

AUSTRALIA'S BOOK HERITAGE RESOURCES PROJECT: FINAL REPORT, 25 AUGUST 1994

ROSS HARVEY

Objective of the ABHR Project

THE OBJECTIVE of the Australia's Book Heritage Resources (ABHR) Project is to provide Australian scholars with precise and detailed information about all books printed before 1801 held in the country's libraries. This information is provided in the form of bibliographic records mounted on the Australian Bibliographic Network, a national computer-based cataloguing system widely available through libraries.

Australian libraries hold substantial collections of early printed books, which as well as being a valuable resource in their own right are also a significant part of Australia's national heritage. Until now they have not been very accessible. The consequence has been that such collections have not been used in proportion to their significance and value, in both cultural and monetary terms. It has often been easier for researchers to travel overseas to examine a copy known to be held in, say, the British Library than to seek out a copy in Australia. The ABHR Project has contributed significantly to improving this situation.

Background to the ABHR Project

Attempts to create an inventory of rare book collections in Australia date back to the 1960s, but the first comprehensive listing of pre-1800 books in Australian libraries began in 1978, with the Australia and New Zealand Early Imprints Project. By 1986 listing was substantially complete in New Zealand and in most Australian states. These records, on hand-written cards, were stored in various locations in the states where they were collected.

The ABHR Project aimed to transfer the records for pre-1800 items held in Australia collected by the Early Imprints Project onto the Australian Bibliographic Network (ABN), and also to complete the recording of pre-1800 items (primarily in New South Wales, Victoria and the A.C.T.) which were not listed during the earlier project. A meeting to plan the ABHR Project and prepare an application for research-grant money was held in Canberra in 1991 under the auspices of the Australian Academy for the Humanities. The Australian Research Council's Mechanism C grant program provided funding of \$200,000 for 1992 and \$250,000 for 1993, with other funding coming from Monash University and further assistance from the five other partners in the ABHR Project consortium. The Project was co-ordinated by the Centre for Bibliographical and Textual Studies, Monash University. The first records were added to ABN in March 1992, and the project was wound up in August 1994. However, records will still be added to ABN, under the auspices of the ABHR Project, for some months.

Funding

The ARC funding granted for 1992 was \$200,000, representing a shortfall of \$70,000 in the total sought. This was used to employ research assistants based at Monash University, the University of Sydney, the State Library of New South Wales and the National Library of Australia.

ARC funding of \$250,000 for 1993 was granted, supplemented by \$56,000 from Monash University. This was again used to employ research assistants in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra. The last of these left the Project's payroll at the end of June 1994.

Consortium members have also contributed resources to the Project. The National Library of Australia has waived ABN charges and provided logistical support, Monash University has provided considerable logistical support, the University of Sydney has provided additional staff time in addition to other support, and the State Library of New South Wales has also provided logistical support. The Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand provided bibliographical advice.

Funding (a total of \$506,000) has been disbursed in this manner:

Employment of research assistants:

Monash University	\$217,420
National Library of Australia	\$126,000
State Library of New South Wales	\$63,000
University of Sydney	\$63,000
<i>Equipment, software</i>	\$18,270
<i>Travel, maintenance, overheads</i>	\$18,430

Each of the four main participating institutions chose to use their funding differently. Monash University employed research assistants who added the EIP records on cards to ABN and who also visited libraries in Victoria and New South Wales to list previously unrecorded holdings. Some Monash funding was used to employ CAVAL Ltd to add EIP cards to ABN and to list previously unrecorded material. At the State Library of New South Wales and the Fisher Library, University of Sydney, staff were employed to catalogue material not recorded by EIP. The National Library of Australia upgraded records created by earlier retrospective conversion programs and also created original records. The ABN Office has loaded onto ABN approximately 9,750 records created during the South Australian EIP project and has undertaken to convert and load EIP records from Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania.

Total records added

The provisional total number of records added to ABN during the Project is 71,089. To this should be added an estimated 10,000 records representing holdings in Western Australia, Queensland and Tasmania which the National Library of Australia has agreed to add to ABN. This represents a provisional total of 81,089 records eventually added to ABN as a result of the Project, or about 80% of the

estimated total of 100,000 records. Note that these figures are conservative, that a fuller reckoning would certainly increase the total number of records added. (While the number of records added directly by the Project can be ascertained with some precision, it is impossible to estimate those which have been added as a result of the Project's work but not under the auspices of the Project - for instance, because the Project's activities have dramatically improved hit-rates on ABN for early printed material.)

Participating institutions have added the following number of records:

Monash University	35,352
State Library of New South Wales	2,353
University of Sydney	4,085
National Library of Australia	19,599
ABN Office	9,700
TOTAL:	<u>71,089</u>

Note that the activities undertaken by each participant varied and so the output of each institution cannot be directly compared.

Collections not recorded on ABN

Not all of the estimated 100,000 records for pre-1800 books held in Australian libraries were added to ABN, for various reasons. The most significant problems were technical difficulties, such as ABN response times and establishing connections, the State Library of New South Wales' difficulties in identifying pre-1801 items in their stacks, the difficulty of locating staff with appropriate language skills to list holdings in Sydney, and the funding shortfall of \$70,000 for 1992 (representing the salaries of 2.5 research assistants, or the addition of about 20,000 records). When in 1993 it became possible to estimate with a moderate degree of certainty how many records the remaining funds allowed the Project to deal with, the decision was made and ratified by consortium members to leave unrecorded the collections belonging to larger or better endowed institutions. This decision was made on the basis that such institutions were more likely to be able to provide resources for recording these items on ABN in the future. Thus there are, for example, unrecorded items at the University of Melbourne, the University of Sydney and the State Library of New South Wales. The estimated 23,400 unrecorded records fall into readily definable categories:

private collections, collections at institutions which did not respond to approaches from ABHR for permission to add their EIP records, and very small collections (up to about 20 items) in remote areas:	estimated 2,500
items too fragmentary to be properly identified:	estimated 1,000
a collection of appeal cases at the Supreme Court of Victoria:	estimated 1,000

British imprints at the Fisher Library, University of Sydney:	estimated 1,400
non-British imprints at the Fisher Library:	estimated 4,000
other non-British imprints:	estimated 8,000
New South Wales Parliamentary Library:	estimated 500
other unrecorded items at the University of Sydney and the State Library of New South Wales, difficult to estimate	estimated 5,000

With some readily definable exceptions, then, bibliographic records for all of the pre-1800 material in New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, and South Australia have been recorded on ABN. In addition, the Australian Bibliographic Network has agreed to take responsibility for adding records for holdings in Western Australia, Tasmania and Queensland.

Other outcomes of the ABHR Project

Recent publications include:

Morrison, Ian. 'The Australia's Book Heritage Resources Project', *Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand Bulletin*, v.17 no.3 (1993): 113-124.

Tilley, Christine. *Early Imprints Project Queensland (EIPQ): a Union List* (Brisbane: State Library of Queensland, 1993): 4 microfiche.

Several papers describing the ABHR Project or based on its products were presented at two conferences: the annual meeting of the Rare Books and Special Collections Special Interest Group of the Australian Library and Information Association, and the annual conference of the Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand, both held in Adelaide in September/October 1993. Another paper which dwelt in large part on the ABHR Project's products and on further issues which these raise for ABN was presented at the 10th National Cataloguing Conference, Fremantle, November 1993 and published as:

Bourke, Leonie and Salmond, Rachel. 'From Bibliographer to Cataloguer: Subject Access to Early Printed Books', *Cataloguing Australia*, v.19 nos.3-4 (1993): 160-166.

The future

It was initially thought that there would be a need to establish a mechanism by which additional acquisitions of pre-1801 material could be notified to the ABHR Project for adding to ABN. This is unlikely, however, to be required, for with the dramatic improvement in hit-rates on ABN for pre-1801 items which has resulted from the ABHR Project, it can reasonably be expected that records will be added to ABN in the normal course of library cataloguing practice. It is possible that a continuing program of advertising the existence of pre-1801 records on ABN and encouraging libraries to add holdings for such items to ABN may be of use and could be addressed in, say, two years' time.

When the ABHR Project was planned it was envisaged that one outcome would be a CD-ROM. It is my belief that this is no longer a significant desired outcome,

because such factors as the current software redevelopment of ABN will enable access to the ABHR records by unskilled searchers (such as the average researcher or academic) to be considerably easier than it is at present. The other factor which I believe supports my contention is that AARNet/Internet has become much more accessible in the last two years, allowing greatly increased access to ABN and the ABHR records from a wide variety of locations throughout Australia and, indeed, the world. If a CD-ROM product is required, then a separate project with separate funding will be necessary.

Summary: achievements of the ABHR Project

Although it is difficult to quantify the achievements of the ABHR Project, the nature of the bibliographic database created by the Project is such that it is accessible through terminals in well over 1,000 libraries throughout Australia, and also from any terminal connected to AARNet (and internationally through Internet). Although monitoring of the use of specific groups of records, such as the ABHR records, on ABN (a large database with in excess of 10 million records) is not possible, evidence such as direct approaches made to the Project at Monash from within and outside Australia strongly indicates that the use of these records is rising as the existence of them becomes more widely known in the scholarly community.

ABN is accessible to all Australian libraries, and in the near future it will also be accessible to individuals who wish to make use of it. Researchers can now, by searching ABN, locate early printed books quickly and easily, eliminating the time-consuming and costly preliminary investigations which were formerly a prerequisite for such research in Australia. A search that might have taken weeks, or even months, may now be completed in minutes. In addition, greater possibilities of searching have been introduced: for example, identifying the output of specific printers or publishers becomes much simpler using ABN's Supersearch facility.

The benefits to libraries are also considerable. Queries regarding early printed books can now be handled much more rapidly and easily than has been possible in the past. The speed (and therefore the cost) of cataloguing early printed books has been reduced. There are also benefits in the area of collection development, at both the local and the national level, as collection strengths and weaknesses can be more readily identified, enabling scarce funds to be spent in the most beneficial way.

International collaboration has taken place with the ESTC (Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue) Project, based at the British Library, London, and with its U.S. counterpart based at Riverside, California. This collaboration has involved the addition of records for Australian items to the ESTC database and the verifying of details of items held in Australian libraries for the ESTC London project. The announcement in March 1994 of an international database of early European printing (the Hand Press Database), to be mounted on RLIN, means that the ABHR Project's records could potentially be made available to this database and become more internationally accessible.

Acknowledgments

It is impossible to acknowledge adequately the assistance and participation of every individual, and institution, who has contributed to the ABHR Project and its predecessors over almost two decades. Some contributions, however, deserve specific mention. The efforts of the Project's employees were crucial to its success: these include Ian Morrison, Pamela Pryde, Stephanie Jaehrling, Kirsten Bird and Norm Turnross at Monash; Rosemary Fallon and Pamela Green at the Fisher Library; Diana McBain, Margaret White and Therese Weiss at the State Library of New South Wales; Pauline Haldane, Christopher Harrison, Pam Dunlop, Nicole White, Gerard Lequileuc, Eve Thwaites, Rebecca Cole, Matthew Calaby, Irena Hejk and Mary Adams at the National Library of Australia; and Rachel Salmond, Leonie Bourke, Pat George, Vicky Gurr, Trish Jackson, Barbara Sandeman, Robyn Sanders and Gillian Sulman at CAVAL Ltd. The contribution of those who oversaw activities at each location is gratefully acknowledged: they include Sandra Flisher, Neil Boness, David Toll and Peter Haddad. The advice given by Wallace Kirsop and Brian McMullin is acknowledged with thanks. The staff of the Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records, Monash University, were always supportive of the Project, and in particular the assistance of Mary Lou Maroney is gratefully acknowledged. The many librarians who willingly allowed their collections to be listed and who answered the queries put to them deserve acknowledgment, as do staff of the ABN Office. Finally, thanks are due to the individuals who produced the EIP cards, many of whom did so on a voluntary basis.

On a personal note, I would like to express enormous satisfaction that the work of the Early Imprints Project has been continued and has been brought closer to fruition. The goal of universal bibliographic control, sought by librarians and bibliographers for many centuries, is a small step closer to completion.

Melbourne