

<http://www.nla.gov.au/pub/gateways/issues/96/story01.html>

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## Australian Newspapers Beta Service Wows Users

The Australian Newspapers Beta Service was launched to the public at the end of July 2008. Since then the service has been heavily used, with around 29,000 full-text keyword searches per day and many more users simply browsing. The service now contains 367,000 newspaper pages from 26 different newspaper titles dating from 1803 to 1954, providing users with over 3.5 million individual articles to search and read. Feedback from users has been overwhelmingly positive with the word 'wow' featuring heavily in the feedback survey form:

*'All I could say was WOW I am so impressed.'*

*'Wow! This is fantastic!'*

*'Just one word, WOW! This will grow to be a remarkable resource for all Australians.'*

The National Library has implemented innovative Web 2.0 technologies that enable users to interact with the service and data in new and exciting ways. Firstly, users are able to correct the electronically translated text. Although this is an unfamiliar concept and no other newspaper service in the world currently offers this functionality, it is already proving a very popular and addictive activity for our users. Over 700,000 lines of text correction have been made by more than 1,500 users. One of the most industrious users has corrected more than 50,000 lines alone. Correcting the electronically translated text improves the service for everyone as it enables more accurate search results.

Comments users have made about this feature are:

*'I like being able to see the OCR [optical character recognition] text and the original side-by-side. This is a smart move to entice people to correct text.'*

*'On OCR text correction, great! Think I just found my new hobby!'*

*'It's looking like it will be very cool, and the text fixing and tagging is quite addictive.'*

*'I was not aware that user editing was going to be included, but what a great idea.'*

*'An interesting way of using interested readers' "labour"! I really like it.'*

Another feature of adding tags to articles is also very popular, and so far a mammoth 15,000 tags have been added. Many of these are for names of people, places and significant events that genealogists and family historians are researching.

Over the next few months the Australian Newspapers Digitisation Program team will gather more feedback from users. The Library is also undertaking a procurement process to establish a panel of digital scanning and OCR contractors for ongoing newspaper

digitisation activities. During this period no additional content will be added to the Beta Service.

To access the Australian Newspapers Beta Service go to [www.nla.gov.au/ndp](http://www.nla.gov.au/ndp).

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