

Policy: Collections

Purpose

To set out the principles governing the management and recognition of University collections.

Overview

The collections of the University are valuable assets used for a range of purposes, including research, teaching, interpretation, diplomacy and community engagement. The appropriate management of collections is essential for their conservation, security, access and use.

The recognition criteria for a collection by the University is guided by *Significance 2.0: A guide to assessing the significance of cultural heritage objects and collections* (Collections Council of Australia Ltd, 2009).

Scope

This policy applies to all collections, including named collections and those that function as museums, except for the following: those collections currently managed by the ANU Library, ANU Archives (including the Noel Butlin Archives and the Pacific Research Archives), the ANU Art Collection, and collections of administrative records (not managed by the ANU Archives).

Definitions

Collection is an assemblage of items that form a coherent group, where ownership or control is vested in the University and where approval for continuance as a collection has been granted by the University.

For avoidance of doubt, this definition intentionally does not mention the format of collection items. A collection could include physical and digital material, or material in only one of these formats. Digital metadata connected to a physical collection is not a separate collection, but exists to support the functionality of that physical collection. Issues relating to the management of different formats in a collection should be discussed in the collection's Management Plan or an accompanying strategy or guideline.

Recognition is the status granted by the University to a collection that is assessed as significant and that meets other eligibility criteria (such a collection can be described as ‘recognised’).

Significance is the historical, artistic or aesthetic, scientific or research, and social or spiritual values that an object or collection has for past, present and future generations.

Significance assessment is the process of studying and understanding the meanings and values of an object or collection, enabling the development of sound and reasoned judgements and statements about the importance of objects and collections, and their meanings for communities.

Policy statement

1. All items in a collection governed by this policy are the property of the University, unless other arrangements are agreed.
2. The University is committed to best practice management of the collections that it owns or controls. It grants recognition to each collection that is assessed as significant and that meets other eligibility criteria.
3. To gain recognition, a collection must be assessed as being significant to the University with respect to at least one of the four primary criteria, namely:
 - historic significance;
 - artistic or aesthetic significance;
 - scientific or research significance; or
 - social or spiritual significance.
4. The comparative criteria used to assess the degree of a collection’s significance are:
 - provenance;
 - rarity or representativeness;
 - condition or completeness; and
 - interpretive capacity.

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