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ALIA Ebooks and eending issues paper. Version 4 – 7 January 2013

ANZSI has read with interest the ALIA *Ebooks and eending issues paper*ⁱ and wishes to lend its support and to provide some information and ideas about ebook indexes.

Ebook indexing developments

Indexes are useful information access tools for ebooks. They are explorable documents that provide selected, concisely worded entry points, with hierarchical and other relationships to guide readers to relevant contentⁱⁱ. Unfortunately they have not been well-represented in ebooks to date, largely because of the technical effort required to implement active, linked indexes. Browne and Coe have discussed the differences between browsing, searching and using indexes, and some of the questions ebook navigation options present to librarians.ⁱⁱⁱ

EPUB is an open, international standard for ebooks developed and maintained by the International Digital Publishing Forum (IDPF). It currently has an Indexes Working Group^{iv} which has written a draft specification for standardised coding for active ebook indexes^v.

The ALIA issues paper notes on page 6 under 'Format' that 'It would be beneficial for all titles to be available in all standard formats and for all devices.' Having EPUB as an international standard reduces the number of formats that libraries, publishers and reading system manufacturers have to deal with.

The Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers (ANZSI) is a member of IDPF and has two representatives on the EPUB Indexes Working Group. ANZSI is committed to the provision of quality, active indexes for ebooks, and believes that the inclusion of indexes in the EPUB standard is a major step towards this goal.

The ALIA issues paper states on page 1 that 'Libraries have always been about equity of access to information and stories, whatever the format – print, audio, digital.' Point 7 on that page mentions 'providing equity of access to compensate for societal inequality.' Equity of access to library books includes accessibility for people with visual and other print disabilities, meaning that an understanding of the features of different ebook formats and inclusions such as indexes is essential for proper service to the community.

The EPUB standard has a strong focus on accessibility; a representative from DAISY (the Talking Book standard) is on the EPUB Indexes Working Group, and the indexing specification has been written with the aim of providing quality access for *all* users. Proposed features of EPUB indexes that will make ebooks more readily accessible include:

- making it easier for publishers to provide an index of any sort
- providing semantic information rather than just presenting something differently, eg, coding text as a main entry rather than just making it bold
- providing additional access features, eg, expandable and compressible main entries, and group break navigation data (links to sections starting with A, B, C etc).

Libraries have an important role in the development of information literacy in their users. This is no less true for digital resources than it has been for print books. In fact, the situation is more complex, as readers will have more navigation options to choose from. It is important that libraries advocate for the inclusion of indexes in ebooks, and help educate users about the best ways to access the information they need. Unfortunately the focus on technical and legal issues in ebook purchasing decisions means that consideration of aspects of ebook quality such as the inclusion of linked indexes can be set aside.

Specific suggestions for the issues paper

We recommend adding IDPF to the international section of 'Appendix 1. National and International ebook initiatives'. Their website address is <http://idpf.org>.

We recommend adding indexers as a stakeholder under to the other participants section of 'Appendix 2: Stakeholders'.

Glenda Browne
5 March 2013

ⁱ *ALIA Ebooks and elending issues paper*. Version 4 – 7 January 2013,

<http://www.alia.org.au/advocacy/Ebooks.and.Elending.Issues.Paper.v4.130107.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.anzsi.org/UserFiles/file/Life%20is%20easier%20with%20an%20eindex.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Browne, Glenda and Coe, Mary. Ebook navigation: browse, search and index. *Australian Library Journal* November 2012, <http://webindexing.biz/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/E-Book-Navigation.pdf>.

^{iv} <http://code.google.com/p/epub-revision/wiki/IndexesMainPage>

^v https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_-4yyEIJeze8xUCbT7SU1r5Queyd6SZK63bJ540SVJ0/edit?pli=1. This specification is due to be provided to the IDPF Board this week (4 March 2013).