

Part 1 Introducing *Significance 2.0*

What is *Significance 2.0*?

Significance 2.0 outlines the theory, practice and many applications of the concept of significance in collection management. It takes readers through the key concepts and steps in assessing significance, for single items, collections and cross-collection projects. With examples and case studies it shows significance in action, in a wide range of applications.

This is a new and revised edition of *Significance; a guide to assessing the significance of cultural heritage collections*, published in 2001 by the Commonwealth of Australia on behalf of the Heritage Collections Council. This second edition extends the scope of significance to demonstrate its use with a wide variety of collections across the four major collecting domains—archives, galleries, libraries and museums.

Since the publication of the first edition, many collecting organisations across Australia have embraced the concept of significance, using it in many facets of their work—in collection policies, for acquisitions and deaccessioning, in conservation, planning, promotion, advocacy, education, online access, and in innovative collaborative projects. Significance is now widely used by collecting organisations in Australia and it has a growing number of supporters overseas.

Who is *Significance 2.0* for?

Significance 2.0 is for anyone who is curious about collections and their meanings.

Significance 2.0 is for all collecting organisations, agencies and owners that manage or hold collections. This includes everyone working with or associated with collections in any capacity—archivists, conservators, curators, educators, heritage managers, librarians, policy officers, interpreters, private owners and collectors, registrars, researchers, scientists, and students, whether as paid workers or volunteers.

How can *Significance 2.0* help?

Significance 2.0 is designed to work for all types of collections, giving collection managers throughout Australia a shared framework and standard process to analyse and communicate the meanings and values of collections.

Collecting organisations will have different uses for significance, depending on their circumstances and collections. While some collecting organisations are using significance in all aspects of their collection work, others find it useful for occasional or specific applications, such as supporting acquisition proposals to boards, or before conservation work. Some collecting organisations mainly use the single item assessment process, while others will find the whole collection process more useful.

This guide provides ideas, examples and suggestions that can be adapted to suit the needs of all kinds of collections.

Using *Significance 2.0*

This guide explains the concept of significance, the assessment process, how to draft a statement of significance, and gives examples of many different applications of significance.

It is designed to work with a suite of online resources including a workbook and e-learning module for developing practical skills in assessing significance, and other supporting online resources.⁷

Examples and case studies in *Significance 2.0* are tightly edited and may not fully convey the significance of the item or associated research. Further more detailed case studies will be added online in the future.⁸ The first edition of *Significance* contains other case studies, and remains available online.

A note on terms

Significance is the short title for this publication, either the first edition or *Significance 2.0*. ‘Significance’ without italics refers to the concept. ‘Significance assessment’ is the process of researching and understanding significance, and the ‘statement of significance’ is the summary of how and why an item or collection is significant. These terms are more fully defined in Part 3 and in the Glossary.

What is Significance?

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 ‘Significance’ refers to the values and meanings that items and collections have for people and communities. Significance helps unlock the potential of collections, creating opportunities for communities to access and enjoy collections, and to understand the history, cultures and environments of Australia.

How is *Significance 2.0* different from the first edition?

This revised edition of *Significance 2.0* draws on a substantial body of experience in using significance to analyse and communicate the meanings and values of items and collections. It includes refinements to the step-by-step assessment process, a greater emphasis on whole collection and cross-collection applications, and the inclusion of criteria for assessing national significance.⁹