

# **An Assessment of Australian Research Library Journal Cancellations, 1990-2003**

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**This paper reports on the outcomes of research assessing the nature and extent of print journal cancellations by Australian research libraries since 1990. The cancellation activity of two groups of libraries, one representing the national and state library sector and the other the university library sector, was examined. These two groups were tested for their cancellation of both Australian and international journals. From the results some conclusions are reached about the factors driving the cancellations and the implications these cancellations might have for the nation's access to scholarly journal literature.**

Arguably the defining issue to face research libraries in the past decade has been the pressure on their serial collections. This issue, often referred to as the 'serials crisis' or more broadly the 'scholarly communication crisis', is in reality a number of interrelated issues. These issues might be grouped under the headings 'economic' and 'technological' and they take in the many factors which have affected the capacity of research libraries to collect published scholarly material, and the format in which they make it available.

One of the features of the research library response to the crisis has been the cancellation of print copies of serials, particularly scholarly journals. It was the journal that bore the brunt of the price rises that were a hallmark of scholarly publishing in the period post-1990, and the scholarly journal was also the publishers' choice when they set about creating a market for full text electronic content. Initially subscriptions to electronic journals were undertaken individually, but more recently the emphasis has moved to large databases of full text journals compiled by publishers and suppliers. It is acknowledged that there are differences between several types of these databases on the market, but for the purpose of this discussion they are referred to generically as 'aggregations'.

The development of aggregations has transformed the serial selection practices of libraries, shifting the emphasis from individual print titles to a choice between databases offering a suite of titles (Quinn, 2001). Not surprisingly, libraries have reportedly funded the acquisition of these databases by cancelling print subscriptions, although the extent to which this has happened has been questioned (Nabe, 2001). There have, however, been risks associated with this strategy, given the lack of stability of aggregations, which may delete and add titles without reference to subscribers. Additional issues that have been raised include licensing agreements which prohibit copying on behalf of other libraries, and the loss of access to content if a library should cease their subscription (Quinn, 2001).

Commentators have noted that this changing serials environment has altered the journal cancellation practices of libraries. There are now a range of complex collection imperatives which typify the 'hybrid library', as a result of which cancellation decisions require consideration of criteria which did not exist with

collections that were overwhelmingly print based (Jaguszewski & Probst, 2000; Rupp-Serrano, Robbins, & Cain, 2002).

Other research that has been conducted regarding the uptake of electronic journals has focused on the reading behaviour and preferences of library users (Morse & Clintworth, 2000; Tenopir & King, 2002; Maula & Talja, 2003; Smith, 2003; Vaughan, 2003). For the most part the results of these studies have reported users' preference for the convenience of electronic journals, and this has in turn further justified libraries in their decision to cancel print subscriptions.

### **Aims of the research**

The research results presented in this paper were derived as a partial outcome of a study examining the changing availability of Australian journals in research library collections.

This particular component of the research was initially undertaken in order to measure the impact of aggregations on print journal subscriptions. The intention had been to focus on the cancellations in the post-2000 period, in order to assess the cancellation impact of the full text availability of Australian journals delivered as part of the Australian Public Affairs Full Text (APA-FT) database. It was decided, however, that a study of cancellation activity over a longer period was warranted. The uptake of electronic full-text via a number of large scale databases from the mid-1990s on – in many cases including titles that are duplicated in the APA-FT database - meant that it was impossible to establish with any high degree of accuracy the impact of one database alone.

It also became apparent that in order to understand the impact of aggregations it would be necessary to examine cancellation patterns as they existed prior to their introduction. As a result the study was extended back to 1990 with a view to assessing the impact of other likely causes of cancellations during this period, in particular those associated with rises in the cost of scholarly journals.

The aim of the research was therefore to track journal cancellations by Australian research libraries for the period 1990 to 2003, in order to;

- assess rates of cancellation of established journals,
- discover if there were patterns of cancellations which could be attributed to either economic factors or to developments in the availability of electronic periodicals, particularly in the form of aggregations.

It was decided to separate the body of research libraries into the grouping of the national, state and territory libraries affiliated with the Council of Australian State Libraries (CASL), and the university based libraries affiliated with the Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL). This distinction was made in the belief that the CASL and CAUL libraries have been responding to different circumstances due to the differences in the nature of their collections and services.

### **Methodology**

The study commenced with a review of the CAUL statistics recording cancellation activity by the university libraries. It became clear that these statistics are flawed in a number of ways (Genoni, 2004), and that a different approach to the task of assessing cancellation activity was warranted. It was therefore decided to undertake a study of cancellations that was 'journal based', rather than one which depended on the 'institution based' figures supplied by the CASL or CAUL libraries.

Thirty Australian titles were selected by a form of purposive sampling, with each of the selected titles meeting the following criteria.

- They are available in full text on the APA-FT database.
- They are established journals, having commenced publication prior to 1990.
- They are still active.
- They are targeted at a scholarly audience. (All but two of the journals are identified as being an 'academic-scholarly' publication by *Ulrich's International Periodical Directory*. The exceptions are *Eureka Street* and *Island*, both of which are recorded – erroneously - as 'Consumer publication'.)

All of these titles are published in Australia with the exception of *Antipodes: A North American Journal of Australian Literature*, which is published in New York.

Thirty international journals were selected. In order to create a sample which was comparable to the Australian titles, social science and humanities journals were selected. The international journals met the following criteria.

- They are available in full text on the ProQuest 5000 database.
- The full text coverage commenced before 2000.
- They are established journals, having commenced publication prior to 1990.
- They are still active.
- There were no stated embargoes on the availability of the full text (on the understanding that embargoes would act as a disincentive to the cancellation of the full text (Brooks, 2003)).
- They are targeted at a scholarly audience. (All of the journals are identified as being an 'academic-scholarly' publication by *Ulrich's International Periodical Directory*.)

Journals included in the APA-FT and ProQuest 5000 databases were selected because of their electronic availability. That is, as it was hoped to assess the impact of aggregations on print subscriptions, then it was desirable that libraries had a known source of access to these journals in an electronic form.

Seven CASL libraries access APA-FT through a subscription held by the CASL Consortium, and in excess of twenty university libraries have access to APA-FT via the subscription of the CAUL Electronic Information Resources Committee (CEIRC). Most other university libraries access APA-FT through independent subscriptions. CEIRC also provides access to ProQuest 5000 for in excess of thirty university libraries. ProQuest 5000 is the most heavily subscribed of the CEIRC provided aggregations that offer access to international journals. The CASL Consortium has not yet provided members with access to ProQuest 5000 or a similar database of international titles (CASL Consortium, 2004).

Holdings for all of the sixty titles were then checked using Kinetica. Records were made of holdings by CASL and CAUL libraries, and of all post-1990 cancellations by these same libraries. When a title had ceased being received it was assumed that it had been actively cancelled by the library concerned. It was of course not possible to tell exactly when the decision to cancel had been taken. The date recorded therefore is the cover date of the last issue of the journal received. The prepayment of subscriptions will have meant that in some cases the decision to cancel a title will take place in a calendar year prior to the publication and receipt of the last copy.

In many cases it was not possible to determine the state of a subscription by looking at the Kinetica record. A number of 'holdings' statements simply record that a library holds a title, but with no further details, or it is difficult to tell from the holdings record if a title is still being received or not. In all of these cases a check was then undertaken using library catalogues in order to determine accurately the state of the subscription. In several cases where this was still not clear a phone call was made to the library concerned to seek clarification.

Checking with local catalogues was also necessary for several libraries that have not contributed full data to Kinetica. If there were questions about the completeness of a library's records on Kinetica, all sixty titles were checked against that library's catalogue.

The data was collected between February and April 2004. As the data collection occurred early in 2004, it is probable that the final issues of journals with 2003 cover dates have not yet been received or accessioned, or that catalogue records and Kinetica records have not yet been appropriately amended. It is therefore highly likely that the cancellations recorded for 2003 are understated. No cancellations were recorded for 2004.

### **Limitations**

Although the original intention had been to focus on titles with Australian content, it was decided that a comparison with international titles would enrich the picture of cancellation activity during this period.

Consideration was given to creating a second set of Australian titles, with the intention of establishing a form of control. These would be journals that were not included in APA-FT. This was abandoned when it was realised that the journals which could be appropriately identified were often available from other full text sources, in which case cancellation could still be an outcome of their being available in electronic full text; or that the journals were of a non-academic type or with restricted circulation, in which case they were of a qualitatively different type. In this latter case it was believed that comparisons between the two groups of journals would serve very little value given the substantial differences between them. The notion of using a control group was therefore abandoned.

The selection of journals from the APA-FT database meant that they are social sciences and humanities titles. This was appropriate, however, as the research was driven in part by a curiosity about the degree to which Australians' capacity to find information or content about their own nation may have been affected by

cancellations. For reason of making comparisons the group of international titles was also selected from these same disciplines. It may well be, however, that different imperatives have been operating for science, medicine and technology (SMT) journals, both in terms of the price rises they have experienced, and their desirability in electronic form. Therefore a similar investigation using SMT journals might produce different results.

### **Australian Journals**

Table 1 represents the current subscriptions to (hold.), and cancellations since 1990 (canc.) of, the thirty Australian titles. They have been separated by CASL libraries and CAUL libraries. In some cases the total for either CASL or CAUL exceeds the number of libraries belonging to these groupings. This is the result of multiple subscriptions recorded for single institutions.

**Table 1 Australian journals; holdings 2004 & cancellations 1990-2003**

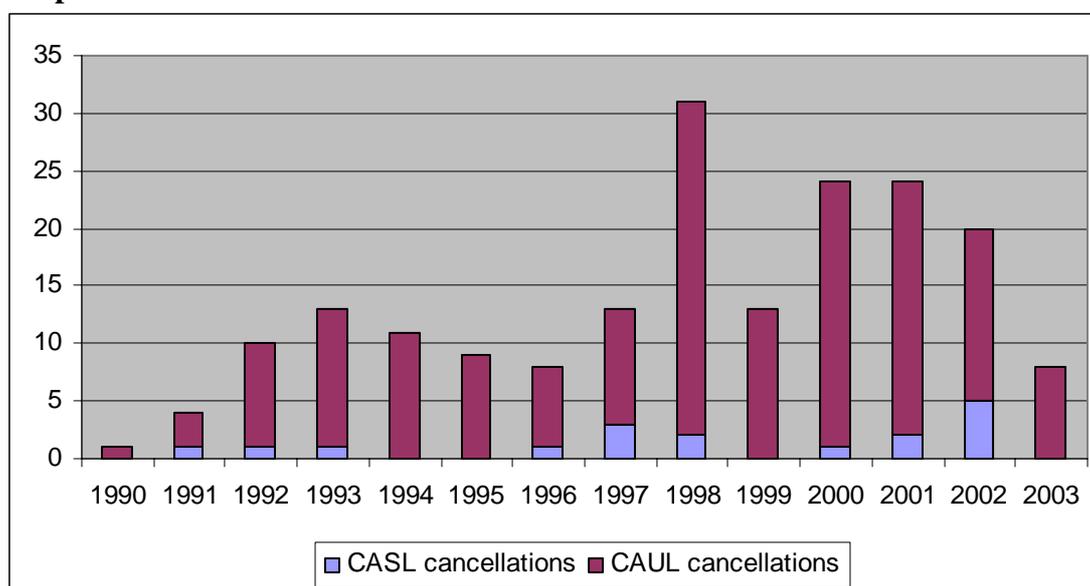
<b>Title</b>	<b>CASL hold.</b>	<b>CASL canc.</b>	<b>CAUL hold.</b>	<b>CAUL canc.</b>	<b>Total hold.</b>	<b>Total canc.</b>
Alternative Law Journal	7	0	39	13	46	13
Antipodes	4	2	15	3	19	5
Australian Aboriginal Studies	8	1	48	6	56	7
Australian Archaeology	5	1	18	1	23	2
Australian Geographer	8	0	29	10	37	10
Babel	5	1	15	5	20	6
Bull. Bib Soc of Aust & NZ	7	0	9	4	16	4
Eureka Street	8	0	37	3	45	3
Flinders J. of History & Politics	4	0	8	2	12	2
Hecate	7	0	31	11	38	11
Historical Rec. of Aust. Science	8	1	18	8	26	9
Institute of Public Affairs Review	8	0	11	9	19	9
Island	7	1	32	3	39	4
JAS	7	0	41	9	48	9
Journal of Industrial Relations	8	0	42	11	50	11
Journal of Pacific History	6	1	27	12	33	13
Journal of Tourism Studies	4	0	30	3	34	3
LINQ: Literature in North Q'land	5	0	15	3	20	3
Margin	5	1	9	3	14	4
Musicology Australia	5	0	18	4	23	4
Overland	7	0	37	5	44	5
Papers: Explor. in Childrens Lit.	5	1	21	5	26	6
Policy	8	0	28	1	36	1
Prometheus	8	0	20	10	28	10
Social Analysis	4	3	15	3	19	6
Sabretache	6	1	1	1	7	2
South Aust. Geographical J.	3	1	6	7	9	8
Southern Review	8	0	33	12	41	12
St Mark's Review	5	1	9	2	14	3
Tasmanian Historical Studies	5	1	2	3	7	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>664</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>849</b>	<b>189</b>

The apparently high rate of cancellations is immediately obvious, particularly amongst CAUL libraries. The CAUL libraries cancelled 20.5% of their holdings for this group of journals in the surveyed period, whereas the cancellation rate by the CASL libraries was substantially lower at 8.41%. The overall cancellation rate for both groups of libraries was 18.2%, with every journal in the sample group experiencing at least one cancellation.

The journals which experienced the highest overall rate of cancellation were *South Australian Geographical Journal* (47%) and *Tasmanian Historical Studies* (36.3%). This may suggest that Australian journals with a regional focus are prone to cancellation, although this evidence is contradicted by the comparatively low cancellation rate experienced by *LiNQ: Literature in North Queensland* (13%).

Graph 1 presents the cancellations of Australian journals by years.

**Graph 1 CASL & CAUL cancellations of Australian titles**



There was little evidence of cancellations of Australian journals at the beginning of the 1990s, but they soon began to occur.

Cancellations for the years 1992-1997 appear to have occurred at a fairly steady rate, although the figures do indicate a 'mini-peak' in 1993. This was the year of the first crisis in the value of the Australian dollar for the decade. The second currency crisis occurred in late 1997 and into 1998, and the impact of this event is also indicated in the graph. This evidence suggests that reductions in the value of the Australian dollar induced libraries to not only cancel international journals, but also to reduce their holdings of Australian titles as part of an overall reappraisal of their subscriptions.

Graph 1 also indicates that the cancellation activity of Australian journals post-1998 has continued at a higher level than pre-1998. The continued low value of the dollar during this period – yet another low point was achieved in 2001 – undoubtedly continued to have an impact. It is also very likely, however, that these cancellations have been influenced by the increasing availability of Australian journals in electronic format, particularly with the advent of APA-FT which became available in 2000.

Certainly there is a suggestion from the 2002 figures that CASL libraries may have become more active in cancelling Australian journals.

### International Journals

Table 2 represents the current subscriptions to, and cancellations of, the thirty international titles.

**Table 2 International journals; holdings 2004 & cancellations 1990-2003**

Title	CASL hold.	CASL canc.	CAUL hold.	CAUL canc.	Total hold.	Total canc.
Adult Education Quarterly	0	2	16	7	16	9
American Anthropologist	3	2	18	6	21	8
Anthropological Quarterly	0	1	5	4	5	5
Brit J for the History of Science	2	1	5	8	7	9
Canadian J of Public Health	0	1	7	8	7	9
Catholic Historical Review	0	1	7	4	7	5
Communication Quarterly	1	1	7	3	8	4
Daedalus	1	3	16	12	17	15
Dispute Resolution Journal	0	0	8	3	8	3
Economic Geography	3	1	12	19	15	20
Educational Theory	0	1	25	14	25	15
German Quarterly	0	1	13	2	13	3
Harvard J of Law & Pub Policy	0	0	5	7	5	7
Historian	2	1	9	3	11	4
Journal of Canadian Studies	1	1	8	6	9	7
J of Comparative Family Stud	1	2	7	16	8	18
Journal of Consumer Research	0	1	24	11	24	12
Journal of Contemporary Asia	4	0	21	16	25	16
Language and Speech	0	1	14	7	14	8
Literary Review	2	1	2	3	4	4
Mankind Quarterly	3	1	3	3	6	4
Modern Age	0	1	0	1	0	2
New Z J of Industrial Relations	2	1	12	4	14	5
Pacific Affairs	7	0	20	11	27	11
Review of Metaphysics	0	1	14	3	14	4
Rural Sociology	0	1	15	9	15	10
Social Forces	0	1	12	18	12	19
Texas Law Review	0	1	9	5	9	6
Theological Studies	0	1	10	3	10	4
World Policy Journal	1	0	7	2	8	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>248</b>

These figures indicate that libraries have been more aggressive in cancelling international journals than Australian journals. In this case, however, it is the CASL libraries that have been more active. CASL libraries have cancelled 47.6%, and CAUL libraries 39.7%, of subscriptions to international titles. Overall 40.52% of subscriptions have been cancelled.

It is also apparent that the cancellation rate by CASL libraries would have been much higher if journals that include content relevant to the Australian region were excluded

from the sample. Neither *Pacific Affairs* nor the *Journal of Contemporary Asia* suffered a single CASL cancellation, and excluding them would bring the figure for CASL cancellations up to 57.7%.

The majority of the decline in CASL subscriptions to international journals is attributable to the NLA. In 1990 the NLA held 28 of the 30 international journals included in the sample, but they have current subscriptions to 5 of these titles only. Of the 23 journals cancelled by the NLA, the final copies of 18 of these were received in 1994 or 1995. It was in these years that the Library instigated a significant shift in its collecting priorities. Mounting financial pressure, exacerbated by the decline in the value of the Australian dollar, was undoubtedly influential in this decision, but the Library was also driven by a desire to sharpen its focus on Australian content. The NLA therefore decided to substantially reduce its previous level of international collecting, including journals. The NLA's *Annual Report* for 1994-95 stated that:

A key element in the Library's strategic plan is the reduction of the amount of material collected from overseas. The Library has moved away from the belief that it can best serve the needs of users and the Australian library community by developing a large pan-disciplinary collection containing substantial amounts of material from around the world. An increasing amount of material is being acquired by other Australian libraries and much of it duplicates the National Library holdings. (National Library of Australia, 1995)

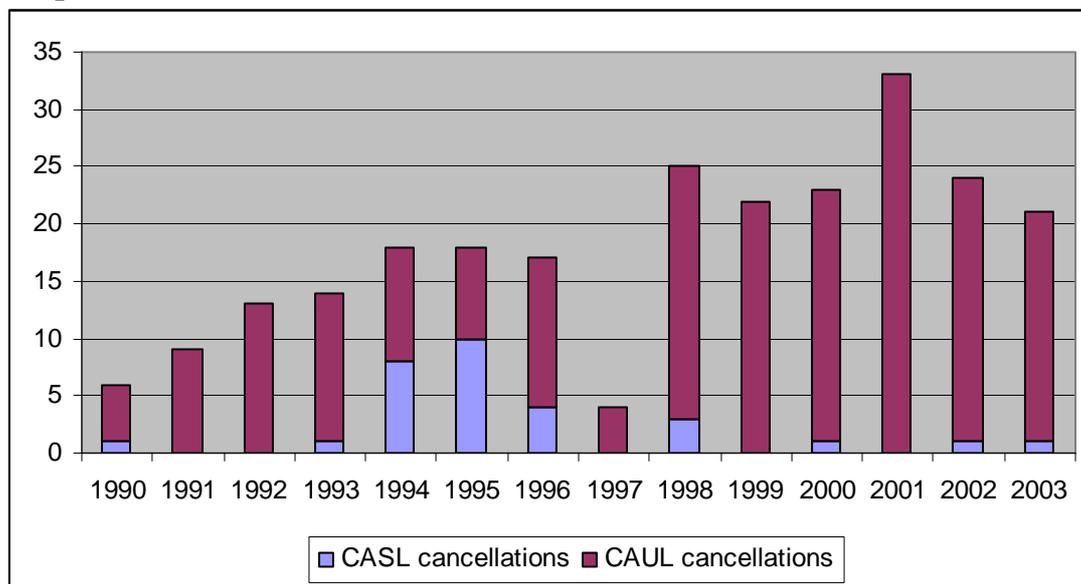
The impact of this decision on the sum of the journals available within the CASL libraries is worth pondering. In 1990, 28 of the 30 journals had at least one CASL holding, but by 2004 this had been reduced to 14, a loss of 14 titles. Rather than being increasingly available in other libraries as the NLA had suggested, the 14 'lost' journals had their subscriptions to print copies in CAUL libraries reduced by 41% between 1990 and 2003. And whereas the content of these journals has recently become more widely available to university library users as a result of the CEIRC ProQuest 5000 subscription, this has been of little or no benefit to users without university affiliation. Even if the university libraries permit walk in use of databases of electronic journals, this is likely to be an unfamiliar and daunting experience which would effectively prevent most public users from accessing these journals.

There is also a further suggestion in these results of the extent to which diversity has been lost from the CASL collections. The two most widely held journals – with a total of 11 subscriptions – were *Journal of Contemporary Asia* and *Pacific Affairs*. They did not suffer one cancellation during a period when the last CASL subscriptions to 14 titles were lost.

It is also worth pondering the fate of *Modern Age*. This title was previously subscribed to by one CASL library (NLA) and one CAUL library (University of Sydney). These subscriptions ceased in 1995 and 1998 respectively. There is now no recorded subscription to the print version of this journal on the National Bibliographic Database.

Graph 2 presents a longitudinal representation of the cancellation activity for international titles by CASL and CAUL libraries.

**Graph 2 CASL & CAUL cancellations of international titles**

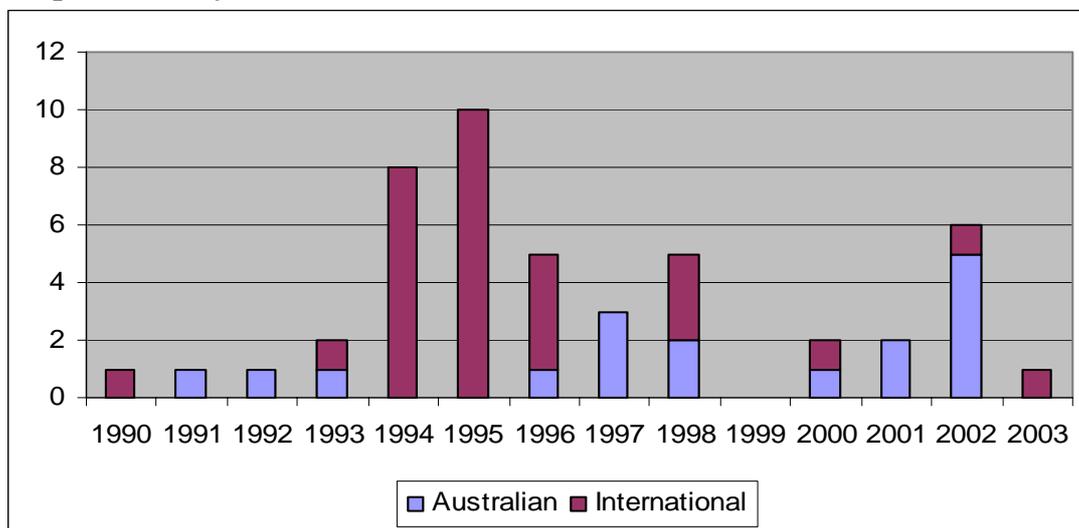


Generally the trend has been for increasing cancellation of international journals. The low figure recorded for 1997 would appear to be something of a statistical aberration, which would in all likelihood be corrected by a larger sample.

The impact of the National Library's change of collecting policy in 1994 – referred to above – is apparent, as is the breach caused by the currency crisis in 1998. Cancellation rates have, however, remained high since then. The low point reached by the Australian dollar in 2001 is again reflected in the figures. It is also probable that the continued high rate of cancellation of international titles reflects the widespread availability of these titles in electronic formats, including as part of aggregations such as ProQuest 5000.

The decreased rate of cancellations of international titles by CASL libraries in very recent years likely reflects the fact that their holdings of these titles have been reduced to little more than a core collection.

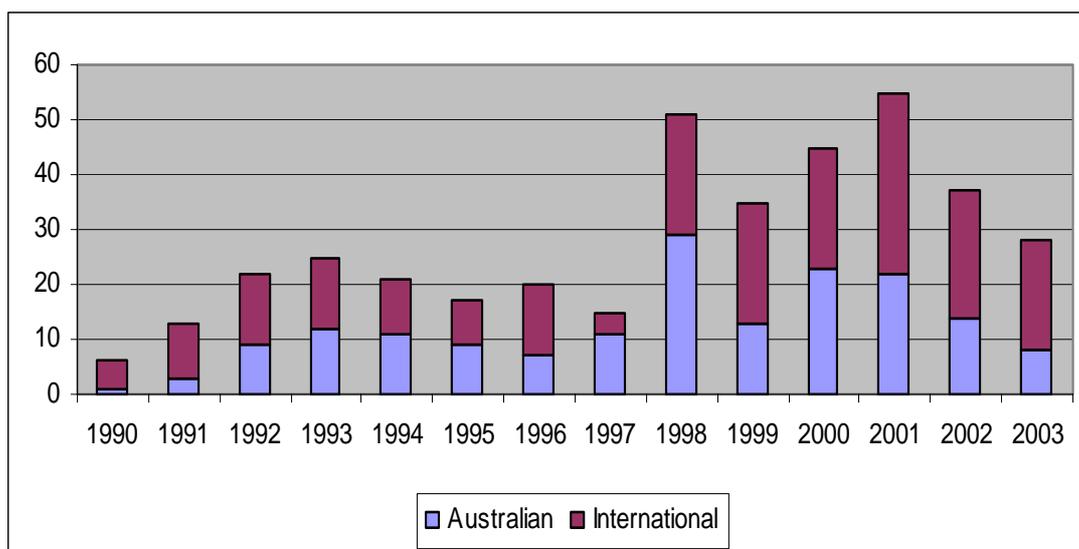
**Graph 3 CASL journal cancellations 1990-2003**



The notable feature of Graph 3 is its stark representation of the cancellations of international journals undertaken by the NLA in 1994 and 1995. All of the CASL cancellations recorded in this survey for those two years were by the NLA. Although these years were by far the most active for cancellations of international titles by the NLA, they have been ongoing since then, with subscriptions declining from 12,317 in 1995 to 9,139 in 2000 (Gatenby, 2000).

The other feature worth noting is the result for 2002, which might indicate the commencement of a trend towards the cancellation of Australian titles. As the CASL collections are reduced to a core set of international journals, it may well be that access to the electronic full text of Australian journals via APA-FT will be funded by the reduction of print subscriptions to those same Australian titles.

**Graph 4 CAUL journal cancellations 1990 - 2003**



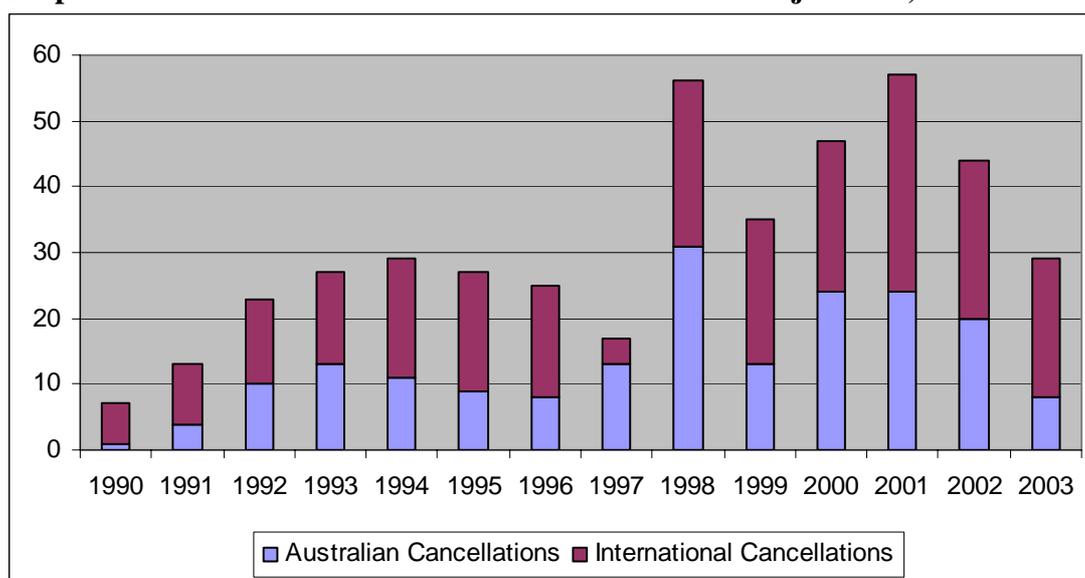
Graph 4 suggests that although cancellations by CAUL libraries had been ongoing throughout the early and mid-90s, the serials crisis only really began to seriously 'bite' in 1998. This evidence supports recent research based on an analysis of the CAUL statistics – and studying new subscriptions as well as cancellations - which suggests that the CAUL collections of print serials continued to grow until 1998 (Genoni, 2004). This conclusion is, however, contrary to other uses of the CAUL statistics which date the serious decline in print serial subscriptions by CAUL libraries somewhat earlier than this (Batterham, 2000; Houghton, 2002; Houghton, Steele & Henty, 2003). Certainly there is no evidence in the figures presented above, however, to support the claim that 'in the five years to 1998 the number of journals purchased by Australia's 38 university libraries was reduced by almost half' (Steele, 2000, p.99). On the sample used in this survey, the reduction on CAUL subscriptions in these five years was 7%, and this is without allowing for the offset factor of new subscriptions.

It is clear that the economics of acquiring scholarly journals were putting pressure on acquisitions budgets throughout the course of the decade. Some cancellations did follow from this in the pre-1998 period, but the university libraries were not in a position to respond as the National Library did by radically reordering their priorities with regard to international journals. It would seem that the CAUL libraries therefore held out against massive cancellations until 1998. At this time they not only faced renewed financial pressure due to the further declining currency value, but they also had available a reasonable alternative in the form of electronic full text. Several of the CAUL libraries issued statements at the time indicating that the primary cause of the cancellations was financial (see for example; Monash University, 1998; Australian National University, 1999). Some of these statements, however, also pointed to the replacement of print journal subscriptions by electronic versions (Queensland University of Technology Library, 1998).

It should also be noted that many universities, as a resulting of acquiring ProQuest 5000 and similar aggregations, will have retrieved access to journals that they had previously cancelled in the early and mid-90s. Although this may be fortunate, it also points to the 'flukish' nature of (post)modern library collections, where content is determined by factors other than carefully considered selection decisions. The

haphazard nature of current collection development is starkly highlighted in these cases, however, as libraries may be left with a gap in their 'holdings' due to the limited availability of older content provided by the aggregations.

**Graph 5 All cancellations of Australian and international journals, 1990-2003**



Graph 5 illustrates the pattern of cancellations after 1990 incorporating the results for both the CASL and CAUL libraries. The impact of the currency crises of 1998 and 2001 are apparent, and 1998 is again notable as the year in which the number of cancellations rose sharply to a level which has continued to exceed that recorded for 1990-1997. Again it should be noted that the result for 2003 is likely to have been reduced by incomplete data.

It is also worth noting that the cancellation of international titles has surpassed that of Australian titles in 11 of the 14 years, despite the fact that the Australian titles have commenced from a considerably larger 'base' number (ie in all this survey recorded 1038 subscriptions to Australian journals, and 612 to international journals).

## **Discussion and conclusion**

The results of this investigation indicate the general trends in journal cancellations for Australian research libraries for the period post-1990. It also establishes that there were differences between the CASL and CAUL libraries.

The CASL libraries cancellation activity during this period was dominated by the NLA's reduction in international journals instigated in 1994. There is also evidence of a more recent CASL willingness to cancel Australian titles, and this may be associated with their availability via the APA-FT database.

The CAUL libraries cancelled a higher proportion of international than Australian journals during this period. There was a small peak in cancellations in 1993 corresponding with a decline in the value of the Australian dollar, and a major loss of subscriptions in 1998 following a further currency devaluation. Since that time cancellations have continued at a high level, peaking again at the time of yet another currency crisis in 2001. It is highly likely that these later cancellations have been underpinned by the replacement of the content of both Australian and international journals by access to electronic full text.

Assessing exactly why cancellations have occurred is, however, increasingly difficult to determine with certainty. The reasons for the cancellations undertaken by the National Library in 1994-95 and by the CAUL libraries in 1998 can be identified with confidence, as they have been placed on the public record. Even at these times, however, a narrow focus on the economic factors can hide some of the broader environmental issues. The CAUL statistics, for example, reveal that new subscriptions continued at a healthy rate for much of the 1990s (Genoni, 2004), and at least some cancellations are therefore likely to have been attributable to the usual shifts in collecting priorities that occur for most libraries.

The causes of cancellations occurring since 1998 are less certain, in that the 'push-and-pull' impact of economic and technological issues become almost impossible to separate. Economic factors – both rising prices and a fluctuating currency - may well be providing the impetus, but it is equally certain that both CASL and CAUL libraries are attracted by the opportunities offered by aggregations to supply new content and improve access to their 'collections'. This inevitably entails some cancellations from the existing print subscriptions, and the strategy is not without risk. Aggregations may only be an interim form of delivery for electronic content, and there are a number of commentators who are prepared to warn of the dangers they present (Quinn, 2001; Friend, 2003; Ball, 2004)

Notwithstanding the unresolved issues regarding aggregations and the challenges they pose to some of the traditional principles of collection development, it is likely that most users of university based library services and collections have not suffered a significant loss of content as a result of the cancellations of print subscriptions. This conclusion is tentative, however, and requires an examination of the subscription fate of journals which – for whatever reason – have not been made available electronically. Particularly important in this regard is the suggestion that some journals will cease publication if they fail, or are refused the opportunity, to make content available via aggregations (Friend, 2003; Thorin, 2003).

From the data presented above it can be concluded that the 'losers' from post-1990 journal cancellations have been the users dependent on the CASL libraries for access to international journals. At the same time as these journals have been lost from the CASL collections, public access to content in university libraries has been increasingly restricted by the licensing agreements associated with their decision to 'go electronic'. Many of these licences restrict access via interlibrary loans, and some of the university libraries also prevent public 'walk in' access to their databases of electronic journals. Certainly the users of the CASL libraries are not being afforded the full advantages of an information environment in which remote desktop access to journal literature has become the norm against which measures of information disadvantage will be judged.

This point was addressed in the recommendations of the recent Senate report, *Libraries in the Online Environment*, which called for special Commonwealth funding to be made available to enable national site licences to be negotiated for 'a number of key databases' (Australia. The Senate, 2003, p66). In the absence of such funding, the focus of the NLA's *Electronic Information Resources Strategies and Action Plan* remains focussed on Australian content (National Library of Australia, 2002)

It appears inevitable, however, that if the CASL libraries continue to narrow their focus on national and state content - be it in print or electronic form - then this will have the affect of further reducing the information base available to the general public.

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