University Museums and Collections

Mission Statement

1. The Museums and Collections of the University of New South Wales exist as a significant component of the University's Heritage and the Distributed National Collection.

2. They are for the purpose of education, research, display and preservation.

3. They have the long-term objectives of:

   * providing an educational resource for the University;
   * preserving heritage items for future members of the University and the community it serves;
   * enriching the visual and scholarly environment of the University.

Accession and Collection Management Policy

1. Policy and Planning

1.1 It is desirable that each Museum or Collection have a triennial strategic plan which establishes a framework for the support of the Museum or Collection, mission statement, statement of objectives, activities, public outreach and performance indicators.

2. Oversight

2.1 The Vice-Chancellor shall appoint the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) as having oversight of the University's Museums and Collections to assess and ensure relevance to the University's overall strategic plans.

3. Staff

3.1 The University shall appoint a person (Curator) designated as responsible for each Museum or Collection. In the case of Museums and Collections held within Faculties or Schools this appointment should be made by the Dean or Head of School respectively.

3.2 In the case of Museums and Collections controlled and maintained by Faculties and Schools, the Curator designated as responsible for the Museum or Collection shall be responsible to the Dean or Head of School. The required duties should be in writing and agreed to by both parties.

3.3 The Curator must give permission for volunteers to work on any aspects of Museums and Collections. The Museum or Collection must maintain a list of volunteer workers, their names and addresses and a record of times and dates when they are working as volunteers. This information is required in case of insurance claims related to injury.
4. Accommodation

4.1 Faculties and Schools are responsible for allocating space, from within their own allotment, for Museums and Collections which they control and maintain.

4.2 In allocating space for Museums and Collections careful consideration should be given to accommodation with regard to:

* storage of objects;
* display of objects if appropriate;
* curatorial staff;
* study of and research on objects by Curators and visiting researchers/ scholars and students;
* teaching where applicable;
* preparation areas involving work on objects, preparation of exhibitions, conservation etc.

4.3 Each Museum and Collection should be provided with adequate security.

5. Budgets

5.1 With the exception of the University Art Collection, Faculty and School Museums and Collections are administered by the Budget Unit in which the Museum or Collection is located and should be allocated resources by that Budget Unit for operating purposes.

6. Reporting

6.1 All Museums and Collections within the University shall be required to present an Annual Report of their activities to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs). This report should include a list of significant new accessions, use of the collection, state of conservation and documentation of the collection, etc. An Acquisition Policy and a copy of all other Policy and Procedural documents concerning the Museum or Collection should also be lodged with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs).

7. Documentation

7.1 All items contained in Museums and Collections must be accurately and systematically documented. Records should be legible and accessible.

A full record should include:

* a register of accessions (object number, title, maker, date, source). This is the minimum required;
* photographic identification where appropriate;
* catalogue;
* valuations where appropriate.

Individual items, valued at $500 or more must be included in the University's Asset Register.

8. Research
8.1 All Museums and Collections shall make their material available, when feasible, for research by members of this and other universities, and for members of the general public who have genuine scholarly interest in the collection. Special permission may need to be granted for restricted collections.

8.2 All Museums and Collections should develop a policy on research, including:

* nature of research;
* access to the collection;
* staff supervision of outside researchers.

9. Loans

9.1 Each Museum or Collection must have an Operations Policy covering issues such as inward and outward loans and copyright and reproduction (see Section 12). The authority for each Operations Policy should be approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) after review by the University's Legal Officer and Insurance Officer. The Operations Policy should also include any internationally agreed loans policies pertaining to the particular Museum or Collection.

10. Accessions

10.1 The University of New South Wales shall acquire (and should retain in its present holdings) only those objects of collectable or intrinsic value that will enhance the University's teaching, research, service to the community or public image, and which are consistent with written relevant mission statements and policies of particular Museums and Collections.

10.2 Objects required for specific Museums or Collections are acquired on behalf of the University and the University is the owner of the object.

10.3 Acquisitions which include special conditions must be approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) and such approval is subject to advice from the University's Legal Office as the University may be legally bound by such special conditions in perpetuity.

10.4 Accessions must be subject to the vendor or donor completing and signing a legal Deed of Gift or Acquisition which shall:

* state the nature of the acquisition, whether it is a gift, a bequest or a purchase;
* contain a statement from the owner of the object as to how the object was acquired;
* contain a warranty from the owner that he or she has the right to dispose of the object.

Where the validity of ownership is in question, the University shall not accept the object until the ownership issue is resolved but could act as custodian pending that resolution, with the written permission of the Head of School, Dean or Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs).

10.5 Acquisitions must comply with the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 1970. The Australian Government is a signatory to this Convention.

10.6 In regard to biological and geological material or other object, the University shall not acquire any specimen which has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection law, natural history
conservation law, quarantine regulation or treaty of Australia or any other country except with the express consent of appropriate outside authorities.

10.7 The University shall not acquire objects where there is reasonable cause to believe that the circumstances of their recovery involved the unscientific or intentional destruction or damage of Aboriginal or other indigenous people's ritual places or other known archaeological sites or involved a failure to disclose the finds to the owner or occupier of the land. Attention is drawn to regulations under the Australian Heritage Act and various State and Federal Acts regarding powers of museums and other bodies in the protection of the natural and cultural heritage.

10.8 All new accessions individually valued in excess of $500 shall be notified on acquisition to the University's Insurance Officer.

10.9 Donations in kind as well as cash to Museums and Collections must be notified to the Director, Public Affairs and Development. Notification must include description of object, name and address of donor, name of Museum or Collection, copy of Deed of Gift, copy of letter of authorisation of acceptance from the appropriate University Officer. All the above shall comply with the University Bequest Policy. The Director, Public Affairs and Development officially thanks the donor in writing and notifies the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs).

10.10 Any object left for temporary appraisal at a Museum or Collection shall be covered by a receipt.

11. Deaccession

11.1 All Museums and Collections should have a written Deaccession Policy, authorised by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs).

11.2 Disposal of items included in the University Register must be authorised by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs), and the Register so notated.

11.3 Reasons for the deaccessioning and disposal of an object or objects in one of the University's collections may include:

* lack of historical relevance to the University;
* lack of relevance to the University's long term strategic plan;
* absence of clear legal title;
* theft or loss;
* damage or serious deterioration in condition;
* repatriation of cultural property; and
* new information which leads to a reappraisal of relevance.

In some circumstances it may be necessary to cull a collection of any objects of inferior quality or which are inappropriate to the nature of the collection.

11.4 Deaccessioning and disposal should occur following routine review and with good reason, and not for capricious immediate need. Wherever possible, a deaccessioned object should be offered in the first instance to another museum or collection.

11.5 It is recommended that if possible, deaccession of objects acquired through donation from a source outside the University (eg. Government, friends of a museum, private
benefactor, gift in kind) requires the consultation of all parties who had contributed to the purchase or controlled the bequest or donation.

11.6 Any monies received by the University from disposal of objects deaccessioned from Museums and Collections of the University shall be applied solely for benefit of the Museum or Collection.

11.7 The Deaccession Policy of Museums and Collections should include the following:

11.7.1 The appropriate Curator must be satisfied that an object proposed for deaccessioning will not be of use to the Museum in any of the ways set out in the Collecting Policy, or in any others which might be envisaged. If in doubt the Curator should seek outside expert opinion.

11.7.2 The Curator shall submit a recommendation for deaccessioning to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs). The proposal shall provide catalogue information about the object and a statement justifying the deaccessioned proposal. The recommendation shall include additional proposals for disposal of the object, either by sale, donation or destruction.

11.7.3 Once approved, deaccession shall take place only after a three-month period. If no use of the object in the intervening three-month period is recorded the decision to deaccession stands. Registration records should be amended, noting the method of disposal, but record of the previous existence of the object in the collection should remain.

This clause may be waived in the case of small Collections, which should however comply with 11.2

12. Copyright and Reproduction

12.1 Reproduction and/or publication of items, including a recognisable portion of an item, held in some Museums or Collections may be subject to copyright in accordance with Australian copyright law.

(Information on copyright law may be obtained from the Australian Copyright Council, which is an independent non-profit organisation founded in 1968, primarily funded by the Australia Council.)

12.2 Photographing of items in Museums and Collections following written application should be approved in writing in accordance with the protocols of the Operations Policy described under Clause 9. Permission should be refused if copyright could be infringed. (It should be noted that the photographer will hold copyright of the image except in the case of works of art.)

12.3 Museums and Collections shall similarly issue written permission for reproduction of items held in their collections upon written application. With regard to works of art, permission must be obtained from the copyright owner.

12.4 Reproduction fees may be charged and other conditions may apply.

12.5 A pro-forma non-exclusive copyright licence for works of art owned by the University has been developed and may be used as a model for the licensing of reproduction of other objects.

13. Ethics

13.1 The University and its employees responsible for Museums or Collections shall be
guided by codes of ethics published by the museum profession, such as Museums Australia Inc., the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material and the International Council of Museums.

14. Access to the General Public

14.1 If a Museum or Collection is to be made available for access by the general public, even on a restricted hours basis, certain Halls Act (now incorporated into the Local provisions of the Theatres and Public Government Act as a responsibility of Local Councils) may need compliance. In such cases, the Facilities Department will, on request, take the necessary steps to ensure that the Museum or Collection complies with statutory requirements prior to opening to the public.

14.2 Visits by invitation to a Museum or Collection by identified outside groups for educational purposes, do not constitute public access, provided no charge is made for entry to the Museum or Collection. A fee may be charged to cover the cost of any educational materials provided during such visits.

15. Establishment of New Collections

15.1 New collections within Schools/Faculties must be approved by the Dean of the Faculty and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs).

16. Recognition

16.1 The University will only formally recognise (as distinct from approve) a Museum or Collection if there has been a conscious decision by the University to commit resources which have been donated or collected for the purpose of managing the Museum or Collection in the longer term. Such recognition requires a resolution of the University Council. In determining such recognition the Museum's or Collection's national or international significance should be taken into account.

17. Reviews

17.1 Museums and Collections shall be reviewed as to their continued significance to the University every five years at the instigation of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) who shall develop a review program and procedure for this purpose.
Appendix A: History

This Policy was drafted as a response to recommendations of the AVCC sponsored report, Cinderella Collections: University Museums and Collections in Australia (January, 1996). The report highlighted a range of concerns about the management of university collections which together constitute a significant part of Australia’s natural and cultural heritage and recommended that each university adopt an overall policy for the establishment, management and maintenance of its museums and collections. UNSW's Policy was developed by Professor A. J. Wicken, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, in consultation with curators of existing UNSW Museums and Collections and the Vice-Chancellor’s Advisory Committee.

For further information and assistance, contact the Policy Management Unit.

This policy is effective from 2 April 1998.

Approved by
Professor John Niland
Vice-Chancellor and Principal

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<th>Sections modified</th>
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