



STATE LIBRARY
VICTORIA

Collection Strategy

2020–24



Acknowledgment of Country and People

State Library Victoria acknowledges the traditional lands of all the Victorian Aboriginal Clans, and their cultural practices and knowledge systems.

We recognise that our collections hold traditional cultural knowledge belonging to Indigenous communities in Victoria and around the country. We support communities to protect the integrity of this information, gathered from their Ancestors in the colonial period.

We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present, who have handed down these systems of practice to each new generation for millennia.



Our collection

The State Library Victoria collection preserves and shares the voices, ideas, stories and experiences of all Victorians.

It is a record of how we have changed, and how we interact with the rest of Australia and the world.

Our collection strengthens communities. It is rich, varied and relevant to all Victorians, regardless of age, ethnicity or economic circumstances.

Seeing yourself, your community or your life experiences in the collection creates a sense of belonging. Hearing and engaging with the stories and experiences of others leads to greater understanding and empathy. It is vital that our collection includes the voices that are not often heard or preserved.

Our collection builds knowledge and skills. It inspires curiosity and creativity. It lifts the profile of Victoria. It is a platform for different voices.

As custodians of the collection, we are working to ensure it remains relevant and valued now, and for generations to come.

We have big aspirations. Understanding and engaging with our communities and our partners is an essential part of realising these.

Our Collection Strategy will guide our efforts and impact over the next four years to benefit communities and individuals now and in the future.

Collection Strategy 2020-24

STATE LIBRARY

Our vision

A library for all in a changing world.

Our purpose

We believe that access to information and stories builds knowledge, strengthens community and inspires our future.

Our collection outcome

Victorians value the State Collection as an accessible, trusted source that enables the creation of new knowledge.

Our collection measure

10% growth in engagement with the collection.

Our role



We collect

the everyday and extraordinary voices, stories and experiences of Victorians in a global context.



We preserve

history and culture, for use today and in the future.



We share

our collection to enable access and discovery.

Our impact

To empower individuals and communities to achieve their own goals, we:

Ignite creativity and curiosity

Facilitate learning

Build cultural and social connections

Support equity and inclusion

Our goals

Our collection benefits and better represents First Nations people.

Our collection is relevant, through a focus on digital-first and diversity.

Our collection is accessible and discoverable.

Our collection is built collaboratively with our communities and partners.

Our enablers



Skilled, agile and diverse workforce



Technology, data and analytics capability



Meaningful collaboration



Financial sustainability

COLLECTION



Introduction

Our Collection Strategy 2020–24 sets out our collection role, goals and priorities for the next four years.

It is not only a strategy to guide the work of the Library team, it is also for Library users, the community, our partners and other stakeholders. It is a way to increase understanding of collecting and our collection, and to be transparent about our focus.

Our collection

We have a mandate to collect, preserve and share the stories, history and experiences of all Victorians. When the Library opened in 1856 it housed a respectable collection of 3846 volumes, selected by Sir Redmond Barry, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in Victoria, and first Chair of the Library Board of Trustees.

Today, we have almost 5.5 million collection items including books, manuscripts, letters, newspapers, magazines, maps, sheet music, vinyl records, ephemera, paintings, photographs, recordings, clothing, realia and even a magician’s bag of tricks.

We have built a vast and diverse collection that covers an enormous range of subjects and areas of interest, with many items unique to the Library. The ongoing development of the collection responds to evolving community needs and rapid changes in the way information is created and communicated.

This remarkable collection is a valuable research resource, and a source of inspiration and interest for people across Victoria and around the world.

Collection highlights

Victoria and Australia

The Library’s comprehensive Victorian and Australian collections are our most significant resources. These collections include both contemporary and historical material that represents Victoria’s diverse communities. They include books, journals, maps, newspapers, archival collections of diaries, letters, photographs and oral histories, as well as digital images, files and websites. We have a significant collection of photographs, documents and books on Victoria’s Aboriginal culture and history.

The introduction of the Copyright Protection Act in 1869, a precursor to our current Legal Deposit provisions, required publishers to lodge a copy of every book, magazine, pamphlet and map, as well as newspapers, published in Victoria. The early introduction of this Act means that the Library has a substantial and comprehensive historical record of Victorian publications, including one of the largest newspaper collections in Australia.

We have a significant ephemera collection, which includes advertising posters, junk mail, menus, exhibition catalogues, press clippings, calendars, invitations, theatre programs, political stickers, badges and flyers. Often readily discarded, ephemera is an important record of social life, popular culture and local history.

History of the book and arts

The Library has an outstanding collection that highlights the history of the book as both a mechanism for communicating ideas and as an object showcasing the art of book illustration, design and production techniques. From ancient clay tablets to contemporary deluxe editions, the collection includes medieval manuscripts, early printed works such as the Nuremberg Chronicle, private press editions and artist books. It also features a collection of rare works including first editions by significant literary authors, foundation works about Australia and Victoria, and a research collection of Australian children’s literature.

Our Arts Collection covers the visual and decorative arts, photography, music, theatre, dance, film, radio and television. Although international in scope, the collection has a strong focus on Australian artists and a particular emphasis on Victoria. Popular culture is strongly represented, including local and international rock and popular music, film studies, photography, graphic novels, comic books and zines.



World knowledge

The Library has an extensive collection that covers the social sciences, humanities, government and law, and science and technology, enabling Victorians to discover and learn about the world and Australia's place in it. Historical strengths include British colonial history, government publications, scientific works, travel and exploration, history, biography, politics and war. We have a substantial collection relating to Australia's involvement in both world wars and the European Holocaust.

Current collecting focuses on the humanities, social sciences, history and politics, with an emphasis on digital resources, in response to the contemporary needs of the Victorian community.

Family history

The Family History Collection includes resources published in a range of formats in Victoria and nationally, as well as New Zealand and many countries of origin of Australia's immigrants. The collection aims to reflect the increasing ethnic diversity of the Victorian community.

Collectors and their collections

Many of our most unique collections are the lifetime work of individuals and organisations with varied interests who have an enthusiasm for or dedication to collecting. The efforts and generosity of these collectors has allowed us to acquire research collections in areas that are generally beyond the capacity of the Library.

Highlights include:

- The WG Alma Conjuring Collection of magic books, magazines, photographs, posters, detailed research files on individual magicians, and other magic memorabilia, as well as small tricks and models
- The MV Anderson Chess Collection, one of the largest chess collections in the world, with books, magazines and tournament reports. It includes a leaf from 'The game and playe of the chesse', published by Caxton in 1483.

- The Scholastic Dromkeen Children's Literature Collection of original artwork, preliminary sketches and dummy books for many Australian children's picture books. Founded by Joyce and Courtney Oldmeadow, the collection was donated to the Library by the Trustees of Scholastic Australia in 2012.
- The John Emmerson Collection of more than 5000 rare printed works, with a particular emphasis on the reign of King Charles I and the 1640s English Civil War. The collection was donated to the Library in 2015. It was amassed over 40 years by the late John McLaren Emmerson QC, a bibliophile and brilliant scholar who had careers as both an Oxford physicist and a Melbourne barrister.

Children's browsing collection

A recent addition to the Library, the children's browsing collection is a dedicated collection for children and families. The collection is designed to enhance literacy and encourage reading and learning, to surprise, delight and foster the curious minds of the young reader and researcher.

The collection focuses on the educational, recreational and informational needs of users aged 0-12 years and their families. The collection has strengths in contemporary and classical Australian children's literature, a focus on First Nations and a range of non-fiction content. And with a bilingual picture book collection, a LOTE (languages other than English) collection, and the inclusion of braille, there is something for all to enjoy.

The children's browsing collection will continue to grow and be refreshed to ensure it remains inclusive, progressive, current and relevant to the Victorian community.



Our role

Our collection is an incredible strength and resource, and is central to State Library Victoria's vision and purpose. We have defined our collection role as having three core functions: collecting, preserving and sharing.

We collect the everyday and extraordinary voices, stories and experiences of Victorians in a global context.

We carefully select materials for the collection, generally based on agreed topics and for a set purpose, and bring these items together in one place. We have been collecting items for more than 160 years and we will continue collecting long into the future.

We preserve history and culture, for use today and in the future.

We preserve our collection items so that they last. This can take many forms, such as conserving a fragile manuscript, digitising a print item or converting an outdated digital format. Preserving our history and culture enables us and future generations to see how our society has changed over time.

We share our collection to enable access and discovery.

We make our collection available and easily accessible so that it can be used. We showcase the breadth of the collection as well as ensure each item can be discovered and accessed.



Our goals

Our goals outline our focus for the next four years. Each of these is important and aspirational and will require commitment, strong partnerships and dedicated resourcing over many years to achieve success.

Our collection benefits and better represents First Nations people.

We are committed to the self-representation and self-determination of First Nations communities. By listening to and collaborating closely with Aboriginal communities and organisations, we can preserve and elevate their voices, experiences, publications and culture. Our collection must also be in accessible formats and safe spaces for First Nations people. In addition to First Nations communities seeing themselves in and benefiting from our collection, this is also an opportunity for non-Aboriginal people to listen, learn and reflect.

Over the coming years we will ensure our collection is culturally safe, by increasing self-determined Aboriginal voices and stories, and signposting colonial material. We recognise this is an ongoing process. The following priorities are the steps we will take to achieve this.

Over the next four years, we will:

- Recruit more Aboriginal people to work in the Koori Unit and continue to create a culturally aware team and a safe collection and work environment
- Listen to, engage and build strong relationships with First Nations people, including Aboriginal organisations, communities and our colleagues
- Enhance our understanding of the First Nations language groups, nations and recognised authorities in Victoria, identify the associated strengths and gaps in our collection, and collect with a focus on defined priorities
- Support and share grassroots research, publications and other forms of knowledge capture and creation by Aboriginal people, including through commissioning
- Ensure First Nations people can access the parts of our collection that matter to them, for example by collecting items in different formats and modalities
- Review our collection for material that may be offensive to First Nations people and include contextual narrative in the descriptive metadata of these items
- Develop new and update existing collection policies, frameworks and protocols to ensure they are inclusive and that First Nations content is culturally safe.

A note on language

We recognise there are many terms used to refer to the traditional custodians of the lands on which we work. Over the years, these have included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, Indigenous, First Peoples, Koori people and more recently, First Nations. If you would prefer to read through the document with another term in mind, please do.

Below: Tiffany Garvie, Gunggari, Aunty Charmaine Sellings and Aunty Rhonda Thorpe, both proud Kurnai women from CFA Lake Tyers Trust, satellite station of the Toorloo Fire Brigade with their ultralight fire truck, Lake Tyers, October 2020



Our collection is relevant, through a focus on digital-first and diversity.

Our society is changing. This is true in Victoria and around the world, and the COVID-19 pandemic is accelerating some changes and initiating others. To help individuals and communities achieve their own goals, we must be aligned with their evolving needs, preferences and experiences. A relevant, contemporary collection requires us to be proactive in our collecting, which, for the four years ahead, includes a focus on digital formats and content, rural and regional stories, and diverse voices, experiences and achievements. In addition, given the interconnected, globalised world we live in, it will continue to be important for us to connect Victorians with world knowledge.

Over the next four years, we will:

- Ensure we have the required technology, data and analytics capabilities, and infrastructure to drive a digital-first agenda
- Focus our resources on collecting digital content and materials
- Establish and implement a digital preservation framework
- Increase collecting from and in collaboration with rural and regional communities
- Proactively collect the voices, stories and achievements from those who are often not heard, including people with disability, LGBTQI+ people, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and commission new works
- Update our collecting policies, frameworks and protocols to continue to meet our statutory requirements, while also enabling inclusive collecting that meets contemporary needs.



Our collection is discoverable and accessible.

With millions of items in our collection, it is critical that people can find and access relevant content. A discoverable collection has descriptions to help people find what's meaningful and interesting to them, and an accessible collection means people can access the content they discover. This requires useful information and data, clear descriptions, intuitive processes, helpful staff and varied formats. Over the next four years we want to ensure more of our collection is discoverable online and improve access for communities who face significant barriers to engaging with our collection. Expectations, as well as technology in this area will continue to evolve and so will our approach and solutions.

Over the next four years, we will:

- Consult our users and leverage data analytics software to better understand what communities currently use, and what they need and want in order to access and discover the collection
- Implement more accessible processes for our communities to find and engage with our collection, with a focus on people who experience significant access barriers, such as rural and regional Victorians, people with disability, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- Increase the number of digitised collection items available online
- Develop a sustainable digitising program for at-risk audio-visual collection material
- Prioritise description of our legacy data collections to improve their online discoverability
- Explore and implement innovative approaches to adding and enhancing descriptions of collection items, including exploring community contributions and new technologies such as AI and machine learning
- Upgrade to an integrated library management system to increase efficiency
- Create and implement a metadata strategy to improve accessibility and discoverability
- Develop and start implementing a plan for the full-text and descriptions of collection items to be available in multiple languages, with a focus on prioritising relevant materials and using technology to maximise productivity.



Our collection is built collaboratively with our communities and partners.

We cannot achieve our collecting aspirations on our own – and we don't want to. We strongly believe that listening to and working with our communities and partners has wide-ranging benefits, including the greater relevance, diversity and appeal of our collection, information and skill sharing with other cultural institutions, and reduced duplication in the sector. As a major collecting institution in Australia and globally, we also believe we have a role to play as a sector convenor and leader.

Over the next four years, we will:

- Undertake broad community engagement to inform and guide our collecting and increase trust and interest in our collection
- Map our existing and prospective partnerships and develop and implement a plan for collecting collaborations, including:
 - with other collecting institutions in Victoria, Australia and overseas to enhance and streamline our collective efforts
 - with rural and regional libraries to support collecting across the state, and
 - with sector and community leaders to achieve their goals and preserve their important stories and experiences in our collection.
- Implement a process for our users to select new book acquisitions
- Develop, pilot and roll out an evaluation and impact framework to assess the benefits of our collection, with a focus on priority community groups
- Explore opportunities to build collecting and archiving capacity beyond the Library, including with historical and genealogical societies, and grassroots community groups
- Support the fundraising efforts that enable us to collect, preserve and share experiences, stories and ideas.



Thelma Thomas (later Afford), maker, Fancy dress costume worn by Jessie Clarke at the Centenary of Victoria celebrations in 1934 and 1935, 1934. H2000.179/1-4

Her glittering lace-like headdress, typifying the electrical developments of the State, caught every ray of light ...
The Australasian, Melbourne, 27 October 1934



About us

Opened in 1856 as the Melbourne Public Library, State Library Victoria is Australia's oldest public library and one of the first free public libraries in the world. We began with a collection of 3846 volumes on the shelves and over more than 160 years we have collected almost 5.5 million items including books, manuscripts, serials, photographs, artworks, maps and ephemera. Each year we add more than 70,000 items to the Library's rich collection.

The Library is one of Victoria's cultural icons, dedicated to knowledge, creativity and learning. We strengthen communities and inspire participation with a full calendar of free exhibitions, events, talks, workshops and children's programming every season. Each year we welcome more than two million visitors to the Library and attract more than five million visits online. Our visitors include families and children, local and international students, entrepreneurs, researchers and culture lovers from all over the world.

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CREATIVE VICTORIA

