

Glossary

- Accessioning* The process of registering an item or collection into a collection or collecting organisation. This generally includes entering the item or collection into a register or database with a sequential numbering system according to domain practice, briefly describing the item or collection so that it can be readily identified, and recording the details of the donor or vendor, including name, address and date of acquisition.
- Acquisition* Acquiring or gaining possession of an item or collection.
- Aesthetic* An item or collection with visual or sensory appeal, landmark design qualities, or displaying creative or technical excellence.
- Appraisal* The process of selecting items and collections for inclusion in an archive. Appraisal for recordkeeping purposes encompasses processes for determining what records to create and capture, and how long records need to be kept. Appraisal involves determining the different needs for records: legal, administrative, societal, cultural and historical. Appraisal may be done both retrospectively (for records that already exist) and prospectively (for records that do not yet exist).⁴⁷
- Archive* Archives are documents created or received and accumulated by a person or organisation in the course of the conduct of affairs and preserved because of their continuing value. Historically, the term has often referred more narrowly to non-current records deposited or selected for deposit in an archival institution. The word 'archives' is also commonly used to refer to (a) the organisation, agency or program responsible for the selection, care and use of records of continuing value, and (b) the building or place dedicated to their storage, preservation and use. Archival documents do not come only as text on paper, but include every known form and format in which information can be fixed in the form of records.⁴⁸
- Botanic garden* A collection of living plants, taxonomically classified and labelled.
- Burra Charter* Charter developed and adopted by Australia ICOMOS, which establishes nationally accepted principles for the conservation of places of cultural significance.
- Cataloguing* Creating a record according to specific principles of construction used in each collecting domain. Cataloguing usually includes details of any numbers assigned to an item; the item name; provenance, appearance, maker and details of manufacture; history and use; storage location; physical condition; and often some form of classification.
- Collection* A body of acquired items held by a collecting organisation, or the accumulated items held by a collector.
- Collection policy* A publicly accessible document that guides the development and management of an institution or organisation's collection, specifying why, what, where, how and when it collects, and how and why items may be deaccessioned from the collection. The collection policy includes a range of clauses or policy statements that provide an ethical framework for making sound decisions about the development and use of the collection.
- Collections Australia Network (CAN)* Collections Australia Network provides free online tools, resources and assistance to make information about Australian collecting organisations and their collections discoverable online. Collections Australia Network is an initiative of the Cultural Ministers Council at <<http://www.collectionsaustralia.net>>
- Collections Council of Australia (CCA)* The Collections Council of Australia Ltd is the peak body for the Australian collections sector. It has been established to ensure the nation-wide sustainability of collections by consulting with key stakeholders to resolve common issues and to promote the value of the sector.
- Collections mapping* A branch of cultural mapping practice focusing on movable cultural heritage. It is used to analyse and document attributes or themes associated with one or more collections (or parts of a collection) located at single or multiple sites, for example locally, nationally, regionally or internationally. Applications include collections management, promotion, access and community engagement and empowerment. It can contribute to cross-collection projects, thematic studies and regional surveys. Mapping information may take the form of inventories, databases, oral and video recordings or websites and may be represented using geospatial techniques. Analysis may focus on physical parameters such as item type or condition or values related to significance such as historic, artistic, scientific and social studies, the potential for research, provenance, rarity, completeness and interpretive capacity.

<i>Community</i>	A social group of any size whose members may reside in a specific locality, share government, or have a cultural and historical heritage. The term includes those who have common interests or form professional communities, such as archivists, librarians, curators, conservators, registrars, and scholars.
<i>Community Heritage Grants (CHG)</i>	The Community Heritage Grants Program aims to preserve and provide access to nationally significant, Australian cultural heritage material held by community groups across the country. It does this by providing grant funding; and intensive preservation and collection management training for first time CHG recipients in Canberra. The CHG program is administered by the National Library of Australia and also supported by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, the National Archives of Australia, the National Museum of Australia and the National Film and Sound Archive.
<i>Connoisseurship</i>	The ability and competence to pass critical judgements on items or collections of cultural heritage, based on knowledge of history, style, technology and comparative examples.
<i>Conservation</i>	All the processes involved in looking after an item or collection to retain its cultural significance.
<i>Contextual history</i>	Commissioned history prepared as part of a thematic study. The history explores the background, events, processes and influences on a subject or theme related to movable heritage collections. It also identifies themes which then provide a framework for the history and for analysing the scope, strengths and weaknesses of the collections.
<i>Criteria (or assessment criteria)</i>	A broad framework of cultural and natural values used in the significance assessment process to draw out or elucidate how and why the item or collection is significant.
<i>Cross-collection projects</i>	Collaborative projects operating across collection boundaries where collecting organisations work together to assess the significance of collections through thematic studies or regional surveys.
<i>Cultural significance</i>	All aspects of significance, also termed heritage significance, or cultural heritage values, especially used in the <i>Burra Charter</i> . This includes scientific and natural history collections.
<i>Deaccession</i>	To de-register an item from a collection. Deaccessioning is the process of de-registering an item from a collection for clearly stated reasons, and disposing of it in accordance with approved policies and procedures spelt out in the collection policy or in a separate deaccessioning policy.
<i>Distributed National Collection (DNC)</i>	The sum of all heritage collections of significance to the nation. ⁴⁹ These are held by a wide range of organisations and individuals, and found across the country.
<i>Documentation</i>	The process of record keeping for each item in a collection. Documentation includes registration, cataloguing and research notes.
<i>Domain</i>	Field of interest within a broader sector. The collections sector includes four major domains — archives, galleries, libraries and museums.
<i>Fabric</i>	Physical material of an item or collection.
<i>Gallery</i>	A museum of art. See also 'Museum' on page 63.
<i>Herbarium</i>	A collection of preserved plant specimens arranged according to a classification system, and retained for research and identification of plant taxa.
<i>Heritage collections</i>	Cultural heritage collections and items in the custody of a wide range of organisations and individuals, including governments and the private, community and non-government sector. These collections include historic, artistic and ethnographic objects, documents, images, natural history and geological specimens, and archaeological collections.
<i>Heritage Collections Council (HCC)</i>	Established from 1996 to 2001 by the Cultural Ministers Council, and responsible for the coordination of a national conservation strategy for preventive conservation, and the development of the former Australian Museums On-Line, predecessor to CAN.
<i>Historic themes</i>	Often derived from a contextual history, historic themes identify the main activities, processes or subjects that have shaped the history of a region or industry. They provide a framework for analysing collections and movable heritage, and help to identify significant objects and the strengths and weaknesses of collections.
<i>In situ</i>	Latin for 'in place'. Refers to items or collections (or 'ensembles') which remain in their original context of use or discovery.

<i>Interpretation</i>	All the ways of presenting the significance of an item or collection, from simple object labels to exhibitions, education programs and web-based resources.
<i>Library</i>	A collection of information, sources, resources, and services, and the structure in which it is housed: it can be owned, organised and maintained by a public body, an institution, or a private individual. The term 'library' can both mean the collection and the building that houses it.
<i>Movable cultural heritage</i>	Any reasonably portable item or collection of historic, aesthetic, scientific or social significance.
<i>Museum</i>	A non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment. ⁵⁰
<i>Nomenclature</i>	The naming of objects, items or organisms according to accepted rules.
<i>Preservation</i>	All actions taken to retard deterioration of or prevent damage to cultural material. Preservation involves controlling the environment and conditions of use, and may include treatment to maintain an object, as nearly as possible, in an unchanging state. Preservation also includes activities taken to prevent or delay material becoming damaged i.e. preventive conservation.
<i>Provenance</i>	The documented chain of ownership of an item or collection, or more broadly the life history of an item including previous owners, origin, and context of use.
<i>Reconstruction</i>	Actions taken to recreate, in whole or part, cultural material, including movable heritage items, by the introduction of new or old materials into the fabric.
<i>Regional survey</i>	A survey and assessment of heritage items designed to review the scope, strengths and weaknesses of collections within a region and assess the significance of the most important items. Themes are used to see how effectively the collections represent and interpret the history and heritage of the region. Results assist strategic planning, co-ordinated collecting and priorities for conservation and access.
<i>Registration</i>	The process of entering an item into the recording systems of a collecting organisation, by assigning a unique number, physically numbering the item, recording that number in a register and noting brief details of the item and its acquisition. In museums, registration is the first step in documentation, preceding cataloguing.
<i>Restoration</i>	Actions taken to modify the existing material and structure of an item to represent a known earlier state.
<i>Risk assessment</i>	As it applies to cultural material, risk management is concerned with the identification, analysis, evaluation and assessment of threats to items or collections from natural or human causes (for example from fire, flood and earthquake to conflict, theft, vandalism, and neglect). Risk management aims to minimise such threats through preventive strategies and actions so that overarching business objectives can be achieved. Significance statements for items and collections provide the key input for setting priorities for risk assessment, mitigation and review.
<i>Significance</i>	The meaning and values of an item or collection, or what makes it important. Significance is the historic, aesthetic, scientific and social values that an item or collection has for past, present and future generations.
<i>Significance assessment</i>	The process of studying and understanding the meanings and values of an item or collection, enabling sound and reasoned statements and judgements about the importance of items and collections, and their meanings for communities. The outcomes of a significance assessment should guide decisions made about the management of an item or collection into the future.
<i>Species</i>	The smallest unit of taxonomic classification, a species consists of individuals capable of interbreeding and producing fertile offspring.
<i>Statement of significance</i>	A reasoned, readable summary of the meaning, values and importance of an item or collection. A statement of significance makes the importance of items and collections accessible to a wide audience.
<i>Sustainability</i>	A state or situation that meets 'the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.' ⁵¹ It has been suggested that the three traditional 'pillars' of sustainability, economy, environment and society, be augmented by culture as a fourth pillar. ⁵²

Taxon (plural taxa)

Taxonomic group of any rank, such as a species, genus, family or class; an organism contained in such a group.

Taxonomy

The theory and practice of describing, naming and classifying organisms; or classification by tightly defined categories of material culture.

Thematic framework

Set of themes and sub themes relating to a subject or activity that provide a framework for analysing heritage items. It is used in a thematic study to aid critical analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of collections. The thematic framework may be derived from the contextual history, a heritage study where the subject is a regional survey, or from state or national frameworks developed by heritage agencies.

Thematic study

Survey of heritage items related to a particular theme or subject, designed to develop an understanding of the significant items, collections or heritage places associated with the theme. A thematic study establishes the significance of key items, identifies priorities for conservation action and strategic planning, and helps to improve access and interpretation.

Threshold

Point at which an item is either included or excluded from listing on a heritage register, based on assessment of its significance. Thresholds may be set by inclusion and exclusion guidelines for each criterion. The concept has evolved from heritage place assessment.

Type specimen

A designated specimen of a taxon to which its name is permanently attached, and on which the description that satisfies the requirements of valid publication is based.

Vernacular

Traditional cultural expression, unschooled.

Acronyms

AIATSIS

Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

AMOL

Former Australian Museums (and Galleries) On-Line
Now see Collections Australia Network, CAN, at <<http://www.collectionsaustralia.net>>

ANMM

Australian National Maritime Museum

ANU

Australian National University

Australia ICOMOS

Australian National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites

CAN

Collections Australia Network

CCA

Collections Council of Australia

DNC

Distributed National Collection

HCC

Heritage Collections Council

ICOM

International Council of Museums

ICOMOS

International Council on Monuments and Sites

NGA

National Gallery of Australia

PMCH

Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage

TMAG

Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery

UNESCO

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation