



Informing the Nation

Open access to statistical information in Australia

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statistics for informed

decision making

Overview

- About the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and National Statistical Service (NSS)
- Access to ABS statistics
 - From charged to free access
 - From “all rights reserved” to “some rights reserved”
- Open access and Public sector information
- Enablers of open access
 - Open licensing
- The ABS has come a long way

Canberra, Australia



About the ABS

- Australia's official statistical organisation
- ABS Mission is to assist and encourage informed decision making, research and discussion within governments and the community, by leading a high quality, objective and responsive national statistical service
- Both a legislative and long-standing commitment to the Australian community to publish the results of all statistical collections we conduct
- <http://www.abs.gov.au>



National Statistical Service



- The National Statistical Service (NSS) is the community of government agencies and their statistical activities
- Led by the ABS as Australia's national statistical organisation
- Building a rich statistical picture for a better informed Australia
- <http://www.nss.gov.au>

Four principles support the NSS

1. Shared values
2. Building skills, knowledge and **accessibility**
3. Making rich content easily available
4. Consistency of practice and implementation

Access to ABS statistics

- Access to information is fundamental to democracy -statistics are essential for informed decision making
- ABS has had a continually increasing philosophy of access for all
- Both change and continuity in ABS policy over time
- Change from user-pays to taxpayers-pay
 - Government user pays policy in late eighties required payment for most access to ABS statistics
 - But equity of access to selected statistics retained
 - Government cost recovery principles introduced in 2005 led to three levels of ABS information:
 - Basic Information Set – free access for all
 - Additional Information Set – recover cost of providing access
 - Commercial Information Set – commercial pricing

However...

**Access to information alone is not
enough to ensure it is used for
maximum benefit...**

**Open access enables innovation,
collaboration and
facilitates informed decision making**

Open access and Public Sector Information

- ABS information is Public Sector Information (PSI)
- PSI = information collected and compiled using taxpayers' funds
- Growing global movement calling for open access to PSI
- Open access involves
 - free access
 - open formats
 - open licensing
- Open licensing means
 - “liberalised” rights to use the information
 - change from “All rights reserved” to “Some rights reserved”

Drivers for change

- **Societal expectation**
 - demand for transparency of public sector information
 - access to information essential to democracy
 - Use of internet increase demand for information, including public sector information.

- **Increasing demand to "mix and match" ABS data with other information**
 - we have the technology to make it happen cheaply and more easily
 - people want to enhance data and create new products
 - need for collaboration and innovation, and Web2.0 technologies can facilitate this

How can we enable this change?

- Open licensing
- Open standards
- Open formats
- Collaboration

What is Open Licensing?

- Although data has been free on the ABS website since 2005, redistribution of information was subject to licensing
- A licence is a document that specifies the permissions and restrictions associated with the use of a work
- The licensing process itself can pose a barrier to effective use (or re-use) of information
- An open licence is one which grants permission to access, re-use and redistribute a work with few or no restrictions

ABS needed to have a simple, open and internationally recognised framework for its statistical licensing

Why open licensing?

- all works are subject to copyright law
- without licensing, use of others' works is limited
- perceived barriers posed by traditional licensing
- open licensing will maximise economic and social returns by raising awareness, adding value, or creating new works, through
 - Enabling sharing of works
 - Incorporating usage rights in the works

**Sharing of information is fundamental to
development and innovation**

Cutler Innovation Review 2008

“... need for an Australian National Information Policy (or Strategy) that optimizes the generation and flow of ideas and information in the Australian economy . . . for social and economic benefit.”

“Australian governments should adopt international standards of open publishing as far as possible”

The solution needed to be simple...

Creative Commons

- Creative Commons (CC)
 - Offers “flexible copyright management tools for creative work”
 - International standard
 - Creators choose the rights they pass on with their work
 - <http://www.creativecommons.org.au>

- Government Information Licensing Framework (Australia)
 - Encourages use and re-use of PSI
 - Uses Creative Commons + 1 GILF restrictive license
 - <http://www.gilf.gov.au>


Creative Commons

A simple answer

- Creative Commons:
 - **Uses a standard approach to clarify responsibilities** for using, sharing and re-using data.
 - Can be searched with Google!
 - Is internationally recognised
 - Can be understood by users with confidence and certainty
 - Means that data from a wide range of sources can be matched together, with confidence that the licensing conditions are common.
- This creates an environment which will **optimise the flow** of ideas and information for social and economic benefit.



Creative Commons widens the use of ABS statistics

- Attribution 2.5 Australia licence: 
- enables ABS data to be free to use, re-use and distribute, even commercially*
 - data is more available to facilitate research and promote wider use of statistics
 - no limit to quantity of data
 - facilitates creativity and innovation

** a small number of exceptions*

ABS only asks for acknowledgement as source of the data

Creative Commons

➤ Four elements

1. Attribution



2. Non-commercial



3. No Derivative



4. Share alike



➤ Elements combine to make up licenses

Six types of CC licenses



Attribution



Attribution – Share Alike



Attribution – No Derivatives



Attribution – Non-Commercial



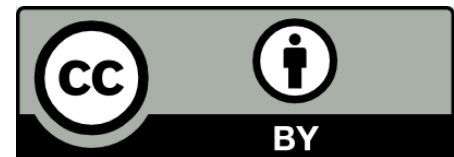
Attribution – Non-Commercial – Share Alike



Attribution – Non-Commercial – No Derivatives

Major milestones in open access to statistics

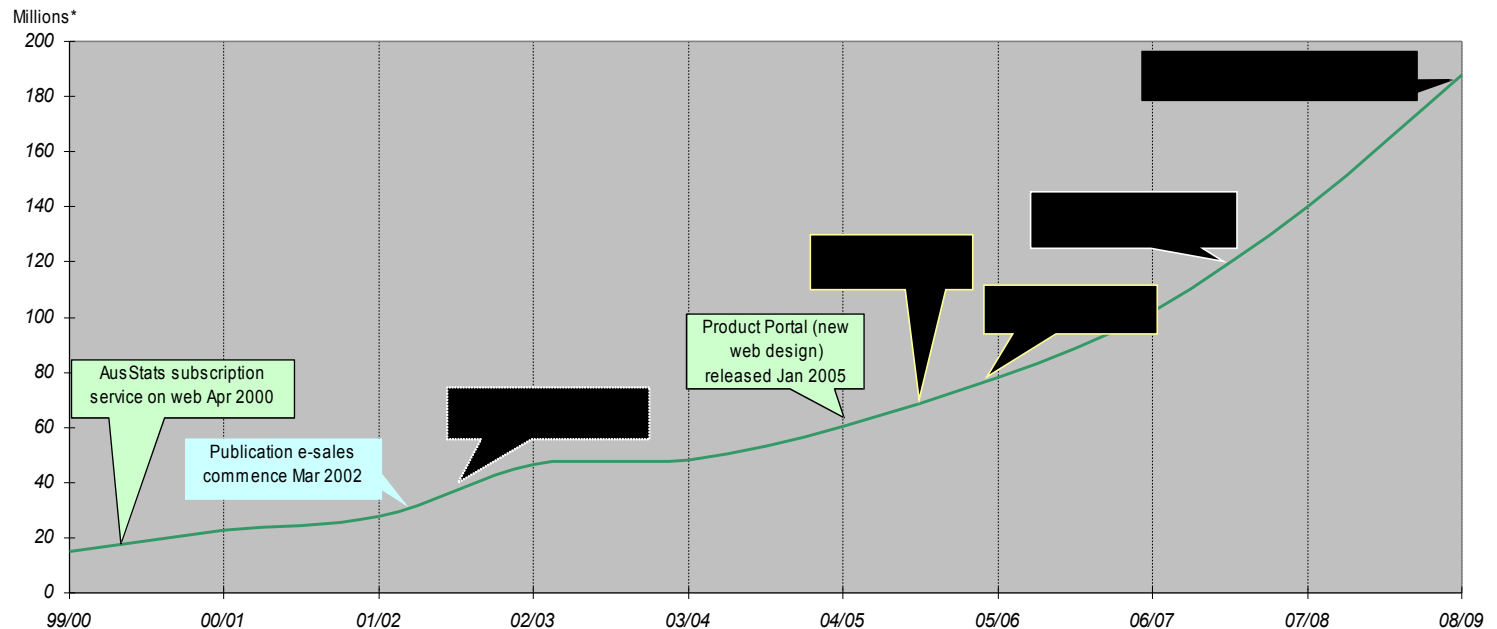
- June 1995 - ABS web “statsite” launched
- April 2000 - “AusStats” goes on-line
- March 2002 - e-sales of ABS data commence
- May 2004 - NSS website launched
- 2004 – National Data Network pilot commenced
- July 2005 - Free publications on the web
- Dec 2005 - Free statistics on the web
- Dec 2008 - ABS adopts Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 Australia licence for website
- Oct 2009 - National Statistical Service website adopts Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 Australia licence



Open access accelerates use

- The ABS website averages **1.5 million page views per week**
- Took 5.5 years to double from 30 million page views to 60 million before 2005; and only 2 years to double after 2005

ABS Website Activity Dec 1999 to Jan 2009



*Number of web pages viewed

The future?

- One size does not need to fit all
 - Different statistical products could have different licences

- Licensing beyond the website
 - Also considering application of CC beyond the website, e.g. customised data

Other enablers of open access

- Open formats
 - published specifications for storing digital data
 - more work to be done to open up access to ABS products – not all in open, easy to re-use formats
 - provide data in recognised open formats
 - provide data rather than products
 - Open standards

- Open standards
 - publicly available
 - has various usage rights associated with it
 - internationally recognised
 - ABS focus on improvements to metadata – data that describes our data

Collaboration

- Australian Government agencies are actively and increasingly collaborating to bring together a variety of information that will add richness to data
- the output of such collaborations will enable better decision making
- Commonwealth Spatial Data Initiative (CSDI)
 - integration and sharing of spatially enabled Australian government administrative data
 - ABS leading data Standards & governance component
- Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System (VCAMS)
 - ABS collaboration with Victorian State Government
 - A state-wide integrated monitoring and reporting system that is directly linked to policy

ABS has come a long way

- From charged access to free access
- From “all rights reserved” to “some rights reserved” – ABS only requires “attribution” for the use of our statistics
- Vital step in supporting democracy and in liberating ABS data for better decision making

ABS has come a long way...

“The ABS move is only one (though a very significant one for Australia) of a number of recent developments in the international movement to provide public access to publicly funded resources.”

CC Australia – Dec 2008