

*The National Library of Australia's latest innovation, Trove has come in handy for many researchers in the Public Service. **Rose Holley** shows how...*

Treasure Trove of information

By Rose Holley*

Trove is the latest innovation from the National Library.

The name 'Trove' makes reference to the expression 'treasure trove', as a collection of rare or valuable things. The name encapsulates the concepts of a collection, of treasured items, and of the process of discovery. As a powerful search engine, Trove makes it possible to find and get over 90 million Australian information resources.

You can also browse 'zones' of information – books, journals, magazines, articles; maps; pictures and photos; Australian newspapers; diaries, letters, archives; archived websites, and biographies of people and organisations. The service is aimed at the general public but is also very useful for the many researchers working in government departments.

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For example, a landmark project supported by the Australian Research Council, the South Eastern Australian Recent Climate History (SEARCH) uses Trove as a key part of its research path. The project spans the sciences and the humanities, drawing together a team of leading climate scientists, water managers and historians to better understand south-eastern Australian climate history over the past 200–500 years. The lead investigator at SEARCH, Joelle Gergis said it was amazing having so much information online and quickly accessible.

“Being able to find weather tables from 1803 onwards in the Sydney Gazette is crucial to our research,” Ms Gergis said.

“Official records from the Bureau of Meteorology only began 100 years ago so being able to access the newspaper records which are earlier than this is really useful.”

Ms Gergis said the sources in Trove also showed how weather events have affected society, with eye witness accounts of floods and bushfires. *“For example we have been researching the 1851 Black Thursday bushfires in Victoria,”* she said.

Assistant Director General Resource Sharing and Innovation, National Library of Australia, Warwick Cathro said Trove was being used to search for digital and non-digital sources.

The feature which enables you to limit your search to online items only is being very well used, but Trove also provides a wealth of information on non-digital resources,” Mr Cathro said.

“Trove provides researchers with access to a wide range of resources from the ‘deep web’, resources that are often not found by popular search engines.”

Trove is a stable repository with permanent page links that can be cited in reports and papers. The search engine is managed by the National Library of Australia and most of the information is from reliable sources such as libraries, museums, art galleries, repositories and archives. New contributor data is being added all the time. Over 1000 organisations are contributing data including the Australian War Memorial, the National Film and Sound Archive and the Parliamentary Library. The 20 million full-text searchable historic newspaper articles are proving very popular and a further 20 million will be available by 2011. Papers from 1803 up to 1954 have been digitised so far.

Senior Law Librarian at the Parliamentary Library, Roy Jordan said newspapers were a ‘wonderful’ source of legal material. *“Early proclamations were published in the Sydney Gazette and before law reports were being systematically published by law publishers, major cases were being described in detail in newspapers,”* Mr Jordan said. *“Source documents like letters and speeches were sometimes republished in full, and reaction to new legislation can be gauged by reading newspapers,”* he said.

Librarian at IP Australia, Amanda Magnussen said the newspapers had been referred to in cases involving dispute over trademarks, where the history could be traced back over a couple of hundred years. Articles often provided interesting information about family disputes and property ownership and indeed many researchers were getting sidetracked looking up their own family histories.

Trove is part of the national information infrastructure and has been developed by working with the public and it utilises many web 2.0 features. Users are encouraged to engage with each other and the data in various ways, including improving existing data and uploading their own data. There is even a Trove Forum where discussion can take place between users.

Trove has something for every researcher exploring Australian information and records, and is an exciting development for the Australian Public Service sector.

The Trove website can be accessed at trove.nla.gov.au.

* **Rose Holley** is the Manager of Trove at the National Library of Australia

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