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## Principles for creating and managing digital heritage collections

### *Preamble*

In 2006, the Collections Council of Australia convened a Summit on digital heritage collections. Delegates from the collections sector, including the archive, gallery, library and museum domains, agreed to work together to develop their digital heritage collections. They agreed that an ultimate aim is to enhance the online presence of Australia's cultural, scientific, educational and research collections. They expressed a vision for the collections sector's work in the digital environment:

To connect all Australians with their collections, and with the information and knowledge held in collecting organisations about those collections.

Delegates also discussed the principles that might guide the development of digital heritage collections. Following further consultation, the Collections Council has endorsed the following ten principles, and recommends their use by collecting organisations and also by funding and policy bodies.

### *Overarching statement*

Activity that contributes to Australia's digital heritage collections should conform to the following principles.

### *Principles for the collections sector*

#### **1. Co-operation**

*So that all Australians are able to discover digital content in order to better understand their history, community, environment, democracy, culture and future –*

The collections sector should work co-operatively with information creators, digital industries (including manufacturers, publishers and distributors), regulators, legislators and policy makers to streamline the delivery of digital heritage collections.

#### **2. Collaboration**

*So that users have seamless access to Australia's digital heritage collections –*

The collecting domains should collaborate to provide integrated access to their digital content.

#### **3. Co-ordination**

*So that digital content is created without duplicating effort, and so that further research into standards and guidelines is fostered –*

Standards and guidelines for the acquisition, preservation, management and interpretation of digital heritage collections should be co-ordinated to meet the needs of all four domains of the collections sector.

## ***Principles for each collecting organisation***

### **4. Stakeholder rights**

*So that the rights of subjects, creators, owners, providers and users of digital content are respected and protected –*

Digital heritage collections should be managed in accordance with cultural protocols and professional codes of ethics, and in compliance with legislation relating to matters such as classification/censorship, copyright and privacy.

### **5. Economy**

*So that ongoing access to significant digital content is guaranteed, and so that creative processes do not have to be repeated to replace lost data –*

Collecting organisations should invest in product development and new applications to create digital resources of enduring value.

### **6. Enduring access**

*So that the range of ways in which digital content may be published and used over time is not limited by technological changes, so that users can engage easily with digital content, and so that the evolving needs and interests of users can be met with quality and relevance –*

Digital heritage collections should be managed in formats and with sufficient contextual information to allow for repurposing and ongoing preservation.

### **7. Respect for users**

*So that users can access digital heritage collections without having to understand the structures and systems of the corporate custodian or the collecting domain –*

Digital heritage collections should be easily discoverable, jargon-free, and (where appropriate) supported by folksonomic tagging.

### **8. Design for ‘universal access’**

*So that digital content is accessible to people with disabilities, and to people with special needs –*

The presentation of digital heritage collections should meet accessibility standards and should be compatible with the use of adaptive technologies.

### **9. Retention of physical collections**

*So that the physical collections, being ‘the real thing’, are retained for the information they hold, to inspire future users and to enable the continuing investigation of each item’s significance in categories such as historic, aesthetic, scientific, research, social and spiritual –*

Decisions to create digital surrogates of physical collections by the process of digitisation should be made in accordance with an organisation’s agreed policies for the preservation and development of all its collections, both physical and digital.

### **10. Sustainability**

*So that the costs and benefits associated with investment in digital content are recognised –*  
The management of digital heritage collections should be supported by sustainable business models.