

# Using metadata to explore the world: NAA and ABS seminar

The National Archives of Australia (NAA) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) co-presented a program, "Sharing Data, Sharing Ideas" as part of Information Awareness Month on 27 May 2009. The aim of the forum was to bring together a diversity of metadata communities to share experiences, collaborate, and look to the future.

Senator Lundy, a long-time advocate for metadata and the only parliamentarian to have uttered the word 'metadata' in the chambers, opened the program with her perspectives on the digital revolution and the place of metadata in managing the information space. Senator Lundy sees that metadata can be a key enabler for:

- making information easily accessible to Australian citizens when and where they need it; and
- enabling the development of innovative and robust government policy and programs based on good, timely, open information.

Michele Berkhout, a data professional from the SEMA Group in Queensland, delivered the keynote address and put "sharing data, sharing ideas" into a global context for us all by "using metadata to interpret our world". Attendees participated in a group exercise SMSing a word or phrase in response to a series of images which were compiled live into a kind of tag cloud at the end of the presentation – a new form of audience participation!

There followed a number of presentations on various Australian web portals, online information systems, and web tools utilising metadata:

- Joanne Evans, a Research Fellow for the Smart Information Portal Project at Monash University, led a project to develop a consumer portal for breast cancer information, BCKOnline, (<http://www.bcna.org.au>). While the project was successful, the project team is still grappling with the most efficient means to produce quality metadata.
- Vanessa Scott (Information Victoria) is the Content Manager for Victoria Online (<http://www.vic.gov.au>), a government information portal for Victorian citizens. Vanessa creates all the metadata for Victoria Online and she described how the portal's flexibility and degree of customisation can be exploited to respond to client needs and current events.
- Gary Anderson (Attorney-General's Department) has been involved in the development of the Emergency

Management Metadata Application Profile with XML Syntax (draft) using AGLS Metadata Standard Part 2 as part of the AusDIN (Australian Disaster Information Network) portal project (<http://www.ausdin.gov.au>).

- Mary Jane Stannus (ABC) gave us some interesting insights into the management of content using metadata on their websites and the development of "ABC Core" metadata for key entities produced by the ABC (<http://www.abc.net.au>).
- Barry Thomas spoke about the development of the National Electronic Conveyancing System (NECS, <http://www.necs.gov.au>) due to go live in 2011. In this case, metadata was used to solve the problem of data interoperability between parties who would not otherwise be inclined to collaborate.
- Ross Wilkinson explained how ANDS (Australian National Data Service, <http://ands.org.au>) is building a data commons for Australian researchers. Metadata will be used for data citation, to support data re-use, for data management, and for data collections to enable discovery.
- Ron Chernich, University of Queensland, is developing metadata tools for e-Research, leveraging IT to assist research data sharing and researcher collaboration (<http://www.itee.uq.edu.au/~eresearch>).
- Peter Alexander from AGIMO told us why [australia.gov.au](http://www.australia.gov.au) (<http://www.australia.gov.au>) doesn't use AGLS metadata for search: the quality of Australian Government metadata is, with a couple of exceptions, too low to be an effective resource discovery tool.

Some common themes emerging from the presentations were:

- Metadata is being used for resource discovery and information sharing
- In general, good quality metadata is not available for harvesting
- Manual metadata creation gives fine control and good quality, but the cost is too high
- Automated systems for metadata creation are not yet good enough
- Who bears the costs and where do the benefits accrue?

All of the presentations are available from the National Archives of Australia website: <http://www.naa.gov.au/whats-on/outreach-and-advocacy/forums/metadata/>.

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# The Librarians 2 – ABC1 in August


The first series of *The Librarians* screened on ABC TV in 2007 to great critical and audience response. It received two AFI nominations for Most Outstanding Performance in a Comedy (Robyn Butler) and Most Outstanding Comedy. The second instalment premieres Wednesday 5 August at 9pm on ABC1.

Frances O'Brien (Robyn Butler) can't seem to get anybody's attention. Ky (Keith Brockett) is in love, Dawn (Heidi Arena) is broken hearted, and Matthew (Stephen Ballantyne) is exploring his sexuality. Neil, (Bob Franklin) the convicted thief, is back – free and proudly wielding a library card. Father Harris (Kim Gynge) is on sabbatical.

Life at home isn't any better. Terry (Wayne Hope) is even less attentive and their daughters are wilder than ever.

It all leaves Frances breathing harder into her paper bag than ever as she wrestles with being a mother, a lover, and a librarian.

Series two features some of Australia's finest talent including; Vince Colosimo, Noni Hazlehurst, Hamish Blake, Tony Martin, Francis Greenslade and Denise Scott.




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