Safe and Accessible National Collections

National Library of Australia
National Museum of Australia
National Gallery of Australia
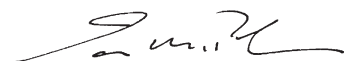## National Archives of Australia
Australian War Memorial

Canberra   ACT
30 June 2005

Dear Mr President
Dear Mr Speaker

The Australian National Audit Office has undertaken a performance audit in the National Library of Australia, the National Museum of Australia, the National Gallery of Australia, the National Archives of Australia and the Australian War Memorial in accordance with the authority contained in the *Auditor-General Act 1997*. Pursuant to Senate Standing Order 166 relating to the presentation of documents when the Senate is not sitting, I present the report of this audit and the accompanying brochure. The report is titled *Safe and Accessible National Collections.*

Following its presentation and receipt, the report will be placed on the Australian National Audit Office's Homepage—http://www.anao.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

Ian McPhee
Auditor-General

The Honourable the President of the Senate
The Honourable the Speaker of the House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra   ACT

AUDITING FOR AUSTRALIA

The Auditor-General is head of the Australian National Audit Office. The ANAO assists the Auditor-General to carry out his duties under the *Auditor-General Act 1997* to undertake performance audits and financial statement audits of Commonwealth public sector bodies and to provide independent reports and advice for the Parliament, the Government and the community. The aim is to improve Commonwealth public sector administration and accountability.

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Abbreviations/Glossary

Accession	A component of the registration process whereby an object is formally included in a collection.
Acquisition	The administrative process of discovering, preliminary assessment, negotiating for, taking custody of and documenting title to, an item bequeathed, transferred, donated or purchased by a cultural institution.
AIA	Art Indemnity Australia (Program).
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
AWM	Australian War Memorial (Memorial)
ACSI	Australian Government Information Technology Security Manual—ACSI 33(DSD)
BCP	Business Continuity Plan
Cataloguing	Assigning an item to one or more categories of an organised classification system, usually with descriptive detail.
CMS	Collection management systems, various software packages used to store and retrieve information about the collections.
Conservation	Action taken to bring an item back to its original condition, or repair an item or maintain an item's condition. Can be achieved through preservation, reconstruction and restoration.
DCITA	Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
Digitisation	Converting objects or records to electronic format usually through digital imaging or recording.
Disposal/De-accession	Refers to the permanent removal of an item from the collection, involving the termination of ownership. In archival terms any action that changes the circumstances of a record or removes a record from its usual setting.
Documentation	The process of developing records to identify and enhance the knowledge of the collection.

DSD	Defence Signals Directorate
IT	Information Technology
Item(s)	Includes relics, object (s), material records, works of art, books and any other cultural material acquired by the national cultural institutions.
ITSP	Information Technology Security Plan
Legal deposit	The term given to the legal requirement for Australian publishers to provide copies of their published works to the National Library of Australia.
Meta data	A descriptor used to describe other data to facilitate on line or electronic searches.
NAA	National Archives of Australia (Archives)
NGA	National Gallery of Australia (Gallery)
NLA	National Library of Australia (Library)
NMA	National Museum of Australia (Museum)
Preventative conservation	Non-intrusive methods to preserve the condition of the collection, usually through building design, stable environmental conditions, dust reduction, pest control and minimising exposure to light.
Provenance	Refers to the history of the item from the time it was created through to when it was acquired by the cultural institution.
PSM	Protective Security Manual
Registration	The overall function of creating a record about an item coming into the collection and the control and monitoring of the collection.
RFID	Radio Frequency Identification Devices,
Risk management	The systemic application of management policies, procedures and practices to the task of identifying, analysing, treating and monitoring risk.
Thesauri	A guide to terminology in classifying information about the collection.
Vinegar syndrome	This term refers to acetate film degradation, which gives off a strong vinegar smell and causes shrinkage, embrittlement and buckling of the film.

Summary and Recommendations

Summary

Background

1.   Five cultural institutions were included in this performance audit. Four of these, the National Library of Australia (Library), the National Museum of Australia (Museum), the National Gallery of Australia (Gallery) and the Australian War Memorial (Memorial) are corporate entities, governed by their respective councils and are subject to the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997.* The fifth is the National Archives of Australia (Archives), which is an Executive Agency under the *Public Service Act, 1999.* The Archives is situated within the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts portfolio and is subject to the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997.* It receives advice from the National Archives of Australia Advisory Council.

2.   As at 30 June 2004 the five cultural institutions had combined total revenues, including Australian Government revenue, of $276 million in 2003–04 and the collections were valued at approximately $6 billion in total.

3.   Each institution has duties under their respective acts to maintain and develop their collections. In the case of the Archives, that institution must look to the preservation of existing and future archival records. Thus each institution's collections are growing year after year, creating particular pressures on storage facilities, which have to be managed within available resources. Processes are ongoing to identify new acquisitions and to de-accession unwanted collection items. In many respects the 'present' has to be collected for the future as well. For example, the Memorial has commissioned war artists to document Australia's recent military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

4.   The Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA) has a coordination role for cultural institutions within its portfolio.

Audit objectives

5.   The objectives of this performance audit were to provide assurance that there were effective measures in place to safeguard the national collections and that institutions had processes in place to provide access to them. The ANAO also examined the extent to which the national cultural institutions have implemented the eleven recommendations from the previous report, *Safeguarding Our National Collections* (Audit Report No.8 1998–99).

Key findings

Strategic Planning (Chapter 2)

6.   To support the management of safe and accessible national collections, an institution requires a sound corporate framework, consisting of strategies targeted at both its corporate operations and its collection management. The ANAO examined corporate documentation covering strategic direction, risk management, business continuity planning and collection development.

7.   All of the cultural institutions included in this audit demonstrated that they had sound corporate planning documentation, either through strategic plans, corporate plans or documents setting out medium term goals. These documents analysed the strategic directions and identified the challenges facing the institutions in their current and future environments.

8.   Risk management practices had been employed to varying degrees within the cultural institutions at both the corporate and business level. Some risk management documentation was considered by the ANAO to be of a high standard.

9.   All cultural institutions had collection-specific disaster plans. Since the *Safeguarding Our National Collections* (Audit Report No.8 1998–99) the ANAO has published the Better Practice Guide, *Business Continuity Management, Keeping the Wheels in Motion*, January, 2000, which applies to the corporate and information technology (IT) related issues for disaster preparedness and business continuity. The ANAO observed during the current audit that a shortcoming for some cultural institutions was documenting a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) that encompassed the corporate side of their business and addressed key elements of the Better Practice Guide such as determining the maximum acceptable outage for key systems and service delivery elements and documenting business impact analyses.

10.   The Museum, Memorial and the Library have detailed collection development plans, which contain analysis of the institutions' current collections and identified priorities and gaps in their collections. The Memorial advised that it does not make its plan public for prudential reasons. The Archives does not need or have a collection development or acquisition policy in the manner of other cultural institutions as its collecting priorities are spelled out in the Act.

11.   The Gallery's collection development policy is stated in the *Into the Millennium, 1999–2001* [1], which was published in 1998. It is further expanded in the Strategic Plan. The ANAO noted that some assessments of individual

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[1]   National Gallery of Australia, *Into the Millennium*, Corporate Plan, 1999–2001, NGA, Canberra, 1998.

collections had been discussed with the Gallery Council as a supplement to the Strategic Plan.

12. The ANAO recommended that the Gallery consider documenting a more focussed collection development policy.

13. The Library builds its collection through 'legal deposit', purchase and gift. 'Legal deposit' is a term given to the legislative requirement in s201 of the Copyright Act, 1968, whereby Australian publishers are required to send their published works to the Library. The ANAO suggested that the Library could do more to raise awareness of 'legal deposit' requirements to encourage even greater compliance with the Act.

14. The previous audit report, *Safeguarding Our National Collections* (Audit Report No.8 1998–99) contained eleven recommendations, which covered areas such as acquisitions, collection management, security over the collection, counter disaster preparedness and performance management. Table 1.1 lists these recommendations and their implementation status. The ANAO concluded that, overall, the cultural institutions had made substantial progress in implementing these recommendations.

15. The cultural institutions had also documented analyses of their collections; their collection development needs, and had charted their future directions and challenges. Appropriate mechanisms were in place to acquire the collections. Continued adoption of risk management practices and business continuity planning should address minor shortcomings.

Collection Management (Chapter 3)

16. This chapter discusses aspects of collection management, in particular the accessioning and de-accessioning (disposal) of the collection, collection management systems and conservation issues. It also discusses to what degree cultural institutions have progressed the implementation of recommendations from the previous audit.

17. The Museum's and Gallery's respective councils formally accept items into the collection, the details of which are entered into the Council meeting minutes. The Memorial acquires items for the collection according to its Strategic Plan, which has been endorsed by its Council. The Library uses the same approach.

18. At the Gallery objects over $30 000 must be approved by its Council before they are purchased and this method provides oversight of individual purchases. The Museum acquires collection items through gift or purchase and these are then considered for accessioning into the Museum's collection by its Council.

19.   The ANAO found that there was a backlog of up to two years in the accessioning of items at the Museum and that the listing of items accessioned into the collection provided in the Annual Report did not reflect items acquired by the Museum in a financial year. The Museum has agreed to streamline this process.

20.   Part of good collection management entails examining the collection for items that are no longer suitable for the collection, either through lack of relevancy or because its condition has deteriorated. All of the institutions included in the audit had de-accessioning policies. The degree to which these policies were adhered to varied.

21.   The Gallery had in its custody items that were part of the Commonwealth Collection, acquired during the 1960s and 1970s. In the early 1990s the Gallery sought the transfer of a large selection of items, which were transferred by Deed of Gift, signed by the Minister. However, a proportion of the Commonwealth Collection was not gifted to the Gallery. The Gallery has been custodians of these items for 30 years. Attempts have been made in the past to dispose or de-accession these objects without much success. The Gallery advised that it has some work to do in assessing the items in the Commonwealth collection. However, the Gallery has indicated that the Melanesian/Polynesian/Micronesian collection has been the most difficult issue to address. This is due to the nature of the collection and the specialised expertise needed to determine the provenance or cultural significance of individual items before consideration can be given to transferring or disposing of them.

22.   Collection Management Systems (CMS) are a key mechanism for cultural institutions to catalogue and control their collections as well as providing for a repository for information about the collection. These are in essence databases, which contain records about the collections. Some proprietary CMS used by museums and galleries have facilities, which enable the databases to be searched via the Internet and for digital images of the collection to be viewed by on line users.

23.   Except at the Library, the ANAO found that improvements could be made to the IT security risk assessments that underpinned institutions' Information Technology Security Plans (ITSPs), which governed the security requirements for the CMS and the networks they resided in.

24.   When items in the collections have deteriorated or need work to preserve their condition, cultural institutions undertake conservation work. Within conservation practice there are specialised areas of expertise, such as paintings, paper, wood, metal and other materials.

25.   In line with a recommendation from the previous audit report, all institutions had increased their conservation resources and documented their

conservation needs in conservation plans. A shortage of trained conservation staff, however, may occur due to the cessation in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) of tertiary courses in the conservation field. Discussions with the cultural institutions revealed that this situation was known to them and was being managed through negotiations for training with other institutions and on-the-job training.

26. At the Gallery, a heavy lending and travelling exhibition program tends to dictate where conservation priorities are placed. In order to overcome this, the Gallery has undertaken an assessment of the collection and identified conservation priorities. The ANAO noted that the Gallery must ensure that internal funding is allocated to undertake this assessment-based approach to conservation.

27. Overall, the ANAO considers that the cultural institutions had adequately addressed issues raised in the previous audit. The ANAO found that the Museum had some work to do in streamlining its accessioning processes and to ensure that its collection management system is populated with information about the collection as a whole.

28. The ANAO made recommendations in relation to collection management systems and the security of information contained in them.

29. With demands on storage, de-accessioning and disposal of unwanted items is increasingly important, in particular to the Gallery in relation to the Commonwealth Collections. The ANAO recommended that the Gallery develop a project plan to address the disposition of the remaining Commonwealth Collections in its custody.

Storage and Security (Chapter 4)

30. This chapter discusses preventative conservation issues relating to the housing and storage of the collection, physical access to collection and administration areas including the collection management systems, and comments on stocktake processes.

31. An essential part of maintaining a safe and accessible collection is the provision of appropriate storage facilities and security over the collection. As collections are developed and held for long periods of time, adequate planning is needed to ensure that optimal storage conditions are maintained to prolong the life of the collection.

32. Appropriate security protects collections from accidental or intentional destruction or theft and can apply both to storage and display. Good control over the collections means that an item can be found at any given time.

33. The Archives and the Gallery have demonstrated that better practice preventative conservation can be achieved. The Memorial, too, has achieved a

high standard, notwithstanding an isolated problem with humidity, which is scheduled to be addressed.

34. The ANAO noted that the Museum reported in its annual report that its collection is kept 'at or above appropriate museum standards'. The ANAO observed, however, that its storage facilities do not provide a level of temperature and humidity control that the other cultural institutions employ to ensure the preservation of the collection. The Museum advised that it cares for the collection to the best of its ability within the constraints of its rented storage facilities.

35. As each institution employed slightly different parameters for environmental conditions, stating them as a measure rather than 'appropriate standards' would provide a clearer picture of what the actual parameters are.

36. Facilities management is crucial to the protection of the collections, in particular, for environmental controls, cleaning and building and equipment repairs. Better practice demonstrated during the audit showed that performance indicators for key repair tasks are a good way to ensure that standards are maintained.

37. Security for the collections relates to the display and storage as well as to objects travelling for loan or exhibition. All of the cultural institutions employed appropriate measures to their permanent displays. Additional security reviews had been undertaken recently, as well as internal audit reviews in some institutions. Fire alarm monitoring was also taking place.

38. The ANAO tested the management of access cards, which allow staff and contractors access to premises and storage areas. The test revealed that cessation procedures and processes for departing staff to ensure the return of cards and terminate network and database access needed attention.

39. The ANAO noted some issues with control over access to the collection in storage areas at the Gallery and in reading rooms the Archives and to a lesser extent at the Library.

40. Collection items on display at the one time represent only a small percentage of an institution's holdings. For example, the Museum has approximately two per cent of its collection on display at any one time. Storage of the collection is a major issue across all the cultural institutions. As these institutions have an imperative to collect, their collections are growing. Although storage facilities are a crucial issue across all cultural institutions the ANAO noted that the Museum had major issues with its storage facilities. All institutions, except the Museum, had plans or building projects in progress to address their individual storage needs. The ANAO recommended that the Museum pursue the development of strategies to address its storage concerns.

41.   Stocktakes are a means to test the system of control over collections. These are usually carried out by sample selection. Stocktake procedures should include guidance of what steps to take when too many items relative to the sample cannot be found during stocktake. The ANAO found that the Memorial had a better practice system of stocktake, including guidance on how to deal with a high error rate. Its regime of stocktake was rigorous and included documenting the condition of items in storage as a matter of course.

Accessibility (Chapter 5)

42.   This chapter discusses aspects of accessibility, such as digitisation, travelling exhibitions, targeted programs such as educational programs, visitor surveys, websites and access issues, including copyright.

43.   As well as collecting and forming a national collection, under their governing acts, cultural institutions must make their collection accessible through exhibitions or other means.

44.   Digitisation is the process of making images of objects and documents. These images can be used in electronic format and in multi-media packages to serve as a substitute for the real object. Making a digital copy of an object allows it to viewed many times, sometimes with much greater detail than when on display, without damage to the object itself. Web usage is increasing and is a major means of access to the collections and information about the collections.

45.   All of the cultural institutions had digitisation programs, however, the ANAO considers that they needed to define how they will measure the outcomes of their respective digitisation programs, be it for preservation, conservation or accessibility.

Performance Management (Chapter 6)

46.   This chapter discusses performance management in the cultural institutions as expressed through performance measurement and systems to capture information to support those measures. A sound management system provides for performance monitoring so that a corporate entity can identify areas of improvement and ensure that it is achieving its goals.

47.   The ANAO found that reporting of performance among the institutions was varied. Although the Memorial had many indicators and few targets in their Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS), reporting in its Annual Report was clear and precise. The Archives reported quite clearly against their Service Charter obligations yet could be clearer and more targeted with other performance indicators. The Library presented its indicators clearly but did not report against its main Service Charter indicator, specifically, in its Annual Report.

48. There are areas for improvement in performance reporting, particularly in allowing comparisons across the institutions on some key performance measures. As the cultural institutions carry on different businesses a 'one size fits all' approach to all performance measures is not considered practical. There are areas, however, where the activities of all the cultural institutions are similar and where comparable performance measures are possible. This would allow for benchmarking of some activities between the cultural institutions. Already there are some comparable measures such as visitor numbers to both the institutions and to their travelling exhibitions.

49. The ANAO suggested that it was timely for cultural institutions to re-examine performance reporting, share good practices and agree on some common performance measurements. Another driver for further development of performance information is the increased scrutiny of agencies' capacity to report at a whole-of-government level, particularly with respect to core business.

Audit conclusion

50. The ANAO found that cultural institutions had embraced the findings and recommendations of the previous audit and, on the whole, had implemented actions to address those recommendations.

51. Overall, the ANAO also concluded that there were effective measures in place to safeguard the national collections, although long-term storage to house the collections was a critical issue. In addition, cultural institutions had various approaches to enhance general knowledge about the national collections and for creating opportunities for the general public to experience and access them.

52. The ANAO identified areas for improvement at both the cultural institution level and cross-institution level. This report contains 14 recommendations directed at improved strategic planning and supporting documentation in the areas of risk management and collection management; strengthening IT policies and procedures, in particular revisiting security risk assessments with respect to collection management systems; enhancing procedures controlling physical access to the collections; strategies to manage future storage requirements for the collections; and collaboration on the development of performance measures to allow greater comparison in performance between institutions.

Responses to the audit

Library

53. The National Library of Australia agrees with the six recommendations of the Safe and Accessible National Collections Performance Audit that relate to the work of the Library. The Library will implement these recommendations in the coming months. In some cases, for example Recommendation 8, work has already commenced on improvements to staff exit procedures.

Archives

54. The Archives is pleased to note that the ANAO has recognised the Archives' achievement of best practice in relation to facilities management and the provision of appropriate environmental conditions for its permanent collection.

Museum

55. The Museum is pleased to note that the ANAO's findings are largely positive concerning the National Museum of Australia, which is identified as having made substantial progress in implementing the recommendations of the previous audit report. The report also identifies areas of concern that correspond to those independently identified by the Museum. Efforts are already underway to remedy these.

56. The Museum is sure that the report will prove of great value in assisting the Museum in identifying priorities in its ongoing efforts to manage, and resource the collections in its care. The Museum largely accepts the findings and recommendations of the report.

Gallery

57. The Gallery fully supports the thrust of the report and agrees with the report's recommendations.

Memorial

58. The Australian War Memorial recognises the importance of the Safeguarding the National Collections audit and has been pleased to be a part of this process. We concur with the recommendations relevant to the Memorial.

DCITA

59. There are a number of mechanisms by which DCITA and the portfolio collecting agencies work together to improve practices at a strategic level. The

primary forum for agencies is the Heads of Collecting Institutions (HOCI). The ANAO report outlines storage, digitisation and conservation issues at an individual agency level. You may wish to note that DCITA and the portfolio collecting institutions are working collaboratively to address collections management issues and progress outcomes in a number of areas including storage, digitisation and conservation. (The full response from DCITA is included in Appendix 1.)

Recommendations

Set out below are the ANAO's recommendations, with abbreviated responses from each cultural institution. Where a cultural institution has provided a more detailed response, this is shown in the body of the report, immediately after each recommendation.

Recommendation No.1

Para 2.17

The ANAO recommends that the Gallery documents a more focussed collection development policy and acquisition criteria based on an assessment of the collection and the endorsed policy direction.

Agreed.

Recommendation No.2

Para 3.9

The ANAO recommends that the Museum streamlines the accessioning process to manage the backlog of items awaiting consideration by the National Museum of Australia Council. Furthermore, the Museum should report acquisitions and accessioned items separately in its Annual Report to provide a more accurate accounting of its acquisitions.

Agreed.

Recommendation No.3

Para 3.22

The ANAO recommends that the Gallery, in consultation with DCITA, assigns a high priority to the assessment of the Commonwealth collection for disposal.

Agreed.

Recommendation No.4

Para 3.33

The ANAO recommends that each cultural institution (except the Library) performs a detailed security risk assessment to underpin its Information Technology Security Plan for its network and collection management systems. The Australian Government Information Technology Security Manual (ACSI 33) should be used as a guide to requirements.

Agreed: All agencies.

Recommendation **No.5** **Para 3.49**	The ANAO recommends that the Gallery gives priority to conservation activities as described in its conservation plan, so that resources are allocated according to the priorities of its collections' conservation requirements. *Agreed.*
Recommendation **No.6** **Para 4.13**	As the conditions that collections are maintained in are a key indicator of the care of the collection, the ANAO recommends that cultural institutions consider reporting the actual parameters set and the standards achieved to their respective councils on a regular basis and also in their Annual Reports. *Agreed:* All agencies.
Recommendation **No.7** **Para 4.19**	The ANAO recommends that the Library, Museum and the Gallery consider introducing performance targets for facilities repair and maintenance and a formal system to monitor key collection related repairs and maintenance. *Agreed.*
Recommendation **No.8** **Para 4.36**	The ANAO recommends that each cultural institution (except the Memorial) evaluates its current exit procedures to ensure that staff ceasing employment do not retain security access cards and systems access to the network, Collection Management Systems and other IT systems. *Agreed:* All agencies.
Recommendation **No.9** **Para 4.46**	The ANAO recommends that the Gallery reviews access to storage areas to tighten control over artworks and ensure that movements of objects from and within storage are accurately recorded. *Agreed.*
Recommendation **No.10** **Para 4.54**	The ANAO recommends that the Archives introduces regular reporting of records on loan to users in the reading room. In addition, the Archives should follow up loans to institutions and require the return of items within set timeframes, consistent with the records' preservation requirements. *Agreed.*

Recommendation No.11 Para 4.58

The ANAO recommends that the Library tightens its current controls over access cards and books in the main reading room.

Agreed.

Recommendation No.12 Para 4.73

The ANAO recommends that the Museum conducts an assessment of its storage needs, including an assessment of the storage needs of the current collection and encompassing the needs of a growing collection, and develop a business case to provide for the appropriate storage of the collection.

Agreed.

Recommendation No.13 Para 5.16

The ANAO recommends that cultural institutions formulate long-term digitisation plans, which contain evaluation criteria for the measurement of success of their digitisation programs.

Agreed: All agencies.

Recommendation No.14 Para 6.18

The ANAO recommends that cultural institutions discuss, with a view to the developing, a set of key common performance measures. The ANAO also recommends that the:

(a)   Museum and Archives re-examine their performance information to develop targeted indicators;

(b)   Gallery introduces some objective measures for its Service Charter; and

(c)   Museum and Library consider reporting against key measurables in their Service Charters.

Agreed: All agencies (Memorial with qualification).

Audit Findings
and Conclusions

1.   Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to the roles and responsibilities of the cultural institutions included in this performance audit and outlines the audit objectives, scope and methodology and the structure of the report.

Background

Cultural institutions' roles and responsibilities

1.1   Australia's Cultural institutions are responsible not only for accumulating and maintaining their individually unique collections, but also for increasing public access to these collections through various programs. An essential element of accessibility is increasing public awareness of the collections' existence and providing opportunities for the public to access them. For the national cultural institutions, there is an additional role of providing leadership to other cultural institutions. Commonwealth-owned cultural institutions must comply with Australian Government legislation and standards relevant to them.

1.2   Four of the five institutions included in this audit are corporate entities, governed by their respective councils and are subject to the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997*. The exception is the National Archives of Australia (Archives), which is an Executive Agency under the *Public Service Act 1999*. The Archives is situated within the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts portfolio and is subject to the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*. It receives advice from the National Archives of Australia Advisory Council.

1.3   Each institution has duties under its respective act to maintain and develop its collection. In the case of the Archives, that institution must look to the preservation of existing and future archival records. Thus each institution's collections are growing year after year, creating pressures on storage facilities, which have to be managed within resources. Processes are ongoing to identify new acquisitions and to de-accession unwanted collection items. In many respects the 'present' has to be collected for the future as well. For example, the Memorial has commissioned war artists to document Australia's recent military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

1.4   DCITA has a coordination role for the cultural institutions within its portfolio and had fostered forums, such as the Heads of Collection Institutions (HOCI) and cross-institutional working parties. In addition, DCITA has scheduled a review of governance arrangements in cultural institutions for late

2005 in light of the Government's response to the *Review of Corporate Governance of Statutory Authorities and Office Holders, 2003*[2] (also known as the 'Uhrig Report'). The Uhrig Report examined how statutory authorities operated in the government sector and proposed changes to their governance arrangements and board structures.

1.5   As at 30 June 2004 the five cultural institutions had combined total revenues, including Australian Government revenue, of $276 million in 2003–04 and the collections were valued at approximately $6 billion in total. The individual amounts for each institution are outlined in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1

Collection valuations 2003–04
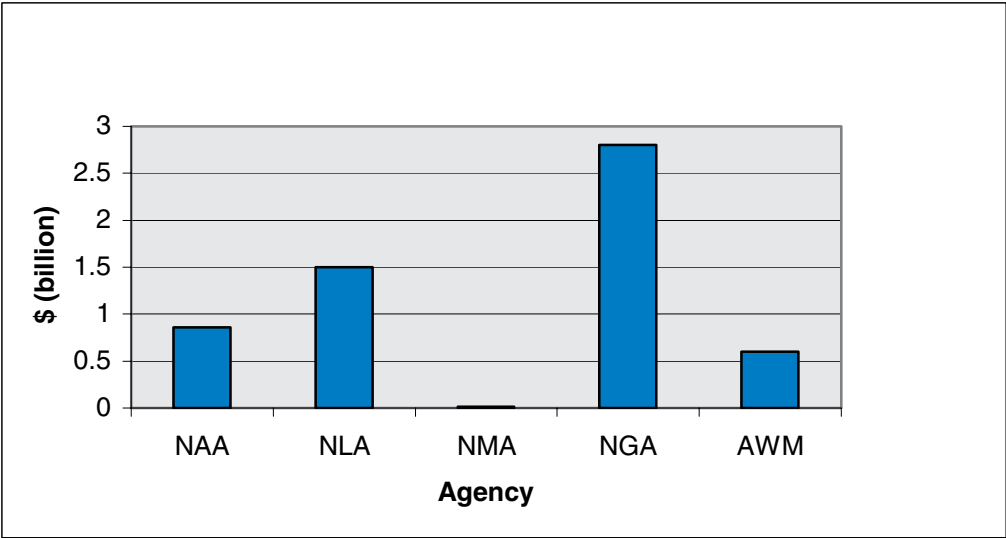
Source: ANAO based on 2003–04 Annual Reports

The National Library of Australia

1.6   The Library was 'established as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library in 1901'[3]. *The Copyright Act, 1968* brought in legal deposit provisions, which laid the foundations for the collection. 'Legal deposit' is a term given to the legislative requirement in s201 of *the Copyright Act, 1968*, whereby Australian publishers are required to send their published works to the Library within one month of publication.

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2   Commonwealth of Australia, *Review of Corporate Governance of Statutory Authorities and Office Holders*, 2003, Canberra, 2003.

3   National Library of Australia, *Collection Development Policy*, NLA, Canberra, 1999, p. iii.

1.7   *The National Library Act 1960* underpins how the Library operates. Section 6 of the Act specifies the Library's functions as being:

> The functions of the Library are, on behalf of the Commonwealth:
>
> (a)   to maintain and develop a national collection of library material, including a comprehensive collection of library material relating to Australia and the Australian people;
>
> (b)   to make library material in the national collection available to such persons and institutions, and in such manner and subject to such conditions, as the Council determines with a view to the most advantageous use of that collection in the national interest…

1.8   The Library has been located in Parkes, ACT, in its purpose-built building, since 1968 and holds the Australian collection within that building. A major part of the overseas collection is held in storage facilities in Hume, ACT. The Library is currently preparing to build a specialist storage facility in Hume to meet the needs of its growing collection.

1.9   As well as books the Library's collection includes music, maps, oral history, paintings, photographic collections, private papers and manuscripts and other related objects. The Library is in negotiation with the Archives to share space in their new purpose built storage facility for approximately 10 000 linear metres up until 2010.

The National Gallery of Australia

1.10   The Gallery was established with the enactment of the *National Gallery Act 1975.* The Gallery has operated from its Parkes, ACT, site since 1982.

Section 6 of the Act specifies the Gallery's functions and powers as being:

> (1)   The functions of the Gallery are:
>
> (a)   to develop and maintain a national collection of works of art; and
>
> (b)   to exhibit, or to make available for exhibition by others, works of art from the national collection or works of art that are otherwise in the possession of the Gallery.
>
> (2)   The Gallery shall use every endeavour to make the most advantageous use of the national collection in the national interest.

1.11   The Gallery is currently preparing to re-develop the Gallery building. This includes remodelling of the entrance to the Gallery, which will enable some expansion of storage space at the Parkes site. As the Gallery's collection is growing it also has plans to make better use of existing space in its Hume storage facilities.

The National Archives of Australia

1.12   There was a National Archives in Australia before the *Archives Act 1983* was enacted. In 1944, Ian Maclean began work as the Australian Government's first archivist.[4] In February 2001, the Archives was established as an Executive Agency.[5]

1.13   Section 5 of the Act specifies the functions of the Archives as being:

> (a)   to ensure the conservation and preservation of the existing and future archival resources of the Commonwealth;

> (b)   to encourage and foster the preservation of all other archival resources relating to Australia;

> (c)   to promote, by providing advice and other assistance to Commonwealth institutions, the keeping of current Commonwealth records in an efficient and economical manner and in a manner that will facilitate their use as part of the archival resources of the Commonwealth;

> (d)   to ascertain the material that constitutes the archival resources of the Commonwealth…

1.14   The Archives maintains repositories in all States and Territories of Australia. The Chester Hill facility in Sydney houses a large audio/visual collection, which are principally the records from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, the Special Broadcasting Service and the Australian Film Commission.

The National Museum of Australia

1.15   The Museum was established with the enactment of the *National Museum of Australia Act 1980.* The Museum opened its Acton, ACT, site on March 2001 and has focussed its efforts to date on establishing the Acton operations. In addition, as a reasonably young institution it has yet to fully bed down the totality of its operational and administrative arrangements. The Museum maintains three storage facilities in Mitchell.

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[4]   National Archives Australia, 2005, *Our History*, National Archives Australia, Canberra, viewed 22 February 2005, <http://ourhistory.naa.gov.au>.

[5]   National Archives of Australia, *Annual Report 2002–2003*, NAA, Canberra, 2003, p. 69.

1.16   The *National Museum of Australia Act 1980* underpins how the Museum is operated. Section 6 of the Act specifies the Museum's functions as being:

(1)   The functions of the Museum are:

(a)   to develop and maintain a national collection of historical material;

(b)   to exhibit, or to make available for exhibition by others, historical material from the national historical collection or historical material that is otherwise in the possession of the Museum;

(baa)   to exhibit material, whether in written form or in any other form, that relates to Australia's past, present and future;

1.17   The Museum was named best Major Tourist Attraction at the annual National Tourism Awards in February, 2005.

The Australian War Memorial

1.18   The Australian War Memorial commenced operations in 1941 and is governed by the *Australian War Memorial Act 1980.*

1.19   Section 5 of the Act specifies the Memorial's function as being:

(a)   to maintain and develop the national memorial referred to in subsection 6(1) of the *Australian War Memorial Act 1962* as a national memorial of Australians who have died:

(i)   on or as a result of active service; or

(ii)   as a result of any war or warlike operations in which Australians have been on active service;

(b)   to develop and maintain, as an integral part of the national memorial referred to in paragraph (a), a national collection of historical material;

(c)   to exhibit, or to make available for exhibition by others, historical material from the memorial collection or historical material that is otherwise in the possession of the Memorial…

1.20   The Memorial has been inaugurated into the National Tourism Awards Hall of Fame for winning the award Best Major Tourist Attraction for three successive years.

1.21   Of the five cultural institutions included in this audit, only the Memorial is not part of the DCITA portfolio. It has been part of the Veterans' Affairs portfolio since 1984–85.

Audit objectives and scope

1.22   The objectives of the audit were to provide assurance that there were effective measures in place to safeguard the national collections and that institutions had processes in place to provide access to them. This encompassed the institutions' programs for promoting the collections, travelling exhibitions and digitisation of their collections. The ANAO also examined the extent to which the national collection institutions have implemented the eleven recommendations from the previous report, *Safeguarding Our National Collections* (Audit Report No.8 1998–99).

Audit Methodology

1.23   The audit methodology included:

- examining key corporate documents and information, including those in relation to security, risk management, internal audit and IT infrastructure;

- viewing the collections' storage and gallery spaces and interviewing key staff; and

- observing processes and procedures in place in each of the institutions in the control and management of the collections.

1.24   The audit team also examined computer databases containing information about the collections, or databases that were key access tools to the collection. The team engaged specialist Information Technology (IT) auditors to assist in the assessment of these key systems and the computer network environments they resided in.

1.25   The audit was conducted in conformance with ANAO auditing standards and cost $325 000.

1.26   This audit follows the themes established in *Safeguarding Our National Collections* (Audit report No.8 1998–99).

1.27 Figure 1.2 outlines the structure of the report.

Figure 1.2

Structure of report
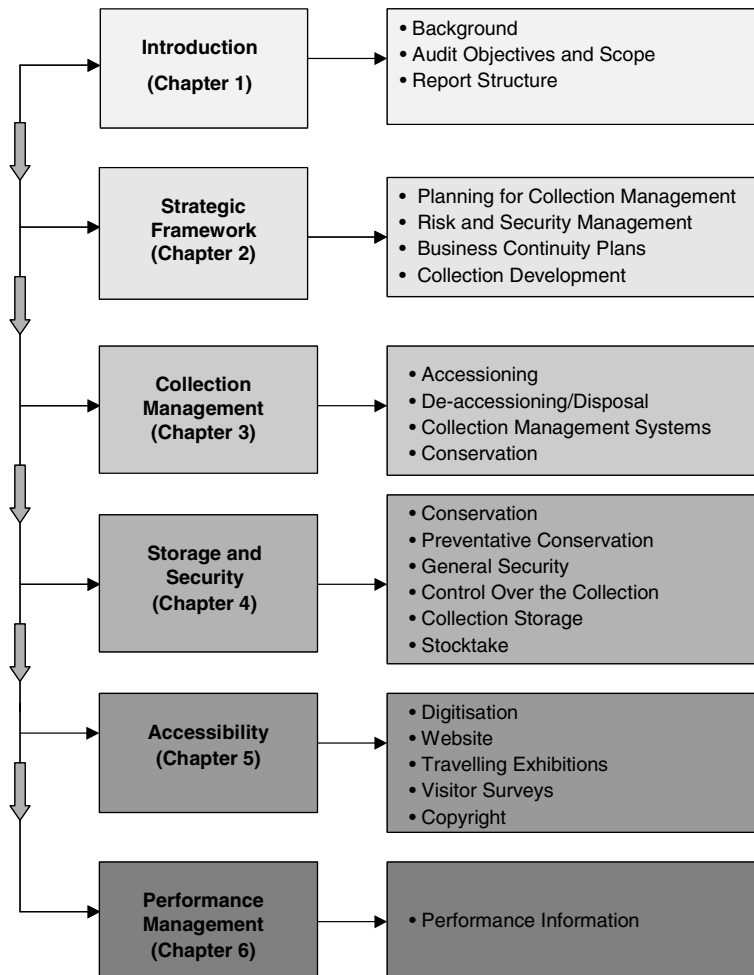
Source: Developed by the ANAO

1.28 As part of this audit, the ANAO also assessed the progress of each institution's implementation of the recommendations arising from the previous report. The previous audit did not include the National Archives of Australia. Table 1.1 describes the status of implementation using the following key:

– Fully Implemented ◆ In progress ◈ Not commenced ◇

Table 1.1

Implementation status of recommendations from *Safeguarding Our National Collections* (Audit report No.8 1998–99).

Recommendation	Implementation
Recommendation 1 The ANAO recommends that: ▪ The Library and the Memorial upgrade their monitoring processes to ensure that proposed acquisitions are assessed in accordance with existing procedures; and ▪ The Gallery and the Library (for its music, map, projected media and ephemera): – develop key selection criteria against which to assess proposed acquisitions and specify them clearly in the collection development policy; and – introduce a process whereby all proposed acquisitions, regardless of their value and method of acquisition, are assessed against the collection development policy and key selection criteria before being accepted formally into the collection.	Library ◆ Memorial◆ Gallery ◈ Library◆ Gallery ◈ Library◆ Note: Gallery fully documents acquisitions. In progress marker is due to recommendation in paragraph 2.17 contained in the body of this report.
Recommendation 2 The ANAO recommends that, except for items covered by legal deposit obligations, all the institutions work towards introducing a comprehensive costing regime to identify the costs of initial acquisition, continuing maintenance and storage.	Gallery◆Library◆Memorial◆ Museum◆ Note: institutions are costing maintenance and storage at the collection level.
Recommendation 3 The ANAO recommends that, in order to ensure the continuing quality of their collections, all institutions allocate a high priority to identifying items for possible disposal, except those items covered by legal deposit obligations or equivalent.	Gallery◆Library ◆ Memorial ◆ Museum ◈

Recommendation	Implementation

Recommendation 4
 	
The ANAO recommends that:
 	
   ▪ the Library and the Museum set priorities for dealing with registration arrears;
 	
   ▪ the Memorial continues to deal progressively with its registration arrears in accordance with defined priorities; and
 	
   ▪ the Gallery ensure that all items are accession marked as part of the registration process and develop strategies for reducing the backlog in accession-marking.
	Library ◆ Museum ◈
	
	Memorial ◆
	
	Gallery ◈

Recommendation 5 The ANAO recommends that all institutions review their priorities for documentation with a view to dealing with the significant arrears and ensuring that all aspects of their collections have at least a basic level of documentation.	Gallery ◆ Memorial ◆ Museum ◈ Library ◆

Recommendation 6
 	
The ANAO recommends that all institutions:
 	
   ▪ review the level of resources allocated to conservation, including surveying and assessing collections; and
 	
   ▪ introduce a program of regular collection maintenance based on the identified needs of the collections.
	All institutions ◆

Recommendation 7
 	
The ANAO recommends that:
 	
   ▪ all institutions implement routine pest inspections of all storage facilities where they have not already done so;
 	
   ▪ all incoming material be isolated from the existing collection in each institution when it is being unpacked; and
 	
   ▪ the Gallery establish a dedicated quarantine and treatment facilities as a matter of priority.
	All institutions ◆
	
	Memorial ◆ Gallery ◆ Museum ◆
	Library ◆
	
	Gallery ◈

Recommendation	Implementation
Recommendation 8 The ANAO recommends that where necessary institutions: • commission full reviews of security and fire alarm monitoring systems by appropriately qualified experts; and • review their use of resources in order to implement the recommendations made in previous security reviews.	All institutions ◆ All institutions◆
Recommendation 9 The ANAO recommends that, as necessary, institutions: • develop a counter-disaster plan and associated procedures; and • implement a review process in line with the development of security and counter-disaster procedures.	All institutions◆ All institutions ◆
Recommendation 10 The ANAO recommends that each institution develop performance indicators that measure performance in the collection management in terms of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.	All institutions ◆
Recommendation 11 The ANAO recommends that, in each institution, a management reporting framework be developed to include a comprehensive range of indicators that concentrate on the specific activities of collections management.	All institutions ◆

Source: ANAO

2. Strategic Framework

This chapter discusses key elements of the strategic framework set up by the cultural institutions to plan for managing their collections. It includes, discussion of strategic planning, risk management, business continuity planning and collection development.

Planning for collection management

2.1   To support the management of safe and accessible national collections, an institution requires a sound corporate management framework, consisting of strategies targeted at both its corporate operations and its collection management. These documents are also requirements for sound corporate governance. Better practice for a well-governed organisation will include:

> Effective corporate and business planing. It is particularly important to ensure such plans—down to, and including, individuals' performance plans and agreements—are aligned and mutually supportive. This reduces scope for confused objectives or gaps in performance planning and monitoring. Effective corporate planning and business planning cascades from the Commissioning Letter, or equivalent, sent to each secretary/chief executive by the relevant Minister.[6]

2.2   All of the cultural institutions included in this audit demonstrated that they had sound corporate planning documentation, either through strategic plans, corporate plans or documents setting out medium term goals, such as the Library's *Directions*. These documents analysed their strategic directions and identified the challenges facing each institution in their current and future environments.

2.3   Each institution had its own particular framework for planning, and all demonstrated a structured approach to planning generally. The Library's planning process was well established and demonstrated elements of better practice. To perfect its planning and budgeting the Library is now engaged in analysing its costs and activities to a greater degree than other cultural institutions.

2.4   Other examples of better practice planning were noted within the Museum, Gallery and the Memorial. At the Museum and the Gallery, section business plans include risk identification. At the Memorial and the Gallery regularly reporting against business plans occurred.

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[6]   Australian National Audit Office, *Public Sector Governance*, ANAO Better Practice Guide, Canberra, 2003, p. 24.

Risk and security management

2.5   Risk management practices have been employed to varying degrees within the cultural institutions at both the corporate and business levels. Some risk management documentation was considered by the ANAO to be of a high standard. The Library and Archives employed risk management for large projects, using methodologies such as Prince 2[7]. There were some areas where the ANAO considered that risk management could be better employed, documented and adopted in all institutions. For example, the logistical arrangements for travelling exhibitions or temporary exhibitions would benefit from sound, documented risk management practices. Both the Gallery and the Museum had documented risk assessments for travelling and temporary exhibitions.

Business Continuity Plans

2.6   A Business Continuity Plan (BCP) comprises many elements, which collectively define the approach to dealing with a break in business continuity. It brings together service area contingency plans, disaster recovery plans and business resumption plans.

2.7   The previous audit report, *Safeguarding Our National Collections* (Audit Report No.8 1998–99) recommended that:

> as necessary, institutions:
>
> - develop a counter-disaster plan and associated procedures; and
>
> - implement a review process in line with the development of security and counter-disaster procedures.[8]

2.8   All cultural institutions had, at the time of the audit, collection-specific disaster plans. Since the *Safeguarding Our National Collections* (Audit report No.8 1998–99) the ANAO has published the *ANAO Better Practice Guide Business Continuity Management, Keeping the Wheels in Motion*, January, 2000, which applies to corporate and IT related issues for disaster preparedness and business continuity. The ANAO observed during the current audit that a shortcoming for some cultural institutions was documenting a BCP that encompassed the corporate side of their business and addressed key elements of the Better Practice Guide such as determining the maximum acceptable

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[7]   Projects In Controlled Environments (Prince 2) is a project management process originally developed as a UK Government standard for IT project management by Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency (CCTA) in 1989.

[8]   Australian National Audit Office, *Safeguarding Our National Collections* (Audit Report No.8 1998–99), ANAO, Canberra, 1999. p. 78.

outage for key systems and service delivery elements and documenting business impact analyses.

2.9   The Library had a documented BCP that followed the ANAO better practice guide and the Museum had a comprehensive BCP, except that it had not documented the IT side sufficiently. The Memorial had a BCP in place. However, it needed further work to meet the requirements of the better practice guide. This work was in progress at the time of the audit. The Gallery and the Archives still had further work to do to document the range of plans needed to form a BCP. This work was currently in progress at the time of the audit.

2.10   All cultural institutions had detailed collection disaster plans of a high standard. Priority lists were in existence, which prioritised icons or significant collection items for evacuation or salvage during an emergency. However, most listed these in accession number order and not in location order. However, the Library, for example, had its priority items listed in location order and its plan included a map.

Collection development

2.11   The Museum, Memorial and the Library had detailed collection development plans, which contained analysis of these institutions' current collections and identified priorities and gaps in their collections. The Memorial advised that it does not make their plan public for prudential reasons.

2.12   In addition, acquisition procedures evidence that acquisitions were in line with the collection development policies of each institution. The Museum and the Memorial had better practice processes and clear, auditable documentation to support their acquisitions process. The ANAO noted that the Library acquired the 20 per cent of its holdings through legal deposit provisions.

2.13   The Archives did not have, nor does it need to have, a collection development or acquisition policy in the manner of other cultural institutions. It provides advice about its collecting policy in Fact Sheet 218.[9] There are some identified gaps, however, where records that should be archived have not been. Fact Sheet 218 promulgated by the Archives outlines some circumstances where Australian Government records may inadvertently end up in private hands instead of in the Archives.

2.14   The *Archives Act 1983* outlines the handling of Australian Government records and the Archives assists agencies to manage Australian Government

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[9]   National Archives of Australia, 2005, *The National Archives Collecting Policy, Fact Sheet 218, August, 2004*, National Archives of Australia, Canberra, viewed 7 April 2005, <http://www.naa.gov.au/Publications/fact_sheets/fs218.html>.

records though documenting the Administrative Functions Disposal Authority, February, 2000, and prior to that, the General Disposal Authorities (GDAs). These documents are underpinned by AS ISO 15489–2002 record keeping standards. The Archives provides instructions to Australian Government agencies on how to classify records for retention, destruction or transfer to the Archives. The Archives takes a leadership role in fostering good record keeping practices in the Australian Government to actively provide for the quality of the collection in the long term.

2.15 The Gallery's collection development policy is stated in the *Into the Millennium, 1999–2001*, which was published in 1998. It is further expanded in the NGA Strategic Plan. The ANAO noted that some assessments of individual collections had been discussed with the Gallery Council as a supplement to the Strategic Plan.

2.16 From this documentation the ANAO found it difficult to evidence a clear direction for Gallery acquisitions policy or their assessment against criteria or priorities. The ANAO noted that the Collection Development Policy could be further developed. The ANAO also noted, however, that proposals for purchase were well-documented and, presented to Council for approval or noting as appropriate.

Recommendation No.1

2.17 The ANAO recommends that the Gallery documents a more focussed collection development policy and acquisition criteria based on an assessment of the collection and endorsed policy direction.

Agency response:

2.18 Agreed.

Building the collection

2.19 Collection development also encompasses ensuring that items for inclusion in the collection are identified and acquired.

2.20 Each cultural institution is bound by their governing act to build their collections. Collections are acquired through gift, direct purchase or via auction. In the case of the Memorial an object, for example the Beaufort Bomber, may be constructed from the parts of the same type of aircraft, taking many years to complete.

2.21 The Gallery, Museum, Library and Memorial receive gifts, which are assessed for inclusion into the collection. Not all gifts are accepted. These institutions may also acquire items through purchase via agents and through auction catalogues. Curators from the Gallery will also visit art shows and artists' studios, as well as networking extensively within the industry.

2.22 The Archives provides advice on what Australian Government records are archival material and when these records come into their custody, ensure that they are preserved.

2.23 The Library builds its collection through 'legal deposit', purchase and gift. 'Legal deposit' is a term given to the legislative requirement in s201 of the *Copyright Act 1968*, whereby Australian publishers are required to send their published works to the Library within one month of publication. Works published in Australia are often referred to as the 'Australian Imprint'. According to the Library's 2003–2004 Annual Report, the Library collected 90 per cent of eligible Australian publications for the year ended 30 June 2004.

2.24 The Library's Collection Development Policy also states that the Library will collect works published overseas where they have an Australian author or where the published work relates to Australia and its people. The Library purchases these titles, usually with the assistance of overseas agents, via blanket orders, which contain a standard set of criteria.

2.25 Large publishers are aware of the legal deposit requirements, as they have been established for some time. Some small press publishers and self-publishers may not be aware of the 'legal deposit' requirements either because they are relatively new to the industry or have not heard about the requirement. In some circumstances, the need to send books to the Library may be overlooked by publishers.

2.26 Where Australian authors are published overseas, their publications do not fall within 'legal deposit' provisions. When the Library is aware of these publications it collects them as an adjunct to the Australian collection. Some of these overseas published titles may be distributed here and available in bookstores, yet do not make their way into the Library's collection.

2.27 Identifying foreign-published, Australian authors and acquiring their books is not necessarily straightforward. In setting up the criteria for blanket orders for overseas agents, the Library provides a list of known foreign-published, Australian authors to aid in their identification. However, not all authors and their books are known and consequently are not acquired, and hence are not available to the collection.

2.28 The ANAO suggests that the Library could further promote legal deposit provisions and its intention to collect foreign-published works by Australian authors, by advertising through State and regional writers centres, libraries and through the key author representative bodies. It could also negotiate with Australian-based distributors to obtain copies of foreign published works by Australian authors, when they are available here.

Conclusion

2.29 The ANAO concluded that overall the cultural institutions had made substantial progress in implementing the recommendations of the previous audit report *Safeguarding Our National Collections* (Audit report No.8 1998–99). For instance, strategic plans, collection development plans, collection disaster plans and risk management processes had been implemented by the cultural institutions.

2.30 The cultural institutions had also documented analyses of their collections, their collection development needs, and had charted their future directions and challenges. Appropriate mechanisms were in place to identify items to be acquired for the collections.

2.31 The ANAO suggested that the Library further promote legal deposit provisions and its intention to collect foreign-published works by Australian authors.

2.32 In the ANAO's opinion continued adoption of risk management practices and business continuity planning should address minor shortcomings in some institutions.

3.   Collection Management

This chapter discusses aspects of collection management, in particular the acquisition, accessioning and de-accessioning (disposal) of the collection, collection management systems, conservation, and preventative conservation issues. It also discusses to what degree cultural institutions have progressed the implementation of recommendations from the previous audit.

Accessioning

3.1   At the Museum and the Gallery items acquired for the collections are formally 'accessioned' into the collection. The Museum's and Gallery's respective councils formally accept items into the collection, the details of which are entered into the Council meeting minutes.

3.2   The Memorial acquires items for the collection according to its Strategic Plan, which has been endorsed by its Council. As items are acquired by gift or purchase, they are processed into the Memorial's collection management system. Items above the delegation limit for the Director, Assistant Director National Collection and Council Chairman go to the Minister for financial approval.

3.3   The Library acquires 20 per cent of its collection through legal deposit. Its collection development plan, which is approved by its Council, guides other purchases for the collection. These items are processed in the same manner as other Library material.

3.4   At the Gallery, the purchase of works of art costing up to $30 000 are approved by the Director under authority delegated from the Gallery Council, while works costing over $30 000 are approved by the Gallery Council. After approval to the purchase is obtained, payment is made and the works of art are entered into the Collection Management System.

3.5   The Museum acquires collection items through gift or purchase and these are then considered for accessioning into the Museum's collection by the Council. The Museum maintains the National Historical Collection, the Educational Collection and the Archival Collection. Items acquired by the Museum that are deemed unsuitable for the National Historical Collection are placed in the Educational or Archival Collections.

3.6   The Museum, in common with the other cultural institutions, has established acquisition procedures for assessing the suitability of items to be acquired for the collection. The Museum has an Acquisitions Committee to review prospective acquisitions. A review of the committee minutes and acquisition documentation indicated that items are assessed against acquisition criteria. Acquisition proposals include a statement of significance, which

generally includes relevance to Australian history, to broad collection areas and to other objects already in the collection. The ANAO considers the Museum's acquisition documentation to be an example of better practice.

3.7   The ANAO found, however, that there was a backlog in the formal accessioning of items into the National Historic Collection and, consequently, the Educational and Archival Collections. Delays of up to two years have been experienced in processing submissions to Council. This delay has other flow on consequences, particularly for reporting. Items accessioned into the National Historical Collection are listed in the Museum's Annual Report. Due to backlogs this listing does not accurately represent items acquired by the Museum in each financial year.

3.8   The Museum advised that it is now focussing attention on the backlog, having concentrated its resources, until recently, on the opening and bedding down of its Acton operations.

Recommendation No.2

3.9   The ANAO recommends that the Museum streamlines its accessioning process to manage the backlog of items awaiting consideration by the National Museum of Australia Council. Furthermore, the Museum should report acquisitions and accessioned items separately in its Annual Report to provide a more accurate accounting of its acquisitions.

Agency response

3.10   Agreed.

De-accessioning/disposal

3.11   Part of good collection management entails examining the collection for items that are no longer suitable for the collection either through lack of relevancy or because their condition has deteriorated. The previous audit report made the following recommendation.

> Recommendation No.3
>
> The ANAO recommends that, in order to ensure the continuing quality of their collections, all institutions allocate a high priority to identifying items for possible disposal, except those items covered by legal deposit obligations or equivalent.[10]

3.12   All of the institutions included in the current audit had documented de-accessioning policies. The degree to which these policies were adhered to

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[10]   Australian National Audit Office, *Safeguarding Our National Collections* Audit Report No.8 1998–99, ANAO, Canberra, p. 50.

varied. There had been minimal de-accessioning activity at the Museum in recent years, although the previous audit noted that 'The Museum had the most active disposal program.'[11] De-accessioning is a resource intensive activity and where objects have been donated there may be sensitivities in relation to the donor that have to be considered, as well as administrative procedures to follow.

3.13   Figure 3.1 depicts the disposal activity since the 1999–2000 financial year as reported in the agencies' annual reports. The graph demonstrates that the Memorial has had a modest, though steady de-accessioning program.

Figure 3.1

De-Accessioning/disposal activity for Gallery, Memorial and Museum
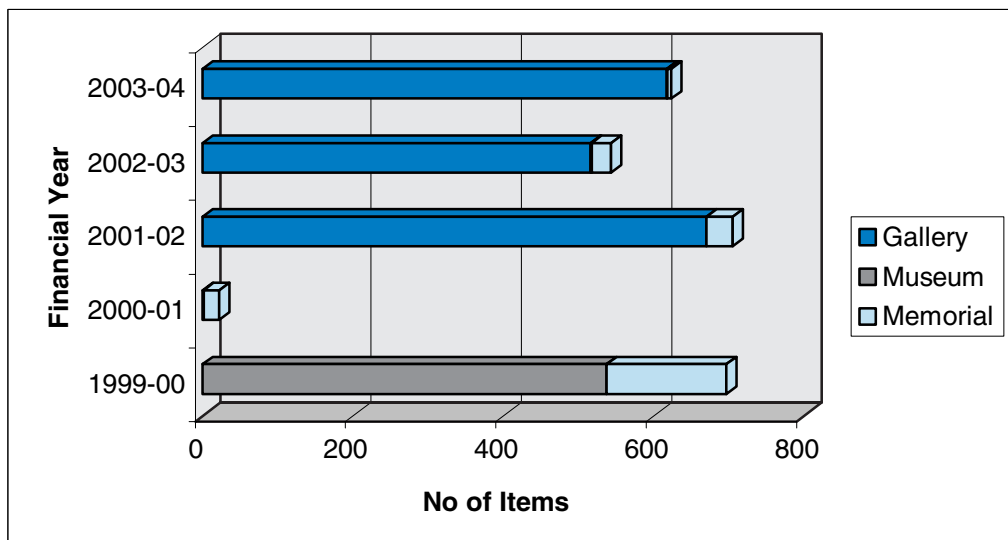
Source: ANAO based on data in respective institutions' Annual Reports

Note: The Library has undertaken rationalisation due to storage demands and has disposed of second copies of overseas collection items.

The Archives has an on-going program of review. Its results are reported in kilometres and not the number of records. Their data was incompatible with the method used in figure 3.1.

3.14   The Museum de-accessioned 537 items in 1999–2000, but has had minimal activity since then. In 2001 the Museum commenced operations at Acton Peninsula on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin. De-accessioning as an activity has had a lower priority since that time.

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[11]   ibid., p. 49.

3.15 The ANAO suggests that the Museum should now give priority to surveying the collection and identifying items for de-accessioning in order to maintain the collection's relevancy.

3.16 Since 2001–2002 the Gallery has had an active disposal program and has nominated targets for de-accessioning in the PBS. The ANAO noted that 989 items had been de-accessioned in the July–September 2004 quarterly internal performance report against the 2004–2005 annual plan.

3.17 The Gallery has in its custody items that were part of the Commonwealth Collection, acquired during the 1960s and 1970s. This collection was not well documented at the time. Although the Gallery allocated accession numbers to these items initially, the Gallery advises that legal title for portions of the collection did not pass to them. In the early 1990s the Gallery sought the transfer of a large selection of items through Deed of Gift, signed by the Minister. However, a proportion of the Commonwealth Collection was not gifted to the Gallery. The Gallery has been custodians for these items for 30 years. The Gallery advised the ANAO that attempts have been made in the past to dispose or de-accession these objects without much success.

3.18 Given the difficulties around dealing with this Commonwealth collection, the disposal of these items has been a low priority. According to the Gallery, the most difficult part of the collection to deal with is the Melanesian/Polynesian/Micronesian collection, which is a series of artefacts, mostly made from organic material. There are also other items in the Gallery's custody from the Commonwealth Collection, such as paintings, Classical jewellery, furniture, sculptures etc.

3.19 This collection is not mentioned in the Gallery's long-term collection plan nor specifically mentioned in its De-accessioning/Disposal policy. A project plan does not exist to address the remainder of the Commonwealth collection with any particular methodology or resources applied. There is no time horizon specified for finalising the disposition of these items that remain in the Gallery's custody.

3.20 The Gallery advised that it has some work to do in assessing the items in the Commonwealth collection. However, the Gallery has indicated that the Melanesian/Polynesian/Micronesian collection has been the most difficult issue to address. This is due to the nature of the collection and the specialised expertise needed to determine the provenance or cultural significance of individual items before consideration can be given to transferring or disposing of them.

3.21 The ANAO noted that there were impediments to the disposal of these items as there are significant cultural sensitivities involved and the ANAO were advised that it did not appear to feasible to return items to their country

of origin. However, these Commonwealth Collection items are also taking up storage space. Given the pressures on storage, dealing effectively with these items should free up some space in the short to medium term. The Gallery states that it does not legally own the Commonwealth Collection, thus DCITA, as the portfolio agency, would need to play an integral part in the resolution of this issue.

Recommendation No.3

3.22 The ANAO recommends that the Gallery, in consultation with DCITA, assigns a high priority to the assessment of the Commonwealth collection for disposal.

Agency response

3.23 Agreed.

Collection Management Systems

3.24 CMS (electronic databases) are a key mechanism for cultural institutions to catalogue and control their collections as well as providing a repository for information about the collection. Some proprietary databases used by museums and galleries have facilities that enable the databases to be searched via the Internet and for digital images of the collection to be viewed by users on line.

3.25 At the Library, for example, the Voyager database is the key mechanism for users to access the collections. Ensuring the accuracy and security of this information is paramount to the Library's business. Moreover, as it has taken many years to catalogue the millions of books in the database, the loss of this data through corruption or deliberate sabotage would be expensive to replace and have a potentially disastrous impact on service delivery.

3.26 The ANAO compared the cultural institutions' Information Systems policies and practices to Australian Government guidelines, embodied in the Australian Government Information Technology Security Manual (ACSI 33)[12] published by the Defence Signals Directorate (DSD). This document outlines the minimum requirements for security planning in relation to information to ensure appropriate security management of Australian Government IT systems and networks. These guidelines reflect those of the Australian and International Standard Code of practice for Information Security Management AS/NZS ISO/IEC 17799:2001.

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[12] Defence Signals Directorate, *Australian Government Information Technology Security Manual (ACSI 33)*, DSD. Canberra, Feb, 2004.

Information Technology Security Plans (ITSP)

3.27   A fundamental, and key control, requirement for agencies in managing their information security is to perform a security risk assessment to identify and quantify the security risks to their information systems. The subsequent development of an IT Security Plans (ITSP) sets the broad standards and guidelines for adequately managing the security risks identified. These risk assessments should be updated annually to reflect current systems and processes.

3.28   The ANAO found that except for the Library, improvements could be made to the IT security risk assessments that underpinned the cultural institutions' ITSPs.

3.29   An ITSP should:

- be clearly linked to the Security Risk Assessment;

- describe how an agency will protect its IT resources;

- generally apply to all IT systems within the agency;

- describe the IT security policies, standards and responsibilities for ensuring security; and

- specify the minimum security requirements for the protection of information on agency systems.

3.30   The ANAO was concerned that the risk assessments were too broad or too general to underpin their ITSPs effectively. The ANAO also found (other than for the Library) that the ITSPs were in draft form and in some cases did not support or address the minimum requirements of the ACSI 33. The most common shortcoming in the ITSPs was that they did not provide for individual security plans for each system, in this case, the collection management systems.

3.31   Stemming from this were issues relating to password policies and management, in particular privileged accounts, such as system administrator accounts, gateway and firewall management, intrusion detection systems and user and access management.

3.32   The ANAO considers that cultural institutions should review ACSI 33 for further guidance in addressing these issues. DSD manage certification programs, which provide external assurance to institutions that firewall configuration and management procedures are appropriate and comply with Australian Government requirements. The program further provides for an annual review for re-certification, thus providing for ongoing assurance.

Recommendation No.4

3.33 The ANAO recommends that each cultural institution (except the Library) performs a detailed security risk assessment to underpin its Information Technology Security Plan for the network and collection management systems. The Australian Government Information Technology Security Manual (ACSI 33) should be used as a guide to requirements.

Agencies' responses

3.34 All agencies agreed.

3.35 The Archives has an IT security risk assessment, which was recently reviewed by its internal auditors. The assessment is now being reviewed to conform with ACSI 33.

3.36 The Museum has already independently commenced the implementation of more comprehensive IT security strategies. A high-level risk assessment has been completed as part of the Museum's upgrade to its Business Continuity Framework. This work will be continued in more detail as suggested in the report.

3.37 The Museum periodically reviews key IT security infrastructure to ensure that it is properly configured and meeting requirements. This includes all firewalls and user access controls. A comprehensive IT security policy is near completion and will be released shortly.

Data quality

3.38 For collection management systems to be effective tools they need to contain to a basic standard, all the relevant information about the collection. Standards can be achieved through using mandatory fields at data entry level and developing data standards and thesauri.

3.39 Where there is duplicate data or incomplete fields, institutions may undertake to 'data cleanse', whereby they delete duplicate records, complete missing fields or otherwise improve the data quality of the record. Processes to cleanse data in collection management systems are either planned or ongoing in the Museum, Memorial and Gallery.

3.40 The Memorial had a well-controlled collection database with targets for data cleansing activity. The management of its collection management system was an example of better practice. Of the larger cultural institutions the Library demonstrated sound practices for its IT systems.

3.41 The Museum has recently consolidated its pre-existing databases into one collection management system and still has approximately 50 per cent of its records on paper. A project plan with resources allocated and a projected end date is needed to ensure that all the data is ultimately included in the new database. Considerable effort will be required by the Museum to cleanse the

data from its pre-existing databases and to incorporate paper records onto the system. To support adherence to business rules at the point of data entry both system documentation and training strategies should be employed. The Museum is aware of these issues and has commenced action to address them.

3.42   The ANAO noted that the Gallery had limited data entry controls, such as mandatory fields or data input standards. There was evidence of many duplicated records on the collection management system. In addition, the Gallery had no formal training programs, and consequently little succession planing for the management of the system. The Gallery has acknowledged these issues and has a project underway to address them.

Conservation

3.43   When items in the collection have deteriorated or need work to preserve their condition, cultural institutions undertake conservation work. For textiles this could be washing the garment, repairing insect damage and restitching the garment to return it to near original condition. Within conservation practices there are specialised areas of expertise, such as in paintings, paper, wood, metal and other materials. Photo 3.1 from the Library shows a specialist paper conservator at work. Photo 3.2 and 3.3 depict before and after shots of textile repairs undertaken at the Gallery.

Photo 3.1

Conservator at work on a rare map at the National Library of Australia

Source: National Library of Australia used with permission.

The figure above shows a specialist paper conservator Kerry McInnis repairing with Japanese paper and paste, a tear to 'Le Globe terrestre' (Paris, 1700) <http://nla.gov.au/nla.map-rm3605>. This rare map was produced by French

geographer, publisher, engraver Jean Baptiste Nolin (1657–1725) and is the earliest depiction of an eastern limit to the continent on a printed world map.
Photo by Loui Seselja

3.44   Recommendation 6 from the previous audit was:

The ANAO recommends that all institutions:

- review the level of resources allocated to conservation, including surveying and assessing collections; and

- introduce a program of regular collection maintenance based on the identified needs of the collections.[13]

3.45   The Memorial has undertaken an assessment of its collection. Condition reporting is done as part of the Memorial's regular stocktaking program.

3.46   In the other cultural institutions, priorities are set to allocate conservation services to the collection as resources permit.

Photo 3.2

Before conservation

Source: National Gallery of Australia used with permission.

This 15th century Sacred heirloom cloth was originally from Gujart, India, and was traded to Indonesia. Gift of Michael and Mary Abbott 1989.

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13   Australian National Audit Office 1999, *Safeguarding Our National Collections*, Audit Report No.8 1998–99, ANAO. Canberra. p. 66.

Photo 3.3

After conservation

Source: National Gallery of Australia used with permission.

3.47   On the whole, all institutions have increased their conservation resources and have documented their conservation needs in conservation plans. A shortage of trained conservation staff, however, may occur due to the cessation of ACT tertiary courses in the conservation field. Discussions with the cultural institutions revealed that this situation was understood and was being managed through consultation with other training institutions and on-the-job training.

3.48   At the Gallery a extensive lending and travelling exhibition program tends to dictate where conservation priorities are placed rather than where the collections' conservation needs are greatest. In order to overcome this, the Gallery has undertaken an assessment of the collection and identified conservation priorities. The ANAO notes that the Gallery must ensure that sufficient internal funding is allocated to undertake their assessment-based approach to conservation.

Recommendation No.5

3.49   The ANAO recommends that the Gallery gives priority to conservation activities as described in its conservation plan, so that resources are allocated according the priorities of its collections' conservation requirements.

Agency response

3.50 Agreed. It should be understood that implementing this recommendation on an ongoing basis will be contingent on the Gallery continuing to receive adequate funding for this purpose. The present funding of the depreciation of heritage and cultural assets is able to be applied to meet the conservation activities referred to in Recommendation No.5.

Conclusion

3.51 The cultural institutions have, on the whole, addressed issues relating to documentation of the collection and firming up acquisition processes raised in the previous audit. The Museum has work to do in streamlining its accessioning processes and to ensure that its collection management system is populated with information about the collection as a whole.

3.52 With demands on storage, de-accessioning and disposal of unwanted items is increasingly important, in particular to the Gallery in relation to the Commonwealth Collections.

3.53 The collection management systems have become increasingly important to cultural institutions, allowing them to document their collections, control them and facilitating on line access to information about the collections. The ANAO found that further improvement of security risk assessments was necessary, except at the Library. These security risk assessments would provide a strong basis to underpin for individual ITSPs. Furthermore, guidance contained in ACSI 33 would further enhance other controls, such as password policies, gateway management and user access.

4.   Storage and Security

This chapter discusses preventive conservation issues relating to the housing and storage of the collection, physical access to collection and administration areas including the collection management systems, and comments on stocktake processes.

4.1   An essential part of maintaining a safe and accessible collection is the provision of appropriate storage facilities and security over the collection. Indeed these are the principle elements in preventative conservation. As collections are developed and held over long periods of time, adequate planning is needed to ensure that optimal storage conditions are maintained to prolong the life of the collection.

4.2   Maintaining a good balance in the environmental conditions can be assisted through building design, through building materials and through mechanical means such as air-conditioning and humidity controls.

4.3   Appropriate security protects collections from accidental or intentional destruction or theft and can apply both to storage and display. Control over collections is a combination of both storage and security. Good control over collections means that an item can be readily found at any given time.

Conservation & preventative conservation

4.4   Preservation of the collection, also known as preventative conservation, 'consists of non-intrusive action taken to slow or stop deterioration and to prevent damage'.[14] Generally accepted practices entail, inter alia, management of environmental conditions, dust reduction, pest control and monitoring and controlling lighting levels.

4.5   The ANAO consulted the Heritage Collections Council guidelines as published by Australian Museums and Galleries On Line (AMOL)[15], which is a DCITA sponsored entity.[16] In addition, the ANAO reviewed what standards the cultural institutions themselves had set for their collections. The parameters for environmental conditions set by cultural institutions were similar to each other and the Internationally accepted standards.

4.6   The ANAO noted minor variations in the parameters set for environmental conditions between the institutions, depending on the nature of

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[14]   Nova Scotia Museum, 2005, *Collection Conservation Policy for the Nova Scotia Museum, October 2002*, Nova Scotia Museum, viewed 28 April 2005, p. 22.
<http://museum.gov.ns.ca/info/NSM_Collection_Management.pdf>**.**

[15]   Australian Museums and Galleries On line <http://www.amol.org.au>.

[16]   AMOL is currently being redeveloped and will be Collections Australia Network (CAN). The new website is < http://www.collectionsaustralia.net>.

their collection. For example, the Gallery set their parameters at 21 degrees C, plus or minus 1 degree C, and relative humidity level of 55 per cent plus or minus five per cent for 24 hours a day, year round. In addition to this, the focus of preventative conservation is to keep conditions stable and minimise hourly and daily fluctuations. This is achieved, principally, through the Heating, Ventilation and Air-conditioning system (HVAC) and through building design.

4.7   The Archives and the Gallery have demonstrated that better practice preservative conservation can be achieved through the provision of appropriate environmental conditions for their permanent collections. The ANAO viewed data documenting the temperature and humidity levels over a period of time, which evidenced that these institutions were able to maintain the storage environment within stated parameters. The Archives also have a separate set of parameters for its audio visual collection, which requires lower temperatures and drier conditions. This observation includes the Memorial, which has achieved a high standard, with an isolated problem related to levels of humidity, which is soon to be addressed.

4.8   The ANAO noted that the Museum states in its Annual Report that its collection is kept 'at or above appropriate museum standards,' but in its rented storage areas it has little or no facility to provide a level of temperature and humidity control that the other cultural institutions employ. The Museum advised that it cares for the collection to the best of its ability within the constraints of its storage facilities. For example, the Museum ensures that it uses high quality archival storage materials, boxes and cabinets for objects vulnerable to environmental fluctuations. It also maintains a clean environment, manages light exposure and has implemented an integrated pest management regime.

4.9   The ANAO noted that the Library reports against the parameters set for environmental conditions for the collection to its executive on an exceptions basis. This allows for issues with plant and equipment to be identified and addressed at a high level as well as informing the executive of the achievement of a key standard of care for the collection.

4.10   As the condition the collection is kept in is a key performance indicator, other cultural institutions could employ better practice by including this type of reporting to their respective councils, executive or even their annual reports. This will allow potential issues that may threaten the preservation of the collection to be routinely monitored and reported.

4.11   As each institution employs slightly different parameters, stating them as units of measurement rather than 'appropriate standards,' provides a clearer picture of what the actual parameters are. For certain types of collections the

standards differ. For example, film affected by 'vinegar syndrome' requires cold storage and lower relative humidity to slow the degradation process.

4.12 The Memorial and the Archives state quite clearly in their annual reports what proportions of their collection are kept in optimal or appropriate conditions and state the reasons why these figures change from year to year. This issue is discussed further in Chapter Six on Performance Management.

Recommendation No.6

4.13 As the conditions each collection is maintained in are a key indicator of the care of the collection, the ANAO recommends that cultural institutions consider reporting the actual parameters set in measurement units and the standards actually achieved to their respective councils on a regular basis and in their Annual Reports.

Agencies' responses

4.14 All agencies agreed.

4.15 *The Archives already reports on the proportion of its collection held in optimum storage conditions, and will now examine avenues for reporting the parameters against which those conditions are defined.*

4.16 *The Museum noted that this recommendation is one for all institutions to consider. It should also be noted that while the conditions of storage are a key indicator of the care of collections they are not the only indicators—the Museum maintains a rigorous regime of special monitoring of materials that may be held in less than perfect environmental storage. This allows pro-active management of problems.*

Facilities management

4.17 Facilities management is crucial to the protection of the collection, in particular, for environmental controls, cleaning and building and equipment repairs. Better practice demonstrated during the audit showed that performance indicators for key repair tasks are a good way to ensure that standards are maintained. Monitoring how those standards are met added robustness to the process. This was achieved by employing a method to record the time a request, or notification of an incident, was made and the time taken to respond, and how effective resolution of that same request or incident was achieved. This system is applicable to both in-house and outsourced arrangements.

4.18 Currently, the Archives and the Memorial use such a method to monitor and control their outsourced building services contracts. This is a good management control to ensure that the needs of the collection are met and actions taken are transparent and accountable.

Recommendation No.7

4.19 The ANAO recommends that the Library, Museum and the Gallery consider introducing performance targets for facilities repair and maintenance and a formal system to monitor key collection related repairs and maintenance.

Agencies' responses

4.20 Agreed.

Other preventative conservation measures

4.21 Measures employed by cultural institutions to provide an appropriate environment for their collections include, in simple terms:

- regular cleaning and dusting;

- keeping the collections apart or segregated from general areas;

- preventing food near or in collection areas;

- using various filters in air conditioning units to target dust particles and organic emissions (off-gassing), which is a by-product of materials deteriorating; and

- quarantining items entering the collection to minimise the risk of introducing pests.

4.22 Cultural institutions usually address these issues comprehensively, by using an integrated pest management approach, keeping food away from storage areas and keeping storage areas clean. The ANAO noted that the Library had a staff kitchen located within the Pictures storeroom. The Library has agreed to re-examine the placement of this staff kitchen facility.

4.23 Also at the Library, the ANAO could find no evidence of recent cleaning of the compactuses in the stack areas in Parkes, ACT, where the Australian collection is housed. The Library has agreed to examine the regularity of cleaning and maintenance of the compactuses in the stack areas and other storage areas. The reduction in dust reduces the risk of infestation and consequent deterioration of the collection. All other institutions had regular cleaning programs of storage areas and gallery spaces.

4.24 The Library and the Archives do not have a quarantine area for items arriving from overseas, for donated items and for items returning from loan or exhibition. The Gallery and Museum use their temporary exhibitions areas for quarantine purposes, although they do not have dedicated quarantine space at their storage facilities.

4.25 The Memorial routinely treated all objects coming into the collection either via freezing or low oxygen treatment. These treatments kill infestations

and unseen larvae or eggs. Other institutions also carried out a regime of pest control refrigeration and or fumigation on an assessment basis.

4.26 The previous audit report contained a recommendation about quarantine areas. At the Gallery, Library, Archives and Museum, the ANAO was advised that implementing this recommendation is subject to obtaining additional storage facilities or is dependent on expanding or upgrading existing facilities.

General security

4.27 Maintaining proper security over the collections has broad applications. It relates to the display and storage as well as to objects travelling for loan or exhibition.

4.28 Security over displays can be maintained through robust and lockable display cabinets, roping off an area around an object or painting, electronic proximity alarms, glazing on paintings and the presence of security guards or staff. These measures are employed to facilitate access but to minimise accidental damage through touching or deliberate breakage and to reduce the risk of theft.

4.29 The ANAO observed that all of the cultural institutions employed these or similar measures, as appropriate, to their permanent displays.

4.30 Procedures for travelling exhibitions and loan agreements also encompassed security measures. Often cultural institutions sent staff to accompany large and/or valuable loan items and to set up exhibitions to ensure security, as well as environmental, issues were addressed.

4.31 The Gallery, for instance, undertakes risk assessments for its temporary and travelling exhibitions as a matter of course. This acknowledges the unique nature of each exhibition and the insurance concerns for objects not owned by the Gallery.

4.32 Recommendation No.8 from the previous audit was:

> The ANAO recommends that where necessary institutions:
>
> - commission full reviews of security and fire alarm monitoring systems by appropriately qualified experts; and
>
> - review their use of resources in order to implement the recommendations made in previous security reviews.[17]

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17   op. cit. p. 78.

4.33 The ANAO considers that this recommendation has been implemented fully by all of the cultural institutions. Additional security reviews have been undertaken recently, as well as internal audit reviews in some institutions.

Staff cessation procedures

4.34 The ANAO tested the management of access cards, which allow staff and contractors access to premises and storage areas. This test was conducted by comparing lists of current cardholders to listings of staff who had ceased employment. This test also compared these names to network and collection management system databases.

4.35 The test revealed that cessation procedures and processes to ensure the return of cards and terminate network and database access needed attention in most entities. Although cessation procedures existed, in some cases a high number of former staff retained their access cards and or access to IT systems.

Recommendation No.8

4.36 The ANAO recommends that each cultural institution (except the Memorial) evaluates its current exit procedures to ensure that staff ceasing employment do not retain security access cards and systems access to the network, Collection Management Systems and other IT systems.

Agencies' responses

4.37 All agencies agreed.

4.38 *The Archives has such procedures in place and will review them and reinforce their application.*

4.39 *The Museum plans to introduce centralised user authentication for all its key information systems, with access control keyed off the Human Resources System. In the meantime, periodic audit of user access rights is being undertaken.*

Control over the collection

Management of access to the collection

4.40 In most cultural institutions objects are given accession numbers when they are formally accessioned into the collection. This same number is used by the CMS as the key identifier.

4.41 The Library uses its own bibliography system to catalogue books, magazines and other publications.

4.42 The ANAO found no issues of concern relating to the management of access to the collection management systems at the Memorial and the Museum.

Gallery

4.43   The Gallery estimates that approximately 20,000 works in its collection remain to be accession numbered. The ANAO performed a sample stocktake of paintings at Parkes and Hume and noted some irregularities, including items not having an accession number.

4.44   In addition to items not having an accession number, the ANAO noted two other types of anomalies. Test findings at the Gallery indicate that artworks are being moved without adherence to registration procedures and that access to the storage areas might benefit from further tightening or registration supervision. For instance, some paintings in the audit test sample were hung on racks but the CMS had not been updated with their location. In addition, some paintings were not in their designated location.

4.45   To address this the Gallery could consider removing access to non-registration and non-storage staff or requiring non-registration and non-storage staff to be accompanied by registration staff so that the requisite changes can be made in the CMS. The Gallery has advised that as an alternative to such an approach, it is considering Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), which would allow up-to-the-minute tracking of objects. If such a system were introduced adequate resources would be needed to apply the RFID tags onto the Gallery's collection.

Recommendation No.9

4.46   The ANAO recommends that the Gallery reviews access to storage areas to tighten controls over artworks and ensure that movements of objects from and within storage are accurately recorded.

Agency response

4.47   Agreed.

Archives

4.48   The Archives has custody and control over the Australian Government's archival records. Once records are transferred to the Archives they become the custodial responsibility of the Archives. Its role is to protect and care for these records indefinitely. The public may view these records when they are in the open access period. Prior to the open access period, records may be viewed or loaned back to the agency that created them.

4.49   The majority of items held by the Archives need to be kept in a stable environment. Some records, due to their age or media form, need particular care. Film, for example, is susceptible to 'vinegar syndrome' where the acetate in the film breaks down, eventually destroying it. The Archives takes steps to

identify affected films and videos and place these items in special vaults to slow the deterioration.

4.50 The Archives provides supervised access to the collection on open access through reading rooms. Users need to register in order to request records. Control over physical access to the reading rooms is good. Lockers are available for visitors to store their personal items. In the Canberra reading room transparent plastic bags are provided for visitors so they can take pencils, paper and small personal items into the reading rooms. Pens are not allowed in the reading room.

4.51 Records are retrieved and allocated to a borrower's access card. When the items are returned the records are entered back into the computer system and then returned to the storage areas.

4.52 The ANAO sampled listings of records on loan to the reading room for researchers, to other institutions and to staff. The listings showed that many records were still logged out to users and that some of these entries dated back to when the system was introduced. The ANAO confirmed, however, that in many instances the records were in fact back in the repository. This report highlighted some issues with the management of records in and out of storage.

4.53 For instance, although there are procedures for logging records out to users and back into storage, sometimes these are not adhered to and records remain logged out although they have been returned to the repository. Some records logged out to researchers, who are attached to agencies, have records logged out to them but the records are actually with the agency and not on Archives' premises. The listing also highlighted that follow up of records on loan was not taking place. This is also true for records logged out to staff for extended periods. Taking into consideration preservation concerns with film and the exposure of paper to light and adverse storage conditions, as a rule, the lending of records from the repository should be followed up on a regular basis. Also, consistent with preservation concerns records loaned to agencies should be subject to mandatory return times.

Recommendation No.10

4.54 The ANAO recommends that the Archives introduces regular reporting of records on loan to users in the reading room. In addition, the Archives should follow up loans to institutions and require return of records within set timeframes consistent with the records' preservation requirements.

Agency response

4.55 Agreed.

Library

4.56 Approximately one million items of the three million listed in the on line catalogue are currently bar-coded. It has taken the Library approximately 10 years to barcode these one million items in the on line catalogue. The current method with bar-codes is to fit them on new acquisitions and on items requested by users. There are also bar-code fitting projects undertaken, for example, during re-shelving projects. If an item is requested and is not fitted with a bar-code it is fitted by staff in the reading room and the bar-code linked to the database entry. However when the reading room is busy, bar-codes may not be fitted due to the workload demands of staff.

4.57 In addition, the Library issues access cards to users so that they can use the Library's database to request books. To further improve the control over books, the ANAO considers that the current access card system could be enhanced. At present it is simply a card system for users to access photocopy services and allow a user to request a book. To improve the User access card system and make it a more robust control, the following procedures could be employed:

- card to have an expiry date;

- users to be contacted to periodically verify addresses;

- firmer control over the books in the main reading room so that the custody of a book can be tracked, for example, closed trolleys or chutes for return of books; and

- tighter controls over items brought into the reading room. Currently, bags of a certain size need to be checked into the cloakroom. Although books can still be taken out of the reading room without detection.

Recommendation No.11

4.58 The ANAO recommends that the Library tightens its current controls over access cards and books in the main reading room.

Agency response

4.59 Agreed.

Collection storage

4.60 Collection storage is a major issue across all the cultural institutions. As all the audited institutions have an imperative to collect, their collections are growing.

4.61 The fact that the majority of storage spaces are leased further inhibits most cultural institutions' ability to address fundamental issues to improve

storage conditions. Allocating funds, in the short term, to improve premises not owned by the cultural institution is a barrier to adapting to the growth in the collections and meeting their specialised storage needs. The ANAO noted that the Archives had managed to maintain best practice environmental conditions in leased premises across Australia at their own cost. However, they have not been able to address the shortage of space as readily.

4.62 The Library and Archives have been able to largely estimate the growth of their collections.

4.63 The Gallery is currently assessing its storage needs and has engaged a storage consultant to improve the use of its existing space. It also has the Gallery redevelopment project, which may provide increased storage space in Parkes.

4.64 The Memorial is also undertaking a storage review to address its future and current storage needs. For example, in one storage area there is a problem with dampness, which affects the relative humidity levels. This issue is being considered as part of the wider review. The Memorial own their storage facilities and are thus not as restricted in adapting storage conditions to their needs.

4.65 The Library has approval to build a storage facility in Hume to house its collection and tender for construction was called for in April 2005. It also has existing issues with its building in Parkes, which are currently being assessed.

4.66 The ANAO observed that the Museum had the most visually acute storage problems of all of the cultural institutions in terms of the conditions for the storage of collection items and for staff in its storage facilities. It also is unable to provide environmental conditions within its own stated parameters, except in the bark painting room. The ethnographic room and other rooms at 9–13 Vickers Street, Mitchell have temperature control only. The large vehicle store has no temperature or humidity control.

4.67 Part of the Museum's role is to provide access to the collection. Researchers may access the collection at Mitchell, though there are no facilities specifically for researchers to do this. Other cultural institutions have rooms or spaces set aside for researchers. At the Museum a researcher must sit alongside registration staff in their work areas. The ANAO noted that this presents a different face to the modern gallery spaces at Acton.

4.68 The Museum undertook to care for the recent cultural gift of the extensive Maple-Brown collection, which filled a gap in its Australian colonial collection. This acquisition required the Museum to rearrange its storage spaces and to hire temporary offices placed it the Vickers Street car park.

4.69 It is timely, however, for the Museum to undertake a detailed analysis of its current and future storage needs and pursue strategies to address its storage needs in the medium to long term.

4.70 DCITA is developing a Portfolio Collection Storage Plan, currently at stage one. DCITA advised that the stage one plan addresses the priorities identified by the cultural institutions themselves. This plan is focussed on the storage of paper items and thus addresses the needs the Library and, to some extent, the Archives. DCITA advised that it is commencing Stage 2 of the Portfolio Collection Storage Plan and the Museum's storage issues will be considered within that context.

4.71 The ANAO considers that there is a risk that the Museum's collection could deteriorate further unless the medium to short term storage issues are addressed as a matter of priority. The ANAO noted a recent collection survey conducted by the Museum, which indicated that current storage was insufficient to adequately prevent deterioration. The report stated, 'Re-housing the collection under appropriate environmental conditions would greatly enhance their chances of long-term survival and reduce the resources required to maintain the collections'.[18] The report indicated that overall, 54 per cent of surveyed items do not have satisfactory storage environments. This situation was acute for large technology items with 97 per cent of these collection items surveyed having storage environments regarded as 'not satisfactory'.

4.72 The report also noted that the inappropriate storage was a drain on resourcing as the conditions do not effectively inhibit deterioration and may cause deterioration to conservation work already conducted. The ANAO noted the Museum's conservation concerns about the lack of environmental controls in storage spaces. The ANAO also noted that items identified as iconic to the Museum's National Historic Collection are being stored in uncontrolled environmental conditions, which are exacerbated by Canberra's climate, which can experience significant diurnal fluctuations in temperature. An example of this is the 'Hong Hai' refugee boat currently stored in McEacharn Place, Mitchell in the ACT.

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[18] National Museum of Australia, *Collections Conditions Analysis and Collections Conservation Plan* 2004-2019, NMA, Canberra, 2004, p. 6.

Recommendation No.12

4.73 The ANAO recommends that the Museum conducts an assessment of its medium to long-term storage needs as a matter of priority. This should include an assessment of the storage needs of the current collection and encompass the needs of a growing collection. The ANAO considers such assessments would be a required first step to provide input into the development of a business case for the provision of appropriate future storage facilities for the collection and for input into the portfolio storage plan.

Agency response

4.74 Agreed.

4.75 *The Museum has independently commenced an internal assessment of its storage needs.*

Stocktake

4.76 Stocktakes are a means to test the system of control over collections. These are usually carried out by sample selection. Stocktake procedures should include guidance on what steps to take when more than an acceptable number of items, relative to the sample, cannot be found during a stocktake.

4.77 The Archives and the Library do not, as a rule, undertake stocktakes. The ANAO noted that their collections are substantial and are accessed routinely and that they employed mitigation strategies to address the lack of stocktake processes. The Library registers missing items and conducts searches to find missing items. They also routinely follow up items not returned to the stack areas from the reading room. The Archives records items that cannot be found.

4.78 The Gallery, Museum and the Memorial all undertake stocktakes. The Memorial had the most rigorous program of stocktake, which included condition reporting. The Memorial also had in place procedures for when too many errors were found.

4.79 At the time of the audit the Museum's CMS had only been recently implemented. The ANAO considers that some work still needed to be done before it could be termed a comprehensive CMS, which could facilitate meaningful stocktakes to be undertaken.

4.80 The Gallery has undertaken a range of stocktake projects. A full stocktake commenced in 1988 and continued for six years. Since that time it has undertaken a sample-based approach to stocktake. In the last 10 years, since undertaking a sample-based stocktake method, the Gallery has not experienced high error rates.

4.81 The Gallery's stocktake procedures did not stipulate what action was to be taken if there was a high error rate. This is also true for the Museum's procedures. One way to address this issue is to undertake hypothesis testing using confidence intervals so that testing can enable some statements to be made about the system as a whole. Alternatively, the ANAO noted that the Memorial's documented stocktake procedures addressed the situation where there was a high error rate and could be used as a model.

4.82 The Gallery agreed to consider improvements in stocktake procedures, including those applied by the Memorial, which was considered a better model by the ANAO.

Conclusion

4.83 The ANAO concluded that security over the collections was basically sound. The ANAO considers that all institutions had appropriately addressed the security recommendation from the previous audit report. ANAO testing revealed weaknesses in the administration of staff cessation procedures at the Gallery, Archives and Library and to a lesser extent at the Museum.

4.84 The ANAO also noted two areas for improvement over the control of access to the collection at the Library, Archives and Gallery.

4.85 Although storage facilities are a crucial issue in all institutions, the ANAO noted that the Museum faces some major issues regarding its storage facilities.

5. Accessibility

This chapter discusses aspects of accessibility, such as digitisation, travelling exhibitions, targeted programs such as educational programs, visitor surveys, websites and access issues including copyright.

5.1   As well as collecting and forming a national collection, under their governing acts cultural institutions must make their collections accessible through exhibitions or other means. An integral part of making their collections accessible is making their organisations and their collections known to the general public through brand recognition, awareness raising via word of mouth, advertising and general promotion activities. Programs targeted at the educational market aim to educate and inform the younger generation about the cultural heritage contained in the national collections.

5.2   Cultural institutions employ various approaches to ensure that their collections are accessed or made available to as wide an audience as possible. In addition to visitors at their galleries and displays, institutions loan collection material to other museums and galleries. They also have programs of travelling exhibitions, which either encompass large block buster exhibitions or are tailored to suit the needs of smaller regional galleries and museums. The cultural institutions also produce publications about their collections or catalogues based on exhibitions. These exhibitions are, in many cases, available on line. Accessibility also entails assisting researchers to access and study collection items held in storage or use reference libraries. In making the collection accessible, a cultural institution must balance the care and preservation of the collection with the objective of making it widely available.

Digitisation

5.3   Digitisation is the process of making images of original objects and documents. These images can be used in electronic format and in multi-media packages to serve as a substitute for the real object. Making a digital copy of an object allows it to viewed many times, sometimes with much greater detail than when on display, without damage to the original object itself. By creating this surrogate image, the cultural institutions provide for access to fragile and rare items, which otherwise may be rarely seen. Photo 5.1 shows the process used to make a digital copy of a rare map at the Library.

5.4   With the high penetration of personal computer usage and the take up of the Internet, websites are becoming a major access point for information and for access to images of collection items.

Photo 5.1

Digitisation
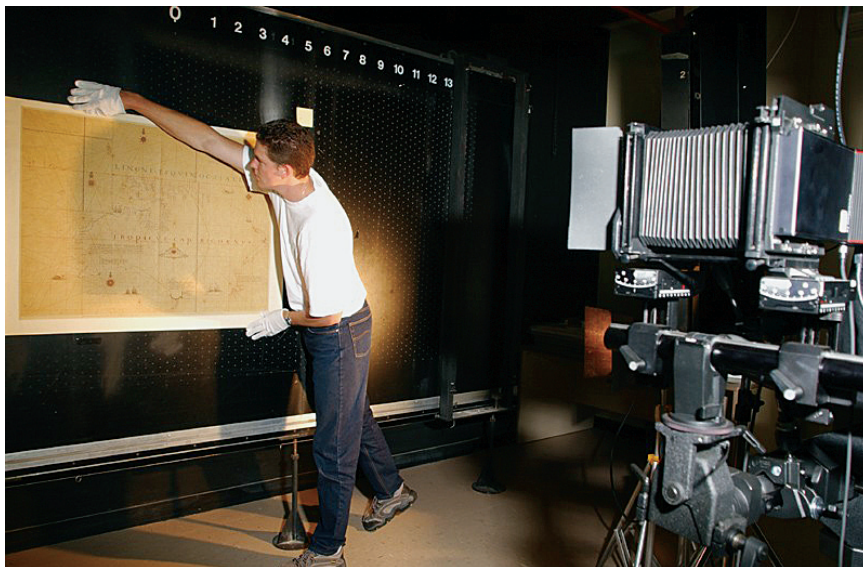
Source: National Library of Australia

Photo 5.1 shows National Library photographer Greg Power positioning a 1942 edition of the Tasman 'Bonaparte' map of 1644 http://nla.gov.au/nla.map-nk1791 prior to capture with a large format digital camera in the National Library's photographic studio.

Photo by Loui Seselja

5.5   The Library has been undertaking a digitisation program for approximately the last 10 years. It has been digitising parts of its collection for preservation purposes and to increase accessibility through its website. Examples of items digitised are maps, pictures and oral history recordings. The Library also archives through Pandora, a program that makes copies of websites and stores them. It archives some Australian Government websites on a curatorial basis along with other websites that contain Australian literary content.

5.6   The Archives is responsible for preparing for the preservation of digital collections, in particular 'born digital' records, such as government files in electronic format.[19] The Archives provides clear directions to Australian Government agencies to help them put in place internal mechanisms for creating, managing and retaining web-based records, for as long as those records have value.

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[19]   Born digital records are records created and stored in electronic format such as electronic transaction records, emails, correspondence and reports. The Archives developed a software program to handle these files so that they can be accessible in the future.

5.7 The Archives also has implemented the 'digitisation on demand' initiative. This initiative allows users who search the Archives' database to request a digital copy of the record's contents. This digital copy is then placed on the database for any other user to access. The Archives currently performs this service for free.

5.8 The Gallery has a fairly recent program to digitise existing photographic transparencies, which due to demand grew to encompass other images. Digital cameras are also used to photograph collection items for identification purposes.

5.9 The Memorial has a comprehensive digital collection, which is linked to an on line sales facility. Digital images are also an essential part of documentation, with images being linked to data records in the collection management system. The Memorial also demonstrated better practice in describing and uploading the metadata associated with the collection. Meta data enhances the ability of search engines to find items as it describes and is linked to other data sub-sets.

5.10 The Museum has a relatively small program of digitisation but is set to increase this to facilitate access to the collection via the Internet.

5.11 The government report, *Review of Cultural Agencies, 2002*, recommended that DCITA prepare a portfolio digitisation strategy. As a result DCITA formed a working group consisting of representatives from selected cultural institutions. The draft strategy focuses on collaboration and identifies government priorities, which include preservation, education, participation, audience expansion and digital heritage. The Minister for Arts and Sport has received and noted the development of the strategy in late 2004. DCITA advised that the strategy functions as an ongoing framework, providing a set of principles for agencies to prioritise their individual activities and work collaboratively in future developments.

5.12 As a consequence of the technological innovations, the collections are much more accessible currently than they have ever been before. Digitisation allows for remote users to access images of the collection and information about items in the collection without leaving home, a good outcome in terms of increasing the collections accessibility.

5.13 In planning for digitisation, however, there are no stated means within the cultural institutions to determine the success of digitisation program(s) and evaluate their effectiveness. In order to evaluate how successful a program is, evaluation criteria need to be set and clear outcomes articulated early. Also, to evaluate cost effectiveness, certain objectives need to be stated at the outset.

5.14 The ANAO considers that cultural institutions should define how they will measure the outcomes of their respective digitisation programs, be it for

preservation, conservation or accessibility. Within three to five years it would be desirable for these programs to be evaluated and comparative measures taken. Most institutions have the necessary data to undertake these assessments already but have not articulated their ultimate goals.

5.15 Examples of the types of criteria that could be used are:

- percentage of collection digitised against target set by institution;

- number of users viewing the images or increase in numbers of users viewing images;

- for DCITA agencies, meeting key government priorities as identified in the National Digital Collection Strategy, when finalised; and

- statements about the long-term sustainability of the digital collection, taking into consideration, storage space and image and file recognition issues.

Recommendation No.13

5.16 The ANAO recommends that all cultural institutions formulate long-term digitisation plans, which contain evaluation criteria for the measurement of the success of their digitisation programs.

Agencies' response

5.17 All agencies agreed.

5.18 *The Archives already includes performance estimates in individual digitisation project plans, and will now examine the most appropriate measures for application to broader digitisation objectives.*

Travelling exhibitions

5.19 Another means for cultural institutions to maximise the opportunities for the public to experience their collections is through travelling exhibitions and loans.

5.20 Visions of Australia, is an Australian Government grant program, managed by DCITA, that supports touring exhibitions of Australian cultural material. There is a strong reliance on Visions funding by the cultural institutions to support travelling exhibitions. This program has been successful in allowing the development and deployment of exhibitions across Australia and to rural and remote areas. Increasingly, cultural institutions are developing exhibitions that can travel to smaller venues and tailoring them to meet the limited environmental and security conditions provided at these venues.

5.21 Each institution had appropriate guidelines and procedures in place to manage travelling exhibitions. Adherence to Visions of Australia procedures requires that adequate planning takes place because funding can be sought to develop the exhibition and the timing of grant funding requires cultural institutions to program itineraries well in advance. Changes to proposed schedules, however, did cause some logistical issues for some institutions.

Photo 5.2

Schools visiting the permanent exhibition at the Archives

Source: National Archives of Australia used with permission.

These school visitors are viewing Queen Victoria's Commission of Assent to the (British) Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act on display at the National Archives exhibition space in Parkes, Canberra.

Targeted programs

5.22 All institutions had programs targeted at particular market segments such as schools (refer Photo 5.3). These included dedicated facilities, such as those at the Memorial, to web-based support documents to facilitate school tours and enhance teacher and student visitor experiences. These programs extend to school holiday specific activities to broaden access to the collections and facilities. Through this means cultural institutions are educating future generations about the cultural heritage contained in their respective collections.

Websites

5.23 Websites are increasingly becoming the main access points for cultural institutions. Web users are, for the Archives and Library, the main source of access to their collections. Joint initiatives such as Pictures Australia and Music Australia[20] provide a high level of access and searching capabilities for on line users.

5.24 The ANAO observed that cultural institutions had active websites in that they were regularly updated and had working links. Surveys were undertaken to underpin reviews of websites in most circumstances. All institutions had specific software to count the number of 'unique'[21] visits and to monitor at a high level what pages of their websites were accessed. Figure 5.1 depicts the level of website usage to access information about the collections. As noted this method of use is increasing. The Library, for example, had an increase of 3.8 million visitors in 2003–04 after its website was indexed by Internet search engines.

Figure 5.1

Number of unique website visitors 2003–04
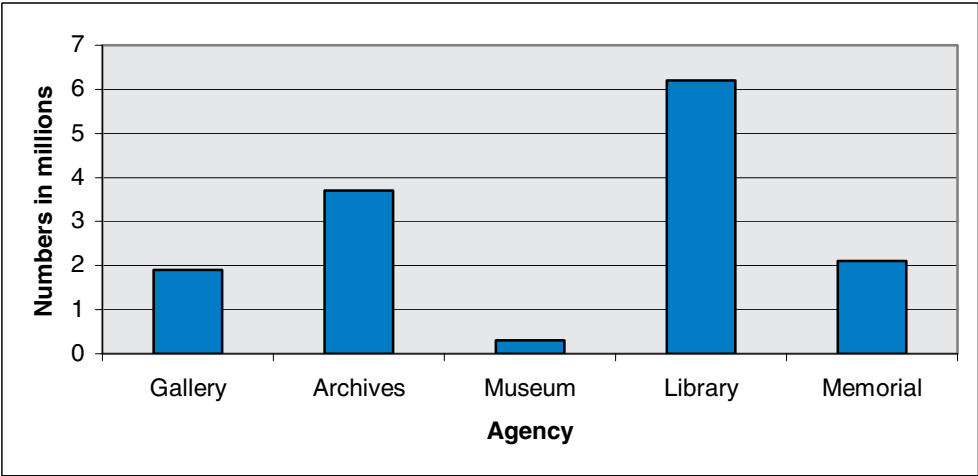
Source: ANAO based on data from 2003–2004 Annual Reports.

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[20]   Pictures Australia and Music Australia are joint agency initiatives to make specific collections available through the one search engine.

[21]   Unique visits is where a real person accesses a website rather than a search engine. All pages accessed by that person during that session are counted as one visit.

Visitor surveys

5.25 All institutions undertook visitor surveys and analysis of visitor statistics. The Memorial used market research to inform exhibition development. The cultural institutions demonstrated a good understanding of the market and the types of visitors that access their collections. Surveys can be targeted to specific exhibitions as well as on-going surveys. The cultural institutions also shared information and compared visitor numbers to general trends in tourism in the ACT. As an adjunct to this, all of the cultural institutions reported on visitor feedback and complaints in their annual reports.

Copyright

5.26 Copyright is an issue that is growing as the increase in on line accessibility grows. Rights to reproduce images are not automatic and copyright licenses and permissions must be sought. Although copyright was a concern to all of the cultural institutions, appropriate strategies were in place to capture information about copyright, record copyright ownership and to acquire licenses where necessary. Currently, there is an Australian Research Council project examining issues of copyright with respect to cultural institutions from a legal perspective. The output from this study will enable all cultural institutions to further enhance their management of copyright and adjust their processes accordingly.

Conclusion

5.27 The ANAO concluded that the cultural institutions use an appropriate range of initiatives to encourage access to their collections and to provide information about them.

5.28 The ANAO considers that digitisation presents an expanding medium of extending access to the collections to rural and remote users and in providing a means to preserve the collection. However, the ANAO found that digitisation plans need to contain evaluation criteria so that these programs can be assessed in future.

6.   Performance Management

This chapter discusses performance management in the cultural institutions as expressed through performance measurement and systems, which capture information to support those measures.

6.1   A sound management system allows for performance monitoring so that a corporate entity can identify areas of improvement and can ensure that it is achieving its goals. The ANAO Guide *Better Practice In Annual Performance Reporting* states that 'When able to draw upon sound and reliable information, executives have a powerful tool to motivate their teams and to help communicate their vision to stakeholders. They can also monitor progress; steer the institution more effectively; and promote their achievements more convincingly.'[22]

6.2   The ANAO report, *Safeguarding Our National Collections* (Audit Report No.8 1998–99) recommended that 'each institution develop performance indicators that measure performance in collection management in terms of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.'[23]

6.3   The report also concluded that 'Overall, the performance management framework was at an early stage of development…'[24] and noted that the Library and Memorial had undertaken considerable corporate effort to develop performance indicators.

6.4   The ANAO noted that the cultural institutions have advanced their level of performance information since the previous audit report. In response to the recommendations in the previous audit report the Library chaired a cross-institution committee under the auspices of the Head of Collecting Institutions (HOCI). Eight collecting institutions participated in that forum to develop performance indicators.

Performance information

6.5   The ANAO examined the performance information for the cultural institutions and their supporting systems, which provide the basis for the figures quoted in PBS and Annual Reports. On the whole, these performance indicators have a good basis for measurement i.e. system-based statistics and survey results. The also provide a good representation of collection management activities.

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[22]   Australian National Audit Office, *Better Practice in Annual Performance Monitoring*, ANAO, Canberra, 2004. p. 3.

[23]   Australian National Audit Office, *Safeguarding Our National Collections Audit Report No.8 1998–99*, ANAO, Canberra, p. 86.

[24]   ibid. p. 86.

6.6 Reporting against service levels as detailed in the Service Charters of the cultural institutions was considered by the ANAO to be weaker. The Gallery had no measurable standards in its Service Charter. The Memorial had one objectively measurable indicator: that of answering correspondence. The Library, Archives and the Museum had several indicators to measure the meeting of Service Charter commitments. All institutions reported on complaints and compliments in their annual reports. The degree and level of clarity to which these measures were reported in the annual reports varied. The Archives provided clear and accountable reporting against their Service Charter in their Annual Report.

6.7 There are areas for improvement in performance reporting, particularly in allowing comparisons across the institutions on some key performance measures. As the cultural institutions carry on different businesses a 'one size fits all' approach to all performance measures is not considered practical. There are areas, however, where the activities of all the cultural institutions are similar and where comparable performance measures are possible. This would allow for benchmarking of some activities between the cultural institutions. Already there are some comparable measures such as visitor numbers to both the institutions and to their travelling exhibitions.

6.8 Website visits, both 'hits' and 'unique visits', are a straightforward measure, particularly for accessibility provided such statistics are reported consistently across the institutions. Using one definition for 'unique' visits, number of pages viewed and the duration of the individual visit have the possibility to provide comparable qualitative data.

6.9 In addition, items acquired, accessioned and de-accessioned can also be quite reasonably compared, though the Archives would continue to report in shelf metres.

6.10 Conservation treatments are generally comparable across the board, except at the Archives. Their measure includes preventative conservation treatments, such as boxing and repackaging to prevent deterioration rather than the actual treatment of an item to restore or maintain it in original condition.

6.11 The Archives also tended to consolidate performance measures about the increase in records on its RecordSearch[25] database, which disguised some separate activities. RecordSearch will increase its number of records through the transfer of new records into storage. The number of records will also increase through arrangement and description projects, whereby records are analysed and described in such a way to allow them to be searched for by key

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[25] RecordSearch is the name given to the Archives Collection Management System.

words. Another way the number of records increases is through older material being entered onto RecordSearch.

6.12 Conservation activity is usually measured by the number of items undergoing conservation in a financial year. While this is one reasonable indicator it can disguise the fact that conservation resources are being consumed by other activities, such as travelling exhibitions and the need for conservators to prepare works for exhibition and travel. It does not give a fair indication that the institution is conserving objects in the collection according to the collection's needs and based on an assessment of the collection's priorities.

6.13 The Memorial pointed out that its 'G for George' Lancaster Bomber took four years to restore/conserve. The ANAO considers that it would be more meaningful for cultural institutions to report against their planned conservation. For example, an additional statement could be made as follows 'a conservation plan has been undertaken, X per cent of items identified for conservation treatment received treatment in the year.'

6.14 The ANAO considered that the performance indicator for the storage of the collection could be more definitive. For example, the indicator for the collection 'stored at or above appropriate Museum Standards' could be open to interpretation. Recommendation No.6 in Chapter 4 of this report addresses this particular performance measure.

6.15 Overall, the ANAO found that reporting of performance was varied. Although the Memorial has many indicators and few targets in their PBS, its reporting in its Annual Report is clear and precise. The Archives report quite clearly against their Service Charter obligations, however, it could be clearer and more targeted with other performance indicators. The Library presents its indicators clearly but does not report against its main Service Charter indicator specifically in its Annual Report.

6.16 The ANAO considers that it is timely for the cultural institutions to re-examine their performance reporting, to share better practices and reach consensus on some common performance measurements. Another driver for further development of performance information is the increased scrutiny of agencies' capacity to report at a whole of government level, particularly with respect to core business.

6.17 The ANAO noted that the Library and Memorial are satisfied with their performance measurements. The Archives, the Gallery and the Museum have recognised the need for further development of their performance measures.

Recommendation No.14

6.18 The ANAO recommends that cultural institutions discuss, with a view to developing, a set of key common performance measures. The ANAO also recommends that the:

(a) Museum and Archives re-examine their performance information to develop targeted indicators;

(b) Gallery introduces some objective measures for its Service Charter; and

(c) Museum and Library consider reporting against key measurables in their Service Charters.

Agencies' responses

6.19 All agencies agreed. The Memorial agreed with qualification.

6.20 *The Memorial considered the development of common performance measures across institutions whose business outputs are quite different from one another will, of necessity be at the broadest level. In respect of performance measures, in the main it is considered best to deliver meaningful information about the institution's performance rather than seeking to make them common across institutions and thereby too broad to be useful. However there will be some areas where broad measures are appropriate.*

6.21 *The Archives has already amended its performance information for the 2005–06 Portfolio Budget Statements, and will seek to make further amendments through the Additional Estimates process. The Archives notes, however, that a number of earlier benchmarking studies across the collecting institutions identified difficulties in arriving at common performance indicators across cultural institutions because of differing descriptive, collection management and curatorial practices.*

6.22 *The Museum agreed to recommendation 14(a). The Museum plans to re examine performance information and to develop targeted indicators. The Museum is reviewing its Service Charter in 05/06 and will consider this recommendation 14 (c) as part of that review.*

Conclusion

6.23 The ANAO found that the cultural institutions had implemented the previous reports recommendations about the development of performance measurements.

6.24 The cultural institutions had robust systems to support the measurement of their performance. However, the ANAO concluded that further performance measurement could be undertaken and that more work could be done to increase the number of performance measures that are comparable across the institutions.

6.25 In addition, the ANAO concluded that meeting Service Charter targets could be improved by introducing some measurable indicators and reporting specifically against them in annual reports.

Photo 6.1
G for George

Source: Australian War Memorial used with permission.

Lancaster Bomber, G for George, is part of the Australian War Memorial's permanent exhibition, Striking By Night, which features a dramatic sound and light show. The exhibition recreates a bombing raid over Berlin in December 1943.
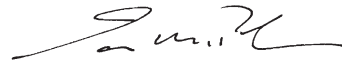
Case Study A

Conservation of 'G for George'

Since it was first installed in Aircraft Hall in June 1955 Avro Lancaster, serial number W4783, 'G for George' has been one of the icons of the Memorial's collection. It is now one of only 17 Lancasters left in the world from the 7 378 originally manufactured.

After finishing its war service 'George' was flown to Australia in late 1944. Since that last flight, 'George' spent almost ten years exposed to the elements at RAAF base, Canberra, before being installed at the Memorial. It was the centrepiece of Aircraft Hall for 44 years before being disassembled and removed for an extensive conservation program in March 1999.

Corrosion, poor handling and general wear and tear since 1945 had taken its toll on both the structure and the appearance of the aircraft, and previous restoration work had resulted in inaccurate paintwork and repairs. The aims of the conservation treatment were to document the condition of the aircraft and arrest deterioration of the structure of the aircraft, while retaining as much of the original material as possible. Furthermore, the construction work needed to ensure the structural integrity of the Lancaster so that it could be safely displayed to the general public and that its appearance was consistent with the way it would have looked at the time.

Canberra   ACT

30 June 2005

Ian McPhee

Auditor-General

Appendices

Appendix 1: Agencies' Responses

Australian Government

**Department of Communications,
Information Technology and the Arts**

our reference

Mr David Crossley
Executive Director
Performance Audit Services Group
Australian National Audit Office
GPO Box 707
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Crossley

Thank you for this opportunity to provide overall comments on the Australian National Audit Office's (ANAO) *Safe and Accessible National Collections* report. I agree to the inclusion of the content of this letter in the final report.

The Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA) has portfolio responsibility for four of the national collecting institutions subject to this report: the National Archives of Australia, the National Gallery of Australia, National Library of Australia and the National Museum of Australia. I note that the ANAO recognises that these institutions have adequately addressed the issues raised in the previous audit, *Safeguarding our National Collections 1998-99* and in many areas demonstrate model practices.

There are a number of mechanisms by which DCITA and the portfolio collecting agencies work together to improve practices at a strategic level. The primary forum for agencies is the Heads of Collecting Institutions (HOCI). The ANAO report outlines storage, digitisation and conservation issues at an individual agency level. You may wish to note that DCITA and the portfolio collecting institutions are working collaboratively to address collections management issues and progress outcomes in a number of areas including storage, digitisation and conservation.

The ANAO report recognises collection storage capacity as a critical issue across these institutions. The portfolio collection storage plan developed by DCITA and the agencies has addressed critical paper storage needs of the National Library and the National Archives as stage one of the plan. Stage two is now in train, where agencies identify critical non-paper storage needs and work together for shared solutions. As members of the storage working group, the National Archives, National Film and Sound Archive, National Gallery and National Museum are progressing storage assessments to complete this stage.

The ANAO report refers to the need for collection management system data standards and thesauri to ensure the effectiveness of the system (refer 3.32). The Department supports a cross-sectoral approach to the development of standards.

Recommendation 5.16 of the report recommends that all cultural institutions develop long-term digitisation plans containing evaluation criteria. Digitisation is being addressed across the portfolio through a digitisation plan where institutions undertake a range of measures, including developing benchmarks and evaluation processes. Implementation of the plan is underway, including harmonisation of web visitation statistics, a key collections access indicator.

In relation to Recommendation 3.21 and the National Gallery's collection deaccessioning processes, the Department is working closely with the Gallery to resolve this issue. It is worth noting, however, that a number of issues exist in assessing the Polynesian/Melanesian/Micronesian collection. In particular, deaccessioning of culturally sensitive material requires appropriate community consultation and can not necessarily adhere to a predetermined timetable.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide some comments on the report. The Department will continue to work collaboratively with the national collecting institutions on collections management issues.

Yours sincerely

R J Badger
A/g Secretary

9 June 2005

Note: 3.32 is now 3.38, recommendation 3.21 is now 3.22

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