The PublicationsNZ Book Cover Image Service
Accessing New Zealand book covers: Easy as 1-2-3
Published May 2010
Updated February 2015

The PublicationsNZ Book Cover Image Service currently provides access to over 5,500 book cover images for New Zealand publications. The service is intended for New Zealand’s libraries to help them promote the New Zealand publications in their collections. Libraries and organisations situated outside of New Zealand are not licensed to use this service.

Please refer to the Terms of Use at the end of this document for information on how these images may be used by your library.

The service makes book cover images publicly available through a URL. The base URL is: http://digital.natlib.govt.nz/bookcover/get/

Each image is assigned a unique identifier to link the image to the bibliographic record it represents. The identifier could be an ISBN, ISSN, ISMN or NBD number (see Step 1 for definition and locations of the NBD number). The base URL should include the type of identifier you’re using to query the service:


For your library to make these images available through your own online catalogue, your library’s ILS must have the ability to access the service by querying one of the URLs above with the unique identifier appended. You may need to contact your ILS technical support to set this up in your system.

Step 1
Identify the items in your catalogue without book cover images and locate their ISBN, ISSN, ISMN or NBD number. The NBD number is the number assigned to the MARC record in Te Puna and will be located in the 035 field following ‘(Nz)’. This number is used if no other standard identifier is assigned (items include CDs and DVDs).

Step 2
Append the URL with the type of identifier and the unique identifier. The unique identifier must not include any marks of punctuation (i.e. hyphens, etc.)
Example: To retrieve a cover image of book with ISBN 9780143020165, use this URL:

The service will convert 10-digit ISBNs to 13-digits:

By default, this URL retrieves the access copy image. To retrieve a thumbnail, a request parameter profile with a value of thumb or thumbnail needs to be provided.

Example: To retrieve a thumbnail image of the book cover with ISBN 9780143020165, use either of the following URLs:

Example: To retrieve a cover image of book with NBD number 11363313, use this URL:

The access copy image will be 240 pixels on the longest side. The thumbnail will be 150 pixels on the longest side.

Step 3
Make sure your system is configured to display the image within your own online catalogue by ensuring the image is formatted correctly:
<img src="http://digital.natlib.govt.nz/bookcover/get/9780143020165">

Your library catalogue should now display the book cover.

Failure to Locate an Image

If you try to retrieve an image using any of the above URL patterns with an invalid identifier number (such as an invalid ISBN number), the system responds with a GIF image of 1x1 pixel size.

A 1x1 pixel GIF is also returned if the image being requested is not available through the service.

Terms of Use

Libraries may use cover images in their own online catalogues and for promotional use within the library (including library websites and blogs). The images must not be
altered, modified or distorted in any way, other than (1) enlarging or reducing the size of the image, or (2) converting the image from one digital storage format to another.

When using a cover image it must be clearly associated with the bibliographic information to which it relates.

If a copyright owner requests that a book cover image be removed, The National Library will remove the image from the service, and it will no longer be available.

Libraries must not download the images and store them locally. The images may only be used if retrieved from the URL service.

Libraries may not on-supply the images to other organisations and in particular must ensure that the images are not supplied to organisations outside New Zealand.