**NAME:**

Introduction

A brown rectangular object with a black background

Description automatically generated

**What is the Emmerson Collection?**

The Emmerson Collection of rare books is an internationally significant collection of rare British printed works. It features books and pamphlets from the 15th to 18th centuries, mostly produced in England.

The collection has a particular emphasis on the reign of King Charles I and the English Civil War, fought during the 1640s. The only comparable collections belong to the British Library and Oxford’s Bodleian Library.

Its significance lies not just in the quantity and quality of the books, but also in the important provenance of items, including works originally owned by significant figures at the time of Charles I’s reign.

Watch [this clip](https://youtu.be/tvP95bDgSLg) of former Principal Librarian, History of the Book and Arts, Des Cowley explain the Emmerson Collection.

**Beyond the Book exhibition**

The *Beyond the Book* exhibition was four years in the making and is a collaborative project between experts in early modern studies and the digital humanities, and specialist library staff. *Beyond the Book* brings the Emmerson Collection to life via an innovative digital interface that allows everyone access to the collection beyond the walls of the Library.

**Curriculum links**

This resource is designed for Visual Arts Levels 9 and 10 Present and Perform curriculum. Each section addresses the elaborations of *Create, present, analyse and evaluate displays of artwork considering how ideas can be conveyed to an audience (*[*VCAVAP044*](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCAVAP044)*).*

Curators and their exhibition

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| Learning intention: | We are learning to: *understand the role of a curator and evaluate the effective display or exhibition of collection items and artworks.* |
| Success criteria | **I can:**   * explain the role of a curator * outline some considerations curators could make when selecting items to include in an exhibition * evaluate the effectiveness of how items have been displayed in the *Beyond the Book* exhibition. |

What is the role of a curator?

* Acquire works
* Care for works
* Develop collections and exhibitions
* Arrange displays of works
* Interpret the works to inform and educate the public

Read the [*About this Project*](https://beyondthebook.slv.vic.gov.au/about/) page on the website. In what way is this exhibition a collaboration?

* The Australian Government supported the project via the Australian Research Council Linkage Project ‘Transforming the Early Modern Archive: The Emmerson Collection at SLV’.
* This allowed the Library to partner with four Australian and New Zealand universities to develop the exhibition: Australian National University (lead), the University of Newcastle, La Trobe University and the Victoria University of Wellington.

The digital exhibition used a technology called photogrammetry to photograph the items, creating high-definition three-dimensional representations of objects by extracting data from two-dimensional images. Watch [this video](https://youtu.be/-h96FHmwwEg) explaining how the technology works.

Why do you think the curators decided to use photogrammetry technology for this exhibition?

* To allow patrons to see the intricate detail of the works – an even better view than seeing them in real life.

Go to the [*Beyond the Book*](https://beyondthebook.slv.vic.gov.au) exhibition and explore the homepage, then navigate through to some of the stories. Note down three design choices the curators have made to display the items in the collection.

* Use of black background to contrast the works and help them stand out
* Use of floating text to summarise key information about the works
* Use of highlight/zoom to draw attention to detail
* Use ‘explore 3D’ button to inspect the works in detail
* Connection section for patrons who want to explore the story further
* Index for patrons with a particular interest they want to search

How effective are these design choices in helping the audience engage with the works?

* Various possible answers
* Designed to be user-friendly and allow patrons to choose their own way of exploring the exhibition
* Designed to elicit curiosity and allow for further exploration

Location

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| Learning intention: | We are learning to: *understand how the location of works can influence the viewer’s understanding of the work.* |
| Success criteria | **I can:**   * evaluate the benefits and limitations of displaying works in a physical or digital exhibition * outline some ways the exhibition location influences the viewer’s understanding of the works. |

The Emmerson Collection could be displayed in person, but this exhibition is a digital-only exhibition. Why do you think the curators decided to make this a virtual exhibition?

* Ability to reach an audience beyond those who can visit the Library, including rural and international audiences
* The technology used means that patrons can view the intricate detail of the works
* The exhibition can be on display for a longer period of time as a physical space isn’t required

There are over 5000 items in the Emmerson Collection, but only a handful were selected for this exhibition. If you were a curator, what would you consider when deciding which items to include and which to leave out of your exhibition?

* Various possible answers
* Works of great value: cultural, monetary, rarity
* Works that are whimsical or surprising that might catch your audience’s attention
* Works that your audiences might relate to
* Works that shock your audience
* Works that explore universal or contemporary issues

Outline the benefits and limitations of displaying works in a physical or virtual exhibition:

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|  | **Physical exhibition** | **Virtual exhibition** |
| **Benefits** | * More immersive experience to be in a physical space * Can see the works in real life * Can engage a range of senses | * Able to use technology to enhance the works on display * Does not require a physical space * Can be accessed by audiences anywhere in the world * Can be on display for an extended period of time without impacting other exhibitions * Easy for audiences to return to the exhibition |
| **Limitations** | * Requires audience to travel to exhibition -> prohibitive for those who live a distance from the location * Often have a shorter exhibition time | * Audiences may not engage with the whole exhibition * Requires audience to have access to a computer and internet |

Outline two ways the location of an exhibition may influence the viewer’s understanding of the work.

Various possible answers. Suggest that students use an example to explain their response.

Expressing ideas

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| Learning intention: | We are learning to: *understand how works demonstrate the interaction between artist and audience.* |
| Success criteria | **I can:**   * analyse how one item from the exhibition was presented to engage audiences. |

The works in the *Beyond the Book* exhibition were designed for audiences hundreds of years ago. Their stories and messages, however, still engage audiences today. The curators identified the following groups as audiences who the exhibition might appeal to:

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* The international library sector: library professionals, academics, historians with an interest in the Emmerson Collection and rare books​
* People who love the book as an object, people interested in the history of the book​
* People with an interest in the history of the monarchy, republican movements, Charles I and the regicide​
* Teachers and high school students of History, Media, Politics, English, Literature or Visual Arts
* Collectors​
* People with an interest in craft and textiles and their uses​
* People who like beautiful old things​
* Philanthropists and donors​

Go to the *Beyond the Book* exhibition and select **one** item from the exhibition, then explain how it was presented to engage **one** of the audiences listed above.

**Story:**

**Item:**

**Audience:**

**How was it presented to engage that audience?**Various possible answers.

Presentation and relationships of artworks

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| Learning intention: | We are learning to: *explore the presentation and relationships of works in an exhibition and how the display enhances the relationship between the artist and audience.* |
| Success criteria | **I can:**   * evaluate the benefits and limitations of displaying works in a physical or digital exhibition * outline some ways the exhibition location influences the viewer’s understanding of the works. |

The *Beyond the Book* curators chose seven stories to focus on for this exhibition:

1. Making Books
2. Reading Books
3. Collecting Books
4. Killing the King
5. It’s Not Easy Being Queen
6. The Prince and His Poodle
7. Times of Crisis

Go to the *Beyond the Book* exhibition and read the descriptions for each of the stories. Why do you think these thematic areas were selected?

* Various possible answers.
* It starts by looking at books as an object to be made, read and collected, then focuses on the historical events and people associated with the English Civil War. The history and stories included are complex but splitting them into these themes makes them easier to engage with.
* The Making Books story also connects to the *World of the Book* physical exhibition at State Library Victoria
* Collecting Books allows the curators to also highlight the role of John Emmerson who was the benefactor of the works in the exhibition

The following items were included in the *Beyond the Book* exhibition. Go to the [stories](https://beyondthebook.slv.vic.gov.au) and read the information about them. Then outline why you think they might have been included in the exhibition and how they might appeal to an audience.

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| A damnable treason, by a contagious plaster of a plague-sore: wrapt up in a letter, and sent to Mr. Pym: wherein is discovered a divellish, and unchristian plot against the High Court of Parliament, October 25. 1641. 1641, printed for W.B. : London, State Library Victoria, Melbourne (RAREEMM 837/8)  **Story: Time of Crisis** | **Why do you think this item was included?**   * It is a fascinating example of historical hate mail * Many audience members would have heard of the plague and have some knowledge of the horrific symptoms associated with it.   **How might this item appeal to an audience?**   * This is an item that may stick with the audience because it is gross but intriguing. It may surprise the audience to learn that people in the 17th century used such measures to show their hate. |
| The countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia / written by Sir Philip Sidney knight. 1605, imprinted for Simon Waterson : London, State Library Victoria, Melbourne (RAREEMM 241/4)  **Story: Using Books** | **Why do you think this item was included?**  It is light-hearted and relatable to a modern audience. Despite the different time, cats act just the same.  **How might this item appeal to an audience?**  For audience members who are cat owners, this would especially appeal as they can most likely relate to this feline habit of cats walking all over their things. |

Ethical understandings

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| Learning intention: | We are learning to: *apply ethical understandings to a theme, concept or subject matter when making artworks* |
| Success criteria | **I can:**   * *apply ethical understandings to a theme, concept or subject matter when making my artworks.* |

The items in this collection are hundreds of years old and reflect the deeply divided opinions of people during the English Civil War. Emmerson was sympathetic to the Royalist cause, and this is seen through the choice of books and pamphlets he acquired.

Should curators be impartial when designing an exhibition?

Various possible answers.

What questions could you ask to ensure you apply an ethical understanding to a theme, concept, or subject matter when you are making your artworks?

* Various possible answers.
* Why do I want to discuss this theme, concept or subject matter?
* How might my audience respond to this theme, concept or subject matter?
* Have I explored various perspectives on this theme, concept or subject matter?
* Have I considered how people from various backgrounds might engage with my artworks?

Sponsored or donated works

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| Learning intention: | We are learning to: *understand the role and impact of exhibiting works that have been sponsored or donated.* |
| Success criteria | **I can:**   * *outline the opportunities and limitations of exhibiting works that are donated or sponsored.* |

Watch [this clip](https://youtu.be/nEjrVUq0dsE) about John Emmerson as a donor.

Outline the opportunities and limitations of exhibiting works that are donated or sponsored:

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| **Opportunities** | **Limitations** |
| * Able to make private collected works available to the general public * The exhibitor does not need to raise the funds to procure the works themselves | * There can be conditions included when someone sponsors or bequeaths items that the exhibitor needs to comply with * The collection donated may be biased |

Develop a physical or virtual exhibition

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| Learning intention: | We are learning to: develop a physical or virtual exhibition |
| Success criteria | **I can:**   * brainstorm an idea for an exhibition * outline the opportunities and limitations. |

What are three observations you have noted from exploring this exhibition?  
  
Various possible answers.

Brainstorm some ideas for your own exhibition.

Various possible answers.

Select one of your ideas and outline how your exhibition could be exhibited in a physical or virtual exhibition:

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| --- | --- |
| **Physical exhibition** | **Virtual exhibition** |
| Various possible answers. | Various possible answers. |