

Request for Proposal: Contract researcher or team (Indigenous-identified positions) to assess Indigenous collections in NSLA libraries

TWO MONTHS FULL TIME EQUIVALENT BETWEEN OCTOBER 2021 AND FEBRUARY 2022

Summary

National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) is seeking expressions of interest from individual researchers or a team of two researchers who are available to complete the equivalent of two months' full time work between October 2021 and February 2022. The researchers will be responsible for conducting an assessment of 12-15 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collections across four of its member libraries: National Library of Australia, State Library of Queensland, State Library of New South Wales, and State Library of Western Australia. Deliverables include a report and presentation to NSLA.

The project has a budget of \$35,000.

Background

National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) is the peak body for the national, state and territory libraries of Australia and New Zealand.

NSLA is currently running a research project into contemporary Indigenous collections in four of its member libraries, covering a twenty-year period (2000-2020). The project is intended to produce a series of recommendations arising from an investigation into:

- how we make collecting decisions for contemporary Indigenous collections
- whose voices are represented in those collections
- how discoverable our collections are within and across our institutions
- the proportion of our collections created *by* Indigenous people versus *about* Indigenous people
- the major gaps in our collections – considering geography, community representation, format
- subject areas, groups or formats that are well represented
- subject areas, groups or formats that are over-represented
- the ways in which our collecting practice for contemporary Indigenous materials has evolved

The project includes two stages:

- 1) published collections, web archives and ephemera (completed July 2021); and
- 2) original collections.

Scope

This piece of work pertains to stage 2 of the larger project. It looks at a sample of 3-4 original collections in each of the four libraries, most collected in the decade since 2010. The selected collections will relate entirely to First Nations communities. They will comprise various formats, (e.g. born digital, oral histories, photographic collections, artworks, manuscripts, music), timeframes (contemporary and historical), and degrees of discoverability (catalogued, uncatalogued, well described, poorly described).

A set of research questions will be developed with representatives from the four participating libraries and applied to each collection, covering collecting decisions, community relationships, promotion, discoverability, authorship, and connection with other collections. The research outputs will be delivered as a written report and presentation, which is expected to include examples of good practice, suggestions for improved practice, instances of practice that are inappropriate or no longer recommended, and a broad assessment of compliance with current institutional Indigenous collection policies.

The analysis will be undertaken by an experienced individual or two-person team (Indigenous-identified positions) with a background in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research, collections, journalism or field work in community history. Ideally the applicant/s will have direct experience of working with Indigenous communities, and telling community stories that draw on collections – whether through documentaries, feature articles, exhibitions, books, artwork, local keeping places or other avenues.

Deliverables

- Two weeks' work (full time equivalent for one person; part time for two) per library for collection assessment and write-up including correspondence with staff and community members where necessary and appropriate.
- Written analysis of 3-4 original collections per library based on agreed research questions, to produce a report of approx. 5,000 words including recommendations for NSLA libraries.
- Presentation of research findings to NSLA (Directors/CEOs of the ten member libraries).

The researcher/s will be expected to:

- visit participating library/libraries to assess selected collections or conduct research by virtual means if necessary (up to five days onsite per library)
- refine research questions and process in collaboration with the NSLA project group
- interview library staff if necessary to gain insight into collecting decisions and content
- conduct desktop research including correspondence with community members if necessary and appropriate to make an assessment of the selection process, discoverability for community members, and representation of community voice in collection content
- produce a short written assessment for each collection and combine into the final report
- deliver a presentation on the research outcomes to the NSLA meeting in March 2022 (Sydney).

A primary contact will be nominated in each library and will assist the researcher/s by providing briefings on relevant library policies and processes, and setting up necessary contact points, entry passes, collection access and interviews with colleagues.

Selection process

Expressions of interest will be considered by a panel (Lesley Acres, State Library of Queensland; Rebecca Bateman, National Library of Australia; Ronald Briggs, State Library of New South Wales; Robyn Hamilton, State Library of Queensland; Barbara Lemon, National and State Libraries Australasia).

Applicants will be provided with a draft list of research questions and invited to an informal online discussion with several panel members to talk through their proposed research methodology. The successful applicant/s will be appointed by mid-October 2021.

Fee

The budget for this project is capped at \$35,000 including all travel costs.

Timeline

19 August 2021	Request for proposal issued
30 September 2021	Proposals due
4-11 October 2021	Panel briefing and informal interviews
14 October 2021	Provider/s confirmed
18 October 2021	Contract work commences
Oct 2021 – Feb 2022	Analysis, research and written assessments (8 weeks)
1 March 2022	Written analysis delivered to NSLA office
24/25 March 2022	Presentation to NSLA meeting

Requirements

- **This is an Indigenous-identified position. Applicants must be of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.**
- Demonstrated understanding of the nature of the project and ability to meet indicative project timelines.
- Demonstrated knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.
- Examples of relevant experience working with Indigenous communities.
- Examples of relevant experience in using original collections for research purposes.
- Proposed fee and method of engagement.
- Australian Business Number for payment and contracting purposes.

Further information

For further information or to discuss the project requirements, please contact:

Dr Barbara Lemon, NSLA Executive Officer

Phone: 03 8664 7512 or 0497 514 332 | Email: blemon@slv.vic.gov.au

Individual library representatives

Ronald Briggs	State Library of New South Wales
Robyn Hamilton	State Library of Queensland
Rebecca Bateman	National Library of Australia
Debra Jones	State Library of Western Australia

Submitting proposal

Please submit your proposal by COB 30 September 2021 to blemon@slv.vic.gov.au