

# State Library of Western Australia

## COLLECTION STRATEGY

### 1. Purpose

The Collection Strategy outlines the State Library's collecting intentions, priorities, and the key principles guiding the development of physical and digital collections. The intent is to be responsive to the needs and expectations of the Western Australian community, anticipate the needs of future generations, and reflect the rich and diverse history of the State within our collections.

The Principles for Collection Development underpin the work of the State Library and guide transparent and informed decisions in selecting, acquiring, managing, caring for, preserving, and making collections available.

This strategy is intended to work in conjunction with the aims of the Library's Interpretation Strategy, to engage with all Western Australians through our collections, foster a sense of belonging, and strengthen and sustain the relationship between the community and the State Library.

### 2. History

Since the early 1890s, the State Library of Western Australia has collected, preserved, and provided access to West Australian documentary heritage. These collections reflect the culture of Western Australia over time – its changing society, diverse communities, individual lives, and connections with the world.

The library opened in 1889 as the Victoria Public Library, named in honour of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee of 1887, and was the first free public library in the colony of Western Australia. Early collections showed Western Australia's ties with the British Empire and Indian Ocean colonial world. James Sykes Battye was the Chief Librarian from 1894 until his death in 1954. His focus was on the State's colonial records, both the archives of the colonial administration and society.

The J.S. Battye Library of West Australian History was established in 1956. The collection of oral histories began at this time and a focus on social history emerged well before it was widely practised nationally. By the State's sesquicentenary in 1979, an interest in family history and convict records had emerged and collections grew to include Aboriginal voices and stories of migration and multiculturalism.

In more recent years, collections continue to grow and diversify in both physical and electronic formats. Significant examples of this diversified approach are the Storylines online archive, launched in 2013, to help the Aboriginal community discover their family history in a culturally safe way, and digital photography which has enabled contemporary, significant events including the COVID-19 pandemic and Black Lives Matter demonstrations to be captured instantaneously.

### **3. Principles for Collection Development**

#### **1. Everyone's story is important**

The State Library's collections should mirror the diverse voices of Western Australia, both past and present.

#### **2. Proactive and responsive collecting**

The State Library will work with a network of partners to collect stories and information related to important events, ensuring these are selectively captured to provide representative coverage, and address gaps, omissions, and biases.

#### **3. Ethical and responsible collecting practices**

The State Library will strive to avoid misrepresenting or exploiting individuals, communities, and organisations within its collections and collecting practices, ensuring that multiple and opposing perspectives are represented.

#### **4. Open and accessible collections**

The State Library is committed to removing barriers to discovering, accessing, and using its collections.

#### **5. Preserving the stories of Western Australia**

The State Library will make sound and informed decisions on collection management to ensure rich and diverse stories representing Western Australia in the past and present are preserved for future generations.

### **4. Collection Life Cycle Management**

The State Library takes a holistic approach to developing and managing collections. Throughout the collection management life cycle, and in line with our guiding principle to exercise ethical and responsible collecting practices, we strive to be inclusive, to represent and make accessible the diverse voices and multiple viewpoints of the community in an unbiased and uncensored way. We incorporate consultation with the community, stakeholder feedback, and analysis of our current collections, to inform and guide decisions in:

- Selecting, appraising and acquiring materials
- Describing and providing access
- Storing and preserving collections
- Reappraising, and retaining or deselecting materials.

We aim to align collection management activities with all our principles for collection development and regularly review our approaches to ensure collections continue to meet the changing needs of the Western Australian community, that we incorporate collecting contemporary formats and Western Australian social history and respond to emerging trends in information and publishing.

## Collection Development

The State Library is committed to providing the Western Australian community with access to their Western Australian heritage, history, and voices to provide information, engagement, recreation, and inspiration. We aim to provide up-to-date, general reference materials to support education, research, and recreational pursuits. The collection we develop will be inclusive, without censorship or bias, to represent the diversity of our community and create a sense of belonging and connection.

Our collections are built through purchasing, donation, and may also be developed collaboratively through the commissioning of new creative works. Material is collected for heritage and for general reference and made available through the State Library and online. Development of public library collections in Western Australia through State Government funding is supported by the State Library's management of library materials supply contracts, as reflected in the *State and Local Government Agreement for the Provision of Public Library Services in Western Australia (2020)*.

Priorities for collecting are in line with legislative responsibilities, the State Library's strategic aims, as well as our principles for collection development. Collection development will address gaps and omissions identified in stakeholder consultations and verified through collection analysis.

We aim to be proactive and courageous, celebrate what is unique to Western Australia irrespective of format, and to be informed by:

- Analysis of materials currently held in the collection
- Planned management and selection of online digital resources
- Transparent assessment and selection processes.

The collection will be:

- Timely, topical, and responsive to emerging areas of interest
- Representative of Western Australians of all backgrounds and beliefs
- Highlight diverse groups, and voices

## Preservation

The State Library's commitment to preserving documentary heritage and ensuring it is accessible for current and future generations guides decisions around how it cares for unique collections. Conservation treatments, custom housing, controlled storage conditions, and digitisation are central to the State Library's approach when taking care of physical collections. Expert conservators work alongside other skilled staff, such as photographers, to carefully preserve physical objects in a range of formats, to enable safe handling and the best digital capture for long-term preservation and online access.

Through the development of metadata standards and implementation of best practice workflows, the State Library ensures long term preservation of and access to digitised and born-digital collections. Maintaining awareness of digital preservation trends, interrogating our practices, and setting growth targets prepares the State Library to implement new and improved solutions that will

increase our capacity to collect and preserve digital formats in perpetuity and provide enhanced access to digital collections in integrated and innovative ways.

### **Access**

Community expectations around increased access to collections drives the State Library's focus on digital transformation. Discoverability and accessibility are prioritised through the acquisition of materials that can be made freely available online and investigation of opportunities to enhance access to existing physical and digital collections. Utilising staff expertise and continuing to invest in state-of-the-art digitisation equipment maximises access to significant collections for all Western Australians now and in the future.

### **Review and deselection**

General collections are reviewed and evaluated in order to cater for the changing needs of the community. Items may be deselected and disposed of when they are identified as no longer required. Where possible, items will be donated or exchanged with other libraries or government agencies, charitable or community organisations or disposed of responsibly.

Heritage and legal deposit collections are treated differently as the State Library has a responsibility to maintain and preserve these for current and future generations. Items in these collections are reviewed in line with storage, access, conservation, and digitisation considerations.

## **5. Aboriginal Collections**

The State Library's priority is to work with Aboriginal people and communities to ensure the uniqueness and breadth of their voices and perspectives are highlighted, respected, and celebrated.

It is the State Library's responsibility to ensure that the rights Aboriginal people have to their heritage are upheld in perpetuity and respected in the management of their collections.

Consultation with Aboriginal people and communities to build relationships and establish trust is ongoing. We will be guided by communities about the management of their collections and encourage and support community led collecting. Management of Aboriginal materials will be guided by community, and the State Library encourages and supports community-led collecting.

Collecting practices will be aligned with the ATSILIRN protocols for libraries, archives, and information services. Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) protocols will be embedded within the workflow of collection acquisition, including communities as the key decision makers. The State Library will seek written and direct confirmation of consent from communities for mediated purchases and donations.

The State Library endeavours to take all opportunities that encourage Aboriginal people to create or enhance documentary records of their culture and enhance digital access to relevant collections.

## **6. Partners and Community Engagement**

The State Library works with a range of stakeholders across its operations, including partnership organisations and individuals on a variety of public programming initiatives that drive engagement with our collections. These include exhibitions and displays, lectures and workshops, educational programming, and other services targeted at specific communities, as well as a range of content delivered online.

Strategic partnerships with organisations such as the National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) group and the Digitisation Centre of Western Australia help us to achieve better outcomes for the community. By utilising shared infrastructure available through such partnerships, the State Library improves access to information, and preserves documentary heritage for current and future generations.

Collecting and preserving Western Australian stories intersects with the work of other collecting institutions within the Perth Cultural Centre. The State Library works with these statutory authorities to ensure collections are held by the most suitable institution and ensure that items remain accessible for the community.

We also partner with local governments and public libraries across Western Australia to support the development of print and electronic collections that meet the diverse needs of the state.

New opportunities to collaborate and build content for community engagement are actively sought out by the State Library. Often these partnerships drive collection development opportunities to fill gaps, omissions and remove bias in our collections. As such there is a symbiotic relationship between community engagement efforts and the State Library's Western Australian heritage collections.

## 7. Legislative and Strategic Alignment

The Library Board of Western Australia is a statutory authority, established under the *Library Board of Western Australia Act 1951*. The Board has oversight of the management of the State Library and works in partnership with participating Local Governments to support Western Australian public libraries.

The legislation administered by the Library Board includes:

- *Library Board of Western Australia Act 1951*
  - *Library Board (Conduct of Proceedings) Regulations 1955*
  - *Library Board (Registered Public Libraries) Regulations 1985*
  - *Library Board (State Library) Regulations 1956*
- *Legal Deposit Act 2012*
  - *Legal Deposit Regulations 2013*

The purpose of the *Legal Deposit Act 2012* is to facilitate preservation of the State's published documentary heritage for current and future generations. Alongside this act, the *Premier's Circular 2021/14* instructs all Western Australian Government agencies to deposit copies of their publications with the State Library.

The State Library's Strategic Plan sets out key objectives to meet the learning, information, and recreational needs of all Western Australians. In meeting these needs, the State Library collects and preserves Western Australian published documentary heritage, as well as unpublished documents that help tell unique and diverse Western Australian stories.

The State Library recognises that knowledge has the power to transform lives and supports truth-telling about our history in line with the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the free flow of information and ideas in the interest of all Western Australians in line with the Australian Library and Information Association statement on Free Access to Information, and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights – Article 19.

## 8. Financial Management

The State Government provides funds for the management and development of Library collections with two main components:

- Funding for the State Library’s collections, including the Library’s Western Australian Heritage Collection and general reference, loanable collections
- Funding for Western Australian public library materials

The State Library may seek other sources to fund the acquisition and preservation of collection materials, particularly when a collection has major heritage significance for Western Australians.

The State Library supports centralised purchase of collections for the Western Australian public library network as outlined in the *State and Local Government Agreement for the provision of Public Library Services in Western Australia (2020)*, a partnership agreement between the Library Board and the Western Australian Local Government Association.

Resources for public libraries in the Indian Ocean Territories are funded by the Federal government as part of a service delivery agreement with the State Library.

The State Library follows the Western Australian Financial Administration Bookcase and Procurement Rules, adhering to the policies and procedures of the *Financial Management Act 2006* and *Procurement Act 2020*, and ensuring that the State Library is accountable to the Western Australian public.

The State Library maintains ongoing awareness of the financial value of collection assets and reports to stakeholders annually in accordance with applicable Australian Accounting Standards and *Western Australian Treasurer’s Instructions*, and with the assistance of expert valuers. As part of the valuation process, previously unidentified high value items may emerge and provide new opportunities for interpretation and engagement.

## 9. Responsibilities

The Director, Collection Services Directorate, with the support of relevant State Library committees, is responsible for the development, management, and review of this Strategy and any supporting documentation.

## 10. References

- *Library Board of Western Australia Act 1951*
  - *Library Board (Conduct of Proceedings) Regulations 1955*
  - *Library Board (Registered Public Libraries) Regulations 1985*

- *Library Board (State Library) Regulations 1956*
- *Legal Deposit Act 2012*
- *Legal Deposit Regulations 2013*
- *Premier's Circular 2021/14*
- *Financial Management Act 2006,*
- *Procurement Act 2020*
  
- State Library of Western Australia Strategic Plan
- State Library of Western Australia Interpretation Strategy (in development)
  
- *State and Local Government Agreement for the Provision of Public Library Services in Western Australia, September 2020*
- Federal government and State Library service delivery agreement
  
- Uluru Statement from the Heart
- Australian Library and Information Association statement on Free Access to Information
- United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights – Article 19

## 11. Authorisation and Review

First approved	Library Board 7/7/2022
Review date	Five years from Board approval (in line with strategic planning)
CIU File	