

Submission
No 45

INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Organisation: Library Council of New South Wales

Date received: 9 August 2016



The Hon Robert Borsak MLC
Chair, Inquiry into museums and galleries
General Purpose Standing Committee No 4
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Monday, 8 August 2016

Dear Chair

I submit the attached submission of the Library Council of New South Wales to the Inquiry into museums and galleries as Secretary to the Council.

Yours sincerely

Alex Byrne 
Secretary, Library Council of New South Wales
State Librarian and Chief Executive

A world leading library

Macquarie Street Sydney NSW 2000 / Telephone +612 9273 1414 / Facsimile +612 9273 1255
www.sl.nsw.gov.au



Library Council of New South Wales

Submission to the Legislative Council Inquiry into Museums and Galleries

August 2016

The Library Council of New South Wales is the statutory body created by the Library Act 1939 which governs the State Library of New South Wales and advises the Minister for the Arts on library and information services in New South Wales. The Council makes the following submission to the Inquiry.

1. **Access to the collections of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, the Australian Museum and any other state collections held in trust for the people of New South Wales, and programs that promote physical and online access**

1.1 The State Library's collection

The State Library's collection, which was valued last year at \$3.15 billion, is the most valuable library collection in Australia, and the third most valuable cultural collection in Australia after the National Gallery of Australia and the National Gallery of Victoria. For comparison, the National Library of Australia's collection is valued at \$1.38 billion and, in New South Wales, the Art Gallery of NSW collection is valued at \$1.33 billion, the Australian Museum \$485 million, the Museum of Arts and Science \$309 million and the Opera House building and facilities \$2.36 billion.¹

The collection includes over 11,000 hours of oral history, over 6.3 million items in other format (including 234,000 prints, drawings, paintings and maps, 1.5 million photographs, 114,000 architectural plans, 40,000 subdivision plans, postage stamps, coins, realia, serials, books and grey literature), almost 13km of manuscript and archival materials and growing born digital, bought digital and made digital resources.²

The State Library's collection includes some of Australia's most historically significant items, including the original charts by Matthew Flinders and First Fleeter William Bradley, early drawings of Australian flora and fauna, the UNESCO-Memory of the World listed collection of First World War diaries, and the works of famous literary figures of the past and today such as Henry Lawson, Patrick White and Kate Grenville. Digital materials include websites and social media from the 2015 state election and some 80,000 social media messages from the 2014 Martin Place Siege. Elements of the collection are listed on the Australian Register of the UNESCO Memory of the World.

¹ From 2014-15 Annual Reports.

² As of 30 June 2016.

1.2 A state wide remit

The Library Council and the State Library are the trustees and guardians of this a vital state asset which is held in trust for the people of NSW, Australia and beyond. Providing access to the collection is pivotal to the State Library's mission.

Within New South Wales, the State Library is unique among state cultural institutions in its reach to every citizen through its enablement of the public library network, its extensive online services, its collections which document the lives of individuals, communities and enterprises in every corner of the state, and its educational programs which reach into all of the state's schools. To offer a few examples, this year the Bombala Public Library requested Korean language books for migrant workers, the educational team presented in Casino with the Governor of New South Wales, the *Portraits of War* exhibition will be shown in Corowa, Tumbarumba, Cootamundra, Temora and Bland, among many other activities in Sydney and across the state.

1.3 Online access

There is great demand from the public, locally, nationally and internationally, to access the State Library's collections online, and in 2015/16 alone there were almost four million digital "visits" to the State Library website. A 2012 Deloitte report highlighted the increasing importance of digital resources, as library clients were found to be almost twice as likely to be obtaining information through digital, rather than physical means.³

As our society becomes ever more digitally connected, it is likely that demand for online resources will continue to grow. The State Library has responded to this demand through a number of strategies including the establishment in 2012 of the 10 year Digital Excellence Program. The Digital Excellence Program is providing unprecedented, world wide access to the most iconic and historically significant documents and objects of our state and nation, enabled by a complete renewal of the Library's underlying infrastructure and systems.

The Program is budgeted at \$72.5M over 10 years, including \$62.3M for digitisation and \$10.2M for digital infrastructure. To date, the NSW Government has committed \$55.1M for the first seven years of the 10 year program. The Program is on track, and the digitisation component of the Program has created over 7.5 million digital objects during the first four years.⁴ The Program has delivered significant benefits to the people of NSW including access to our most historically significant cultural treasures.

As part of the infrastructure component of the Digital Excellence Program, the State Library of NSW this year launched its new website featuring rich digital experiences and compelling stories, making the Library's collection even more accessible. The website is compatible with the diversity of mobile devices and features a new integrated digital catalogue. The website has also provided the platform for innovative web publishing, a new online shop and event and venue management systems.

1.4 Increasing physical access through the State Library's Master Plan

The State Library's Master Plan aims to maximise the potential of the Library's buildings and make the iconic Mitchell building more accessible to the public. The plan will deliver inspiring public spaces for readers, researchers, students and visitors to access the Library's unrivalled collections and services in new and innovative ways.

To date, with funds raised from donors, key parts of the plan have been successfully completed, including the restoration and renewal of the Mitchell Library Reading Room and

³ Deloitte Access Economics, *Economic value of the State Library of NSW*, 2012

⁴ As of 30 June 2016

the original Mitchell Reading Room (now the Friends Room), the construction of Amaze: The Michael Crouch Gallery, and the Gallery, Volunteers and Fellows Rooms.

The current stage of the Master plan includes the NSW Government funded compliance works which will make the Library fully accessible to those with mobility impairment or young children for the first time in over 100 years and the project to renew and extend the Mitchell Galleries. Future stages of the Master plan include a rooftop restaurant, a new children's learning space, a 400 seat auditorium and better connection to the Governor Marie Bashir Reading Room. In these ways the State Library is expanding public space within its heritage footprint on Macquarie Street.

The State Library's exhibition program is one of the primary ways in which the Library can provide access to the collection. The self-funded \$15 million project to renew and extend galleries as part of the State Library's master plan will expand public space on the ground and first floors of the Mitchell building which will dramatically increase opportunities for public access to the collection by providing additional exhibition space. The new Mitchell galleries will use the latest technologies to deliver innovative new and adaptable platforms for visitors to experience a combination of our rich digital content and unique collection items that are found nowhere else. The Library's intention is to offer a connected user experience in the new galleries which will enable deeper engagement with the Library's collections.

1.5 Regional outreach and access to the State Library collection

The State Library has an exhibition touring program which extends the reach of the Library's collections to the public in both suburban and especially regional areas. In 2015/16 two major exhibitions toured: *Life Interrupted: Gallipoli Moments* to the National Archives in Canberra and *The Greatest Wonder of the World* to Bathurst Regional Art Gallery. In June 2016 the Library's immensely popular exhibition *What a Life: Rock photography by Tony Mott* toured to Lismore Regional Gallery, and will tour to another nine venues.

The State Library utilises the public library network to extend the reach of its exhibitions into regional areas, by converting them into travelling displays which tour public libraries. In the 2015/16 financial year alone the Library toured four displays, which are able to reach a large number of people. For example, more than 54,000 people saw the display *Portraits of War: The Crown Studios Project*, which toured to 17 locations to public libraries in regional NSW and western Sydney.

In 2015/16 the State Library also lent 159 items from the collection to support regional, national and international exhibitions.

The State Library's *FAR Out!: Treasures to the Bush* educational program provides physical access to original items from the State Library's collections to schoolchildren in far flung and geographically isolated areas of NSW. Since the program began in 2012, 22,520 schoolchildren from 358 rural and remote schools have been able to access items including Captain Cook's shoe buckle and Indigenous word lists. The *FAR Out!* program is made possible with the generous support of the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation and the Caledonia Foundation.

The State Library also provides online curriculum based materials for teachers, drawing on the Library's collections. The State Library also delivers teacher training modules throughout NSW which focus on these online resources and help teachers build competency in using these resources. The Library is increasingly using videoconferencing to reach schools in remote and regional areas, and is focussed on providing support to disadvantaged schools.

1.6 Suburban outreach and access to the State Library collection

The State Library similarly reaches the communities of the Sydney metropolitan area through its educational programs, touring exhibitions, lending and advice and funding (see 2.1). A further point to note is that the State Library budget also includes provision for the rising and significant costs of maintaining heritage buildings of cultural significance. These obligations increase the challenges inherent in meeting any efficiency dividend requirements.

The educational programs bring students on site to the State Library for curriculum based educational experiences with a bus subsidy for underprivileged schools in Western Sydney provided by a State Library staff giving program. Special programs are offered in support of Higher School Certificate students: also available to regional students they are particularly attractive in the metropolitan area.

Another program which is of particular benefit to metropolitan communities is the State Library's multicultural collection of 80,000 books in 43 languages. Available state wide, these materials, and the accompanying advice, are of particular interest and value to the culturally diverse communities of Western Sydney. The State Library is currently trialling the concept of centres of excellence in particular languages with participating councils and their public libraries.

2. Opportunities to revitalise the structure, reach, and impact of museums and galleries, and their research and collecting priorities

2.1 Utilising NSW public libraries

Under the Library Act, the State Library administers the provision of funding and advice to NSW public libraries. The reach of the public library network - which includes 367 libraries, with a further 34 satellite locations and 20 mobile libraries serving another 500 locations – is vast, and is able to effectively service small and isolated communities.⁵

The State Library utilises the public library network to provide access to the Library's collection through touring displays (see 1.4), and as venues for public programs such as author and curator talks. In regional areas which lack a museum or gallery, there is an opportunity to further utilise the public library network in this way, by providing a space for displays or events based on state collections. Rare items, such as Shakespeare's First Folio, are taken by curators to selected public libraries, such as Dubbo in July 2016

2.2 Local history collections

Many public libraries, local communities, multicultural and indigenous communities have local history collections that are valuable and irreplaceable archives of NSW's history and culture. However, the condition of these collections and the capability of staff to describe, maintain, and catalogue them varies across the state. This has consequences for long term preservation and access to these collections, and it is an area which requires further investment. In its advisory capacity the State Library is in a unique position to assist public libraries to put in place a robust framework for the management of local history collections, including appropriate collection development policies.

If local collection managers, amateur historians and volunteers in local communities are given the skills and knowledge to properly catalogue local collections, there is the potential for these collections to be opened up as a resource accessible to all. This could be achieved cost effectively through the national online discovery service Trove, which is managed by the

⁵ As of March 2015.

National Library of Australia and to which the State Library has contributed millions of pages of content.

The State Library is also currently exploring opportunities to make local history collections digitally accessible through the State Library's ground breaking indyreads project. Currently a pilot project with Leichhardt Library and Parramatta Library, indyreads is a new platform which gives local communities access to titles from independent publishers and local content such as oral history, photographs and stories.

2.3 Digital opportunities

For libraries, galleries and museums to stay relevant in the digital present and future, they require new models for content discovery, delivery, and contribution. The Library has pioneered digital innovation in the cultural sector through experimentation, rapid prototyping, and collaboration. In 2015 the Library established the DX Lab, the first and only digital humanities lab of its kind in Australia. The DX Lab has developed new models of digital access to heritage content held in libraries, galleries, and museums using open source technology, data visualisation, and big data analysis. A key tenet of the DX Lab's approach is to publish and share the open source code it develops with the community.

Some of the projects that the DX Lab has developed in its first year include an experimental interface using over 1000 postcards from the Library's Broadhurst Collection, and an interactive experiment that uses 100 year-old survey data to map the location and meaning of Indigenous Australian place names across the country. The DX Lab also collaborated with the Tweed Regional Museum to develop a new visualisation tool combining data sets from both the State Library and Tweed Regional Museum, which has since been adapted for use in gallery exhibitions.

Many local communities lack the ability to capture, store, and share their own unique and rich stories, as they lack the budget, technology, and curatorial and archival knowledge to do so effectively and efficiently. With the expertise the Library has developed through the Digital Excellence Program, the Library is in a unique position to provide a digital platform to enable local communities to tell their own stories, and ensure that they are safely archived.

This year the Library piloted Waranara, an Indigenous digital collection infrastructure based on open source software. Waranara provides a robust digital platform to enable Aboriginal communities to collect and curate their own digital content, and, with appropriate permissions from local communities, it can be used by the Library to ingest material into its permanent collections. The Library is developing this platform in consultation with local Indigenous communities, and it will be accessible on mobile phones to ensure greater accessibility. The platform has great potential as a way for Indigenous stories to be collected, for example to collect stolen generations testimony. There is also potential to modify the platform to suit other communities and contemporary collecting opportunities.

2.4 The State Library's research and collecting priorities

The *Library Act 1939* defines one of the objects of the Library Council of NSW as:

to promote, provide and maintain library services and information services for the people of New South Wales through the State Library and through co-operation with local libraries and other libraries and information agencies.

Commercial and private publishers based in NSW contribute to the State Library's collection through the Legal Deposit provisions of the *NSW Copyright Act 1879*, and NSW Government publishers deposit as required by the *Premier's Memorandum 2000-15: Access to Published Information: Laws, Policy and Guidelines*. The Library receives a capital allocation from the

NSW Government to acquire material for the collection. In 2014–15 the capital allocation was \$6.535m accompanied by a recurrent allocation of \$1.025m for online resources. In addition, the State Library of NSW Foundation, a charitable trust, also supports new acquisitions. Others arrive by donation, sometimes under the Commonwealth's Cultural Gifts Program which provides tax deductibility for the value of approved cultural gifts. The ability of the Library to continue growing its collection underpins the State Library's mission and is a key priority of the State Library's 2015-19 Strategic Plan.

A rigorous approach to acquisitions is implemented to collect contemporary material, fill gaps in the record and meet the research and information needs of people throughout NSW. The State Library continues to adapt its collecting priorities in response to contemporary community concerns, technological change and contemporary events, to ensure that its collections are representative of the diversity of cultural life in NSW, and that these cultural memories are preserved for future generations. In the 2015/16 financial year for example, the priority collecting areas included Islam in NSW, the maker community and the Barangaroo and Millers Point developments.

The Library collected material in a range of formats to document the candidates, parties, issues and media commentary about the 2015 NSW State Election, including websites and social media. In 2016 the State Library launched an Indigenous Collecting Strategy which provides a focus and framework for the Library to engage in contemporary Indigenous collecting. The Strategy has a particular focus on collecting community generated content and experiences.

2.5 Preservation of the State Library collection

A core responsibility of a major collecting institution like the State Library is to preserve its collection for future generations. This is a demanding task across the extensive range of formats collected by the State Library. It also requires investment in storage capacity for future needs and provision for the rising and significant costs of maintaining heritage buildings of cultural significance.

Preservation starts with high quality storage conditions which are temperature and humidity controlled, appropriately designed and secure. Highly trained conservators conserve and, where necessary, repair precious collection items to ensure their long term preservation as well as to prepare them for exhibition and for digitisation. Recent examples include the Library's incomparable collection of First World War diaries (exhibited and digitised in 2014) the papers of the Wentworth and Macarthur families, and the Dixson numismatic collection.

Digital resources demand particular focus. The State Library has recently implemented the Rosetta system to ensure the preservation of its born, made and bought digital content. The Library is working with National and State Libraries in Australia, New Zealand, the UK, Netherlands and Germany to address major issues in digital preservation.

3. The economic impact of museums and galleries on cultural tourism, and their role in supporting the visitor economy in Sydney and regional New South Wales

Visitation to the State Library is steadily growing, as is its role in attracting visitors and supporting the visitor economy. In 2015/16 the State Library's onsite exhibitions, public programs, and reading rooms attracted close to 900,000 visits throughout the year. In addition to the vital programs and the information services it provides for the community, the State Library, including the heritage-listed Mitchell building, is a cultural destination in its own right. It is expected that the State Library's Master plan, including the additional exhibition space provided by the new Mitchell Galleries (see 1.3) will drive visitation to the Library, and will have flow-on benefits to the visitor economy in Sydney. The increased exhibition space will also

enable the State Library to attract more overseas exhibitions building on exhibitions such as World Press Photography, annually since 2000, and successful exhibitions from London's Victoria and Albert Museum.

A 2012 Deloitte report estimated the economic contribution of the State Library to the Australian economy in 2011/12 at \$67 million. For every three people working at the Library, it supported another job elsewhere in the economy.⁶ The report estimated the benefits to the community from Library resources and services as \$144 million, then around twice the Library's annual revenue, meaning that for every \$1 invested in the library there were \$2 in returns to the community.⁷ NSW public libraries which are managed by local councils and supported by the NSW government through the State Library also have a significant economic impact, and were estimated as having made a \$336 million contribution to the economy in 2010-11.

⁶ *Economic value of the State Library of NSW*, p. 4

⁷ *Economic value of the State Library of NSW*, p. 4