

## **Access to Early WA Regional Newspapers: Pre-Federation to 1905**

*Sponsored by the Lotteries Commission of Western Australia  
with the support of the  
J S Battye Library of West Australian History,  
State Library of Western Australia*

The aim of this project was to film or re-film major regional newspapers from pre-Federation to 1905 to current Australian Standards using the original newspapers held by the Battye Library and to borrow copies held interstate when necessary, if such copies were available.

The project began in October 2001 and was completed by December 2002. Copies of the microfilm are available in the Battye Library and the relevant regional library.

The newspapers microfilmed are:

<i>Albany Advertiser</i>	1897-1901
<i>Albany Mail</i>	1883-1889
<i>Albany Observer</i>	1890-1891
<i>Bunbury Herald</i>	1892-1902
<i>Coolgardie Miner</i>	1894-1909
<i>Daily Advertiser</i>	1890-1893
<i>Eastern Districts Chronicle</i>	1877-1905
<i>Geraldton Advertiser</i>	1893-1905
<i>Geraldton Observer</i>	1880-1881
<i>Hannans Herald</i>	1895-1896
<i>Kalgoorlie Miner</i>	1895-1903
<i>Kanowna Democrat</i>	1896-1897
<i>Pilbara Goldfield News</i>	1897
<i>Southern Cross Herald</i>	1894-1896
<i>Victorian Express</i>	1878-1894
<i>Western Argus</i>	1894-1905
<i>Western Mail</i>	1885-1901

### **Earlier Project**

The current project is the second Lotteries Commission grant obtained by the Friends of Battye Library (Inc). The first project 'Access to Western Australian Historical Newspapers 1833-1901' was successfully completed in 1999. This project related to the refilming of some of the State's major city newspapers. A report on this project can be found on the State Library of Western Australia website: <http://www.liswa.wa.gov.au/nprrep.html>

As well as information about each newspaper, this earlier report details the steps involved in the preparation of the newspapers, filming and processing of the microfilm to current Australian and International Standards.

## **Achievements of this Project**

The amount of filming expected to be completed in this project was based on our experience in the previous Friends of Battye Library newspaper project. Much has been learnt and techniques refined to produce the best images possible. Preparation and filming of these very old, crumbling and torn newspapers required special skills and dedication on the part of all staff involved. The degree of difficulty depended on the condition of the original newspaper and the availability of additional copies interstate. Much expertise in handling, preparing and filming fragile and unique early newspapers has been gained.

The project achieved the goals set and an additional 50 reels were prepared, covering the period for some titles published between 1902-1905. Five small titles, of newspapers covering less than two years were also refilmed. This is an exceptional outcome.

Factored into the project was time for the libraries interstate to retrieve and despatch loan copies, and for the collating team to double check and finalise the material for filming. The work of the collating team needed to be completed before filming could commence for each title.

Filming progressed very well. After the frustrations of the previous project, the Custodians of the State Library were successful in obtaining a Lotteries Commission grant for the purchase of a new Zeutschel camera and vesicular duplicator. In addition, the State Library purchased a second Zeutschel camera. These two new state-of-the-art cameras replaced cameras that were over 40 years old, enabling the filming of the newspapers in the current project to run smoothly with a better quality product. Quality control checking improved as all the processing of the microfilm was done in Preservation Services at the Battye Library instead of the commercial laboratory used previously.

## **Microfilming in the Battye Library**

The Battye Library has been microfilming Western Australian newspapers since the early 1950s. This has enabled old and fragile newspapers to be withdrawn from daily use in the library, thus preventing further wear and tear. Even with the best of care, the original newspapers, most of which are printed on newsprint made from wood pulp, will not survive for any extended period.

Refilming has become necessary because there have been many problems associated with the early filming. Although the images were captured, many pages were out of focus making it difficult to read. Damaged pages were not repaired and no attempt was made to locate and include missing issues. Density and reduction problems also contributed to a less than perfect final product.

There have been many advances in microfilm technology since the 1950s. Australian and International Standards are now in place for newspaper microfilming. Microfilming is still the most appropriate technology available to capture the images of the newspaper page. Although digitisation is possible from the microfilm copy, it is

still very expensive and is not a preservation medium. When correctly prepared and stored, the microfilm has a life expectancy of approximately 500 years.

The Battye Library does not have sufficient resources to microfilm all the newspapers that require filming, let alone refilming. Based on the current rate of filming, it will take 10 years to film all remaining pre-1950 titles, 17.8 yrs to film post 1950-1997 titles, 10 yrs to film 1997-1999 titles and 13.9 yrs to refilm the rest of the titles identified as requiring refilming, or a total of 51.7 years.

It is only through special projects such as this one that the Battye Library can refilm newspapers to modern standards.

## FACTS ABOUT THE NEWSPAPERS MICROFILMED

### KALGOORLIE REGION:



There have now been four newspapers called the *Coolgardie Miner* over the past century. The first was started on 14 April 1894 by William Howard (Billy) Clare. An article by Arthur Bennett in *Scoop* March 1988 p.25, describes the difficulties endured in printing the first issue:

Clare and Dryblower Murphy fed the sheets of paper into the press, hot wind drying the paper and willy-willies spinning drayloads of sand on the rollers, running over gritty ink. Half the sheets were spoils. During the night, a cyclone blew the calico printing office down and printing stopped for two hours to fix the wreckage. The machine was then run at full speed all Saturday night and most of Sunday, and stopped when 1200 pages had been printed. The issue was sold out at sixpence a copy.

Given these circumstances, we are indeed lucky that copies of this newspaper have survived. Only two sets of the *Coolgardie Miner* are known to exist - the Battye Library copies, and those held by the State Library of Victoria.

The condition of the *Coolgardie Miner* (1894-09) has deteriorated greatly over the last 100 years. The large broadsheet pages are very brown and brittle, crumbling easily. Numerous tears have had to be repaired, and past repairs using tissue (which obscures the text) have been removed by washing. Some missing issues have been found in the set of newspapers borrowed from the State Library of Victoria enabling a more complete set to be filmed.

# The Western Argus

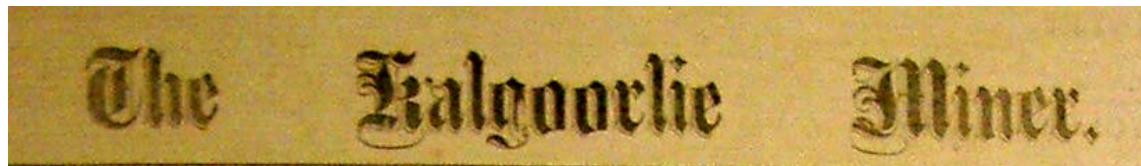
The Mott brothers started the *Western Argus* as a four-page weekly newspaper in Hannans (later called Kalgoorlie) on 24 November 1894. The paper was purchased by the Hocking brothers in August 1895, who then started the daily newspaper the *Kalgoorlie Miner*. Sydney Hocking had earlier been involved with James MacCullum Smith as a proprietor of the Coolgardie newspaper, the *Western Australian Goldfields Courier*.

In 1896 the *Western Argus* changed format and content. The first issues in the new format held by the Battye Library starts with 13 February. It appears, from the discrepancy in pagination, that these issues are missing the pink wraparound found in later issues. Each issue has approximately 20 pages and contains a roundup of the local news for the week, including details of local mining activities.

Photographs first appeared on 30 April 1896 with two photographs of local interest, increasing to 8 pages until the end of 1913 when the photographs cease. Anyone researching the goldfields area will be fascinated with the photographs. Subjects include local buildings, gold mining activities, concert contestants, local gardens, and panoramas of Kalgoorlie, to name just a few.

The collating team preparing the *Western Argus* for filming removed the individual pages of the newspaper from the bound volumes to enable the best possible images to be produced. Each issue was then collated ie checked for completeness and correct numbering, and repaired. Missing pages and issues were noted and replacement copies sought. Another set of the newspaper for the period from 1898 was obtained from the State Library of South Australia, and these issues included the pink wraparound. Copies for the earliest period 1896-1897 were found at the Kalgoorlie office of the *Kalgoorlie Miner*. The best set of the *Western Argus* was prepared and filmed using copies from all three sources.

Filming of the *Western Argus* required great concentration and skill. A typical issue had two pink pages, followed by numerous brown pages with varying quality of print, eight pages of better-quality white paper with photographs, more brown pages, and finally two pink pages. In addition there were all the normal problems with faint print and bleed through print. When the researcher sits down to view the new microfilm with the best copies of each image available they will have no idea of the difficulties involved.



The *Kalgoorlie Miner* began on 14 September 1895 when the Hocking brothers, having acquired the weekly newspaper the *Western Argus*, decided to publish a daily newspaper.

The *Kalgoorlie Miner* was the leading daily morning newspaper outside of Perth in the 1890s, and is still holding its own today more than a century later. It played a significant part in Federation, encouraging the people of the goldfields to seek separation from the rest of Western Australia when it appeared that WA would not be a party to Federation. In the ensuing referendum it was the votes of the goldfields' people that ensured WA would be part of the Commonwealth of Australia.

In his unpublished manuscript *Early Western Australian Newspapers & their editors* (Battye Library Acc 3177A) A C Frost comments:

An indication of the remarkable growth of the goldfields in the decade before the turn of the century is reflected in the fact that seven newspapers were published in Coolgardie alone and 25 in the surrounding districts. But like the 'pubs' they have mostly all gone.

The Battye Library copies of the *Kalgoorlie Miner* were in particularly poor condition. The pages were very crumpled and brown, probably heavily used prior to filming, and like many goldfields newspapers of that era, subjected to extremes of temperature which hastened deterioration. Fortunately a check by the staff at the *Kalgoorlie Miner* in Kalgoorlie resulted in copies from 1896 to 1898 being sent to Perth for inclusion in the project. The period 1899 onwards was relatively easier because a second set donated to the Battye Library years ago was stored at our repository.

#### GERALDTON REGION:



The *Victorian Express* was the first newspaper published in Geraldton (Victoria District). The founder was Isaac Walker and the first editor was Stephen Montague Stout. In 1879 he was replaced by Mr R C Howes as editor, followed by Mr Frances Hart in 1883 and Mr Alfred Carson in 1888. The *Victorian Express* was published weekly, initially on a Wednesday, and ran from 11 Sept 1878 to 26 October 1894.

In 1888 the newspaper business had become insolvent and was sold to a group of 20 Geraldton businessmen who formed the Victorian Express Company Ltd.

In November 1890 Mr John M Drew was appointed Secretary and Manager of the Victorian Express Company, an association that was to last for 38 years.

In April 1892 following the resignation of Mr Carson, John Drew was offered the position of editor of the *Victorian Express*. As he wrote in his farewell to the company in the *Geraldton Express* 31 December 1928:

I accepted it on the distinct understanding that I was not to be interfered with as regards policy – a compact which was duly honoured. On taking control, I attacked numerous abuses which I considered existed, and pursued a bold outspoken policy regardless of consequences so far as advertisers were concerned. The circulation of the paper increased enormously, and at every centre on the newly discovered Murchison Goldfields we were extensively patronized.

The title *Victorian Express* was changed in November 1894 to the *Geraldton Express and Murchison Goldfields News* to better reflect the subscription area, and to eliminate the confusion, particularly amongst those on the goldfields, that the newspaper was published somewhere in the colony of Victoria. The *Geraldton Express* ran until 1928 when the title changed to the *Geraldton Guardian and Express*.

Although the Battye Library has almost a complete set of the *Victorian Express*, there are some missing issues. Copies for the period 1887-1892 were obtained from the State Library of Victoria. Despite our best efforts, the first issue, vol. 1 no. 1, 11 Sept 1878, is still missing.



In 1890 the Victorian Express Co. started a daily (Monday to Saturday) newspaper called the *Daily Advertiser*. The first issue was called the *Morning Advertiser*. The *Daily Advertiser* was not a financial success and publication was suspended between October 1890 and June 1892.

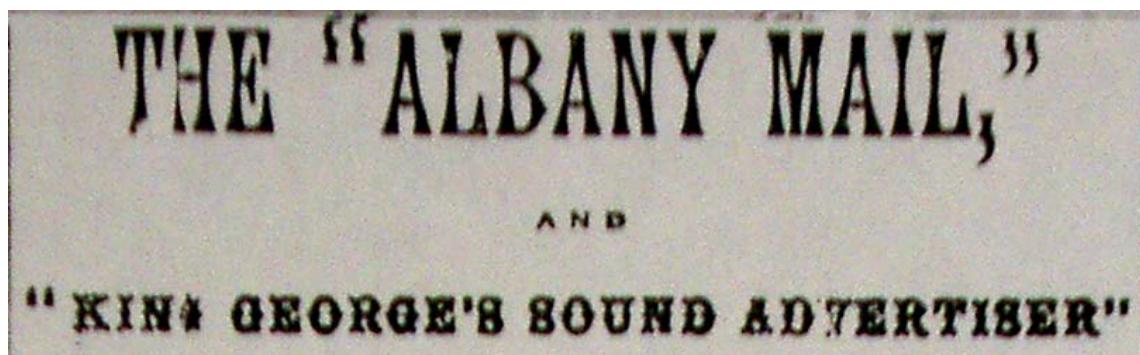
Mr John Drew as editor of the *Victorian Express* revived the paper in April 1893, changed the title to the *Geraldton Advertiser* and published it twice weekly. In 1895 he purchased the *Geraldton Advertiser* from the company and continued as editor of both the *Geraldton Advertiser* and the *Geraldton Express*. In 1906 the *Geraldton*

*Advertiser* was incorporated into the *Geraldton Express*, producing one newspaper and increasing publication frequency to three times a week.

The Battye Library has the only known set of the *Daily Advertiser*. However it is incomplete. Of particular interest is the missing issues no.1 to no.108, published in 1890. Unfortunately we do not expect to find copies of these missing issues. An article in the *West Australian* 19 Oct 1891 p6 describes a terrible fire at Geraldton: 'everything was destroyed, including 11 years volumes of the Express, forming a complete file, which loss, of course, cannot be replaced.'

The Battye Library has the only set of the *Geraldton Advertiser*. Copies for the period 1894-1897 are incomplete. The period 1898 to 1905 appears to be complete.

ALBANY REGION:



The *Albany Mail* and *King George's Sound Advertiser* was started by a group of local Albany businessmen in 1883, with Christopher James Ashwell as the printer and publisher. Depending on what source you read, Mr Ashwell was either from Victoria or New Zealand. In April of 1886 he sold his interests to his stepdaughter Mrs Clark(e), who became editor with the support of her literary husband. Each issue of the paper states 'printed and published by the proprietress Louisa Bessy Franklyn' so one can only assume that these two ladies are the same person.

There is no indication in the last issue of the *Albany Mail* of 28 August 1889 that the paper would cease publication, as they were still taking advertising.

A notice in the *Australian Advertiser* of 25 Sept 1889 states: 'The proprietors of this paper have purchased the *Albany Mail* with its plant, stock etc, and henceforth it will be incorporated with the *Advertiser*.'

The Battye Library set of the *Albany Mail* is incomplete. Fortunately the State Library of South Australia also held a set, and the two sets were combined to enable the most complete set to be microfilmed.

# The Albany Advertiser.



Photograph of the Albany Advertiser offices after the fire in 1981

The *Albany Advertiser* is today the major regional newspaper in the Albany region. The name the *Albany Advertiser* first appeared on 20 February 1897, as vol. 9 no. 1352, formerly the *Australian Advertiser*.

The *Australian Advertiser* was started in 1888 by a partnership between Lancel Victor De Hamel and William Forster. The construction of the railway from Perth to Albany promised increased prosperity for the town and was eagerly awaited by some and a source of discontent to others. Lancel De Hamel campaigned against the WA Land Company choice of route the railway took in the town. As is reported in the *Albany Advertiser* of 6 May 1980 p.11:

He campaigned strongly against the actions of the WA Land Company and, finding himself denied the support of Albany's paper he started his own.

The existing newspaper was the *Albany Mail*, which was brought in 1889 by the *Australian Advertiser*.

The Battye Library set of the *Albany Advertiser* is not complete. The only other known set, held by the publisher at Albany, was destroyed by fire in 1981.

## PILBARA REGION:

### The Pilbara Goldfield News.

The *Pilbara Goldfield News* started on 19 February 1897 and ran for 27 years. (Note: two rs in Pilbara). It was first published weekly by Ernest A Williams for the proprietors at Francis Street Marble Bar, and circulated throughout the pilbara region.

Marble Bar at the time had a transient mining population, as well as those involved in the pastoral industry. In 1912 the place of publication moved to Port Hedland, 120 miles away and linked by the Pilbara Railway. By this time the proprietor was T G Heyden. As the editorial mentions on 27 July 1912 p.2: 'In removing to Port Hedland we simply transfer the plant from one portion of a huge district to another.'

Only the first year of this newspaper, 1897, has been refilmed as part of this Friends of Battye Library newspaper project. The later years were filmed in 1980, to current microfilming standards. The Battye Library set does not include 1901, and if copies are ever found they will be microfilmed. At this stage, no other copies of the *Pilbara Goldfield News* are known to exist.

YORK:



The *Eastern Districts Chronicle*, the first country newspaper published in Western Australia, first appeared on 3 November 1877 (the date on p.1 of the first issue incorrectly reads as 31 October 1877). The publisher was George Inkpen of York, and he states in the first issue that the newspaper, 'will be conducted on liberal principles, advocating all that will promote the welfare of the colony – the Eastern Districts particularly'.

*The Herald* (Fremantle) of 26 June 1880 writes of the importance of the *Eastern Districts Chronicle* p.3e:

'There could not be a much smaller paper than the Eastern Districts Chronicle, and yet it sports a whole railway train, engine and all, at the head of its first pages, and prints its leading articles in the biggest type. Moreover it says things that its big brothers of Perth and Fremantle dare not, or at all events do not say.'

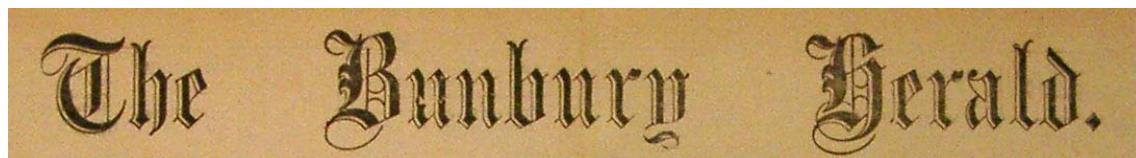
The Battye Library has the only known copies of the *Eastern Districts Chronicle*. It remains a mystery as to why this paper was not published for almost twelve months from 9 April 1887 to 3 March 1888. The issue of 10 March 1888 p.4b mentions 'this revised edition' indicating that something was amiss.

The *Eastern Districts Chronicle* continued until 7 January 1927 when it changed its name to the *York Chronicle*. By this time it was printed and published by the proprietor George Edwards Inkpen (son of George Inkpen), at the Chronicle Printing Works, Avon Terrace York.

On the occasion of the Jubilee Year of the founding of the *Eastern Districts Chronicle* (*York Chronicle* 14 Jan 1927 p.2) the editorial reviewed the past 50 years:

With the discovery of our goldfields our population rapidly increased, and greater attention was devoted to the culture of all marketable products. The rich fertile lands of the Avon Valley were turned to profitable account, and here, as in other parts of the State, wonderful advance has been made. With this progress newspapers in all districts have sprung into existence and while in the 80's and 90's our title was more appropriate as the "Eastern Districts Chronicle" we feel that it is appropriate when announcing our Jubilee Year to have a re-christening. We want to be known in future as "The York Chronicle".

BUNBURY:

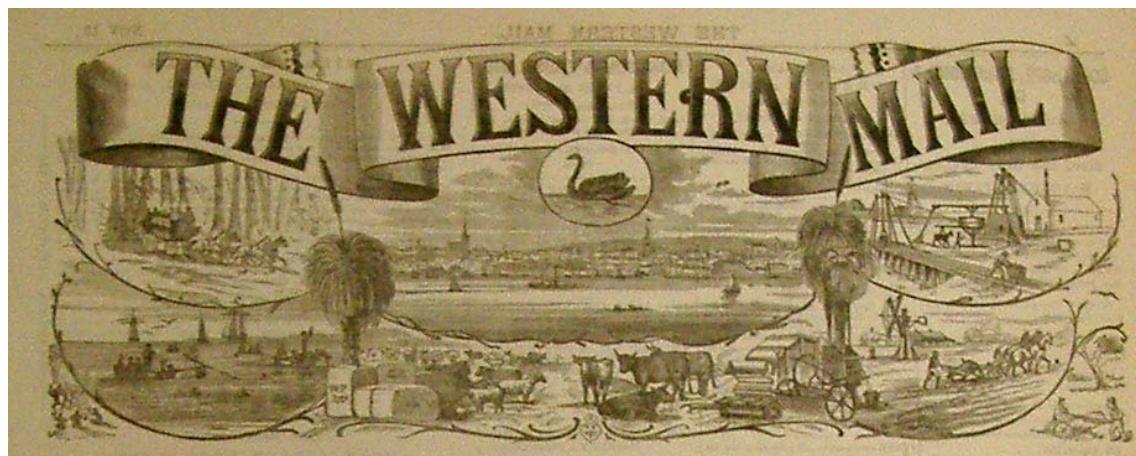


The *Bunbury Herald* was a weekly newspaper started on 28 September 1892 by Mr S J Cusack and his son Stephen. Frequency of publication increased to three times weekly by October 1897.

In 1901 Mr Cusack sold his interests to a local company 'Bunbury Herald Newspaper company Ltd 'which had been formed for the purposes of acquiring the paper'. (Bunbury Herald 20 December 1929) The directors of the new company were Sir Newton Moore, Dr C Joel, Mr J Tuxford and J H Carr.

The first editor under the new company was Mr George Wm Keith who died about six weeks after taking up his position. Printing and publishing details from the newspaper show that William Edward 'Billy' Clare was involved with the publication from 1906 to 1912, and Charles Edward Simmons from 1912 to 1916. Later in 1917 the paper was 'reluctantly sold' to Mr R S Sampson of United Press Ltd.

STATE-WIDE COVERAGE:



Although the *Western Mail* (1885-1955) was published in Perth by West Australian Newspapers, its purpose was to provide information for country people. It started as

a weekly newspaper in the style of a magazine with 24 pages, and later expanded to over 48 pages. It contained a reprint of interesting news for the week from the *West Australian*. As well as the general news it also contained farming, pastoral and agricultural information, a ladies column, children's corner, sports news, serial stories and 'wit and humour, riddles and other amusing items'.

Of particular importance to many researchers today is the wealth of pictorial material i.e. cartoons, sketches and photographs in the *Western Mail*. Photographs first appeared on 23 July 1897 and related to people, places and special events (e.g. 1897 Jubilee celebrations), most of which were of Western Australian interest. The *Quarterly Bulletin* (West Australian Newspapers) in May 1968 p. 20 describes those early days:

In those days there were no staff photographers. The half-tone blocks were made for the Western Mail by Ardern & Co of St Georges Terrace from pictures taken by commercial photographers, mainly Greenham and Evans and the Hart Co.

Both photography and reproduction were mediocre by modern standards but still far ahead of other pictorial journalism in Perth in 1897.

In 1897 the first of the special Christmas Issues was published. Although some were dated 25 December, most were available early in December. The Christmas numbers were usually 100 pages of photographs and illustrations highlighting events and progress in Western Australia.

That year there were other improvements in the *Western Mail*. The issues from 13 August 1897 contained wraparounds – a grey paper which was actually pages 1 and 2 and the back pages. The 1897 and 1898 wraparounds have not survived, however, those from 1899 were found in the set of the *Western Mail* acquired from the State Library of New South Wales. The wraparound contained the same illustrated masthead as appears on page 3 of the newspaper, as well as advertisements for such things as hotels, theatres, agricultural implements, kitchen stoves, windmills, explosives, and inks.

The microfilming of the *Western Mail* required skilled and experienced camera operators due to the large volume of photographs. In most cases it was necessary to take more than one shot at different densities to capture a good image of both the photograph and the accompanying text. The degree of darkness or lightness of the photograph and the quality of the printed text determined the final number of shots taken. As a result, there are more reels produced of the *Western Mail* than could be estimated. The overall concern has been to capture the complete image, remembering that the original newspaper will undoubtedly crumble away.

The old *Western Mail* microfilm produced in the mid 1950s has deteriorated. In particular many reels had developed vinegar syndrome due to the acetate film base causing the film to shrink and buckle and resulting in a loss of information. The working negative can no longer be used for duplication. The new microfilm produced

in this project will ensure that this valuable newspaper will be around for the next 500 years.

## Thanks

The Friends of Battye Library (Inc), J S Battye Library of West Australian History, and the State Library of Western Australia would like to thank the following for their assistance with the project Access to Early WA Regional Newspapers: Pre-Federation to 1905:

State Library of Victoria for the loan of:

<i>Coolgardie Miner</i>	1894-1909
<i>Victorian Express</i>	1886-1892

State Library of South Australia for donating copies of:

<i>Albany Mail</i>	1883-1889
<i>Western Argus</i>	1896-1905

State Library of New South Wales for donating copies of:

<i>Western Mail</i>	Dec 1897-1901
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Hocking & Co, publishers of the *Kalgoorlie Miner*, Hannans St Kalgoorlie, for  
donating copies of:

<i>Western Argus</i>	1896-1897
<i>Kalgoorlie Miner</i>	1896-1897

Without such cooperation a significant and invaluable historical resource would have been lost to future generations.

The Friends of Battye Library (Inc) wishes to thank the Lotteries Commission of Western Australia, the State Library of Western Australia and the staff of the J S Battye Library of West Australian History for enabling this project to be successfully completed.

All those involved can feel a sense of pride in adding to the documentary heritage preserved and available to the Western Australians and wider community.

It is also very pleasing that copies of newspapers microfilmed will be accessed by local communities through their regional public libraries.

Margaret Hartnup  
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Friends of Battye Library Newspaper Project