

Accounting and Business Resources

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CPA Library Network

The Australian Society of Certified Practising Accountants (ASCPA) has 80,000 members and 14,000 students who have access to the vast resources of the CPA Library Network. The CPA Library Network consists of the national library in Melbourne and divisional libraries in each of the capital cities of Australia. Smaller libraries have been developed in the Asian branches to support the Society's CPA educational program.

Clients

The clients of the CPA Library Network are members of the ASCPA working in a variety of areas. Members work in public practice, government, industry and commerce and academia. As a result of the diversity of CPAs' work, it is necessary for the network to reflect their different information needs which cover a wide range of subjects. The CPA Library Network does not just concentrate on accounting material, but includes resources from all aspects of business, finance and management. The main subject areas covered in the Network are accounting, auditing, management and cost accounting, general management, economics, taxation, company law and information technology. Information is collected from Australia as well as internationally.

A major library client, is the staff of the Australian Accounting Research Foundation (AARF) which is jointly funded by the ASCPA. This organisation develops the accounting standards for the Australian business sector and the pronouncements are released as AAS or ASRB. As a result, it is paramount that the CPA Library collection has current, relevant and international information available. The CPA Library Network is well resourced to support the work undertaken by AARF, assisting them with their research for Australian accounting standards setting and keeping them abreast with the international accounting and business scene.

Accounting standards are found in the ASCPA's *Members Handbook* and also in an annual publication issued for students. These would be useful references in any law library. A law firm's financial controller or accountant should have a copy of the standards in his or her office.

You may find some CEOs of major firms, including law firms, have been accountants earlier in their careers, and then moved into general management, having had an excellent understanding of the business and finance

Collection

The Network's collection has grown from the original 91 books, brought out from England in 1888, to about 300,000 items. This ensures that we are the third largest accounting library in the world. The Network boasts 1200 journal titles, about 700 of this number are on CD-ROM. The hardcopy journal titles, in most cases, are the only copies and the most complete sets available in Australia. We hold about 30,000 book titles including all editions. Videos, audio cassettes, access to Internet, online databases such as DIALOG, Orbit, & Ausinet and a large number of CD-ROMs ensure the library resources are relevant, topical and current

CPA Library Database

The *CPA Library Database* provides access to the material held by the CPA Library Network in each of its divisions across Australia and now in its overseas locations. The *Database* covers material relevant to the accounting profession internationally. The online *CPA Library Database* comprises approximately 90,000 records and includes accounting standards, books, conference proceedings and papers, journal titles and articles, videos and all ASCPA publications. This is an excellent reference tool for accounting and related information

The CPA Library indexes and abstracts the relevant articles from the 500 hardcopy journal titles received in the library to compliment the *Business Periodicals on Disk (BPO)* which is a full-text imaged database with its own index, *ABI/INFORM*. The Australian accounting and business journals are not comprehensively covered by *BPO* but the *CPA Library Database* specifically indexes these titles so that all articles are easily identified and retrieved.

The subject coverage of the journal titles is the same as for all resources. The titles of the accounting journals may not be creative, not vary much, all sound much the same and in some cases have duplicate titles from different countries. Can you imagine locating journals titles like *The Accountant* (Kenya and UK), *Accountants journal*, (NZ and Philippines), *Charter* (NZ and Australia), *Accountancy, journal of accountancy*, *Management accounting* (NY and UK)? It can make for a challenging conversation when clarifying a reference with clients who are unsure, except that it has *account* in the title!!!

Australian accounting journal titles held by the network include: *The Australian accountant*, *Australian accounting review*, *Accounting & finance*, *Abacus*, *Charter*, *Accounting history (NS)*, *Accounting, Auditing & accountability Journal and Accounting forum*. This list gives you an idea of the depth of research and writing in the Australian accounting profession. All these are indexed onto the *CPA Library Database* as well as the numerous international titles held, some of which are listed above

The Network compiles a valuable 10 year cumulative index to *The Australian accountant*. This compliments holdings of the title in any library. The index is available for sale from the CPA National Library and will be available online shortly. The annual index is published in the February issue of the following year.

Subject Headings

The Network has used over the years various thesauri to cover the changing jargon of the profession. Library of Congress subject headings are not always specific enough for our needs, having an obvious American slant. This is also true for the *Accounting & tax index*, previously issued and published by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, (AICPA) under the title of *The Accountants' index*. As a result, we create our own subject headings with Australian terminology which is familiar to our clients. 'See references' are obviously given for the American and English terms. This change has made for a friendlier thesaurus.

Specific subject headings are allocated to articles such as: AAS27; SAC4; Auditors - Malpractice - Cases - Australia; or Auditors - Duties & Responsibilities - Australia. Many 'business' databases are too general for the requirements of the accounting profession and so this level of detail is essential for the retrieval of relevant information.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia, (ICAA), also produce a list of subject headings for use in the business sector.¹

ABI/INFORM-BPO

The introduction of the full text CD-ROM resource, affectionately called *BPO*, made us instantly popular with the members and students. The service consists of *ABI/INFORM* which contains an index, bibliographic citations and abstracts to approximately 1200 international business, finance, economics and management journals, together with the scanned images of 510 journals which is the *BPO* component. The images appear exactly as they do in the original publication including the advertisements. Hardcopy journals are cancelled if imaged on *BPO*. This product has saved space, reduced subscriptions costs and time in accessioning and indexing journals and articles.

Users can search *ABI/INFORM*, which is also available online through Orbit and Ausinet, by keyword, geographical terms, company names, subjects and authors. Searching is fast and very user-friendly, with even the unsophisticated library user being able to be educated to use the CD-ROM resource and achieve successful results. It is also powerful enough for the experienced searchers.

¹ Ellis, R and Ramsay, J. *Australian accounting & business thesaurus*, Institute of Chartered Accountants, Sydney 1991

The introduction of *BPO* in 1994 has broadened the subject coverage of our collection, by including journals we could neither afford to subscribe to, nor have the space to house. The 550 imaged CD-ROMs take up about 4-5 drawers of a filing cabinet. This is an excellent business and management resource. The library's hardcopy journal holdings are also placed on *ABI/INFORM-BPO* so members know what 'indexed only' items are available in paper. Due to the demand of this resource it is advisable to contact the national library for a booking time.

Other CD-ROMs

The CD-ROMs not only expanded access to a vast amount of information available to the members and students, but also ensured that the library is busier. CD-ROMs are user-friendly and searches achieve immediate results - this is always satisfying for library users.

CD-ROM technology was introduced to the CPA Library Network in February 1994 with the installation of *Business Australia on disk*, *Accounting & tax index*, *Business Who's Who in Australia*, *ABIX*, (Australian business intelligence) in each state library and *ABI/INFORM - BPO* in the national library based in Melbourne. The following CD-ROM resources have since been introduced, *Asia/Pacific key business directory*, the Fairfax publications including archive disks and the *CCH tax and corporation libraries*.

Accounting and tax index is now produced by UMI and abstracts and indexes articles from more than 300 key accounting, tax and financial management publications from the United States and other countries, and selected articles from more than 800 additional newspapers and business journals, back to 1990. An ideal reference for international accounting material, particularly accounting standards and official pronouncements. This database is also available online through DIALOG and is updated weekly. For Australian material it would be advisable to use this database in conjunction with the *CPA Library Database* to ascertain an overall view of the international accounting profession and relevant pronouncements.

Business who's who in Australia and *Asia/Pacific key business directory* provide concise business information on Australian, Asian and Pacific public and private companies and organisations. Searches can be made on company names, directors, auditors, solicitors, executives, products, trade names, executives and countries in the case of the *Asia/Pacific key business directory*, and any combination of these. For example, inserting the law firm name in the 'solicitor' field and accounting firm name in the auditors field, a list of joint clients will be produced from the database. This is great as a marketing tool, checking on your competitors or potential employees or for a list of potential clients. This can be further refined by a postcode range.

The CD-ROM versions are substantially better than the hardcopy as you can search across the database, combining criteria for specific targeted results. These are fairly simple references to use, but the new search engine of BWWA needs some work to confirm accurate results. It is now updated twice a year in May and August. Refer to a recent review of the product in *Online Currents*².

ABIX Australasian business intelligence, is a comprehensive business intelligence tool, encompassing market research, company, industry and trade information in Australia. A cross-section of business, finance and trade journals together with national newspapers are indexed. This is an excellent reference tool when searching for Australian information on law firms, or any company, court cases (eg the Bond and Peabody cases), auditors or accountants malpractice, liability, bankruptcy or a particular person's name.

For international information on auditors' liability and duties and responsibilities or particular cases, it would be more appropriate to refer to other CD-ROMs and databases such as *Accounting & tax index*, *BPO* and the *CPA Library Database*.

Current issues of the *Australian financial review (AFR)*, *Business review weekly (BRW)*, *The Age* and *The Sydney morning herald* offer topical and valuable information. Indexed by *ABIX*, these Fairfax publications are all relevant to the accounting, business and finance areas, making them complimentary full-text resources to the CPA Library Network. A drawback of the CD-ROM format is currency, being only updated quarterly. We have however, hardcopies of *AFR* and *BRW* as well as having them available online through Ausinet.

The archival set of these publications covering the period 1992/93 to 1995 are also invaluable backups to the current year disks. Running these on a stand-alone PC in the library, members find these papers simple to use. The *Good weekenders* are also included. Hardcopy newspapers are difficult to maintain for a long period, so these have been a welcome resource.

The *CCH electronic tax library* provides information from: *CCH Australian federal tax reporter*; Income tax and related legislation; *Income tax rulings and determinations*, current *Master tax guide*, *Australian tax cases* and newsletters such as *Tax Week* and *Corporate News*. The *CCH Electronic Corporations Law Library* provides a comprehensive commentary of the Corporations Law integrated with the full text of the corporations and securities legislation and company cases as well as the electronic newsletters.

No longer do you need to flick through volumes to find your answer! Searching on the CD-ROM is easy and fast - you can use either a plain language search or the Boolean method. You are able to search the entire text and link between the commentary, related legislation, rulings and the *Australian master tax guide* and *Australian Securities Commission releases*. These services are updated monthly so the information is current.

² Johnstone, P. 'Business who's who of Australia CD-ROM - one step forward, three steps back: a short review' (1996) 11(5) *Online currents* 13.

CPA Online

Members of the ASCPA have access to conveniently available, up-to-date information on many accounting and finance issues through *CPA online*. Everything from the latest government regulations through to Society data and even daily bank interest rates is available. Also included will be the *CPA Library Database*, Society publications such as *The Australian accountant* and publications from our Centre of Excellences and Small Business Policy Centre. The very latest Australian Tax Office rulings, determinations, bulletins and media releases as well as minutes from the National Tax Liaison Group and subcommittees and ISC circulars can be read online.

The ASCPA *accounting handbook*, including Australian accounting standards and accounting guidance releases are available and can be down-loaded. This could be useful if required urgently, and not held in hardcopy. Expert advice on specialist subjects such as public practice, management, taxation, company financing and information technology is now available online. Members can post questions on the Society's unique interactive bulletin board and a resident expert will reply by end of business the following working day. Through *CPA online*, members can be linked to other accounting-related sites, nationally and internationally.

This is a valuable resource which presently is only fully available to members of the ASCPA. Some sites can be searched by non-members and other areas will require passwords and ID.

Marketing: internal and external

The CPA Library Network works hard in promoting the library services to our external members and students and our internal clients. The issues addressed in the marketing feature in the *Australian law librarian* July 1996³ are all relevant in a professional organisation. Internal promotion can ensure survival and continued support by management. We host many functions and organise training sessions, always with something to eat and drink. Traditionally Pancake/Shrove Tuesday is celebrated each year in the library with open invitations bringing all visiting interstate directors and staff into the library for breakfast. We are regularly on show for visiting international guests from other accounting bodies. The size of the library and the comprehensiveness of the collection does impress these visitors and this promotes the ASCPA and the library service internationally.

Conclusion

The CPA Library Network has divisional libraries in each state, so if you wish to use any of the resources described above, or wish to peruse the collection, please contact your local ASCPA office to make an appointment.