

AustLit's Vision Statement:

To be a superlative virtual research environment for Australian literary and print culture researchers and a peerless information resource for all.

The Proposal: That CAUL consider supporting AustLit to become more widely available throughout Australia by assisting us to remove the subscription barriers and move to an open access business model.

Why is AustLit important to the Australian education and research sectors?

[AustLit] offers unparalleled coverage of Australian literature ... AustLit is an indispensable tool for research into Australian literature.

Bert Almon, Professor of English at the University of Alberta, Canada, in a review of AustLit published in the American Library Association's journal, *Choice*, 14.11 (2005).

- AustLit is the premiere resource for information relating to Australian literary history from 1788 to the present.
- AustLit is the most comprehensive source of authoritative information about Australian print cultures available.
- AustLit supports research into all aspects of Australia's narrative history.
- AustLit supports the teaching of our national literature at all levels.
- AustLit is unique in its scope, comprehensiveness and breadth of service delivery.

Who uses AustLit?

- Librarians, academics, researchers, students, teachers, historians, publishers, critics, booksellers, writers, readers, genealogical researchers.
- Use of AustLit has grown steadily over the past decade.

Why is AustLit a subscription service?

- AustLit is a not-for-profit subscription-based organisation that services the needs of the teaching and research sectors in Australia and internationally. All income is fully reinvested in the service.
- AustLit employs experienced, knowledgeable librarians and bibliographers to ensure that the services it delivers are authoritative, dependable and comprehensive. AustLit's only other funding is tied to grant successes.
- Without independent income the quality and diversity of its service delivery would diminish. It would not be able to maintain its high quality information service.

As someone who uses AustLit almost every day, I know my research would be considerably impeded without it. I am continually impressed by the range and depth of coverage of Australian literature which it provides.

(Professor Elizabeth Webby, October 2007)

Why should AustLit be more widely available?

A few months ago I completed my dissertation on contemporary Australian fiction, which I wrote in the U.S. Writing a dissertation on Australian literature from abroad ... would have been infinitely more difficult, if not impossible, without AustLit. Thanks for a wonderful and invaluable database!

(International student
August 2008)

AustLit is the most authoritative source of info on all things literary and Australian - I rely on you guys so much.

(Australian academic,
February 2007)

Congratulations on a fascinating database! I've been glued to it for a couple of days ... Thanks again for many enjoyable hours!

(Guest user, May 2007)

- AustLit is a public service, performing an important public good by recording and making available research-rich content about our literary culture.
- With significant levels of funding from the Australian government and its university partners, AustLit has developed and is developing highly valuable tools and services that are designed to support and facilitate research activities across a very diverse range of areas – from the history of banned books in 20th century Australia through the vibrant and thriving narrative activities of Australian Indigenous writers and storytellers to the relationship between American publishers and Australian writers in the 19th and early 20th century – AustLit allows researchers to use AustLit as a repository for their datasets for analysis and interpretations while enriching a publically available resource for all Australians.
- Making AustLit more widely available will mean that the wealth of information on Australia's literary heritage of the past and the future, which is painstakingly gathered by researchers around the country and the world, will become readily available to all Australians with a networked computer.
- Subscription barriers mean that the discoverability of AustLit content through search engines such as Google is considerably lower than it could be.
- If AustLit was open access, a student in Albury or Alice Springs using the internet to search for information on *The Secret River* would discover the highest quality information available on Kate Grenville and the novel.
- If AustLit was open access a student or researcher in China or Romania or Ireland would be able to discover information to support their work, teaching and study or find information about the impact of the diasporas from their own countries in Australia through the Australian Multicultural Writers Research Communities.

- AustLit understands its users' needs and has developed content and tools that will support digital era research and teaching practice into the future.
- Investment has been made into AustLit development by the ARC, the NCRIS, the ALTC because these organisations recognise that AustLit is an essential aspect of Australian eResearch needs and a high value teaching resource.

Sustaining AustLit into the future

The major challenge AustLit facing is sustaining its core service delivery activities. We agree fundamentally with the principles of the open access movement and the democratisation of knowledge that it facilitates but we must find a business model that will not allow this extremely important national asset lose impetus and become a relic of the past.

The future of education and research globally is a vision of informed society working and learning in a networked world – AustLit is a part of that network. We seek the Council of Australian University Librarians support to make AustLit a part of more Australian's lives by agreeing to continue financially contributing to AustLit while allowing it to become more open.

Kerry Kilner (k.kilner@uq.edu.au) on behalf of the AustLit National Advisory Board