

DIGITAL ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS: DIGITISATION STRATEGY 2021-2023

PURPOSE

In accordance with the *National Library Act 1960*, the Library makes accessible documentary resources relating to Australia and the Australian people so that the community can discover, learn and create new knowledge.

VISION

The Library's vision is to connect all Australians with national collections, enriching conversations about who we are and our place in the world.

MISSION

The Library connects with communities and connects communities with their national collections. We collaborate with others to maximise the national impact of cultural collections.

PRINCIPLES

The National Library of Australia is a world-leader in providing rich online engagement with collections. We leverage the power of technology to reach all Australians regardless of geography, and to enable deeper discovery, and new ways of sharing and creating knowledge.

Trove embodies the Library's ambitions to provide a shared national platform for digital collections, embracing the diversity of Australia and its collecting institutions. Trove is accessible to all Australians and visited by millions. The Library is a trusted provider of digital content.

Over two decades, the Library has created 40 million digital pages from print collection materials, and 51,000 hours of oral history recordings. This includes two-thirds of Australia's pre-1955 published newspapers and more than 100% of the Library's oral history and folklore recordings. The Library has deep expertise in digitising from microfilm collections; approximately 85% of the Library's digitised pages have been created from microfilm. However, in total we have digitised less than 10% of our total physical collections.

This strategy outlines the Library's priorities for creating and making accessible digital copies of physical collection material (digitisation). It supports and operates in conjunction with the Collection Strategy, the Engagement Strategy and the Fundraising Strategy.

1. The Library's vision includes the digitisation of all our Australian collection materials, and rare overseas collections, especially those relating to the Pacific. We will engage in philanthropic and other collaborative partnerships towards this goal.

2. Our primary focus will be on digitising materials that provide immediate public benefit. Wherever possible, digitised content will be made available through Trove, in ways that encourage access and creative engagement.
3. Digitisation will support long-term preservation of the Library's collections. We will digitise once to meet all needs.
4. Our digitisation is collaborative. We will partner with cultural, research, historical and other organisations to ensure that our program reflects the diversity of Australia.
5. We will invest in developing capability to digitise our diverse physical formats, ensuring our operations are sustainable, cost-effective and scalable.

PRIORITIES

Over the next three years to 2023, the Library's key priorities are to build capability to deliver a scalable, cost-effective digitisation service, while continuing to deliver a complex digitisation program that meets partner, donor and public needs and expectations.

1. Digitise Australia's 'treasured voices'

By listening to the voices of those who have come before us, documented in our national collections, we can better understand who we are as a nation, where we have come from and what we can aspire to be in the future.

The Library will deliver an ambitious program to digitise flagship collections of national significance. This will include the Library's most requested manuscript collection, the papers of Sir Robert Menzies, as well as a range of personal collections representing Australia's diverse leadership. Balancing collections of national significance will be a range of documentary heritage materials recording the diversity of Australian life. Examples include nineteenth and early twentieth century photographs, newspapers, books, maps and drawings.

The Library will work with First Australian communities to prioritise materials of relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for digitisation in culturally appropriate ways. In doing this work, the Library will build upon existing relationships with communities who intensively use our existing online collections. As online collections are the Library's primary method of engaging with Australians in regional, rural and remote areas, we will prioritise materials of local relevance to these communities. We will also prioritise culturally and linguistically diverse collections in line with the Library's 2020-24 Corporate Plan priority to increase the diversity of audiences engaging with our collections.

As the National Library of Australia, our focus will remain on digitising our Australian collections. We also hold other unique or rare collections of both national and international significance, especially relating to the Pacific. These collections may be considered for digitisation, based on significance to Australians and partnership opportunities.

The collaborative nature of the Library's digitisation strategy requires a flexible approach to determining materials to be digitised. We work with partners and communities to identify relevant materials from our collection. To facilitate these discussions, the Library will investigate and internally document possible digitisation projects from within our collections based upon the above priorities.

2. Enhance discovery and experience

The transformational nature of online collections is driven by the potential of digital exploration. Where physical text is read linearly, digital information can be deeply searched by a person or analysed by a program. This provides new pathways to collections - reaching new audiences and revealing new knowledge. Digitising collections is more than creation of a copy: it is a new life for the collection.

Through this strategy, we push further into transformational technology. We will improve the keyword search capability and enhance the contextual presentation of material. As we expand the formats we are digitising, we will ensure the application of appropriate technologies for access.

We will also move beyond keyword search. We will explore computer vision: facilitating whole new ways of understanding and experiencing pictorial collections, and engaging Australians we are currently unable to reach. Through semantic search, we will reveal and provide new insights into large collections, accelerating digital humanities research.

3. Expand collaborative digitisation opportunities

Collaborative digitisation programs enable significant growth in online collections. The Library partners with donors, organisations and individuals to make Australia's heritage accessible. In the next three years, the Library will significantly grow our digitisation programs funded through philanthropy, partnerships and digitisation-on-demand services.

Support from donors has been important in digitising a number of collections to date. To achieve our ambitions, the Library will seek substantially increased philanthropic support for digitisation, as outlined in the Fundraising Strategy 2018-28. Philanthropic support for digitisation will always be in support of public access to identified high-value materials. The

Library expects that a combination of Government, partner, and philanthropic support will be required to achieve our aim of digitising our Australian collections.

In the last five years, a steady partnership digitisation program has supported the creation of more than 5 million pages of digitised content, primarily of published material such as newspapers and gazettes. Material produced through partnerships is heavily used in Trove, demonstrating the value of working with community organisations to identify priority digitisation projects. Over the course of this strategy we will grow the number and diversity of partnerships, expanding the program to include appropriate unique and rare materials. In particular, we will seek partnerships with regional, rural and remote community organisations, public sector entities and commercial organisations wishing to make accessible their corporate history. The partnership program will be a focus from 2022 onwards.

The Library's digitisation on demand services are extensively used by regional and rural Australians accessing unique collection material. By 2023, we will transition these services to full cost-recovery and integrate and promote these services with Trove: providing another pathway for new content.

4. Build capability

The Library has built a world-class digitisation program over two decades. To expand our program, we will deepen our capability in multi-format paper-based digitisation and ensure our operating model supports a diverse and flexible program. We will develop our capability to deliver a sustainable, cost-effective digitisation service through a number of initiatives, including:

- a. **Develop an operating model that supports increased digitisation through a varied and flexible set of programs**
- b. **Implement an end-to-end digitisation workflow to increase efficiency**
- c. **Acquire a fit-for-purpose suite of digitisation equipment**
- d. **Review and update digital capture and display standards**
- e. **Develop and implement technical enhancements to support capture, ingest, discoverability and delivery of digitised content on Trove.**