

# **DOCUMENTING MULTICULTURAL HERITAGE**



**Documenting the Migration Heritage of Wollongong  
Guidelines from  
Multicultural Documentary Heritage Workshop  
9-10 June 2004  
National Library of Australia Canberra**

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## **Forward**

It is with great pleasure that I introduce you to this new and comprehensive resource to assist to record and preserve heritage records.

This information was compiled by Fidelia Pontarolo who is a member of the Illawarra Migration Heritage Project after she attended a workshop for multicultural communities at the National Library in Canberra in June 2004. The workshop was organised in collaboration with the National Archives of Australia as part of the Library's Multicultural Documentary Heritage Project.

Fidelia has spent hours transcribing notes and collating handouts in order to make the material accessible and easy to go through by people and community groups who are interested in preserving heritage records. The dissemination of this material is an important step for the Illawarra's multicultural community as the preservation of the records of migrants to the area will ensure that the memory of the many thousands of people who settled here are not forgotten.

This document is also an important resource for the Migration Heritage Project, as it will help the committee to further its aims of defining, recording, protecting and promoting migration heritage in the Illawarra.

We hope that you will find this resource helpful and encourage you to implement some of the processes and share this knowledge widely within your group or community.

Franca Facci  
Chairperson

## Introduction

A Multicultural Documentary Heritage Workshop was convened by the National Library in Canberra in June 2004. These notes have been taken from books, handouts and other information collected at the workshop. Wherever possible, references are provided so that you may access fully the information available.

Collecting, preserving and conserving is what it is all about, and there are professional organisations and people who do this for a living, so what about the rest of us who are committed to preserving our history in our own communities, yet don't have the training or expertise. This handout has been put together to give you some background knowledge of what is required when you start your collection. Some notes have been provided by the presenters at the workshop, whilst other notes were taken by a 'novice' who attended the workshop. What this 'novice' learnt is that once you have an idea of the minimum requirements to collecting and preserving your collection, you discover there is much more to learn. But there is an abundant amount of information to help you particularly on the internet.

The first place to start is the "Preserving Australia's Multicultural Documentary Heritage" Starter kit available from the National Library of Australia ([www.nla.gov.au](http://www.nla.gov.au)). This publication will lead you to many other areas where information is available including other websites. Some of the information contained in the Starter Kit was presented in the workshop and a small amount is included in this handout.

The following is a list of topics and the presenters at the workshop:

- Significance session with Roslyn Russell
- Preservation session with Tamara Lavrencic
- Setting up and managing an archive with Ian Batterham and Emma Jolley
- Family migration and naturalisation papers in the National Archives' database with Kerry Jeffrey and David Bell
- Estonian Archives in Australia – case study with Maie Barrow
- Italian Historical Society – case study with Laura Mecca
- How to care for your collection National Library of Australia Preservation Services Branch
- Digitisation with Erica Ryan
- Oral history & folklore with Dianne Dahlitz
- Community Heritage Grants Program with Ralph Sanderson
- Australian Museums & Galleries Online (AMOL) with Genevieve Thompson

There are many things to be learnt regarding collections but technical aspects aside, remember that when you are collecting you must:

- ✓ Preserve it
- ✓ Make it accessible to all
- ✓ Grow it
- ✓ Make it community owned done by community work and not owned by an individual

Websites and organisations:

National Library of Australia <http://www.nla.gov.au>

National Archives of Australia <http://www.naa.gov.au>

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## **SIGNIFICANCE**

Significance helps you look at photographs, books, tapes, documents etc and ask what is the story about this? Because without the story it means nothing.

Significance is basically listing all the reasons why the object is important to an individual, group or organisation.

*The process of identification/listing helps you assess the significance the heritage objects and collections in your care has for past, present and future generations.<sup>1</sup>*

It's not just about the materials used to make it or how the object looks. It's about all the things that make up the object's meaning, including its context, history, uses and its social and spiritual values.

*When you consider this information you can draw informed conclusions about why an object is significant. Significance is not fixed – it may increase or diminish over time.<sup>1</sup>*

Why do we need to work out significance? Because once you understand the meaning and importance of an object or collection you can then make the best decision about conservation and management of the objects.

Who should do it? Museum staff would obviously do this type of work but it is not confined to them. A volunteer working in a community-based project is also an integral part of the significance determination process. Whoever is involved in working out the significance, where objects have a social or spiritual significance to specific communities or individuals you must consult them and document their reasons why the object or objects are important to them and their points of view must be reflected in the statement of significance. *Wherever possible, you should let the donor or the community have the opportunity to describe, in their own words, why the object is important to them.<sup>1</sup>*

The following information on the process and criteria and provenance has been extracted from the source document *Significance: A Guide to Assessing the Significance of Cultural Heritage Objects and Collections*. Heritage Collections Council.

### **The Process**

Significance Assessment involves three simple tasks:

1. analysing the object
2. understanding its history and context; and
3. identifying its value for communities.

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<sup>1</sup> *Significance: A Guide to Assessing the Significance of Cultural Heritage Objects and Collections*. Heritage Collections Council. Website: <http://www.dcita.gov.au>

The process allows you to define the meaning and value of an object and establish its significance in relation to other objects. It helps you demonstrate why an object is sufficiently important to be in a collection.

The process involves considering significance against a standard set of assessment criteria, relevant to the whole spectrum of museum collections in Australia.

Using consistent and agreed set of criteria facilitates more accurate analysis and helps you tease out the unique characteristics and meanings of each object or collection.

Not all objects are significant, or sufficiently significant to merit inclusion in museum collections. Significance assessment can also provide well-reasoned arguments for declining a donation or deaccessioning an object.

### **The Criteria**

There are 4 primary criteria applied when assessing significance:

1. Historic Significance
2. Aesthetic Significance
3. Scientific Significance
4. Social or Spiritual Significance

Not all 4 criteria need to apply.

Five Comparative criteria evaluate the degree of significance. These are modifiers of the main criteria:

1. Provenance
2. Representativeness
3. Rarity
4. Condition, completeness or intactness and integrity
5. Interpretive potential

You should consider all criteria when assessing significance. However, it is not necessary to find evidence of all criteria to justify an object's significance. Indeed, an object may still be highly significant if only one or two criteria apply.

### **Historic Significance**

An object or collection may be historically significant for its association with people, events, places and themes. This is the most common category of significance in historical collections. Historically significant objects range from those associated with famous people and important events, to objects of daily life used by ordinary people. They include objects that are typical of particular activities, industries or ways of living. Historically significant items may be mass produced, unique, precious or handmade.

## **Aesthetic Significance**

An object may be aesthetically significant for its craftsmanship, style, technical excellence, beauty, demonstration of skill and quality of design and execution. It might include innovative or traditional objects from Indigenous or folk cultures or high art. Aesthetically significant objects may be unique or mass produced.

## **Scientific or Research Significance**

An object or collection may have research significance if it has major potential for further scientific examination or study. An object may be of scientific value if it demonstrates the documented distribution, range, variation or habitat of a taxon or taxonomic category, such as species or genus. Archaeological artefacts and collections may have research significance if they are provenanced, and were recovered from a documented context, and if they represent aspects of history that are not well reflected in other sources. This criterion tends to apply chiefly to biological, geological and archaeological material, but may also apply to documentary collections. All biological collections of wild plants or animals, providing they have some data about their provenance, are of some real or potential scientific value, since they contribute to an overall picture of the species, an ecological community, or area of biota of particular locality. Note that objects significant to the history of science or technology should be assessed under the criterion of historical significance, not scientific significance.

## **The Significance of Archives**

It is important that archival collections maintain the series order in which they were created and used. The original placement of documents next to, inside of or underneath other documents can be meaningful in itself, and such relationships must be maintained. If an archival collection has already been disturbed by re-boxing, or if it has been rescued from the dump in a disordered condition, its significance is impaired, if not necessarily lost.

## **Social or Spiritual Significance**

Objects have social significance if they are held in community esteem. This may be demonstrated by social, spiritual, or cultural expressions that provide evidence of a community's strong affection for an object or collection, and of how it contributes to that community's identity and social cohesion. This evidence can usually be found by consulting people and communities, but it sometimes becomes apparent only when the object is threatened in some way. For example, the social significance of an object is often demonstrated through public debate about its location, conservation or interpretation. Objects may acquire social value with the passage of time and through particular events or activities that demonstrate present-day community esteem.

Some objects may have intrinsic spiritual qualities for particular groups of people and belief systems, and are referred to as sacred objects. Social significance is only for living contemporary value, if the value has ceased to exist, it becomes historical significance. For further discussion of social significance see What is Social Value, Chris Johnston, Australian Heritage Commission, 1992.

### **Provenance**

Provenance means the chain of ownership and context of use of an object. Knowing this history enables a more precise assessment. Provenance is central to establishing historic and scientific significance. An object may be significant because its provenance – a documented history of its existence, ownership and use – gives it a context in society at large or in the natural world, or in the more personal world of a known individual. Provenance has very particular meanings in some collection areas. For example art museums and collectors prefer a complete line of ownership of a work of art, from the time it leaves the artist's studio to its latest appearance in the saleroom. Artworks of doubtful or incomplete provenance have less value than those with a clear sequence of owners. Archaeological material should desirably be provenanced to a particular site, and to an exact stratum and location within that site. Archaeological material removed from a site without having had its provenance recorded has little value, unless it has other significance, such as aesthetic. Even then, an object whose archaeological provenance is unknown is diminished in value in the same way as an artwork of doubtful provenance. Archival collections take provenance of a record as a basic organising principle. A record forms part of a series created by a specific agency or individual, and must remain in its original place within the series to maintain its specific integrity, and the integrity of the series and archive as a whole.

### **Representativeness**

An object may be significant because it represents a particular category of object, or activity, way of life or historical theme.

### **Rarity**

An object may be significant as a rare, unusual or particularly fine example of its type. It is possible for an object's significance to be rated as both rare and representative.

### **Condition, Intactness and Integrity**

An object may be significant because it is unusually complete, or in sound, original condition. Objects with these characteristics are said to have integrity. Changes and adaptations made in the working life of an object do not necessarily diminish significance, and in fact are also recognised as an integral part of the object and its history.

## Interpretive Potential

Objects and collections may be significant for their capacity to interpret and demonstrate aspects of experience, historical themes, people and activities. In the hands of a skilled museum worker, most objects have potential to tell their story, and their significance is best described by reference to one or more of the primary criteria. However, there are some circumstances where interpretive potential is a major attribute of an object or collection, or may indeed be the only criterion for which the object is significant. To some extent, interpretive potential represents the value or utility the object has for a museum as a focus for interpretive and educational programs. It may also be significant for its links to particular collection themes, histories, or ways of seeing the collection. Some objects may have very limited significance under the primary criteria, but they may still have some degree of significance for museums for their ability to interpret and illustrate particular themes, people or ideas. This is the case for many humble, unprovenanced social history objects, where the object stands for, or is used as a link to, wider themes or issues. Interpretive potential can be particularly important where certain aspects of history and experience are not well represented in museum collections. Some people's lives are not materially rich or well expressed in the material culture record. In museums their lives or experience may be interpreted through generic objects that have interpretive potential but are otherwise of limited significance.

## Step-by-Step Significant Assessment

1. **Compile a folder containing all available details about an object and its history.** This may include the acquisition date, donor details, notes made when the object was acquired, photos, copies of reference material and notes on related objects in the collection.
2. **Research the history and provenance of an object.** Including photos of it in use, notes about the owner or place where it was used, when it was made or purchased, and general history.
3. **Talk with donors, owners, users and relevant community associations.** To ensure the context, provenance and potential social values of the object are fully understood. Encourage the donor to write notes and describe the history and meaning of the object and when it was in use. Consult other people in the community who may have information about the object or expert knowledge of similar items, and of the associated industry or trade.
4. **Understand the context of the object.** Consider its relationship to other objects, where it was used, the locality and how it relates to the history and geography of the area. Whenever possible, record the object or collection in its context of use and its original location.

5. **Analyse and record the fabric of the object.** Document how an object works, what it is made of, its manufacture, patterns of wear, repairs and adaptations. Record the object's condition. (This step may be part of your cataloguing procedures).
6. **Consider comparative examples of similar objects.** Check to see if AMOL lists other similar or related objects. Check reference books and talk with colleagues and other museums with related collections. Judge whether the item is common or rare, in good condition or intact, and if it is well-provenanced and documented by comparison to similar items in other museums.
7. **Assess the significance against the main criteria** – historic, aesthetic, scientific and social values. Determine the degree of significance by assessing against the comparative criteria – provenance, rarity, representativeness, condition and integrity, and interpretive potential. The criteria will help you analyse and define the object's significance.
8. **Write succinct statement of significance** encapsulating the object's values and meaning. Do not just say the object is significant – explain why it is significant and what it means.

(See source document for a case study and step-by-step example)

### **Significant Assessment Check List**

- ÿ Have you compiled a folder with details of the object?
- ÿ Have you properly researched the history and provenance of the object?
- ÿ Have you talked with donors, owners, users and community associations about their knowledge of, and feelings about, the object?
- ÿ Do you understand the historical context of the object?
- ÿ Have you analysed how the object works? What is it made of, and what are its patterns of wear, repairs and adaptations? Have you recorded these?
- ÿ Have you compared the object with similar objects?
- ÿ Have you assessed the object's significance against the criteria?
- ÿ Finally, have you written a succinct state of significance for the object?

Source: *Significance: A Guide to Assessing the Significance of Cultural Heritage Objects and Collections*. Heritage Collections Council. Website: <http://www.dcita.gov.au>

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## **PRESERVATION**

*The following notes are reproduced from the Preservation Session of the Multicultural Documentary Heritage Workshop presented by Tamara Lavrencic, Collections Manager, Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales.*

### **Definition**

All actions taken to slow deterioration of, or prevent damage to, cultural material. Preservation involves controlling the environment and conditions of use, and may include treatment in order to maintain an object in an unchanging state. In the case of archival material, moving image and sound, this may transfer to another medium.

*[Heritage Collections Council: recollections, Glossary, p26]*

### **Paper**

#### **What are the main threats to records?**

- The nature of the materials that they are made from
- The environment in which they are kept
- The way the material is handled
- Natural and man-made disasters

#### **What are the most common types of damage?**

Paper is vulnerable to physical damage and to the damage caused by chemical deterioration.

Physical damage includes problems such as:

- Tears
- Paper losses
- Dog-eared corners
- Dents and punctures
- Creases and folds – paper can split along creases and folds if the paper is brittle or it is folded and unfolded repeatedly.
- Insect attack – paper, sizes and glues are good food sources for some insects. Mice and rats also eat paper.
- Abrasion and general wear and tear from excessive or careless use
- Distortions caused by fluctuations and extremes of relative humidity and temperature in storage and display environments.

Damage from chemical deterioration includes:

- Faded colours and discoloured paper – from exposure to UV radiation and high lighting levels
- Faded colours and discoloured paper – from age of the item itself or the items with which it comes in contact
- Mould attack – mould digests the materials it grows on

- Brittle paper – from the acids produced by the paper or the items with which it comes in contact
- Damage from pollutants

## Recognising the Problems

Some of the common forms of damage and deterioration in flat paper items are listed below. If the damage or deterioration is severe, isolate the item and get advice from a conservator.

Physical damage such as tears and losses can occur easily when items are handled roughly or stored in crowded situations. Physical damage can also include abrasion, chipped corners, dents and punctures. Paper with mechanical damage should be handled carefully to avoid making the damage worse.

Creases and folds can disfigure and weaken paper. Old or brittle material is especially vulnerable because it can split and tear easily.

## Foxing

Foxing is the name given to the small, brown spots that appear in a specific area of the paper or over an entire surface. Foxing is usually caused by mould attack, brought on by a combination of high humidity, temperature and acidity. Other brown spots in the paper can be caused by inherent impurities such as tiny metal particles.

Mould attack can take other forms, and nearly always leaves stains and weakens the paper.



Heavy foxing disfigured this watercolour. The watercolour was treated and the foxing was reduced, but not fully removed.

*Photograph courtesy of Artlab Australia, reproduced with permission of the Art Gallery of South Australia*

## Soiling and Staining

Soiling and staining can cause considerable damage to paper through:

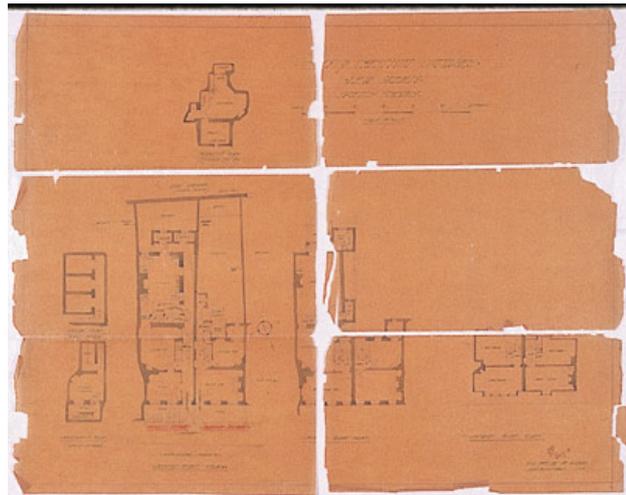
- dirt particles, which are often acidic. These can be caught between the paper fibres, weakening and discolouring the paper, and creating a foothold for insects or mould; and
- self-adhesive sticky tapes, rusting clips and staples, and poor-quality adhesives. They can stain, cause severe damage and be extremely difficult to remove.

## Discolouration

Discolouration, usually brown or yellow distributed evenly or unevenly throughout the paper, is a sign of deterioration that is generally caused by acidity and/or light damage to the paper. In artwork, the discolouration often appears worse in the margins or on the reverse side, where the paper has been in direct contact with an acidic mount or other poor-quality materials. This discolouration is often referred to as 'mat burn'.

## Brittle Paper

Brittle paper, which has become brown and is usually made of poor-quality or impermanent materials such as old newspaper, will deteriorate rapidly when exposed to light for lengthy periods and/or left in contact with other acidic material. Such paper can be extremely fragile and may disintegrate with unsupported movement or handling.



Brittleness has caused this plan to split along the folds.  
*Photograph courtesy of Vicki Humphrey*

## Common causes of damage

All the most common types of damage are caused by:

- poor handling;
- poor storage methods;
- inappropriate display methods;
- wear and tear from repeated use;
- chemical changes in the paper;
- chemical changes caused by chemicals that are present in the materials in contact with the paper or that are present as pollutants in the atmosphere; and
- combinations of any or all of the above.

A great deal of damage to paper can be prevented by care and pre-planning your handling, storage and display of flat paper items.

## Photographs

Photographs can be created from a range of different materials, but they have three layers in common:

- a support, which can be made from glass, plastic film, paper, or resin-coated paper.

- is a binder or emulsion layer, most commonly gelatine, but also albumen or collodion, which holds the image forming material.
- the image forming material which is made of silver, colour dyes or pigment particles.

### What are the most common types of damage?

Probably the most obvious damage you will see is physical damage. This includes problems such as:

- tears;
- creases. These almost always cause tiny splits or fractures in the emulsion;
- dog-eared corners. These also cause tiny splits or fractures in the emulsion layer;
- insect attack. The materials used to make photographic emulsions are a good food source for some insects. Insects, mice and rats will also eat the paper base of photographs;
- abrasion and scratching. Photographic emulsions are made from materials such as gelatine and albumen—egg white. These materials form very smooth films, which are very easily scratched when rubbing against other photographs and rough paper surfaces such as album pages;
- indentations in the photograph where labels have been written or typed directly onto the back of the photograph. If excessive pressure has been applied, the emulsion can be fractured; and
- emulsion peeling away from the paper base.



Silverfish attack to emulsion and cardboard mount.  
*Photograph courtesy of Artlab Australia, reproduced with permission of Mortlock Library, the State Library of South Australia*



This photograph is severely damaged with a large tear and losses.  
*Photograph courtesy of Monique Godelle*

The other most obvious damage is the result of chemical deterioration:

- fading of the photographic image, accompanied by loss of detail;
- yellowing of the image. In many historic black and white photographic processes, the image becomes warmer in tone and changes from blacks, whites and greys to browns and yellows;
- colour change and fading of colour prints, negatives and slides. Colour prints are most susceptible to this type of damage;
- silver mirroring—silvering out—in shadow areas. This is such a common symptom that nearly all 19th century gelatine developing-out prints are affected;
- staining. Stains can develop on photographs. Some come from within the photographs and others from the materials that are in contact with the photographs, such as album pages and sticky tape; and
- photographs which have broken or fractured emulsion are more susceptible to chemical deterioration.

In summary, the main threats to records relate to:

- The nature of the materials that they are made from
- The environment in which they are kept
- The way the material is handled
- Natural and man-made disasters

### **What can you do to minimise damage to your records?**

- Handle objects with clean dry hands.
- Make copies of very fragile and/or frequently used materials.
- Make copies of newspaper clippings and faxed records on permanent paper.
- Handle or display important documents in protective mounts and folders.
- Do not 'mend' documents.
- If it is necessary to annotate documents or photographic prints, use a soft (B) pencil
- Do not use metal pins, staples, paper clips or sticky tape.
- Check your collection of negatives and audiovisual material for vinegar syndrome.
- Keep storage areas clean; vacuum regularly.
- Avoid exposure to direct sunlight.
- Regularly inspect storage areas to prevent insect or animal infestation.
- Avoid extremes of temperature and humidity. [National Library of Australia: Preserving Australia's Multicultural Documentary Heritage: A Starter Kit]

## CONSERVATION

*Information included in this section is available from the National Archives of Australia and the Australian Museums Online (AMOL) websites. Additional notes taken from Setting Up and Managing an Archive Presentation by Staff from the National Archives of Australia at the Multicultural Documentary Heritage Workshop and from the Preservation Branch Staff at the National Library of Australia.*

The conservation of objects is a skilled task based on the structural and chemical knowledge of the materials involved and an understanding of the nature and significance of each object. Conservation treatment of these objects should therefore be carried out by, or with the advice of, a qualified conservator.

The National Library of Australia website contains comprehensive Archives Advice.

Check in the Yellow Pages under Art Restoration & Conservation or Antiques-Reproductions and/or Restorations for private conservators.

### Definition

Specific practices taken to slow deterioration and prolong the life of an object by directly intervening in its physical or chemical make-up. Examples would be repairing damaged bindings or removing a photographic print from cardboard backing.

*[FLA: International Preservation Issues, Number 1]*

### Paper

Reflex paper that you can buy at most stationers and stores is okay. Reflex archival paper is the next step up. The term archival quality paper is sometimes misleading when it is used as a marketing term. The best type of paper is acid free and has alkaline buffer. Look for the symbol that looks like the number 8 lying on its side. The National Archives of Australia (NAA) actually has its own brand and they test papers and these have the NAA logo on it.

The main problem with paper is handling, e.g., grease from hands, tearing, creasing and insects include mice and rats.

Store in protective enclosures such as:

- A view book (commonly available in most newsagents (but not PVC plastic).
- Encapsulate it in plastic (mylar).
- Large sizes like maps, store flat, if not roll over a large tube (acid free) with a roll of paper outside tied with cotton tape.

## **Thermal Faxes**

Print will fade with time until it completely disappears. There is nothing you can do to stop this process. Just make sure you make a copy of the document before the text disappears.

## **Ink**

Iron Gall Ink which was used back in the early part of last century causes the letters to dropout and the ink actually eats through the paper. This process can not be stopped so therefore the document should be copied before this occurs to preserve it.

Use Permanent Pen when signing documents that are going to be included in an archive, otherwise fading will occur.

## **Photographs and Negatives**

Photographs are difficult to preserve. Negatives can get something called 'vinegar' syndrome, because it smells like vinegar when they are degrading. You can't stop this but you can slow it down by storing them in very cold conditions, but you do need to copy them as deterioration from vinegar syndrome is sudden and rapid. 1930-1970 could be prone to vinegar syndrome.

Colour photographs and negatives have a problem with dyes fading. They do all fade (yellow fades first). Good storage will help, but won't stop it.

Make sure you copy (scan, photocopy, whatever method you can use) to preserve them as well.

## **Magnetic Photo Albums**

The adhesive degrades and gives off gases which fades the photographs. Avoid these types of albums at all costs. Companies sell photo archival systems.

## **Handling Paper and Photographs**

Use white gloves when handling photographs or negatives but generally with paper just clean dry hands because wearing gloves may actually cause you not to get a proper grip on the paper.

## **Plastic Protectors**

For brittle items place them in polyester plastic sleeves (trade names include Mylar and Melinex). Look for chemical stability (inert) that won't break down and attack the paper. The following is a definition of the difference types of plastics [Source: IFLA, Principles for the Care and Handling of Library Materials S&M Supply Company, Conservation & Archival Materials Catalogue]:

### **Polyester**

The common name for the plastic polyethylene terephthalate. Its characteristics include transparency, lack of colour, high tensile strength and chemical stability. Used in a sheet or film form to make folders, encapsulations, book jackets and adhesive tapes. Trade names include Mylar and Melinex.

### **Polyethylene**

In its purest form, a chemically stable plastic material. Used in film form to make sleeves for photographic material and other uses. A cheaper alternative to polyester film.

### **Polypropylene**

In its purest form, a chemically stable plastic material. Used in film form to make sleeves for photographic material and other uses.

### **Polyvinylchloride**

Plastic usually abbreviated as PVC, or sometimes 'vinyl'. Not as chemically stable as the plastics mentioned above. It can emit acidic components which damage paper and photographs. Added chemicals called plasticisers are also used to make PVC more flexible. These can also cause damage.

### **Chemical Stability (Inert)**

Not easily decomposed or otherwise modified chemically. This is a desirable characteristic for materials used in preservation, since it suggests an ability to resist chemical degradation, such as paper embrittlement, over time and/or exposure to varying conditions during use or storage.

### **Acid Migration**

The transfer of acid from an acidic material to a less acidic or pH neutral material. This may occur directly, when the two materials are in intimate contact. For instance, from boards, endpapers, and protective tissues, to the less acidic paper of the text.

Archival plastics (and most archival storage materials) are very expensive. If you can't afford to buy the expensive plastic paper protectors, then the document protectors that you buy from stationers are okay to use just make sure they are 'copysafe'. Oven bags can be used but they only provide limited protection.

Mylar plastic pockets are the best to use, but are very expensive.

### **CDs, DVDs, Audio and Video Tapes**

All have a limited archival life – on average 10 years.

CDs, particularly some of the earlier discs, are becoming damaged from CD rot and this renders them unplayable. All CDs and DVDs should be handled with care as they are a lot more fragile than people think. The most obvious sign of rot occurs when the CD/DVD gets rust patches on them. Rot will also cause static-like background noise, heard first on tracks that are closer to the end of the disc. Discs should be stored vertically and handled by the edges.

Audio and Video Tapes should be stored in a cool dry place.

It is a good idea to 'migrate' the information onto a new disc or media as the original disc/tape gets close to the 10 year mark. But just be aware, that 10 years into the future will a machine still be available to play it on as technology advances so does storage media change. What needs to be done is to preserve it the best you can by storing them under the best conditions, copy it (by digitising) then transferring it to the media, i.e.:

Preserve - digitise - migrate

Please refer to Archive Advice 5 and 6 from the National Library of Australia for further information.

### **Lamination**

Don't Laminate. Once a product is laminated it can not be undone. Avoid it at all cost.

### **Reducing Damage**

Care in handling of materials reduces damage and increases preservation:

- Remove metal paper clips, pins, staples and replace with plastic paper clips.
- Segregate newspapers from other papers by placing in plastic sheets (copysafe) when storing with other paper.

- Store photographs in archival plastic sleeves specially for photographs (Bantex is one brand) then place into polypropylene binders. Ordinary ring binders are okay providing the photographs are stored in polypropylene pockets. Okay to store upright.
- Slide in photographs albums are okay, provided the plastic is polypropylene.
- Instead of sticky tape use special archival tape such as Archival Aids Document Repair Tape or Filmoplast P90, but be very careful because once you stick it on you can't take it off.
- Try to avoid glues, but UHU glue stick is okay to use but it does not last. This glue doesn't stain.
- Sandwich bags, oven bags, freezer bags (like you buy in supermarkets) are also useful means of storage and are a cheap alternative to the more expensive archival plastic storage.
- You can buy a document cleaning pad (don't use this over pencil or artworks) or you can use Staedler Mars Eraser on printed documents such as certificates or letters.
- Photo albums where the photographs are glued in make sure you use with interleaving acid free tissue between pages.
- When using mounting corners to store photographs in albums use archival quality corners. Use the larger size corners as the small corners tend to cause the corners of the photographs to tear over time.

## **Materials for Preservation and Conservation**

### **Boxes and Folders**

Archive boxes can be bought from stores but just because they say archive does not necessarily mean they are acid free. You can buy acid free boxes from archival stationers or you can also buy boards to make boxes and folders etc to any size you require.

Multi-use board can be used to make up boxes for storage. This board is available from archival stationers. It is acid free.

Mount Board can be used for artwork.

Library board is good for making folders and wallets for storage

Grey/White board can be used for making boxes, the white side is the acid free side.

Phase box: If an item needs preservation step 1 is to box the items to hold them until they can be treated.

Polypropylene plastic boxes and wallets can also be used for storage.

When making boxes, folders, wallets etc use a bone folder to score a line to mark fold lines then bend them into shape. Bone folder can be bought from stationers but another similar instrument can be used for the same purpose.

If you can't afford to buy the boards to make acid free boxes or you can't afford acid free archival boxes then use storage boxes but line them with acid free paper and store the documents in acid free folders (manila folders if you can't acid free) so that the documents don't touch the sides of the box.

If the box is not full, use something to fill up the space like bubble wrap so the papers don't fall down and this way they will remain straight.

## **Books**

Store books in an upright position or flat. Never pull them off the shelf from the top part of the spine, grip right around the spine with your hand.

If the book is damaged, tie up with white library cotton tape or store into an acid free box.

For support when using books, make a bean bag and fill  $\frac{3}{4}$  full with bean bag beans (size of bean bag depending on the size of the book). This also makes a for a good method of displaying books as it provides support for the spine of the book.

## **Textiles**

When handling textiles wear gloves (but not silk ones as you can't get a good grip). If not wash your hands every half hour and no hand cream.

Store textiles unfolded because folds will create weaknesses. If too big you can roll them up with an outer cover like a calico sheet that has been washed well and rinsed repeatedly so there is not soap residue. When you roll the textile roll it around a cylindrical tube (can be purchased from archive stationer), if not a post tube that has been covered with acid free paper. Place the rolled textile with the outer sheet cover into an acid free box that has side mounting that allows the tube to be store suspended so that it does not sit flat on the bottom of the box. Alternatively you can stand on a rod. It is important that it does not sit onto the surface because one side will be flat.

## **Checklist for Action**

### **Storage**

- ü Regularly inspect storage areas to prevent insect or animal infestation. If necessary, use pest strips to control insects, but do not let them touch your documents.
- ü Keep your storage room clean. Vacuum regularly.
- ü Wrap or box documents in alkaline materials (acid free).
- ü Avoid extremes of temperature.
- ü Avoid extremes of humidity.
- ü Avoid exposure to direct sunlight.

### **Handling and Display**

- ü Handle objects with clean dry hands.
- ü Make copies of very fragile materials.
- ü Handle or display original documents in protective mounts and folders.

### **Preservation**

- ü Do not mend objects
- ü If it is necessary to annotate documents, use only a soft pencil.
- ü Do not use metal pins, staples, paper clips or sticky tape

Remember do not laminate or mount anything  
and  
never do something that you can't undo

## **ARCHIVAL MATERIAL SUPPLIERS**

Zetta Florence Pty Ltd  
187 Gertrude Street  
Fitzroy Vic 3065  
Tel: (03) 9416 2236 1300 555 124  
[www.zettaflorence.com.au](http://www.zettaflorence.com.au)

Conservation Resources International (Aust)  
PO Box 210  
Enmore NSW 2042  
Tel: 1300 132 570  
Fax: 1300 132 571  
[www.conservationresources.com.au](http://www.conservationresources.com.au)

Albox Australia Pty Ltd  
56 North Terrace  
Kent Town SA 5067  
Tel: (08) 8362 4811 1300 555 717  
Fax: (08) 8362 4066  
[www.albox.com.au](http://www.albox.com.au)

## **WEBSITE LINKS FOR PRESERVATION**

<http://amol.org.au/recollections/>  
recollections is available online at the Australian Museums Online (AMOL) website. It gives preservation advice for a wide variety of materials. The AMOL website itself is also useful as a point of information about museum practices.

<http://www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/rkpubs/advices/index.html>  
Archives Advices are written by the National Archives of Australia to provide information for those who create government records. The long list of topics includes some basic preservation advice.

<http://www.aiccm.org.au>  
The AICCM is the professional body for conservation in Australia. This website includes a list of conservators in private practise and a number of information sheets under 'Caring for your Treasures'.

[http://www.preservation.gc.ca/index\\_e.asp](http://www.preservation.gc.ca/index_e.asp)  
'Preserving my Heritage', a website built by the Canadian Conservation Institute provides information on caring for a wide range of materials. It is primarily designed to address personal collections, so it provides non-technical information on care and handling of the materials.

[http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/publications/conservoogram/cons\\_toc.html](http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/publications/conservoogram/cons_toc.html)  
The National Parks Service in the USA has online information sheets called Conserve o grams. They are on a huge range of topics, designed for small museums. Some are quite technical, but they contain a wealth of information.

<http://palimpsest.stanford.edu>  
'Conservation Online' is a website by and for conservators. It has links to many articles on preservation related topics.

Apply for community heritage grant for preservation and conservation funding.

## **SETTING UP AND MANAGING AN ARCHIVE**

When accepting records, it is a long term responsibility and continually requires resources.

Document records from the time it comes into your care.

### **Collection Policy**

Have a collection policy that:

- Outlines overall policy
- What and what not to collect
- Govern access to the records.
- Who can view the records
- How they can be viewed and who can use it.

You must also determine what can be opened or do you need to close the records to the public.

Have a description standard for all records, so that they are all described the same.

### **Provenance**

Record the provenance of the record:

- Who created it.
- Order it was created and maintained.
- Records are kept separate and complete i.e., not mixed up with other peoples.
- Keep the records in original order, do not rearrange.

### **Control**

- Archivists control the records from time of custody until you leave and you handover
- Know exactly where everything is and exactly where it is located, e.g., Box 1 Shelf 2 or “Located in Front Office”.
- Physical – location where records kept to be suitable so as to preserve the records.
- Intellectual – description of the records. (Oztech (University of Melbourne) has software for recording or else contact National Archives of Australia.

## **Assessments Register**

To record when a group of records come into your care.

Unique number for each collection of records.

Information it should contain:

- Date Received
- Quantity e.g. 1 paper or 47 boxes etc
- Title e.g. Name or organisation or individual person who created the records.
- Record who, or which organisation gave you the records.
- Conditions of access
- Physical location of records

## **Physical Control**

Area is clean, cool, no water, dust and vacuum regularly and boxed in appropriate boxes or containers.

## **Intellectual Control**

Description – Who, When, What, Why

Written description for individual items (box list): Title, date range, box number, series number.

You can record your list of holdings on the web for free through the National Library of Australia (Register of Archives and Manuscripts (RAM)).

Australian Museums on Line (AMOL), will help you create a website for holdings.

Always look after records – respect them and the individuals who gave them to you. Be confident in your decision about what to collect and

Document

Document

Document

And Never to Anything to Your Records that Can't Easily Be Undone.

Australian Society of Archivists Website can also be useful resource for information.

## **Key Concepts**

*(Notes provided by the staff of the National Archives of Australia)*

### **Original Order**

The order in which records and archives are kept when in active use i.e. the order in which they were created, maintained or used. The principle of Original Order requires that the original order be preserved.

### **Provenance**

Used to describe who created the records and why. That is the organisation or person that created, received, accumulated and used the records in the conduct of their business. Identifying and documenting the provenance of records is an essential part of establishing their authenticity and integrity.

### **Where to go for Advice**

So where do you go for advice? There are various places you can contact for advice.

- The Australian Society of Archivists (<http://www.archivists.org.au>) or phone 1800 622 251 free call which will direct you to a contact in your state).
- The National Library of Australia, Manuscripts Section (phone 02 6262 1111)
- Archives Program, Australian National University, Dr Sigrid McCausland (email [Sigrid.McCausland@anu.edu.au](mailto:Sigrid.McCausland@anu.edu.au)).
- Emma Jolley at National Archives of Australia ([Emma.Jolley@naa.gov.au](mailto:Emma.Jolley@naa.gov.au)).

### **Published Sources**

Keeping Archives, second edition. Editor Judith Ellis, The Australian Society of Archivists, 1993. The third edition to be released shortly. This is an excellent basic manual for archives administration that gives solid practical advice.

### **Other Websites**

Look at the websites of other Archives. Many with their policies and some procedures publicly available. Some good examples are:

- Archives Program (Noel Butlin Archives Centre) at the Australian National University: [www.archives.anu.edu.au](http://www.archives.anu.edu.au)

- University of Melbourne Archives:  
<http://www.lib.unimelb.edu.au/collections/archives/>

Look at other websites that deal with archives such as:

- Register of Archives and Manuscripts: <http://www.nla.gov.au/raam>
- Australian Museum and Galleries online: <http://www.amol.org.au>

## CASE STUDIES

### **Estonian Archives**

By Maie Barrow

I am delighted to be here today. The preservation of the history of migrant communities in Australia has always been a passion of mine and I am glad to see so many people here who share this passion. Our story is important, not only to our own community but also to Australians as a whole since our story is part of the history of Australia. I commend the National Library for arranging this workshop and hope it will be the first of many.

It is a privilege to be the archivist for the Estonian community in Australia. I am the fourth and second longest serving archivist in 50 years of the existence of the archive. The second archivist, Dr Hugo Salasoo, worked for nearly 40 years to amass this important collection so I still have a long way to go to best that. The collection comprises a library, an archives and a museum as well as being a resource centre for information about Estonia and the Estonians.

I work with a wonderful group of volunteers and together we run the Archives one day a week. We come in many ages and with different skills and together we cope with the many challenges that come our way.

When the Council of Estonian Societies in Australia set up the Archives in 1952 they had modest aims – to preserve Estonian culture in Australia by collecting material, mainly literary, created by Estonians in Australia. Soon the Archives started collecting material from all over the world. Dr Salasoo was a respected scholar and people from all over the world started sending him material for safe keeping. An important part of its activities became “keeping the truth”, making sure that the communist regime in Estonia could not rewrite history.

Now 50 years later, the aims of the Archives have changed in a way its founders could not have foreseen. We still have a large collection of books, papers and objects but we have become the collectors of stories, stories about the lives of the Estonian people and families and organisations in Australia.

Some stories are long, some have only a few scraps of information, but putting them all together we write our story, the history of the Estonian people in Australia and with that a slice of Australian history too.

The stories are not all beautifully written or recorded memoirs although we do have some like that. Most stories are in bits, a certificate, some letters, a photograph, an old passport, perhaps a diary, a handful of earth taken at the moment of departure from their homeland, a scrapbook recording the journey to Australia and the early days here, a news clipping or an obituary from the

local Estonian paper. The story is there but the researcher needs to put it together.

For organisations – their story is written in a different way - the minutes or notes kept of a meeting, annual reports, photographs, anniversary albums, financial records, letters and programmes from functions, videos of activities and sound recordings and newspaper advertisements. Again the researcher can put the story together from all the separate bits.

As the years have passed some organisations have written their own histories for the 25<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> or even 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries. These books are very special because the story is there for all to read.

### **How do we get the material?**

I was lucky. When I became the archivist in 1994 there was already a large collection of material for me to work with. Beautifully recorded on catalogue cards but placed at random on shelves. The cards did not indicate where the item was! So we had to start from scratch.

My interest was in collecting the history of Estonians in Australia rather than having a large international collection. Estonia had regained its independence, we no longer had to be “freedom fighters” and protect the heritage of Estonia, they could do it very well themselves. We could concentrate on collecting and preserving our history here.

Material comes to us in many ways. Some people offer their papers, others send us information about prominent Estonians. When organisations close down some send us their records. Others feel that their records belong in Estonia. **I don't agree. It is our story, our history** and while I am happy to share it with archives in Estonia, the originals should remain here. Fortunately, I have a good relationship with museums and archives in Estonia and we can often resolve it so that we all benefit. Mostly just a list of what we hold is enough to enable access from Estonia when needed.

Sometimes people get in touch with me and arrange to hand over the records, others just leave them at Estonian House. Some even have been thrown over the fence in a plastic bag!!! So much for proper accessioning!

But you can't just sit back and wait for them to arrive, you have to go and search them out. Records are fragile things and easily lost, especially the records of organisations. Too often the President or Secretary takes them home, puts them on top of the wardrobe, or under the bed, or in the garage, all traditional places for storing archives and forgets about them. When they are no longer President, the records remain where they were. When they die or move house, their children, who often no longer speak their native language, clear out the house and throw the records away because they don't realise their value.

I seek out such records, I ask questions, I talk to committee members and offer to take the records for safe keeping.

### **What do we do with the records when we get them?**

We are a small community archive with very limited resources. We have a room, shelves, storage boxes and computers to record what we have. We keep it simple but archivally correct. We respect provenance and original order. There is no point in collecting material if you don't know what you have or you can't find it when you want it.

With individual people or families we put their records in a manilla folder, write their name on it and place the folder in an archive box. The boxes are labelled with the letters of the alphabet, my records are in the "B" box. If the collection is large, and we have some very large collections, then the person or family gets their own box or boxes. These boxes are stored in the alphabetic sequence to make them easy to find. These boxes are stored on different shelves to the records of organisations..

For organisations we keep the records of one separate from the others. Each organisation has a box or boxes and we arrange the material in series so that all the minute books are together, all the correspondence in chronological order, the photographs together and so on. For small organisations I arrange them first by city, Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth etc, then by organisation, then by type (minutes, correspondence etc) and place them in a box. The boxes are clearly labelled with name of city and organisation. This work is done in stages. We don't always get to the series level in one go. We start by sorting by city. Then when the box is full and a volunteer has some time, we sort by organisation. Later we may sort by series. It can be done in stages as time and resources permit, but you must always label the boxes accurately so you know what you have and where it is.

We have put all our newspapers, periodicals and research papers into the computer and are now entering the personal files. For personal files we use the Exell program based Register of Australian Archives and Manuscripts template that we got from the National Library. We have had to adapt it to our circumstances because not all the existing fields are relevant to us. When we have finished, we will give the NLA a copy so that they will know what we have. We will also send copies to Estonian libraries and archives. Then we will start the records of the organisations.

### **Promotion Of Your Archives**

At EAA we are firm believers in that we must become active participants in collecting the history of the Estonians in Australia and that we can not just sit and wait for it to come to us. So what do we do? We advertise our existence and our collection whenever and wherever we can.

- We write an annual report for the Estonian newspaper,
- we write articles about interesting collections or new additions,
- we have a webpage that is well visited and we get emails with queries from all over the world,
- we tell anyone who will listen about the Archives and how important they are to our community,

- we have film and video afternoons where we show some of the material in our collection. People love to see themselves when they were young and gorgeous. And you can charge an entrance fee and make money for your archive as well.
- I give talks about the Archives to Estonian community groups all over Australia when asked.

We have bought a display case for the foyer of Estonian House so that we can arrange regular exhibitions and last year we had an exhibition, "Happily Australian but Estonian Too" in the Migration Museum in Adelaide for 3 months.

Exhibitions and talks are a great way to get your message across. People say "I didn't know you were interested in diaries/ scrap books/ photographs of festivals" or "I have one of those, would you like to have it?". And so your collection grows.

But we don't just do it for the Estonian community, we hold open days during History Week and Archives and Records Week, we welcome visits from people of Estonian heritage who no longer speak the language, other archivists, historians or just people who have heard about Estonia. Since Tallinn, our capital, has been seen on TV we get visits from people who want to learn more about Estonia before they visit.

We often get visits from students of all ages, primary school children who want to do a project on Estonian food (I ask them to bring grandmother next time so she can translate the recipes) to nursing and social work students who interact with elderly Estonians and want to know something of their culture and background.

To me there is no point in having a great collection if no one uses it. I am very pleased that our collection is used for family research, by students of all ages for projects and by historians and writers writing the history of our people or organisations.

### **What about the money? Always an important question.**

We are funded by the Estonian community through the Council of Estonian Societies and the occasional donation from our users. We have been left money by people who value our work and we have been lucky to get two Community Heritage Grants from the Australian Government through the NLA.

Money is not always the main criteria for success, you need **commitment**. We are all volunteers and achieve much with a modest budget. We enjoy our work- it has become our passion and I warn you it will become so for you as well.

Our Archive is open on Wednesdays from 10am to 3pm and we would be very happy if you paid us a visit when you are in Sydney. If that is not possible, we

are happy to share our knowledge and experience with you. Just write to us or send us an email.

I feel very privileged to be one of the collectors and keepers of the history of the Estonians in Australia and as you may have guessed, I am very proud of the Estonian Archives in Australia.

Please look at our website [www.eesti.org.au](http://www.eesti.org.au).

I have a flyer here which tells you about our Archives and gives you our contact details. Please come and talk to me during the day if you feel I can help you or advise you in any way.

Thank you for listening to me today.

## **Italian Historical Society – CO.AS.IT**

A Case Study  
Multicultural Heritage Workshop  
National Library of Australia, Canberra  
9-10 June 2004

In my talk I will present the history and work of the Italian Historical Society which is located in the heart of Italian Carlton, in Melbourne.

The story of Italian migration to Australia is very much part of Australian history and the heritage of migrants is also the heritage of all Australians. It is important that their stories be handed down and recorded in the way the migrants themselves want them to be told and preserved.

The narration of personal experiences, the photographs treasured by the migrants or their descendants, the documents stored in a drawer for many years, household items and trade tools brought out to Australia are all valuable testimonials of a migrant's story which we must preserve.

It was the need to foster pride in our Italian heritage and in an Italian-Australian identity that led to the creation of the Italian Historical Society by Sir James Gobbo and a group of young graduates of Italian background.

Located in the heart of Italian Carlton, the Italian Historical Society was formed in 1980 at the AGM of CO.AS.IT Italian Assistance Association, the official welfare agency of the Italian community in Victoria. We are an integral part of CO.AS.IT and this was instrumental to the success of the Society. It gave us credibility and most importantly the financial support to develop into the most important collecting body of material on the history of Italians in Australia.

The first project undertaken was a survey of the resources held in public libraries and archives on the Italian presence in Australia. Conducted by a student undertaking archival studies, this study found that the main resources available were only a wide range of government records.

Limited records on the migration and the settlement experience or on the various contributions of Italian immigrants in Australia were then available in public repositories.

Not long afterwards the Society began an oral history project of immigrants who had arrived before the Second World War. Most of them were already quite elderly, therefore we could not waste any time. The interviews were conducted by young bi-lingual Italians under a training and employment program funded by the Federal Government.

At these interviews some important photographs and documents emerged. It was soon realised that unless this evidence was collected, documented and preserved, it would be lost forever. Thus the Society also began to collect this material.

In the process of collecting, an important factor is that the Society never puts any pressure on the migrant or the descendants to donate the originals. Unless they voluntarily donate their records, we only borrow the material for copying. Most consent to the material being copied. A print and a negative is made and included in the collection. The original is then returned to the donor.

This does not diminish the social and historical value of our collection. On the contrary, it ensures that as much material as possible is collected and preserved, without permanently removing it from the context and history of the community.

During the first ten years of operation, a limited quantity of material was deposited spontaneously by the community. A good degree of time and resources was spent informing and educating the community as to the importance of recording their experiences and contribution to the development of Australia.

At the beginning our knowledge in conservation was quite limited, however the State Library of Victoria with whom we have maintained a long collaboration, taught us some basic principles, such as the use of acid free bags for storing originals, negatives and copy prints, archival storage boxes, etc.

For each image we gather information as to the donor's name, the names of the people depicted, the place and date and the context. A time-consuming but extremely important effort. The hardest work is to identify the names of people in large groups. It takes years to complete, it is almost a generational exercise!

An oral history or extensive notes on the story of the migrant and his family in Australia always accompanies the family photos and documents.

The culmination of the Society's initial work was the exhibition *Victoria's Italians 1900-194'* presented in collaboration with the State Library of Victoria in 1985, as part of the celebrations for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the State of Victoria.

Over the years, as the collection grew and the work of the Society was publicly endorsed by the Italian community and by Australian public institutions, the Society's material on the heritage and history of Italian migration to Australia became the base for other successful and important exhibitions, including the bicentennial exhibition *Australia's Italians 1788-1988* held in collaboration with the State Library of Victoria.

In 1992 in a unique partnership with the Jewish Museum of Australia and Museum Victoria another successful exhibition was presented by the title: *Bridging Two Worlds: Jews, Italians and Carlton*. It was so successful that the initial plan to hold for six months was extended to almost two years.

The great success of these exhibitions was reflected in the large number of visitors and in the abundance of material they generated not only for the Society's collection but also for mainstream repositories.

The appreciation of our immigrants, the enhancement of the recognition of their contribution to the Australian society and the awareness of their past, values and traditions reflected in the photographs and objects on display, engaged the interest of the Australian born generations in preserving our heritage and transmitting aspects of our distinct culture to future generations.

Collaborative agreements with mainstream repositories such as local or state libraries and museums are essential to the success of an exhibition. They provide the venue and their expertise.

In 1983 the Society established a project which has become a model for other similar organizations of non-English speaking background.

Believing that the holdings of public institutions did not adequately reflect the contribution to the wider Australian community of those of non Anglo-Celtic origin, the Society instituted the policy of depositing copy prints or, when available, the originals of the material it collected in the State Library of Victoria.

We have thus pioneered the building of a collection in a large public institution, where it is available for posterity, for scholars and the public at large and, most importantly for the descendants of the immigrants. This collaboration continues today.

A similar agreement for the collection of three-dimensional objects was formulated in 1993 with Museum Victoria. Many members of the community who had lent objects for the exhibitions felt that their heritage and migration story would in the future be better told if these objects were permanently housed in the museum. Some of these items are today on display the Immigration Museum in Melbourne.

Our collection has grown considerably since the Society's establishment 24 years ago. It now consists of 350 oral history tapes, more than 8,000 photographs, many rare documents, a unique collection of archival records from Italy in microfilm format, and an important specialised library with a number of rare books.

The migration story often begins with a studio portrait of a mother with her children usually photographed close to their departure to join the husband and father in the foreign land, whom they had not seen for years. It was quite common to send a photograph to help him recognize his family when they disembarked.

The voyage, the arrival, the first home in the new homeland, the espresso bar, a soccer match with gum trees in the background, men working on important projects such as the Snowy Mountains Hydroelectric Scheme, cutting cane in north Queensland or staying at Bonegilla or Rushworth migrants centres ... these important moments in the life of a migrant are well featured in our collection. Material only within the migration context is collected.

Today most of the material is collected spontaneously from members of the community, many of them Australia-born second and third or fourth generation Australians, who call into the Society with photo albums, eager to tell and record the story of their family. As a result of this change, a series of important holdings of photographs, documents and objects feature prominently in the main collection.

A significant holding of original documents is the Santospirito Collection consisting of a large number of original letters and documents dating from 1940-1970. It contains rare evidence of the experience of post-war migration, from the perspective of the protagonists themselves.

This collection was the subject of a collaborative agreement with the University of Melbourne. A grant by the Australian Research Council funded the archival arrangement and the compilation of a detailed description of the collection.

The outcome of this project conducted over three years was a definitive guide to the Santospirito collection, an electronic finding aid posted on to our website and a PhD thesis.

If we accept that knowledge of the present and the future presupposes knowledge of the past, it is of the utmost importance that the stories such as those handed down by Italian migrants do not fade. But fade away they might, if the custodians entrusted with the care of these records were not prepared to protect them from the ravages of time itself: from environmental changes, disasters and excessive handling.

It is for this reason that the Italian Historical Society has embarked on a program of preservation, including the creation of a computer data-base for the photographic collection. This program has been put in place to run parallel with the cataloguing process.

Hence details of each photograph are entered on the database and the image scanned. This project has been recently completed, after four years of hard work scanning and cataloguing 8000 images.

We have recently received funding under the Community Heritage Grants administered by the Australian National Library for the digitisation of over 2,500 documents in the Santospirito Collection which will enhance the preservation of the collection and improve access for future research and study.

We make extensive use of the search tools of the Australian National Archives and the Public Record Office of Victoria. Correct spelling of names, arrival dates, names of ships, naturalization's dates, names of next of kin ... these records contain vital information for the cataloguer. However, we have in place a policy to not duplicate any records held in Australian public institutions or in other collections. We perceive duplication as a waste of time and resources.

Since 1990 the Society also publishes a bi-annual Journal which is very well received by academics, researchers and the wider community. It gives the opportunity to scholars to publish articles and to individuals to write about their family experience. However it is purely a public relations exercise considering that it is quite expensive to produce in terms of staff's time to chase the articles, write some sections, printing and distribution cost. Only a small amount is recouped via the subscriptions.

We are open to the public and we have in place access conditions and fees.

We do sell prints of our photographs mainly to illustrate educational and history books. We are very protective of our collection, sometime to the point where we are criticized for not making the collection more open and accessible to all industries especially food and hospitality, advertising and others.

We have the moral duty to protect our material from abuses or stereotyping such as to decorate the walls of restaurants or shops with images of Italians eating pizza or spaghetti. There is much more behind an image of this type: the migration story, the culture and the traditions which are not conveyed by a photograph adorning the walls of a restaurant.

In the last couple of years our public program has been quite limited to a few public lectures and displays of images in regional centres, the reason being that we directed all our energies towards the computer cataloguing of the photographic collection. We also conduct guided tours of Italian Carlton to selected group of people, mainly from the University of the Third Age.

We serve the schools providing material in Italian and in English to secondary students and teachers on issues such as immigration, contribution and social changes. Many tertiary students from Australia and from Italy use our collections and archives for research purposes.

We have a family history section. However we only provide limited assistance by advising on how to obtain records from the country of origin of their ancestors. Most of the people who come to the Society for family history are descendants of Italian and Swiss-Italian Gold-Rush pioneers.

We are now working towards the publication of a quality coffee table book that will be published by Melbourne University Publishing in 2005. This is another exciting and demanding project!

The Italian Historical Society enjoys credibility as a collecting body because it is firmly anchored in the Italian community. It is essentially a community organization and that is its special strength.

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## ORAL HISTORY AND FOLKLORE

- Store tapes CDs in even temperature (at 16<sup>0</sup>), low humidity with no great fluctuation in temperature and conditions
- Store Upright
- Transcribe the material contained on the tapes/recordings.
- Film Sound Australia interested in multicultural groups for films. National library of Australia do not deal with film.
- Transcribing machines cost about \$400-500. Useful because they make transcribing from recordings easier. Maybe able to hire one from business machines specialists or oral history associations in each state may be able to help. There is an Oral History of Association of Australia. Oral history directory: [www.nla.org.au/ohdir](http://www.nla.org.au/ohdir) then follow link to Oral History Association of Australia.
- Put your audio collections into the National Library of Australia directory by filling in form online "reporting new collections".
- Store tapes in normal cassette covers or plastic video case covers etc.

## DIGITISATION

Digitisation is the reformatting of an original item into electronic format. There are 4 access types used by the National Library of Australia:

- Unrestricted Access
- Restricted Access
- Indigenous
- Adult Content

Always do the first scan at the highest resolution then resave at a lower resolution for use on the web, emailing etc.

Record the scanning/capture: What resolution, software used etc.

Crop around the image so that you can see where the original image begins and ends, i.e., even if that means showing black bits around the image.

### What is Digitisation?

*Following notes taken from presentation by: Erica Ryan, Manager, Digitisation Project, National Library of Australia, email: digitisation@nla.gov.au*

Digitisation is capture - the “reformatting” or conversion, of a physical item into a digital form. For example:

- electronic copy of a written or printed work (eg digital image or text keyed into an electronic form)
- scan of an picture or original artwork
- digital audio recording

Why Digitise?

- **Improve access**
  - Make material more widely available (eg on CD-ROMs, local computer, Internet)
  - You may discover more about items (eg identification) – or more items!
  - Improve “search-ability”
  - Use copies in exhibitions or online
  - Participate in collaborative services (eg PictureAustralia)
- **Help preserve collection items** by reducing physical handling
- **Potential income generation** (eg purchased reproductions, publications and other merchandise)

## **What Will You Digitise, Why?**

- Ø Preservation or access?
- Ø Motivations can influence your choice – intended re-use, means of delivery and access to users
- Ø Nature of the material influences how you do the work, equipment and resources

## **What Will You Digitise?**

Some things to consider:

- Ø Research interest and cultural significance
- Ø Originality of the item – unique material
- Ø Support other activities
- Ø Ease of capture
  - Condition of original material
  - Description or lists
  - Rights and cultural sensitivity
  - Equipment

*These important decisions will slow you down ...*

## **Before You Digitise**

What pre-digitisation activities are there?

- Ø Is the collection organised?
  - Describe and arrange (eg catalogue, caption, index)
  - Work out a system for file names
- Ø Is it in reasonable condition or are there any special needs?
  - Preservation assessment and treatment
  - Re-house and correctly store material
  - Will cradles, easels or other supports be required
  - Consider the possible effect of photographic lights and the heat of scanners on material ...

## **Digitisation will Impact On...**

- Ø Impact of digitisation on others?
  - Rights management – ownership, ©, privacy, cultural sensitivities
  - Provision of appropriate access

- Other projects and opportunities for collaboration
- Re-use of the digitised material

- ∅ How long will it take to get ready to start?
- ∅ Infrastructure – storage and delivery options for digital images
- ∅ Risk management – what if something goes horribly wrong?

*Have back-up plans!*

### **Who Will do the Work?**

- ∅ Are people available within the organisation?

OR

- ∅ Will you need to pay someone else to do the work or provide you with advice?

### **What skills and competencies?**

- Care and handling of collection material
- Imaging/photographic vs library skills
- Information Technology skills and experience
- Value-added knowledge of collection material and/or subject area

### **What Equipment**

- ∅ What's on the market and offered locally?
  - Constantly changing technology
  - After-sales support, warranty and service agreements
  - Software compatibility
  - Use personal and professional contacts
- ∅ Try before you buy (if you can)
  - Trial equipment and ask others what they're using
  - Leasing, "consortia" deals, joint equipment purchases
- ∅ *Get the "best" you can afford to do what you need*

### **What Other Equipment**

Don't forget the add-ons ...

- Something to drive the imaging devices
- Software and licenses

- Peripherals and accessories
- Storage
- Light-boxes, bulbs and hoods
- Furniture and furnishings

### **Where Will It all Happen?**

- Ø On or off-site
- Ø How will you get the material and digital images there and back?
- Ø Consider the physical environment
- Ø Light levels - collection vs colour vs people
- Ø Air quality
- Ø Ergonomics and safety of furniture, equipment and workflows

### **How?**

- Ø For the best possible results, prefer the original carrier
- Ø To what standard, file format/s and file sizes?
- Ø Digitise to the highest-quality you can
- Ø Determine the usual image capture methods (eg digital camera on a tripod, flat-bed or transparency scanners, digital-backed studio cameras) and establish clear procedures

### **What About digital Files?**

- Ø Establish how the images will be processed
  - What image manipulations are acceptable?
  - What software will be used?
  - Will image quality be assured and checked?
  - What technical metadata will be kept?

### **Be consistent**

- Ø What happens to the original material?
- Ø What (if any) links will be made between the “analogue” and the digital files?

## Manage the Processes

- Ø Track the movement of material
- Ø Use checklists and worksheets
- Ø Security
- Ø Care and handling guidelines
- Ø Scanner and/or digital camera set-ups
- Ø Image processing (eg colour management, manipulations)
- Ø Quality checking

Reflect ...

Revise ...

Re-engineer the processes



This online course will guide you through the process of digitising your collection; from planning and budgeting through to implementing your digital project. The course is freely available to those working in the Australian cultural sector.

Enter ►

**CHIN**  
Canadian Heritage  
Information Network

**AMOL**  
Australian Museums  
& Galleries Online



A collaboration between the Canadian Heritage Information Network  
and Australian Museums and Galleries Online.

<http://amol.org.au/capture/>

## Acknowledge and Accept

- Ø You can't ever know *everything*
- Ø It's OK to ask for H.E.L.P.
- Ø Be prepared to experiment and improvise processes
- Ø There will always be different ways of doing things
- Ø You will have to compromise sometimes
- Ø Technology will continue to change
- Ø Something will, inevitably, go wrong!

The following has been downloaded from the National Library of Australia Website: [http://www.nla.gov.au/digital/care\\_handling.html](http://www.nla.gov.au/digital/care_handling.html)

## Care and Handling Guidelines

DISCLAIMER: The National Library of Australia disclaims liability for the use of the information provided in these pages. The National Library of Australia accepts no responsibility for the loss occasioned as a direct or indirect result of the use of the information in these guidelines.

Care of our collection is paramount and correct handling is an important part of the digitisation process. Specific care and handling guidelines are prepared to aid Library staff in the digitisation of each collection to hand. These 'generic' guidelines are also observed. These guidelines should be applied to the special collection materials - maps, manuscripts, photographic items and artworks.

General rules  
Maps, plans and charts  
Photographic materials  
Artworks  
Manuscript items

Anyone should receive instruction from a trained conservator before beginning any treatment of collection items.

### General rules

- Wash hands regularly to ensure they are clean at all times
- Cotton gloves may be used, when appropriate, to handle most items - this will protect paper and other materials from grease, oils and dirt on bare hands. Gloves, however, can make fine work like turning pages more difficult - use discretion.
- Always have plenty of room in your workspace to accommodate the material you are working with.
- Transport items as much as possible in their folder and on an appropriate trolley.
- Be careful when removing fragile items from storage enclosures .
- Don't lick your fingers prior to handling any collection item .
- Make sure items are fully supported at all times.
- Works, particularly damaged ones, should be enclosed in Mylar (polyester) pockets, polyethylene or polypropylene bags or sleeves, archival mounts or folders when in storage or when being transported.
- Avoid direct handling or touching of surface areas.
- Always use pencil when working near collection items.
- Never use collection items as a writing surface.
- Do not stack different items together eg books and artworks.
- No food and drinks near collection items; wash hands after eating.
- Remove paper clips, pins and string carefully.
- Replace metal pins and clips with plastic paper clips.

- If you need to mark a page use a piece of clean white paper - do not use a post-it notes or other adhesive papers or plastics.
- Avoid the temptation to repair items; do not use adhesive tape to repair, this will eventually discolour and damage the paper.
- Consult a paper conservator to perform repairs or for further advice.

### **Maps, plans and charts**

To capture oversize items such as maps, the National Library has a vacuum-easel on which the item can be held in place by suction whilst being scanned. A studio camera with a digital back is supported on a track system, which also makes setting up easier.

#### **In general:**

- Be aware that maps and plans are difficult to handle because they are large. Make sure there is enough space to handle and work with them
- When not in use store maps in a map cabinet.
- Do not make new folds in maps or plans, as it will damage them.

#### **Types of maps:**

- Hand-drawn maps and plans, prepared using inks, pencil or watercolours
- Printed maps on machine made paper
- Photo reproductions on plastic film, photosensitive papers or synthetic papers
- Atlases and directories
- Tracing paper
- Butter maps

So called because they are printed on a particular type of tracing paper, butter maps often have a slight yellow tint. This type of tracing paper deteriorates quickly as the process of making it translucent makes them acidic. Once it becomes acidic the paper becomes brittle and hard to handle. Most of these maps should be repaired before digitisation. Some of these maps may be brittle and encapsulated in a polyester sleeve and should be scanned enclosed in this sleeve. As these maps are quite translucent they will take on a darker or lighter appearance depending on the background chosen. By placing a white piece of paper behind the map, details of the map are made clearer.

### **Photographic materials**

Depending on the physical format, artworks and photographic material may be digitised using a flat-bed scanner, digital camera or film/slide scanner.

- Ensure glass platen of the flat-bed scanner is clean; wipe with 'screen cleaner' instead of commercial detergents. The National Library uses a water-based streak free cleaner, CRC VDU 99.
- Make sure the transparencies are securely in position. If your scanner comes with a negative holder use it to hold the film in place. If not, a clean, dust-free glass plate with bevelled edges can be placed on top of the film.

### **In general:**

- Store photographic items in archival plastic or paper sleeves.
- Photographic emulsions are easily scratched and need to be protected when handling more than one photograph at a time. You can protect them by separating them or interleaving them - ideally with archival materials. Avoid placing on top of each other.
- Don't mend photographs using self-adhesive sticky tape of any kind. These tapes deteriorate and will stain and damage the photograph. .
- Be careful removing fragile slides and transparencies from boxes or sleeves, be sure to place slides back into their pocket properly.
- Don't lick your fingers prior to lifting the transparencies or negatives.
- Handle negatives and transparencies by their edges or use gloves.
- Labels and identification stamps should not be applied directly to photographic material. ID material should be placed on the packaging. Stabilo (or similar) or B grade pencils can be used to write on the verso of paper-based prints. Stabilo and B pencils are available from art or stationery stores.
- Never use metal pins, staples, paper clips, rubber bands or adhesive tape directly in contact with photographic materials.
- Light boxes and scanners should be clean before placing photographic material on them.
- Photographic material should be protected from extended exposure to light i.e. on light boxes and studio lights.
- Do not use any water-based solvents such as window cleaner or film cleaner on photographic material. Improper cleaning of photographic materials can cause serious damage such as permanent staining, abrasion and loss of binder or image. Use a soft brush or photographers blower brush to clean dusty negatives or photographs. Consult a photographic conservator to perform repairs or for further advice on cleaning.

### **Types of photographic materials:**

#### **Glass plate negatives**

Glass plate negatives or transparencies are fragile because of the nature and age of the glass.

- *When handling use a mat of soft material to place glass material on.*
- *Do not leave glass plates on light boxes for over long period of time, it may soften the gelatine emulsion.*

### **Nitrate film**

Nitrate film can be hazardous as it can self-combust in some circumstances and can be difficult to extinguish when ignited. Nitrate should be stored separately from other collection material. When nitrate film deteriorates it can produce nitric acid fumes, which can damage other collection material stored in the vicinity.

- § Wear gloves or house items in polyethylene sleeves so they can be handled. Deteriorated nitrate materials may cause skin rash.
  - Work in a well-ventilated area.

### **Cellulose acetate film**

Cellulose acetate film is also known as 'safety film' and has been widely used as a film base since early 1950. When acetate film starts to deteriorate it gives off acetic acid vapour, this phenomenon is known as the 'vinegar syndrome', because the vapour smells like vinegar. Once deterioration progresses the base material shrinks and the emulsion later starts to warp and wrinkle creating a web-like pattern. A pink or blue discolouring can also occur.

- Wear gloves or handle items in a plastic sleeve.
- Work in a well-ventilated area.

### **Photographic prints (black & white or colour)**

- Photographic prints are commonly gelatin or albumen-based and in good condition. However, broken, torn, or cracked photographs should be handled in a polyethylene sleeves or with an archival board support.
- If a photograph has a flaking binder layer or friable surface do not place the item on a flat-bed scanner - use an overhead camera.
- Use a soft brush or blower brush to remove loose dirt or dust.
- Consult a photographic conservator to perform repairs or for further advice.

### **Cropping images with decorative supports and borders**

Most albumen prints and black and white gelatin prints from the early 1900s to late 1960s were adhered to a secondary support. Often these supports have a decorative edge applied by the photographer or owner. It is important to consider whether these decorative supports should be digitised as part of the object or as a whole. Digitising the support will increase the

file size of the image but you will be documenting the item. So it is important to consider the purpose of recording these images. Decide if the record is for access or preservation or both.

### **Silver mirroring**

Silver mirroring is a bluish metallic sheen appearing on the surface of silver based photographs or negatives as result of ageing. The oxidation ageing process causes silver particles to migrate to the surface of the emulsion.

It may be difficult to digitise these items as the scanning light may hit the silver mirroring areas causing the light to reflect. To avoid this, moving the item around to another position helps.

### **Artworks**

These guidelines concern the care and handling of art works on paper (drawings, watercolours, prints and posters).

#### **In general:**

- Artworks with friable media (pastels, charcoal and pencil drawings) are easily smudged. They should always be in a window mount with a cover over the window and stored in a poly bag. Never place these items in a polyester (Mylar) sleeve because static attraction may lift any loose particles from the surface.
- Paper from the late 1800s will often be of poor quality and brittle. Because handling may cause further deterioration, this material will have specific careful handling needs. Please consult a conservator for further advice.
- Do not stack unenclosed items.

#### **When capturing:**

- Items without friable media and of a suitable size can be scanned on a flat bed scanner.
- Use an overhead camera for pastels, graphite and charcoal drawings or oil paintings.
- Gently place items face down onto the platen and avoid moving items around while they are face down.
- If an item has a backing, which makes it larger than A3, and the backing does not need to be scanned, to fit it on the platen the scanner lid may be removed. To provide a dark background, use a piece of black cardboard or cloth to cover work instead of the lid.

### **Manuscript items**

A manuscript collection can include sheet music, note books, diaries, correspondence, reports, drafts, maps, plans, charts, photographs, x-rays, pamphlets, forms and faxes. They are usually held together by string, pins or paper clips in a folder.

Most items can be digitised on the flatbed scanner. If you come across material with a friable surface such as pastel, watercolour, and graphite or charcoal they should be digitised with an overhead camera. Bound material should also be digitised under an overhead camera using a supporting cradle. Please refer to a conservator if you are unsure.

**When capturing:**

- Scanner platens should be clean before scanning using 'screen cleaner' (see above).
- Remove any staples or pins before scanning.
- Wrinkled or folded items should be smoothed out by gentle pressure with your fingers and palms. If items are severely crumpled and damaged a conservator should treat the item.
- Make sure items are fully supported at all times.
- Bound sheet music items will be too large for the platen of a flatbed scanner. Place a support stand around the sides of the scanner to hold open sheets to prevent sagging and dangling while scanning.