', Levett considered *The Journal's* role 'to nurture the inexperienced contributor' (1996, 7). He acknowledged the importance to academic writers for articles to be refereed, suggesting a compromise 'to allow contributors the option ... accepting the concomitant delay' and concludes by noting that the issue is covering 'aspects of the Internet' (9).

John Levett edited *The Journal* for a further eleven years, emphatic throughout and into his final editorial that 'one of the greatest furbies in the *Journal's* history' was its claim to 'scholarliness'. Levett saw *The Journal* as a publication for the entire profession, in all its diversity, and himself as 'a mere journeyman'. He wrote 'that whilst *ALJ* might properly honour scholarship and publish scholarly works ... proud accounts of 'how we do it at my library' ' were equally important and 'No-one has seen fit to contradict this view' (2006, 281).

Contrasting with Levett's final fighting words as editor, but not the last as a contributor to the Journal, Ian McCallum opened his first editorial in 2007 with 'Greetings from your new editor, dear reader'. The new editor predicted few changes. The 'ALJ stays our flagship publication' that throughout its existence has 'helped us make sense of where we find ourselves, and helped us explain ourselves' to others (2007, 3). McCallum's relatively brief period as editor, three years compared with Levett's two decades, came as changes to The Journal were again being introduced; a reduction in pages, variation of the terms and conditions for editorial appointments, and rearrangement of The Journal's production. A significant event for The Journal in McCallum's last year as editor was its selection for indexing by Social Sciences Citation Index, the oldest and arguably best-known citation index with the potential to improve the exposure and profile of The Journal and its contributing authors in the international LIS community.

An interim editor, Helen Partridge, published a combined first and second issue in 2010 while the Association finalised the appointment of the present editor, Ann Ritchie, and a new editorial board. A review of the Association's publishing resulted in a decision to redesign the Journal's 'cover and overall look ... to reflect the value of its contents to the profession, but also a user-friendly, practitioner-based style'. This decision was made with the intention of creating a distinction between *The Australian Library Journal*, 'a practitioner-based journal', and the Association's other publication *Australian Academic & Research Libraries*, 'an academic research journal' (Partridge 2010, 2). However, in Ritchie's first editorial she announced a new description for The Journal as: 'an internationally recognised journal that showcases the best of Australian library and information research and practice'. It begs the question about the relationship between the Association's two journals and whether one, the other or both can be sustained as serial publications for Australian LIS research and practice.

Although the purpose of *The Australian Library Journal* remains similar to Metcalfe's original aim to 'help in the achievement' of the Association's objects (1951, 3), and in terms of longevity and readership The Journal continues to be the 'flagship publication of the Australian Library and Information Association', it is also clear from the Association's recent review of publishing that uncertainties of the past continue into the present. Finding a balance to meet the diverse needs of the Australian LIS profession has challenged editors of The Journal over its lifetime, and the tensions that exist between a practitioner focus and research reporting are as acute now as ever. In part this is due to circumstances beyond the control of The Journal, such as the Federal Government initiative, Excellence in Research for Australia, to reward quality research outputs by educators, primarily focusing on journal articles. The imperative for a strong LIS publishing environment is not, however, only important to educators. A robust research culture also benefits the profession as a whole by advancing knowledge and contributing to the ongoing enhancement of our services. Research and practice working in partnership are the hallmarks of a mature profession, and a journal that nurtures and sustains this partnership should be celebrated.

In closing, it is appropriate to quote the longest serving editor of *The Australian Library Journal* who wrote: 'the journal *does* have a future, and one which cannot be

contemplated without regards to its past' (Levett 1996, 3) – a past to which this brief history pays tribute.

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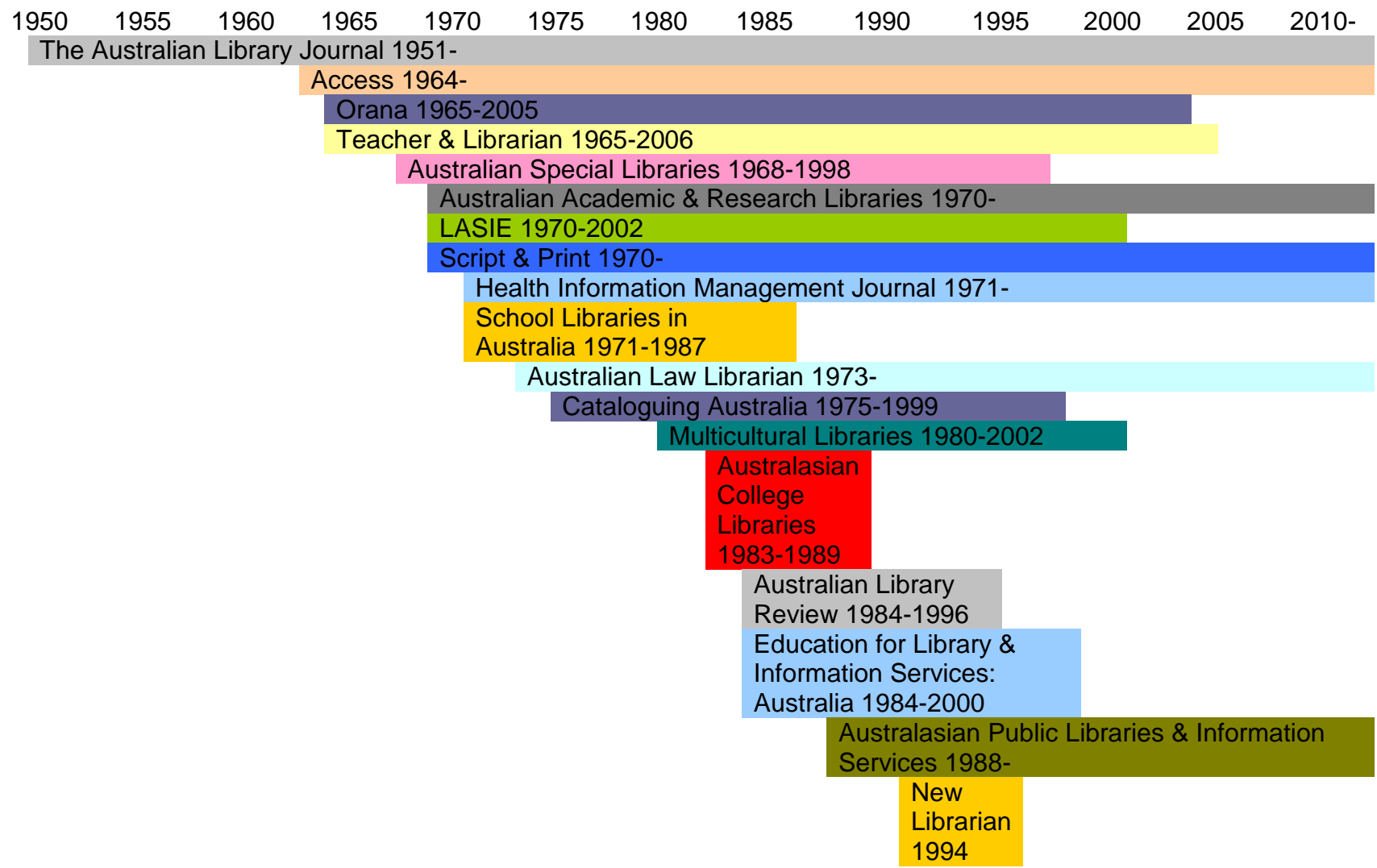


Figure 1. Australian LIS journal publishing since 1950