
Further understanding of Australian Indigenous cultures, past and present through undertaking and publishing research, and providing access to print and audiovisual collections

Twenty years of iconic Indigenous newspaper goes online and global

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Twenty years – more than 35,000 pages – of an Australian publishing icon will be available online from this week, thanks to a unique project undertaken by the nation’s premier Indigenous research organisation.

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) in Canberra has partnered with the Koori Mail to digitise the newspaper’s back archive*.

The massive online collection will be officially launched in a special ceremony in Canberra tonight, also marking publication of the Koori Mail’s 500th edition.

The collection features 20 years of stories, photos and cartoons published in the Koori Mail – dating back to the very first edition in May 1991.

AIATSIS Chairman Professor Mick Dodson AM said the Koori Mail online collection would be a stunning resource for all Australians, but especially Indigenous people who’ll be able to look back and reflect on their history, their events and their lifestyle over the past two decades.

“What it reflects is a treasure trove of the social and political history of Aboriginal affairs in this country,” Prof Dodson said.

He praised the AIATSIS library digitisation team for completing the task with the help of partners CAVAL, an Australian not-for-profit company established to provide library services to libraries in Australia, New Zealand and Asia, and the State Library of NSW who had provided the metadata from years of indexing the Koori Mail.

AIATSIS Digitisation Manager Gerald Preiss said it was the first time in Australia’s history that a complete run of an in copyright national newspaper had been made available free online.

“For this we have to thank the Koori Mail Board of Directors and management for allowing this to happen,” he said.

Mr Preiss said AIATSIS believed the website would prove enormously popular.

AIATSIS Library Manager Rod Stroud, who initiated the project with Koori Mail Managing Editor Kirstie Parker, said the availability of the CAVAL digitisation facility had been of enormous help in getting the project over the line.

“Going online means that people the world over can search and browse issues by keywords, name, subject date and issue number,” he said. “All photo captions are searchable.

“While it has involved a great deal of time and effort, this project has been particularly worthwhile.

“It has also been different and exciting seeing the range of issues covered by the Koori Mail over the past 20 years and 500 issues.

“As the colour scans have mainly come from the original well-printed issues in good condition, rather than microfilm, there has been little need for text correction and most photographs have reproduced to a very high standard.”

Under the digitisation project, the Koori Mail retains full copyright of its material. Formal permission is still required to reproduce the collection’s content.

Koori Mail Chairman Russell Kapeen said the newspaper’s Bundjalung board of directors had been pleased to support the digitisation project.

“The Koori Mail began in 1991 and was Australia’s first wholly Indigenous-owned fortnightly newspaper,” Mr Kapeen said.

“Initially we circulated only in NSW, Queensland and Victoria but we are now a truly national newspaper, read by an estimated 100,000-plus people each fortnight.

“To have all of our editions available online is groundbreaking. We believe the wealth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander opinions and viewpoints expressed in the Koori Mail makes an important contribution to the national landscape.

“The collection will be an important research tool for Indigenous people, students and anyone interested in a truly rounded perspective on national debate.

“We thank and commend AIATSIS staff for their efforts in this important initiative.”

The Koori Mail online archive will be available via the AIATSIS website at www.aiatsis.gov.au.

Further information: Peter Windsor 0400 554 603

The official launch will take place in at: From 5.30pm. AIATSIS
Acton Peninsula
Canberra

* Reflecting the Koori Mail’s ongoing subscriptions, the online collection’s content will lag four months – eight editions – behind the newspaper’s publishing schedule at all times.