The WABI dataset

# Introduction

The Western Australian Biographical Index (WABI) is a highly used resource at the State Library of Western Australia. A recent generous contribution by the Friends of Battye Library (FOBS) has enabled SLWA to have the original handwritten index cards scanned and later transcribed.

The dataset contains: several csv files with data describing card number, card text and url link to image of the original handwritten card.

# Use case

We’ve identified that this index has potential value to West Australians; but in its current form it presents challenges. How do we make this information more useable? How do we expose its value? We’d like to see what the GovHack community can make with it.

Limitations of the set:

* Some cards are missing;
* Transcripts are crowdsourced so may contain spelling errors and possibly missing information;
* Some cards are crossed out. Some of these are included in the collection and some are not;
* Some of the cards contain relevant information on the back (usually children of the person mentioned). This info should be on the next consecutive card;
* As the information is an index, collected in the 1970s from print material, it is incomplete. It is also unreferenced.

It is still a very valuable dataset as it contains a wealth of information about early settlers in Western Australia. It is of particular interest to genealogists and historians.

# About WABI

Work began on the West Australian Biographical Index (WABI) in the early 1970s when information was sought on people who lived in Western Australian prior to 1914. Publicity was sent out through local libraries, historical groups and in publication such as the *West Australian*. Western Australians were asked to provide genealogical information, not only on prominent identities, but also from their family records including the arrival in Western Australia, occupations, dates of birth, marriages and deaths of their ancestors.

Entries for the index closed in December 1979, and were filed at the Battye Library for reference. Rica Erickson and a growing band of helpers sorted through the flood of information that arrived and also methodically went through resource material at the Battye Library. They searched through passenger lists, church registers, the WA almanacs and directories, the index to the *WA Government Gazettes*, and old newspapers such as the*Inquirer* and *Perth Gazette*to find additional details. All this information was condensed and handwritten on individual cards and sorted alphabetically by surname.

The material collected was microfilmed and the reels of microfilm and her biographical cards are widely used for genealogical research in the Battye Library. The cards contain summarised information and may include date of arrival in Western Australia, dates of births, deaths and marriages of family members, where they lived and occupation. Source: <http://slwa.wa.gov.au/erickson/pages/biographical.html>

Our thanks to Virtual Volunteering for assisting with the transcription of the cards, visit them at <http://www.virtualvolunteering.com.au/volunteer/>