

Strategy

Uniting university libraries across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand to shape the future of knowledge.

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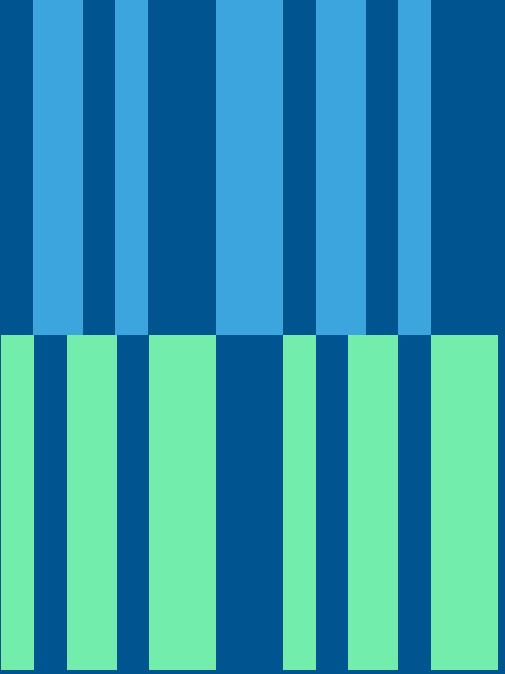


This strategy is about harnessing the collective power of university libraries to shape the future of knowledge.

In a time of rapid change—in technology, equity, and publishing—we are choosing to lead, not follow.

Together, across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, we will transform how scholarly communication is shared, amplify the voice and value of libraries, and embed cultural integrity in everything we do.

It's a clear, ambitious strategy framework to focus our energy where it matters most and create impact for our member institutions and beyond.



Acknowledgement.

CAUL Council Members are located on First Nations lands across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. CAUL respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Kaitiaki of the lands on which we work.

CAUL acknowledges the important contributions made by First Nations people to both CAUL and CAUL Member institutions in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

We pay our respects to Elders, past and present. We recognise Māori as Tangata Whenua and embrace the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. CAUL is committed to partnering with First Nations people for positive outcomes.

Note on the limitations of language.

The terms First Nations and Indigenous are used in this document to be inclusive of both Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and Māori peoples in the context of the CAUL strategy. The use of either of these terms may be problematic, however, and are not intended to cause offence. We acknowledge that individual and community groups may have their own preferences with regard to terminology.

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Purpose. Our why.

The peak body uniting university libraries to lead access, influence and innovation in the sector.

Together we work to harness the collective influence and expertise of university libraries and librarians across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand to drive equitable access to knowledge, reshape scholarly communication, and elevate the visibility, value and impact of academic libraries in research, teaching and learning.

Aspiration. Our goal for this strategy.

A transformed, equitable scholarly system that enables open knowledge and serves the public good.

Champion a fairer, more open system for how research and knowledge is preserved, created, shared, accessed and used—ensuring equity, honouring Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and Māori knowledge systems, and extending the benefits to students, researchers, institutions and the wider community.

Success. How we will know.

- Transformed access to knowledge.** Delivering faster, fairer and more open access that reduces costs, removes barriers and makes diverse scholarship visible.
- Academic libraries recognised as strategic leaders.** Seen as essential partners shaping research, learning and sector-wide transformation.
- Demonstrated commitment to working in partnership with First Nations colleagues.** Demonstrated commitment to working in partnership with First Nations colleagues. Shared goals are progressed in culturally informed and respectful ways.
- Trans-Tasman identity and influence.** A unified, collaborative voice recognised for bridging Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Role. Our what.
For the higher education sector

CAUL acts as a trusted peak body, using its collective voice to push for fair access to knowledge, sustainable publishing and strong trans-Tasman influence that benefits students, academics, institutions and communities alike.

For Council members

The Council drives shared priorities, aligning members around what matters most and working together to raise the profile and impact of university libraries in supporting students and academics across the higher education sector.

As a CAUL office

The Office enables delivery, managing core services, partnerships and operations that help members act collectively and deliver changes that strengthens outcomes for students, academics and institutions.

Strategic direction. Our focus.

01

Transform knowledge ecosystems for equity and access

Use CAUL's collective power to reshape scholarly publishing so it's fairer, more inclusive and better aligned with sector priorities and public good.

- Drive sector-wide negotiations and collective procurement to secure fairer publishing terms and advance equitable, inclusive open access that reflects the diverse needs of researchers and communities.
- Advocate clear sector positions on emerging scholarly communication issues.
- Align strategies with national partners to advance open access.
- Champion open research infrastructure.

02

Enhance the university library sector's voice and value

Strengthen CAUL's influence by showing the impact of academic libraries in research, education and public life.

- Develop unified messages on libraries' role in student success, research and equity.
- Strengthen CAUL's presence in national and trans-Tasman policy discussions.
- Champion libraries as leaders in digital, AI and scholarly literacy.
- Share library success stories and impact data with external audiences.
- Advocate for libraries' role in whole-of-institution strategies.
- Support communities or practice to share insights and improve services.

03

Commitment to Indigenous partnership

Commitment to build respectful partnerships with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and Māori communities, guided by their priorities. Working closely with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and Māori leaders to prioritise what is most impactful for Indigenous communities, as determined by those communities themselves.

- Co-design commitments with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and Māori leaders.
- Ensure action, not symbolism through a commitment of resources and collective accountability.



A connected and accountable Council



Cultural integrity in practice



Focus our resources where they count

Introduction.

The Council of Australasian University Librarians (CAUL) is the peak body for university librarians in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Since the first meeting of Australian university librarians in 1928 and the formation of the Committee of Australian University Librarians in 1965, CAUL has brought together the leaders of academic libraries to advocate, collaborate, and innovate on behalf of the higher education sector.

Our members are the librarians of Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand universities. Collectively, we support millions of students and researchers, provide access to vast scholarly collections, and contribute to the quality, reputation, and impact of our institutions. As a Council, we harness this collective capability to address the issues no single library can tackle alone.

Today, the higher education landscape is changing more rapidly than ever. The ways research output is produced, shared, and accessed are being reshaped by digital technology, new publishing models, artificial intelligence, and growing expectations for equity and inclusion. At the same time, universities face significant pressure to demonstrate value and impact for their students, their staff, their communities, and society at large.

CAUL's role in this context is clear and unique. We are the collective voice of university libraries. We are the peak and champion for the university library sector. This next strategy as an opportunity to focus

on transforming scholarly communication, elevating the voice and value of libraries and committing to working in Indigenous partnership through authentic and meaningful action. It is a strategy to help not just set direction but to ensure we focus our efforts, better leverage the collective network and ensure we deliver direct value to every member. It also helps to further clarify and validate how we work: as a Council of members; as a representative peak body for the sector; and as a CAUL office team that helps enable action and coordination.

This strategy represents a collective commitment to lead where it matters most. It sets a clear direction for the next three years and is focused, practical and grounded in shared purpose, while leaving room to adapt as our context evolves. The following document provides a framework for action, it will guide how we work together, the impact we are trying to have, and help position us to best use our resources on what matters most.

Strategic context.

Understanding the context CAUL operates in is critical to setting the right course. This strategy is shaped by shifts in how knowledge is created, shared, and valued across Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, and globally. The role of university libraries is being redefined by rapid technological change, evolving expectations of equity and inclusion, and ongoing financial pressures. The following context does not cover every challenge or opportunity but seeks to highlight a number of the important drivers influencing CAUL's priorities over the next three years.



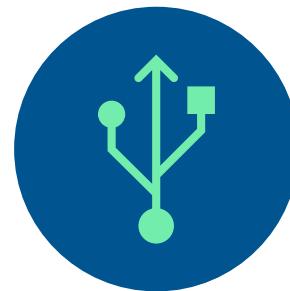
Libraries are central to knowledge.

University libraries remain indispensable to research, teaching, and public good. They safeguard and provide access to scholarship, support learning and digital literacy, and enable equitable participation in higher education. As universities navigate financial pressure and questions of value, libraries must demonstrate and amplify their impact on institutional success and the student and academic community more broadly.



Scholarly communication is undergoing profound change.

Global publishing systems are in flux. The rise of open access, new business models, and increasing calls for equity in publishing are reshaping how knowledge is produced and shared. CAUL members are at the forefront of negotiating transformative agreements, advocating for fairer systems, and exploring alternatives like open educational resources. Collective action is essential to influence these changes at scale.



Technology—especially AI—is transforming research and learning.

Artificial intelligence (AI), data analytics, and digital platforms are changing how information is created, discovered, and used. Libraries are expected to lead on digital and AI literacy, while also managing the ethical, legal, and cultural implications of emerging technologies. Harnessing technology without losing the trusted, human-centred nature of library services is a key challenge and opportunity.



Equity and inclusion are non-negotiable.

There is a growing imperative to remove barriers to knowledge and to reflect diverse perspectives. For CAUL, this means advocating for barrier-free access to information, supporting members to embed inclusive practices, and ensuring collective work reflects the full diversity of communities across the trans-Tasman context.

'CAUL's strength lies in its collective influence, sector-wide advocacy, and ability to convene members to tackle shared challenges.'



Respect for Indigenous knowledge is fundamental.

Embedding Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and Māori views and voice is critical to cultural sovereignty and integrity in higher education. For CAUL, this means working in partnership with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and Māori colleagues and ensuring shared work honours First Nations perspectives, priorities and leadership.



Collaboration has never been more essential for influence and change.

The issues facing university libraries from licensing negotiations to digital infrastructure cannot be solved by single institutions. CAUL's strength lies in its collective influence, sector-wide advocacy, and ability to convene members to tackle shared challenges. Strong partnerships across universities, government, and the broader library and research ecosystem will be vital to achieving meaningful change.



Resources are constrained, but expectations are rising.

University budgets remain under pressure, yet demand for library services including digital access, support for researchers, and publishing solutions continues to grow. The challenge is to do "different with less," focusing on high-impact collective priorities ensuring sustainability and demonstrating value to members and the sector.

Our strategy.

This strategy provides a framework for action—guiding decisions, setting priorities and helping CAUL focus its collective effort where it delivers the greatest value. It recognises that resources are finite and ensures that even as we adapt to a changing higher education landscape, our work remains focused on the areas of greatest impact for members, students, academics and the wider public.

Purpose. Our why.

The peak body uniting university libraries to lead access, influence, and innovation in the sector.

We bring together the collective influence and expertise of university libraries and librarians across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. We negotiate better access to research, champion fairer publishing systems, and support open, inclusive ways of sharing knowledge. We help libraries share their value and make sure their voice is heard in decisions that impact the higher education sector. We exist to help connect members to share ideas, benchmark performance, and improve how library services are delivered. This helps ensure university libraries remain visible, valued and equipped to lead in a changing world of research, teaching and learning.

Role. Our what.

For the **higher education sector.**

CAUL is the trusted peak body championing fair access to knowledge, sustainable publishing, and trans-Tasman influence for the benefit of students, academics, institutions and the community.

CAUL acts as the collective voice of university libraries across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. We advocate for fair access to knowledge, drive sustainable approaches to scholarly publishing, and strengthen trans-Tasman influence on issues that shape higher education and research. In doing so, we will work towards helping ensure students, academics, institutions and the wider community benefit from more equitable systems and stronger library leadership across the sector.

For **Council members.**

The Council aligns members on shared priorities and lifts the profile and impact of university libraries.

The Council brings together member libraries to identify and pursue shared priorities, focusing collective effort on what matters most. By working together, we raise the profile and impact of university libraries and ensure their contribution to student success, research quality, and institutional transformation is recognised and valued across the higher education sector.

As a **CAUL Office.**

The CAUL Office enables the delivery, manages core services and supports partnerships that drive collective action and impact.

The Office supports the work of the Council by managing operations, providing the coordination, data and expertise that enables members to act collectively, implement strategic initiatives and achieve tangible outcomes, strengthening support for students, academics and institutions across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Our strategy.

Aspiration. Our goal for this strategy.

A transformed, equitable scholarly system that enables open knowledge and serves the public good.

This means championing a fairer approach to how research and knowledge are preserved, created, shared, accessed, and used. It involves removing barriers to participation and ensuring that diverse voices and knowledge systems, including Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and Māori ways of knowing, are respected and represented. By reshaping how scholarly communication works, we aim to extend the benefits of knowledge more widely, reaching students, researchers, institutions, and the communities they serve, and strengthening the role of universities in advancing equity, innovation, and public benefit across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Success in our aspiration and the delivery of this strategy will be illustrated through:



Transformed access to knowledge.

CAUL's collective action delivers faster, fairer, and more open access to knowledge by reshaping publishing agreements, securing equitable terms for authors, and expanding sustainable open access pathways. This reduces costs and barriers across the sector, ensures Indigenous and under-represented scholarship is visible, and provides students, researchers, and communities in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand with quicker, simpler access to the materials they need.

Academic libraries recognised as strategic leaders.

Libraries are seen by universities, governments, and the research sector as essential partners in shaping the future of research and learning. Their influence is visible in policy, procurement, and sector-wide initiatives, with CAUL amplifying their role as a trusted, trans-Tasman peak body driving systemic change.

Demonstrated commitment to working in partnership with First Nations colleagues.

CAUL will have demonstrated its commitment to Indigenous partnership through actions across policies, practices, and operations, all co-designed with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and Māori colleagues. Success will be measured through respectful, and safe partnerships that uphold sovereignty, amplify Indigenous scholarship, and ensure strategies, agreements, and advocacy reflect Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and Māori knowledge systems and priorities.

Trans-Tasman identity and influence.

CAUL operates as a truly trans-Tasman collective, unified in purpose and respectful of difference. Success is seen in strong cross-country partnerships, shared priorities that reflect both national contexts, and recognition (within the sector and externally) of CAUL's unique role bridging Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Our strategy.

Strategic direction. Our focus.

The work we do aims to strengthen the collective influence of university libraries, amplify their impact across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, and create a sector where knowledge is more open, equitable and widely valued. Our strategic directions will help us deliver on this, provide focus and prioritise the use of our resources.

Direction 1: Transforming knowledge ecosystems for equity and access

We are focused on reshaping scholarly publishing to be fairer, more inclusive, and better aligned with the priorities of higher education and the public good. CAUL's collective power will influence how research is created, shared and accessed. The outcome is to move publishing, procurement and access beyond transactional models to systems grounded in equity, cultural safety and the diverse needs of students, researchers, institutions and communities, including Indigenous knowledge systems. Working with members and partners, we will strengthen collective procurement, take clear positions on emerging issues, and align open access initiatives so libraries are not just negotiating better terms but actively shaping a system that works for everyone.

Our priorities:

- **Drive sector-wide negotiations and collective procurement.** Work to secure fairer terms with publishers, expand rights retention, and advance open access models that are equitable, inclusive, and aligned with the diverse needs of researchers and communities.
- **Develop clear positions on key issues.** Lead sector advocacy and facilitate shared sector-wide guidance on emerging challenges and opportunities in scholarly communication, such as AI, copyright, rights management, digital and AI literacy and data sharing.
- **Align strategies across CAUL and national partnerships.** Integrate work with and across existing CAUL and partner initiatives to better advance open access and maximise sector impact.
- **Champion open research infrastructure.** Champion community-led, university-owned platforms as sustainable alternatives to commercial providers—ensuring equitable, open access and long-term sector stewardship.

Success is linked to our aspiration



Transform knowledge access



Academic libraries recognised as strategic leaders

Our strategy.

Direction 2: Enhance the university library sector's voice and value

We are strengthening CAUL's influence within higher education and beyond by showing the essential role academic libraries play in research, learning and public life. This means creating unifying messages about the impact of university libraries on student success, research outcomes and social equity, and ensuring those messages are heard and actively influencing in national and trans-Tasman policy discussions. It also means celebrating university library achievements, sharing evidence of impact, and supporting the communities of practice that help members learn from one another and raise standards across the sector. Through strong partnerships across the sector and with other peak bodies, CAUL amplifies this collective voice. By doing this, CAUL positions university libraries as strategic leaders in areas such as digital capability, AI and scholarly literacy, and ensures their expertise shapes institutional priorities and sector transformation.

Our priorities:

- **Develop unifying messages and evidence of impact.** Show how libraries contribute to student success, research quality, and social equity, supported by strong data and stories.
- **Champion libraries in policy and strategy discussions.** Strengthen CAUL's presence in national and trans-Tasman conversations and advocate for libraries' role in whole-of-institution strategy.
- **Promote university libraries as leaders in higher education.** Position library expertise at the forefront of emerging skills and sector capabilities.
- **Amplify success stories and sector-wide achievements.** Share library innovations and outcomes with external audiences to raise profile and influence.
- **Support and connect communities of practice.** Enable member networks to collaborate on benchmarking, user experience, and service improvement to lift sector-wide standards and share skills across the network.

Success is linked to our aspiration



Indigenisation embedded in collective work



Trans-Tasman identity and influence



Transform knowledge access

Our strategy.

Direction 3: Commitment to Indigenous partnership

We recognise the work ahead to build culturally informed, respectful partnerships with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander, and Māori communities. This isn't about symbolic gestures; it's about creating real, lasting change.

We will work closely with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and Māori leaders to prioritise what is most impactful for Indigenous communities, as determined by those communities themselves.

Our shared priorities:

Note: These priorities will be further refined through Indigenous engagement and leadership.

- **Co-design commitments with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander, and Māori leaders.** Work together to define priorities, approaches and measures of success.
- **Ensure action, not symbolism.** Commit resources and collective accountability to ensure tangible and impactful improvements.

Success is linked to our aspiration



Indigenisation embedded in collective work



Trans-Tasman identity and influence



Academic libraries recognised as strategic leaders

Our strategy.

Enablers. Our guide.

Delivering this strategy relies on more than just priorities and actions—it depends on the conditions that allow CAUL to work well together and have impact. These enablers describe how we organise ourselves, uphold cultural integrity, and focus our resources so we can respond to change, work collectively across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, and deliver the greatest benefit to members and the wider sector.

A connected and accountable Council

CAUL's strength lies in its collective voice. To maximise this, we must ensure our Office, Board and Members work in a coordinated and accountable way. This means clarifying roles, sharing responsibility, and building strong channels for collaboration and decision-making. When we act as one—across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand—we can speak with authority, deliver on shared priorities, and amplify the sector's impact.

Example actions include:

- Develop clear agreements on roles and responsibilities between the Office, Board and Council to streamline decision-making.
- Map and prioritise CAUL's representation across national and trans-Tasman policy forums to ensure the right presence and influence.
- Improve mechanisms for collaboration and communication across members (e.g., regular joint planning, shared reporting, collective issue tracking, targeted working groups).
- Create transparent accountability measures so progress on shared priorities is visible to members and stakeholders.

Cultural integrity in practice

Fostering a culturally safe and respectful environment is fundamental to CAUL's work as a trans-Tasman peak body. This enabler commits us to embedding approaches within our Council, Office, policies, and governance that honour Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and Māori ways of knowing, ensure equity and inclusion, and strengthen how we work together. By weaving cultural integrity through our internal structures and practices, we build a more representative, respectful, and effective organisation.

Example actions include:

- Partner with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and Māori representatives to co-design practical guidelines for embedding cultural safety and diverse knowledge systems in CAUL's work.
- Build cultural capability through training, shared resources, and peer learning.
- Ensure cultural integrity principles are reflected in CAUL's policies, representation, and approaches to partnerships and advocacy.

Focus our resources where they count

Our impact depends on using resources wisely. This enabler is about building the systems, data and capabilities that allow us to act with clarity and confidence, while finding efficiencies and synergies across the CAUL Office and the wider Council. By being clear on where CAUL leads and where we support members, and by focusing our effort where it delivers the greatest value, we ensure our collective work is sustainable, targeted, and able to adapt to future challenges and opportunities.

Example actions include:

- Invest in data and analytics to measure impact, support negotiations, and inform future decision-making.
- Develop shared data dashboards and metrics to evidence sector impact and value.
- Identify shared services or joint procurement opportunities between members and the Office to reduce duplication and maximise resources.
- Regularly review operational priorities to ensure resources are directed toward high-value initiatives and emerging sector needs.

