

**Policy
and
Minimum Requirements
for
Management of
Cultural Collections**

Cultural Collections Committee

April 2006

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

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University of Melbourne

Policy for management of Cultural Collections¹



1 Introduction²

The University of Melbourne owns 32 identified cultural collections, of which 30 are managed by the University.³ It also owns a number of individual heritage objects which are not part of a collection. This policy and the minimum requirements are intended to apply to all faculties, schools, institutes, centres and departments of the University, and to all Cultural Collections owned and managed by the University now and in the future.

2 Definition

Each of the Cultural Collections owned by the University of Melbourne is an assemblage of physical (not digital or virtual) objects,⁴ which have historic, aesthetic, scientific, research, technical, social or spiritual significance. This significance goes beyond the collection's role as an intellectual resource or carrier of information or evidence.

The objects in a Cultural Collection may be naturally occurring or created by humans and can include living organisms. Although each individual object might not be rare or unique, each collection as a totality is unique and irreplaceable; if lost or destroyed, the collection may not be able to be re-created, regardless of available funding. Some of the collections were originally accumulated by private individuals, families or organisations, and later acquired by the University; this provenance contributes to the significance of these collections and cannot be replicated.

As assets, the Cultural Collections usually appreciate rather than depreciate in value.

At present, each Cultural Collection is located in one place or is administered by one organisational unit of the University.

An assemblage of objects used for teaching or which results from research or a teaching activity, and which is not sufficiently significant to be regarded as a Cultural Collection, may be considered a Teaching Collection, and should be managed in accordance with locally agreed policies and procedures for Teaching Collections. Should there be any

¹ This document was endorsed by Planning & Budget Committee in April 2006 and noted by Council in May 2006. In 2009 minor editorial changes were made by the Cultural Collections Coordinator, principally an updating of the list of collections and the inclusion of "University Librarian".

² This document draws upon the following sources:

Standing Committee on Museums and Collections, New South Wales Vice-Chancellors Conference Australia, *Minimum maintenance requirements and closure and disposal procedures for University museums and collections* (September 2000).

University of Dundee, *Acquisition and disposal policies for the University Museum collections* (revised May 2001).

Museums Australia code of ethics, Museums Australia (Canberra, 1999).

ICOM code of ethics, International Council of Museums (1986, amended 2001).

³ Number and list of collections last updated by Belinda Nemeč, Cultural Collections Co-ordinator, January 2008. At original time of writing, April 2006, the list comprised 31 collections, of which 28 were managed by the University of Melbourne.

⁴ Objects include but are not limited to: books, documents, photographs, maps, musical scores, artworks, technical or architectural drawings and plans, analogue audio-visual materials, artefacts, scientific specimens including botanical, geological, palaeontological, anatomical and zoological, scientific apparatus and other technical, experimental or measuring equipment, costume, musical instruments, furniture and ephemera. It may be appropriate to broaden the categories of object type in the future to include digital or virtual material.

doubt as to whether an assemblage of objects qualifies as a Cultural Collection or merely as a Teaching Collection, a significance assessment should be undertaken, using the University's agreed methodology.⁵

This policy and all other such policies and procedures must comply with all relevant State and Federal legislation.

The University's Cultural Collections Committee and its three subcommittees: the Conservation and Storage Sub-committee, the Exhibitions and Public Programs Sub-committee and the Web Presence and Digitalisation Sub-committee provide co-ordination for the management of the Cultural Collections.

This policy does not apply to human remains and burial artefacts related to the remains including sacred and secret objects. Such objects are governed by the "Protocol for the Accessioning, Storage and Deaccessioning of Human Remains and Burial Artefacts and Sacred or Secret Objects", a standing resolution of Council.⁶

3 Ownership

Each Cultural Collection is an asset of the University, managed on behalf of the University by a faculty, school, institute, centre or department.

If an individual wishes to bring his or her own personal collection onto University premises this should be approved and documented in accordance with an agreed local policy and procedure.

Advice in relation to the legal status of any Cultural Collection should be sought from Legal Services or the Trusts Manager as relevant.

4 Responsibility

A Dean of a faculty, or the Vice-Principal of an administrative division or the University Librarian, should normally be designated as the responsible custodian for each Cultural Collection. This responsibility should be recognised in that person's position description. The list of collections contained in Part D of this policy makes reference to these designated custodians.

The day-to-day management of each Cultural Collection should be delegated to one staff member (e.g. the museum director, librarian, curator or archivist). In this policy such a person is referred to as 'Collection Manager'. The Collection Manager may be responsible for managing other staff who work with the Cultural Collection.

Responsibility for management of a Cultural Collection includes responsibility for the physical preservation and protection of the collection, and the preservation of its meaning, significance and values, including the preservation and documentation of information relating to the collection.

If a faculty, school, institute, centre or department finds that it cannot meet its responsibilities for a Cultural Collection, the matter should be referred to the Cultural Collections Committee for consideration of options, taking into account the Collection's deaccession and disposal policy and procedure.

⁵ The methodology used from 2001 to 2008 was: Roslyn Russell and Kylie Winkworth for the Heritage Collections Council, *Significance: a guide to assessing the significance of cultural heritage objects and collections* (Commonwealth of Australia on behalf of the Heritage Collections Council, 2001). In 2009 this was replaced by Roslyn Russell and Kylie Winkworth for the Collections Council of Australia Ltd, *Significance 2.0: a guide to assessing the significance of cultural heritage objects and collections* (Collections Council of Australia Ltd, 2009).

⁶ Although this Protocol has been drafted, it has not yet been approved by University Council, pending commencement of new State legislation (Belinda Nemeč, 2 February 2007).

5 Establishment

A University faculty, school, institute, centre or department should only establish a new Cultural Collection with the prior written approval of the relevant Dean or Vice-Principal or the University Librarian, and the Cultural Collections Committee.

A new Cultural Collection should only be established if the University can provide:

- adequate appropriate space to house the collection safely;
- adequate qualified staff to manage the collection to a professional standard, including:
- physical care;
- cataloguing and other documentation;
- undertaking research and facilitating access by students, researchers, staff and the public; and
- adequate recurrent funding to provide the above.

6 Acquisition

A University faculty, school, institute, centre or department or an individual should only acquire collection-type objects in accordance with this policy.

Any University faculty, school, institute, department or an individual who finds objects on University premises or objects which are thought to belong to the University, and which they believe may be appropriate for inclusion in one of the University's Cultural Collections, should consult the University Archivist (for archival records), the Cultural Collections Co-ordinator, or a relevant Collection Manager as to the most appropriate way to proceed.

Cultural Collections Committee
April 2006

University of Melbourne

Minimum requirements for management of Cultural Collections



This document sets out MINIMUM requirements which each Cultural Collection should meet. Any existing policies and procedures may remain in place, as long as they at least meet, and do not contradict, the minimum requirements of this document.

PART A: General requirements

A1 Statement of purpose

The Collection Manager should prepare and publicise a clear statement of the purpose of the Cultural Collection.

This statement should be submitted through normal departmental channels for approval by the relevant Dean or Vice-Principal or the University Librarian and also by other relevant departmental committee(s).

The statement should also be submitted to the Conservation and Storage Subcommittee, for forwarding to the University's Cultural Collections Committee for noting.

A2 Code of ethics

The Collection Manager should actively comply with the code of ethics of an appropriate, recognised industry or professional organisation (e.g. Museums Australia, International Council of Museums, Australian Society of Archivists, or relevant librarians association).

A3 Significance assessment

A fully documented significance assessment of the Cultural Collection should be undertaken by the Collection Manager at the earliest possible opportunity, in accordance with the methodology *Significance: a guide to assessing the significance of cultural heritage objects and collections* (Heritage Collections Council, 2001).

The statement of significance from the assessment should be made to available to interested parties upon request.

A4 Acquisition Policy

The Collection Manager should prepare and publicise a clear acquisitions policy, consistent with the provisions of PART B of this policy. This should be submitted for approval in the same way as the statement of purpose (see clause A1).

A5 Deaccession Policy

The Collection Manager should prepare and make available upon request a policy and procedure for the deaccession and disposal of objects from the collection, consistent with the provisions of PART C of this policy. This policy should be submitted for approval in the same way as the statement of purpose (see clause A1).

A6 Loans: documentation

The Collection Manager should prepare and make available upon request a loans policy and standard loan agreement which covers all inward and outward loans of

different durations.⁷ The Collection Manager should also maintain a loans register, of all inward and outward loans. The standard loan agreement must be used unless a lender or other party insists on the use of its own loan agreement in which case Legal Services should be given the opportunity of reviewing the loan agreement.

The loans policy should be submitted for approval in the same way as the statement of purpose (see clause A1).

The standard loan agreement includes provision for conservation, insurance, packing, transport, and the allocation of costs and responsibilities.

All loans, whether long-term or short-term, should be for a clearly stated purpose and should be adequately resourced.

The Collection Manager may negotiate with the person in control of the objects for sufficient resources to care for the objects for the duration of the loan.

A7 Loans: review of outstanding loans

Any existing loans which are not covered by a current loan agreement consistent with the Cultural Collection's formal loans policy, or for which the loan agreement has expired, should be reviewed by the Collection Manager. Such review should result in one of the following:

- return of the objects to the lender or the lender's heirs;
- renewal of the loan for a set period of time and for a specific purpose, to be documented in a formal loan agreement signed by both parties;
- acquisition of the objects into the Cultural Collection; or
- recommendation for acquisition into another Cultural Collection of the University.

If the recommended outcome is acquisition of the loan objects, then the relevant acquisition policy referred to in clause A4 should be followed.

A8 Collection access

The Collection Manager should prepare and publicise a collection access policy and guidelines, which will meet the needs of staff, students, researchers and the general public as appropriate.

A9 Cataloguing

Ideally, all Cultural Collections should be fully catalogued or listed in electronic format, including information on provenance, within six months of their acquisition.

A10 Copyright, reproduction and publication

The Collection Manager should prepare and publicise a policy, for reproduction and publication of objects from the Cultural Collection in accordance with the University's copyright policy.

A11 Risk management

The Collection Manager should develop and maintain a risk management plan, accompanied by the purchase of all necessary materials and equipment and the provision of specialist training for relevant staff.

⁷ There is an existing University of Melbourne loan agreement pro-forma, available from the Cultural Collections Co-ordinator.

PART B:
Acquisition policy: minimum requirements

(relates to clause A4 above)

B1 Scope of the Cultural Collection

The acquisition policy should include a clear and definitive statement on the scope of the Cultural Collection and the type of objects which may (and, optionally, may not) be acquired. The parameters of this statement might include relevance to a field of academic endeavour, geographic area, historical period, object type or association with the University.

In some cases it may be appropriate to define a Cultural Collection as 'closed', in which case no new acquisitions would be considered.

B2 Stewardship

Only objects that can, in the opinion of the Collection Manager, be adequately housed, preserved, documented and made accessible should be acquired. The acquisition of objects in poor condition can be a burden on the University and should be avoided unless there are compelling reasons for the acquisition.

The Collection Manager may, in consultation with the Trusts Manager if appropriate, negotiate with the donor or person in control of the objects, at the time of acquisition, sufficient resources to care for the objects.

B3 Valid title

Objects should only be acquired if valid and unencumbered legal title can be secured.⁸ If in doubt, refer the matter to Legal Services.

B4 Ethical considerations

All acquisitions should be consistent with the terms of the code of ethics with which the Collection Manager complies (see clause A2).

All acquisitions must comply with all relevant State and Federal legislation.

B5 Specific Conditions imposed by donors

Objects offered to the Cultural Collection will generally be accepted only if, in the opinion of the Collection Manager, they are free of any restrictive covenant or special condition, for example they may or may not be displayed in a particular place or manner or period of time. Any proposed exception to this rule requires the prior approval of the Cultural Collections Committee.⁹

B6 Methods of acquisition

Acquisition may be by bequest, donation, gift, purchase, a commission paid, or by collection in the field in the course of research, teaching or other professional activity.

A Loan is not a method of acquisition but a temporary administrative arrangement (see clauses A6 and A7).¹⁰

B7 Approval of acquisitions

All acquisition proposals require the approval of an acquisitions committee, which may be a specially-constituted committee, or an existing departmental or faculty committee. It may include members external to the department or faculty.

⁸ Some long-term deposit arrangements in the University of Melbourne Archives may be an exception to this clause.

⁹ This clause will not always be applicable to the University of Melbourne Archives, due to the various statutory and privacy considerations and sensitivities relevant to many archival holdings.

¹⁰ Some long-term deposit arrangements in the University of Melbourne Archives may be an exception to this clause.

The acquisitions committee should take into account the advice of the Collection Manager.

An individual staff member is only authorised to accept objects for the Cultural Collection on behalf of the University with the prior approval of the relevant acquisitions committee.

B8 Documentation

All acquisitions require documentation at the time of acquisition. Invoices and receipts are required for purchases. A signed, standard form deed of gift from the donor is required for all gifts and donations, or from the executor for all bequests. A letter of acknowledgement to the donor or executor is required for all gifts and bequests. Appropriate documentation and collecting permits are required for all material collected in the field by staff or other individuals acting on behalf of the Cultural Collection.

B9 Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander human remains, burial artefacts and sacred, secret objects

It is prohibited under Commonwealth and Victorian law for any institution or individual to acquire Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander human remains, burial artefacts and sacred, secret objects.

Refer to the University's standing resolution, the "Protocol for the Accessioning, Storage and Deaccessioning of Human Remains and Burial Artefacts and Sacred or Secret Objects".¹¹

B10 Other human remains and burial artefacts, and secret/sacred objects

Refer to the University's standing resolution, the "Protocol for the Accessioning, Storage and Deaccessioning of Human Remains and Burial Artefacts and Sacred or Secret Objects".

B11 Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural artefacts and artworks

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural artefacts and artworks, not associated with burial and not of a secret/sacred nature, may be acquired subject to the same requirements as for any other Cultural Collection. There may sometimes however be special requirements for their management.

B12 Review

The acquisition policy should specify a date by which it will be reviewed.

¹¹ Although this document has been drafted, it has not yet been approved by University Council, pending commencement of new State legislation (Belinda Nemec, 2 February 2007).

PART C:

Deaccession and disposal policy and procedure: minimum requirements

(relates to clause A5 above)

C1 Scope and application

The deaccession and disposal policy and procedure should be applied if there is an intention to dispose of individual objects, parts of collections and entire collections. Any proposal for the deaccession and disposal of more than one object should include a full list specifying all the objects under consideration.

The deaccession and disposal policy and procedure refer only to objects in the Cultural Collection. All non-collection items such as furniture and equipment are subject to the normal disposal procedures of the University.

C2 Ethical considerations

All activity and considerations relating to a proposed or actual deaccession or disposal should be undertaken in a manner consistent with the code of ethics with which the Collection Manager complies (see clause A2).

University staff and Council members, and their family members, and other individuals formally associated with the University, may not purchase or otherwise acquire a deaccessioned object or collection, nor may they benefit personally in any way from the deaccessioning of an object or collection.

C3 Ownership of collections

In considering any deaccession or disposal, it should be borne in mind throughout the process, that all objects are the property of the University and may not be disposed of unilaterally by the responsible department or by any individual.

C4 Approval of deaccession and disposal

All proposed deaccessions of individual objects or insubstantial parts of collections require the approval of the relevant departmental committee and Dean or Vice-Principal or the University Librarian, or their delegate under the terms of the Cultural Collection's agreed Deaccession Policy and Procedure, taking into account the advice of the Collection Manager. Deaccessions approved under a delegation should be reported annually to the relevant Dean or Vice-Principal or the University Librarian.

All proposed deaccessions of entire collections or substantial parts of collections require the approval of the Vice-Chancellor, taking into account the advice of the relevant Collection Manager, departmental committee, Dean or Vice-Principal or the University Librarian, and the Cultural Collections Committee.

C5 Steps to be included in procedure

The records relating to each object should be carefully checked to confirm that it is owned by the University and that the University has the full right of disposal.

Any conditions specified or implied at the time of acquisition should be identified and honoured. If in doubt the advice of Legal Services should be sought.

C6 Reasons for deaccession and disposal

The recommendation should provide clear reasons for the proposed deaccession and disposal. These reasons might include:

- Lack of relevance to the particular work or interests of the relevant faculty, school, institute, centre or department of the Cultural Collection and its acquisitions policy;
- lack of historical relevance to the University;
- disposal required in accordance with the law;
- damage or serious deterioration which has occurred to the object or collection;

- inherent risk to the health or safety of staff, students or the public;
- a request for repatriation from an indigenous community or another nation; or
- closure of the Cultural Collection.

C7 Method of disposal

The recommendation should indicate the method of disposal to be employed. This might include one of the following, whichever is most appropriate:

- return to the donor, owner or heir (this may be repatriation to an indigenous community or another nation);
- transfer to another Cultural Collection of the University;
- transfer to another collecting institution outside the University;
- transfer to another faculty, school, institute, centre or department of the University for purposes other than a Cultural Collection;
- sale by auction; or
- destruction.

Objects should not be disposed of by gift or sale to an individual (other than by return to the original donor, owner or heir), whether or not the individual is associated with the University as a staff member or in any other way.

Objects should not be openly disposed of by dumping through the municipal garbage or recycling collection system, other than in the case of disposal of the properly packaged remains of an object which has been deliberately destroyed or defaced for the purpose of disposal.

C8 Documentation

Full documentation of the reason for deaccession and method of disposal should be lodged with the records of the Cultural Collection.

In the case of return to original donor, owner or heir, or transfer to another collection or collecting institution, a copy of all documentation should accompany the object at the time of return or transfer. The original documentation should be retained by the Collection Manager.

Except where an object is transferred to another collection or collecting institution, the accession number and marks of University ownership should be removed from the object or cancelled.

C9 Review

The deaccession policy and procedure should specify a date by which it will be reviewed.

Part D:
List of Cultural Collections (*and individual heritage objects*)
listed according to designated custodial responsibility

Faculty of Arts:

Centre for Classics and Archaeology:

- ◆ Classics and Archaeology Library: Rare Books

Faculty of Economics and Commerce:

- ◆ (*MONIAC economics model machine*)*

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences:

Departments of Anatomy and Pathology:

- ◆ Harry Brookes Allen Museum of Anatomy and Pathology*

Department of Microbiology:

- ◆ (*Artifacts & documents relating to Sir MacFarlane Burnet; also three unrelated scientific instruments: weighing balance, polarimeter, spectrophotometer/colorimeter*)*

Department of Otolaryngology:

- ◆ Bionic Ear Archive*

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences:

- ◆ Medical History Museum

School of Dental Science:

- ◆ Henry Forman Atkinson Dental Museum

Faculty of Science:

Department of Zoology:

- ◆ Tiegs Zoology Museum

School of Botany:

- ◆ University of Melbourne Herbarium

School of Chemistry:

- ◆ School of Chemistry Collection (temporarily stored at University of Melbourne Archives repository)

School of Earth Sciences:

- ◆ F.A. Singleton Collection

School of Physics:

- ◆ School of Physics Museum

Faculty of the VCA and Music:

- ◆ Musical instruments—rare & historic examples
- ◆ VCA Art Collection

* Significance assessment yet to be completed on these collections and individual objects.

Faculty of Veterinary Science:

- ◆ Veterinary Science Anatomy Collection (Parkville campus) and heritage objects (Werribee campus)*

Ian Potter Museum of Art:

- ◆ University of Melbourne Art Collection (includes public art, and Classics & Archaeology Collection)

Melbourne School of Engineering:

Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering:

- ◆ (*Venturi water meter, made by Kent Ltd, London and Luton*)*

Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering:

- ◆ Electrical Engineering Education Museum

Department of Geomatics:

- ◆ Surveying and Geomatic Engineering Collection

Department of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering:

- ◆ A.G.M. Michell Engineering Collection

Melbourne School of Land and Environment:

- ◆ Dookie Campus Historical Collection*

Property & Campus Services:

- ◆ Campus photographic collection*

University Library:

- ◆ Architecture and Planning Library: Rare Materials Collection
- ◆ Earth Sciences Library: Rare Books
- ◆ East Asian Collection: Rare Books
- ◆ Grainger Museum Collection
- ◆ Land & Food Resources Library, Burnley: Rare Books*
- ◆ Law Rare Books Collection
- ◆ Maps Library: Rare and Historic Maps Collection
- ◆ Louise Hanson-Dyer Music Library: Rare Collections
- ◆ Print Collection, Baillieu Library
- ◆ Special Collections, Baillieu Library
- ◆ University of Melbourne Archives

COLLECTIONS OWNED BY THE UNIVERSITY BUT MANAGED BY OTHER ORGANISATIONS:

- ◆ Donald Thomson Collection (on loan to Museum Victoria since 1973)*
- ◆ Godfrey Howitt Entomology Collection (on loan to Museum Victoria since 1904)*