

Digital collecting principles for NSLA libraries

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Collecting born digital material is changing the way libraries do business. The way we collect, store, describe, preserve and use born digital collections is in some ways very similar to the way we collect, store, describe, preserve and use physical collections, but in many ways, so very different.

This set of principles outlines the way born digital collections will be acquired by the national, state and territory libraries of Australia. These principles apply to the unique digital collections acquired for permanent retention in the heritage collections of NSLA libraries. Complementary to these are NSLA's [digital preservation principles](#), which address issues of collection sustainability.

NSLA libraries commit to the following principles:

1. **Acquisition:** Digital collections will be acquired in accordance with the libraries' collection policies, with content decisions being based on significance, research value, geographic coverage and legislative requirements as they apply to each of the national, state and territory libraries.
2. **Collaboration:** Collaboration between NSLA libraries and other collecting institutions is required to build robust digital collections that fulfil the information needs of our clients. NSLA libraries will collaborate on digital collecting activities and initiatives with an aim of minimising unnecessary duplication across our collections.
3. **Proactive collecting:** In digital collecting, time is of the essence. Digital collecting requires libraries to be proactive rather than reactive in their approach to acquiring digital material. NSLA libraries commit to actively collecting born digital material now, to avoid a future 'black hole' in our documentary heritage.
4. **Rights management:** Negotiating appropriate rights management is a critical process of digital collecting. Issues of copyright, intellectual property rights, moral rights, cultural protocols, distribution and use will, where possible and necessary, be negotiated at the time of acquisition, rather than retrospectively. Application of appropriate rights for digital collections should not be a barrier to their acquisition, access or use.
5. **Storage:** Born digital collections remain vulnerable in the short term while policies, procedures and technologies are being established. We commit to storing our digital collections in secure digital repositories, and continuing to make them accessible for the long term through sustainable practices in preservation and technical infrastructure.
6. **Standards:** The acquisition, storage, preservation, description and provision of digital collections will take place under internationally-recognised, best practice standards and guidelines, enhancing their discoverability, access and use. We will strive to achieve technical and social interoperability, and commit to increasing access to linked open data.
7. **Risk management:** Confidence in the authenticity and integrity of digital collections will be ensured through implementation of risk management strategies and establishment (where possible) of provenance.
8. **Internal promotion:** Information on digital collecting will be shared internally with the aim of digital collecting being understood by all staff and stakeholders as an integral part of our core business as libraries.

Internal principles(operational)

NSLA libraries acknowledge that in the short term, digital collecting can be a very time consuming and manual process while it is being established, trialled and evaluated. However, ongoing dedicated collecting in the digital arena will provide medium-term (3-5 years) and long-term (5 years+) opportunities to better streamline and automate our services and processes.

NSLA libraries will:

1. **Commit and sustain human resources:** Back up their commitment to digital collecting with adequate and appropriate staffing, training, resources, technology and storage.
2. **Adhere to standards:** Ensure the integrity of digital collections is maintained through the adherence to standards, guidelines, policies and procedures that will enable sustainable accessibility and usability.
3. **Keep up to date:** Continue to monitor, and implement where necessary, new and emerging technologies and standards.
4. **Consider significance over format:** Consider technological issues when making acquisition decisions, but, where feasible, do not allow technological capabilities of the collecting library to a barrier to collecting digital material.
5. **Promote digital collecting:** Communicate and promote NSLA libraries' digital collecting activities to the public, government, other cultural and heritage institutions, and potential partners and funding sources.



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