



GLAM · PEAK

Draft national framework for digital access to Australia's collections

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www.glampeak.org.au
www.digitalcollections.org.au

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Preamble

GLAM Peak represents the peak bodies of the galleries, libraries, archives, museums, historical societies and other research collections.

Their members support the nation's arts, heritage, education, science and humanities research, and innovation priorities.

The bodies are united to enable and promote collection digitisation and digital access for engagement with the nation's cultural, scientific and other collections.

Aim

This framework sets out the nation's ambition for digital access to collections — for open access to a rich diversity of Australian content by national and international audiences. Implementing the framework will make Australian collections discoverable globally. It will support capacity building in the sector, particularly for smaller institutions, and knowledge transfer between collecting institutions of all types, sizes and jurisdictions.

Vision

To enable the Australian people to create innovative, educated, resilient and connected communities that understand and celebrate our shared cultural identity through digital access to the nation's cultural, scientific and other collections.

- Our collections hold data — all collections are born digital or have the potential to be digitised to assist in their preservation, enduring and universal access and engagement (noting that some may not be made available due to cultural or other sensitivities);
- The internet allows us to share data through aggregated databases, web-based content platforms and social media;
- National aggregators greatly increase the ease with which citizens find, search and use national collections;
- We need to support existing infrastructure and build new platforms that allow us to upload and link data so it can be widely shared, used, adapted and analysed; and
- We will have succeeded when people discover, access, research and engage with our national digitised collections and create new knowledge in a way unimagined, at a scale unimagined.

Principles

GLAM Peak acknowledges and accepts that not all organisations can place the same level of priority on digital access, or are at the same point in terms of providing digital access to their collections; there are many pathways to achieve this. We therefore encourage and support all organisations to understand the opportunities and engage with collection digitisation and digital access according to their community's needs, ethical considerations and their own capacity.

To lead the development and implementation of a national framework to progress collection digitisation and digital access initiatives across Australia GLAM Peak agrees to:

- 1. Co-operate and collaborate to achieve national and global digital access to our collections, to improve services for existing and new users and so that we will have enduring access to Australia's digitised and born digital collections and the information held within them.*
- 2. Share resources and pool knowledge, wherever this is possible, in order to reduce duplication and to achieve our objectives in the national interest.*
- 3. Co-ordinate for the nation standards and guidelines for the acquisition, preservation, management and interpretation of digitised and born digital collections.*
- 4. Acknowledge the professional methods, rights management, policies and legislation of the sectors and our national and international cataloguing and documentation standards for born digital collections, collection digitisation and digital access.*
- 5. Retain physical, born digital and digitised collections in accordance with legislation, rights and standards and in the case of heritage collections, with regard to their significance.*
- 6. Support sustainable and enduring digital access to the nation's digitised and born digital collections in formats and with clear access information that allow for present and future access, preservation, repurposing and content creation.*
- 7. Strengthen life-long learning and community development networks, including social media networks and encourage users to navigate their own experiences and be content creators.*
- 8. Support commonwealth, state and territory, local government, regional and community initiatives and approaches to make digitisation technology both collection and user centred and also work towards shared national access objectives.*
- 9. Recognise the innovation and diversity of collection management platforms that hold digitised collections, including born digital, and work towards national shared digital access and engagement.*
- 10. Identify, share and promote industry technical standards for descriptive metadata to encourage interoperability and align different domain standards to support greater distribution, discovery, access and use of digitised collections and resources*

Strategies

1. State and territory digital plans

Rationale

The patchwork development of digital accessibility to collections nationwide needs now to be steered and funded in a coherent and efficient way, following a national framework. This is best done at state and territory level, through policies, plans and funding programs guiding and supporting local initiatives, and feeding into a national picture. In some cases, national sector approaches will be most effective, for example across the university sector.

Improved leadership, direction and coordination by states and territories aligned to existing outreach and support networks are key to successful implementation of the national framework.

Strategy

Each state and territory government, through its preferred department or agency, coordinates the development of a Digital Plan for its GLAM sector, in order to deliver the shared vision described in this framework. State and territory plans may require some level of national coordination.

2. Regional hubs and collaboration

Rationale

Improved leadership, direction and coordination nationally, and by states and territories through their digital plans, should be aligned to existing outreach and support networks. There are also a number of regional centres working collaboratively on arts and heritage projects such as collaborative collections surveys. The successful regional model of the Central West Councils, reviewed in the Stage 1 Report case studies, is based on structured projects of applied learning and sector capacity building that run between one and three years, that have a clear project rationale and method and take skills development step by step. Building on success, these regional leadership models should be supported.

Strategy

Develop and support programs that work regionally and bring small organisations together with local government libraries, galleries and museums to help collaborative collection surveys, documentation and digitisation either in a region, or for particular collection types or themes. Include impact assessment frameworks and tools. Projects should include training and significance assessment where relevant to the collection and result in digital access. (See discussion of Community Heritage Grants at Strategy 4, below).

Review and expand successful programs to include remote areas, in particular Indigenous collections and centres.

3. Aggregation

Rationale

There has been considerable recent effort and progress in digitising collections and using many different databases and collection management platforms to catalogue and share them. This plurality of old and new systems is accepted but future efforts should work towards integration where possible with national platforms such as Trove.

Transferring older legacy databases into new digital collection management platforms and aggregation of these diverse platforms into databases like Trove will remain the key to making collections accessible and easily discoverable by users in Australia, and indeed around the world.

Strategy

Support national aggregated databases like Trove and the Atlas of Living Australia and state based ones like Victorian Collections, as a means to make collections across a diverse range of legacy databases and new digital collection management platforms accessible and searchable, improving return on digitisation investment.

Encourage states and territories to review a diverse range of digital collection management systems and platforms and make recommendations tailored to specific needs for small organisations. This will assist small organisations make informed choices in selecting a suitable and supported platform — and ones compatible with aggregated databases and outreach services.

4. Funding incentives for small organisations

Rationale

Small organisations hold important collections but have limited staff and volunteer resources and time. More incentives and support to make collections digitally accessible are needed. One way of determining priorities is by focusing on collections at risk of being lost, on highly significant collections and ones of greatest researcher interest.

The Community Heritage Grants program is funded by the Australian Government through the National Library of Australia; the Ministry for the Arts; the National Archives of Australia; the National Film and Sound Archive and the National Museum of Australia. It currently provides grants of up to \$15,000 to community organisations such as libraries, archives, museums, genealogical and historical societies, multicultural and Indigenous groups. The grants are provided to assist with the preservation of locally owned and nationally significant collections of materials that are publicly accessible including artefacts, letters, diaries, maps, photographs, and audio visual material. The grants are generally awarded in several stages, progressing from Significance Assessment to Preservation Assessment to Collections Management assistance.

Strategy

The Department of Communications and the Arts to increase funding to its Community Heritage Grants program administered by the National Library of Australia for a Stage Four Grant — where significant collections are digitised and made accessible on the internet. The grants program could also provide incentives in the form of a grant to progress to public digital collections access through Trove.

5. Standards, guidance and training

Rationale

Lack of awareness of, and applicability of, publicly accessible information and advice, along with limited opportunities for training is holding back small organisations from making collections digitally accessible.

Strategy

Support face-to-face training and advisory services in regional hubs using the Digital Access to Collections Toolkit, developed in Stage 1. This would cover how to plan, prioritise and collaborate, along with providing technical advice on digitisation approaches and standards, software, platforms, and websites.

Provide advice on finding and using national and international standards relevant for different collection formats. In particular, guidance on thesauri, minimum descriptive standards to achieve collection discovery, standards for describing what end users can do with items discovered online (e.g. CC licences, rights.org statements), and information on exchange of data across digital collections should be collated, augmented if required, and disseminated in ways that are useful for general audiences. A clear finding of Stage 1 of this project was that the availability of online standards information has not translated into awareness and use by those who need them most: custodians of collections held by small to medium sized organisation.

Provide updateable information that can be easily distributed through outreach networks and online. These could include Copyright, Artists' Rights, Privacy, Security and Risk Management.

6. Strengthen promotion of good practice

Rationale

Examples and models are proven ways to help raise standards and expertise. More can be done to highlight successful digital collections access case studies and provide incentives for other organisations to emulate best practice models.

Along with significance assessments, thinking about how parts of a collection will be used (interpretation, education and the creation of new content) is also a critical driver of what is digitised.

GLAM Peak should clearly articulate what successful digital access or 'multimedia' projects look like with a clearer rationale to promote national standards of practice.

Strategy

GLAM Peak to lead discussions and articulate what excellence in digital collections access looks like. Encourage training feedback, user-centred experience and project evaluations to revise and improve standards.

Encourage state and territory and national awards programs to highlight projects that achieve excellence for other projects to emulate.

Encourage creative re-use of collections: support projects and partnerships that enable innovative interpretation and presentation of collection materials through digital means.

7. Learning in digital

Rationale

Stronger links between GLAM organisations and educational institutions would strengthen both, and accelerate digital access programs. Small organisations could partner with local schools, for example, to progress digitisation of collections, making them accessible on the internet and also to draw collections together for regional storytelling. In this way, community collections would provide the 'practicum' for student learning, by having students actually doing digitisation and website development.

Programs for learning in digital technologies with GLAM small organisations would need to be carefully managed and structured to ensure skills development and achievable project outcomes for both students and life-long learners in small organisations and to build capacity.

Strategy

Align GLAM organisations' collections management and digital access programs with curriculum requirements for digital learning.

Partner with state and territory education departments, and other community hubs such as the public library network, in a trial program in selected regions.

8. Social media, other partnerships and crowd sourcing

Rationale

The "open data" issues surrounding digital access to public domain images is a critical one for decisions about types of partnerships.

It would be useful to offer small organisations with large backlogs, for example of family history and photographic records, assistance to progress documentation and digitisation. This support could come from a number of sources, including peer-to-peer, and possibly commercial organisations with an interest in being a channel to market, for example for sales of photographic images.

The National Archives now has many years of experience of working in partnership with commercial organisations which result in making important parts of its collection,

although generally text rather than images, directly available online for family history and other research.

Partnering with commercial organisations can be a very effective way to fund some digitisation, recognising, however, that there are hard limits to what commercial organisations are interested in.

Commercial opportunities should be considered as part of a discussion by small organisations on their strategic direction and in determining what will best meet their long term needs. Is it raising revenue? Or is it raising the profile and utility of their collections through lower intermediation?

A third-party platform might not only support sales income, but also be able to crowd source knowledge, to help identify people and places where they are not known.

Strategy

Investigate partnership options for a program where the family history and/or photographic holdings of small organisations could be digitised and returned to small organisations, and subsequently aggregated for easier national public accessibility and discoverability (and increased revenue from image sales).

Encourage the enhancement or redevelopment of aggregated databases to more easily facilitate and integrate social media for crowd sourcing knowledge about collection holdings and story-telling about digitally accessible collections. This will provide incentives for small organisations to aggregate and share their collections on the internet with the public and support their interests in publishing narratives accessible to the public about their collections.

As an incentive, small organisations relying on image sales for revenue, and ones finding it difficult to document their collections, could benefit from a platform that facilitates crowd sourcing of knowledge and, in the future, is able to support electronic funds transfer for high resolution image sales.