

## NSLA Indigenous Group

### Case studies based on the *National position statement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander library services and collections (2014-15)*

July 2015

This document sets out a number of case studies to illustrate the varied ways in which some NSLA libraries are seeking to meet objectives set out in the *National position statement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander library services and collections (2014-15)*.

The position statement was drafted by the NSLA Indigenous Group on the understanding that certain objectives were being addressed more consistently or effectively than others, and that NSLA libraries should collectively aspire to meet all six objectives by sharing and improving current practice.

The case studies listed below are an illustrative selection only – they do not reflect the full scope of policies and practices in NSLA libraries. For more detailed information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and collections in NSLA libraries, contact [nsla@slv.vic.gov.au](mailto:nsla@slv.vic.gov.au)

#### OBJECTIVE 1

The right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be informed about collections that exist relating to them, their culture, language and heritage.

#### ***State Library of New South Wales: Outreach by the Indigenous Services Team***

The [Indigenous Services team](#) at the State Library of New South Wales was established to work with Indigenous communities across NSW to help preserve and manage Indigenous heritage resources. Part of the team's role is to promote library services and collections to Indigenous communities. This is perhaps best illustrated through the library's recent [Rediscovering Indigenous Languages](#) project (see Objective 6). A priority for the project is to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to inform them about the existence of language resources, and to make these resources available for local community use and projects.

#### ***State Library of Western Australia: Storylines***

Storylines is an online archive for digitised heritage collections at SLWA that relate to Aboriginal history in Western Australia. Members of the public can view, print and engage with thousands of photographs, as well as a growing number of oral histories, historical documents, sounds and movies. The online archive is hosted by SLWA in Perth, but there is also a community-run database in Mowanjum (Wurnan Storylines) and plans to work with other remote areas to digitise, preserve and share their collections.



Storylines assists the library in the digital return of photos and other materials directly to Aboriginal families, communities and people. It is also helping to identify many formerly unknown subjects in photographs in the J.S. Batty Collection - hundreds of photographs have been identified since 2013.

The Ara Irititja software on which the system is based allows objects, people, places, stories, plant, animals and technology to be tagged and linked to create vast knowledge profiles which reflect the many languages, stories and perspectives of Aboriginal Western Australia. Storylines is uniquely capable of adhering to cultural protocols, and supports media types including video and audio. It is envisaged that Storylines will become a central point for Aboriginal people who wish to access the State Library of Western Australia's extensive heritage collections, and a safe place to store records of people, place and history.

### ***National Library of Australia: Indigenous Language Resources***

The recently completed online research guide on [Australian Indigenous Language Collections](#) lists materials such as vocabularies and word lists in unpublished Manuscripts collections. First Languages Australia, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and others have been made aware of the research guide. A public talk was delivered in June 2015 at NLA by Shannon Sutton, who compiled the research guide, with audience representation from Indigenous individuals and groups including the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages. A further presentation about the project by Shannon has been offered for the Puliima National Indigenous Language & Technology Forum in Melbourne in October.

### ***LINC Tasmania: Family History Portal***

LINC Tasmania has included a dedicated '[Aboriginal ancestry](#)' section in its new online family history portal. This guide is one of a number developed to assist in navigating LINC Tasmania's' library, archival, hardcopy and online resources. The guide helps people to understand the complexities of researching their Indigenous family history and directs people to resources available through the library. By including Aboriginal ancestry as a key section in its family history portal, LINC Tasmania aims to share information and research advice with a wide range of clients, some of whom may not be able to visit the search room in Hobart.

### ***National Library of Australia: Workshops and Publications***

The National Library of Australia has an MoU with AIATSIS guaranteeing special access and services to support Indigenous family reunion through the Link-Up network. NLA informs AIATSIS staff of relevant collection material through a biannual meeting to exchange information and guarantees a central enquiry point and the provision of free copies for Link-Up clients.

NLA also provides individually customised programs for Indigenous people about the library's collections and services, for example a half day visit for members of the Yuraki node of the National Indigenous Research and Knowledge Network to see original research materials and meet NLA staff.

NLA Publishing has produced several popular books which highlight collection material relating to Indigenous people, including [True Light and Shade](#), Professor John Maynard's book about convict artist Joseph Lycett's depiction of his Worimi ancestors in the Newcastle region.



## OBJECTIVE 2

The right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to determine use and access provisions for heritage materials which reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture, language and perspectives.

### ***Northern Territory Library: Maningrida***

The Northern Territory Library has chosen to use its digital keeping place software, Community Stories, as a focus of its digital literacy program as community members are highly engaged with material about their own place. Approximately twenty community members and senior language speakers from Maningrida College, Maningrida arts centre and Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation attended a Community Stories workshop in Maningrida. This was the second workshop for Maningrida Community members. Another workshop was held in Darwin earlier in 2014. Community members participated in robust discussions in their first language regarding digitised content within maningrida.communitystories.net. Workshop participants learned how to:

- add material and metadata to community stories
- record welcome and cultural warnings in all six of the main languages in the town
- create and edit knowledge profiles and information about people, places, subjects, and clans etc
- identify people, technology, and animals and tag and mark these on media
- create video, audio and text annotations
- apply access restrictions to sensitive and sorrow material
- basic searching



Community participants spent time during the workshops searching and adding relevant metadata to Maningrida Community Stories. The community arranged a town meeting, held at the school during the training visit, and a group of strong language speakers and community leaders from Maningrida spoke about the importance of Maningrida Community Stories and how it is being used in capturing knowledge, language and stories.

### ***State Library of Western Australia: Storylines***

As part of this project, the State Library of Western Australia will be working with several remote communities to set up community-controlled archives which complement the Storylines system but restrict access to material deemed secret, sensitive or sacred by the community. These instances will be run by the community according to their own needs and protocols.

### ***State Library of Victoria: Cultural Permission Program***

The State Library of Victoria's [Cultural Permission Program](#) (video link to Maxine Briggs at NSLA Heritage Collections Forum 2015) was developed to ensure the provision of culturally appropriate responses to requests for use of collection material relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The program allows library staff to meet with traditional owner groups to provide information about relevant collection material, develop MOUs determining access provisions, and to add descriptive information to catalogue records where possible.

The Cultural Permission Program was a major component in the successful development and delivery of Culture Victoria's recent project, [Seeing the Land from an Aboriginal Canoe](#). This online resource, which includes a series of images and interviews on video, explores the significant contribution of Aboriginal people in guiding people and stock across the river systems of Victoria in colonial times. The project was released as part of Reconciliation Week 2015.

### OBJECTIVE 3

The inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in decision making processes, at all levels, to achieve informed and appropriate directions and agendas across the library and information sector.

#### ***State Library of New South Wales: Indigenous Advisory Board***

The State Library of New South Wales has established an Indigenous Advisory Board which met for the first time in June 2015, reporting to the Library Council of New South Wales. Membership includes the State Librarian, two members of the Library Council and five Board nominees.

#### Terms of Reference

1. To advise the Library Council of NSW on matters relating to the Indigenous population of NSW including the needs for library and information services.
2. To assist the Library Council and the State to build relationships with the Indigenous communities of NSW.
3. To advise the Library Council on the development and progress of State Library of New South Wales strategies relating to Indigenous peoples.

#### ***State Library of Queensland: Indigenous Advisory Group***

The [Indigenous Advisory Group](#) provides advice to the Library Board of Queensland on policy and strategic issues concerning library and information service provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

### OBJECTIVE 4

The development of strategies to increase employment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within the library and information sector.

#### ***National Library of Australia: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy***

NLA has developed an [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy](#) as part of its commitment to improving employment opportunities at the library for Indigenous people. The strategy was developed by a cross-divisional working group, chaired by the Director HR and including an SES champion. The group has overseen the development of a web presence focussing on Indigenous employment at the library, including [personal profiles](#) written by Indigenous staff.

Through participation in the APS-wide graduate program over the past five years the NLA has recruited and retained five graduates; contributing to an increase in the percentage of Indigenous staff employed at the NLA from 0.6% at June 2011 to 1.8% at June 2014, and the expectation of reaching 2% when statistics are collated at June 2015. On satisfactory completion of the graduate year, recruits are offered permanent employment at the NLA. Former graduates are now working in three of the NLA's six divisions.

### **State Library of New South Wales: NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy**

The State Library of New South Wales is party to the [NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy](#) released in 2014. The strategy acknowledges the need to “grow and develop a talented and versatile Aboriginal workforce right across the sector, in a wide range of roles, and at all levels – from trainees to Department heads”.

SLNSW is currently at or above the targets outlined in this strategy.



### **Libraries ACT: Recruitment Policy**

Libraries ACT led a change of wording throughout its Directorate in advertisements for jobs, from 2015: *The ACT Public Service is committed to building a culturally diverse workforce and an inclusive workplace. As part of this commitment we strongly encourage people from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background, and / or People with Disability, to apply.*

### **State Library of Queensland: Workforce Strategy**

The SLQ [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy 2012-16](#) was developed with assistance from a range of stakeholders and applies to “people who are descendants of and/or identify themselves as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and as such are accepted by the community with which they are associated’. The number of SLQ employees identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander exceeds the QPS target.

SLQ has a long history of contribution from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and fostering opportunities including traineeships, cadetships, interns, residences and informal mentoring and networking opportunities. However the library acknowledges that there is inconsistent representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees across all SLQ functional areas and classification streams. KIPs for the library include increasing representation within SLQ to 5% of staff by 2016; and ensuring that retention rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees maintain parity with overall SLQ employee rates.

## **OBJECTIVE 5**

The development of strategies to strengthen cultural competency across our workforce, including knowledge and awareness of issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander library users.

### **National Library of Australia: Cultural Competency Training**

NLA provides formal cultural competency training as part of its annual central training program. In addition, occasions such as NAIDOC week provide an opportunity for Library staff to learn, respect and celebrate.

In 2014 for NAIDOC week Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff from collection areas across the library presented a ‘white gloves’ display of materials documenting Indigenous history, culture and experience to more than 100 staff.

In 2015 a private screening held for NLA staff during NAIDOC week will replay the *Australian Story* episode about the purchase by Sam and Janet Cullen of historic photographs of Indigenous people from the Clarence River region taken by J W Lindt. These photographs were donated to the Grafton Regional Gallery where they are being made available to descendants through the Gallery’s Lindt Research project. The NLA also holds many of Lindt’s portraits of Indigenous people. Kate Ross will introduce the screening by talking about [her recent staff Travelling Fellowship](#) to the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, Quai Branly in Paris and Te Papa in Wellington, to learn about cultural management of historic Indigenous photographs in the three museums and what we can learn from their practice.

## Libraries ACT: Exhibitions

Libraries ACT has housed exhibitions of Aboriginal artwork since 2011 including two based on the creative works of Kevin Gilbert (1933-1993), several from the Yurauna Cultural Arts Program and the Alexander Maconochie Centre. Information sessions are delivered by exhibitors to staff in the library, contributing to overall awareness and levels of trust between staff and community members.

### OBJECTIVE 6

The development of strategies to return usable copies of collection material to cultural owners to support cultural and language maintenance or revitalisation.

### State Library of New South Wales: Rediscovering Indigenous Languages

In 2011 the State Library of New South Wales began a significant project to identify and make accessible materials in its collection relating to Indigenous Australian Languages. [Rediscovering Indigenous Languages](#) aims to reconnect Indigenous people and the wider Australian community to word lists and vocabularies relating to the first languages of Australia. It also aims to:

- Develop protocols for the publication of language lists, to ensure that they meet community needs and allow communities to contribute their knowledge to SLNSW records about their languages
- Locate previously dispersed language lists in the Library's collections
- Increase public awareness of Indigenous language and cultural history
- Be an effective educational resource contributing to school curriculum and further research.



The first phase of the project involved engaging an external linguistic specialist, Dr Michael Walsh, to begin identifying language material within the library collections. Research was carried out with the library over a twelve month period, ultimately identifying over 200 previously inaccessible listings relating to 100 languages. The listings were prioritised for digitisation and enhanced records created for each catalogue record. A community-friendly website, informed by Indigenous protocols, was developed by SLNSW and launched in 2014.

### State Library of South Australia: Repatriation Policy

The State Library of South Australia holds significant collections depicting Aboriginal people and aspects of their culture. SLSA acknowledges the important role that connection to culture plays in maintaining Indigenous health and wellbeing. To this end, the library has developed a policy that outlines its commitment to digitally repatriate relevant material from its collection back to the community of origin, on a cost-recovery basis - free where possible.

Requests must come from an established or developing Indigenous Knowledge Centre or similar Community-owned database, publication or project (rather than an individual). Repatriated material must be made available for general community use, with the exception of culturally restricted material which is to be administered within the Community according to their own protocols.

Digital repatriation is most often initiated by a Community request to access or copy relevant material. When such a request fulfils the conditions of the policy, research is done by SLSA staff to uncover any other relevant material in the collection, and the results are presented to representatives of the Community for their consideration. Once a selection is made SLSA works to produce and supply digital copies of the identified material.

Material returned to Communities under the policy includes digital versions of manuscripts, photographs, artworks, film and sound recordings.

### **State Library of Western Australia: Yawuru**

In April 2015 the State Library of Western Australia built a new digital keeping place with the Yawuru people in Broome. This new archive will hold not only local heritage and cultural materials, but also returned images from SLWA heritage collections. SLWA returned nearly 400 images to the Yawuru community and these formed the beginning of the new Mangara Storylines archive. The returned material included photos of Yawuru traditional country (the Broome area) and Yawuru people over the last 200 years.



As part of the return of the images the State Library participated in a community workshop to engage the wider Yawuru community with the photographs and the archive. The workshop was well attended and was [covered by ABC News](#) and broadcast nationally. Dozens of photographs were identified for the first time in decades and people spoke of the importance of these collections, and having them in local control.



*John Geijsman and Andrew Meredith (SLWA) with Yawuru community members*

*"A lot of the anthropologists and people throughout history have recorded and documented things that shouldn't be documented, relating to law and culture and so on. So now we have the rights and responsibility to restrict things that shouldn't be shown, so it's culturally appropriate and hopefully we can make it a thing for everyone to share and be happy with."*

Bart Pigram (Yawuru cultural officer)

The State Library of Western Australia has repatriated approximately 1000 photographs in various communities through the Storylines program.

### **State Library of Queensland: Indigenous Languages Strategy**

The SLQ Indigenous Languages Strategy supports the preservation and promotion of Queensland Indigenous languages through the work of the community-based Language Centres and language workers. Key activities under the strategy include:

- Indigenous Languages Researcher position: undertakes research and other activities relating to languages
- kuril dhagun and Indigenous Knowledge Centres: support community language activities and increase awareness of languages
- Community-based training activities: language skills, IT, recording, archival skills, etc.
- Research Discovery Workshops: increase community access/research SLQ collections
- Documentation, including digitisation of materials from SLQ collections
- Promotion through the [SLQ blog](#)



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